

the independent wargame magazine

BATTLES

#7

COMPLETE REVIEWS

Phantom Fury, Field Commander Napoleon, Fighting Formations, Lash of the Turk, Nightfighter, Shisho, Spartacus Imperator, Six Days of War, Four Roads to Moscow, Steel Wolves, LZ-X-Roy, Breakthrough Cambrai, Storm Over Hengyang, Allemagne 1913, Talk, Dean Essig & None But Heroes, **FRESH BLOOD** Le Combat des Trentes, **MOST WANTED** Bomber Command, Simulating Wars, Braccio Da Montone, Storm Over Dien Bien Phu, Honneur et Patrie, **AND ALSO** Making Connections, Supplying Wargames, Cousse & Effect, Small Solitaire Wargames... And More!

WINNER
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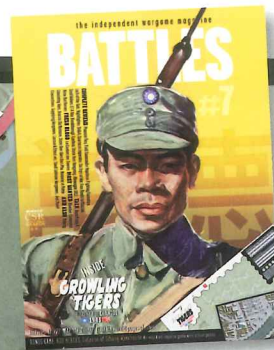
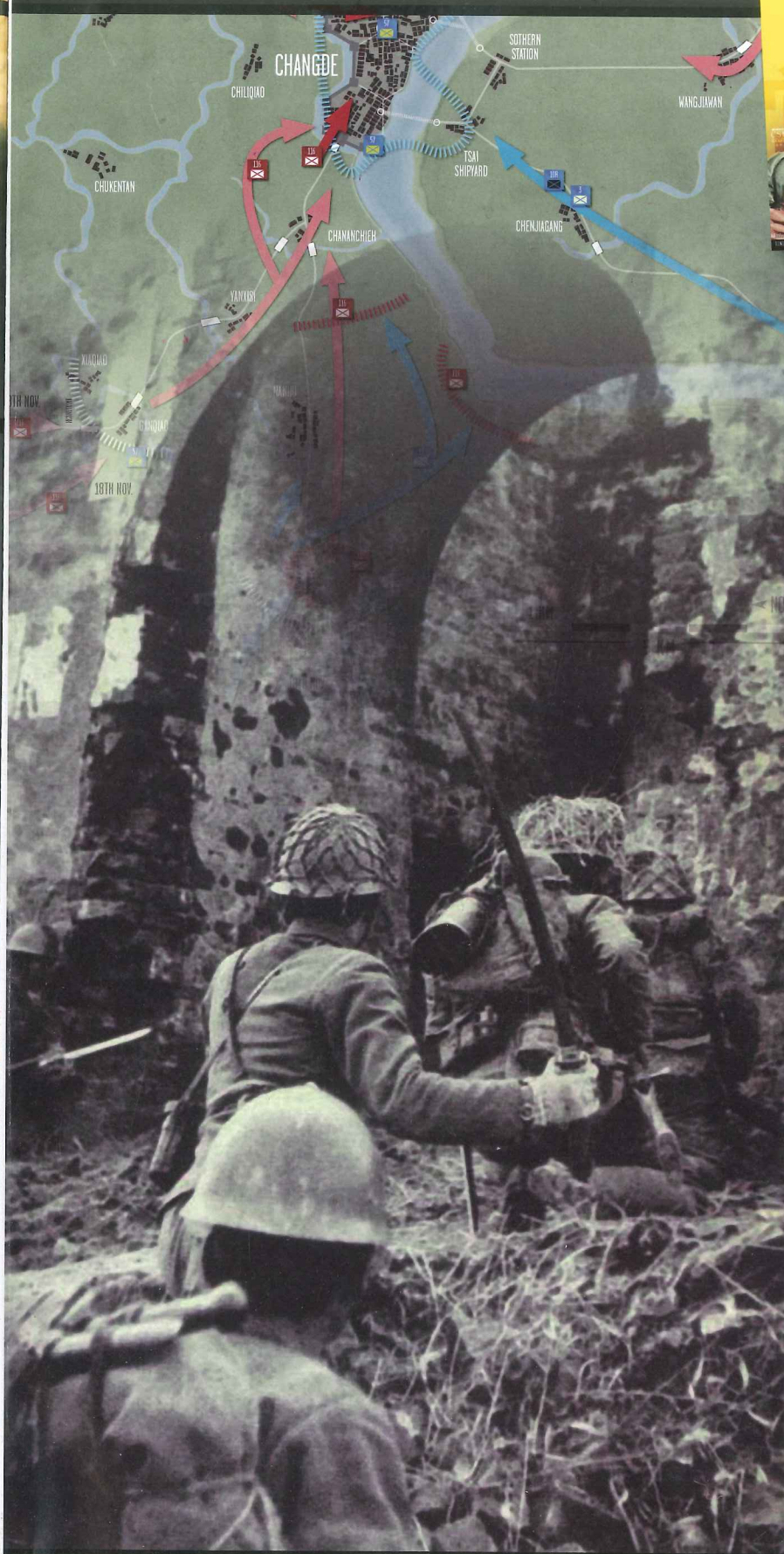
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*"Une brute qui marche ira
toujours plus loin
que deux intellectuels assis"*

The game in this issue was originally supposed to be *Bozeman Trail* by Lionel Liron. In the end, we changed our minds. The game is very good, but the problem was that it wasn't enough of a wargame and resembled more of a historical eurogame. There is nothing wrong with that, but it isn't what we are trying to present in this magazine. We tried to re-work the game to veer it towards war, but the result was not satisfactory. By stretching it every which way, the game ended up losing its essence. We decided not to go with it rather than publish something that was trying to be two things at once, and failing to be anything in particular.

Lionel continued to work on the game on his own, and should publish it as a downloadable PDF. We will take a look at it once that happens. You'll also be able to discover his work on the Indian Wars once the dingsos at Nuts! Publishing announce that pre-orders for *Hoka Hey!* will begin to be taken soon.

On the subject of Nuts! Publishing, as you might know I am part of this merry band of *trompe la mort*. You will find in this issue a review of our first game, *Phantom Fury*. Before publishing this issue, I asked myself whether I should include reviews of Nuts! games in *Battles*. Is it possible to do it without being suspected of false advertising and without any conflicts of interest? After asking you on the forums, the answer was "yes". It wouldn't be very fair to deny Nuts! the visibility that any other publisher would have. Publishing boxed wargames is already difficult enough as it is without further handicapping ourselves. David Hughes was given the task of writing this review, and obviously we did not touch a word of it. I'm happy he was willing to do it. He is known for not being a pushover, even a "bad boy" for some, a kind of wargame terrorist (!) if we believe the rumors. In my view, David is one of those who have made it possible for *Battles* to win its second CSR Award for Best Wargame Magazine.

Yes, a second award. Champagne! I am very happy that this magazine pleases you and happy to receive your encouragement. This award is certainly due to the authors more than me. Guys, all of you who have been with *Battles* since #1 or who have come later, I sincerely thank you, and I drink to your health. Merci! *A Week in Hell*, our solitaire game on the Battle of Hue, also took the award for Best Magazine Game. Caviar! I liked this game and I am particularly happy for its designer, Laurent Guenette, who is working on some new projects. Thank you, Laurent, and congratulations. Congrats also to David Julien and Daniel Herbera, their graphic work was also important in the game's success.

In this issue, we are also celebrating the 100th issue of the French magazine *Vae Victis*. An issue published every two months since 1995. "Marche ou crève", as we say. You will find in our pages an interview with Nicolas Stratigos (yes, that is his real name, I swear) and Pascal Dasilva, two eminent members of this "magazine de jeux d'histoire". If my calculations are correct and if we maintain our current rhythm, I will be 157 years old and you will all be dead when *Battles* publishes its 100th issue.

Yes, *Battles* might be a little late. As usual. We've already discussed that in previous issues, I won't do it again now, and only say that... it should go more smoothly in the future.

To return to the subject that opened this editorial, I should add that I am very proud to publish two games by Wayne Cheng Cheng in this issue. Wayne is a Taiwanese publisher who puts together the *Board Wargame Magazine* that François Xavier told you about in *Battles* #6. He is also the brainchild behind Formosa Games, which will be publishing its first boxed games soon. I have played five of his games up to this point (see review on page 102). Discovering Wayne's work was a really nice surprise. I think we will see his name on many great games in the future. Keep an eye on this guy...

I am also very happy (really, I am a happy guy today) to see that *Battles* is made and read on every continent on the planet. This was one of the goals when the magazine started. Gathered around several pages, we have Frenchmen, Russians, Chinese, Americans, Finns, South Africans, Brazilians, etc. - and even a few Englishmen*!

Until next time, merci à tous,
Olivier

*By the way, gentlemen... What about this rugby World Cup? Not too rough for you? cough cough...

WINNER CSR Charles S. Roberts AWARDS

(Twice! No kidding!)



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Battles Magazine Allée du Campas 64240 Urt - FRANCE

<http://www.battlemagazine.com>

Commission paritaire : en cours

N°ISSN : en cours

Made in France - Proudly Printed in Euskadi

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NIGHT DROP

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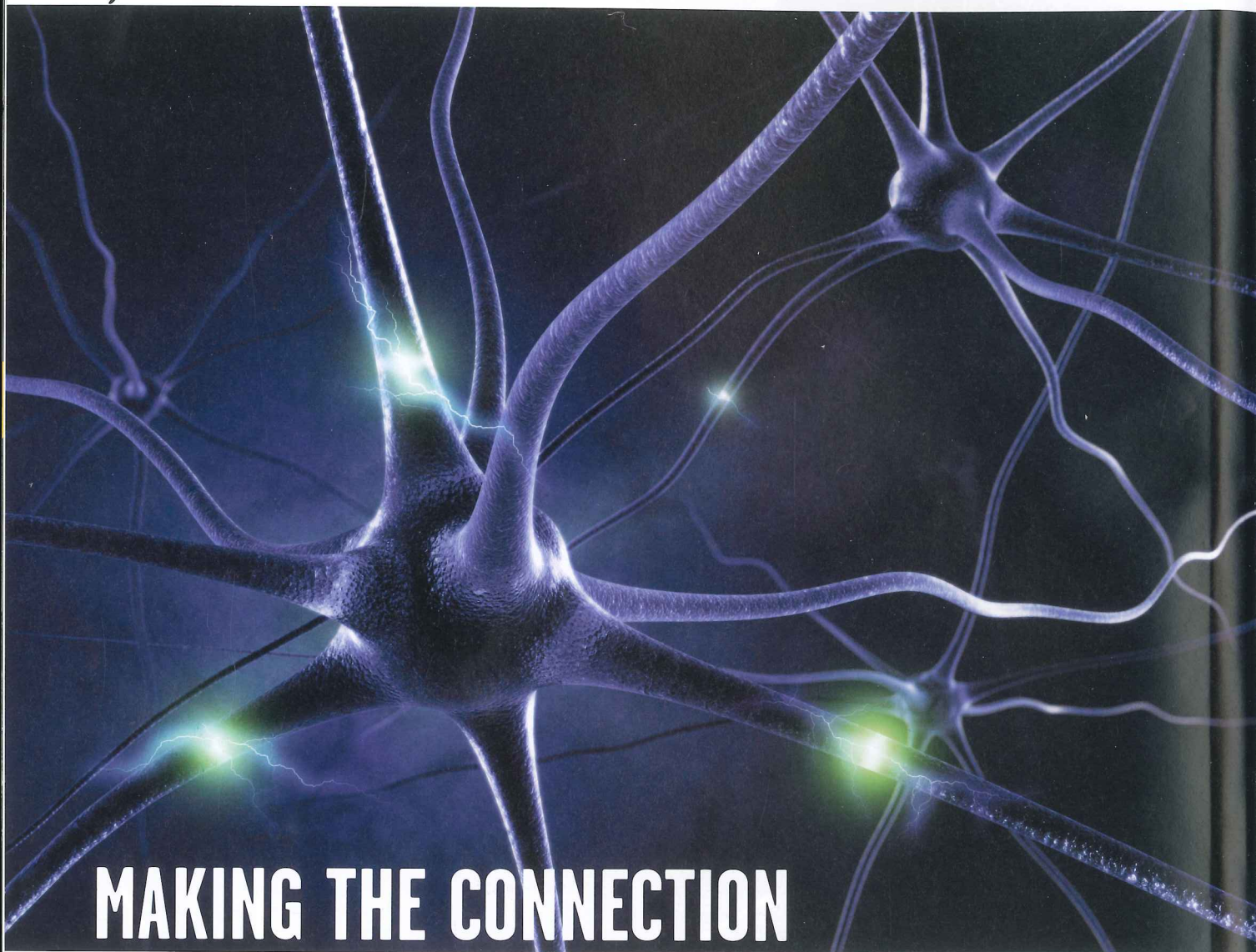
Night Drop is a two player game simulating the first hours of 6 June 1944 and focuses on the operations conducted by the 82nd Airborne Division. The randomness of the drop, the priority assigned to each objective, and the arrival of German reinforcements assures a different game each time

A game by Laurent Closier

«A bloody good game!»

John Wayne (Psychiatrist)

by Matthew Kirschenbaum



MAKING THE CONNECTION

If, as James Dunnigan has always insisted, wargaming is the hobby of the overeducated, then the Connections conference (<http://connections-wargaming.com/>) this past August in Washington, DC promised to combine the intensity of a doctoral exam with the pizzazz of the A-list lecture circuit. I'd never been to a Connections meeting before but as an academic I'm no stranger to conferences—I have literally hundreds of keepsake badges adorning my office. So, sorry that I was unable to make the trip up to Lancaster, PA for the World Boardgaming Championships that very same week, I instead hied me down to the campus of National Defense University at Fort McNair. There, in rapid succession, the podium played host to James Dunnigan, Peter Perla, Richard Andres (a distinguished scholar from the National War College), Volko Ruhnke, Brian Train, Roger Mason, and Joseph Miranda. And that was all before lunch.

Connections is a conference designed to fit the niche at the intersection of professional and recreational wargaming, with active duty military personnel, hobbyists, academics, designers, industry representatives, and policy wonks all rubbing shoulders. The crowd numbered about 80 on the day I went. Connections has been convening for almost 20 years, with fel-

low *Battles* contributor Brant Guillory a long-time organizer and attendee; but this is the first time the conference had come to the campus of NDU under the auspices of the Center for Applied Strategic Learning (CASL), one of several think tanks at the United States' premier joint professional education center. As a grognard fortunate enough to live in the greater Washington, DC area I've found myself increasingly interested in the professional side of the hobby; and, as an academic with time on my hands on a hot summer day, I thought of the trip downtown as 2/3 indulgence and stargazing and 1/3 intellectual fieldwork. Connections, in short, gave me a chance to see how wargaming was presented amid the formal trappings of panels and Powerpoint presentations, or "briefs" as they were sometimes called.

The morning of speeches did not disappoint. Dunnigan was animated and pugnacious, and delivered a 25-minute excursus ranging from his personal history with SPI to wargaming's fraught relationship with contemporary partisan politics. Perla, whose seminal *The Art of Wargaming* is about to be reissued in a new edition from John Curry (<http://www.wargaming.co/>), was characteristically authoritative, shedding new light on the original 1811 von Reisswitz Kriegsspiel (the conference advertised itself as having convened on the 200th anniversary of the "invention" of wargaming, a

claim to which the conversation would return). Ruhnke examined the representation of terrorism across several different game systems; Brian Train covered the evolution of his own intricate political/counter-insurgency designs, and Joe Miranda (who now holds the record for most published game designs) showed no signs of being jaded as he talked about current projects.

Several key themes emerged. Above all was the notion that wargaming was first and foremost a tool for jumpstarting discussions. The “model” behind any particular game is the engine of a self-contained world whose selective representation of reality inevitably amplifies and distorts. These amplifications and distortions are what draw players in, creating “suspension of disbelief” and getting them talking and thinking (and arguing) free of inhibition. None of the speakers were interested in pontificating about realism in wargames; rather, the games were cast as vehicles for analytical and imaginative exploration. The catch, as Ruhnke put it, was judging whether any given game’s findings were the result of “context or caprice,” that is informed modeling of the situational variables or merely the designer’s own idiosyncratic views. This dovetails with the second key theme of the day, the application of wargaming to problems well beyond the battlefield. Gaming COIN operations was clearly a major preoccupation of many of the designers present, but beyond that games were mentioned in relation to a host of contemporary social and economic challenges, from influenza outbreaks to famine and economic collapse. “*What happens when Yemen runs out of water? How do you game that?*” asked NDU’s Vice Admiral Ann E. Rondeau, who opened the conference. Roger Mason described his work applying operations research and wargaming methodology to situations ranging from traffic control to emergency response.

A final key theme was the ever-growing gap between computer and board wargames, and the fact that manual games, seemingly counter-intuitively, were the real site of innovation. Several reasons were suggested. First, accessibility: as has often been observed, every board wargame is also a game design kit since the complete system is included in the box. Computer games, by contrast, tend to black box their code, their data, and their algorithmic modeling; and even when these elements are exposed for player modification, there are typically levels of abstraction to which a non-programmer simply doesn’t have access. Moreover, the cottage industry trappings of recreational wargaming—epitomized by an outfit such as Victory Point Games, which has proven the viability of print on demand—means that designers can work on marginal topics without any immediate economic peril. A computer game, by contrast, demands dozens of artists, programmers, project managers, sales personnel, and so forth. Consequently, the big budget blockbuster titles have to answer to the marketplace, and the result is obsessive attention to graphics and multimedia effects rather than risk taking with game design. James Dunnigan pointed to smart phones and the casual games revolution, praising *Angry Birds* as the model of a game that could be bought for a few dollars and learned in a few minutes. But serious computer wargaming, aside from the efforts of a few individuals like John Tiller and James Sterrett, or the *Harpoon* team, remains a niche within a niche (within a niche).

The early afternoon was given over to demo sessions spread out across four dif-

ferent rooms. Larry Bond and Chris Carlson were on hand to show off *Persian Incursion* (reviewed in *Battles* #6). Brian Train was teaching and running multiple games of an abstract design called *Guerilla Checkers*. Tim Smith had a display on “Simulation-Based Analysis and Training,” which appeared to borrow pieces of published wargames like *Jutland* or *Axis and Allies* to teach critical decision-making strategies in the classroom. A Microsoft Surface tabletop display from BAE Systems was exhibited as a “virtual sandtable”—large tokens like drink coasters are placed on the touch-sensitive surface to activate game functions. Ellie Bartels and Guillory, meanwhile, led a demo of the GEMSTONE project, an NDU-sponsored game engine for COIN operations. The afternoon finished off with one final panel of talks, this time from the professional side of the aisle. Topics ranged from Bob Barker’s overview of simulation gaming at the Air Force Research Lab to Christopher Weuve’s discussion of gaming’s contributions to the USN’s new maritime strategy, unveiled in 2007. At that point I had to head home for a dinner engagement, so I missed out on the evening of pick-up gaming that is a traditional highpoint of the Connections conference.

Connections was a non-classified event. Anyone who knew about it could have walked in off the street and registered. Consequently, I was somewhat surprised by my one critique, at least the single day I was able to attend: the conversations, while animated and broad-ranging, felt curiously insular at times, unknowingly sequestered from the burgeoning serious games movement (for example) which has begun garnering popular attention through the work of advocates like Ben Sawyer. Likewise, the independent games scene is a space where a tremendous amount of innovation is taking place, on topics that would have easily fit within the expansive purview of wargaming embraced by Connections. Jane McGonigal’s recent high-profile (some will say overexposed) book *Reality is Broken* describes her efforts to use hybrid online/real-world games as “massively multiplayer forecasting tools.” *World Without Oil* (<http://www.worldwithoutoil.org/>), which is probably her best-known effort, marshaled several thousand players to game out solutions to daily life after a global energy crisis. Likewise, Mary Flanagan, a game designer based at Dartmouth University, has worked on projects such as *POX* (<http://www.tiltfactor.org/pox>), a board game about immunization policy. Ian Bogost has launched the study of “newsgames,” whose topics and themes are drawn straight from the headlines (<http://jag.lcc.gatech.edu/blog/>).

Games, it seems clear, are becoming more and not less important as tools for making sense of the world around us. The question is whether wargaming can or will or even should retain its identity as a distinct game design tradition, or whether it will once again fade into obscurity. As Dunnigan pointed out at the start of the day, wargaming wasn’t “invented” in 1811 with von Reisswitz; the knowledge was merely codified in a written form which could be reproduced and disseminated via the printing press. Wargaming, at least on the professional/policy

side, must make more of an effort to reach out to its neighbors in serious games, independent games, and even art games if it is to retain its identity and vitality. Connections appears poised to provide a platform for doing so in the future. **B**



Note: David played a DTP version of the game. Its components were roughly the same than the components of the printed version. The pictures in this article show our proof samples components, sent by the printer, the same that you'll find in the box

NUTS!
REVIEW
by David Hughes

PHANTOM FURY

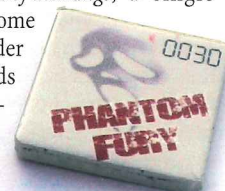
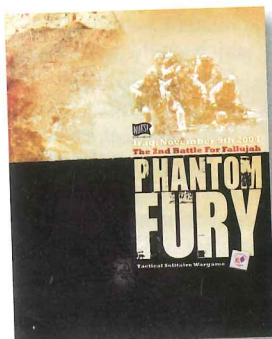
Wargames about the immediate past have a pretty chequered history, and it is easy to understand why. They must be a nightmare to research. While there is a multiplicity of multi-media sources for recent wars, the very profusion of these sources adds to and complicates the designer's task. Not only that, but the sources are often repetitive, biased and superficial. Perspective is not gained quickly, nor is consensus. The conflict in Iraq following the fall of Saddam is a good case in point. If you google "Fallujah," for instance, then you are confronted by a daunting list of 3.5 million pages, and based on some random sampling, most of these have something to say about the fighting there in 2004. How is the poor designer to home in on the key aspects of his subject under this deluge of material? Laurent Closier, designer of *Phantom Fury*, a solitaire game on the action fought by 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Division in the Jolan district of Fallujah on the morning of 9th November 2004 has taken a radical approach to this problem. To a very large extent, PF's system is based on a single source: an article published in the *Marine Corps Gazette* in September 2005.

This article, written by four enlisted marines who fought at the sharp end in this action, is titled "Infantry Squad Tactics,

some of the lessons learned during Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (MOUT) in the battle for Fallujah." Now, this may not be a best-seller, nor does the title exactly trip off the tongue, but the article is a blueprint for city fighting against insurgents, and indeed this is exactly how Closier has used it. In three decades of wargaming, I cannot think of any game which is more closely tied to its material; even SPI's *Lord of the Rings*, a single-sourced effort if ever there was one, draws some of its inspiration from general pre-gunpowder warfare. PF on the other hand largely discards the conventions of tactical wargaming; if something is not in the article, it is unlikely to be in the game – if it is in the game, you'll find it on the page.

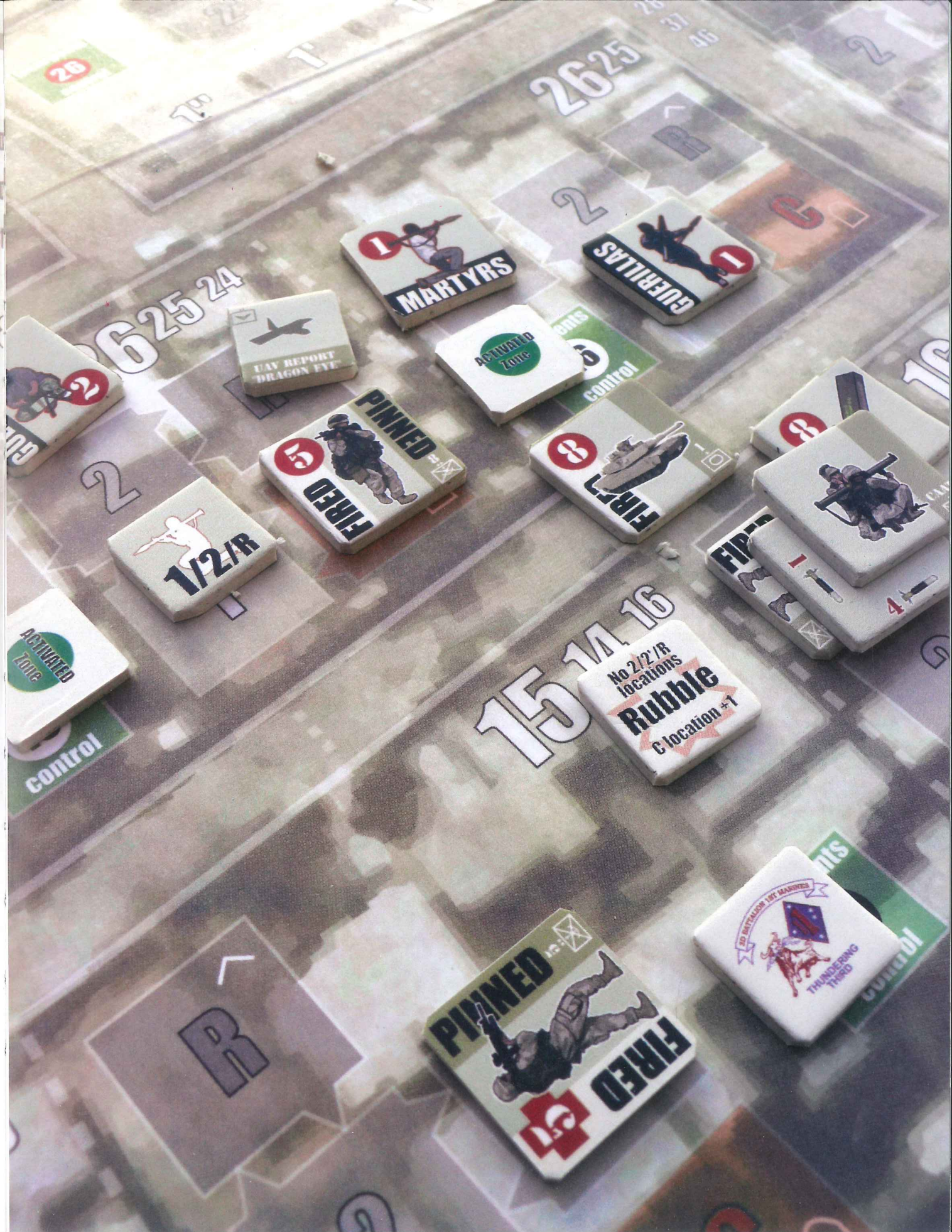
I must confess that I find this a fascinating approach – my primary raison d'être for being in this hobby is to study the way actual events can be translated into game mechanics. PF is a virtual laboratory for examining how this can be done. Of course, the designer has looked to other sources for his non-system data – scenarios,

DESIGNER LAURENT CLOSIER
GRAPHICS THOMAS POUCHIN
PUBLISHER NUTS! PUBLISHING



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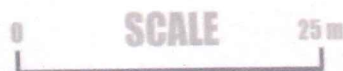
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ne limit (block limit)
ne limit (block separation)
reet section limit



Zone ID
A black circle means
"Marines start zone"



Egress routes
In order of priority

force strengths, cartography etc – but the essence of the game is to be found in the experiences of the four thinking infantrymen who penned the article.

Before proceeding with the review, though, a disclaimer of sorts is necessary. There will be few of you reading this who are unaware that Olivier Revenu, our esteemed editor and publisher, is one the principles of Nuts!Publishing. Can you be certain that any unkind words on my part have escaped the cut of his editorial sword? Or, that if I had despised the game, that my whole review would not have found itself on the spike? This is a tricky question. As it happens, I am far from despising the game, as you can probably tell already, so that does not apply. I do have a number of criticisms, and given the circumstances, I will list them all – even things which in other games I might have been tempted to pass without mention. As for Olivier's editorial stance, I have no doubt he will comment on the topic somewhere in this issue. For my part, Olivier has not altered a single word in any of my previous reviews, even when controversial, and even when he himself has disagreed, and I am certain that he will not do so in this one. And in that unlikely event, you can be sure that I will post about it online *. Now, let's see how *PF* stands up to this scrutiny.

ONE DAY IN A LONG WAR...

Your job as the commander of a reinforced company of Marines in Operation *Phantom Fury* is stark, and unequivocal. You have to clear and secure part of the deadly Jolan neighbourhood in the north-west corner of the benighted Iraqi city of Fallujah. Your area of operations covers roughly 600

metres by 400 metres – 24 city blocks, of densely packed, stone built, 2 story housing. You have a single morning to do it – no exceptions – and have to be prepared to take casualties; if you achieve your mission, High Command will accept losses of up to 20%. Not only that, but time is of the essence; Division is prepared to trade time for blood, and for a priceless 60 minute reduction in the time taken to secure the Jolan, will accept a further 10% losses before conceding defeat in this sector, and relieving you from command. This is a high priority mission!

Luckily, your 9-squad company has been heavily reinforced, as befits the difficulty and importance of the task. To augment your firepower you have been assigned a number of Combined Anti Armor Teams (CAAT), which will spend much of their time in a "bunker-busting" fire support role. Much to the relief of the men under your command, two M1A1 Abrams tanks will accompany your attack. Support will also be provided from the air; you have access to reports from Dragon Eye Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) reconnaissance, and can call in close air support from both AH-1W Super Cobras, and F/A-18 Hornets. Immediately after breaching the front line you will have three more squads released to your command, and as soon as you reach the sector's only mosque, a platoon of Iraqi troops will be made available to occupy this politically sensitive, and heavily fortified site. If needed, Battalion will place a further platoon of Marines at your disposal, but these come at a cost, and calling for them may look bad on your fitness reports.

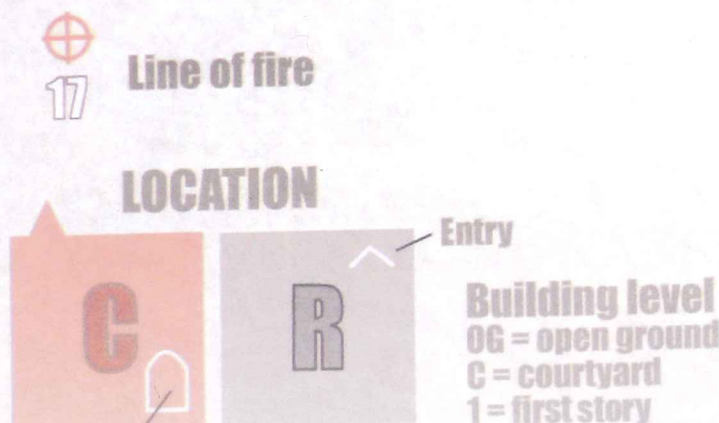
So as you can see, you should have more than enough firepower to get the job done. The dilemma you will face is to maintain a fast enough pace of advance while minimizing casualties. And if you think that taking full advantage of such a variety of forces will be a challenge, spare a thought for the real-life commanders. Captain Timothy J Jent, who commanded one of the Marine companies operating in the Jolan on November 9th, recalls that he was reinforced at the last moment by a platoon of tanks, a section of Armored Assault Vehicles, an engineer squad, some CAATs, a SEAL Sniper team, Artillery forward observers, Mortar forward observers, a psychological operations team, various interpreters, and several embedded journalists! With no time to train them, Captain Jent was worried about how he would keep track of them all when the bullets started flying. No wonder, as he reports, he was pulling his hair out!

Component-wise, *Phantom Fury* just about gets the job done. I really like the map, which is based on a 1:1000 scale grab from Google earth, by the looks of it. Each of the 24 blocks represented has been divided into two or three zones, and each of the re-



*Tu bluffs Martoni! note of the editor

REVIEW



sulting 60 zones has to be controlled by the player for victory. A zone contains a number of locations – sometimes open ground, a courtyard / entrance, 1st and 2nd floor locations, and a roof – and it is in the locations that the action plays out. This is not unlike the way buildings are handled in ASL, but unlike that game, here the individual floors and levels have their own space on the mapboard, eliminating the need for stacking. It would be hard to over emphasise how much easier this makes *PF* in play.

Your forces can move from zone to adjacent zone directly, and to neighbouring zones through connecting street sections. As this is very close terrain, lines of sight are limited to adjacent and neighbouring zones, except in the streets surrounding the map's sole area of open wasteland. Here the designer borrows and adapts an idea from *D Day at Omaha beach*, and marks directly on these street sections the IDs of the zones from which they can be fired upon. Zones also indicate the paths of retreat to be followed by guerilla units recoiling from the fury of your assaulting Marines. All in all I think that the *PF* map is a triumph. Like that of the aforementioned *D Day at Omaha Beach*, it simplifies and enhances the play experience, and does it without taking serious liberties with what is a highly realistic portrayal of the terrain. This has my vote as the best map of the year so far.

I don't think that the remaining components quite manage to live up to this exalted standard. The counters are fine, as you can see – clear, functional, and quite attractive to my eyes. I would have liked a little more use of colour to differentiate between the marines and the insurgents, but this is purely an aesthetic objection, as there was never a problem distinguishing the two sides in play. In a similar vein, the way the suspect counters are dominated by their location codes detracts a little from their look, but you can't argue with their functionality.

The game comes with a two-sided play aid, which pretty well captures everything you need from the rules. The rulebook itself is astonishingly concise, cramming everything into 16 pages, and this includes a contents page and a fully articulated 3-page example of play. It achieves this conciseness by ruthlessly avoiding duplication. Things are defined once, and

once only, and if the topic needs to be referred to later, that is what it does – refers back to the original definition. This is a rulebook which says what it means, and means what it says. While this makes for efficiency in the expression of ideas, it does not make for ease of

assimilation to anything like the same extent. I took the rulebook's advice, read it through once quite quickly, followed the example of play in some detail, and then subjected it to a second, more careful

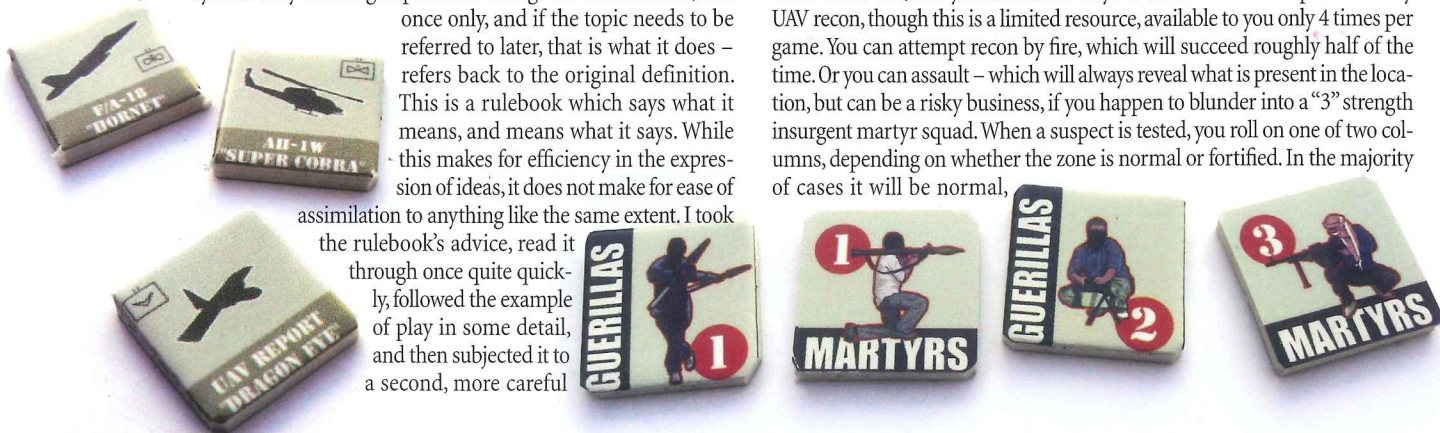
read before starting play. Despite this, my first play through involved much head scratching, and considerable rulebook riffling. Some of this is the inevitable result of presenting us with a new and quite intricate system, but some of it comes from wording and presentation choices too. For example, "adjacency" is a key concept in the game; zones, locations and street sections can each be adjacent, and each type of adjacency has its own definition. Choosing the "adjacency" label for three similar but slightly different concepts made things much more confusing than they needed to be. It took until into my second game for things to become second nature – say around the fifth hour of play, and I was certainly making rules mistakes up till that point. This is quite a bit longer than with most games of this scope and complexity, though to be fair, I usually play face to face, where two heads are considerably better than one.

SHOOTING IT TO HELL

I read a very succinct description by a Marine corporal of the house-to-house fighting in Fallujah. "Usually we'll start off with a rocket and then light it up with Mark 19 rounds (40mm grenades) – basically we just shoot it to hell, 'til we go in." This is a very succinct description of the game's system, too. The heart of the game is the capture of a zone – an abstract representation of around half a dozen buildings.

First, a zone is activated, and this happens whenever your troops capture a neighboring zone. An activation chit is drawn, to check if the zone is normal or fortified, and then two suspect markers are drawn, and placed in specific, individual locations as indicated on the counter. I have not done the arithmetic, but my play experience would suggest that they will land on the roof, 2nd floor and 1st floor roughly 20%, 40% and 40% of the time, respectively. Placement is important, as insurgents on the roof are easier to kill by fire, and whether you are assaulting up or down has an impact on the risks your troops face, and their chances of success.

Suspects are just that – potential rather than real danger – until you put them to the test, and you have three ways to do this. The most painless is by UAV recon, though this is a limited resource, available to you only 4 times per game. You can attempt recon by fire, which will succeed roughly half of the time. Or you can assault – which will always reveal what is present in the location, but can be a risky business, if you happen to blunder into a "3" strength insurgent martyr squad. When a suspect is tested, you roll on one of two columns, depending on whether the zone is normal or fortified. In the majority of cases it will be normal,



Zone limit (block limit)

Zone limit (block separation)

Street section limit



Zone ID

A black circle means
"Marines start zone"



Egress routes
In order of priority

which is a very good thing, as it means that 50% of the time, the suspect will prove to have been a false alarm. If the threat was real, you draw a random insurgent unit, and use its guerilla or martyr side, as instructed. 10% of the time your marines will be ambushed, either by a sniper or IED. In fortified zones the chance of a false alarm drops to 1 in 10, the risk of ambush doubles, and the rest of time you will find yourself facing martyrs, whose average strength is a little higher, and who do not retreat. Ever.

Once you have determined the threat level, the next task is to decide on a plan of action. Again, there are three basic ways to apply your firepower. First, you can call up air support – usually devastating, but in very limited supply, and often unavailable. There is a very neat nuance here. Because a call for air support required the Marines to pull back to avoid friendly fire, the savvy insurgents would often use this lull in the pace of the marine assault to regroup and reorganize. Whenever a call for air support fails, you roll on the Insurgents Reaction table, with a range of outcomes, none of which is pleasant. These can be as seemingly innocuous as allowing guerilla units to retreat from contested zones, to counter-attacks or house-borne IEDs, which always seem to happen right when you are hard against your casualty limit. As a result, I found myself religiously refraining from calls for support, hoarding them until I absolutely, positively needed to eliminate an enemy strongpoint, or risk falling ruinously behind schedule.

The second approach is what you would expect – to shoot your target to hell. All combat in the game follows a similar routine – to have an effect, the shooter must roll equal to or less than his combat factor on a D10. For full strength marine squads this ranges from 4 to 6, and for insurgents from 1 to 3. There are a small number of modifiers, most of which apply only to marine fire, but these are largely situational – there is not much you can do to improve your chance. There is one significant exception to this. You begin the game with 4 CAAT units, each of which can provide a +2 modifier, four times per game. I tended to use these in tandem with my 6CF marine squads, providing firebases which would eliminate their targets roughly 80% of the time.

The third approach is to go in – storming the enemy held location by assault. The core assault process is in effect the same as fire, with a different set of modifiers; however, these modifiers are more within your control. In particular, you can sometimes manoeuvre your assaulting unit to deliver a top down or bottom up attack, depending on the location of the insurgents in the zone. Bottom up is the one to choose if you have time, or are worried about

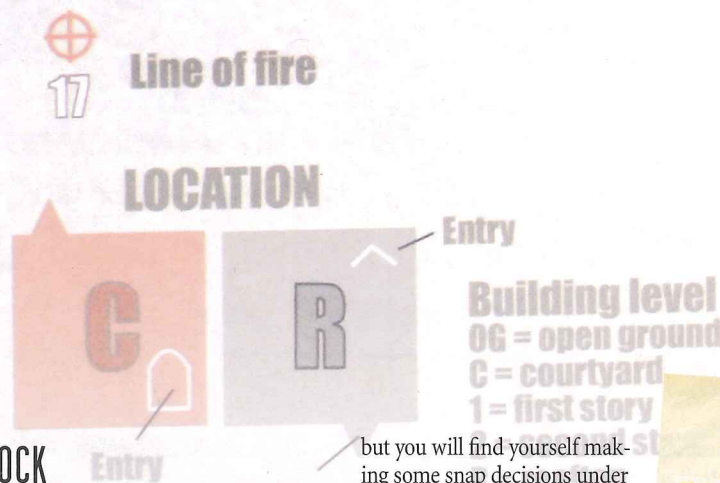
your casualty levels; it reduces the chances of casualties for both sides. Top down has the opposite effect. It also allows you to flood a building – in effect, turning a success into a type of overrun, which continues until the building is clear, or an attack fails. This is an aspect of the game taken directly from the article. Apparently, top down followed by flooding was standard doctrine, but the experience of Fallujah indicated that in the tight confines of the Jolan, it proved very difficult to haul a wounded marine with full equipment and body armor back up the stairwells, and so the article recommends adopting bottom up assault where possible to minimise friendly casualties. Designer Closier's solution is both effective and elegant, I think.

Of course, it is considerably more dangerous to storm a building than to shoot it up, and the game reflects this too, as in an assault, the insurgents shoot back. In addition, if either side rolls a "0" here, they consult their side's assault events table. There are some outcomes here that you never want to see; for example, if you are facing martyr units, then a "suicide bomber" result automatically eliminates the assaulting squad.

At the end of an inconclusive assault, insurgent guerrilla units will retreat to a neighbouring zone. Martyrs will not. Most of the time you are happy to see the guerrillas go, as they will ultimately retreat off the board edge if you keep up the pressure. There are two circumstances, however, where you want them to stand and fight: when you need the Victory Points their elimination in combat brings, and when their presence in another zone will interdict a road you have to cross. The game gives you a tool to force guerillas to stand. Each USMC squad can detach its security element, at a cost of -1 to its combat factor. If it assaults in a zone where the security element is present, the guerrillas cannot retreat. I must confess to under-utilising this capability, probably for the inglorious reason of the slight increase in fiddle factor the additional counter brings.

The net result of all this is that combat doctrine is easy to establish, but harder to execute. As an insurgent's combat factor has no influence on its vulnerability to fire, you want to blast high CF insurgents with fire. As low CF insurgents have a small chance of hurting your troops in assault, especially if assaulting bottom up, you will choose to deal with them face to face. Putting this into practice depends not just on your rate of progress (fire is much slower,) but also on whether you can actually maneuver your troops to the correct locations, and that too can be fraught with danger.





THE TICKING OF THE CLOCK

In *Phantom Fury* moving troops put themselves in harm's way on two occasions: when they cross a street, and when they enter a zone. The movement process is very clever, and very effective. Marines have a movement factor of 4, and every location or street section cost 1 to enter. 4 MF is enough for a unit to enter a courtyard and climb to the roof in a single 15 minute turn. A squad in a courtyard is subject to defensive fire from all insurgents in the zone, and benefits from a +1 modifier if it is accompanied by its (detached) security element. If the insurgent shoots well you will suffer casualties or pinning; in many cases, especially when the clock is ticking loudly, casualties are preferable, as fire discipline limits you to a single marine squad in a contested zone, and recovery from pinning is not automatic.

Crossing the street is even riskier; in this case ALL insurgents and suspects in neighbouring zones fire; insurgents can cause casualties, and suspects only pinning. You can mitigate the risk by positioning an Abrams in the street to be crossed; in this case suspect units do not fire, and a success by a guerilla is reduced to a pin. Sadly, you only have one of these, and you cannot always predict how far it will move.

Luckily for the marines, you do not have always have to cross the street, or enter a zone by the front door. Zones in the same block are often accessible by roof, and when the target zone roof is unoccupied, this is usually the method of choice. Once more the map makes this easy, as a simple symbol shows at a glance which roof locations are connected.

I have mentioned the ticking clock a number of times, and well I might, as this pretty well drives your play choices. In the main scenario, you have 16 turns to control every zone on the map – 60 of them. You control a zone by occupying it when clear of enemy units and suspects at the end of your turn, by the way. This is no easy matter. A key difficulty is that your combat power will tend to erode steadily, as you use up your CAAT teams' ammo, exhaust your air support and suffer casualties. The insurgents, however, just keep on coming, just as strong as before. As a result, I set myself hourly (4 turn) milestones: 22 zones in the first hour, which I usually struggle to achieve, 18 in the second, which is a rare event, 13 in the third which is all but impossible, and 7 in the fourth, which I have yet to see. If I am not at 35 by turn 8, I would tend to admit defeat.

The net effect of all of the above is that you tend to spend your thinking time on a discrete series of tactical problems, which are connected and held together by the ever-ticking clock.

How will I cross that street? Who will fire? When will I call in support? Can I take that roof?

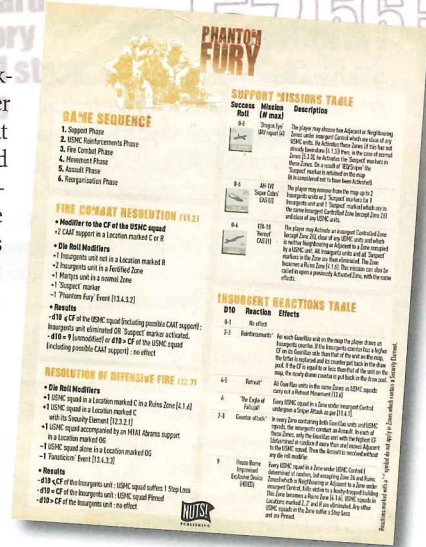
Where should the tank be positioned? It's very tactical, and very enjoyable. Not only that, if you allow yourself only 15 minutes to play out a turn, not only will you complete a game in real time,

but you will find yourself making some snap decisions under pressure. There is no doubt that the game's system does indeed capture the essence of the "lessons" article, but it does more than that I think. It also aligns well with the various battle narratives and journalism which I have seen. All this is in a smallish, compact, tense, difficult to beat, fast playing game. What's not to like?

Not much, to be honest. Of course, it is not perfect. Apart from the rulebook which I discussed earlier, the biggest weakness for me is its limited scope. Zones are pretty much interchangeable. Oh, you can vary the number of fortified chits seeding the activation container, and the strength and location of the insurgent enemy will vary, but still and all, attacking one block is much like attacking another, and that is basically the whole game. And this is pretty much a single scenario game; a minor variant shortens your available time and compensates by the earlier release and augmentation of your reinforcements, but these are variants in name only, appealing I suspect only to the game's true believers. The rest of us will want more, but unfortunately as it stands *Phantom Fury* is a one trick pony. It's a great trick to be sure, but even great tricks lose their appeal.

Another weakness – or perhaps more accurately, missed opportunity – arises from the game's single minded focus on fire and movement. This is almost exclusively a combat game, but, as Captain Jent's comments remind us, even at the height of the fighting, a company commander has much more on his plate than killing the enemy. The thing I most missed was some process for ensuring that marine casualties are recovered, given immediate care and evacuated quickly out of harm's way. I continue to hope against hope that our collective interest in games about war will transcend a simple focus on fighting and killing. Some day perhaps, but not today. There is not even the excuse that this is an aspect ignored in the source article, which shows how seriously the Marine Corps takes the care of its wounded. In this regard, sadly, *Operation Phantom Fury* missed being *Operation New Dawn*.

But these small points do little to temper my enthusiasm for what is otherwise a fine effort. This is a game which came out of nowhere and really surprised me. As I have mentioned elsewhere in this issue, I am not much of a fan of solitaire games. However, I am a fan of this topic, and *Phantom Fury*'s system is so engaging that it has made a fan of me. At the risk of sounding like the teacher's pet, Nuts Publishing is off to a flying start. **B**



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January 2010
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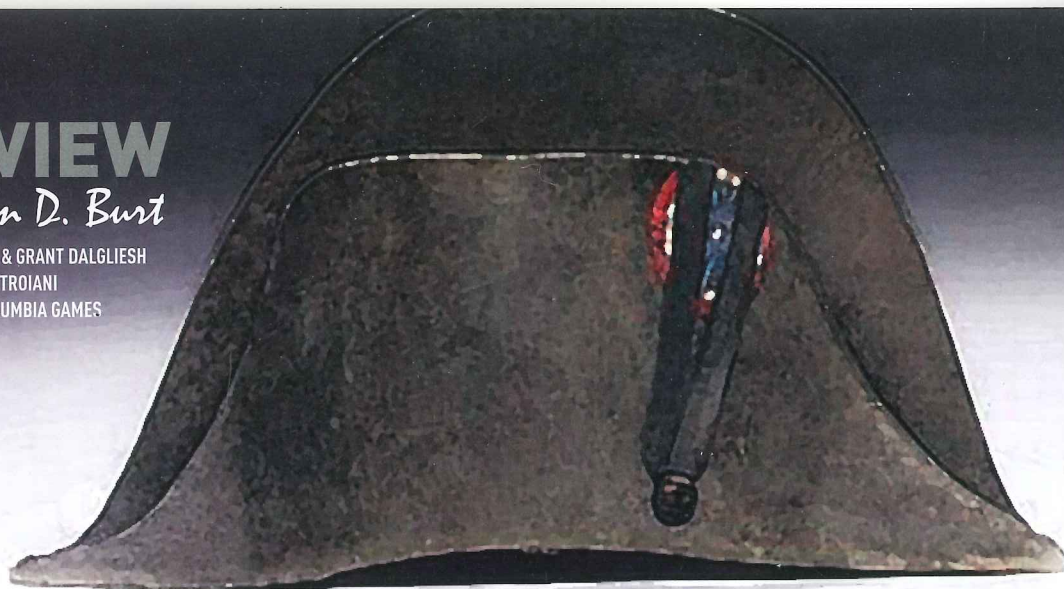
REVIEW

by John D. Burt

DESIGNER TOM & GRANT DALGLIESH

GRAPHICS DON TROIANI

PUBLISHER COLUMBIA GAMES



FIELD COMMANDER NAPOLEON

IN 2008, DAN VERSSON, BEST KNOWN FOR HIS SOLITAIRE LEADER SERIES (*PHANTOM LEADER*, *HORNET LEADER*) AND THE ACKNOWLEDGED DESIGNER OF THE *DOWN IN FLAMES* AERIAL CARD GAMES, CAME UP WITH A NEW SOLITAIRE SYSTEM, THIS TIME FOR LAND BATTLES. *Field Commander: Napoleon* gave us the Desert Fox's famous campaigns - France, Africa and Normandy - and challenged us to do as well or better than he did. The system worked quite well, so well in fact, that I named it one of the best games of 2008.

This year he gives us *Field Commander: Napoleon*, featuring twelve Napoleonic campaigns from 1796 through 1815 to challenge our capabilities. Battles are far more tactical than the *Field Commander* original, as you'd expect, since broader tactics were key to victories back then.

The BIG package is deluxe in every sense of the word. There are seven separate 11" x 17" mounted maneuver maps to cover the twelve campaigns, and

six full slick countersheets to provide the forces for each campaign, and the battle plan markers that make the system run.

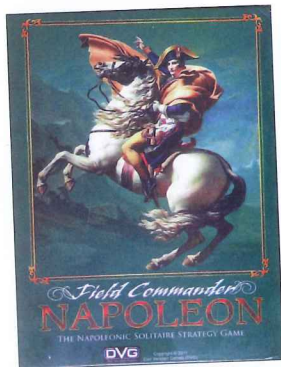
The maps are area movement maps with very little terrain, except for key cities to fight over. Each map has the starting forces and locations for the campaign(s) fought in the region, the enemy orders table for movement of your opponent, resupply, victory conditions/objectives and other special rules for the campaign and a turn track that you'll find way too short!

Overall, while I thought the maps did a reasonable job of handling the campaign maneuvers,

the broad stroke area movement negates grand maneuvers. You get the move forward to engage type of warfare that typified the era, but some of the details seem odd. For example, the 1809 Campaign, Napoleon has to take (among others) Vienna and Wagram, crossing the map with Charles and the Austrians in the way. You'd get the sense from the map and campaign that Napoleon started this particular fracas, when in fact Austria did. Another anomaly was the 1815 Campaign - the famous Hundred Days - Napoleon's maneuvers to beat the Prussians and get between the British and Prussians is negated by the starting locations that have the Allies already in contact in adjacent areas.

The general purpose of Napoleonic warfare was to beat the other guy's army and that's the focus of this version of *Field Commander*. The counters, called forces, you use are both mobile and static, infantry, cavalry and artillery. The nicely done 1.25" long slick counters show nationality, activation number, combat value, and a skill level ranging from conscript, poor, line, veteran to elite. The activation number is the number rolled on a D10 when the force attempts to do something; the combat value is the value or less to roll to score a hit on the opponent. Some units, notably cavalry, have a superior superscript that provides the ability to hit twice if the combat roll is below the superscripted number. For example, Davout's 1809 cavalry is a veteran force, with an activation of 8 and a combat value of 84 meaning a roll of 1-4 scores two hits on an enemy, 5-8 scores one hit and 9-10 misses completely. Most infantry units are back printed with reduced values to show a reduction from combat hits. Those that don't are destroyed with a single hit. Cavalry is quite fragile that way.

Not surprisingly, the only leader on the map is Himself. He is rated for tactical ability that shifts with time, as did his real abilities. The tactical ability provides the number of special orders he can give to his forces in battle as



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France (Sens)
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Russia (Brien
Barclay, Gallit
Lambert, Gort
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Austria (Ciney
Wrede, Wurte
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France (Rhin): Marmont, Ney, Victor, MacDonald, Grouchy
 France (Sens): Mortier
 Prussia (Brienne): Yorck (2)
 Russia (Brienne): Karpow, Wasilchow, Barclay, Gallitzin, Yermolof, Wittgenstein, Lambert, Gortchakof
 Russia (Verdun): Langeron, Lieven, Olsufief, Pahlen
 Austria (Ciney): Gyulai, Nostitz, Frimont, Wrede, Wurtemberg

ate Arrivals: Place Feb 1814...

France (Moret): Oudinot, Amey, Rebeval

Prussia (Brienne): Kleist, Bulow (2)

Russia (Verdun): Stronganof

ate Arrivals: Place Mar 1814...

France (Moret): Henrion

Russia (Verdun): St. Priest

attle Plans: No Napoleon 1, Enemy 3

SPECIAL RULES

You cannot repurchase your Destroyed French Forces.

Victory: Play until an Enemy Force enters the Paris Area, or until the end of the last Campaign turn, whichever occurs first.

SET-UP 1815

Counter = Corps

Supply points: France 3, Enemy 5

Starting Forces:

France (Chateau-Thierry): Napoleon, Gerard, Drouot, D'Erlon, Reille (2), Vandamme, Lobau, Majol, Exelmans, Kellerman
 Britain (Brussels): Orange, Galt, Wellington (4), Uxbridge
 Russia (Liege): Thielmann (2)
 Russia (Ciney): Zieten
 ale Plans: No Napoleon 1, 3

SPECIAL RULES

You may choose to end the Campaign at any time in the middle of a Battle.

Roll 1 to all Fog of War Battle Turns.

Place the Enemy Forces you Destroyed during a Battle to the side to calculate your Victory Points at the end of the Campaign.

Victory: Gain Victory Points at the end of each Campaign turn based on the number of Enemy Forces Destroyed during the Battle.

Enemy Forces Destroyed	VPs Gained
2	1
4	2
7	5
10	11
12	19
or more	30

You eliminate all the Enemy Forces from the map, the Campaign and score +5VP.

Superior 30+, Historical 29-20, Inferior 19-

RESUPPLY

FRANCE	
Gain 1 Supply point for each French-Held Area.	
ENEMY	
Roll for Liege, Brienne, Nemours:	
Roll	Enemy Gain
1-2	2 Supply points

SEQUENCE OF PLAY

FRANCE

- Advance Turn Counter
- Moves
- Resolve Battles
- Forced March
- Resolve Battles
- French Resupply

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REVIEW

well as the number of Insights allowed. Insights are special combat bonuses that Himself can wield - as long as he's there to lead. Players will learn quickly that French forces without Himself at the helm tend to melt fast.

The rule book is very complete and is written as per each step of the sequence. There are a variety of look-ups that players will need early on, especially the battle plans that will lead to page flipping, but so far we haven't found anything that isn't there.

The turn sequence is straight forward. As the French leader you get to move your forces into adjacent areas as desired. If enemy units are in any area you enter, a battle is generated and is resolved, unless one side has a 3-1 combat value advantage. In that case, an "envelopment" is declared and the smaller force is considered destroyed. After all French initiated battles are concluded, French resupply is performed, with French given supply points based on what they hold. Damaged units can be refitted by expending supply points, and if you have enough supply, you can purchase previously destroyed units, for the cost of their combat value. Buying back Davout's cavalry, for example would cost you eight supply.

Following your turn as Himself, the system provides enemy moves. Enemy forces on the map are separated into discrete groups (2-4 forces) and each rolls on the Orders table to find out what it does. Options include holding in place, advanced toward the nearest (and smallest) French force, or moving toward friendly or French held objectives or cities. The die roll is modified by the amount of supply available at the time of the rolls. As with French moves, all enemy moves that end with opposing forces in the same area result in a battle. Once these battles are resolved, enemy resupply takes place that results in more troops, more forts, or more supply. As with the French, any damaged forces on the map can be refitted to full strength with the use of supply points.

A note on the random orders. In the example below, Jellacic's 1809 Austrian Division is ordered to advance against a French held objective - in this case the city of Munich, defended by several corps of French soldiers - an obvious mismatch. Would such a thing happen in reality? Sure, as any student of Napoleonic times will tell you. It could be that his scouts failed to give him vital information, or those same scouts were repulsed by French vedettes - or he's an idiot officer who follows orders regardless of whether they make sense. I noted only a few anomalous situations when following the enemy orders; the rest made sense. I was impressed.

Now we move on to the battles themselves. Ah, the battles. The smoke, the fury, the bouncing cannon balls...

Battles in *Field Commander: Napoleon* take place on a battle map divided into French reserve, approach and front boxes and opposite enemy boxes. Forces are placed on the battle map oriented to show Line or Column formation. These forces then maneuver through the use of Battle Plans. There are two basic types of battle plans; those chosen (or drawn) for forces and default plans when a chosen one is not available. As Himself, players choose the number of battle plans available to His tactical ability in the campaign. When he's absent, chosen battle plans are more limited. You can buy extra plans for - you guessed it - supply points. Enemy battle plans are drawn randomly.

At the start of a battle, the Fog of War table is checked with a D10 die roll - enemy supply can affect this table. Fog of war provides a variety of potential results from gaining or losing supply, to moving mobile forces from another area to moving Himself to the battle if not already there. In addition to these



effects, the table also tells you how long the battle will last. Battles last until one side is completely gone or until the Fog of War time runs out.

If Napoleon is available, you get to choose any Insights you might want to use to aid the French cause. There are seven possible choices, with each one selected counting against the French battle plans available for the real fighting. They include adding a battle turn to the Fog limit, aiding morale checks during the battle, raiding enemy supply, and engineers to hit static garrisons and fortifications the enemy has. There is one to let you start closer to the enemy (Front) and one that is still a mystery to me - Terrain, which allows you to place enemy forces in violation of normal placement rules.

Finally there's the very powerful (occasionally) Cavalry Sweep. This

Insight lets from 1-3 cavalry units leave the battle field and attack the surrounding area inflicting hurt on the forces opposing you. Each cavalry unit chosen can attack three times, and with the right cavalry unit (like Davout's 1809 cavalry) this can pretty much eliminate the enemy. The caveat is that the cavalry is not available for the actual battle should one occur afterwards.

While most of these Insights activate automatically, Engineers and the Sweep require activation by Himself, rolling against his tactical ability. Choosing the best one for the battle is a key decision for players.

Before discussing battle plans, combat mechanics need to be defined. A unit attacks by rolling a D10 equal to or lower than its combat value. A successful roll can cause one or two hits with each hit taken by reducing an enemy force or eliminating an already reduced force. Units moving into an area containing enemy units shock them - basically a morale check with a D10 rolling against the shocker's combat value. Less or equal succeeds and the unit stays put. Failure puts a hit on the unit and sends it into retreat one space if it isn't eliminated outright. Units in column always lose a shock test. In a nice touch, the shock test is taken by the unit with the lowest skill rating. Units starting their activation in the same area as enemy units are considered in melee, and can only attack but with greatly enhanced power. Note to self, melee is not a good way to maintain force integrity.

Each Battle turns starts with any Insight activation remaining, then the French chooses the number of battle plans up to his limit and assigns them to specific forces. These include Charge, where cavalry can advance up to two locations, shocking the enemy as it goes and finally attacking. There is a Volley plan, allowing an infantry unit to attack with increased firepower. There's an Engage plan that moves an infantry unit forward, perhaps shocking an enemy, and then attack. Any force that does not get a chosen plan gets a default plan: march, pivot, fire or retreat.

Some of the plans require the force to pass an activation test before actually doing what the plan requires. To use the Charge plan, Davout's cavalry above would need to roll an 8 or lower. Messena's 1809 infantry could use an Engage plan immediately if they were in column formation; if they were in Line formation they'd have to roll a 7 or less. It's a nice system that resolves quickly and lets you grapple with the problems of command when your units become reduced and are less prone to do what you want them to do. Messena's reduced force, for example, would only activate with a 5 or less.

Once the French plans are in place, the enemy plans are randomly drawn and assigned from highest to lowest skill level. Once the plans have been drawn

Enemy Reserve

Enemy Approach (4)

Enemy Front (6)

French Front (6)

French Approach (4)

French Reserve



Retreat
0+
No Roll
Routed
Column
Retreat

Combat
0-1
No Roll
Line
Attack

Advance
2+
If Column
No Roll
Advance

March
If Column
No Roll
Cav: Advance
or
Retreat

Fire
If Line
No Roll
Attack

Pivot
No Roll
Line
or
Column

Retreat
No Roll
Routed
Column
Retreat

REVIEW

(or default plans identified, resolve the enemy plans from front to back, highest to lowest skill level. These plans include things like assault and forward (advance and attack), aimed (enemy volley), and melee (an advance and two attacks.) In addition to plans given to specific forces, there are three plans that affect the battle turn for all enemy forces: well struck adds power to attacks, officers add to activation rolls, and close ranks cancels the first hit against them.

After the enemy plans have been resolved, resolve the French plans, then check to see if someone has a 3-1 strength advantage. If so the other side routs and can only retreat. If not, go to the next battle round.

Here's an example of a battle turn:

It's the start of the 1807 Peninsula campaign. In Toledo French General Dupont and his veteran infantry (7-7) find themselves challenged by the Spanish leader Castanos and his poor infantry (4-4), plus a conscripted force of Spanish patriots (3-2). In the fog of war, the enemy has stolen two French supply points, and shows that the battle can last a maximum of three battle rounds. Dupont starts his force in column in the French Approach area, while both Spanish columns appear in the Enemy Approach area. Since Napoleon is not in attendance, the French only get one plan and Dupont chooses Engage and graciously allows the Spanish the first move (after all it is their country - and the rules say the enemy goes first!)

Spanish get two battle plans and these are now drawn randomly from the coffee-less coffee cup and assigned to each force, starting with Castanos (since he has a higher skill than the conscript Patriots.) The Closing plan is drawn - this will activate Castanos infantry automatically and move him forward in column. The Assault plan is drawn for the Patriots. They'll have to activate to follow this plan.

Castanos activates the Closing plan, moving his column into the Enemy Front area. If the French had been in this area, they'd have had to survive a shock check. If the French had been in their adjacent Front area, Castanos could have fired. But Dupont is too far away.

The Patriots attempt to activate the Assault, needing a three or less. They roll a six, so they stay put and are done.

Dupont now activates. Since he's in column, he can activate Engage without a roll. He moves forward into the French Front area, changes to Line formation, and attacks Castanos with a +1/+1 bonus. That turns his 7th infantry into an 81 infantry for this battle turn. He rolls a three scoring one hit on Castanos, dropping the Spaniards to a 2-2 infantry.

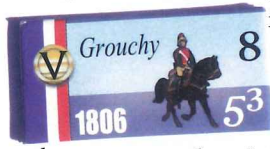
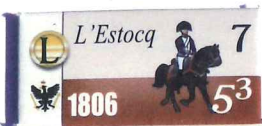
The battle turn ends with a rout check to see if either side has gained a 3-1 advantage. The French still have 7 strength, the Spanish now have 4 so the battle continues into Round two.

The battle plan markers take some getting used to, so expect to use the rule book the first several battles. But the abbreviations are pretty good and after you've been through a campaign or two, the resolution becomes quicker. I can't say the same about choosing your own battle plans. I liked the system. (except when I lost. ...)

Campaigns last until Himself gains all the objectives lists or when time runs out. Many of the campaigns list a "grade" level for achieving all objectives early. If you're really into historical comparisons you can try to get through all the campaigns and total you score against His. It's quite a feat if you can.

So how does it play?

We take you to central Europe in the spring of 1809 (mainly because I just finished John Gill's magnificent trilogy on the campaign.) At the start of 1809, Napoleon's goals are to take Freiberg, Nuremburg, Munich, Caldiero, Vienna



to Munich, currently defended only by a garrison and fortification; Napoleon himself, with Lannes, Vandamme and Bessieres cavalry march on Nuremberg, joined by Davout. His forces envelop Nuremberg with more than 3-1 strength advantage; the Austrians try to reinforce Munich but can only muster a 2 strength cavalry unit which still leaves them enveloped. Himself collects four supply points and banks them as he has no casualties at this point.

In return, the Austrians (expending two of their five supply points to get a +2 on their movement orders) start moving. Gyulai and John hold in Klagenfurt, refusing to advance and flank the French advance. Liechtenstein and Hiller advance into Ratisbon, threatening both Munich and Nuremberg. Kienmeyer and Bellegrade hold in Pilsen, but Kollowrath, expecting help, advances against Nuremberg all alone (ouch). Vecsey moves east out of Vienna to protect Wagram, while Charles and three infantry move back into Vienna. Jellacic, seeing the bulk of Austrian forces moving east, holds alone in Salzberg. Kollowrath inflicts a hit on the French (taken by Vandamme through fog of war) before being overwhelmed at Nuremberg. During their supply phase, Freiberg and Austerlitz get recruit cannons, Caldiero an extra garrison, Wagram a fortification and Vienna gets two supply and a recruit infantry.

In May, Napoleon moves his entire force out of Nuremberg to engage Kienmeyer and Bellegrade in Pilsen, Oudinot and Massena move out of Munich to take on Hiller and Liechtenstein in Ratisbon, while Lefevre and Rouyer stay in Munich to hold the objective city, and the reduced Vandamme does the same in Nuremberg.

At the battle of Pilsen, Napoleon chooses to unleash a cavalry sweep as his insight, choosing Lannes' and Davout's horse to do the deed. Fog of war sets the battle length at two, which He chooses to increase with another insight of duration. That leaves him with a single battle plan to select for his remaining forces.

At the start of the battle, Napoleon activates his cavalry sweep (rolling 3 against his ability). Devout and Lannes with their three attacks each, smash the Austrians with eight hits, having needed only six to destroy the whole enemy force. Pilsen is an overwhelming victory.

At Ratisbon, fog of war allows Napoleon to move to the scene, but again limits the battle to two turns. Oudinot and Massena's cavalry is not as good as Davout and Lannes, so Himself chooses only to add Duration as a single Insight for this battle. For his battle plans he selects Oudinot's cavalry to Charge and Massena's infantry to Engage.

The Austrians all advance, using different battle plans; Hiller's cavalry is the only unit that has to roll for activation for its Wedge plan, while Liechtenstein and Hiller's infantry Closes and moves forward, respectively. None of the forces are in combat range and they sit in their Front area.

Massena opens the dance by engaging - moving forward in column and changing to line before attacking with a bonus of +1/+1 which changes his 80 infantry to 91. His attack roll is a 6, scoring one hit on Liechtenstein. Oudinot's cavalry strikes next, charging two areas into the Enemy front and shocking poor Liechtenstein. The Line troops there fail a shock check and the unit disintegrates. The horse then attack and score two more hits, destroying Hiller's infantry. The rest of Napoleon's forces march forward. At the end of the first battle turn, strength comparison stands at 23-6, which is an envelopment. Hiller's cavalry will have to retreat, if it can.

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In the second battle turn, however, Napoleon chooses to volley with Massena's infantry and engage with Oudinot's infantry. He'll retreat the horse if possible, Hiller's battle plan of retreat is discarded because he shares an area with Oudinot's horse and thus is in melee. He attacks with melee's +3/+3 bonus, making him a 96 juggernaut; his attack roll is a 2 putting two hits on Napoleon's forces. Oudinot's horses are destroyed and Oudinot Line infantry take the second hit. Massena's volley destroys the Austrians and the battle ends.

With six supply, Napoleon moves his five forces into Passau at a cost of five supply - Himself moves with them at no cost.

The seven Austrian forces spend one supply for a +1 on their orders. Jellacic moves onto Munich to contest the French there, while Charles, Hohenzollern, Rosenberg and Louis move directly against Napoleon, aided by recruit cannon and infantry along the way. Gyulai, Vecsey and John move into Vienna to defend the capital.

In Passau, fog of war sees the French gain two Austrian supply points and a five turn battle. A strength comparison has the Austrians with 34 strength and the French with 35; Napoleon decides it is worth sending Davout's excellent cavalry on a sweep and holding the rest for the battle. For his battle plan he decides to engage with Davout's infantry and flank with Besseires' cavalry, hoping that some of the Austrians move close enough, for that plan to work.

Napoleon fails to activate Davout's cavalry sweep initially and the main battle begins. The battle starts poorly as the Austrians pull a close ranks battle plan, which will ignore the first hit on them. Charles gets an aimed plan, leaving him in place while the others get forward and a rush to plunge forward.

Besseires cavalry moves forward on his flank attack, forcing Louis into a shock check, which the infantry fails. Louis doesn't lose the required step because of the close ranks plan, but has to retreat anyway. The French follow-on attack scores two hits reducing both Hohenzollern and Rosenberg. Davout's infantry engagement scores another hit, destroying Rosenberg. Both Lannes' cavalry and infantry march forward.

On the second battle turn, Davout's cavalry sweep activates and scores four hits. The recruit infantry and cannon die, as does Louis's force. Napoleon intends to charge with Lannes cavalry and volley with its infantry.

The Austrians get an assault for Charles and a wheel for Hohenzollern's reduced group. Hohenzollern is in melee with Bessierre's cavalry, improving from a 40 to a 73, but fails to hit anything. Charles successfully activates his

force and moves into the front, his attack (barely) hits and destroys Bessieres cavalry.

The French chose to default fire with Davout hitting and destroying Hohenzollern. Lannes activates for

Morale
Your Forces gain +3
on Shock rolls.

his volley and hits Charles. Lannes' cavalry charges, and the resulting shock failure destroys Charles and wins the battle for Himself.

At Munich, Rouyer and Lefebvre square off against Jellacic's division, being one point shy of enveloping him. Fog of war loses the French two supply points and a three turn battle.

In those turns, Jellacic is damaged and forced to retreat, but the French could not destroy him; he retreat to Salzburg.

Austrian resupply sees Wagram collect two supply, which goes to heal

Jellacic's division in Salzburg, Austerlitz, Freiberg and Caldiero get additional garrisons, which Bellgarde's rejuvenated cavalry and a recruit cavalry join the Austrians in Vienna.

June sees Eugene's two infantry



Square
Only: Inf
No Roll
Pre-Attack
Cavalry
(+4/+0)

Push
If Column
No Roll
Column
Advance
(Shock -4)

Volley
If Line
No Roll
Inf: Atk.
(+4/+0)
Cav: Atk.
(+2/+2)

arrive at Freiberg, while Bernadotte, Poniatowski and Marmont arrive in Passau to reinforce

Napoleon. Rouyer and Lefebvre march south to reinforce Eugene against the strengthened forces at Freiberg, while Oudinot and Massena move back to Munich. Napoleon and all his forces move against Vienna.

At Vienna, Napoleon chooses to send Davout's cavalry on another sweep, and send his engineers against the Austrian static forces; that will leave him with only one battle plan, but he feels the hits will be worth it. Strength stands at 37 French, minus Davout's cavalry, and 41 for the Austrians. Fog of war provides an additional recruit infantry for the Austrians and a five turn battle.

Napoleon fails to activate his chosen insights and chooses to engage with Marmont's infantry. The Austrians get four battle plans: Gyulai's cavalry rushes forward two areas but the French aren't there as yet. His infantry closes to the enemy front but can't attack; Vecsey's cavalry assaults forward, but again has no target. His infantry fails to activate for its wheel plan.

John, Bellgarde's cavalry and the recruit infantry all move forward from the reserve area. The fortification's cannon fail to hit anything.

With cavalry right in front of him, Napoleon fires with Bernadotte who misses, and with Poniatowski who hits and destroys Gyulai's cavalry. Marmont engages and scores one hit. Vecsey's line cavalry takes the hit as it is a lower skill level than Gyulai's veteran infantry. Davout and Lannes infantry march forward, while Lanne's cavalry holds in place.

Napoleon again fails to activate his insight plans, and the battle rages. He chooses to volley with Lannes infantry to increase their potency.

Now that the French are closer, Austrian officers arrived to bolster their troop's ability to activate. Gyulai's infantry aims at Marmont's troops and hits them; John's infantry moves forward, changes to line, but misses his attack; Vecsey's infantry, with the help of officers, moves forward in a wedge, misses its attack and forms line; Bellgarde's cavalry assaults forward, changes to line and misses his attack as well. The fort's guns, however, hit Marmont's infantry and destroy it.

Davout's infantry fires and hits; Lanne's infantry volleys and hits as well, killing the recruit infantry and some of Vecsey's infantry. Bernadotte and Poniatowski move forward and Lannes' cavalry holds.

Napoleon finally gets his engineers and Davout's cavalry sweep going; inflicting hits on the garrison and the fort, and Davout scoring five hits. The fortification, garrison and recruit cavalry are eliminated, as is Vecsey's reduced infantry. John's infantry takes the final hit. Another excellent sweep. With all the enemy now at his front, he again orders Lannes' infantry to volley; the rest to fire. But the Austrians get their chance first and, helped by a closed ranks plan, their orders initiate first. Gyulai's infantry activates its wedge plan and

Raid
1-2: 3 Supply points
3-5: 2 Supply points
6-10: 1 Supply point



Engineers
Inflict 1 Hit on each
Garrison and
Fortification.

THE BARBAROSSA CAMPAIGN

ons: Units in MAJOR cities. Axis on a coast, an...
re: Put Line...
down) of the isolated units removed her Initiative Markers...
x. Each causes one Initiative...
at turn during the Initiative Phase and...
return...

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REVIEW

moves into the French front, shocking Bernadotte's infantry who is reduced and retreats; the follow on attack at 71, misses. John's reduced infantry makes its activation roll and rushes forward, shocking Poniatowski into a retreat and step loss. Finally Bellegarde's cavalry uses aimed fire to make a 64 attack, but misses.

Napoleon has Poniatowski, Bernadotte and Lannes' cavalry fire. The infantry miss, but the cavalry scores two hit, eliminating John, with one hit wiped out because of the close rank plan. Lannes infantry cannot volley as it is in melee; but the melee raises the unit to an 83 strength and a two scores two hits which destroys Gyulai's infantry. Davout's attack kills off Bellegarde's cavalry and Vienna is Napoleon's.

Freiberg, defended by two garrisons, a fortification and recruit cannon, sees a three round battle. The recruit cannon is eliminated and one garrison hurt, but the French are forced to retreat.

Post battle, the French force march Davout's and Lannes' troops into Wagram, leaving Poniatowski's and Bernadotte's reduced infantry to hold Vienna, spending four of five supply points. The fog of war gives the French a scout and four turns to reduce a fortification and two garrisons. Himself chooses the engineers to hurt the static forces opposing him, and the front insight that lets him start closer to the enemy; leaving him one battle plan to push troops forward in the face of heavy cannon-fire.

He fails to activate the engineers, and the fort fires and misses. All the French move forward. Battle turn two sees the engineers activate hitting all the static forces and reducing them. The fort fires again and misses (it would have hit had the engineers not reduced it.)

Lannes' cavalry charges and shocks one of the garrisons into destruction; rolling a 4 for his 74 unit's attack kills the remaining steps of the enemy. Wagram falls.

The French resupply, gaining four points and using them to refit Vandamme's force in Nuremberg and Oudinot's reduced infantry in Munich.

Austria's June moves are limited to the only mobile force on the map: Jellacic's refit division. His orders send him back into Munich where he's immediately overwhelmed by the mass of French forces there. Austrian resupply provides Bellegarde's rebuilt infantry as reinforcement for Freiberg, a recruit cannon for Caldiero and two supply points from Austerlitz, which goes to refit the garrison in Freiberg.

July sees the French move en mass against Freiberg. Bellegarde's infantry and one garrison are eliminated, Freiberg's other garrison and fortification are reduced and two French forces are destroyed. The reduced static forces are eliminated as the French now hold a 30-4 advantage, Freiberg has fallen. Now only Caldiero remains on His to-do list. The only other French move is Napoleon and Davout's infantry moving to Klagenfurt to help against Caldiero.

August sees the end of the campaign as Napoleon's engineers help overwhelm Caldiero for an inferior (i.e. took Him too long) victory.

When I first looked at the maps, I didn't think I'd enjoy *Field Commander Napoleon* – it looked to me to be very samey for each campaign. I'm glad to say I was wrong. The campaigns play very differently and each battle plays differently. Look at the battle of Passau above. For grins I played it out three times, literally losing two of those times when Davout's cavalry sweep simply failed to materialize or hit anything when it did.

The later campaigns, though, are my favorites. You don't have as powerful a weapon as the cavalry sweep in them, and you can't just bull ahead. In one memorable 1814 campaign, I clobbered two allied forces on the first turn and had another advance two spaces into Paris on turn 2 while I counted my laurels. Whoops. The Egypt campaign, the 1813 and 1814 campaigns were outstanding challenges; oddly, I didn't have the same feeling about 1815, the penultimate affair.

Overall you will get your money's worth of challenges, frustrations and enjoyment from this *Field Commander*. **B**

32

LUFTWAFFE SUPPORT

If the Axis Strategic Mode is set to **Economic Warfare**, then receive 1 Luftwaffe marker, if available.

BONUS
South Only

Otherwise, draw to generate a **SPECIAL EVENT** (6.2.10).

8

Partisans!

PARTISANS!

Place a Partisan marker in Kiev if Axis controlled and not adjacent to a Soviet unit.

BONUS

Otherwise, the Soviets immediately capture **1** in the Soviet Union as per 6.2.4c.

"The Barbarossa Campaign is a must." - Luc Olivier (*Battles Magazine*)

"A quality solitaire wargame. I love the economic system." - David Scholari

"One heck of a game. Really feels like an East Front game should." - Doug DeMoss

15

STALINGRAD FORT

Stalingrad fortifies.

BONUS

Otherwise, draw again to generate a **SPECIAL EVENT** (6.2.10).

28

AXIS Strategic Mode

ALTERNATE PLANS

Apply a benefit awarded from where the Axis Strategic Mode marker is not currently located regardless of initiative.

Retain this card if you wish to receive a Reserve Offensive and discard it when so used.

Also, draw again to generate a **SPECIAL EVENT** (6.2.10).

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Designer
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Game scales

1 turn: 1 hour;
1 hex: 300 m (about 328 yards);
1 strength point: 2-300 men for infantry, 150-200 for the cavalry and 2-3 guns.

Game Components

One game-map 84x60 cm;
216 5/8" die-cut counters;
140 1/2" die-cut counters;
Three Player Aid Cards;
A rule booklet with scenarios and an historical commentary

by Brant Guillory

WARFARE AFFAIR

As modern warfare has focused more and more on the native populations of areas in which wars are being fought, civilians on the battlefield have become more and more important, especially in cities and towns. The US Army once referred to this as "MOUT," or "Military Operations in Urban Terrain." Tellingly, the British had a different term that both more wry and more accurate: "FISH," or "Fighting In Someone's House." Not all interactions with civilians take place in urban terrain, with current operations in Afghanistan a perfect example. Moreover, the importance of the civilian population is magnified during insurgencies.

When addressing the issues of civilians on the battlefield, there are two approaches to examine. The first is the way in which current military doctrine describes civilians on the battlefield, and plans for their interactions. The second is to examine the way in which they are portrayed in wargames.

As noted above, the US Army and USMC refer to MOUT, which inherently addresses some civilian considerations. But even more important, the Army has emphasized not only their Civil Affairs units, and their role in current operations, but they have also spent the last 5 years developing academic-focused Human Terrain Teams, whose purpose it is to use academic methods and structured research to assist the local commanders in understanding the local population. Current US military practice refers to the wealth of civilian-focused knowledge – infrastructure, the economy, schools, religion, emergency services, etc – as the "Green COP" (see sidebar). This information becomes more and more important as local military commanders are expected to not only perforate bad guys, but also provide the local population with governance, services, and any other professional assistance they could provide.

With all of the importance placed on them in the real world, it's a wonder that civilians don't play a larger role in wargames, especially contemporary ones. There have been a smattering of civilians appear in wargames over the years, going back to Raid on Richmond in the Civil War, and through Victory in the West in WWII, and up to Sautur Sur Kolwezi in current days. Portraying civilians in wargames, though, has been tricky over the years, for a variety of reasons.

As a designer approaches the wargame, the most important question to answer is: "Why am I putting civilians in my game?" What are the effects I expect them to provide and how do I model that in the game? Why am I modeling them that way? Given their expected effects within the game system, how to the players access the ability to influence those effects? In short, the civilians in the game have to have a purpose beyond decorating the map, or providing a marketing edge on the box cover.

Civilians might affect the logistics and supply model of a game. They may have the ability to interfere with supply routes by clogging roads. They may sap logistics capability from a the local military units if the commander has been tasked to provide assistance to them. In games in which units are required to forage, or locally procure supplies, (common through the late 1800s), those military operations may directly affect the local population, but if there's no rules mechanism to track the supply status of the local population/area, then there's no point in tracking the damage done by foraging.

The security and defensibility of civilians could be another important game consideration. If the players' mission(s) include securing the local population, how do they do so? Equally important is this: if one side has the requirement to secure civilians from harm, does the other side have the ability to somehow inflict that harm, to use as a gauge for the success of the mission? While it might be accurate to model the targeting of civilians by military forces, it might not be the best PR move to include it in a commercial game.

Civilians may serve as nothing more than physical impediments on the

battlefield, almost as a sort of 'roving terrain' that hinders movement, supply lines, and stacking limits. When pondering this level of integration within a wargame, a designer has to ask, "Are these issues limited to specific areas, or are they widespread across the battlefield where the effects can average themselves across the map with no special rules required."

Most challenging of all, however, are combatants with the ability to hide in the civilian population. This is of paramount importance in an insurgency or counter-terror campaign, as well as unconventional warfare and wars of resistance against an occupying force. The variables of concealed movement, hiding the population, collateral damage from combat among civilians, and the support the local population provides to the concealed forces can all have overwhelming effects on the battle, and therefore ought to be present in any comparable game.

Given the multitude of effects that civilians can have on military operations, ignoring them in a game seems counterintuitive. But even worse is including them in a design without a real purpose. If civilians in the area are primarily a hindrance to mobility, then perhaps simply reducing the movement factors is sufficient. Historically, civilians may have been an important source of information about enemy movements, but in most tabletop wargames, unit locations and statuses aren't exactly secret. So while they are important on the battlefield, their presence on the tabletop should not be automatically assumed.

The "Common Operating Picture"

The US military discusses the current battlefield situation, as expressed on a map, as the "Common Operating Picture." This is the set of information that is shared among all of the units in the command, usually through a variety of digital tools like the "Command Post of the Future" (CPOF).

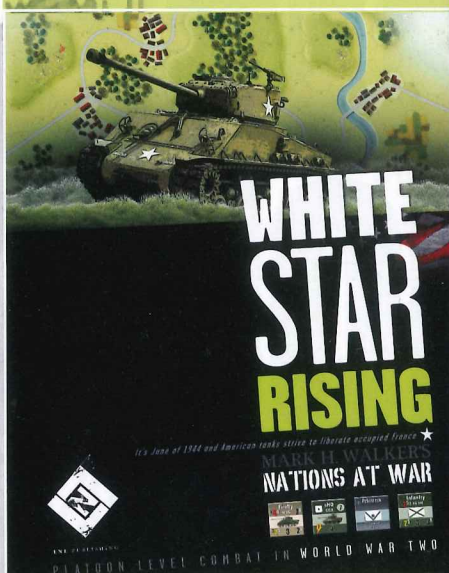
The three COPs are describe with color codes, based on the colors of the symbology as they appear on the map. The BLUE COP is friendly forces, both US and immediate allies. The RED COP is enemy-focused, and will include known/likely/suspected enemy locations, as well as recent enemy activity. Within the past 3-4 years, more and more units are incorporating the GREEN COP, which displays the local civilian situation.



WHITE

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REVIEW

by Rob Winslow

FIGHTING FORMATIONS

GROSSDEUTSCHLAND MOTORIZED INFANTRY DIVISION COMBAT COMMANDER WITH TANKS?

DESIGNER CHAD JENSEN GRAPHICS LEE BRIMMICOMBE-WOOD, CHAD JENSEN, CHARLES KIBLER, RODGER B. MACGOWAN PUBLISHER GMT

A long, long time ago...

I can still remember

How that game used to make me smile...

And that game was AH's old *Panzerblitz* (PB). I believe it was my 3rd game, after AH's *Battle of the Bulge* and *Afrika Korps*. It was the coolest game on the block. Neat-o little tanks and guns and men shooting each other up across an ingenious invention – the “geo-morphic” map board. I was hooked, and could easily see exactly how the Soviet and German commanders felt maneuvering in over the Russian Steppe. Then my 15th birthday came and I received a few WWII history books and my dream was shattered. *PB* was a hoax! It was nothing like the accounts I read. I had been lied to. The coolest game on the block, I now realized, was a fraud. Disappointed, I shelved it, and figured I'd concentrate my interests in operational and strategic games, for they, at least, had a narrative that sometimes followed the script that the history books related to me. But, secretly, I always hoped a “new” *PB*-like game would come along and catch my fancy because, well, because fighting with those little tanks was so cool...

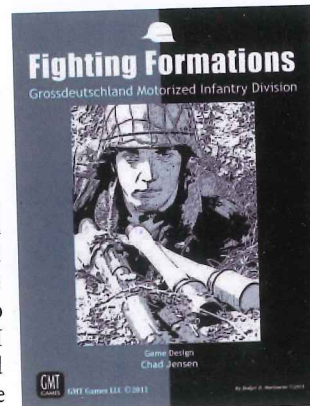
So I tried to find it. For a while, I thought *Squad Leader* would fill the niche, but it kept on getting more and more complicated and then went “Advanced.” Not for me, I decided. Others too numerous to recount came and went, with nothing really grabbing my fancy. I told myself I just wasn't meant to be a tactical gamer. I was OK with that.

Then, in 2006, the game *Combat Commander* (CC) hit the market. It was a tactical WWII game that used, wait for it, cards! Now, I'm a big fan of CDGs, and I guessed I lied a little about no tactical game grabbing my fancy, for *Up Front* (UF) definitely did. However, it was limited in that it was too small to rec-



reate individual battles and I never enjoyed the vehicle rules, for they tended to dominate the game. Yet it is a brilliant design, one I still enjoy, and, I figured, a board game based on *UF* had to be good. So, remembering that long, long time ago, I took the plunge. Well, when my game arrived, it certainly looked cool, but there were no vehicles. Hmm, looks like a more grown-up *UF*, perhaps, but I'm still not going to get my tanks. Indeed, I was reluctant to even try the game after all my disappointments with tactical games over the years, but, luckily, *Battles'* own contributor Nels Thompson twisted my arm and taught me via a German vs. Yugoslav scenario. Since that first game, I have never looked back! *CC* remains one of the, if not “the” favorite game in my collection.

So, where does that leave us? Well, if we come full circle, I have the tactical game that *PB* could never be. So I should be happy, and I am. But I still don't have my tanks, and this piece is supposed to be about *Fighting Formations* (FF), so I guess I need to open the circle a little and fit it in. And it fits in because it could be





REVIEW

the game, with tanks, that *PB* or even *CC* could never be. It is from a designer, Chad Jensen, whose work I respect. Not only do I tend to enjoy his games, I admire the fact that he designs using many of the philosophies laid out in Jesse Schell's *The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses*. Plus, he designed *CC*, so *FF* will have to be good, right? *CC* with tanks, or *CC* on steroids, whatever you prefer. A no-brainer purchase for me. So the circle does indeed close, and we're all happy, for *FF* gives me that game I've been looking for – one with tanks – since my early disenchantment with *PB*.

Or does it? When my game arrived, I punched out the counters for Scenario 0, the "training" scenario, a hypothetical clash of fairly equal units. I plowed through the rules, set up the game solitaire, and began playing. I never finished. The game seemed tedious. I surmised my problem was twofold – I don't enjoy solitaire gaming, and the scenario wasn't historical. So I get my friend Mark to play a historical scenario with me. We had an OK time, kind of, but both of us say, "We should have played *CC* instead, it's much more fun." For me, the search continued, and, if I had not committed to this review, I would have shelved the game and concentrated on *CC* for my tactical fix. But I had work to do for *Battles*, so I slogged on, twisting arms to play so I could get more info and, at least, write a fair review of the game. *Battles* and its readers deserved nothing less. So I persevered, not looking forward to the task.

But a funny thing happened along the way and the game began to grow on me. The more I played, the more I enjoyed *FF*. I began to see aspects of the design that hadn't initially been clear to me. I began to enjoy the game for what it was, and I stopped trying to make it into my teenage *PB* replacement.

GROSS

Back to my enchantment, every once in a while the jaded old fart in me gets excited about an upcoming game. It doesn't happen often, but when it does, the game's arrival makes me feel like a wee lad again, opening Christmas presents, knowing that my Red Ryder BB gun is in the pile somewhere. As my doorbell rang one Saturday morning and I saw the postman had a game-sized box in hand, I was once again a 12 year old boy being handed the present I was looking for. Yes, here it was, my copy of *Fighting Formations: Grossdeutschland Motorized Infantry Division*, the game I had been eagerly anticipating since playtesting it with the developer (well, playing a couple turns...) a year and a half ago. I ripped the USPS Priority Mail box open, and the gleaming green and black box was candy to my eyes. Only a whimper from Cheyenne, my dog, reminded me I was not 12 and that the game would have to wait as I took care of other responsibilities. Cursed by being an adult!

Grumble, grumble.

OK, dog is walked, lawn is cut, laundry's thrown in the wash, now I can get to the fun. But before I do, let's cut right to the quick about this game, for that's what the ADD reader wants anyway. Yes, it fills an unfortunate slot in the Nazi glorification pantheon (but please, read on...) and no, it is most definitely not *Combat Commander* with tanks. Looking at the last point, one expecting to find "CC with tanks" is going to be very disappointed.

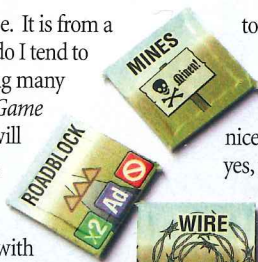
Very. *FF* is not some kind of "grown up" *CC*. Nay, it is a completely different game with a few mechanics that are less "it's like *CC*" and more "it's like other tactical WWII games." I think, since I don't really play many WWII tactical games, but it sounds right. So, don't come here looking for "CC on steroids," come here looking for a WWII game where you can fight chosen battles down

to the platoon and squad level with some clever mechanics. Comparisons, though, are inevitable, and I'll even use a few here. Oy vey.

Transitioning from my rudimentary Yiddish, I have to say that the Nazi thang is a lot trickier. Grossdeutschland didn't always employ the nicest soldiers in the German army. There were atrocities they committed and yes, they are Nazis. Going even further than the Blues Brothers, my hatred of Nazis goes beyond Illinois' Nazis and I'm not exactly fond of the guys in GD. In fact, if this game was designed by most other designers, I probably would have passed on it, as I passed years ago on the "GD" games from MMP in their TCS series. Who wants to fight with these pricks? But it was designed by the guy that designed my favorite tactical game, a guy who is a true "outside the box" thinker. So, I asked him why he chose GD to highlight first in what promises to be a series of games focusing on various formations. He replied that, one of the many books he received for Christmas one year was on the GD. At this same time, the idea for *FF* was germinating in his mind. To quote Chad Jensen, the designer: "The book was a fascinating read, which led me to discover that there were copious amounts of detailed information on GD, even down to the tactical scale which is often hard to find: exactly what a design of this sort needed. So an interesting unit with lots of existing research data at my fingertips made for an easy transition to I think I'll start with this one."

That's the story, no thought of "Let's have a game with Nazis because they're Nazis!" I personally find this credible, as my inner designer has been working on a game of the Tet Offensive since reading a few books on the subject, given to me by a friend. I had a "voila" moment about a design, and that game had to be on Tet, because of a book, period. I find nothing nefarious here, and hope that others can look at *FF* as a documentary on a unit, not a celebration of said unit. The next two volumes promise to cover the U.S. 2nd Armored and the 1st Canadian Infantry, so, if you absolutely can't stomach GD, you will have choices with which to look at in this series in the future. So, while I wish an Allied division had been chosen for the initial offering, I do see the designer's explanation as valid. This is Chad Jensen doing a game on a unit that gave him a "voila" moment not "Chad Jensen doing a game on Nazis because he thinks Nazis are cool." As folks say online, "YMMV," but I am confident that *FF* wasn't meant to be put in the Nazi glorification pantheon, so, now, we can focus on the game. Well, I can, and I hope you can too.

Ah, yes, the game. Did I mention we have Nazis and Commies fighting across Mother Russia in from 1941 through March 1943 using platoons and squads? If not, rest assured, this is a tactical game of WWII in the Soviet Union, following several battles GD was involved in. As the game is laid out, the maps are historical, based on where the fighting took place (there are 4 back printed historical maps, no geomorphic "could have beens" here), and units are rated for their anti-vehicle and anti-infantry/gun firepower and range as well as protective armor (front/flank) and/or morale (soft targets). However, each unit in a class is "generic," in that a Soviet Rifle Platoon is a Soviet Rifle Platoon. Not sure one could do it any differently at this scale, frankly. The game uses different sided dice based on the situation, so you'll be rolling d6s, d8s, d10s, d12s, and d20s as you play. The GMT version has these dice in different colors so they're easy to pick out. A couple friends I played with "pimped out" their dice, buying a red set for the Soviets and a black set for the Germans. While these may "look" cooler, I found it a chore to pick out the right dice. My advice is to stick with what GMT provided. Finally, the game comes with two double-sided charts (I made color copies of



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these so my opponents could have a set, as well) and an 8.5x22" orders matrix which wants to curl up on itself, even though it's supposed to lie flat. Let's hope that future printings of this game will use the same stock that was used in CC, as the 8.5x22" matrix from that game lies perfectly flat. Overall, it's a full package – too full for the box, it appears, as one won't be able to use counter trays with this one and still shut the box lid. One final caveat is that the counter colors (light gray Germans and light brown Soviets) look a bit washed out. I had no problem with them, though others have reported trouble telling the sides apart in poor lighting. Overall, though, I liked the components (save for the curling charts) and there is a good deal packed into this box.

So, the counters are punched, the rules are read, and I'm ready to go. The rules come in one 24 page (20 actual pages of rules) series rulebook, which gives the basic rules for all games in this series, present and future. These rules cover the components, mechanics, and orders in an easy to assimilate fashion. Each game in the series will have a playbook and the playbook in *FF:GD* is 64 pages of goodness. One page deals with rules exclusive to *FF:GD* such as Radioless vehicles, Engineers in Melee, and Smoldering Wrecks. Two pages are devoted to terrain that is found in *FF:GD* but not necessarily in other games to come. Two additional pages details special actions units in the game can use, such as firing APCR projectiles, using light machine guns, and loading/unloading passengers, for example. Add in five pages explaining the use of assets (these are cards, we'll get there!), 1 page detailing fortifications, and a page of optional rules, and we're now at the scenarios. The playbook has 11 scenarios – 9 historical, 1 hypothetical, and 1 introductory. But wait, there's more! Anyone familiar with a Jensen (Chad and Kai)/John Foley game has come to expect great notes and examples of play. These items fill out the playbook, and are very well done, indeed. I actually had a friend read through the examples of play (he had not yet played the game), not the rules, and we were off in less than 5 minutes. Nice.

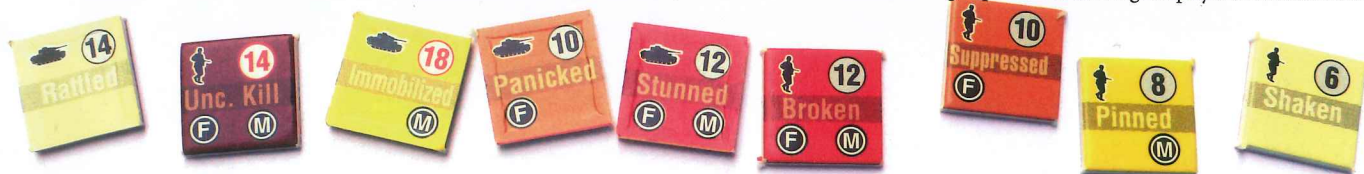
Now, I guess, the big question is, how does this game play? If you stumbled through my earlier prose, you'd know I think it plays pretty well, but we really

should talk about the mechanics. These mechanics are pretty slick, and they're barely related to your grandfather's *PB*. Barely...

MATRIX

Playing the game appears to be pretty easy – pick a scenario, choose sides, set 'em up and get started the sequence of play. Hmm... Where is the sequence of play? One frantically searches the rules and can't find one – because there is none! Now, that's not absolutely true, as there is a sequence to go through at the end of each turn, but the player turns aren't broken up into move/fire/rally actions. The player turns and how they play out is up to, of all things, the players! Take off the shackles you may be used to and get ready to command units as you see fit – no more rigid, "I must do this, that, and the other thing, then repeat." But the game isn't a simulation of anarchy, so how does this work, in practice?

Can you say "Order Matrix?" The Order Matrix (Matrix) is a devilishly ingenious device that allows players to take actions for certain "costs." Each turn, 10 cubes are "seeded" on the in boxes that go from 1 up through 10, matching the pips on a 10-sided die. To play a cube (that is, to issue the order in the box the cube occupies) costs Initiative points. When you've used enough cubes (issued enough orders) to send the Initiative pawn (yes, Initiative is tracked throughout the game) to your opponent's side, then he can start giving orders. This way, play swings back and forth, while players play a game within a game as they miserly try to hold onto Initiative while performing the actions they need to perform. As an example, let's say the Initiative pawn rests on your side of the track at "5." If you choose an order cube that costs only "4" Initiative, then you can carry out that order and, after you're done, give a new order since you are still the Initiative player at "1." However, if your first order had cost "7" the Initiative would now be with your opponent at "2," so after your order is complete, the turn goes to your opponent. The Initiative track can never go beyond "20" for one side, so, rest assured, both sides will get to play – but holding onto the Initiative for as long as possible is what a good player will strive to do.



When the two sides are "3" for the "3"). Other while the Initiative "1") allow Matrix is the cube means the bumper be available does this overpay for a move



TRACK DISPLAY

End of Turn sequence (below) matrix is devoid of order cubes

8	9
	10
	11
	12
14	13

Command

of turn: from here to Available board command from map to here command to their Tactical

When choosing an order, there are subtle differences in the Matrix between the two sides. Soviets can move more easily, so their cost for a move is "2" vs. "3" for the Germans. Conversely, the Germans fire a little more easily ("2" vs. "3"). Other differences are that the Assault order is easier for the Germans while the Sniper order is more cost-effective for the Soviet player. High costs in Initiative will secure Asset cards (1, 2, or 3), while the lowest Initiative cost (a "1") allows either player to use their assets. Even more interesting, is that the Matrix is "seeded" randomly before each new turn, rolling a d10 and putting the cube on the corresponding box (roll a "7," a cube goes on box "7"). This means that some orders will not be available that turn. If no "10s" are rolled, bummer for both sides, as no division support (in the form of asset cards) will be available. But this brings up a potential problem – what if no "2s" are rolled, does this mean the Soviet player can't move? No, it doesn't, as one may always overpay for an order. The Soviet player could spend 10 Initiative and then call for a move order, if he had to, as one can always use orders that cost the same

OR LESS than the amount of Initiative spent. Sometimes, in the metagame of the Matrix, one will overspend just to deny his opponent a "cheap" order. Yes, the Matrix can be an evil mechanism. Here's how the designer describes it:

"[The Matrix models] the ebb and flow of initiative on the field of battle. Also, the battlefield maneuvers that tend to be more difficult to coordinate effectively (combined arms assaults, for example, as opposed to simple fire or movement) have a higher initiative cost, meaning more planning is involved if you want to execute one and retain the overall initiative. Alternately you can order an assault on the

fly, at the expense of perhaps giving the opponent more initiative elsewhere. Note that your Assault order will always execute perfectly -- the way YOU as the gamer want it to -- whereas the real troops on the ground will have had a harder time of it. The extra initiative given to your opponent abstractly represents the fact that your opponent may be "simultaneously" doing more basic firing and moving while you're spending precious time coordinating a difficult maneuver. The request for higher-level assets -- air, artillery, etc. -- also takes time and coordination above the norm, so carry with them a similar higher in-game initiative cost."

Some have called the Matrix nothing more than a "gimmick." I will side with the designer here and say that, in my experiences with the game, the Matrix nicely models what he intended it to model – and, best of all, with no cost in complexity!

NEW ORDERS

But enough of the Matrix, what are the orders? This is a tactical game on WWII warfare in the Soviet Union, so, what can units do? Well, they can do a lot, maybe...

Going down the Matrix may be the best way to explain the game. I'll use the Soviet side as an example – the German side has the same orders, though the cost may be different. Starting at the cost of "1" Initiative, we have "Asset." Asset allows the player to play one asset from his hand. Assets come in the form of cards, and range from calling in air support and artillery to manipulating on-map command. Other assets, such as anti-tank rifles, smoke screens, and Commissars are played as "reaction" cards, not costing anything. It's a great feeling to know that your superiors have given you the OK to lay



TRACK DISPLAY

End of Turn sequence (below)
Matrix is devoid of order cubes.

8	9
10	
11	
12	
14	13

Command

At end of turn:
from here to Available box
from map to here
command to their Tactical side)

Germany ← ORDER MATRIX → Soviets

	ORDER		ORDER	
Draw 3 Assets	Division Support	10+	Division Support	Draw 3 Assets
Draw 2 Assets	Regiment Support	9	Regiment Support	Draw 2 Assets
Draw 1 Asset	Battalion Support	8	Battalion Support	Draw 1 Asset
Flip the Sniper marker to the German side then perform an Advance, Assault, Rally, Move, Fire or Asset order	Sniper	7	Assault (Melee: Veh.)	Move & fire with activated units: printed speed is halved may spend 1 MP to fire once: -1D if direct fire
Advance activated units: move into adjacent hex then must stop ignore MPs; no Return Fire or Op Fire allowed	Advance (Melee: Inf.)	6	Advance (Melee: Inf.)	Advance activated units: move into adjacent hex then must stop ignore MPs; no Return Fire or Op Fire allowed
Move & fire with activated units: printed speed is halved may spend 1 MP to fire once: -1D if direct fire	Assault (Melee: Veh.)	5	Sniper	Flip the Sniper marker to the Soviet side then perform a Rally, Fire, Move or Asset order
Rally activated units: base 2d10 (+1D in cover, +1D w/Command; -2D in melee)	Rally	4	Rally	Rally activated units: base 2d10 (+1D in cover, +1D w/Command; -2D in melee)
Move activated units: unit's speed = available movement points expend MPs to move hex to hex	Move (Melee: Gun)	3	Fire	Fire activated units: see Player Aid for direct fire see Melee Table if same-hex
Fire activated units: see Player Aid for direct fire see Melee Table if same-hex	Fire	2	Move (Melee: Gun)	Move activated units: unit's speed = available movement points expend MPs to move hex to hex
Play up to one Asset order from your hand	Asset	1	Asset	Play up to one Asset order from your hand
Fire at enemy firing/moving unit: (Costs Initiative equal to unit's activation cost) If either die ≤ ROF: firing unit becomes spent	Return/ Op Fire	?	Return/ Op Fire	Fire at enemy firing/moving unit: (Costs Initiative equal to unit's activation cost) If either die ≤ ROF: firing unit becomes spent

Basic Procedure—When you have t

1. Move the Initiative marker a numt
the row from which the cube was
2. Choose to perform: the order list
Soviets) of where the cube was t
3. Activate units if appropriate: spe
0 if under Mission Command. Ur
Vehicles may then be abandoned
4. At the end of every order oppon

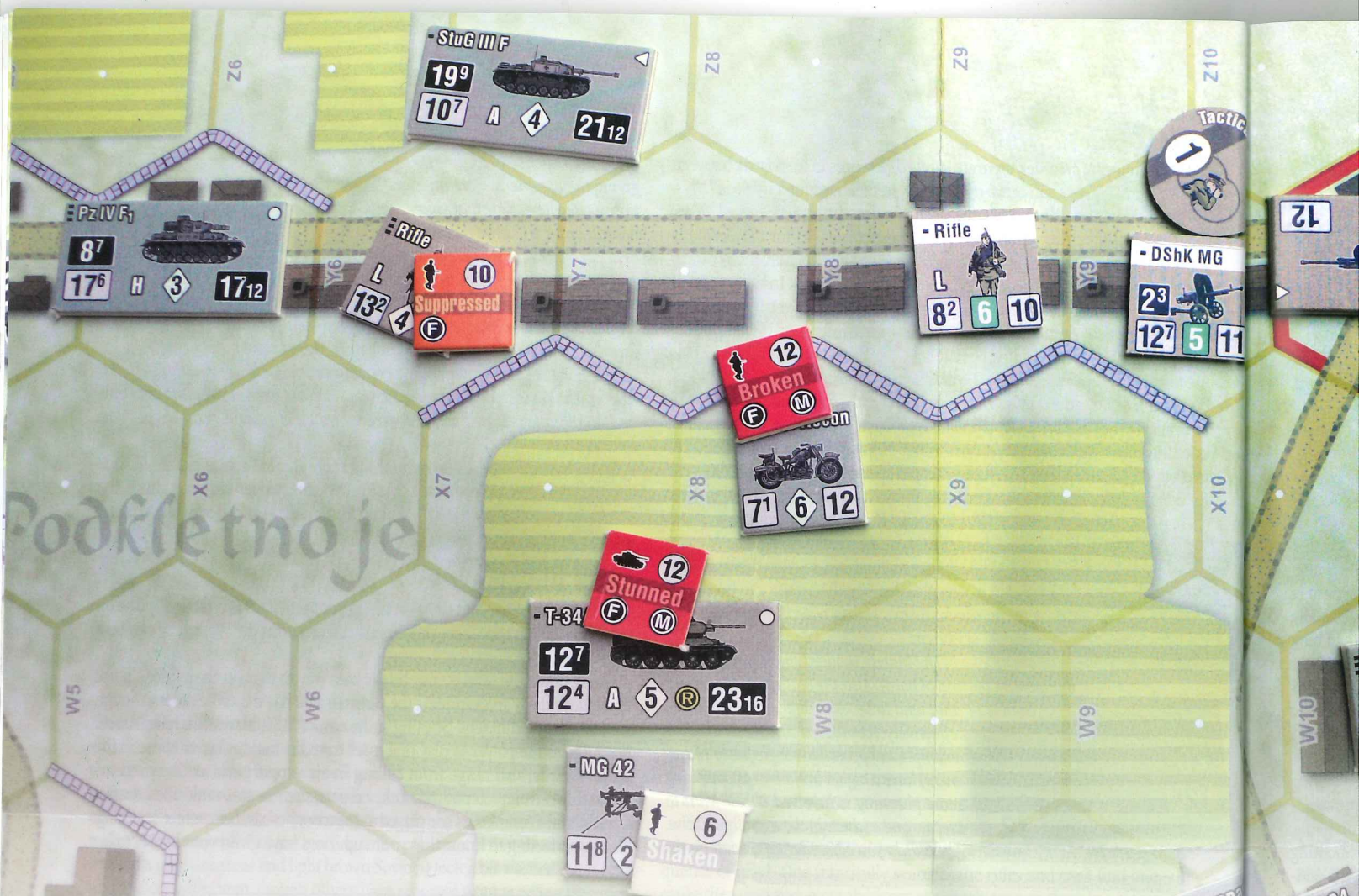
A turn ends at the conclusion of t



Pending Com

At end of turn:
first, move Command from her
then, move Tactical Command
(then flip active Mission Command)

Initiative = player holding the Fate card



down a Katyusha Rocket barrage, one only hopes that the Germans don't have counter-battery fire that will negate it!

At Initiative "2" the Soviets can move. So, the Soviet player looks at all his units and moves them. Wrong... Units need to be "in command," to move, or they cost extra Initiative, and we know that's something that isn't spent lightly. Each side has limited command markers they can place during the game. These represent orders being received and carried out by leaders in the field. The best command is "Mission" command, which activates units to move for free within their command radius – anywhere from 0-4 hexes. As the battle rages, "Mission" command degrades to "Tactical" command. Units activated to move that are under "Tactical" command each cost an Initiative point, and remember, we hate giving back Initiative to our opponent, but sometimes ya just gotta move these guys. In addition, there will be units on the board who are "Out" of command. These units can still move, but they'll cost "2" Initiative points each. There will be times you'll pay this penalty out of need, but it hurts...

After you've chosen all units to activate – flipped them over to their active sides and paid their Initiative costs – you begin moving. Infantry are platoons and squads, represented by 5/8" counters. They can move in any direction, platoons breaking down into squads or squads reforming into platoons prior to movement if you wish. Vehicles and guns are on long counters (double 5/8") and they have to conform to facing rules to move and pivot, facing a hexside at all times. Units pay terrain costs for each new hex they enter, and can be fired

on by any eligible unit each time a new hex is entered (opportunity fire). This may seem excessive at times, as some units could conceivably be fired at by hundreds of enemies (OK, I exaggerate). The good news is that it's not that clear cut, as each opportunity fire carries a cost – an Initiative cost and a potential "Spent" cost. Sure, the enemy can fire his "Mission" command guys for free, but all those under "Tactical" command (or, even worse, "Out" of command) are going to cost him Initiative. Yeah, he'll take those shots that may do damage, but taking a low odds' attack here probably won't happen, as the cost is usually too high. In addition to paying Initiative, each unit has a "Rate of Fire" (ROF) number. If any die roll is \leq the ROF, that unit is done ("Spent") for the remainder of the current order. Simple mechanics here prevent an unrealistic "rain of fire" occurring at each move.

Movement sounds reasonable, eh? But what about combat? This is a game on WWII, so we have to have some shooting, and at a cost of "3," the Soviets can activate units to fire. Additional costs will have to be paid for units under "Tactical" command or "Out" of command, and this happens on all orders, so it won't be mentioned again. Infantry can fire through any hexside, while vehicles and guns need to fire through their front arc – pivoting is allowed, but at a cost. As each unit fires – and fire is done unit by unit though each fire attack affects all units in the defending hex – one rolls two d10 and adds this to his appropriate firepower to come up with a total. The defender rolls two d10 and adds this to his defense (multiple rolls if >1 unit is in the hex) – this is actually a lot like some miniature games I have played. If the defender's total is equal to or greater than the attacker's total, the shot has no effect. If it's less than, the defender takes a hit and selects a "Hit" marker from the ubiquitous opaque cup, placing it on the hurt unit. This marker will give restrictions on what the "Hit" unit can do, and a unit with a "Hit" marker on it that is hit a 2nd time will be eliminated (an eliminated platoon will actually be an eliminated squad, with the platoon breaking down after the loss). But why d10s, when we





have d6s, d8s, d10s, d12s, and d20s? This is one of the simple beauties of the game – each die roll starts with d10s, but can be modified. As high rolls here are better, one strives to get to “better” dice! So, an attack that starts with d10s can be raised to d12s if firing on an adjacent hex. On the other hand, it can be lowered to d8s if the fire attack is at long range, or even d6s if the attack is at extreme range. This simplicity makes the game easy to play – no looking on charts or reading through 10 values for each shot. Take the attack value, roll the appropriate dice; take the defense value, roll the appropriate dice, compare. It’s a hit or a miss. Simple, but effective. No, one won’t find 17 armor values here. What one will find is simple math showing relative strengths of units. Front armor is better than flank, but a hit is a hit and a miss is a miss. Pretty straightforward. The designer has done the work for us and broken down each attack and defense into simple die rolls. I like that!

As an example, let’s have a platoon of Soviet KV-1B tanks fire at a single German Panzer IVF at 5 hex range through its front armor. The line of sight is through all clear terrain, so there are no hindrances between the units, more on that shortly. The Soviet attack begins with 16 AP firepower (not modified for range as the normal range is 7 hexes). The Soviets decide to play a special action, discarding an asset to use APCR rounds which add +4 firepower at range 5, upping the attack to a “20.” 2d10s are rolled and they come up “3” and “8.” The final fire attack is thus 20+11 = 31. This is marked, and the German armor rolls its defense. The base defense for a frontal attack is “17.” The German unit is in the open, so no terrain modifiers apply. 2d10s are rolled for defense and both are “6s.” The final defense is thus 17 + 12 = 29. Comparing the two results, the Soviets “win,” so the German armor is hit. The German player, feeling unlucky, draws a “Hit” marker for his Panzer IVF and gets an “Immobilized.” Pretty bad, as the unit can’t move and is very hard to rally (getting eliminated if there’s a failure). However, it can still fire its guns, so things could definitely be worse...

One caveat about firing. Your opponent isn’t impotent when you rain steel on him. When each unit fires, ONE (and only one) enemy unit can attempt return fire. Initiative costs are paid, and units fire away. As with opportunity fire, these units can become spent for the remainder of the order. OK, there is another caveat, as well. Each fire (order, opportunity, return) has a “hindrance number – that is, how well the firing unit can see the target hex. The base hindrance is a “1,” line of sight going through non-clear terrain or smoke will raise this. If either die results in a number which is that hindrance number or lower, the shot is an automatic miss. So, even with overwhelming firepower, nothing is certain. A simple, yet effective mechanism.

I’m hoping you have an idea of how the game plays, so, instead of going through each additional order one by one, here they are, with their costs: Rally (4), Sniper (5), Advance (6), Assault (7), Battalion Support (8), Regiment Support (9), and Division Support (10). Well, maybe some slight explanations are in order, know that:

Rally attempts to remove hit markers from units, though it may backfire and eliminate a unit!

Sniper is a special order that let’s you put the sniper marker on your side (to be used at turn end to try and hurt your opponent’s command) and then perform any order that costs less than it in the Matrix.

Advance is how infantry moves into melee (close combat). Melee is a whole different procedure where one unit fires on one enemy unit. There is a table showing hit numbers which units use in lieu of their printed combat factors.

Assault lets units move and fire, at a cost to both movement (which is halved) and fire combat (which goes from d10s to d8s). Assault also allows vehicles to move into melee.

Support allows the player to receive asset cards – 1 at Battalion, 2 at Regiment, and 3 at Division.

And a final note about the Matrix is the reminder that you can overpay for any action. If there are no cubes in the “4” box, this doesn’t mean that the Soviet player can’t rally his units. He can take a cube off, for instance, the “8” box and, instead of declaring Battalion support and drawing an asset, he can perform a Rally order. So you have some flexibility here, at the cost of Initiative.

Now that the Order Matrix is understood, you should have a good idea of how the game plays, even with no fixed sequence of play. FF:GD is a tactical game, with tanks, that is simple in execution yet very deep in how one needs to approach each activation. Not only in the metagame of the Matrix, but in protecting units that will be vulnerable to opportunity or return fire while pouncing on the opponent’s units who are likewise vulnerable. It is up to the players how the game progresses, and this means that no two games will be alike.

Of course, taking FF:GD out for a spin is truly the only way to know if it’s a game for you. However, I hope that the descriptions here of both my attitudes toward tactical games and the mechanics will provide you with some food for thought. I found many things to like about this game, and I also some things to dislike. Starting with my dislikes, I have some counter issues. The only differentiation of platoon and squad counters is that a platoon has 3 small dots on the upper left, while a squad has 1 small dot. Even today, I often mistake one for the other. Also, the vehicles are side view, and this just looks weird to me, especially

ABSCHLUSS!

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NO RETREAT 2

THE AFRICAN FRONT

1940 - 1942

victorypointgames.com

164th Light
14 M
4-3

4th Indian
1
5-4

NO RETREAT 2 02
MARE NOSTRUM
Play this card upon drawing it.
Draw the Deck and Discard Pile to form a new Draw Pile. Draw a replacement card if Malta is **Inactive**.

NO RETREAT 2 03
U.S. Code Black Broken
Play at any time to examine the Allied Player's hand - **OR** - to place the top card in the Discard Pile into your hand.

"Force B"
Combe 1 2-6
Aufk 4 2-6

Victoria Cross R
Play at any time to re-roll any single die. Afterward, you decide which roll result to use.

Panzer Tactics
Play during the Battle Sequence. One German Tank unit in that Battle is considered to be a Tank.

NO RETREAT 2 34
Heeresgruppe Afrika
Play during the Strategic Phase to seize the Initiative. If you already have the Initiative and Malta is **In-Active**, play at the end of the Turn to repeat it, skipping both the House Keeping Phase (but still adjust/draw Cards), and the Strategic Phase.

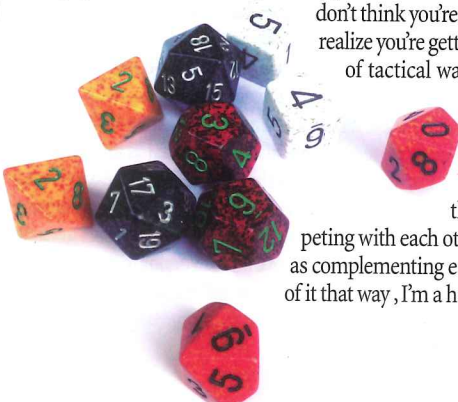
Axis Supply Transport Shortage
At the start of the Axis Movement Phase to place one Out of marker on a stack of Axis R - two if Malta is **Active** (effects).

Rest, Refit & Reorg
You must immediately discard this card to your opponent upon drawing it. Afterward, draw a replacement card for this one if Malta is **Active**.



when there are several similar vehicles faced in different directions. Another little hassle is that hexes can be full of counters. There is no stacking limit in the game, so you could theoretically put your entire force in one hex (usually, though in towns and woods vehicles are restricted), and each unit could have an attached hit marker. While that generally won't be happening (unless you're an idiot), stacking in the game can get hairy, especially as vehicles and guns can be in a hex facing different hexsides. I suppose this is unavoidable, but one needs to be careful - even with large hexes, tweezers may be necessary. In addition, the scenarios are often asymmetrical, though this is more a condition of "we need to be historical" vs. "we wanted to be different." But after playing Scenario 0 with its equal forces, the historical scenarios are sometimes a let-down, though each is balanced. And did I mention the die rolls? In this game, wristage is high, very high. Each shot has a roll, as does each defense. Shooting at a hex with several units will see you rolling more dice than the average dungeon master (OK, maybe that's hyperbole, but wristage is high). If you suffer from carpal tunnel syndrome you may want to look elsewhere!

I do like this game, and, in the final analysis, I give it a thumbs' up. This game has grown on me through each play. This is a game where both players are constantly involved, and there is no "set path to victory." Shit happens, and you have to deal with it. First contact with the enemy and all that. There is even an optional rule for events (which I always use), adding even a little more uncertainty. The Matrix metagame is fun in and of itself, and one must plan well to make gains vs. the enemy. Every time I play this game, I like it more, and that's a good thing, especially as my initial reactions weren't exactly positive. But, personally, I keep asking myself, "Where does this game fit in my collection?" I believe it is the replacement to PB that I've searched out for decades. But I'm not sure it's ever going to be my tactical "go to" game. I wanted it to be, but CC still fills that role for me, even sans tanks. No matter how much I try, I can't shake the fact that CC is more fun, quicker, and gives me more of what I'm looking for in a game. Really, I'm not sure exactly what that means, but I can say that I've never played a game of CC and ended it with a "We should have played FF instead." It's probably just me, and I do recommend FF. Just don't think you're getting CC with tanks - realize you're getting a fun, playable game of tactical warfare between German and Soviet units, tanks included. Just because we have the same designer, let's not think of the two games as competing with each other - let's think of them as complementing each other. When I think of it that way, I'm a happy camper. **B**



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The Gameplay's the Thing!

REALLY

SMALL

#6

This space in the magazine is about small wargames. Really small wargames. The kinds of games you can set up in a corner of the dinner table and finish several in an evening

by Elias Nordling

A lot of us play wargames solitaire. Sure, nothing beats a good face to face experience and the sweet feeling of having outwitted your opponent, but if all the spare time you have for wargaming is half an hour each night after having put the kids to bed, there isn't much point in calling your wargaming buddy or going to the club. But if you can find enjoyment by playing wargames by yourself, there is still much hobby fun to be had at those small slices of spare time.

MOST

two-player wargames can be played solitaire if you have the right mind for it. Some people, for example, make up plans for each side and try them against each other. As for me, planning has never been my strong side, but I'm a mean player when it comes to improvising and chaos management. So when I play solitaire, I look at the map with fresh eyes at the start of each player turn, thinking about what opportunities and risks this turn has to offer me.

There are many players out there who find this kind of wargaming unfathomable, or even pitiful. I'm not saying you're missing out, tastes differ. But even for you, there is potential hobby time in those late night moments alone, if you go for purpose-built solitaire wargames.

Solitaire wargames have a long history. The oldest purpose-built solitaire wargame in my collection is *Ambush!* from 1983, nearly 30 years ago, the oldest I've been able to track down is *Wolfpack* and *Operation Olympic*, both from 1974. *Ambush!* is in many ways the epitome of solitaire wargames. It features a pretty standard game situation (World War II at the tactical level has been done a lot, to say the least) with a very elaborate AI mechanism to run the enemy.

AI, Artificial Intelligence is a computer term for when a machine tries to recreate, or at least fake, human intelligence. AI has been a field of research since the 50s, but so far the results have been pitiful. The best results are usually achieved when the computer is attempting to emulate a human at some pretty limited task, such as playing a game. By now, computers can be pretty mean chess players, but they usually still suck at wargames as those playing computer wargames can attest. This is probably more due to the

limited budget of makers of computer wargames than a limit of the abilities of the computer.

Ambush! can indeed feel a bit like manipulating a paper computer at times, and I know many people find that a turn off, one that is applied to solitaire wargames in general. It is easy to forget that the AI of the solitaire wargame is not the purpose of the game, but a means to an end.

By now, you are either thinking I have lost myself in an endless diversion, forgetting the topic of the article in the process, or more likely you have figured out this is going to be about really small solitaire wargames. As you might have noted from my previous articles, a surprising number of really small wargames are purpose-built solitaire wargames. Surprising, because, on the face of it, a format that rarely sees more than 8 pages of rules ought to suck at making a paper computer.

But think once more about the fact that AI becomes easier to create the simpler task it has to perform. And not all wargame situations are created equal in this respect. Have you played the TCS game *Omaha*? Have you played *Omaha* as the GERMANS? If so, you might have noticed that you were playing a massive monster game where your opponent(s) swung between terror and elation generally having the game of their life, but all you did was rolling dice for the fires of your pillboxes. The thought might have struck you that your role could easily have been replaced by a few simple rules paragraphs.

Omaha is in fact a situation eminently suitable for a solitaire game, one where playing one side is a lot more enjoyable than the other and the limited decisions on the other side makes it really easy to replace the player. And the solitaire game *D-Day at Omaha Beach* did in fact turn out to be one of the best games of 2009.

I don't think I'm alone in thinking there are far too many games in this hobby that would in fact be better off as solitaire games. Games where one side hardly ever attacks, and spend the whole game adjusting his frontline plugging any holes in the line. Or just about any game with the Japanese in them after Guadalcanal.

So, given the right situation, it turns out the really small format is not in any way a hinder in designing a solitaire wargame.

Another common feature of solitaire wargames, one often mistaken for the purpose of making a wargame solitaire, is limited intelligence. It certainly is one of the draws of the "paper computer" games like *Ambush!* and *Carrier* that the game system is capable of really springing a surprise at you. But so is another player. You can have just the same amount of limited intelligence in a two player game, and there is nothing that says a solitaire wargame has to feature limited intelligence.

A better way to put it might be that limited intelligence is a commonly used design trick used in solitaire wargames to compensate for the lack of tension that might occur when you're playing a wargame against a few paragraphs of rules rather than against a live player. It is also slightly easier to implement limited intelligence when you're determining enemy actions by random means than when you have a player making actions that need to be hidden from his opponent.

Readers of this column know that I like my solitaire games tough. That way, I get a lot of replay value from trying to play better to beat the game. If you can win most of the time with little effort, what's the point?

A true solitaire wargame should really have the game engine making all the decisions for your opponent, either by die roll, or by a strict checklist of actions. This isn't always the case. Some solitaire wargames let the player you make the final choice between multiple alternatives for your opponent. This can work too, if the game designer has in mind that you will always pick the choice most advantageous to yourself. There are examples of solitaire wargames, such as *Catherine the Great* in *Strategy & Tactics* 232, that expect the player to make discretionary choices for the non-player side that is in that side's best interest. I wouldn't call this a true solitaire wargame, as you are then basically doing the same thing as you would if you were playing a 2-player game solitaire.

So, now that we've discussed the key features of solitaire wargames, let's look into depth at a couple of really small solitaire wargames to see how they use these features.

WE MUST TELL THE EMPEROR (Victory Point Games)

We Must Tell the Emperor is a strategic simulation of the War in the Pacific, with the player representing the Japanese. I am told it is one of Victory Point Games' bestsellers. It uses the company's *States of Siege* game engine, and is no less than the 7th game from the company to do so.

The basic idea of the *States of Siege* engine is dead simple. In the center you have your home country, capital or whatever it is you are defending. Around it are a number of different tracks. On each track is a different enemy force, moving along the track towards the center. If any of the forces reach the center, you lose.

The movement of these forces is governed by a deck of cards. Each card represents a historical event that features an advance or retreat of one of more specific enemy force as told by the card. The card also gives you a number of attacks to conduct. Each enemy force has a number on it, a combat strength if you will. To conduct an attack, roll against this number. If you pass the roll, you push this army back one space on the track. There are usually positive or negative modifiers for attacking certain forces listed on the card. If you manage to stave off defeat until the deck of cards has run out, you have won.

In its basic form, I think this game engine comes dangerously close to the old joke about the Really Simple WWII game: Roll one die, if it's 1-5 the Allies win, if it's a 6, the Axis win. Or as the Pacific version goes, roll two dice, 2-11 the Allies win, 12 roll again.

It is the embellishment that makes all the difference. *Zulus on the Ramparts*, for example, a game I quite liked, introduced a number of clever concepts, hand management of the cards even, that really added to the experience and showed how far you could push this engine.

We Must Tell the Emperor is a much less radical adaption of the *States of Siege* system, and the additions have more the character of chrome plating than any tweaking of the underlying engine. There are tracks for the strength of the Japanese military, prestige and oil supplies, but functionally they are so close that they could pass for three more enemy forces if you squinted. There are kamikazes and fortifications with a few simple rules.

There is also something called battles, famous naval engagements. When these come up, the player can gamble an attack on a better outcome than

historical, but risk an even worse result. You might wonder what exactly the difference between an attack and a battle simulates. It is one of many signs that this is a game designed to fit a system, rather than the other way around.

Is the Pacific War a particularly good solitaire situation? Yes and no. After the first 6 months of the war, the Japanese were down to mostly reacting to what the allies were doing, and it would be pretty easy to simulate this with a robot player. In general, it is easier to make AI for a defender than for an attacker. But that is not the course this game has taken, as you are put in the position of the side with the fewer choices to make. It is the nature of this system that the player is the one defending against multiple threats.

But the game also illustrates another feature of wargames:





As you zoom out from tactical to strategic scale, the amount of player decisions shrink as the minutia of unit placement is reduced more and more. Thus most topics work as solitaire wargames if you zoom out enough. And with the entire war reduced to 5 tracks; China, the Commonwealth in Burma-Malaya, Indonesia, New-Guinea-Philippines and the Central Pacific, you can't get much more zoomed out.

Here is another example of a game designed to fit a system. The fact that the Central Pacific axis of advance towards Japan goes US West Coast, Hawaii, Midway, New Hebrides, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, Marianas, Iwo Jima signals that some shoe-horning had to be done to fit the historical fighting into five simple axes of advance.

The AI of the game is handled entirely by the deck of cards. It is divided into the early, middle and late war period, and contains all the historical battles with no alternates. Thus the system won't spring any surprises on you and there really isn't any limited intelligence to talk about. Unless you haven't played the game before and know nothing about the Pacific War, you'll know exactly what's coming at you, the only unknown is the exact order of events. The advances along the axes are the only decisions the AI ever has to make, so it should be pretty evident that there are no discretionary choices for the player to make.

Did I enjoy playing the game? Absolutely! Much more than I expected, given my stated ambivalence to the system. The game provides a real challenge, and playing it really weaves a story about trying to beat back numerous enemies and then dig in and ride out their worst, all while managing diminishing military and oil resources. Just when I think I have things in hand, a dormant Chinese or Burmese theater will awake and bite me in my tail. Simple little chrome rules show how the Allies get tougher and tougher, and the oil harder to bring home.

But the enjoyment comes mostly from the storytelling aspect of the game, not from any tough gameplay decisions. You wouldn't go much wrong if you simply rolled for whatever track was at the lowest at any given opportunity. With this simple AI algorithm, you could make a zero-player game out of it and let it play itself.

On the other hand, you could compare it to a solitaire card game like *Klondike*. It plays quick and is a challenge, and you usually don't mind the lack of player decisions. Solitaire Card games can be quite addictive. Granted, you paid more for this game than for your deck of cards, but you also get a lot more flavor.

Is it The Great Pacific War? Not as we know it. The game provides for some tense back and forth, but the real war was more of a short burst of forth followed by more or less uninterrupted back. In the game, you will see things like Nimitz beating at the gates of Okinawa, quite possibly while the other Allies are far behind, and then being pushed back all the way to Guadalcanal again.

As I said, the narrative of the game is strong, and the cards provide a lot of historical flavor, but there is a distinctive disconnect between the two. For

example, you could be fighting a desperate battle for Port Moresby, and then learn MacArthur just decided to leave the Philippines, or have Tokyo Express run supplies to Guadalcanal after the Emperor has already ordered the withdrawal from the island, and all the while the actual battle for this track is going on somewhere else. Of course, you can think of the events on the cards as similar to the historical events, but taking place under different circumstances somewhere else. But then, the historical text becomes more of a distraction than adding to the game.

There is an expansion to the game, adding numerous cards and the ability to add to your army by withdrawing troops from China, the Soviets coming in near the very end, as well as shorter scenarios. Another welcome addition is a scoring system, where you can calculate a final score to use as comparison to better your previous result, even if you keep losing the game. If you didn't like the game to begin with, the expansion won't alter your opinion. If you did, you probably want it all, even though the expansion doesn't change the game a lot. If you like games that tell a good story as it plays through, and don't mind if they distort history or are short on player decisions, you'd probably belong to the latter category.

ACW SOLITAIRE (Dave Kershaw)

Dave Kershaw have designed a number of small, simple solitaire games on various topics, of which *The American Civil War* is the latest (though as it is copyright 2007, it isn't exactly new). Other games cover Vietnam, Imperial Rome and the East Front in World War II. They could all be had for a song from www.wargamedownloads.com. ACW Solitaire is a print and play download, you have to print out the components and assemble the game yourself.

The graphics are pretty primitive, but not exactly an eye-sore. There is one counter sheet of 90 counters, but the rules tell you to print as many counters as you need, and I needed slightly more units than those on one countersheet.

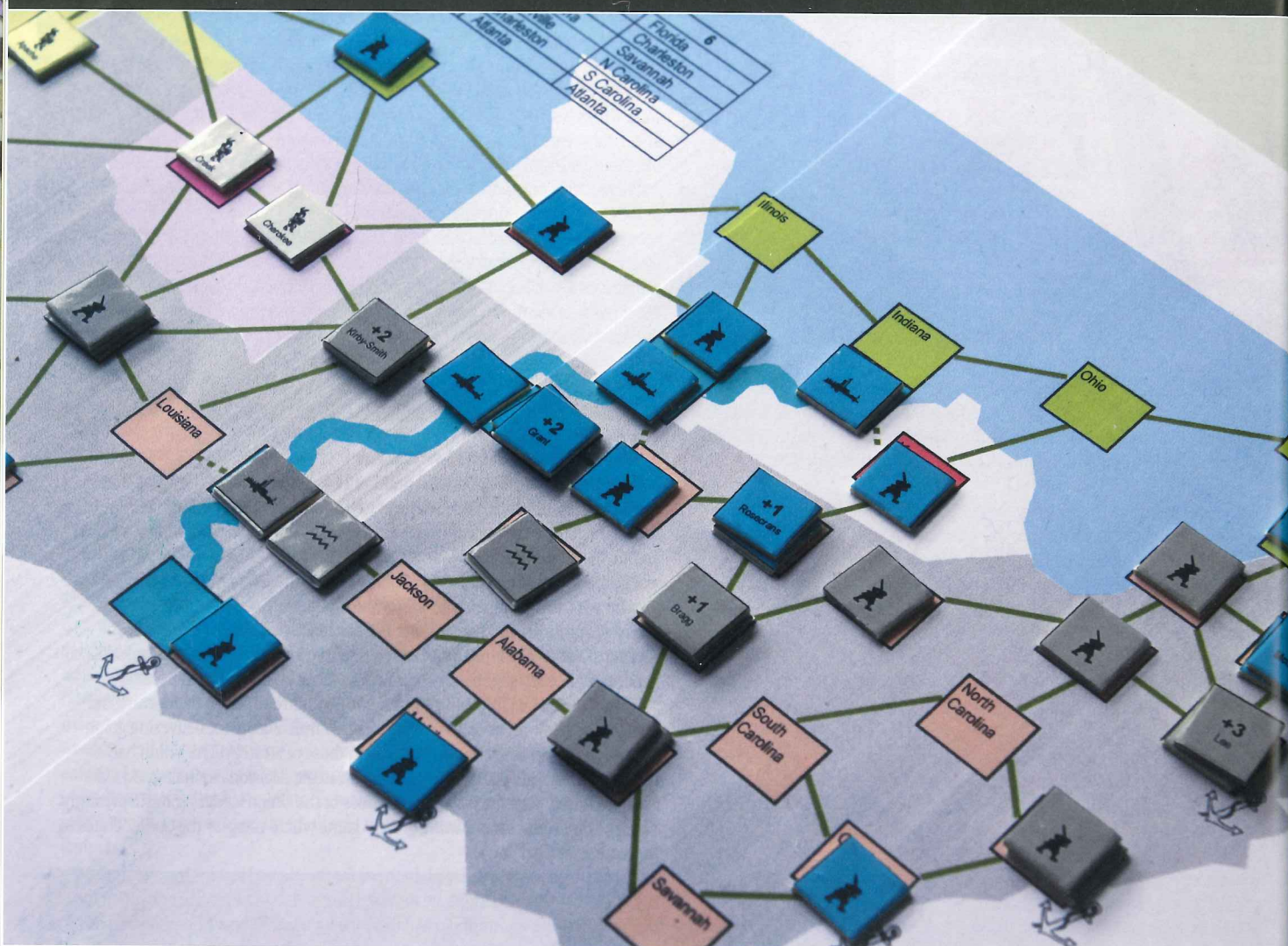
This is another example of getting a good solitaire situation by zooming out enough. With few areas on the map, there isn't much fancy maneuvering going on, and the player decisions are reduced to those of strategy. The Union had the strategic initiative and the important strategic decisions to make, and Dave Kershaw wisely puts the player in the shoes of the Union leaders (not surprisingly, Victory Point Games has a *States of Siege* game where you play the Confederates in the American Civil War).

The strategic decisions are plain to see for the player. He wins by reducing the Confederate production rate to zero. The Confederates receive one union for controlling either Richmond or Atlanta, one for controlling a Mississippi crossing, one if they roll higher than the number of Union-controlled confederate ports, and one for rolling higher than the number of Union ships on blockade duty. So, the task is to build a fleet to blockade the Confederates and to land troops along the coast, and conquer the Mississippi, Atlanta and Richmond. The player can lose if he takes too long in getting it done, or if the Confederates control a certain number of union spaces.

In contrast to *We Must Tell the Emperor*, here the system is clearly built for the game and not the other way round. Dave Kershaw's four solitaire games are all very different and don't share much mechanics.

The system here is fairly traditional. The Union builds units, moves and fights combats, the Confederates build units, move and fight combats, and you roll a die to see what happens in Indian country. As the Union player, you can move one area into enemy territory, or two in friendly territory, unless you move by gunboat or naval invasion. You can only build new units in friendly territory, so armies tend to pause to allow reinforcements to catch up frequently. Combat is resolved on a table with modifiers for odds, generals, forts and Indians. It is usually bloody with losses for both sides.

The classical problem of the quality of Union generals is handled quite simply. The union can build new generals, drawn at random, and can sack one general per turn. Unless unlucky, the good ones will come up faster than historical, but spending build points to get better generals is probably not a priority right from the start.



The Confederate artificial intelligence is run by a few simple tables and die-rolls. For each production point, you roll to see if an army is built and if it goes to the field armies or to regional defense, or perhaps a fort or gunboat is built. Only troops under Generals move, and a die-roll is made comparing to their rating to see if they try to attack the nearest Union controlled space. If there are several possible spaces, you always determine by die-roll where the army goes, so there are no discretionary choices for the player to make.

There is no limited intelligence in the game. It is entirely possible to play the game as a two-player game, but be prepared for a tougher fight. The AI actually does a pretty good job at showing how the Confederates diluted their resources by trying to defend everything at once. I do find the Confederate generals a bit over-aggressive, though, especially in the west.

The Indian front is pretty random and can mostly be ignored, as can the Trans-Mississippi theater for that matter; the war isn't going to be settled there unless you start losing union territories in the region. Still, it is in the game, works fairly well and doesn't slow down the game much. Optional rules allow you to abstract the Indians out.

The designer's notes state that you will probably win this game most of the time. As a high score mechanism, you check your level of victory by comparing with the number of turns it took you.

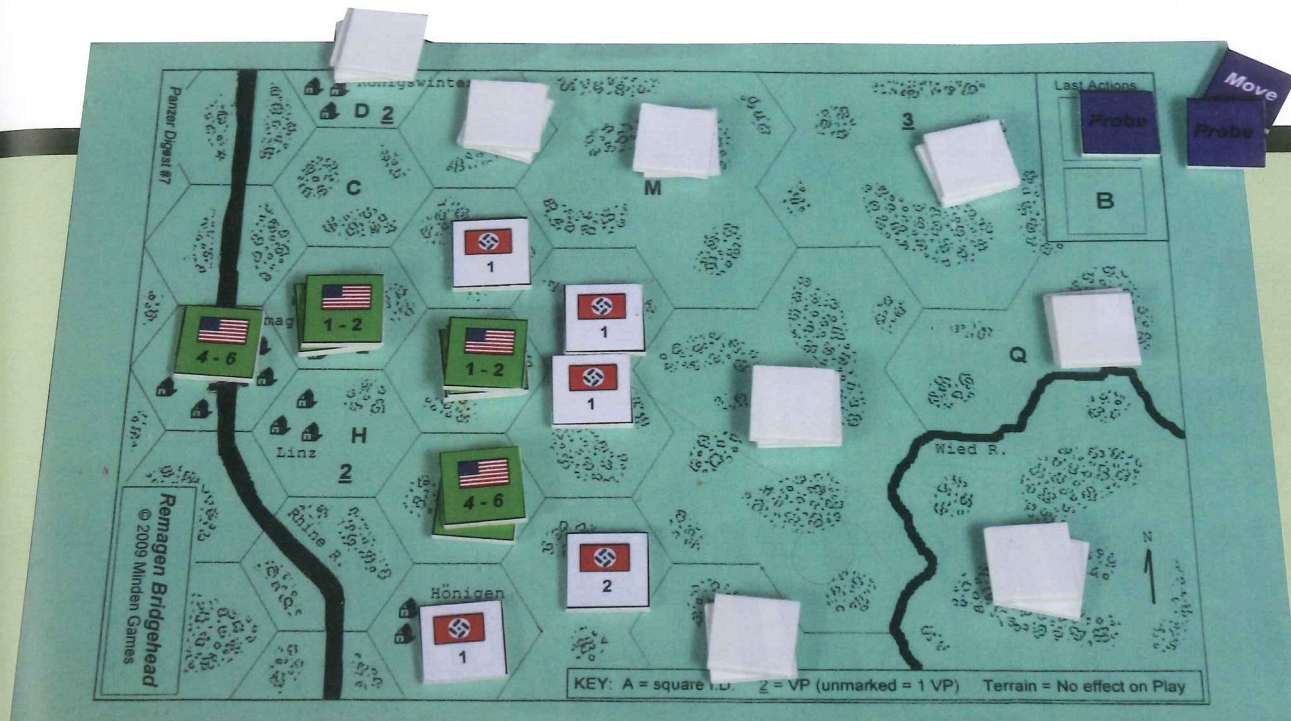
In my experience you will probably score better than historical most of the

time. This is not so much because of any faults in the simulation as because, unlike the historical Union player that had to fumble around for a couple of years, you know exactly what it takes to win. The game does nothing to compensate for this hindsight.

The game doesn't exactly play quick-fix-fast, but it moves along nicely, and both the events on the board and the player decisions feel about right. There are a few rough edges in the rules, especially for how exactly the Mississippi gunboat fighting works, but let's face it, you're not going to argue rules interpretations with your opponent.

ACW Solitaire both provide more interesting player decisions and feels like a better simulation of the actual war than *We Must Tell the Emperor*, but it can't come up with the same level of tension and drama. This is of course because you play the advantaged side, and aren't likely to lose by anything other than your own procrastination.

I definitely liked the game, but I didn't get the "just one more try"-feel after finishing it, so it will probably come back to my table less frequently. There is no ground-breaking cleverness in the game mechanics, but I do think it does an admirable job at showing what the American Civil War was about at the strategic scale with surprisingly simple means. I would recommend it both to people that are into the ACW and those who knows next to nothing about it and want to learn a little.



REMAGEN BRIDGE (Minden Games)

Remagen Bridge is a DTP game from issue 7 of **Panzer Digest**, published in 2009. While the previous two games are on the big side of this column, *Remagen bridge* is truly a Really Small Wargame, with a 1/2 letter sheet sized map (A5 for us in the rest of the world).

The game is a bit impressionistic, Gary grabber states in his designer's notes that he aimed for game more than simulation and that he wanted an enjoyable solitaire design playable in half an hour. I think he has succeeded fine.

Order of Battle fetishists can look elsewhere, there are no unit designations on either side, and anyway you draw the units for both sides randomly from a cup for the setup and for reinforcements. US units come as Armored and Infantry, with the only difference being their chance to hit in combat (50% for Armor, 33% for Infantry). Germans come as 2-step units, 1-step units and dummies without combat ratings.

The fighting around Remagen Bridge, the famous bridge captured intact by the Americans as they reached the Rhine in 1945, seems like an ideal situation for a solitaire game. There was some real tension for the Americans, but the Germans at this stage in the war were in such poor shape that any action from their side coordinated by a player would be overstating their abilities.

There is no need for discretionary decisions from the player for the Germans, or much of an AI at all really. Reinforcements arrive randomly, and German counterattacks are handled rather abstractly, more on which below. Unlike the previous two games, limited intelligence is key in this game, and all German units start off inverted on the map.

One of the game's clever twists is the sequence of play, which is not quite like anything I've seen in any other game. The US player gets two action segments, and for each of them he can choose between (No, not Move or Fight, you thought you knew what was coming there didn't you?) Probe and Move. Moving includes fighting, all the usual wargaming stuff. Probe on the other hand doesn't allow any moving or fighting, it just lets you reveal one enemy stack for each adjacent US unit.

Doesn't sound like much of a choice does it? Who cares what's in the enemy stacks, just stack up enough and go at them! But, wait, there's more to it. In movement, you can move 2 areas if the last action was probe, but only one if it was move. Moving into an enemy occupied area triggers combat. Combat results are either the aforementioned hits that cause a German

step loss, an attacker retreat, or an 1 in 6 chance of an attacker elimination, but ONLY if the previous impulse was Move. If it was Probe, that result is instead no effect. Now you can see how the choice between Probe and Move becomes a very real choice between a careful advance with little risk and a more reckless advance that risks serious setbacks. And it IS a very real dilemma, there are only 5 turns (possibly less, see below) for the US player to accomplish his goals.

What are the goals? Actually, you don't know. After the game ends, you roll to see which of the 12 possible victory conditions you had to achieve. They involve capturing different parts of the map, so you usually can't go wrong by capturing as much of the map as possible, concentrating on the high VP areas, but you can also get a victory condition where you lose if the US has taken too many losses. If you find this just too wild to handle, there is an optional rule that allow you to roll for the victory conditions at the end of turn 2 instead.

There is a Random Events Phase in the game. The events are either the bridge getting blown by the Germans, in which case the game ends and the victory conditions are checked immediately (so you might have less than 5 turns after all), the Germans getting two reinforcements instead of one, or a German counterattack.

You place German reinforcements by rolling on a table for location. If the area is US occupied, you roll again, and if the second area is also occupied, the reinforcement is forfeited, so it pays off to spread out and try to cover the map.

Or it can hurt you if you get a German counterattack. If you do, you roll once for each area with US units adjacent to an area with German units. If you roll an 1, one US unit is eliminated BUT if the previous two activations were both move, the German counterattack succeeds on a 1-2 instead.

Other than that, the Germans never really move or fire, they are just steps you have to eliminate to clear the area. It is not easy, and it isn't made easier by the unknown victory conditions. I find the game a suitable challenge for the player, one you can keep returning to, especially since the game indeed can be played in half an hour or less.

I think *Remagen Bridge* is a really clever little game, with some original concepts, the Move/Probe in particular, that other designers ought to take note of and copy. It is also a perfect example of a topic best done as a solitaire game, and well executed. It will probably not appeal to any hardcore simulationists, but if you don't mind games that are a bit impressionistic and paint with a broad brush, it isn't totally off as a simulation either. **B**



INTERVIEW

by Olivier Revenu

"ROYAL WITH CHEESE" VAE VICTIS 100 ISSUES LATER

The French magazine that covers board wargames, miniatures, and everything relating to historical gaming, *Vae Victis*, is celebrating its 100th issue. Congrats! Thanks to VV (say "vay-vay"), which has somehow published an issue every two months, francophone wargamers have a place to fuel their hunger and their passion for the hobby since 1995.

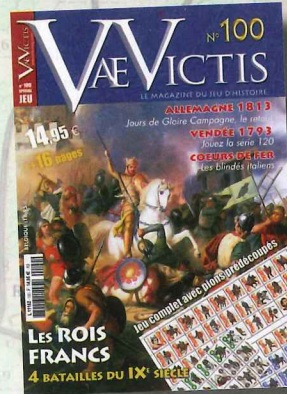
If France is still a wargaming nation today, with at least three active publishers, two magazines at the kiosks (soon), another with a more modest audience but no less CSR-erized (the one you have in your hands), and a very active internet and convention-attending community, it is in part thanks to VV.

When wargaming seemed to be becoming a marginal activity practiced by a handful of fanatics, VV made it possible to establish links within the community and bring in some new blood as well. Generation VV*, perhaps.

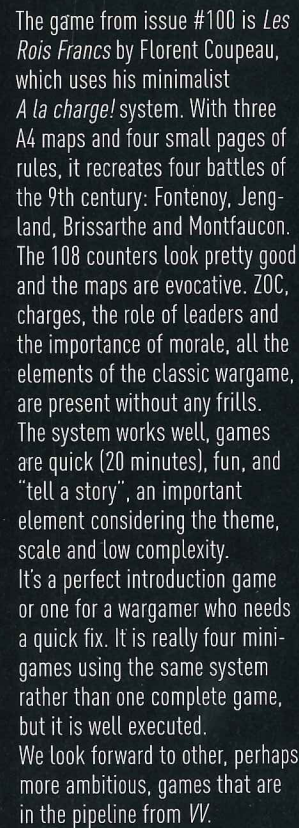
Without VV, *Battles Magazine* wouldn't exist. Its publisher, mézigue, had no more links with wargaming than the purchase of an issue of *Vae Victis*, every two months, before catching the fever again and returning to the table – thanks to a game review published in... VV. Yes, *Battles* is a child of Generation VV.

VV is news, new releases, scenarios, analysis, and, perhaps above all, a complete game that needed to be cut and mounted yourself (before this 100th issue), usually on an original or seldom-covered topic.

Its tone was serious but enthusiastic, enthusiastic but serious, and quite different from the Anglo-Saxon magazines that were being published when VV was launched. The quality of its games' graphics, with detailed and very historically cor-



u Antoine.



INTERVIEW

rect counters that emphasized the varying uniforms of its subject period, also had a great effect on the reading public and, undoubtedly, many other publishers. The quality of these graphics is often still well-above international standards. To me, these are but two elements that summarize the VV spirit and explain its longevity.

For some time now, VV has published special issues with die-cut counters and the 100th issue came with an announcement long-time readers had been waiting for: VV will publish each of its future magazine games with die-cut counters. Champagne! Let's meet the guys in charge.

Battles: Ave Nicolas and Pascal. Both of you are important figures for VV. What are your respective roles and responsibilities?

Nicolas Stratigos: I am editor-in-chief.

Pascal Dasilva: My role with Histoire & Collections, which publishes VV, is in regards to marketing and sales. Technically, I have no direct role with VV. But as it is, I now handle graphics for the games.

Battles: Since when have you worked with VV, and how did it all start?

Nicolas: I've been full-time since issue #12, but I have worked with the magazine since the third issue.

Pascal: I've been with H&C for five years and I've been involved with VV's games for three.

Battles: How started VV?

Nicolas: If I recall correctly, Théophile Monnier proposed the project to H&C. They accepted to launch a magazine covering historical strategy games. *Casus Belli** was already heavily loaded with RPGs and was bit-by-bit abandoning its wargaming aspect.

Battles: Finding a game to publish every two months, to test it, to develop it, is it complicated? Where did they usually come from? What are and have been your general criteria for making your choices?

Nicolas: It's a little complicated and definitely time consuming. There

needs to be a minimum of organization. Games come from proposals sent to the magazine or on demand from some of the designers who have worked for VV or others in the past. There is no ostracism, if a subject is interesting and the system works, everyone is welcome.

Pascal: I only become involved at the development stage and this can be more or less complicated. Complications come in the delay in producing the game. Some designers are very reactive, prepare good mock-ups, respond to questions quickly and make corrections rapidly. Others are constantly making modifications. VV release dates are fixed ahead of time and it has to be on the shelves at the scheduled date (there are financial penalties, otherwise). Sometimes the allotted time is too short to do everything we'd like, especially in terms of research for the graphics. Other times, it goes as simply as a letter through the mail.

Battles: Do any games stick out as your favorites?

Nicolas: Yes, a few great systems appeared in VV. *Paris vaut bien une messe*, *Typhon sur le Pacifique*, *Pour Dieu et pour le Roy*, *Au fil de l'épée*, *Féodalité*, *la Drang*, *Tonkin*, and the *Second World War* series. I'm certainly forgetting others.

Pascal: Recently, I had a lot of fun with *Les Rois Francs* and finding graphics that were different from the usual.

Battles: Have there been any failures or disappointments? A game that you regret having published or one that would need to be re-worked from A to Z?

Nicolas: *Tobrouk* needed to be re-worked; there is a good game in there. I'd make *Kharkov* a little simpler. I would like to adapt the *Paris vaut bien une messe* system for neighboring eras, but I don't really have any regrets. Some games have their fans, others don't, and there are always some games that are less well done than others.

Battles: What issue has sold the best? And which games do you think were the most played and appreciated?



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Nicolas: Without a doubt it is *Arnhem*, which sold out in record time. Otherwise each era has its best-seller: *Champs de bataille*, and *EPT*, La Normandie, the bi-centennial series...

Pascal: The most recent best-seller is issue #98, thanks to the "Special Game" version. There aren't many surprises, but issue #99 did well for a naval game on a little-known battle, released during vacation season. It is almost impossible to know how often games have been played. A poll might need to be conducted. What we do know is that less than 10% of readers played games of the old format (up to #84).

Battles: VV always devoted a lot of attention to miniatures and I believe that you, Nicolas, are a fan of this style of gaming. Do you have an idea of what percentage of your readership plays only wargames or only miniatures?

Nicolas: I'd say that VV's readership is 50/50 on the subject, with a lot of people who play both, just one, or stick to one period. VV's readers are multifaceted!

Battles: Is there a notable difference in the attitude and the expectations of a boardgamer and a miniatures-gamer?

Pascal: Generally, miniature fans think we talk too much about counters, and counter-pushers think there are too many articles on miniatures! It's like in the '60s, with people who like *The Beatles* or *The Rolling Stones*, but really listen to both.

Nicolas: I don't think so; they expect quality and pertinent articles. The biggest difference is probably on having too much or too little history.

Battles: Nicolas, you are also a game designer. How many have you published up to this point? What motivates you and what are your preferences concerning time period and system?

Nicolas: I can't be far from 20 or so. What motivates me more than anything is the historical period, especially if nothing already exists or what does exist isn't to my liking. The system depends on the subject, be it tactical, operational, or strategic. I started playing with particularly complicated systems (the golden age of SPI/GDW at the end of the '70s and early '80s), but now I like systems that have the same results but don't cause any headaches. Time needed to play is also a factor. For the future, I've been thinking about revisiting the *Rocroi* system for other battles of the Thirty Years' War. And I'm also thinking about creating a generic system for the Second World War at the battalion level.

Battles: Pascal, for some time now you have picked up the torch of Christophe Camillotte with flare, demonstrated by the counter art for this issue (also see *Battles* #3). Christophe's artwork marked an entire generation of gamers. What is he doing now? Will we see him again in VV?

Nicolas: Christophe is so skilled that he is now completely occupied by other pursuits in the artistic field.

Pascal: Christophe's work is still very present in VV as I re-use a lot of his silhouettes (which I re-work to my liking, but at their foundations they are his work). He now does freelance work, notably for *Steelmasters*.

Battles: VV is published by Histoires et Collections. What is the principal work of this publisher?

Pascal: H&C publishes about twenty history magazines (*Raids*, *Batailles*, *Militaria*, etc.) and magazines on locomotion (*Charge Utile*, *Tracteurs*, etc.) and between 30 and 40 books per year on these subjects.

Battles: VV has had some difficulties now and then, like many magazines in France. I believe that the magazine almost went under. How did you handle these situations?

Pascal: At the time, VV was living above its means. The game, expensive to produce, was only being played by a small proportion of our audience and penalized the majority. A re-focusing of the budget, especially in terms of the size of the games, allowed us to get out of the red. Our shambles in matter of communication itself also contributed to our troubles. The announcement of our ceasing to publish and then of the removal of the games (which were, in the end, just reduced) provoked a drop in subscriptions as many readers lost confidence that we'd continue to publish. Little by little they are coming back, but it is a long process.

Battles: You are starting a new format, with the magazine game including die-cut counters. What made you (finally) decide to do this?

Pascal: Of course, this demand has existed for years. The first thing that needed to be done was to convince the publishers that producing die-cut counters wasn't so complicated (and thanks, in passing, to Hexasim, who will be taking on this role for the first few "big games"). We also had to work out a method whereby we could economically publish issues with counters in-house. This was followed by the test in #98 and after encouraging results, it has been inaugurated for issue #101 onwards.

Battles: What exactly will the new format be?

Pascal: Firstly, the special issues that could never be placed correctly have been abandoned. Its content will be distributed in the regular issues with 16 supplementary pages. Secondly, the regular issues will be released in two editions:

- The "standard" edition, game not included, but enriched by 16 pages, clearly for those for whom the game does not interest them.
- The "special game" edition, which includes the magazine (identical in both editions) and a complete game with die-cut counters. This issue will, of course, be more expensive: 14.95 euros.

We know that some readers will be disappointed that they won't be able to get a game at a lower price, but a choice had to be made and we hope that there will be more gamers happy with the die-cut counters, even at 14.95 euros, than there will be disappointed gamers with the abandonment of the old "new format" games. The idea is that the reader has a choice. If the reader wants only to read, he has an 84-page magazine. If the readers wants a game that is simple (but not simplistic), easy to begin playing, and relatively quick to play, the reader can invest in the special game edition. VV is sticking to its role as an initiator with games that we hope will attract new gamers who could eventually become interested in boxed games.

Battles: What are the specifications of the games?

Pascal: One sheet of 108 counters, one A3 map, and a rules booklet with no more than 16 pages in A5 format. There is also the possibility of a second A4 map with an extra scenario.

Battles: What is planned for upcoming issues?

Nicolas: There are quite a few games that are ready or almost ready. Part of it is reflecting on the order of the games, with an eye to subject and system (hexes, zones, solitaire, etc.). I think that we're settled on the next issue, but let's say that we have subjects covering the Ancients, medieval sieges, the Second World War (solitaire), the First World War, 1870, etc. In short, at least eight games are finished or almost finished, and other proposals are expected in the coming weeks. The next will be *Sicile 1943* by Laurent Martin at division scale, with a map divided by zones, and good-looking counters!

Battles: Thanks guys, and we wish another long life for "Vay-vay"!

Nicolas: Thanks, Olivier.

Pascal: Thanks! 8

REVIEW

by Marc Figueras

DESIGNER ANDY NUNEZ

GRAPHICS TERRY LEEDS

PUBLISHER AGAINST THE ODDS

THE LASH OF

THE TURK

When I saw that issue #30 of *Against the Odds* was to be about the Ottoman-Hapsburg struggle for Hungary and Vienna during the 16th and 17th centuries, I was quite excited. Finally, a period under-represented in wargaming was going to have a new simulation. Then, even before my first playthrough, the editor of this magazine asked me for a review of the game - even better! Unfortunately, though, the process of reviewing the game has also been a process of partial disappointment, much to my chagrin.

AN APPEALING PACKAGE

At first sight, and after a quick look at the rules, *Lash of the Turk* seemed to have everything I wanted, with well-thought choices on different issues. The game does not represent a grand-strategical scenario encompassing all the period considered (difficult and complex to simulate), but rather four scenarios simulating four seasonal campaigns in key years (1526, the year of the Battle of Mohacs, 1529, 1532, and 1683 - a much later period).

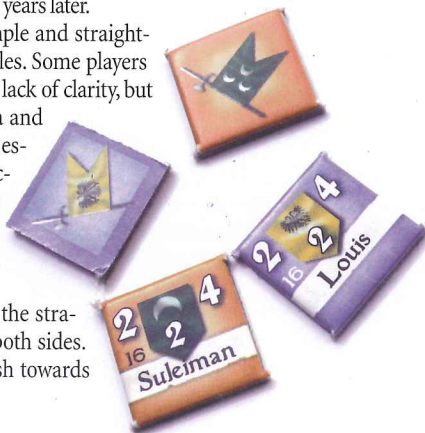
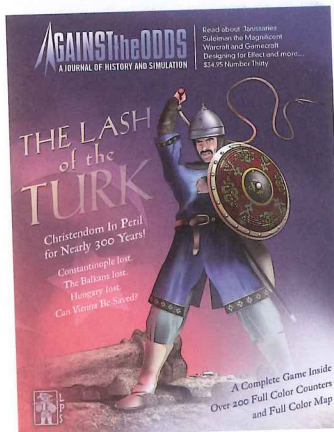
The basic rules are pretty standard, in the typical hex and counter, "I go - you go" movement-combat system, but spiced up with some interesting chrome: harsh attrition rules, cavalry raids, defection of allies, sieges, boats on the Danube, supply wagons, etc. With simple mechanics and few exceptions, this was ideally suited for a quick, exciting and replayable game. Following this line of simplicity, a good choice by the designer was not to include rules forcing the players to recreate some more or less stupid actions as happened historically.

But before moving forward on the game itself, let me add a side-note on the visual aspect: this is the first issue of *Against the Odds* without Craig Grando as artwork director. Yes, I admit I was a big fan of Grando from the first time I saw his work. He has shaken the world of wargame design a little, and not just for the sake of it. Of course, he had his ups and downs and some dubious choices, but his overall production has been extremely refreshing and appealing. I will miss him from now on.

That being said, the graphic part of this first non-Grando issue is equally good, with a more traditional look, but nevertheless very beautiful, especially the map. There are some misprints but nothing to worry about (although the spellings of Hungarian or German names have led to some debates on the internet). Counters are very nice and are double-sided for use with the 16th century scenarios or for the later 17th century scenario (there are no step losses in this game). It is surprising, though, that both sides of each counter are exactly the same, except for the drawing of the unit, so the relative strength of the different types of units are exactly the same for the beginning of the 16th century and 150 years later.

The rules are pretty simple and straightforward, without major holes. Some players have complained about the lack of clarity, but despite some minor errata and vagueness in certain parts, especially in the setup instructions, I think the game is perfectly playable out of the envelope. Let us have a look at how it is played.

Overall, in all scenarios the strategic situation is clear for both sides. For the Ottomans, just push towards





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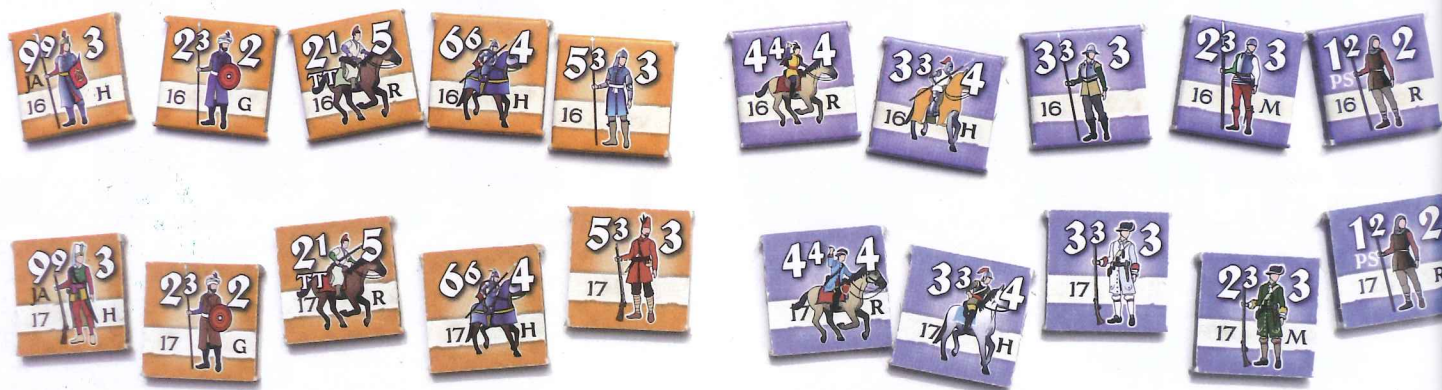
REVIEW

Vienna (the capture of both Buda and Vienna is automatic victory for the Ottoman player in all scenarios), while keeping an eye on supply (being put out of supply rarely happens, and you can also try to forage if you are caught) and take any opportunity to gain some victory points (VP) with scattered raiding parties.

For the Hapsburgs, just try to defend your territory the best you can and take advantage of any Ottoman mistake for catching him off balance (the capture of Buda and Belgrade is an automatic victory for the Hapsburg), and steal some VP by raiding. If automatic victory is not achieved, then the winner is determined by number of VP, obtained by control of fortified cities (each scenario has specific cities that are worth double their VP value) and towns, and successful raids performed during the game.

Weather is paramount, especially in the scenarios with many turns during the fall (and their higher probability of bad weather). Rain or mud is very bad news for the Ottomans, as it is the player with the burden of going on the offensive with long lines of supply. Bad weather not only hinders movement, but also greatly increases attrition for large armies. The combination of weather and attrition check die-rolls is one of the elements I find most successful in this game. It forces the Ottoman player to think carefully on how to conduct his campaign.

A possible Ottoman strategy is to form a single army, an unstoppable megastack, but while this may seem doable in the first scenario (with good weather in all but the last turns), this is hardly a good choice in later scenarios.



The megastack will be unstoppable, indeed, but it will be: 1) extremely slow; 2) extremely sensitive to attrition, which will constantly deplete the army; and 3) extremely sensitive to having its line of supply cut by enemy units. But even in the first scenario, I found that the megastack strategy does not quite work, not because of supply, but because of attrition and the possibility of a long siege if the Hapsburg player defends Buda with, say, more than 15 combat factors and a leader. In my experience, a single huge army is not the best option and usually two great Ottoman armies supported by advancing and scattered parties can perform better.

FIGHTING THE COMBAT SYSTEM

Movement rules are pretty standard, but with the nice addition of allowing for interception, for overruns, for naval movement (upstream and downstream the Danube) and for forced marches (a sometimes risky option without a leader, as it is determined by a die roll and you can end with moving less than your normal movement allowance). The combat phase follows.

Combat is the most problematic aspect of this game. The combat resolution table is of a very classical kind, and in principle there is nothing wrong with that. The problem is that it allows for a campaign that does not feel realistic. Combat table results are "attacker eliminated", "no effect", "one unit loss", "two units loss", "defender eliminated" or "exchange", and as a consequence you have many virtually bloodless battles, which seems inappropriate at this scale.

The game simulates seasonal campaigns, which usually involved a small amount of pitched battles (with just one or two great pitched battles), but leads instead to seasonal campaigns in which you can have a big pitched battle one turn, with both armies unscathed after combat, and then another big pitched battle the next turn, again with the same bloodless result, and so on and so forth. Huge pitched battles between large armies week after week? Campaigns with more than, say, five pitched battles, without any effect or at most with the loss of one or two units? I think that at this scale (one turn = one week) it makes little sense to fight a big pitched battle each week, taking into account that seasonal campaigning was usually decided after one or two pitched battles, and where one of the main strategic points was to out-manuever your enemy in order to force battle upon him in unfavorable conditions.

Besides that, for my taste there are too few combat modifiers, which leads to "just build up your army with anything at hand", be it foot, horse, artillery or whatever, and throw it at your enemy.

However, this is not the main problem I have with the combat system. I feel that battles should be bloodier and more exhausting for both parties (the only really potential bloody result is "exchange" or "eliminated", of course, but this is very rare). In one of our sessions, Suleiman and Tomori were fighting almost one battle per week without being depleted. With great armies, a 3:1 force ratio and a die roll of 6 or 7, the loser just eliminates two units (out of a total of more than 10 units), and this hardly changes the overall strategic situation. Having an indecisive Mohacs-like battle every week seems odd.

Of course, you can justify this by considering the bloodless results as representing just some skirmishes between advanced parties, not a true pitched battle, and that only the "exchange" result represents the true engagement between both armies. But somehow this also does not seem right, and not only because the final outcome in an "exchange" result is completely determined by chance, regardless of the composition of your army.

Perhaps the problem is that the combat table results in outcomes well suited for a smaller-scale operational setting, rather than the strategic game here.

The siege subsystem is worth mentioning. It is a simple system which does not add complexity to the general combat system and it is quite effective. It includes interesting events, like the possibility of mercenaries surrendering, mines and countermines being dug, and progressive weakening of fortifications. Nevertheless, the siege system is not devoid of some oddities.

In the first place, you can lay siege with cavalry units if the situation allows it. Another oddity is that an attacker can also lay siege to an unfortified town, and the defending units get a defense bonus (just like inside a fort). This siege process and the defensive bonus for unfortified cities seem inappropriate for 16th century warfare.

During sieges, Ottoman siege artillery may come in handy, as it gives a +1 die roll modifier. In the briefer scenarios (nine and twelve turns), though, artillery becomes too cumbersome and in the sessions I played the Ottomans usually leaves their artillery behind after the first few turns, because it slows down

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the march too much. In one of the first scenario games, the Ottoman player left his artillery at Belgrade the entire time.

The Ottomans will have enough numerical superiority and it does not matter whether you have a 7-strength artillery or two 4-strength cavalries, for example, when conducting a siege. That bonus of +1 DRM on the siege table that the presence of artillery brings does not seem worth the effort (you can transport your artillery by ship and there link with the main army, but it is still cumbersome). Moreover, you can assault a city like Vienna without artillery, a fact that would have been nearly impossible in that time. To lay siege to a city and starve it into surrender without artillery seems plausible, but assaulting it?

Another subsystem added to the basic game is involves raiding. This is a good point to the game, adding chrome and historical feeling without overly complex rules. Some units have raiding capability and at the end of a turn they can try to raid nearby towns (provided they have not taken part in any combat during the turn). The effects of a successful raid are VP gained and enemy units disrupted or even eliminated, while an unsuccessful raid can eliminate some (or even all) raiding units and give VP to the raided player instead. Without any modifier you have a 66% of success in a raid, but this ratio can easily fall if the other player is careful enough not to leave you to freely roam the Hungarian plains.

Of course, this is easier said than done, and both players are constantly thinking about how many units to detach from the main army to wreak havoc in the nearby villages. Do I keep almost all my units in the main army (or armies) or send two or three small or medium-sized raiding parties to get those easily attainable victory points?

FINAL THOUGHTS

If automatic victory is not achieved, the winner is determined by means of victory points, as explained above. In this regard, the game suffers from what I call "last turn syndrome". By that I mean, as in many other games, in the last turn you try to do what-

ever you can, just to get the victory points needed, regardless of the strategic situation that these actions would lead to if the game continued normally. You can try a desperate attack on Vienna, committing almost all your forces, an attack that in case of failure would have left you in a hopeless strategic situation, ready to be utterly defeated, with the gates of Belgrade open to the Hapsburgs, and maybe even those of Istanbul, too. But hey, it is the last turn, so who cares?

Overall, I liked the simplicity of the system, which has very few exceptions, and gameplay flows smoothly. I especially liked the supply, foraging, weather, attrition and raiding rules. Unfortunately, I think that the combat system almost kills the game, and like some other reviewer has said (Marco Arnaudo in one of his now famous video reviews), I am also under the impression that "the game is less than the sum of its parts".

We have here a set of interesting mechanisms combined in a way that leads to a somewhat bland and unexciting game experience, and I suspect that part of this general feeling of blandness is due to the combat system. Lash of the Turk is a decent game, interesting for its subject and for some of its mechanics, but not so much for the overall experience and the game outcome as a whole.

But is this game worth playing? Despite my criticism of the combat system and some other aspects of the game, my answer is yes, mainly for two reasons: the scarcity of other simulations on Suleiman's campaigns, and the simplicity of the system and its short playing time (about two hours for the briefer scenarios once you know the system, and no more than five hours for the longer ones). So, if you say to me "what about a game of Lash of the Turk right now", I'll answer "yes, let's play it!"





In the Trenches: Through Mud and Blood

The latest module of the *In the Trenches* series is now available from Jeux Grenier Games. This series, designed by John Gorkowski, simulates battles of the First World War at tactical scale.

Included in *In the Trenches: Through Mud and Blood* are operations covering the Western Front and the Balkan Front. Lead your French tanks to victory, fight off German attacks against the American "Lost Battalion", and take Hill 06 against withering Bulgarian MG fire.

In the Trenches: Through Mud and Blood includes five maps, seven operations, and 264 die-cut counters.

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by John Nebauer

NIGHTFIGHTER

AS THE NAME SUGGESTS, **NIGHTFIGHTER** COVERS NIGHT FIGHTER OPERATIONS DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR. It pits one or two fighters against a small number of bombers (typically two or three, but occasionally up to a dozen). Each hex represents roughly one mile, and each turn about a minute. As designer Lee Brimmicombe-Wood says in his Designer Notes, this is a topic rarely covered by any wargame.

When you open the *Nightfighter* box, you'll see that it comes with two maps, two counter sheets (one with 1/2" counters, the other 5/8"), rulebook, scenario booklet and a rules supplement which gives players the option of playing out campaign games. A sturdy double-sided player's screen that contains the all of the aircraft data and the main search and combat tables rounds out the package. The artwork is particularly handsome, and while the purple counters may seem unusual, when set against the dark map they add nicely to the game's atmosphere. Also inside the box are six six-sided dice (three blue and three purple). These have a nice marbling effect, which is a pleasant change from the usual monochromatic hexhedrons.

Information on the counters is kept to a minimum – just the aircraft type and a three digit ID number. The last digit in this number is the aircraft's Tally number (a value from 1-6)

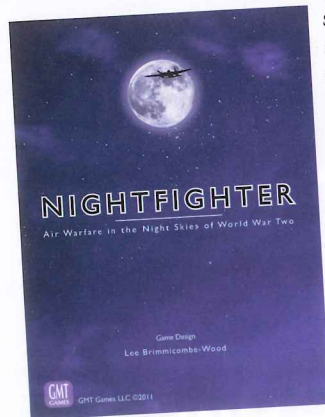
and is used for tallying (spotting). Some fighters also have a double crotchet musical notation, indicating that they are equipped with Schräge Musik (oblique-firing guns). Apart from aircraft, the remaining counters are used as aids for game functions such as radar sweeps, or as mnemonic devices.

Players game for all sorts of reasons. For the late Redmond Simonsen, games were to be played competitively, historicity (or lack thereof) taking a back seat. Others play to see a narrative develop, with the game as competition secondary. For these players historical modelling will be important in order to allow a plausible narrative to take shape. While I like a good competitive game, I tend towards the latter. I like gameplay for its own sake, but if I'm going to play a wargame (something that is usually a step up in rules complexity), I really want it to map to the events, or to plausible alternative outcomes, as well as possible. Perhaps I tend to favour this style of play because my win/loss record is rather like King Lear – more won than winning.

Nightfighter is an unusual wargame in that it is an asymmetrical semi-co-operative game. While there are two players, one of those is an umpire, who secretly controls the bombers on a map. The player screen sits between the players so that the umpire's map is hidden from view. The player controls the defending night fighters, conducting radar sweeps in order to locate and shoot down bombers, on their own map, before the bombers exit the map and proceed to their target. In this, the player is reliant upon the umpire for the results of radar sweeps, spotting attempts and so on. It is asymmetrical in that the umpire has perfect knowledge of both side's locations, while the player is, as it were, kept in the dark.

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REVIEW

DESIGNER LEE BRIMMICOMBE-WOOD
GRAPHICS LEE BRIMMICOMBE-WOOD, RODGER B. MACGOWAN, IAN WEDGE
PUBLISHER GMT

FIGHTER

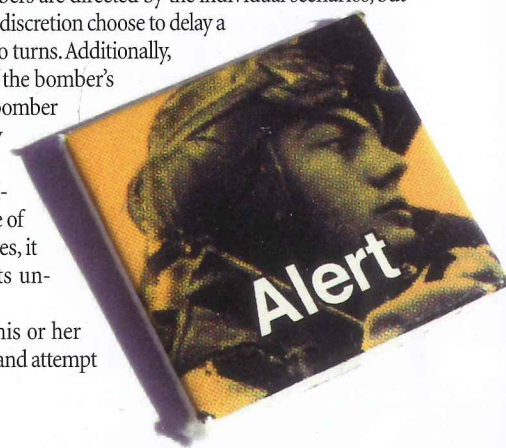
The umpire mechanism was chosen in order to model the central dilemma that the historical protagonists faced – locating the enemy. Imagine driving your car at night along an unlit country road without using your headlights. You'll get a sense of the dilemma pilots faced in simply trying to find a bomber at night, let alone trying to shoot one down.

Not knowing the location of enemy forces is a problem that all commanders face, and is something that is usually not modelled well in wargames. With a perfect eagle-eyes view of the battlefield and the pieces deployed thereon, simulating fog of war is a difficult exercise. Really, a commander doesn't even always know where their own forces are. An operational Napoleonic game will feature Bonaparte and his enemies giving directions for corps to move from one location to another. Once the order's given, the commander wouldn't actually have known where their troops were, except when reports were received from dispatch riders. Yet the player will always see exactly where their own troops are on the map. It would be really interesting to have a board game design where one's own troops exist in some state of Schrödinger-like state of indeterminacy once they're moved, their location known only intermittently. The designer's solution to the problem cuts out the need for complicated rules to prevent fighters from flying towards bombers that the pilot wouldn't have spotted, or rules for dummy markers that would make spotting the real McCoy little more than a crap-shoot. With diligence, those elusive bombers can be found and hunted down. The player more or less has the information that the pilot would have, all without the added bone-numbing cold and claustrophobic darkness. Because both players have quite distinct roles, it also means that

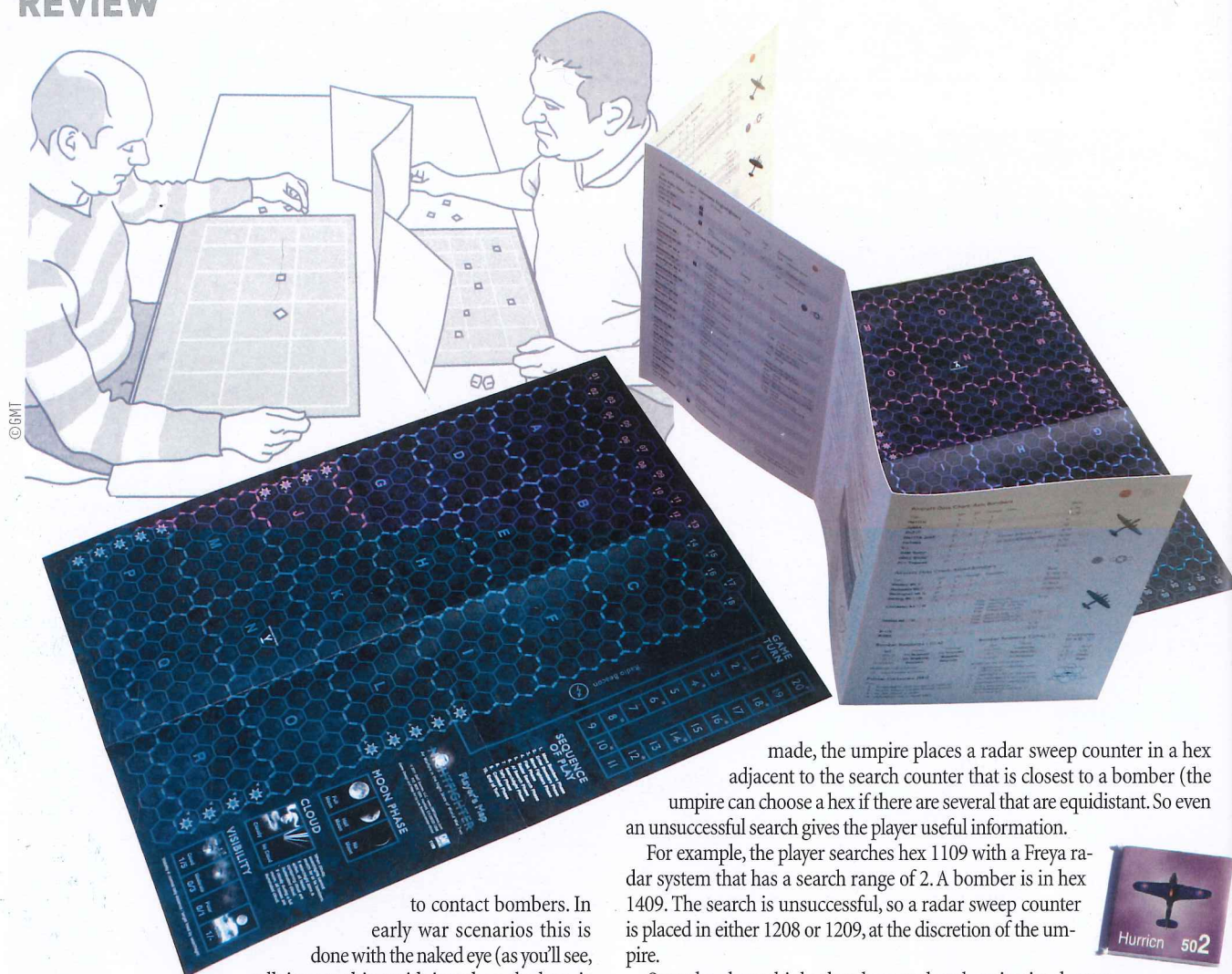
the player gets to concentrate on piloting and, leaving the rules for searching and tallying to the umpire.

The game structure is really very simple. Each turn the umpire moves bombers that are on the map, and then enters any new bombers into play. Chits are used to determine where bombers enter. These chits are double-sided (red on one side, yellow at the other), with both sides containing three hex row numbers. At the beginning of the game, the umpire secretly decides which colour chit will be used for the whole game. The chits will tend to concentrate entry to one side of the map or the other. If only one bomber enters in a turn, only the first row is used, if two the first and second are used, and so on. The entry turns for bombers are directed by the individual scenarios, but the umpire may at his or her discretion choose to delay a bomber's entry for one or two turns. Additionally, the umpire can also choose the bomber's speed for that turn. Once a bomber enters the map, it generally remains in its designated hex row and flies at its maximum speed to the other side of the board where, if it survives, it exits and heads towards its unknown destination.

The player then moves his or her fighters on the player's map and attempt



REVIEW



to contact bombers. In early war scenarios this is done with the naked eye (as you'll see, tallying anything with just the naked eye is simply a matter of luck). As the war progresses, the player has an increasingly sophisticated array of tools to help, though the umpire will also have more sophisticated tools to thwart the player. Each scenario lists visibility conditions, which set the range at which aircraft can be tallied. In Poor or Moderate visibility, this range is 0. In other words, your fighter must be in the same hex as a bomber to tally it. If visibility is Good, this increases to 1 hex. On a 27 x 18 hex map, this makes finding something with the naked eye tricky. It may also seem unreasonable, but remember that each hex is about a mile. Spotting something a mile away in the air is tricky enough in broad daylight.

To help the player find their prey, most scenarios have radar available. These may be early-war ground-based systems (where aircraft were directed by ground controllers) or Airborne Interception (AI) systems mounted in the aircraft. The latter are more accurate, but any form of radar is a godsend. When you're looking for a needle in a haystack, every little helps.

Ground-based radar counters have a search value. The player designates on his/her map a search hex and, if there is a bomber within the radius of the search value, the counter is flipped to its 'contact' side. There's no indication given of the number of aircraft or their precise location. But even if no contact is

made, the umpire places a radar sweep counter in a hex adjacent to the search counter that is closest to a bomber (the umpire can choose a hex if there are several that are equidistant. So even an unsuccessful search gives the player useful information.

For example, the player searches hex 1109 with a Freya radar system that has a search range of 2. A bomber is in hex 1409. The search is unsuccessful, so a radar sweep counter is placed in either 1208 or 1209, at the discretion of the umpire.

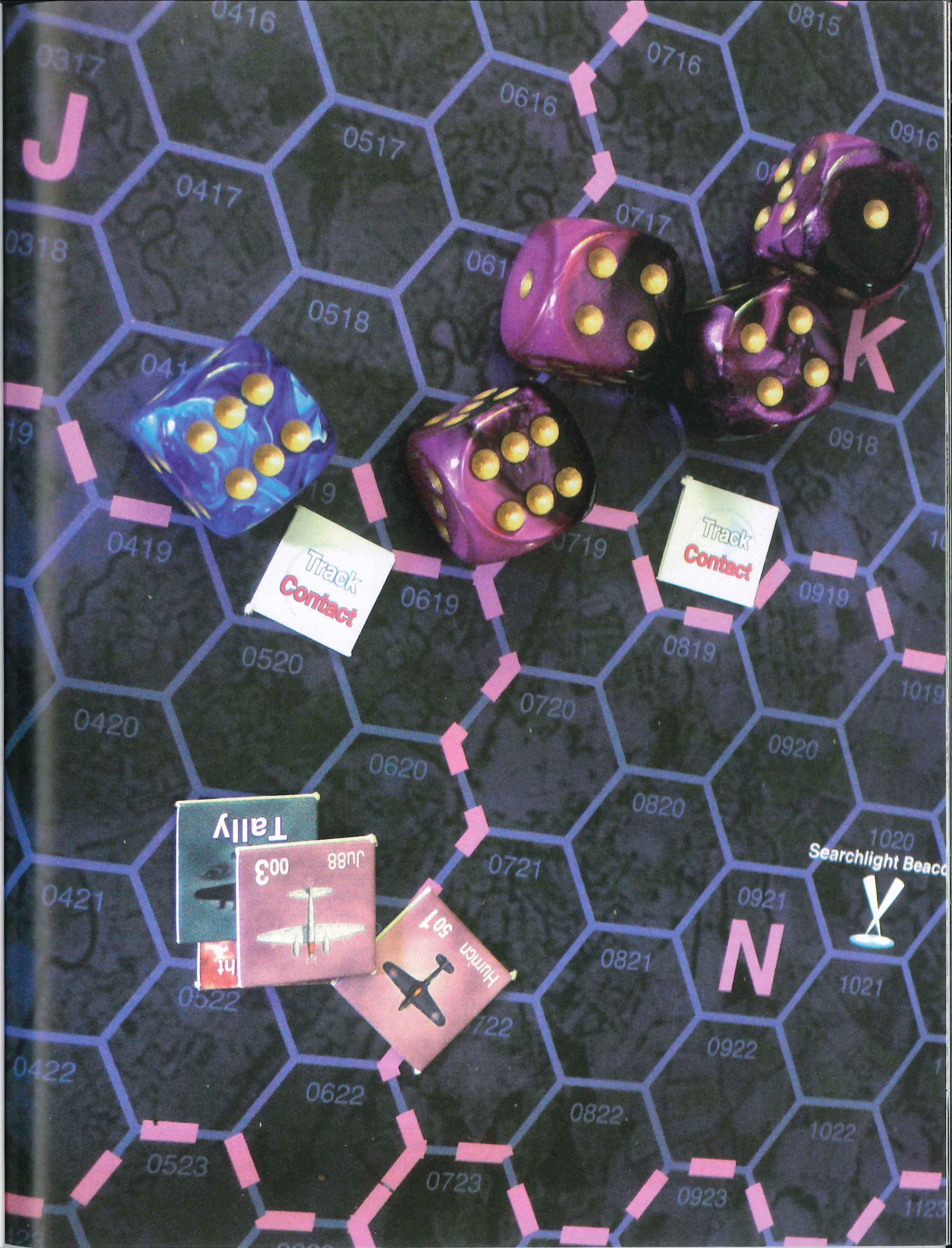
Once the player thinks that there are bombers in visual range, they can be tallied. The player rolls a number of dice depending on prevailing conditions: 1 for Poor visibility, 2 for Moderate, 3 for Good. Other conditions such as phase of the moon may make spotting easier by adding extra tally dice. The required number of dice is rolled, and if any bombers within tally range have a corresponding tally number, the aircraft is spotted. For example, in Poor visibility, there is a bomber with a tally number of 4 in the same hex as a fighter. The player rolls 1 die and gets a 4. The bomber is tallied and, if the fighter is pointing in the same direction as the bomber, can now shoot at it. The player rolls 2 dice and adds the fighter's firepower value and consults the combat table to see how many hits are scored. When the number of hits equals the bomber's damage value, it's shot down.

For example, in scenario 3, a Ju88 is in hex 1412, in the same hex and heading as a Wellington Mk I bomber. The Wellington has a tally number of 3. Visibility is Poor, but there is a full moon, so the player gets 2 dice instead of the usual 1. The player rolls a 3 and a 5. The 3 matches the bomber's tally number, so the player has spotted his target. Because the fighter matches the bomber's heading, the bomber can now be fired upon.

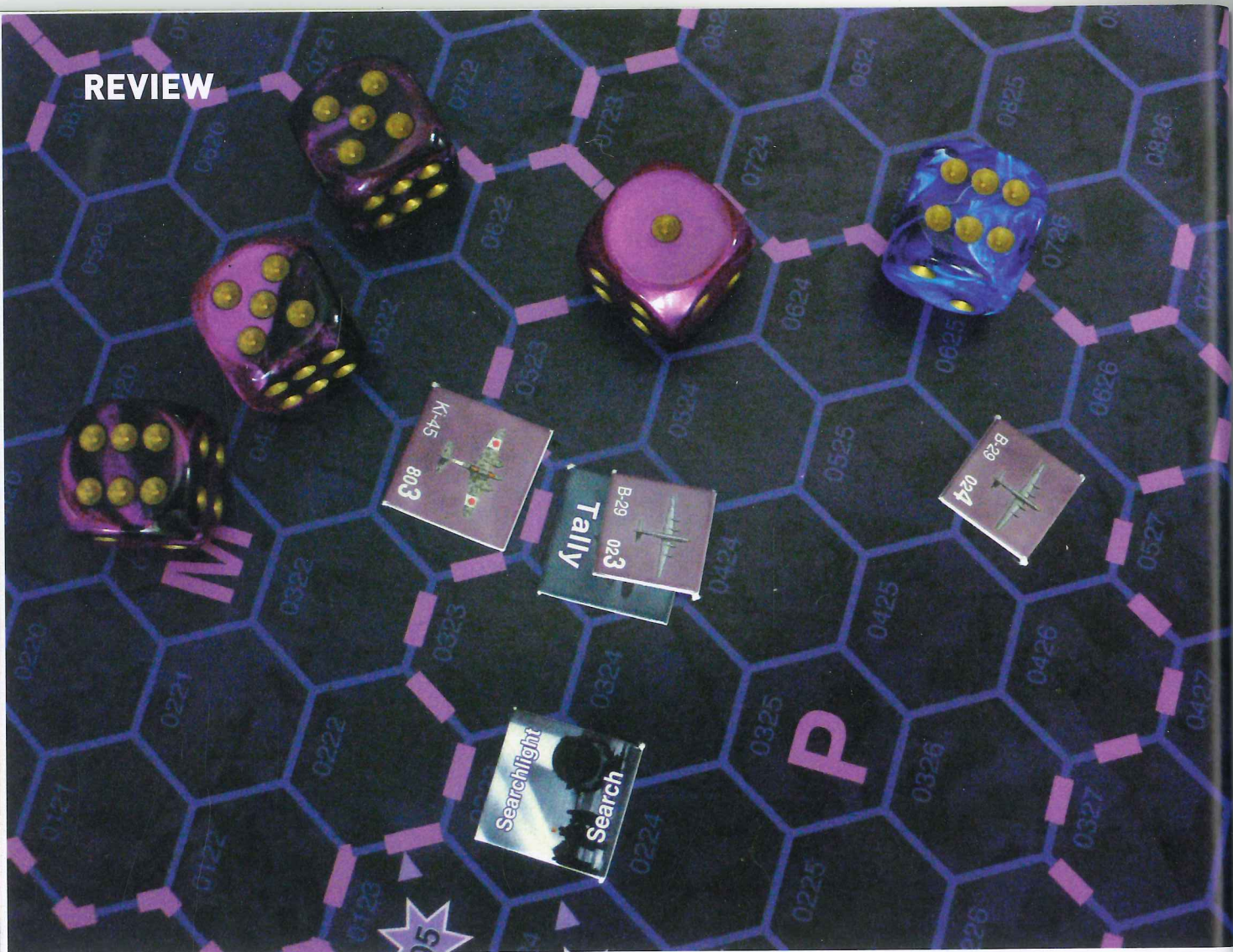
The game then proceeds in a similar vein on subsequent turns until the requisite number of bombers have been shot down to award the player victory, or until all



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REVIEW



bombers have successfully exited the map. Nightfighter is a tense game of cat and mouse in which the player must use the precious information gleaned from the umpire to best advantage. Unless there is no radar, the player should be able to discern where a bomber is, but must do so quickly enough to enter its hex while facing the same direction. There will be many times when a player will work out where the enemy is, only to find that there's no chance to catch it before it escapes.

Typically, tactical aircraft games deal with the minutiae of manoeuvre; players concentrate on turns, gaining lift, acceleration, planning when to dive out of the sun, and so on. There is an on differentiating movement speeds, firepower, manoeuvrability, and the focus of play is the plotted move that typically represents a few seconds of real time. With mile-wide hexes, these details of manoeuvre are glossed over. Bombers typically move 2-3 hexes per turn, and most fighters are not much faster, typically moving at 3-4 hexes per turn (though the ME262B-1a zips along at an impressive 7 hexes). Though the fighters are often little faster than their adversaries, they have the advantage of starting mid-map, while the bombers must cross the whole map before they can escape.

In the basic game, there are no altitude rules, and as the game becomes more complex altitude considerations are still quite rudimentary. Manoeuvre is also quite basic. Moving forward a hex costs 1 movement point, after which it can pivot 60° in its hex. In Nightfighter, the design focus is squarely on detection. If your pleasure lies in plotting a precise Immelmann turn and dive manoeuvre, then you will be disappointed.

When I learn a new game, I look for familiar concepts. So I'll look for whether units have zones of control, whether these stop movement, how many units

I can pile into a hex, whether combat between adjacent units is mandatory and how supply works. With increasing age and declining mental capacity I flounder somewhat if a game presents lots of new and/or complex rules. Because there is a lot of stuff that is presented in new ways, Lee has taken pity on us and made use of programmed instruction to ease us into things. The first scenario only requires you to absorb 10 pages of rules to get started, though the odds of the player finding something to shoot at are quite low. Scenario two introduces ground-based radar, and is another page of rules. Scenario three introduces searchlights, expert pilots, altitude advantage and advanced tallying and combat rules in another three pages. Bombers can now shoot back at you, or corkscrew into a new hex row. The remaining scenarios introduce more advanced radar types, jamming, naval actions and intruders (attacking night fighters that accompanied bomber streams to 'hunt the hunter').

Programmed instruction is certainly not new. Squad Leader used it effectively (though this was less useful as rules changed across multiple expansions). It's a formula that's worked for any scenario-based design where layers of detail are added incrementally. In Nightfighter, there are no rules to be unlearned in order for more advanced rules to be added. If programmed instruction rules aren't your cup of tea, they work well here, and if the early scenarios aren't competitive games, they are excellent learning experiences. It also lets the gamer choose a level of immersion that they're comfortable with. Someone with a passing interest in the topic may well be satisfied with the level of detail in the first three scenarios. In this mode, Nightfighter may well become a 'filler' game of choice. With typically less



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than a dozen pieces in play, players who are familiar with the rules should be able to knock over the early scenarios within an hour. The grognard with a deep interest in the topic can immerse themselves in the detail that the later war scenarios offer.

The scenario book has 10 scenarios, but each one has one or more variants. Scenario 2 (which introduces ground controlled radar) pits an ME110C-4 against three RAF Hampden Mk I bombers. However, there are four variants: the first is a Blenheim Mk I against three HE111s, the second a Do17Z-10 against three Whitley Mark Vs, the third a P-40B against two Emily bombers and the last Japanese J1N1 against three B-17Es. Each variant also has its own special rules, all of which adds variety to the same flavour of game. Taking the variants into account, there are nearly 70 scenarios for you to work your way through. Even if you get through a scenario a week, you've got more than a year's worth of solid game play to get through.

Having a player/umpire structure means that, while competitive play is certainly possible (by reversing roles), there is greater emphasis in the game on developing a narrative. This is not an unusual mechanism in the game world at large. The most famous use of this type of mechanism is of course Dungeons and Dragons and the flood of role-playing games that have appeared in its wake. With these, the emphasis is very firmly on narrative development, and the game is a very co-operative experience where there is no win/lose between players. Instead, players concentrate on character development, which might be understood as improving a character's statistical attributes, or understood as character development akin to the way characters develop in a piece of fiction.

This is the polar opposite of the board game, with set victory conditions, in which some players (usually a single player) will win and the others lose. Occasionally, a board game will have co-operation as an integral part of game play. For example, in Republic of Rome, players compete for prestige, but must cooperate sufficiently for the Roman state to survive, lest everybody lose.

Nightfighter falls between these extremes. There are victory conditions for each scenario for the player to fulfil, but the player is battling the game system rather than the umpire. The umpire in turn will in turn try to confuse the player, for example by delaying the entry of some bombers. But because the umpire has perfect knowledge of the situation, each individual game is not a contest between gamers per se. In a sense, it plays rather like a solitaire game, with a human providing the AI and feedback, instead of the player relying on a series of charts or some other artificial AI mechanism. For the truly competitive, many games will play sufficiently quickly to allow the players to swap roles in a single session.

If the idea of wargame a la *Dungeons and Dragons* appeals to you, Nightfighter also comes complete with a campaign supplement, where the player manages a squadron of Luftwaffe nightfighters and their crews, in which pilots gain experience, new crew members replace those killed, and new aircraft are received as the campaign develops. Pilots can be awarded medals for various levels of achievement, right up to the Knight's Cross with Oakleaves, Swords and Diamonds, and highly decorated experten might get their own personalised aircraft (hmmmm - let's see, I have a level 20 pilot, flying a +8 He219A-6...). To keep players on their toes (and to provoke howls of anguish), random events might see a seasoned pilot killed in an accident, an RAF raid damage your latest and coolest machine or (happily) a new experten might join the unit. I didn't have a chance to play any of the campaign scenarios before this review was done, but I'm certainly keen to do so. I have many pleasant memories of a Wings over Arras campaign that I hope not to emulate.

I prefer game reviews to deal with the game as published. If a game doesn't work out of the box without significant errata, I believe that the review ought to reflect that. Living rules at best are an excellent tool for incorporating changes, but it seems that they often substitute for poor playtesting or development. At the time of writing, having looked through Boardgame Geek and Consimworld, there are no errata to report, and only a few minor FAQs, which indicate a thoroughly professional job.


ALONE IN THE DARK

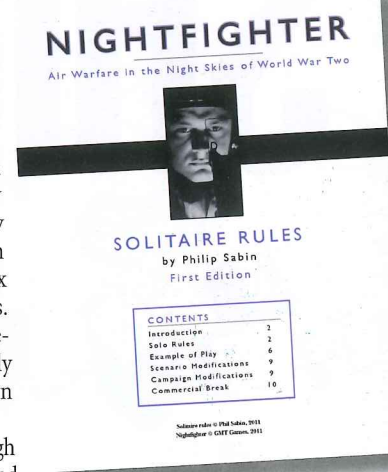
From what I've described, *Nightfighter* might come across as a solitaire design which substitutes a human brain for an AI system. I hope that I've indicated that I think this to be a positive feature. However, if *Nightfighter* appeals to you, but not your gaming cohort, the game as published quite understandably has a very limited solitaire capacity. Happily, and in defiance of my own strictures of reporting on the game as published, there is a fix available to rectify this. At the time of writing, Philip Sabin, professor of Strategic Studies in the War Studies Department of King's College in London has created a set of solitaire rules that will let players play all published scenarios except 9 and 10. It will even let you play out the campaign game.

It adds just over five pages of rules modifications, a three page example of play and a couple of pages of scenario and campaign game modifications. It eliminates the need for an umpire by giving bombers an uncertainty level (shades of Schrödinger). When bombers are due to enter, instead of entering as indicated by the scenario, one or more bombers enter with varying states of uncertainty. Low uncertainty represents the actual location of a bomber that is subject to a tally or other sort of fix. Bombers usually begin at moderate uncertainty, which mean that a bomber may be in the hex indicated, or any of 17 adjacent hexes. Radar sweeps and so on serve to reduce the uncertainty level, and nicely replicates the effect of narrowing down searches as the game progresses.

Again, with limited time, I got through a play of scenario three and managed to find a bomber, though not to shoot it

down. By the time this goes to print, I daresay that Phil's rules will be available. I really enjoy the experience as it's designed, but these solitaire rules are a good substitute.

There are sometimes produced games that are more than the sum of their parts. No part of this game is individually remarkable. Most of the mechanisms have been used elsewhere in other contexts. However the combination of effects that the designer has employed has produced something extraordinary. It's also presented with apparent simplicity. It isn't overworked with unnecessary chrome or detail. Like the creation of a master Japanese chef, the elegance of the presentation disguises the work that went into its creation. If the topic and the means by which it's communicated sound appealing, this game is definitely for you. Playing a wargame in which the game play feels akin to a role-playing game is to my mind pleasantly different experience and is something that any gamer ought to try at least once. Even if this topic isn't high on your radar, give *Nightfighter* a try anyway, because this game is the work of a master craftsman. 



A note of warning: I am listed in the alpha playtest credits. I played a couple of games of the initial iteration, and wrote my thoughts about it here: <http://thesparrowsnest.wordpress.com/2009/05/18/playtest-session/>. You can have a read of it if you like, but as I'll be covering similar themes here you won't be missing anything (apart from spelling errors) if you don't. I haven't played it again until I received the published version from GMT.

REVIEW

by John D. Burt

DESIGNER TOM & GRANT DALGLIESH GRAPHICS DON TROIANI PUBLISHER COLUMBIA GAMES

SHILOH: 1862



The battle of Shiloh, fought April 5-6, 1862, was the eye-opening event of the American Civil War. The two day affair witnessed almost 25,000 casualties between the combatants and put the nation on notice that the war was not going to be an easy one.

The battle has seen several simulations, including Battline/Avalon Hill's venerable *Fury in the West*. Multiman Publishing featured it in *A Fearful Slaughter* as part of their regimental combat series in 2004, for example. Recently it has re-emerged in several forms.; *Strategy & Tactics* Magazine put out Paul Koenig's version in issue #264; Decision Games also issued it as one of their new *Musket & Saber* Folio series, and finally, Columbia Games released *Shiloh: 1862*, their block and area movement version of the April slaughter around Shiloh Church.

For owners of Columbia's *Gettysburg* game, be warned: *Shiloh* is a completely different, simpler system. Block units representing infantry, artillery, cavalry and headquarters move within areas on the map and engage in combat if enemy blocks are there as well. This is not a battle of maneuver; Shiloh was a tactically unsubtle bludgeon of a battle and so is the game.

The 22" x 25" map is a really nice view of the battlefield. The multicolored woods graphics contrast well with the pale green of the clear ground. Area borders are pretty clear once you've played a couple times; darker grey lines, small streams and slopes predominate the borders and each has separate limits on movement across, depending on whether the enemy is there or not.

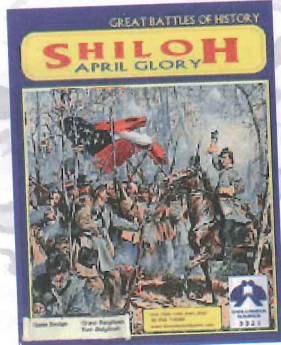
Units are represented by blocks that, like most block games, are rotated as hits occur to decrease strength. Units - in this case generally brigades - have their strength points and division or corps

affiliation shown as well as the designation of firepower, basically a letter and number. The letter A-C signals when a unit fires in combat, current strength points says how many die are rolled, and firepower designated the die roll or less needed to score a hit on the opponent. For example, Cleburne's excellent infantry brigade of Hardee's Corps initially has three strength points and is rated a C3 - it fires after A and B units and, if not damaged in previous fire, rolls three D6 and hits on rolls of 1-3.

One key to the game are the headquarters units. These blocks also show a strength point, and indeed this strength is the number of die they roll in combat. But these points are also used as command points. At the start of a turn, headquarters (divisional for the Union and Corps for the Confederates) can spend a command point to issue movement commands to any unit in the same area and all affiliated units within command range (generally one area for Union and two for Confederates.) Commanded units can then move without having to roll for attrition aka a 50% chance of losing a strength point.

Although I have no problem with this command system, I do have a problem with the strength point and stacking aspect of headquarters. These blocks count toward stacking in this game, which feels wrong if they represent a group of men on horses (or foot) yelling orders; thus, stacking makes them equivalent to a nominal brigade of 2,000 men, like Sherman's 4th Brigade under Buckland. I think the headquarters strength should be either combat strength or command points, not both as it stands. I'd prefer them to stack for free and roll a single die for combat if present, regardless of command points.

All blocks generally act the same. All can move one area (or two in on a road; so, cavalry is as fast as artillery and infantry. That's counterintuitive, but probably not a major problem in a maneuver-less slugfest that this is. Cavalry can avoid battle immediate if desired and artillery must stay on



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REVIEW

roads and is handicapped initially in a battle their side initiates. Those are both good touches.

The sequence of play with hourly turns is straight forward. Except for Turn 1 (6 am), players roll for initiative to see who moves first. The first player identifies headquarters that will expend command points, then moves, restricted by stacking and border crossing limits if entering an enemy space. Stacking is limited to six blocks per side in clear areas and four in woods. The second player then identifies his command point expenditures, and moves, limited by stacking and blocks pinned by first player moves. In other words if you have four blocks in an area and the enemy moves three into it first, three of your blocks are pinned and you can only move one block out. Hence, initiative is important. If your opponent had not moved those three blocks in, all four of yours would be available for movement.

Once both sides have moved, the initiative player chooses what order combat in contested area is resolved. Unit ratings give the order of firing: defending A-class units (artillery) before attacking A units, defending B (cavalry and headquarters) before attacking B units, and finally defending C units (infantry) before attacking C units. Combat lasts four rounds with the fourth round requiring attacking units to retreat, if defenders still exist. After round one, all units can retreat instead of fire; cavalry is the only unit that can bug out on round one. Hits have to be taken by the strongest unit on the opposing side.

There are a couple nuances to combat. The biggest is that defending units that are sent as reinforcements into areas where the initiative player moved units to attack, do not come into play until the second round. If all initial defenders are eliminated in round one, the reinforcements become the attackers. That's a nice touch.

A better touch is an optional rule on flanking. Basic combat has all attackers available for combat immediately, even if they didn't start in the same area. That is questionable given the horrendous command problems coordinating such an attack would create in a forested area. As an option, the attacker can designate a main attacking force and a flanking force coming from another area. These flankers don't engage until round three, but fire more effectively by adding +1 to their firepower (i.e. a C2 unit acts like a C3 unit.) I like this rule, but it adds to the Confederate difficulties.

Successful combat allows the winner (attacker or defender) to regroup, and move into an adjacent empty or friendly area.

Once all combat is resolved, the turn ends with each side getting three supply points to dole out. These supply points can replace command points or strength points, with limits of one per block and two per area. If the Confederates capture an area with a Union camp, they gain an additional two supply points as a one-time reward. Union recapture of the same camp does not gain them extra supply points - basically, all the coffee is gone.

The supply point mechanism in *Shiloh* is the game's best feature in my opinion. Both players will be forced to make hard decisions about where the points go. The Union not only have to decide when to replace combat losses or activate divisions, but will have to decide when to hold onto camps and when to skedaddle. The Confederates will have to choose between keeping their combat power up and keeping leaders command capable. One interesting (and nasty) tactic I experienced in a recent game as the Confederates, was watching the Union backpedal very quickly (had the initiative, the damned Yankee...), giving up three camps immediately with little combat. That gave me the camps but no real place - other than command points - to use the extra supply points.

Game setup is fairly simple, but non-historical. The five Union division commanders start in their camps and the units of their commands in adjacent areas with a maximum of two blocks per area (remember headquarters blocks count). Sherman (5th Division) and Prentiss (6th Division) are the only two Union leaders who start with command points, each with one. The Confederate Corp leaders (Hardee, Polk and Bragg) start in their on-map camps and then place their troops within command range and stacking limits where they want to. As designers Tom and Grant Dalglish stated later, they

didn't want to saddle players with the idiot deployment both sides used. The end result of this design decision is that the Confederates are more ready to dance and both Sherman and Prentiss have some additional troops.

One of the major design features of any *Shiloh* game is how Union surprise is handled. *Shiloh 1862* handles this with the Confederate free set up, the Unions limited stacking ability and command point limits, period. I was surprised not to see a Union morale check (requiring a retreat) or a firepower bonus for the Rebels. But unlike their Gettysburg game, morale is not a function here. And in my first couple games played as the Union commander, my die rolling was so poor that no additional Confederate bonus was needed! However, after multiple battles, I'd suggest that rolling for initiative should not start until 10-11am time frame. That lets the Confederates lead the dance early.

Both sides get reinforcements. Breckenridge's Reserve Corps shows up at 9am for the Rebels; Lew Wallace's 3rd Division arrived between 3 and 5pm. Buell's Army of Ohio starts arrived at 6pm.

Victory is predicated in unit loss. If the Confederates have killed off ten more Union units than they have suffered, they win on the first day. Between one and nine extra losses, the game goes into the second day with Buell's fresh troops leading the way and saving Grant's butt - at least according to Buell's account. If the Confederates lose more or have equal losses, they lose.


Most of our games have started with decent Confederate advances, but with the Union doing everything they can to pull back and concentrate. If, for example, Sherman can concentrate five or six of his units at his camp, the Confederates will have to maneuver into several adjacent areas in order to put the same number into battle with him - the maximum they can put across a single border with his camp area is three, so they'll need to come from several different directions. See the optional flanking rule for an interesting side effect of this. At that point it becomes a slugfest - or dice fest in this case. And most of our games came down to several dice fests.

By the early afternoon, the Confederates have been suffering from command paralysis, due to the intermingling of corps units - there is a tendency to look at strength only, not command structure in pushing through the initial Union lines. In all our games, there came a moment when the Confederate player is looking at maximum Union stacks and wondering how to grapple with them. It's enough to stop the game cold. Generally, if the rebels are already well ahead in units killed, you simply grapple and hope you kill as many or more of his than he'll kill of yours. If this sounds bloody - just check with Braxton Bragg because that is exactly what he tried to do in the real battle.

The more games played, the better the initial Union deployment became to minimize the initial attacks and maximize concentration capability. And while your mileage may vary, I don't particularly enjoy dice fests with little maneuver to keep things interesting. A side note to Union commanders: Both Union losses occurred when the Union attacked areas on Day One. It might be fun to reach out and try for that isolated Rebel unit, but you will generally pay for it.

There is a nice optional rule about front lines that should be tried and used in the game. Basically it says that areas next to enemy areas have to be treated as enemy areas for border crossing limits. It makes things more interesting, if only until the Union concentrates.

We also tried the historical setup that has been created and posted on the Boardgamegeek website. After that particular setup, you'll say as every historian who's ever studied *Shiloh* has said: "*Beauregard was an idiot.*" The gist of the historical setup is simply the Confederates cannot launch a good/decent turn one attack, and after turn one the Union will be concentrated.

As a rule, I really like block games. They have a fast setup, the fog of war is great, and in general you have to deal with tactical problems...like having a C1 unit roll three "1"s to unhinge what the moment before had been a great defensive position. *Shiloh 1862*, however, went stale for me pretty quickly. Too much slug fest, not enough maneuver. 

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REVIEW

by Laurent Schmitt

DESIGNER PATRICK RECEVEUR GRAPHICS LIONEL LIRON, FRANÇOIS VANDER MEULEN PUBLISHER HEXASIM

SPARTACUS IMPERATOR

73 BC. Led by a man named Spartacus, a group of enslaved gladiators, just escaped from a training school in Campania, take refuge on the slopes of Mont

Vesuvius. As Rome sends its militia in to squash this nuisance, none realized that the most terrible of the Servile Wars was about to begin. Will you lead the rebellion and give liberty to the thousands of slaves and proletarians who embraced your cause? Or will you wear the robes of the Roman Empire, and swear not to return to the Senate until the last of the rebellious slaves has been crucified? No matter who you choose, do not forget that those from whom everything has been stolen still have their will to fight.

ROME AGAINST HER SLAVES

As the 2nd century BC came to a close, the Roman imperial machine, now at full speed, continued to expand the borders of its Mediterranean domain. The fruits of conquest flowed to the heart of the empire, included the hundreds of thousands of conquered men, women, and children, sold at auction. The living conditions of these slaves, employed in all levels of the Roman society and economy, varied greatly, but some refused to resign themselves to their fate and dragged Rome into long and costly rebellions.

While the era of Spartacus is by far the most well-known, two servile wars rocked Sicily long before the gladiators escaped Capua. From 139 to 132 BC, veritable slave armies made up of free men who had lost everything (in the literal sense of the proletariat, those who possessed nothing but their children, or proles) terrorized the countryside, pillaging cities and large domains and defeating the armies sent against them. The father of the rebellion, a certain Eunus, even founded an ephemeral Sicilian kingdom that did not last the return of the legions from Spain in 133. Seasoned by a bloody campaign, the Roman legions crushed the rebellion and crucified the survivors.

It was again in Sicily that a new rebellion began three decades later. In 104 BC, two slaves named Salvius and Athenion, rose-up with their companions and the mediocre troops sent by Rome were incapable of putting the rebellion down. Salvius, now styled as Tryphon, was named king and defied the Senate. Less than three years later, free from the campaigns against the Teutons and the Cimbri, elite Roman troops re-established order.

Returning to 73 BC and the foothills

of Mont Vesuvius, Spartacus and his men, having pierced the Roman lines, worked their way up Italy to the Alps, brutally pushing aside the troops sent against them. Despite the

massacre of his lieutenant, Crixus, and tens of thousands of fellow rebels that had been separated from the main force, Spartacus seemed to have opened the route through the Alps to Thrace, his homeland. Instead, he turned south and marched back into Italy. The army numbered more than 70,000 men and had proven itself capable of defeating the Romans in battle. The end of the Servile War came only when the Senate had finally decided to act and in 71 BC, ten legions were placed under the command of Crassus. The armies of Pompey and Lucullus were recalled from Spain and the east, respectively.

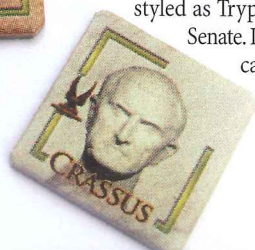
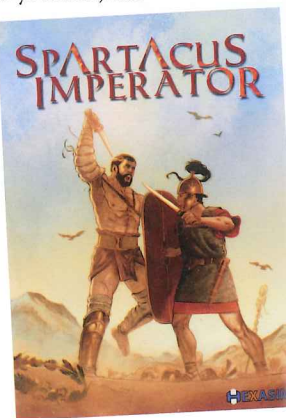
Not wanting to share the glory with his rivals, Crassus forced the rebels into a battle on the banks of the Silarus and 60,000 of them were killed, including Spartacus. The survivors were crucified along the Via Appia, reminding all slaves up to the gates of Rome the fate reserved for those among them wanting their liberty.

OF CARDBOARD AND MARBLE

More than 20 centuries later, the nice cover of *Spartacus Imperator* invites us to replay this drama from antiquity. A pleasant surprise awaits us inside the box, with a lot of colored and attractive components.

Rarely has a rules booklet fit its name so badly, as the rules themselves occupy fewer than 10 pages. A very detailed example of play is included, as well as a rigorous history (Patrick Receveur, well-versed in the period, has removed the burden of having to check the sources for you and I) and even a short Latin glossary! The publisher also has not skimped on the number of player aids, with a descriptive aid for each scenario, as well as distinct displays for deploying troops during pitched battles and sieges.

Wargamers used to a more austere quality to player aids and rulebooks may be surprised with the good-looks and color of the aids and rulebook. In addition to the dynamic and varied silhouettes of the combatants designed by Lionel Liron, the game features the inimitable stamp of François Van



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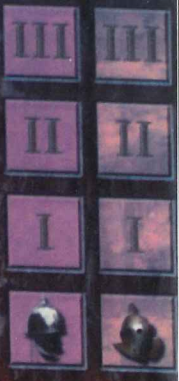
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CUS
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VIGNES DU VESUVIUS MONS
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A JOUER IMMÉDIATEMENT
SPARTACUS attaque par surprise
GLABER en Campania.
Lors de cette bataille, le joueur romain
ne peut lancer aucun dé avant la phase
de mêlée générale. EXCEPTIONNELLEMENT,
SI SPARTACUS perd la bataille,
il peut retraiter où il veut.

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ANNO II
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I





REVIEW



der Meulen, done with finesse and subtlety. It is no coincidence that his name is associated with two of the best-looking Hexasim products, *Kanawakajima* (1) and now *Spartacus Imperator*.

While the printing work is of good quality, the definition on the counters is somewhat unsatisfactory (for example, I had difficulty identifying the arrows on the units capable of firing). On two or three counters the backsides were also offset (though without consequence in game terms), and the thickness of the playing cards is perhaps too slim.

The map is a real game board worthy of the best in Eurogaming. The omnipresence of the marbled texture (all over the map, on the cards, counter, and even the dice) may put some off, but all is presented with a high degree of quality, and it would be a positive thing to see this level of quality in every wargame.

A SIMPLE, YET EFFICIENT SYSTEM

The rules are short, coming in at only six pages if we exclude the description of the components. They are also easy to understand and explain. A new player could be made familiar with the rules within an hour, without them having to open the rulebook. The exhaustive and detailed example of play should dispel most doubts, and an official erratum is on the publisher's website for the rest (2). Though there are specific rules for each scenario, in general the system is easily digested.

Before going any further, it is important to point out that *Spartacus Imperator*, despite the presence of playing cards, is not a card driven game. The actions of the two sides are not determined by cards, which are not drawn randomly or replayed during the game. The scale is strategic, with the two battle fields (Italy is on one map, Sicily on another) divided into large areas. Units represent between 500 and 2,000 combatants, while leader counters identify Roman magistrates for the one side and rebel leaders for the other. Each game turn corresponds to a three-month season.

The preliminary phases of the turn are played quickly, and are spent replacing losses, redeploying fleets (Roman and pirate), and recuperating provinces that have been sacked. Players then move to the activation phase, by far the most important. Each leader has a certain number of activation points available each season (not surprisingly, little is done in the winter) that can be spent on various actions. Certain actions are available to both players, like passing on the turn (which costs one point), moving units, or playing a strategy card.

Other actions reflect the particularities of each side. The rebels can ravage the countryside and try to recruit new soldiers, while the Romans can try to consolidate their shattered forces to make them combat-ready again. Players alternate until both are out of activation points. An advantage to this system is that action is always taking place, and players do not have to wait for their opponent's turn to finish.

The system is, thus, simple, but not without its nice touches. For example, not only are leaders limited in the amount of units they can lead, but because of their rivalries they can not occupy the same area as another friendly leader. Also, with activation points being assigned to each leader and not to each player as whole, more care has to be taken in how they are spent.

Another important element is determining the opportune moment to play a strategy card. Few in number and discarded once played, they can be decisive if they are not wasted.

Adding to this is the game of cat and mouse produced by the position of fleets and the deployment of rebel units with their values hidden, demonstrating how many finer points the game has.

The lack of more advanced logistical and political mechanics is unfortunate, but the subject matter does justify it as the Romans are fighting on their own home soil and the Senate is more concerned with events taking place outside of the Republic. But the operational system might frustrate the more demanding players, if it was not tied to a particularly stimulating combat resolution system.

AD VICTORIAM!

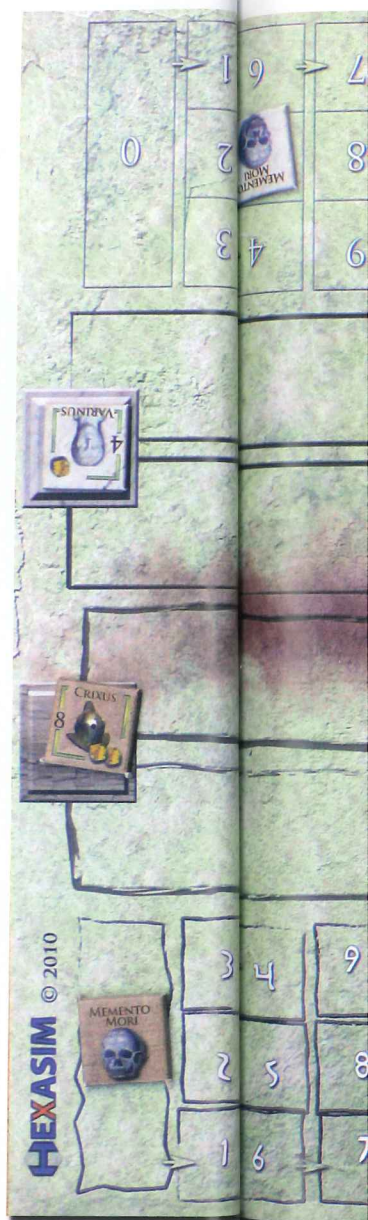
Everyone who has played an operational or strategic scale Antiquities game has to admit that the resolution of combat is a delicate question, considering that in this era the results of battles often decided an entire campaign, if not a war. Plenty of games have tried, with mixed results.

One of the biggest criticisms of the venerable *Imperium Romanum II* (WEG) is that battles were reduced to the single roll of a modified die. Though popular in some quarters, much ink has been spilt over the resolution of battles with playing cards in *Hannibal* (Avalon Hill, now Valley Games). Joe Miranda did better with his *Ancient Wars* (Decision Games) series, though the detailed system does get in the way of the game's rhythm. Rather than go on, let's see how Patrick Receveur cut the Gordian Knot.

When a battle is launched, units and leaders are transferred to the player aids, with the identity of rebel forces hidden. These aids reproduce the make-up of each army in combat, divided into three tactical boxes: first line (*prima acies*), second line (*secunda acies*), and a kind of reserve (*vae victis*), meant for the units which have become too damaged to have any influence on the battle. Each player then has a number of die re-rolls, useable on his or her own die rolls or those of their adversary, the number of them depending on the skill of their leader.

Tactics must be chosen from a list of four possibilities: frontal attack (heavy infantry try to breakthrough), flanks (cavalry tries to envelop the enemy), dissuasion (light units harass the enemy, while the rest prepares to retreat), and general attack (all in). This decision is crucial, as it determines which units are sent to the front line. While these units will inflict the critical hits, they will also be the ones taking the first losses. But that is not all: each tactic can break another tactic of a different type, which means that the loser risks losing his entire army in the process, leader included, if the wrong tactic was played. For example, opting for a frontal attack means putting the heavy infantry in the first line and crushing an enemy mounting a general attack. On the other hand, if the enemy mounts a flanking attack your army will be cut-off and cut-up.

A firing phase is followed by two melee phases. Depending on their capabilities, units participate in one or the other, or both types of combat. No charts



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or strength ratios in this game. All that is necessary is to roll a result inferior or equal to the strength of a unit to cause a loss, two losses if the result is equal and the unit is in the first line (critical hit). After rolls from both sides, losses are taken at the end of each phase, starting with the units placed in the first line. The army that has suffered the most losses, and if the enemy has survived, loses the battle and must retreat from the combat zone – of course, as long as the combination of tactical cards was not fatal!

What is so satisfying about this system is that it gives the impression of playing out a plausible battle of Antiquity.

Players are made to make decisions that can decisively influence the course of the battle, be it in the choice of tactics, re-rolls, and the management of losses. There is real tension when the players reveal their tactical choices (just as in a game of *chifumi* (3)), or when a good roll is replaced by a less happy result.

Of course, not every battle will be equally interesting. If the possibility did not exist to catch your enemy off-balance and at a great disadvantage, what would be the point of the strategic aspect of the game? Do not count on a re-hashing of the final confrontation between Spartacus and Crassus at the Silarus. The elite armies mobilized by Rome in 71 BC are simply invulnerable, automatically destroying any rebel force they come into contact with. This does not bother me at all, as it avoids the playing out of an inevitable massacre.

The siege rules are somewhat surprising, differing from pitched battles in that only the besieging player chooses a tactic from two options: harassment (exchange of missiles only) and assault (scaling of the walls and a brutal mopping up). If the place is not captured, the besieger retreats automatically. While the Roman Army did not conduct any traditional sieges during the Servile Wars, why not give players the option?

LIBERTY OR THE CROSS

Three scenarios are included in the game, corresponding to each of the great revolts described earlier. All three are playable in one evening, clocking in at about two hours for the shortest and maybe four hours for "Eunus", which lasts

- 1 - Simulating the 16th century Japanese battle, this game owes its design and artwork to FVM and is a pearl. Worth discovering as we await another game from this publisher.
- 2 - Though it isn't always quick enough, the designer responds quickly and courteously to questions posed on the forums.
- 3 - Rock-paper-scissors. The ancient bluffing game that allows the most cunning to avoid household chores.



INFESTIS PILIS
DETUIT: LES ALLES
Toutes vos unités avec un glaive bien
en deuxième ligne montent en première
ligne lors des phases de mêlée.
Elles subissent alors les deux premières
pertes et font des coups critiques.
Votre armée peut retraiter à la fin
de chaque segment, sur 4, 5 et 6 en
montagne ou 6 en plaine.

AD GLADIOS
ATTAQUE FRONTALE
DETUIT: ATTAQUE GENERALE
Toutes vos unités avec un
glaive jaune en deuxième ligne
montent en première ligne lors
des phases de mêlée.
Elles subissent alors les deux premières
pertes et font des coups critiques.



for 32 seasons. Final victory conditions are the same across the board, survival for the rebels and ending the revolt for the Romans. A premature victory is also possible, for example by capturing Massilia or by fleeing by sea in the "Spartacus" scenario. The rebels start the game with few units and only one leader, but Rome has weak armies and weak leaders to oppose them. It is, thus, imperative that the rebel player seize the initiative immediately, even if he is only hanging on by his fingernails.



What objectives to pursue? What policies to apply in the countryside, whether it be recruitment or systematic sacking (which prohibits recruitment, but allows for the repair of battle-damaged units thanks to the booty)? How best to manage the inevitable splintering of the rebel forces into several armies that refuse to co-operate? These are just some of the dilemmas that the rebel player faces in the "Spartacus" scenario.

The Romans cannot simply await reinforcements behind their walls, and the decisions to make are no less difficult. What are your adversary's intentions and how best to foil them? Is it better to go after Spartacus himself or to crush his lieutenants?

Is it a good idea to engage a force the make-up of which is unknown? Clearly, both sides have a lot to do.

Another stimulating aspect is that games are close and balanced, with the advantage going back and forth depending on the outcome of a battle or the playing of a strategy card. Yes, a lot of dice are rolled in *Spartacus Imperator*, but this has the effect of balancing things out – that is if your luck holds!

Finally, let us tackle the delicate issues of historical scripting, which *Battles Magazine* has brought up on several occasions (4). I am among those who ask for little, and in this case I could have done with less. For example, the first action of the rebel player is already decided in the "Spartacus" scenario, which also has the most special rules and the most strict victory conditions. In these terms, I felt freer in "Eunus". Certain cards are tied to a particular date or leader, meaning that the respect for history is maintained at the price of surprise. There is also the option of a forced march, which Spartacus can only use to head south – is it impossible to imagine some circumstances where this might have been done in a different direction? (5)

Generally speaking, uncertainty and history can be combined at little cost, for example by making the arrival of the elite Roman troops random (assuming that their wars elsewhere have not gone as they did in history, which is nothing unusual to postulate in a wargame (6)). But the game is what it is, and while players may feel a little too historically guided, it cannot be said that *Spartacus Imperator* inhibits putting into place your own strategy or that it enforces a historical timeline.

A TENTATIVE CONCLUSION?

Passionate about this period of history, I expected a lot from this game, especially since Patrick Receveur had designed the interesting *Optimus Princeps* (7). At the very least, I can say that I was not disappointed. Nice artwork and ergonomic, *Spartacus Imperator* is also well-designed. The double strategic/tactical system works harmoniously, even if the tactical aspect is the more interesting of the two. The strategic element, while not uninteresting, might leave a little to be said for some gamers. Finally, and though this may be anecdotal, it is nice to see a designer who perfectly masters his subject not take himself too seriously and inject a little sense of humor into his work (8).

I can already see someone, his lines drawn-up like at Karnak (Crassus edition), raising his hand to ask what comes next. The gods themselves have whispered into my ear the names of Pyrrhus, Hamilcar, and Vercingetorix, evoking the development of strategic rules designed to deal with their campaigns. I go no further, for fear of ending like Prometheus. But what's certain is that the success of this first attempt depends on the further development of these ideas. After all, between the complex *Ancient World* of GMT and the *Ancient Wars* of Decision Games, graphically surpassed and tired, there is certainly place enough for a series as well-designed as this first *Spartacus Imperator*. **B**

SPARTACUS OR SPARTACUS IMPERATOR?

You are no doubt aware that a game called *Spartacus* was recently released by Compass Games, a title which leads us to compare the game to *HexaSim's*. From a material standpoint, the Compass Games title ranks a little bit below that of the French publisher, whether in terms of graphic quality or design. *Spartacus's* mechanics are that of a classic CDG, which should not displease the fans of *Hannibal* (from which it also borrows the system of battle with cards, though the use of this system is optional).

The operational theatre extends from Spain to Turkey, the subject matter being vaster than that of *Spartacus Imperator*. The Servile Wars are here just a secondary threat, compared to that posed by Mithradates in Asia or Sertorius in Spain. These events only indirectly enter into *HexaSim's* game.

The approach to these games is so different that there is little to compare between these two interesting titles. For its superior finish in all regards (material, rules, balance), my personal preference is *Spartacus Imperator*.

4 - See articles by P. Sabin and C. Vasey in *Battles* #5 and #6.

5 - The designer explained to me that *Spartacus* would win more easily if the forced march was allowed in any direction. It is true that the number of areas separating Vesuvius Mons from Massilia is not very large.

6 - For example, who would play the French or the Allies the same way at Waterloo if the arrival of the Prussians and the time and location of these reinforcements was not fixed and certain? The retrospective knowledge of events does not ruin the interest in a wargame, if we recognize that historical accuracy includes psychological and not only material factors.

7 - An insert game in *Vae Victis* #67. You have to get past the graphics of the map. Hopefully, I heard the rumor of a coming soon 2nd edition...

8 - The rule deciding who plays who is an example: "if both players cannot agree, the player who does not own the game gets to decide, as this is a game for rebels."

NUTS!

PUBLISHING

A GOOD DAY TO DIE

HOOKA HEY!

A SERIE BY LIONEL LIRON

Hooka Hey! a Good Day to Die is a game at tactical scale which ambitions is to cover all the fights between the Indian tribes and the U.S. Army during the second part of nineteenth century.

It begins a serie whose first module, entitled "Yellow Hair" focuses on General George Armstrong Custer and covers his two major commitments delivered against the Indians: Washita, November 27th, 1868, where he captured the camp of the Cheyenne chief Black Kettle, Little Big Horn, June 25th, 1876, the famous defeat that makes him entering in the legend. Based on a strong historical aspect, this module attempts to stick as close as possible to the fighting methods of the two camps on simple and intuitive principles.

The importance of the effort is aimed by graphics which recreate the atmosphere of these wars, colourful and violent. It is an epic that is told in this game, an adventure where legendary leaders, heroic characters, military units and harmless civilians are all actors included in the rules.

From disciplined skirmish lines of American companies to harassing and agile Indian units, each unit moved on the map is personified by a single drawing for the player fully immersed in the game.

Will you capture the Indian civilians without succumbing to the swarms of warriors?

Can you push the blue tunics that threaten your camp?

You try to rewrite history, but you can also follow the thread of many hypothetical scenarios proposed.

It is a good day to win!



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by Philip Sabin

THERE IS A WELL KNOWN SAYING THAT 'AMATEURS TALK STRATEGY, WHILE PROFESSIONALS TALK LOGISTICS'. Wargamers are just as vulnerable as other observers of military affairs to the seductive attractions of strategy and tactics, at the expense of more mundane practical considerations such as supply. The very name of the longest running board wargames magazine attests to this fact! It is all too easy for us to push cardboard counters across a map, without bearing properly in mind how difficult it is for the fighting men whom the counters represent to sustain themselves and maintain their combat effectiveness during the clever manoeuvres concerned. I was particularly struck by an article by John Salt in issue 214 of the *Wargame Developments journal The Nugget* (now available freely online), in which he showed that, even in World War Two before the advent of universal automatic weapons, a typical infantry unit could fire off all the ammunition it could carry within five minutes. How many of our games truly reflect this severe constraint on how much foot soldiers could actually carry (a factor which surely helps to explain why the German practice of prompt counterattacks was often so successful against advancing Allied infantry)?

There are now, of course, a number of books which try to bring home the importance of logistic constraints, among them Martin van Creveld's classic 1977 study *Supplying War* on which the title of this article is based. However, it is one thing to read about such constraints in theory and quite another to experience them in practice. In our networked age, we have become used to an unprecedented annihilation of time and distance, allowing us immediate access in the comfort of our own homes to an ever-growing mass of words and images through Google searches or YouTube videos. We can post our own views instantly online for all to see, and we can even get our choice of books and games delivered direct to our door with just a few clicks of a mouse. It takes a real effort of imagination to remember that war as it is still fought today in Afghanistan and Libya involves lugging heavy loads over large distances, often on human backs just as it has for millennia.

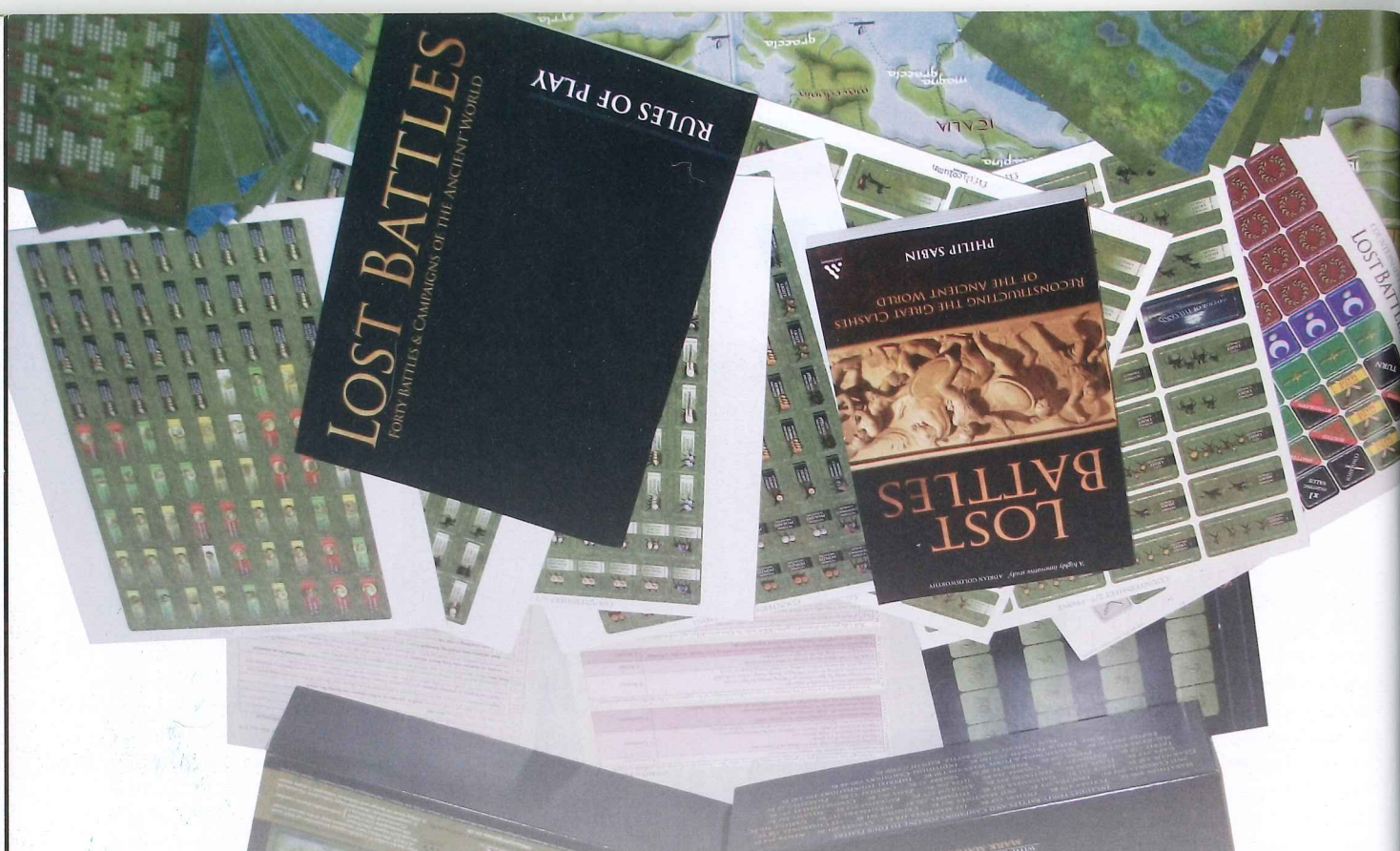


SUPPLYING WARGAMES

Mass market computer wargames, with their 'pick up and play' character and instant internet connectivity, give little real sense of the sheer physicality of actual warfare. However, board wargames can sometimes convey a better feeling for logistic constraints, especially when one moves beyond private enjoyment of commercial simulations to the actual production and running of games based on one's own designs. I have had two recent experiences which have acted as very salutary reminders that, in the real world as opposed to its online reflection, time, distance, weight and cost are still very significant constraints which we downplay at our peril.

The first experience was when I was commissioned by the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre of the UK's Defence Academy at Shrivenham to run a day of manual wargames in May of this year, as part of their very welcome effort to encourage better professional use of this 'old technology' alongside the computerised mainstream. (Look for their new *Wargaming Guide* on the DCDC website early in 2012.) Based on my long experience running manual wargames for my own civilian students (just Google 'Sabin consim'), I knew that it was hopeless to try to use commercial games, since even the simplest are too complex and take far too long for non-wargamers to grasp and to play. I hence decided to run my own *Fire and Movement* game which simulates battalion attacks (including ammunition constraints!) using just 48 five inch wide hexes and a handful of chunky 2.5 inch square unit counters per side. This game worked well, but the real triumph of the day was my even simpler urban combat spin-off *Block Busting* which was played twice in succession by the extra attendees at this unexpectedly popular event. We are used to taking our time to savour full size board games with hundreds of counters, but for non-grognards, Clausewitz's aphorism that '*the simplest thing is difficult*' applies to wargames just as much as to war itself.

My second recent experience of logistic constraints has been even more telling. After my ancient battle system published in my 2007 book *Lost Battles* sold several thousand copies and spawned a Yahoo site with several thousand



posts, we decided to produce a deluxe board game edition with fully mounted components. At first this went fairly smoothly, with talented wargame artist Mark Mahaffey e-mailing me successive graphics drafts, and with hundreds of Paypal orders being attracted by our website at www.fifthcolumngames.co.uk. However, the bill for actually printing the game was eye-wateringly expensive (largely due to the time and labour needed to assemble all the different components), and even the discounted postal rates we negotiated for shipping the heavy 3.5 kg game to the global diaspora of grognards significantly exceeded the P&P charges we had levied. We will be lucky to break even on the whole \$100,000 project, despite the days and weeks we have spent simply on corresponding with customers and filling out labels and the endless triplicated customs forms. Even having retail partners in other countries is a double-edged sword given how long it takes to pack up multiple copies of games for safe shipment and to handle all the tax complications.

Producing and shipping over a thousand heavy games over the past few weeks (including working for entire days in the factory itself) has given me a very different perspective to the typical customer experience of buying a single copy in a store or online. It is worrying that many gamers see our charges and postal costs for this deluxe product as expensive, whereas commercial organisations would have to charge double what we do if they were to make their massive investment of time in design and logistics even remotely worthwhile. Perhaps because conventional books can now be obtained so cheaply thanks to automated printing and cutthroat competition, we tend to undervalue board wargames, even though their production and shipping costs are in an entirely different league. As I said in the last issue of *Battles*, this is one of the things which concerns me most about the long term future of board wargaming with such a small, dispersed and ageing customer base.

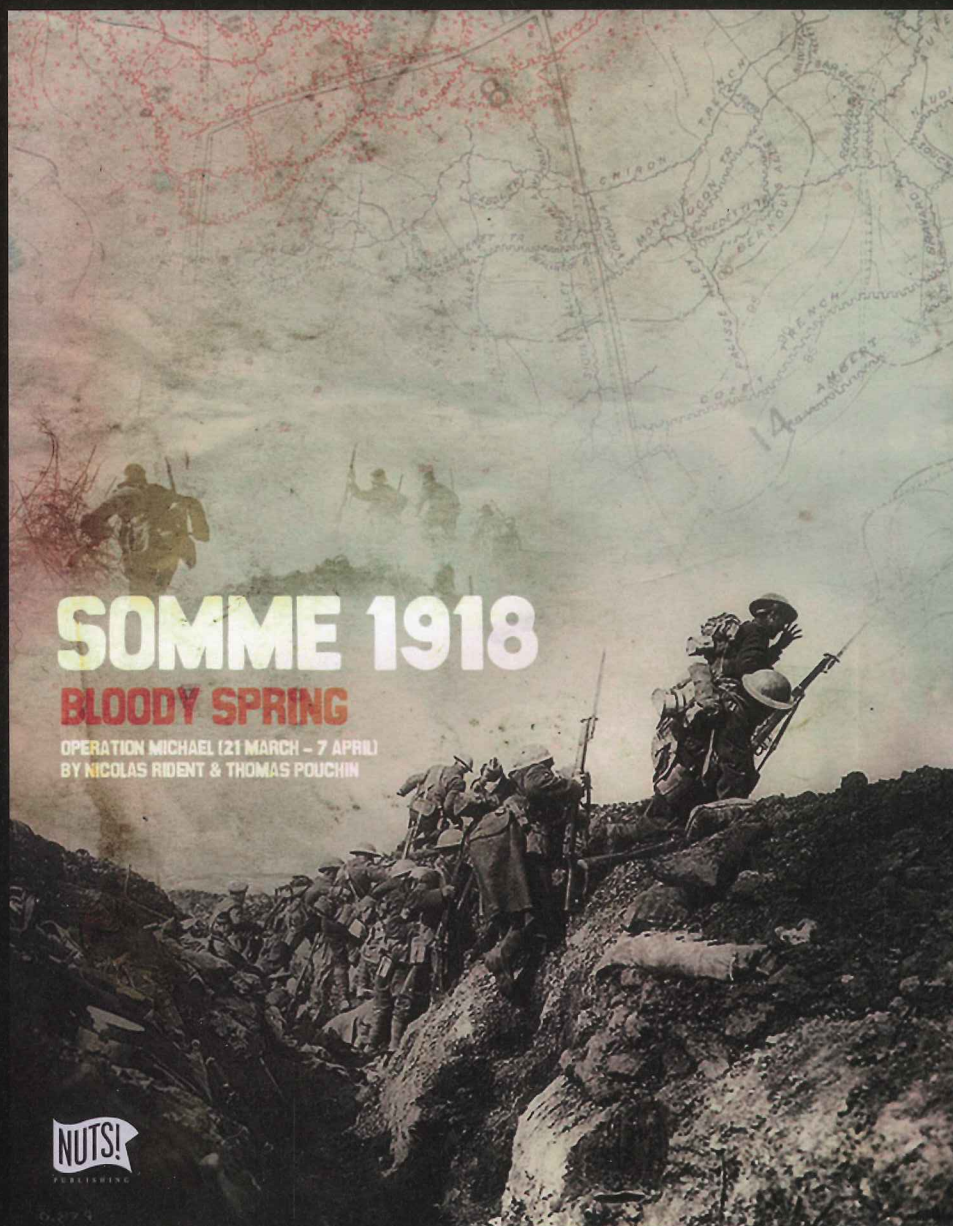
What offsets this and gives me most hope is the growing potential for synergies between board wargames and the online world. I recently bought a copy of Lee Brimmicombe Wood's new GMT game *Nightfighter*, since my abiding interest in the topic outweighed the game's complete lack of solitaire playability. However, it was soon apparent that the umpire's role was mainly to keep secrets rather than to contribute active tactical opposition, and I saw a way to

tweak the system to have the secrets of bomber location kept automatically instead. Once I had tested this solitaire mod, I shared it with Lee, and he laid it out in the same professional format as the game's existing rulebooks. We then obtained comments from his online playtest group and soon posted the revised rules (complete with colour illustrations and a much quicker campaign system) for free download by all and sundry. From being unplayable solitaire, the system has become one of my favourite solitaire games, thanks to its quick playing time and diversity of scenarios. As I argued in the last issue, this ready adaptability of board wargames is one of their greatest strengths compared to computer games, and the potential for free online discussion and distribution of the resulting mods offers us the best of both worlds.

It feels good to have published *Lost Battles* as a fully fledged deluxe board wargame at long last, after so many years of producing more 'do it yourself' versions of this and earlier systems. As with the previous Fifth Column Games product *Where There is Discord*, we may even consider a second printing in 2012 if demand continues to be as strong as it has been so far – less than 20% of our initial print run remained unsold at the time of publication, and you will have to approach our retail partners for a copy once we ourselves run out. However, my next publication will return to the original *Lost Battles* pattern of a mainstream book containing multiple wargames including both *Fire and Movement* and *Block Busting*, as described in the 'Most Wanted' section of this issue. I have already checked the proofs and the book is due to appear in January, so there is not that long to wait!

The message of this article is that logistics matter, in wargames just as in war itself. You should never forget the sheer physicality of warfare and the enormous impact of time, force, space and cost compared to the ease of moving a counter across a map or a cursor across a computer screen. Board wargaming involves its own physical constraints, since full size games take a long time to play and an absolute age to design, produce and ship. Remember all this underlying work the next time you moan about the expense of the latest 'must have' product, but remember also that the games which actually get played rather than simply admired tend to be the simple and accessible ones. Less may definitely be more, and as in war itself, speed is of the essence! **B**

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SOMME 1918

SOMME 1918 IS A SEQUEL OF MARNE 1918: FRIEDENSTURM

Somme 1918 is the second game in a series that covers all of the offensives on the Western Front in 1918. It covers Operation Michael. Somme 1918 is an intense and nerve-wracking game that takes place over eight turns, from the end of March to mid-April. Both players will face difficult challenges. The German player needs to re-create the historic breakthrough and has to put in every effort to reach Amiens. The Allied player has to resist succumbing to panic in the first turns in order to organize an effective defense, and then a counter-attack near the end of the game. The game includes: 22"x34" map, 560 counters, 4 player aids, 24 pages rules booklet, Scenarios and campaign booklet

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ATTACKER	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
DEFENDER	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8



WARFARE AT THE DAWN OF CIVILIZATION 1500-1200 B.C.

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6 DAYS OF WAR

REVIEW

by John D. Burtt

DESIGNER PAUL ROHRBAUGH

GRAPHICS BRUCE YEARIAN

PUBLISHER HIGH FLYING DICE GAMES

GAMING THE JUNE 1967 MID EAST WAR HAS TWO THINGS GOING AGAINST IT, THE FACTS AND A JOKE.

Here's the joke: *An Egyptian Division was crossing the Sinai when scouts spot an Israeli observing them from a hill. The Egyptians send a squad after the Israeli – none return. A platoon goes – same result: a company goes, same result, no one returns. Finally a full battalion goes after him and this time several bloody and beaten stragglers make it back,*

"What happened?" asked the Divisional commander.

"It was an ambush," one of the stragglers replied, "There were two of them."

Here's the history, from Michael Oren's 2002 release *Six Days of War* (Oxford University Press, 2002):

One hundred and thirty-two hours. That was the duration of the war, one of the shortest in recorded history. In that brief period, the Egyptians lost between 10,000 and 15,000 men, among them 1,500 officers and forty pilots; thousands more were wounded. An additional 5,000 Egyptians were listed as missing. Seven hundred Jordanian soldiers had died and over 6,000 wounded or missing. Syria's losses were estimated at 450 killed and roughly four times that number wounded. Israeli admitted to 679 killed and 2,563 wounded.

All but 15% of Egypt's military hardware was destroyed and vast stores became Israeli booty.

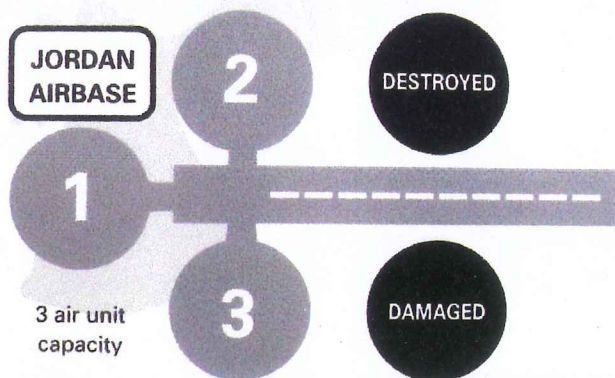
So how do you make a game out of such a lopsided war that spawns jokes? Not easily, but High Flying Dice's founder, designer and chief bottle washer, Paul Rohrbaugh, has given it a darned good try, with his desktop published game *Six Days of War*. He starts the game prior to war breaking out, which

gives players a chance to set their military and diplomatic standing prior to the outbreak of hostilities. He did this successfully with his 2005 game *Operation Kadesh*, on the Suez Crisis and war. Here the 1967 situation gives him a much more difficult task; one that works using historical hindsight.

Six Days of War comes with three maps, one 11" x 17" representing the Sinai and two 8" x 11" maps representing the West Bank and the Golan Heights. Game scale is ten miles per hex in the Sinai and five miles on the other maps. In general the Arabs are limited to their own particular map, while the Israelis can move between them. Of note on the maps are the fortifications near the borders which both sides will fight over. Both sides also have air base displays that have air unit stacking and status of the airbases. Single sided combat units, you need to mount, represent both land and air units. Land units are rated for combat, type of movement (mechanized or leg) and movement allowance. You might be surprised to see that mechanized brigades on both sides are rated equally for strength. You might also be surprised to see that unit morale is not provided. I think this is correct as certainly the Egyptians, for example, were well equipped and "should" have equaled their Israeli equivalent. The key difference was low level and high level leadership, which basically sucked for the Arabs. Paul handles this with a separate mechanism. Air units are rated for air combat and bombing combat, and identified as to what kind of aircraft they are: fighter, bomber or fighter-bomber.

The rules are very complete; we found only two questions about the game's mechanics. But the designer is compiling clarifications and corrections into a list available on Consimworld or through his website.

What sets *Six Days of War* apart from a regular wargame on the 1967 War are the cards. Paul provides 19 Israeli cards, 18 Arab cards and 21 random event cards, representing various events (and possible events) that preceded and occurred (or could have occurred) during the war. The play and interaction of these cards



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sets each player's "stage" for the conflict. Players have the limited ability to "trump" their opponent's cards, either temporarily stopping the card or eliminating it completely, with varying effects. Diplomatic standing, superpower commitment, war footing all shift with the play of the cards. More on these later.

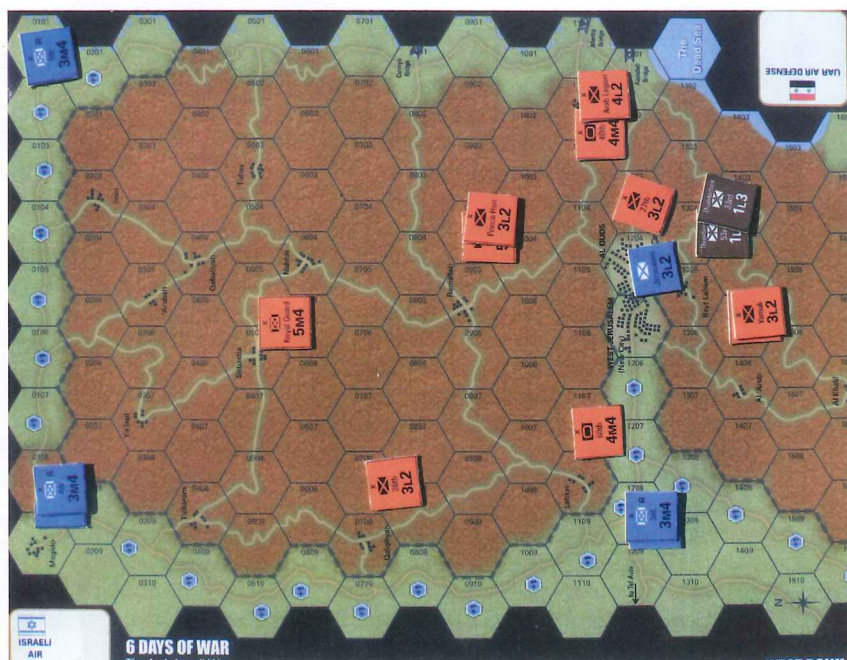
The sequence of play involves a strategic phase and an operational phase to constitute a single day. Players work their card decks during the strategic phase, manipulating their standings prior to the outbreak of war. When war finally breaks out, the operational phase kicks in and each side gets to alternately launch operations. Following an operations phase there is a recovery phase where disrupted combat units and damaged air bases can regain operational status. This is followed by the Cease Fire phase (where the superpowers might nudge the combatants apart) and a victory point phase, where territorial and diplomatic points are scored. To win a complete victory, a side has to not only win militarily, but diplomatically as well, so you can't just bash and crash, as they say.

The key dynamic of *6 Days of War* is a side's War Footing. This numerical representation of a nation's military preparedness is part and parcel of many of the game's procedures:

1. It is a major component of initiative during the operational phase, with the war footing and D10 roll providing the initiative for each side. Since initiative affects combat, war footing affects this aspect as well. A side with an initiative that is three better than their opponent gets a column shift in combat.
2. It is the component in disruption recovery and damage repair. Roll less than or equal to your war footing will reorganize combat units after disruption and repairs damage to air bases and aircraft. Obviously, the higher the war footing the better.
3. Units retreating through enemy zones of control test their status with war footing. Miss the roll, disruption (or elimination) results. As before, higher is better.
4. Out of supply units roll against their war footing; failure results in disruption or elimination at the beginning of the Operations phase.
5. A secondary effect is found in trumping your opponent's cards, (more on this later) A higher war footing allows a side to be a bit more aggressive in trumping as the other guy rolls against his lower war footing to see if war breaks out after a trump.

The War Footing mechanic is a good one and makes sense: the more prepared you are for a war, the better you'll fight it. It also adequately reflects the poor preparation of the Arab league at this point in time. Nasser was literally overtaken by events and the shrill acclaim that came from other Arab nations. He failed to see that a reasonably equipped army riding high on emotion and expectations was no match for a smaller, professional force with their backs against the wall.

During the strategic phase, a player – starting with the Arabs – can play a card (which could be trumped by the opponent), rescind a card already played, draw a random event card (and play if desired), or pass. The latter generally doesn't happen, but, you never know. As noted above, increasing one's war footing is a Good Thing, so early play sees a lot of this. For example, the Arabs can Oust the UN from Sinai and Close the Tiran Straits for war foot bonuses and a nice increase in their diplomatic standing. Lobbying the Kremlin won't add to their war footing, but will add to the USSR commitment and make Jordan (a neutral at the start) more prone to join in



the eventual war. They would lose ground everywhere except war footing, if Nasser Pledges Restraint.

The Israelis might choose to Lobby President Johnson, which can possibly increase the Diplomatic standing but definitely adds +1 to their war footing. If they Deploy Chemical Weapons they also get a +1 war footing change, but they lose a die rolls worth of diplomatic standing and both superpowers get really interested. They could Present their case to the U.N., which wouldn't affect war footing, but provides more diplomatic standing. Or if they're interested in International goodwill, they could support Operation Regatta (a U.S. backed attempt to break the Egyptian blockade of the Straits of Tiran.) This would lower their war footing and the commitment levels of the US and USSR, and give them a diplomatic standing boost.



REVIEW

Random events are interesting. Of the 21 cards, fully a third are No Event, a third are pro-Arab and a third are pro-Israel. Two cards Palestinian Revolt and Revolt in the United Arab Republic must be played if drawn; the rest can be held. It takes a while to determine the best way/use to handle Random events. Sample games tended to see random events being drawn when there are no better card options or if you're behind militarily and looking for an edge.

In short both sides have options. What makes the strategic phase really interesting is the number of ways war can break out. Let me count the ways:

1. Both sides roll a d10 die and add their war footing; if the totals are the same – WAR!
2. If the difference between the d10 die rolls above is greater than the difference between opposing war footing – WAR! (with a diplomatic option)
3. Random event Palestinian Revolt is drawn by either player – WAR!
4. Trump a card and the affected player rolls against his war footing – a result higher than the war footing – WAR! Thus if the Israeli war footing is 7 and the UAR's is 3, an Israeli trump would force war 70% of the time; while the UAR can trump with a 30% chance of immediately causing war,
5. Either player unilaterally yells – WAR! There are diplomatic penalties for the slimeball that does this.

Once war has broken out, players have ten operations phases to force a conclusion – or fewer if the superpowers step in.

The operations phase starts with an initiative roll, which, as noted above, is affected by war footing. Then everyone checks supply, which is a simple "trace to" type of check. After that operations start with the initiative player going first. That player is able to perform a number of operations that is half the difference in the two initiatives before the other player gets an operation. What constitutes an operation depends on the player. For the UAR player, an operation is a d10s worth of undisrupted land or air combat units (from any/all maps.) Once activated for an operation, the unit is done for the turn. The die roll limitation does a good job of simulating the strategic, operational and tactical deficiencies of all levels of UAR leadership. For the Israelis, they can activate an entire Ugdah (think division) and one independent unit within two hexes, any/all undisrupted air units, or independent units equal to a die roll. Israeli land units can only activate once per turn, but a major Israeli advantage is their air force, which can activate up to half the Israeli war footing, dropping fractions.

Activated unit can move, then attack. Movement for land units is basic – pay for terrain, stop in Zones of control. Mechanized can go from zone of control to another one for all their movement, the Israelis can do it at normal cost if they roll less than their war footing. Air units are simply placed next to their targets. Both players can have air units in air defense role on the various maps.

Land combat is basic: attacker: defender odds ranging from 1:4 to 4:1 with a die roll modified for things like supply, previous disruption, initiative differences, etc. Note that supply is checked again at the start of combat making surrounding the defender with zones of control a beneficial maneuver. The results are listed as retreats and/or disruptions for one or both sides, with the possibility of a "no effect" in

there as well. A disrupted unit cannot move or attack, and is eliminated if disrupted again.

Aerial combat is handled by rolling against an air unit's combat ratings; a hit is scored rolling less than the air rating, equal to it rates a damaged result, one more is an abort. Air combat is not a sure thing. Here's an example:

The Israelis launch a strike by sending aircraft to hit the Egyptian and Syrian air forces on the ground. One raid of three Israeli squadrons, two Special Mystere fighter-bombers (4-4) and one Vautour bomber (4-5) attack one of the Sinai airfields. One MiG-21 is on air defense for the Egyptians:

Air-to-air combat occurs first.. One of the Mysteres targets the MiG. The others could provide support (a nice way of saying the MiG pilots are distracted while being swarmed)

but would suffer whatever combat result might occur. The air combat rating of the Mystere is 4; the MiG's is 3. Both players roll a 4 on a D10. The Israeli roll equals the Mystere's air combat rating so the MiG is damaged. The MiG roll is one above its combat value, so the engaging Mystere is aborted and cannot take part in the remaining raid.

The remaining Mystere (ground attack value 4) and Vautour (ground attack value 5) strike the base with a special -3 modifier for first turn attacks. Rolling a 3 and 7 respectively, gives a zero and four result, both of which are lower than the respec-

tive combat values, so the base is damaged twice, or destroyed. All remaining air units on the base are toast. Base anti-aircraft fire is factored in if the attack die roll was a 9 or 10.

Air attacks on ground units acts the same, with hits equaling disruptions. We were uncomfortable with air units being able to destroy land units with a second disruption hit – armor makes sense as you've killed the tanks, but infantry is much harder.

The game ends with a cease fire, one player quits, or the end of ten turns after war has broken out. Victory is counted in two ways – military victory and diplomatic victory. Military victory points are awarded for territorial possession, eliminated units, and available units left. For example West Jerusalem is worth 20 points to the Israelis but 40 to the UAR. Diplomatic victory points are awarded for diplomatic standing and for achieving a military victory level higher than your opponent. I have no problem with these victory conditions, except for equal points for eliminated units on both sides. The Israelis were more sensitive to casualties, given their small numbers – Owen's quote that Israeli losses during the war equated to about 80,000 Americans rings loud and clear. We used a house rule to double the points for Israeli losses.

That's the basics, but the feel comes from the added rules and options.

One of the key additions is the Jordanians. King Hussein tried very hard to remain neutral, but was hounded by Syria and Egypt and faced a popular

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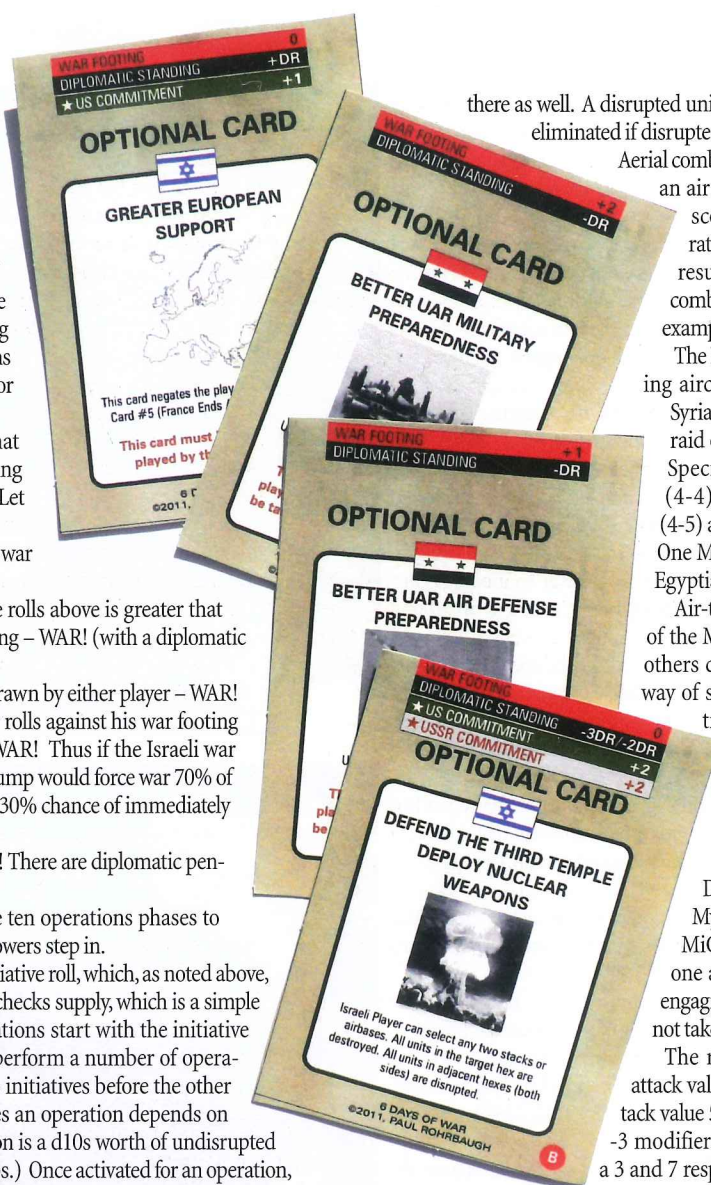
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revolution of people caught up in Nasser's rhetoric. In the game, Jordan is neutral until a die roll succeeds against the Jordanian Intervention level. Some of the UAR cards affect this level by making it more or less possible they would enter the conflict. Each turn without war breaking out, a die is rolled against the Jordanian intervention level; less than or equal to the level brings the Jordanians in and opens a new front for the Israelis. That's the good news for the Arabs. But having the Jordanians come in also lowers the Arab war footing (while they wanted Jordan in on the fray, they did little to prepare them) and Israeli war footing jumps by two. Now reread the effects of warfooting. Is it worth having them intervene?? If war starts before the Jordanians come in, they stay out of it.

Superpower intervention is another additive. Cards and events can change the commitment level of the US and the USSR. And the commitment level dictates the cease fire attempts between the combatants. A cross-index of commitment levels gives a number that a die roll by both players has to come in under in order to cause a cease fire. For example, if the US commitment level was 4 and the USSR a 3, the cease fire number is 4. The Israelis roll a 5 and the UAR rolls a 3. Technically, the UAR should declare a cease fire. They can ignore the first such roll, but their opponents gain diplomatic victory points. The UAR cannot ignore a second cease fire. It's a nice little system and - just like the ability to unilaterally start the war, leaves the final decision to the players. Also, in a nice optional touch, if both players roll modified 10s in the cease fire roll, the US and USSR have intervened militarily and everyone loses!

The game comes with three scenarios. The first is the main game, starting on May 15. The Israelis start with a war footing of 5; the UAR starts at 2 and there are only a few units on the map. The second scenario is the historical game, which starts on June 6 with the Israeli preemptive air attacks. The rules lay out the cards that have been played and those remaining. Finally there's Ben Gurion's Nightmare, where the pre-emptive strike has failed on June 4, and the UAR is a more prepared. Both the historical game and Ben Gurion's Nightmare start with war having erupted, and thus are ten turns long at most.

There is a lot of other chrome in the game - amphibious or airborne assaults, heavy artillery kibbutz defense, etc. There are some optional cards available that affect the international scene for some additional replayability.

So, the big question is - how does it play?

Once again into the WayBack Machine to May 15, 1967.

To start the ball rolling, the United Arab Republic chooses to Close the Straits of Tiran. This increases their war footing by +1 to three and gives them four diplomatic standing points. Both the US and USSR commitments also increase +1 to one and two, respectively. The Israeli's counter by Lobbying President Johnson. Their war footing increases to six, but the die roll for diplomatic standing fails so they remain at zero standing. They decide to increase US commitment up to two to match the USSR. The die roll to see if war breaks out shows no war, and the Jordanians (level one) do not intervene.

May 16 dawns with the UAR ousting the United Nations Emergency Force from the Sinai. The Israeli's trump, trying to stop the ouster, but the Egyptians counter-trump and the UNEF leaves the field. Tons of Egyptians pour into the peninsula. Their war footing goes to four, the US commitment jumps to three. They gain four more diplomatic standing points now at eight, and the Jordanian level increases to two. The Israelis Mobilize Reserves and their extra troops storm onto the map. Their war footing goes to seven, but they lose two diplomatic points.

Both sides check for war because of the trumping, but neither causes war. However, the Jordanians (with only a 20% chance of intervening), choose to do so. Israeli war footing immediately jumps to nine, while the UAR's falls to three. The UAR gains two diplomatic points, rising to +10.

However, the war check die roll indicates - WAR!

With a massive war footing the Israeli's choose to try a pre-emptive attack. Rolling a d10 they add to their war footing; the result is easily greater than 10 and definitely more than double the UAR's war footing, so they achieve the pre-emptive strike. They have four unanswered operations and - more

importantly - four air operations (half their war footing.) Four air strikes later, the Syrian air base and all Egyptian air bases are toast. The solitary air defense MiG is shot down, but they also knock down the attacking Mystere. Three other Israeli air units are damaged by anti-aircraft fire. As the real operations phase starts, there are no UAR aircraft in the air.

Operations start with an initiative die rolls which are added to the war footing to see "who goes first." Rolls are 6 and 4 respectively for the Israelis and the UAR. Initiative values then are 15 and 7. The Israelis not only get another four unanswered operations, but the big difference in initiative will give them a column shift in combat. They use three of the operations as air attacks, losing two more aircraft to damage, but disrupting multiple units on the ground. Their final operation is a helicopter assault on Mount Hermon which eliminates the Syrian heavy artillery, placed there without defenders. (whoops.)

The first UAR operations allows nine units to move, so the Jordanians close in around the West Jerusalem garrison, throwing a 1-1 attack at them flowing the column shift for initiative, and manage to disrupt the garrison and one of the attackers. The Israeli counter by sending their last air strike to disrupt almost all the remaining attackers around Jerusalem. The next UAR operation moves Palestinian out of the Gaza strip on their way to Tel Aviv, since the Israelis didn't man the forts surrounding the Strip. (whoops.)

The remaining operations see the Peled Ugdah blow a hole through Syria's Golan Heights forts; mechanized reserves surround and kill two disrupted Jordanian brigades and the three Ugdahs in the Sinai move against the scattered and disrupted Egyptians.


The cease fire check is made by cross-referencing the US four with the Soviet two for a five target number. The Israelis roll and two and the UAR rolls a six. This puts a cease fire on the UAR since their roll exceeded the target number. After looking over his dead pile of burning planes and the number of UAR disrupted units on the map - and the fact he's not having any fun - accepts the Cease Fire. The War stops.

Hmmm. Well, it's certainly historical.

And that's the key to the 1967 "situation" as far as a wargame goes. Nassar and the UAR assumed they would fight a conventional war against an outnumbered foe. He was wrong; outnumbered means nothing if poorly led. If players go into *Six Days of War* with the same historical UAR mind set, the above historical replay will happen a lot - and players will get soured easily, as we almost did.

For the game to be challenging, you have to think asymmetrically. Loyal readers of *Battles* may recall in my review of *Clash of Arms' Persian Excursion*, I said much the same thing after two squadrons of Israeli jets blew through the Iranians and shattered their oil terminal targets. The UAR has to work around the edges, mostly diplomatically and take advantage of anything the Israelis give them, which is not going to be much. The Israeli advantages, especially in the air, are too much for the UAR to have much of a military chance. (It can happen though with a D10 - think rolling a 1 and your opponent rolling a 10... don't ask how I know.)

I think Rohrbaugh has all the pieces right for this situation. The biggest concern I have is that in the game currently, there is no reason for the Israelis not to start the war as soon as possible. Diplomatically things are generally even at the outset, so extending the strategic period pre-war just gives the UAR more time to get ahead diplomatically and increase their war footing. Historically, the Israelis were quite restrained internationally, until it was almost too late. I think there needs to be such a restraint in the game.

There is a lot to like about the game. The cards give a nice history lesson all in themselves, and the prewar mechanics make a nice subgame in itself. It certainly captured the essence of 1967; as long as the players think asymmetrically, the game can be challenging and fun. Note to grognards out there: if playing this with a newcomer, take the UAR and let them roll with the Israelis, you'll both have fun. 

REVIEW

by John D. Burt

FOUR ROADS TO MOSCOW

DESIGNER ROGER NORD, JOHN PRADOS, TED RAICER, MICHAEL RINELLA GRAPHICS RANDY LEIN, BRANDON PENNINGTON PUBLISHER AGAINST THE ODDS

ONE OF THE MORE INTERESTING GAME PRESENTATIONS MADE RECENTLY WAS THE DECISION BY THE POWERS-THAT-BE AT *AGAINST THE ODDS MAGAZINE* to publish four separate (and distinct) games by four separate (and again distinct) designers on the same subject. The subject was the June 22, 1941 Operation Barbarossa invasion of the Soviet Union. Or as it more commonly known, "How I Won the Battle and Lost the War in Five Easy Months."

Designers Michael Rinella, Ted Raicer, Roger Nord give us distinctly different looks at the same operation, taking us into the fighting itself, while John Prado's rendition - *Codeword Barbarossa* - looks at the year-long lead up to the invasion. Each game comes with its own counters and its own 17" x 22" map.

MICHAEL RINELLA'S **SLAUGHTERHOUSE**

Slaughterhouse is a point to point movement game using armies and leaders as the primary combat systems. Brandon Pennington's map has only three kinds of terrain in it - clear, woods and swamp - but each point on the map is rated for a terrain modifier from Moscow's 5 to Tarnopol's 1. The modifiers affect combat. Some of the points (cities) are rated for victory points, others have an urban marker to show possession - important for supply considerations.

The game's armies are rated for attack, counterattack and movement. The German armies and panzer corps are identified as to their Army Group - North, South and Center. Units cannot be shifted between armies, which I question since Herr Hitler certainly shifted units around. The combat formations are back-printed for step loss reduction. The other significant units are the leaders: the counters show a portrait of the leader and a combat rating used when he's attacking or counterattacking. I was surprised that leaders did

not count for defense. All the German armies have leaders but only a few matter in practice.

The sequence of play is an impulse system. First is a political phase where players can change leaders, place reinforcements and toward the end make a "Hitler takes command" check which affects what the German can do. There is also an odd "peace term" option that allows the Soviet player to ask the German player if he wants to stop fighting. Well, generally we gamers do this anyway when a) one side is going down the toilet quickly with no relief in sight, b) both players are tired, or c) the beer runs out.

After the political phase, players alternate taking an impulse, of which there are two separate kinds: assault and non-assault. Assault impulses allow a player to activate a single point (maximum three armies) and enter an adjacent enemy held point for combat.

Non-assault impulses can be:

1. **Movement** - everyone moves but cannot enter enemy controlled points on the map;
2. **Strategic movement** - one unit can go nearly anywhere with some restrictions;
3. **Strategic transfer** - reduce a unit a step one place and rebuild a reduced unit elsewhere. It's possible to reduce a German infantry Army and use that step to rebuild a Panzer group up to full strength. That shouldn't be an option.
4. **Soviet Leader swap.** - The Soviet can exchange leaders.

Each side gets an action during an



REVIEW

impulse and impulses continue until the first German die roll in an impulse results in a number less than the current impulse number. If the number rolled equals the impulse number the next German impulse cannot be an assault impulse - a logistics logjam, so to speak.

Combat is fairly straightforward. The attacker designates a lead army or group and adds the attack factor to the leader combat bonus and points for additional infantry (+1) or armor (+2) and combat support. From this attack total, you subtract the terrain modifier for the contested point, plus points for defending units. A 2D6 roll is made against this combined total. Rolling under the total wins the battle for the attacker, over the total wins for the defender and a tie hurts both sides.

Eliminated or surviving defenders can counterattack with the same resolution system in the hopes of hurting the attackers. If the attack succeeds, leaving some defenders in place, they can opt to retreat rather than counterattack since a counterattack failure will hurt them.

Here's an example:

The Soviet Southwestern Front (a 3-5-1 unit) is defending Lvov with Kirponos commanding. They are attacked by Kleist's First Panzer Group (a 5-3-2 unit), with VI Army and XVII Army in support. The attack factor is the Panzer Group's five plus Kleist's combat factor of five, plus two for the two infantry units. The Luftwaffe is available with a +3 modifier, so the attacking total is fifteen. The defenders in Lvov have a terrain modifier of four and +1 for the defending army, for a total of five. Thus, the target die roll is 15-5 or 10. A 2D6 roll less than 10 is a win and the Soviets will suffer two steps lost (attacking with an infantry army would only inflict one step loss); a roll of 10 will hit each side with a one step loss, while an 11 or 12 will hit the Germans with a step loss.

Assume the roll is a German win; this would kill off the Southwestern Front; however, they can counterattack with much the same system. The Front's counterattack value of five is added to Kirponos' combat value of three for an attack total of eight. The defenders use the Lvov terrain modifier (4), +2 for Kleist's tanks and +1 each for the two infantry armies, for a total of 8; since you cannot roll less than a 0, the counterattack fails to do anything useful. The Southwest Front is eliminated for this turn and Kirponos goes back to Moscow for his next assignment.

The counterattack rule is a good one, but the way the numbers turn out, in multiple games played, we've seen only a single successful counterattack, which doesn't quite capture the attrition the Germans suffered, especially among their panzer groups. It might be different if the attackers did not get credit for the terrain modifier in the area.

The game starts with ALL German units able to use assault movement; remaining turn one impulses have them activating whole Army Groups. After turn one, assault activation is a point at a time.

At the end of each turn, players get points to rebuild steps of full armies. The Soviets get six points, enough to rebuild six full infantry armies - and if it frustrates you to see those armies return to the field the turn after you overran them, imagine what Wehrmacht Chief of Staff Franz Halder and crew felt like in 1941! The Germans get two points per turn. Even more frustrating is that the Soviet armies appear in any victory point city that they still own, regardless of whether that city can trace a line of communication back to a supply zone. One enterprising German commander encircled Kiev and its two defending armies at the end of a turn, which eliminated the armies due to out of supply rules. The city however was still Soviet and thus had more armies immediate rebuilt there. We ruled a line of communication had to exist to rebuild the armies and this has since been added to rules clarifications.

Another interesting aspect of *Slaughterhouse* is the Advantage rule, this little chit can be traded to change a leader, call for fanatical defense or maximum attack, combined operations (i.e. all units in an Army Group get to act) or increase replacement

points (by one.) It's a nice bit of chrome that, unfortunately, saw little use in our test games.

The game runs for five turns or until the Germans win an automatic victory by taking Leningrad, Moscow and Rostov. If the game goes the distance, the German win if they take ten points worth of cities.

Overall, *Slaughterhouse* plays smoothly and seems to emphasize most of the right things. Panzers in good terrain can outrun infantry, which can lead to trouble when activations for combat involve a single point. Counterattacks do seem less attritional than history indicated. The Germans will have to gage when to use a "move everyone" impulse to gather forces, and forego attacking especially on turn 1. Balance really depends on the turn one length - and if on impulse three your opponent rolls snake eyes to stop the turn; consider it a "do over moment." We've had several games end on turn two with major German victories, and we've had full length dog fights with generally the Germans holding enough victory points to win. And one time the beer ran out, so the Soviets asked for terms. Overall, Rinella has crafted a decent little game that lets you play the campaign.

TED RAICER'S HITLER TURNS EAST

Hitler Turns East is a more standard hex based game that uses operational orders and a chit pull to provide the interaction. The map art, by Legion Games Randy Lein, is quite good looking with clear, swamp, forest and rough terrain. Cities are noted for supply and for victory. The only confusion came with distinguishing major and minor rivers - at least to these old eyes. (Hint: the Dnepr and Donets Rivers are the only major rivers!)

The units represent armies and corps with only their combat value listed on the counter along with the number of steps. German armies have four steps and replacement counters when they lose two steps; Soviets are all one step armies. Movement allowances are determined by the orders the units operate under each turn. Both sides have leaders that can affect things, Guderian and Kleist for the Germans, Zhukov for the Russians. Unlike *Slaughterhouse*, Army Group affiliation the Germans is determined by map-based boundaries, for Army Group North, Center, South and "A" (deep south); the Soviets get Northwest, West, Southwest and South groups. With some restriction, this allows the players to regroup as he wishes.

The basis for the sequence of play is command points which both players use to "buy" orders - one is required for the four Army groups each turn. The orders available are:

- 1. Hold/Advance to Contact** - units move forward but cannot attack; they can only move in the direction shown on a map compass.
- 2. Withdraw** - units move backwards, again they can only move in the direction shown on a map compass.
- 3. Assault** - Units move as they wish and can attack.
- 4. Blitz/ mobile defense** - for the Axis only. Panzer mobile assaults are allowed as are other attacks. Mobile defense comes into play during snow.

Player roll on a table to get their command points; German points can range from 6 to 12, while the Soviets can get 6 to 9. Twelve Axis points will build four assault orders, or two blitz orders, one assault and one hold. Players get their command points the turn before they use them. Turn 1 orders are already assigned - and you probably won't be surprised to know that the Germans starts with three blitz orders and one hold orders.

The initiative player (German for all but snow turns) holds one orders chit out and the rest go into the proverbial "opaque container" - along with Soviet Counterattack chits. Orders drawn are placed on a group and the units in that boundary activate with the orders-derived movement and combat potential. No group can get more than one order per turn.

The exception is the Soviet Counterattack. When this chit is drawn, a die roll indicated which of the Soviets' four groups are activated. ALL units in that group then attempt to move into contact



HITLER + BARBAROSSA

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16
VICTORY POINTS

GAME BY TED RAICER
LANDSLIDE PUBLISHING
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NORTH
EAST
CENTER
SOUTH

SWISS
SLOVAKIA
HUNGARY
ROMANIA

GERMAN ADVANCE
COUNTRY BORDER
ZONE BORDER
RUSSIAN SEA BOUNDARY
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City	City	Fort/VP Fort	Fort/VP Fort	Oil Hex/Oil Fort	Oil Hex/Oil Fort	Sea/Ocean	Sea/Ocean	Rough	Rough	Swamp	Swamp	Forest	Forest	Clear	Clear	Clear	Clear
City	City	Fort/VP Fort	Fort/VP Fort	Oil Hex/Oil Fort	Oil Hex/Oil Fort	Sea/Ocean	Sea/Ocean	Rough	Rough	Swamp	Swamp	Forest	Forest	Clear	Clear	Clear	Clear

GAME DESIGN BY TED RAICER
GAME DEVELOPMENT BY LEMBIT TOHVER
MAP ART BY RANDY LEIN

REVIEW

with German forces and an overall combat is applied. This is a very nice way to add total chaos to the Soviet side of the battle as well as capture the essence of Soviet early strategy - attack, attack, attack. The counterattacks will always hurt the Soviets with a step loss, and can pull them out of good defensive terrain, but can a hurt the Axis as well. This is a very nice mechanism. Kudos to Mr Raicer.

Movement is standard and so is the odds-based combat. Terrain can affect the odds as can leaders. Combat results include retreats, step losses and outright elimination. Under blitz orders, German panzers can attack with a mobile assault, as long as they're not in woods, swamp or rough terrain.

Combat support is available to both sides. The Germans get up to three Luftwaffe markers for additional power. Interestingly, only one is available on the first turn - my guess is this represents the fact that most of the Luftwaffe early was used to destroy the Soviet Air Force rather than support the troops. The Soviets get a single T-34 marker later in the game.

Once all movement and combat for that group are completed, the next chit is pulled. The turn ends when all chits have been pulled.

Chit pulls do add to the chaos of the system and can definitely lead to some odd openings to Barbarossa. The German get to activate a single Army Group before chit draws start, so you have the potential to have the Soviets move right after - to stack against the remaining Germanic hordes, or counterattack into German territory from the get-go. This is always good from a replay point of view.

To win, the Germans have to hold twelve victory points worth of cities at the end of the game (all supplied, of course. Or they win automatically holding Kiev, Leningrad and Moscow or Leningrad, Rostov and Sevastapol/Maikop at the end of a turn.

Example: The June 22 blitzes are over. Counterattacks in the Soviet West, along with Guderian's mobile assaults, have blown the west wide open. In the Northwest a single failed Soviet counterattack aided Army Group North's advance almost to Rostov. Eleventh Army held its position, while AG South pushed through heavy resistance almost to Lvov. The Germans suffered three infantry and one panzer step loss, while the Soviets lost nine armies and four mechanized corps.

To start turn two, both sides receive reinforcement and replacements. For the Soviets they received NINE western armies, with two more arriving in the southwest and one in the north. The Germans regain one army step and the lost panzer step.

Command point rolls give the Germans ten points and the Soviets seven. The Germans choose two Blitz commands for eight points, and two hold/Advance, commands for the remaining two; the Soviets choose three Withdraw orders for six points and one Hold for one. Three counterattacks go into the cup.

The Germans choose a blitz for their first choice and it goes to AG South. Kleist leads two of his Panzers in a mobile assault against the 8/16 Mechanized Corps. Normal odds are 8 - 2 or 4-1, and Kleist gives his troops a +1 for leadership: roll 4+1 = Defender Eliminated. 17th Army marches past the Soviet 12th army (only German armies have zones of control) and gets to the out-

Strike the Bear

skirts of Zhitomir to combine with Kleist against the town. In normal combat 6th Army and 48 Panzer hit 22/24 Mechanized at 6-1 (result DE), and 17th Army and Kleist combine against 8/23 Mechanized and the newly arrived 37 Army in Zhitomir. Basic odds 16-4 or 4-1 and the town has no effect. Roll 6 = DE.

The next chit is a Soviet Counterattack; a roll on the table indicated that the Northwest group performs this one. All Soviets in the group move forward and can put three armies and a mechanized corps adjacent to 16th Army + 56 and 41 Panzer Corps. Totalling all strengths of adjacent units, they have 9-16 or 1-2; a roll of 1-3 kills a Soviet army, 4-6 kills the same plus a German step. Having this counterattack come early will allow the attacking troops to possibly pull back to more defensive positions when a Soviet Withdraw chit is pulled. If the German second Blitz chit comes out, though the Germans will have a major decision about where to use it.

Raicer's game is quite clean and the counterattack rule is excellent. Vagaries in the command points will handicap the German and make decisions difficult at times - who gets to blitz and who doesn't. I really liked the unit setup as it clearly shows how heavily the Soviets reinforced the south at the start of the game/war. Stalin was sure Hitler would go south and bet his troops on it.

Overall, *Hitler Turns East* is a tight little game, easy to get into and thoughtful.

ROGER NORD'S STRIKE THE BEAR

Strike the Bear uses a more innovative system for its depiction of the German assault into Russia. The map is split into octagons (called oxes), representing 120 miles of space, and smaller diamonds rather than hexagons, with movement into the diamonds limited to corps size units. Combat takes place inside the spaces similar to an area movement game (or Slaughterhouse.) Unlike the other games, a key feature of the map is the depiction of railroads, used for strategic movement and supply. The German has three railhead markers to show where his conversion of the smaller Russian rail size had taken place.

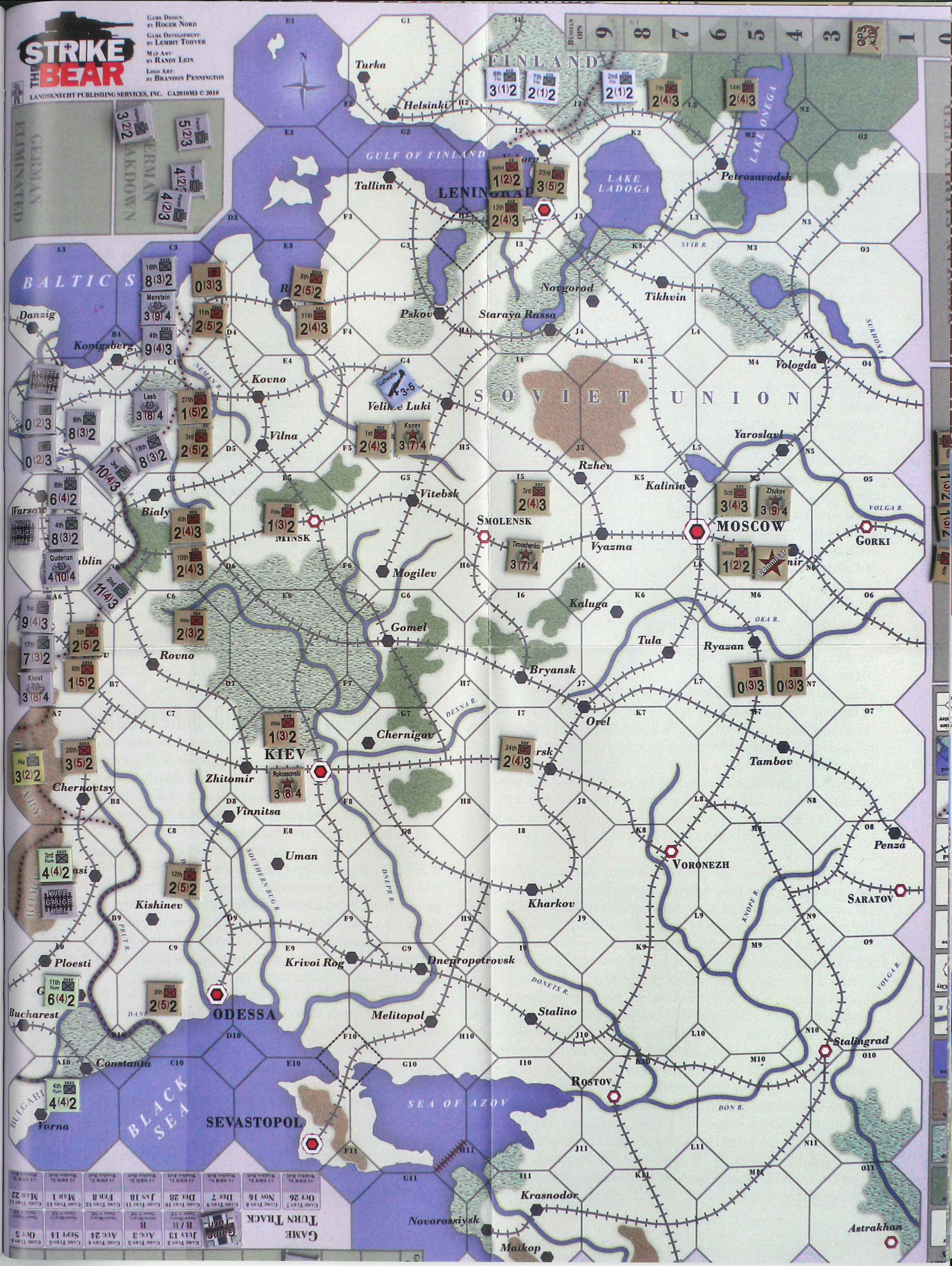
The units represent armies and corps, rated for combat, movement and operational costs. Breakdown corps units are available on both sides as are four leaders each. In a departure with other games, it's the lack of a leader that affects combat adversely in Strike the Bear, something that takes some getting used to, since a leader's effect can cover 360 miles (or three oxes.)

Another mechanism that sets Strike the Bear apart is its use of operations points. Both sides get them each turn (and optionally from unspent points in previous turns.) The points are used for reorganizing disrupted units, purchasing replacements, rebuilding damaged corps, continuing a battle, and committing reserves to a battle. A complete list of operation point possibilities is not provided; players should make one.

Another change from the other games is that when rolling for operations points, players may also be required to change the objectives of their attack/defense. Default objectives are Leningrad, Moscow, Kiev, Odessa and Sevastapol. You could end up with the objectives of Leningrad, Odessa, Sevastapol and the southern edge of the map. If the change occurred toward the end of the game, while you're focused on that last gasp at Moscow, well, crud happens?? Objectives can be different for both sides as well, so this is a more fluid game, representing the difficulty both sides had in determining (and staying with) a single set of objectives for the campaign. In a recent game, the Soviets had to roll for objectives and ended up needing both Minsk and Odessa, both already in German hands. The Soviets have little or no attack capability, so German errors are hoped for.

Supply is a big factor in Strike the Bear. Units have to trace combat supply through railroads and or have adjacent trucks to be in supply at the moment they attack or are attacked. The Germans move railroad markers forward if

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they can one ox each turn to track the change in railroad gage that allows them to supply, redeploy and strategically move units. Tracing supply can at times be a chore, but it also allows a German player to sequence his attacks to negate Russian supply, adding to maneuver decisions especially on turn one. Luftwaffe units can be used to cut railroads in an ox or bomb trucks to make supply harder; the Soviets get random partisan placement to do the same.

Combat, as noted previously, is handled in the ox or diamond cohabitated by opposing units. Attack factors are totaled and compared to defending totals in either an odds or differential manner, then the final combat results table column is shifted for terrain, Luftwaffe participation, and supply. Not having a leader close or in the combat results in a die roll modifier. Both sides also get the combined arms column shift on attack or defense; I think this is wrong for the Soviets, particularly at the start of the game. Early Soviet counterattacks were wholly uncoordinated and should be depicted so in this game, at least through August when the historical battle for Smolensk wound down. Combat results in steps lost, retreats, exchanges and outright elimination at high columns.

Combining combat and using Operations points is a key to the game.

Here's an example.

Turn one sees Guderian lead 3rd Panzer and 6th Army (16 total points) into the Bialystok Ox (C5) against the Soviet 4 and 10th Armies (4 total points). The odds would be 4-1 or +12; since the +12 differential is a higher column, the German player chooses the differential. Column shifts include a 2 Left shift for marsh/woods terrain and a 1 Right shift for the German combined arms; both sides are supplied, but Konev is too far away from Bialystok to provide leadership. So the final column is +9 (4-1) with a +2 die modifier. Die roll is a 6 + 2 for a D1 result. One step of the Russians is lost, so 4th Army reduces from a 1(5)2 Army to a 0(4)2 Corps and a 1(3) 2 Rifle corps is put into the eliminated section.

Guderian wants to clear the ox so Continues combat by expending seven of his operations point to pay for the two combat units. The differential is now +13, but column remains the same; but this time he rolls a 10 which kills all the Russian units in the ox with a Defender Eliminated result.

He can now choose to advance by spending half the operations costs for his units. That would be four points for the armor and infantry or nine points if he wants to accompany them. (Guderian's operations cost is a whopping ten points, the highest of all the German leaders...not sure why, though as that seems counterintuitive. Shouldn't the better leaders cost less?) Since he can affect combat from where he is, he stays put. But the 3rd Panzer can continue to attack in a blitz - even though 6th Army also advanced, they cannot attack again in this different ox. 3rd Panzer pays another four points to attack the 11th Mechanized in Minsk. Odds are either +8 or 4-1. In this case the odds are better, so we have a two column shift for woods/marsh and +2 for Guderian's long distance leadership. Roll = 7 + 2 = 9, DW. The Russian has to roll for how many oxes it has to retreat and finds it has to retreat one ox back to Vitebsk.

End result, the Russian have lost Minsk and two armies; the Germans have suffered no losses, but have used up fifteen of their initial 70 operations points on this portion of the front.

Codeword Barbarossa

DIPLOMATIC ASSURANCES

Germany seeks to reassure Union of its peaceful intentions.
Crisis Spectrum moves left away from "Imminent War."
Award the German player 10 VP.

WINTER WAR

Stalin invades Finland.
Three Soviet armies (choice) are immediately moved to Finland. Reduce Soviet BRPs by 5. Units in the Leningrad area and the Russian area just north of it must remain in place and may not move until the Winter War ends. "Rising tide" one Army is lost (200). Each following phase, the roll makes a die roll. On an even number, the war ends normally. On an odd number, take two moves. The card is moved to "War."
G01

BALTIC STATES OCCUPATION

Stalin occupies the Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.
Soviet player must immediately select two armies and place them one each into any two of these areas: Latvia, Lithuania or Estonia. Reduce Soviet income this turn by 5 BRPs. Crisis Spectrum moves one level right towards "Imminent War." The German player may one extra Action this turn.
G02

Nord handles the initial Soviet counterattacks with his Commissar counter. At the end of each Russian movement phase the Commissar is placed via die roll (be sure to get the errata as the table this uses was not included in the game!)

If the marker ends up in a contested ox, the Russians have to attack regardless of odds. If not contested, the marker stays in place to "aid" the defense. I put "aid" in quotes, because the aid is anything but. The Commissar will negate any required withdrawals from an Ox but surviving Russians have to immediately counterattack. In one game, the commissar landed in Kiev just before the Germans assaulted the city. The initial German attack resulted in a Soviet withdrawal, which the Commissar negated, but the three points of Russians had to immediately attack the twenty points of German Panzers and were lost in an attacker eliminated.

The winner of the game is the side holding the most of its objectives.

Strike the Bear gave us a lot of trouble. There were a lot of niggling questions as the games progressed and some big holes in the rules - like what happens to trucks in combat. (answer: they're immediately disrupted and retreated two oxes.)

Every game we tried paused and stopped while rules were discussed and debated. In addition, none of us could quite get the reason for the use of oxes and diamonds; it just complicated an already convoluted game. We managed to finish several games, with a mix of results, but we were never really sure we were playing the game Nord intended.

Nord's supply rules once you work through them give a much better feel for supply problems during the campaign than either of the first two games. Kudos for that. But we ended up fighting the rules more than the campaign.

JOHN PRADO'S CODEWORD: BARBAROSSA

Codeword Barbarossa, as mentioned previously, is not a simulation of the fighting that occurred from June 41 through March 42, like the other games in this set. Rather, designer extraordinaire John Prado's has focused in the year preceding the invasion. Players spend actions to mobilize, upgrade and move units, shift strategies, and attempt to interfere with their opponent prior to the German-Soviet Crisis level reaching the "Verge of War" state.

The Codeword map is an area movement depiction of Europe from France to Russia and from the upper Mediterranean to Scandinavia. Other than area borders there is no terrain shown, although the border region (from where the invasion would be launched and initially defended) is clearly identified. Units shown are Armies and Corps, backprinted to show upgraded status; they are numbers for convenience, but there is no combat factor or movement factor.

There are four basic elements to the game: War Strategy, Crisis level, Basic Resource Points, and Technology Level.

1. War Strategy: Each side selects a specific war strategy to pursue. The Germans can select Historical, Northern Emphasis, Moscow Central or Ukraine Emphasis; the Soviets select Border Defense, Defense in Depth or Offensive. War strategy (and the comparison with the opposing strategy) affects victory points for units and where they are on the map when the game ends.

2. Crisis level: the Crisis level, which runs from Friendly Relations to Verge of War, affects the number of actions each player gets per turn, cost to mobilize or upgrade units, and what constitutes an alert check. Basically moving too many units in the border region makes the other side nervous and triggers an alert check - 50% of the time the Crisis level will increase.

3. Basic Resource Points. Each side gets a monthly allotment of these

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points and spends them for technology increases, unit mobilization and upgrades, and some movement types. The Germans start with 8 and the Soviets start with 6 and are multiplied when technology levels increase. I'm not sure about these levels as compared to the resources both sides were historically using (The Soviet industry was far outbuilding the Germans.), but that's a nit. Cards can give or take away resource points as well, sometimes hamstringing the opponent.

4. Technology Increase. Technology levels increase a side's monthly basic income. In a very nice touch, players have to invest resource points (up to a maximum of four per turn) to gain new levels. Technology Increase cards can be turned in along with ten invested points to gain a technology level. I really like the investment aspect, as well as the card requirement. In real life, sometimes throwing money at something just doesn't get you what you want.

Apart from the units, *Codeword* uses cards in game play to add potential events to the diplomatic maneuverings. The cards, 18 per side, punched out, have a variety of effects. Technology Increase cards are used to change the technology level of each side and affect a turn's income. Some cards, like the German Diplomatic Assurances or the Soviet Rote Kapelle Warning affect the Crisis level directly, while others, like the German Winter War or the Soviet Crisis in the Western Desert, make the other side move units where they might not be available when war breaks out.

The game starts with a Preparation Phase where the number of actions based on the Crisis level are received, events played last turn are resolved, and resource points received. A movement Phase follows where players alternate moving units as they deem fit. The Terminal phase has players investing in technology, buying or playing cards, mobilizing and upgrading units. The game ends at the end of turn 13 or before if the Crisis level has been at Verge of War for a full turn. Once the game ends, players spend significant time totaling up acquired victory points based on the final comparison of war strategies. That took almost as long as the game itself.

Here's quick run through of an early turn.

It's July 1940. Germany has opted for a Moscow Central strategy and last

turn, played an event card (one action), strategically moved two panzer units from France to Poland's borderlands (two actions and two resource points), and mobilized two panzers in Germany for two actions and eight resource points. Moving two panzers into the borderlands triggered a crisis alert check, which moved the Crisis level up to Uneasy. The Soviets, used their five actions to 1) buy two more event cards, 2) upgrade one armor corps (two resource points), and invest in technology twice (two actions and eight resource points.) Their chosen strategy is Defense in Depth.

For the July turn, the Uneasy Crisis level gives each side five actions. Germany's event card is now resolved. It's Bessarabian Dispute, protesting the Soviet's moving into disputed parts of Romania. The card awards the Germans five victory points, an additional action and moves the Crisis Level to Anxious. He receives eight more resource points bring his total to 26. The Soviets get six more for a total of twelve resource points.

The German spends two actions and two resource points to move two more panzers into Poland, while the Soviets move no one. This again triggers a crisis alert, but this time there is no movement of the level (it's a 50-50 proposition each alert.) During the Terminal phase, the German spends a point to pick up another card, and the remaining three to mobilize units. At the Anxious level, mobilization costs two points, so his resources have dropped to 18. The Soviets play a Technology Increase card for next turn and follow it with a technology investment of two resource points, giving them the requisite ten investment points they need to bump their tech level to two next turn. That will double their resource income. They mobilize two armored corps for four points and pick up another event card. It turns out to be a good one – the Balkan Campaign card requires the German to move ten units into the Balkans and Greece immediately, reduces the German income by ten resource points, and moves the Crisis level away from war.

That's a *Codeword Barbarossa* turn. Prado's cards give you a nice sense of the events that shaped the year between France's fall and the start of Barbarossa, but the game itself is not as much fun – there is very little interaction between players and the accounting chore at the end can be daunting. We liked the information imparted, but the game lost its appeal quickly.

Victory is awarded to the side amassing the most points (duh.) Points are awarded for unit types mobilized, with the points awarded sometimes increased for upgraded status. In addition points are awarded for meeting certain criteria for your chosen strategy. For example, the Germans get one extra point per panzer group in Poland's borderlands, and five for every borderland with three or more units if they've chosen Moscow Central.

It doesn't take long to realize that the Germans want into start war as quickly as possible, while the Soviets want it to drag out and stay away from Border Defense. Upgrading Soviet units generally pays for itself in victory point while German upgrading does little. I believe that's probably a correct assessment of the situation but it does create a fallacy. Climate has nothing to do with this outcome, and if the Germans push things to the edge of war in, say January 1941 – there is no way they would have invaded then. Turn 12 is the earliest weather might have let them attack (That's when they were originally scheduled to try until the Real Balkans Campaign interfered; other historians disagree citing bad weather in May 1941 which would have turned the Blitzkrieg in to a Mudkrieg as happened later that fall.) One addition to the game that was interesting was Paul Rohrbach's addendum that provided effects on the other three games from the outcome of Prado's *Codeword*.

Overall, two of the four games are well crafted and eminently playable, with a third very playable but dry; errata and possibly a rules rewrite would aid Strike the Bear. As for the burning question of which game best describes why Barbarossa failed; I would give the nod to Raicer's *Hitler Turns East* over Rinella's *Slaughterhouse*, because it best seems to catch the real essence of Barbarossa which in my opinion was the ceaseless Soviet counterattacks and attrition of the attacking Germans. **B**

CAMPAIGN STUDY N°3

GRAPHICS
MARK MAHAFFEY



(COUNTERS SHOWN ACTUAL SIZE)



BRADLEY'S D-DAY

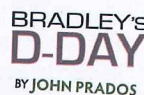
Design John Prados
Development Lembit Tohver
Graphics Mark Mahaffey



CAMPAIGN STUDY N°3

INSIDE 420 FULL COLOR COUNTERS
80 PAGE REFERENCE GUIDE
22"x 34" FULL COLOR MAP

BRADLEY'S D-DAY

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rich for a mere article, even a study like this one. While books have been written about D-Day, few focusing a narrower beam on the American side of D-Day will permit good coverage. In addition, the British landings at Normandy are usually presented as the aspect of the battle where the potential was greatest—both for deeper advance or failure—and an American success is often taken in a given. A closer examination of the possibilities on the U.S. sector reveals wider scope for either success or failure there also. Here we will consider the joint Anglo-American planning of the Normandy invasion and then zero in on the American side in covering the actual airborne operations, assault landings, and a variety of other features of the battle. Normandy, in the end, was a calculated risk.

THE SECOND FRONT

The Anglo-American Air has long debated the strategy in the European war. When the Soviet Union stood on the verge of being overwhelmed, one particularly daring 1942, Stalin had pressed for Anglo-American operations. But would these away some of the weight of the German armed forces. The British and Americans could hardly enter the Soviet point, and as early as 1942 there emerged a concept for a campaign in France, codenamed 'Operation Overlord'. This was the plan that would lead to the invasion of Europe. The British and Americans could hardly enter the Soviet point, and as early as 1942 there emerged a concept for a campaign in France, codenamed 'Operation Overlord'. This was the plan that would lead to the invasion of Europe.

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REVIEW

by David Hughes

DESIGNER STEPHEN C. JACKSON, BRIEN J. MILLER
GRAPHICS BRIEN J. MILLER
PUBLISHER COMPASS GAMES

STEEL WOLVES

OPINIONS DIFFER AS TO WHETHER WE ARE CURRENTLY IN A NEW GOLDEN AGE OF WARGAMING, BUT I SUSPECT YOU'LL FIND VERY FEW SOLITAIRE GAMERS WHO WILL DISAGREE. Recent years have seen a

torrent of interesting, innovative and entertaining games for the soloist, and indeed, I believe a case can be made that there has been more successful innovation in solitaire games than in those for two or more players, especially in aspects such as chaos, consistency of player viewpoint and limited intelligence. *Steel Wolves*, Compass Game's much-anticipated follow up to the very well regarded *Silent War*, follows more traditional paths than say, *D Day*

at *Omaha Beach* or *Fields of Fire*, but in one very important regard it pushes the boundaries of simulation design. More so than any other design I can think of, it offers the promise of experiencing the game from the sole point of view of an individual running a major campaign. According to the very informative notes by co-designers Brien Miller and Stephen Jackson, it is intended to single-mindedly sit you at Admiral Donitz's desk, directing the operations of every U-Boat in the fleet, week upon week, for nearly 4 years. Just as in history, no detail is too small to escape the Admiral's attention, and just as in history, Donitz must fight on two fronts; at sea, against the Allies, and on land, against his colleagues in the Navy, Army and Party hierarchies.

It is also hard to miss that it is HUGE – by far the largest solitaire game ever published, I believe. From the detergent-sized game box, to the 12 sheets of counters, to the mega-dice system, to the lavish, full-colour play aids, to the 300-hour plus campaign game, *Steel Wolves* is more than just generously proportioned, it is super-sized.

Now on the face of it, I'm the last person you'd ask to review this game. As I have written in previous issues, I want nothing to do with pro-German WW2 games, and certainly not games which force you to take the German point of view. And I'm a gaming butterfly – I've played hundreds of games once, but only 10 more than five times; my attention will flit to new topics, for sure. Even more to the point, I loathe solitude the way that nature abhors a vacuum. The prospect of me volunteering to spend 300 hours on my own seems as likely as Paris Hilton winning the Nobel Prize for Physics. But I am drawn to *Steel Wolves*' premise. I love the topic – the idea of running a whole

campaign wearing a single hat is very appealing, and I hear that *StW* might give me that. I am also keen to get a glimpse into the psyches of those intrepid gamers who DO stick at it; the people who replay season after season of *Statis Pro Baseball* or *International Cricket*; the enthusiasts who crave narrative more than interaction; the dedicated souls who complete what they start. For if Jim Dunnigan and his feedback from *Strategy & Tactics* readers in the early 80s still holds true, this cohort is much more representative of the hobby than me. And after the furor generated by my comments in issue #5, it might be good to sail in the mainstream, for once.

In this context, let me deal with the issue of German viewpoint before we start. Or rather, let the designers deal with it. The first paragraphs of their notes comprehensively slay this beast, and I recommend that everyone read them.

They state that, "In no way whatsoever is this game meant to promote, glorify or indemnify the history of Germany's war of aggression against Europe." Even on my highest of high horses, I can find no fault with this!

STOW THAT GEAR, SAILOR

As will emerge later in this review, this is a big game in more than just its components, but the first task for the solo submariner embarking on a *Steel Wolves* campaign is to come to grips with the mountains of "stuff" needed for play. Even more than in most big games, you have to get yourself organised, or you risk drowning in a frustrating sea of mislaid ships and wasted time.

There is a lot of sorting to do, and this task begins with the first counter punched. It is fair to say that the way the counters are laid out on the sheets does not help this task. I could not really discern a reason for the order in which the U-Boats for example are presented. Why could they not be done in order of availability, say? But for the U-Boats, at least when the initial sort is done, it will serve you forever. The same cannot be said for Allied vessels, of which there is a veritable torrent. Tramp steamers distinguished by tonnage, tankers, fishing vessels, sailboats, liners, battleships, cruisers and CVs – or targets, as the wolf packs would describe them – not to mention class upon class of escort type. As if that were not enough, these come in a further

THE LONELINESS OF THE CARDBOARD SUBMARINER A SHORT REVIEW OF A LONG GAME



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REVIEW



profusion of nationalities - British, Canadian, French, US, Brazilian, Greek, Russian, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, Panamanian, Polish, Belgian, and more. And if you want to play the game in its ultimate form - keeping loss statistics at this level of detail - then your storage system should let you retrieve and restore each of these categories quickly and easily. Because every fourth game turn, you will need to return each category of ship to its storage location, and redraw and refresh a range of target pools. It's no mean task!

And this is merely the start of your odyssey of counter organisation. For this is a game where your counters do more than merely wait in a baggie before coming into play. If your play takes you as far as War Period 4, you need 14 - that's not a typo - fourteen of our beloved "opaque containers" to make the game work, and most of these contain a specific number of the types, sizes and nationalities set out above. Filling this array of containers is not merely a process of dumping all the ships of a class into the pot; you must follow a precise set of instructions, rather like a very elaborate cocktail recipe. For example, at the start of the game, filling the "Loner" cup alone requires picks from 18 different pools. By the time you are set up for your first combat cruise, you will be breathing a hard earned sigh of relief. But beware, the hard work has barely started...

DIVE, DIVE, DIVE!

There are few things more tedious than a blow-by-blow description of a process-heavy rulebook, and I am not going to give you one. However, the *Steel Wolves* rules are not available online, and even for those

intrepid submariners who have played *Silent War*, the *Steel Wolves* rules are different in many regards. So, how best to convey the experience of playing this game? Perhaps if we follow part of a single patrol - a week in the alternative life of Heinrich Leibe, and U-38, in early July, 1940, one month into War Period 2. In my campaign, Leibe left port in the third week of June, and transited around the north of Scotland to the Western Approaches without incident, to join 7 other U-Boats in the area - BdU is keen to test its new Wolfpack doctrine, and so has massed its boats in the main sea lanes. Leibe had a lean time in his first week on patrol, failing to join his colleagues in a prolonged attack on Convoy HX12. Only two lone merchantmen fell prey to his torpedoes, amounting to no more than 8,000 tons sent below. But now, in the first week of July, he is determined to do better, and will be assisted in this ambition by the code-breakers at BdU - the Western Approaches is the B-Deinst area for this turn. Let's see how he fares.

The first requirement, of course, is to locate the enemy, which involves a roll on the area's Area Activity Chart (AAC.) Leibe rolls poorly again - damn those lookouts! - a 1, modified as follows: +1 as Western Approaches is the B-Deinst area, +2 for the current enigma level, +1 for the current B-Deinst level, -1 as there are more than 6 U-Boats in the area, for a total modified DR of +4. Reading this off on the Western Approaches AAC line for War Period 2 gives a result of orange, which translates as "contact with a slightly larger number of enemy ships." More to the point, it provides no modifier for the next stage of the process - determining just what ships the U-Boat has actually found.

This requires a roll on the contact table for the Western Approaches in War Period 2 - Leibe rolls 5, and once more fails to find a convoy. As Donitz wrote, "In all cases, first contact was a matter of chance. The convoy approached the U-boat," and chance so far has not been kind to Leibe. But all is not lost - he has managed to blunder into some loners. The next step in the patrol process is to determine just how many loners he has intercepted.

So, on to the Contact Tables we go. These are colour coded according to the AAC result - orange in this case, if you remember, designated "Low," and low equates to 2 contacts. At this point the contact routine for U-38 is done, and we

Marcello 12/40 2 5	Marconi 11/40 2 5	Marcello 11/40 2 5	Marcello 10/40 2 5	Marcello 10/40 2 5	Marcello 1/41 2 5	Marconi
Marconi	Malaspina	Cappellini	Faà di Bruno	Mocenigo		
Finzi	Tazzoli	Bianchi	Da Vinci	Baracca		
Calvi 10/40 2 8	Calvi 11/40 2 8	Marconi 1/41 2 8	Marconi 11/40 2 8	Marconi 10/40 2 8		
Glaucio	Otarìa	Giuliani	Tarantini	Bagnolini		
Glaucio 11/40 2 7	Glaucio 10/40 2 7	Liuzzi 10/40 2 9	Liuzzi			
U-2322	U-2511	Guglielmotti	Brin			
XXIII 2/45 2 1	XXI 5/45 3 8	Brin 4/41 2 6	Brin			
U-1405	U-1061	Archimede				
VIIIB 3/45 2 2	VIIIF 3/44 2 10	Brin 4/41 2 6				

Steel Wolves

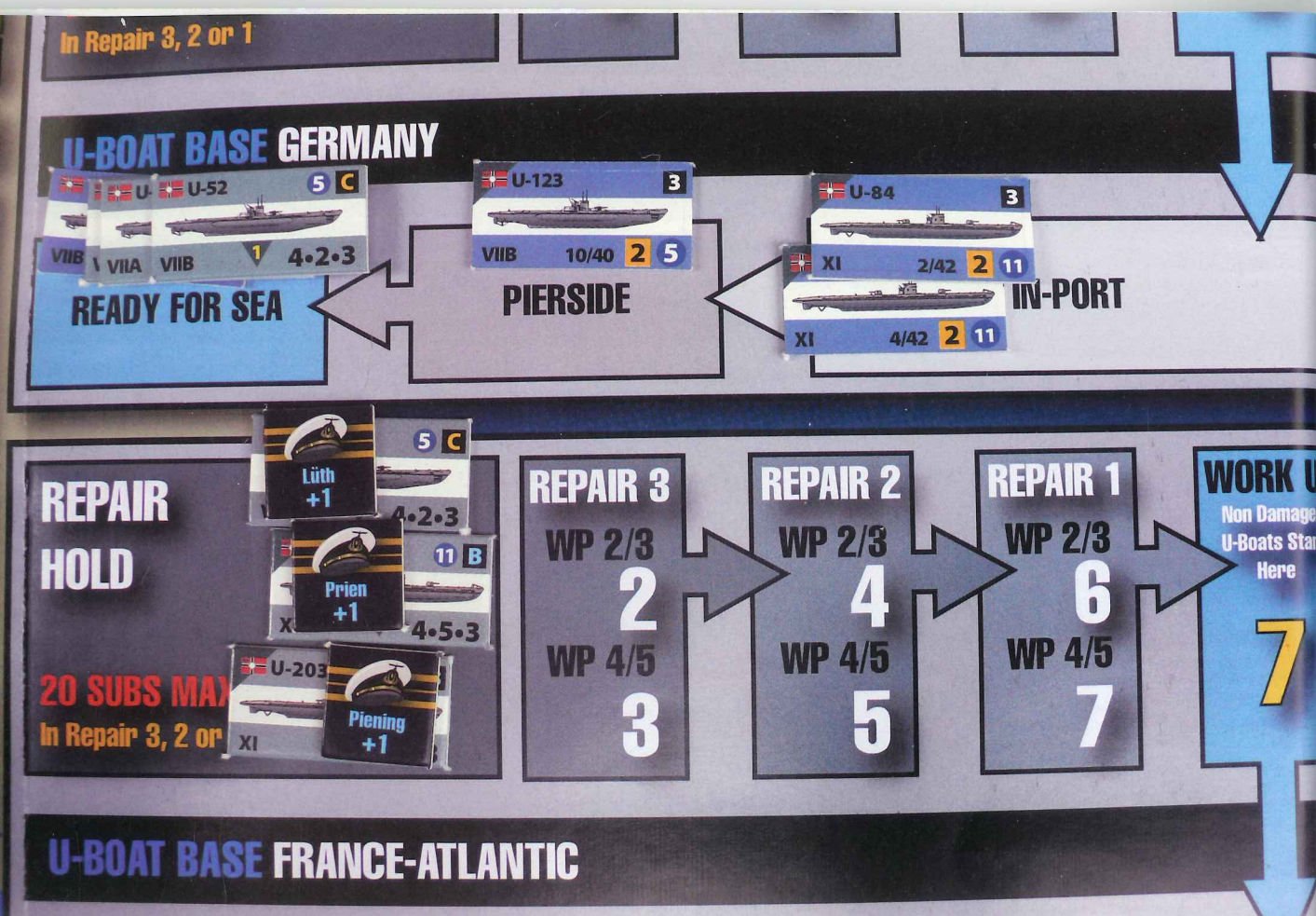
Countersheet 7 Back

U-69	U-102	U-101
IXB 2/41 2 6	IXB 6/40 2 6	IXB 5/40
U-140	U-138	U-76
IXB 11/40 2 6	IXB 9/40 2 6	IXB
U-995	UF-3	UF-2
IC/41 5/44 2 5	L'Aurore 9/42 2 4	L'Aurore
Vetehinen		
Vetehinen PoIT 2 1	Surface Raider at Sea	
Vesihisi	O-14	
Vetehinen PoIT 2 1	O-12 Evnt 2	
Iku-Turso	O-23	
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K-XVII	K-XIII	

Steel Wolves

Countersheet 12 Front

CV 30t	CV 29t	CV 29t
742 5.0	Victorious 5/41 5.0	Formidable 1/41 5.0
CVE 11t	BB 36t	BB 36t
8/41 2.1	Queen Elizabeth 8.0	Warspite 8.0
BB 41t	BB 42t	BB 42t
9.0	1/41 8.0	Prince of Wales 5/41 8.0
CA 13t	CA 10t	CA 10t
5.0	4.0	1/42 8.0
CL 10t	CL 10t	CL 13t
WP2 5.0	WP4 5.0	Edinburgh 5.0
CL 9t	DD 1t	DD 1t
5.0	5.1	5.1/2
DD 1t	DD 1t	DD 1t
6.1/2	6.2	6.1
DD 2t	DD 2t	DD 2t
WP5 7.3	WP4 7.2	7.2
SL 1t	SL 2t	7.1
6.2	CT 1t	7.1
BB	WP4	WP4



proceed with anticipation to the combat phase, and move from the map to the Loner display to discover the fate of the Merchantmen.

First step now is to draw the two hapless targets from the Loner cup. In this case these are a 1 Thousand Ton (1 T) Sailing Vessel, and a 4 T Merchantman – it seems that there will be no Ritterkreuz for Leibe on this patrol! Leibe next draws a Target Data Computer marker for each target – these provide modifiers ranging from +4 to -4 for the ensuing combat resolution. Leibe's foul luck continues – while the SV's TDC is a juicy -4, that for the more lucrative target is 0.

Leibe first turns his attention to the SV. Now, if this was his only target, Leibe might choose to surface and utilize gunfire, preserving his torpedoes and increasing his chances of remaining at sea, but as he will be using torpedoes against the 4T, there is no point. To resolve the attack, we calculate the attack value – 5 for the U-Boat class (a more capable IXA,) +1 as Leibe is an ace – and the defence value – 0 for the target, -4 for the TDC. The net result of this is 10, and to hit the target Leibe must roll less than 10 on a D10 – he manages an 8! All is not lost for the Sailing Vessel though, as we still have to determine the attack result. This requires one final roll – on the Attack Results table. Cross referencing the DR of 4 with the Vessel weight of 1 gives a red box, which translates on the results key as "SUNK!" Small beer, but this is a war of attrition, and there is another target to resolve – the 4 T merchantman.

In this case, Leibe's attack value is the same as previously, at 6, but the defence value is 2: 2 for the target, 0 for the TDC – giving a net DR required to hit of 4 or lower. Leibe rolls a 7, and misses. The crew begins to wonder if U-38 is cursed...

But this combat is far from over; the fat lady has not yet sung. Attacking in a U-Boat is never risk

free, and the Royal Navy always has the chance to counter-attack. In this case, there is scant chance of success; the process is as follows. First, we return to the map, to check the Western Approaches AAC once more. There are two red boxes in the Row for WP 2, which generate an ASW value of 2. The current War Period table – also on the map – provides a general +1 ASW value, for a total of 3. We subtract from this U-38's defence value of 3. At this point, we would roll on the Counterattack table – there is a "0" row – but luckily for the nerves of the U-38 crewmen, Leibe's ace status provides a further -1 drm, and so no counterattack occurs. But there is no rest for the wicked, and the war must go on... to the re-attack rounds, where Leibe has the chance to atone for that earlier miss.

Now, all TDCs are returned to the pot, and redrawn for surviving targets – the 4T, which gets a -2. This makes the hit number 7 – 6 for Leibe, -1 for the target, (which suffers an additional -1 in re-attack rounds.) U-38 rolls a 2 to hit, followed by a 6 to sink it. (If he had missed yet again, Leibe, as an ace, would have had the chance to re-attack once more.) The second counterattack does not occur, once again, due to Leibe's drm.

And STILL we are not done with Leibe! To reflect that the British home waters were packed with shipping, U-Boats in these areas which did not locate a convoy in their first use of the AAC get a second chance. This time, Leibe's lookouts were awake – rolled a 7 – resulting in a red result: contact with a large number of enemy ships! The +3 modifier from this result on the contact table generated a large convoy – of the OB type, let's call it OB 20. The engagement table tells us that this is a 36 ship convoy, and so 36 ships are drawn – 12 each from the Outer, Inner and Centre cups – and set up on the Large Convoy display. Leibe approaches the convoy boldly – rolling a 5 on his approach roll, which allows him to slip past the escort-heavy outer column, and begin his attack on the inner column. As this is his second attack of the week, he cannot call for a wolfpack, and so prepares a solo attack.

He flips three targets in the inner column, and locates an 8T oiler with

a defence value... with a defence... fortune contin... tively. At last... attack factors... was conservat... skippers were... target. In this... 7T outweigh... attacks. He h... counter attack...

Before re-a... needs a roll le... round. Our rol...

As before, T... prove his posi... higher value t... and +3 for U-... turn three tar... the White Ens... be flipped. Th... about there. T... interesting! L... Leibe decides... step is the TD... Not quite so e... 1 to hit, follow... game! Leibe a... to hit. Result i... him to elude a...



COMBAT DISPLAY [14.1] Large Convoy

a defence value of 2, a 7T merchant with a defence of 1, and a 4T merchant with a defence of 2. He draws a TDC for each revealed target, and his good fortune continues: they are all favourable to the U-Boat, -2, -3 and -2 respectively. At last the U-Boat skipper has a choice to make: how to allocate his 7 attack factors across the targets. At this stage in my campaign, BdU doctrine was conservative, reckoning that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; skippers were under standing instructions always to concentrate on a single target. In this case, Leibe judges that the additional 20% of a hit against the 7T outweigh the single extra T for the oiler; it and the 4T are left for later attacks. He hits on a roll of 4, sinks her with a 3. Once more, the British counter attack is ineffective.

Before re-attacking, we check to see if the convoy has straggled, which needs a roll less than the number of ships sunk or damaged in the previous round. Our roll of 2 is sadly higher than the required 0.

As before, TDCs are returned to the cup. Leibe now checks if he can improve his position – that is, move into the centre of the convoy, where the higher value targets are found. He rolls 7, modified by +1 for his ace rating and +3 for U-38's tactical rating, which just succeeds. Once again, Leibe can turn three targets face up; however, he is first required to flip any showing the White Ensign of the Royal Navy – in this case, there are two which must be flipped. The first is another 8T oiler with 2 defence – nothing to worry about there. The second is the Battleship Ramilies – now things should get interesting! Luckily for U-38, no target yet revealed has an ASW value, so Leibe decides to quit while he is ahead, and reveals no more targets. Next step is the TDC draw – one for Ramilies, one each for the two oilers: 0, -1, 0. Not quite so exciting. Ramilies is out of reach – she would need a roll of 0 or 1 to hit, followed by an 8 or 9 to kill – a 4% chance is not attractive in this game! Leibe aims instead for the oiler with the -1 TDC – needing a 7 or less to hit. Result is an 8, so the torpedo misses. As before, Leibe's skill enables him to elude any counter-attack, and with such an attractive target in sight,

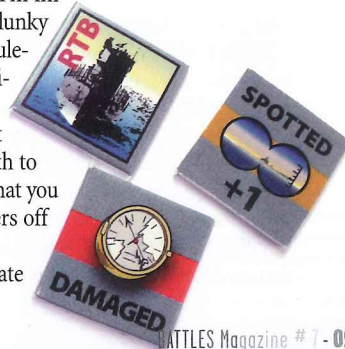
tries for a second re-attack. He needs to roll 1 or less, but fails. Leibe fumes as his periscope shows Ramilies escaping over the horizon...

The final counter-attack as before can have no effect, so the last thing to be done is to check U-38's endurance. Cross checking her endurance rating with the Endurance table on the map shows that she must roll 5 or less to remain on station; the roll is 8, and so Leibe's patrol is over; U-38 is marked RTB, and must return to a base.

So the patrol lasted 4 weeks in total, and resulted in the sinking of 5 ships, with combined weight of 22,000 tons. A fairly uneventful cruise, with no combat events, aircraft or escorts to contend with, which was a little less productive than the historical sortie, which resulted in 6 ships sunk at 30,000 tons. The brief encounter with Ramilies brought a frisson of excitement to the proceedings, of course. And in a poignant footnote, in the game U-38 did not make it home. While crossing the North Sea, she rolled an unlucky sequence of 8, 7, and 9 on her transit check, and was lost at sea from causes unknown.

So, what are we to make of all this? First and foremost, I found it pretty enjoyable. The system flows reasonably well, is not too hard to assimilate, generates a nice narrative, and more to the point, gives results that are well in the historical range. I have to admit, I'm impressed. The physical processes are a bit clunky – tables are scattered over the map, two rule-books and a number of charts, and modifiers are often listed only in the rules. Your first game week can be a bit of a raffle-fest finding the correct information, but truth to tell, you repeat these processes so often that you will have most of the tables and modifiers off by heart soon enough.

Indeed, it would be difficult to overstate



REVIEW

how much repetition is involved. In the example above – representing a single week for a single U-Boat – I rolled the dice 18 times, and drew 48 chits. The full campaign involves hundreds of U-Boats and lasts for 4 years. I will let you do the maths. Rather than spend 300 hours playing it, it feels like one hour repeated 300 times.

And it is hard to miss that there are relatively few decisions involved in this example, as you saw. To be fair, choices become harder when enemy ASW forces are present, and when you have the possibility of forming a wolfpack, but much of the time this felt like a self-playing process out of which only two things matter – what was sunk, and how did the U-Boat fare. I do not want to create the impression that the player has no choices to make – I count at least 10 decision points in the combat routine. It is more that I rarely felt that these decisions would make a material difference to the outcome of the game in the long run. The analytical engine is so strong and well crafted that it is basically proof against the stupidity of my U-Boat commanders, perhaps? And such decisions as there are – how an individual U-Boat approaches a convoy, for example – could be seen as taking place well below Donitz's pay grade, and so cause a weakening of the focus on the Admiral's role. You would think it might all be done more easily with a couple of tables and a single die roll – as indeed, it was done to an extent in *Silent War*.

None of this is lost on the designers, of course, who arrived at the level of detail and decision making in *StW* intentionally, after much consideration. They note three reasons for the inclusion of this significantly more detailed system for generating the results of a patrol. Firstly, they say, it was done to enhance the narrative, and in my view they have succeeded in this. Secondly, they tell us, players of *Silent War* wanted more decision-making. I think that they have succeeded to a degree here, but as mentioned, with the caveat that it often felt to me that the decisions I had to make were of minor importance. And lastly, the designers observe that this process allows some unnecessary abstractions in the *Silent War* system to be removed. Here I think that they have been less successful; some abstractions (such as *Silent War*'s 4-column convoy display) have certainly been eliminated; however, this has come at a cost, both in play time and in process detail, which I found was not justified by the results. But of course there is no absolute right or wrong here, and I am sure many and indeed most players will delight in this level of detail.

ONLY A SCANT FEW MEN

The dice and counter fest required to resolve patrols is all the more puzzling, as the game's design focus is explicitly elsewhere. As the design notes tell us, the game is meant as a simulation of "a unique position that only a scant few men in history have held... a war time command of a nation's submarine force." And indeed the rest of the game's systems are pretty ruthlessly focused on this level. Of course, the player's main task as Donitz is the direction of the U-Boats, and as Donitz discharged this responsibility himself, week in, week out for the duration of the war, the game hits just the right note. You also have to manage the flow of ships to sea, through an appropriately detailed (and dice heavy) series of repair and readiness systems.

Aspects of the war which the design team reckons are beyond Donitz's ability to influence are handled through a well thought out series of random events, and a war progress system. For example, demands by Hitler that Donitz divert U-Boats to other duties make themselves felt here, as do more fundamental changes in the nature of the campaign, such as improved Allied convoy doctrine, the closing of the "air gap" and the ever-present intelligence war. Once again, the basic systems of the game seem to me to do a fine job replicating the key elements of the history, but I am less convinced that they represent a perfect model. An example might illustrate what I mean. In the game, the Allies



will deploy more escorts as time passes, regardless of the success or failure of German efforts; in reality, the war on shipping was a constant series of actions and reactions. In the game, the Allied reaction is fixed by the historic German progress, and does not vary, even if the rate of German progress varies.

The game also provides an optional but recommended political sub-system, which is presented at a greater level of granularity than I have seen before. Broadly, Donitz is engaged not just with the enemy at sea, he must also wrestle with his so-called colleagues in Nazi Germany's other arms of service. The game system here revolves around the twin concepts of prestige and influence; both are gained primarily through success at sea, and are spent in "requests" which if granted, provide benefits for the U-Boat war. For example, Donitz can request a major increase in submarine production, which would cause all U-Boats to be received 2 months early. This is rated as a Difficulty Level "III" request – the highest, and targets OKW. Let's say that Donitz's current influence with OKW is +1, and with the Reich Chancellery is 0. The base chance of success is 10%, which can be influenced by spending prestige points for favourable drms. There are never enough prestige points to go around! And the success OR failure of a request will impact on the prestige level in each of the other branches of service. This is an intricate, detailed and very well implemented system. But it is frustrating for the player, dangling many delights before his eyes, which will be unaffordable – only one request can be made each month, and then only if prestige points are available. They often will not be, and if they are, they must be hoarded to ensure the success of vital requests such as those to correct torpedo failures.

All in all, the range of factors covered by each of the above systems is testament both to the depth of research which has gone into the game, and to the designers' skill – they shape the fundamental processes of the game, but unlike patrol resolution, do not overwhelm the player. I am impressed once more.

NOT WAVING BUT DROWNING

Impressed, but not ecstatic, for this has been a very difficult review to write. For most of the past 6 months, *Steel Wolves* has loomed over me as a task; something to be done, like my taxes, but not enjoyed. Most of my play has been in three tranches; the first, and most intensive was done using the components in the box. I played campaign one through to the end of 1939, before utter exhaustion set in. It is hard to be precise, but I doubt if I made fewer than 2,000 dice rolls, or fewer than 4,000 draws from the various cups. After a short time I literally flinched every time I rolled up a large convoy, to the point where it took every ounce of will not to cheat myself in the interests of a shorter game. I cheered every single time a sub RTB'd, and every time I failed a maintenance roll – anything to reduce the workload. For the first time in my life I found myself in wholehearted agreement with Winston Churchill, who said of this campaign, "How willingly would I have exchanged a full-scale attempt at invasion for this shapeless, measureless peril, expressed in charts, curves and statistics." When I finally quit, my relief was only tempered by the thought that I'd have to do it all again – for how can you review a game on the Atlantic without seeing a wolfpack?

My second attempt was considerably less onerous – I playtested a campaign week and a number of patrol scenarios using vassal, while on a flight from Australia to Scotland. My objective was limited – to explore whether using vassal would overcome the sheer tedium of manual play, and the answer was a qualified "yes," particularly the functionality which automatically seeds the target cups. However, I also used this opportunity to collect data on an excel spreadsheet, and the extra workload involved in keeping track of detailed statistics drove me over the edge yet again. My in-seat power malfunctioned somewhere over the Indian Ocean, and I have rarely been so glad when some-

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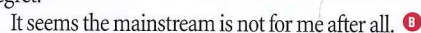
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None of the above will make this a quick endeavor though; perhaps the wisest words in the rulebook are these, "*When a player begins a campaign game, it is advisable to select a place to set up the game that will allow it to remain set up for a long time.*"

And seen in this light, *Steel Wolves* does indeed have considerable merit. First and foremost, it



VICTORY POINT TABLE [31.03]														
D	Victory Points		1 POINT		2 POINTS		3 POINTS		4 POINTS		5 POINTS		Historical Score	England Imperiled Track [31.04]
	ships	tons (000)	ships	tons (000)	ships	tons (000)	ships	tons (000)	ships	tons (000)	ships	tons (000)		
1939	Sep	16	71	23	102	31	137	39	172	47	203	9		
	Oct	17	66	25	97	33	128	41	159	50	194	15		
	Nov	18	66	26	96	35	129	44	162	53	196	18		
	Dec	18	67	26	97	35	131	44	165	53	199	23		
1940	Jan	19	68	28	101	37	133	46	165	56	201	30		
	Feb	19	69	28	102	37	135	46	168	56	204	38		
	Mar	19	70	28	103	37	137	46	170	56	207	39		
	Apr	20	71	29	103	39	139	49	174	59	210	39		
	May	20	72	29	104	39	140	49	176	59	212	39		

ATS**REVIEW***by Matt Foster*DESIGNER JASON BROWN
PUBLISHER CRITICAL HIT

LZ X-RAY



WELCOME TO ATS TABLETOP

On the morning of November 14, 1965, the men of Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, choppered into a small clearing in South Vietnam's Central Highlands. Designated "X-Ray," the landing zone was located at the base of the Chu Pong Massif, which rose impressively above the Ia Drang valley. Intelligence provided to the commander of 1/7 Cavalry, Lt. Col. Hal Moore, indicated that a single regiment of the Peoples' Army of Vietnam (PAVN) was in the area. In fact, three full PAVN regiments were operating from the Chu Pong, along with a main force local battalion of the Vietcong. Within hours, Moore and his men were fighting desperately to cling to the small landing zone as PAVN troops streamed down from the mountain in an attempt to annihilate them.

LZ X-Ray - Ia Drang is one of the newest offerings in the *ATS* line of games from Critical Hit. It's the series' first foray into America's Vietnam experience, and it uses the *ATS* "Tabletop" (*ATS-TT*) rules that debuted in "Drop Zone Normandy." *LZ X-Ray* is a module, not a stand-alone game. You'll need the main *ATS* rulebook and play aids, plus a set of the game system's standard markers in order to play.

Seven scenarios cover the major actions of the 1/7 Cav's bitter fight for the landing zone on Nov. 14-15, 1965. In addition to the seven scenarios, the *LZ X-Ray* ziplock package includes a couple of cardstock playaids with the charts and tables specific to the game, two half-sheets of counters, the *LZ X-Ray* battlefield walkaround booklet with additional rules and a compact 30 cm by 50 cm game map.

While by no means a big package, *LZ X-Ray* packs in a lot of "new" for the *ATS* game system. It introduces the new *ATS* Tabletop rules, new "main" system rules adopted from *Bloody Omaha*, new terrain forms, new unit types, new rules for snipers and extensive new rules for the use of helicopter transports and gunships.



The first thing an *ATS* grognard is likely to notice after opening the ziplock is the size of the counters. The *ATS-TT* series of games replaces all *ATS* 5/8-inch counters (personnel and light weapons) with 1/2-inch counters, and all 3/4-inch counters (vehicles and "H" weapons) with 5/8-inch versions. The two half-sheets of counters in the package, which are duplicates, also include a few 1/2-inch replacements for some of the standard *ATS* 3/4-inch markers.

The battlefield walkaround booklet for *LZ X-Ray* runs 12 pages. About three pages are devoted to the *ATS-TT* rules. Some of the Tabletop rules are simple additions, but others replace rules found in the main *ATS* rulebook. They're not difficult for an experienced *ATS* gamer to assimilate, but newbies might find it a little confusing at first.

The Tabletop rules also bring in an entirely new sequence of play that's used during the early stages of a scenario. Called the "Advance to Contact Sequence of Play," it basically discards *ATS* standard impulse-driven sequence of play in favor of an IGO-UGO turn structure. At the end of each turn played with the Advance to Contact SOP, players tally up their casualties and roll on an "Escalation" table to see if play changes to the system's standard sequence of alternating impulses.

Some of the *ATS* system's core combat mechanisms also get a make-over in the Tabletop rules.

ATS-TT uses a new casualty table that increments HE factors a little differently and includes lines for new weapons such as the RPG-2, LAW and aerial Rocket Pods. The biggest change to combat, however, is the elimination of column shifts for terrain and cover. *ATS-TT* converts all terrain column shifts to die roll modifiers. Cover states that provide left shifts under standard *ATS* rules now provide a positive DRM instead. Right-shifts on the casualty table are converted to negative DRMs.

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REVIEW

New melee rules and a new melee results table give players the opportunity to break their in-hex battles into more detail. Instead of simply calculating a single attacker-to-defender odds ratio, *ATS-TT* allows both players to designate and resolve separate attacks within the melee hex, with the results usually applied simultaneously. The new rules also add gunfire factors from light machineguns into melee combat.

"NEW EDITION" RULES, TERRAIN AND NEW UNITS

LZ X-Ray includes some of the rules that debuted in *Bloody Omaha* which will appear in the next version of the main *ATS* rulebook. The new rules aren't anything earth-shaking, but a few of them do give players the ability to sling a little more firepower around the game map.

Machine-guns are enhanced by the addition of rules for traversing fire and grazing fire. Personnel units eligible to use Assault Fire gain the ability to postpone their fire action and instead use it as Opportunity Fire during an enemy impulse, or employ standard Assault Fire during a later friendly impulse.

Elephant grass and scrub trees cover much of the *LZ X-Ray* game map. Scrub trees are a new type of terrain, but they are treated like orchards. That leaves plenty of lengthy lines of sight on the map, but both of these terrain forms are considered Obscuring Terrain. Each hex of obscuring terrain that a fire attack passes through generates a +1 DRM on the casualty table, which means gunfire attacks lose effectiveness rapidly at range.

Woods terrain backstops the landing zone, providing some helpful cover for the Americans. Woods also cover much of the Chu Pong's lower slopes along the map's west and south edges, which the PAVN forces can use to protect their limited number of heavy weapons.

A couple of other new terrain types can make their presence felt during play. Termite mounds scattered around the map block line of sight and enhance the cover state of units occupying them. Two lengthy dry creek beds cross the map between the foot of the Chu Pong Massif and the landing zone. Treated as shallow ravines, the creek beds are perfectly positioned to provide covered approaches and jumping-off positions for PAVN assaults into the landing zone hexes.

The game's two countersheets offer an array of new units and new unit types. North Vietnamese forces are fairly straightforward. PAVN regular squads are rated 4-4-8 (Firepower-Range-Morale), while Viet Cong squads are all 4-2-7. What few support weapons they have are all well-known Soviet makes from the Cold War era: RPG-2 rocket launchers, RPD light machine-guns, PK medium machine-guns and DShK heavy machine-guns.

Commissars are included in the PAVN order of battle. Unlike their World War II Soviet counterparts found in other *ATS* games, North Vietnamese commissars don't execute anybody when they fail to rally a broken squad.

PAVN and VC squads have a few special abilities and limitations. They gain some defensive and movement advantages in elephant grass terrain, and can infiltrate out of melee hexes (before any combat occurs) in woods. PAVN squads can only form multi-hex firegroups if each hex contains a leader, which are pretty rare. VC squads can't form multi-hex firegroups at all.

The U.S. Army brings a lot more hardware into the Ia Drang valley. Air Cav squads are rated 7-6-8, and they're supported liberally with M-60 light machine-gun teams. The light M-60s are inherent to the gun teams, which are rated 4-4-8 with a "2" rate of fire. Full-strength U.S. squads are also include an inherent M-79 grenade launcher, which gives them a one-column right shift on the Casualty Table.

It's also worth noting that U.S. personnel are never affected by enemy units in their morale support range when they check morale, and they never sur-

render. Broken American personnel units also take part in melee combat normally when PAVN/VC units infiltrate into their hex.

Similar to the BAR counters included in World War II orders of battle for the U.S., the *LZ X-Ray* counter mix includes a few individual M-79 Thumper gunners. Rated 3-3-9 with a "2" rate of fire, the individual gunners provide some extra punch, but they don't get the same casualty table shift as full-strength squads.

Other U.S. gear includes tripod-mounted M-60s (medium MGs in the game), single-use LAW rockets and a new version of the M29 81mm mortar that's considered an "H" class weapon that can fire both chemical smoke and white phosphorous.

The Air Cav troopers also benefit from top-notch leadership. In addition to a substantial number of "normal" leaders, they also have two leaders who never take morale checks and are always marked with Courage: Lt. Col. Hal Moore and Sgt. Maj. Basil Plumley. They rally broken units as commissars (without the "C1" step loss on failure...) and have an increased morale support range of 4 hexes.

The U.S. forces also bring along a highly lethal assortment of supporting fires. They have improved ratings for artillery accuracy and battery contact, and have either one or two batteries of 105 mm guns off-board in five of the seven scenarios.

Rocket-armed helicopter gunships appear in three of the scenarios and the deadly Douglas A1-H Skyraider appears in two. In addition to its 20mm cannons, the Skyraider can lay down cluster bombs, which hit a 10-hex pattern, and napalm, which blankets a line of four hexes.

GAME PLAY

In all seven scenarios, the U.S. player will find himself thoroughly outnumbered and on the defensive. As an example, the first scenario, *Into the Valley*, takes place only a couple of hours after the Americans first landed. A total of 26 NVA squads, backed by a couple of heavy machine-guns, descends the Chu Pong to attack what amounts to an American company -- 10 squads, plus weapons teams.

The numbers in most of the scenarios are similar, typically a company-sized American force taking on a battalion of PAVN, give or take a few squads. The American player finally gets all of 1/7 on line in the seventh scenario, *Broken Arrow*, along with some troops from 2/7 Cav -- but the PAVN player counters this with the appearance of the H15 Main Force battalion of Viet Cong to fight alongside his battalion of regulars.

American firepower makes movement-to-contact a bloody affair for the PAVN, but long-range fires from the U.S. troops are frequently degraded by all of the obscuring terrain -- elephant grass and scrub -- covering the map. Fire attacks at ranges greater than a few hexes are often reduced to little more than harmless fireworks.

How well the American player makes use of his fire support is frequently the difference between victory and destruction. Obscuring terrain limits the effectiveness of direct fire, but it doesn't interfere with the line-of-sight needed to call in off-board artillery and mortars. He will come to greatly prize (and painstakingly protect) his 81mm mortars, just as certainly as the PAVN player will learn to hate the American 105mm guns, which can eliminate squads wholesale in a single attack.

In interviews conducted years after the war, a number of PAVN officers stated that the lessons they learned from the battles in the Ia Drang valley led to the development of their "hug them by the belt" directive of close engagement with American forces whenever possible. The PAVN player in *LZ X-Ray* enters



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into the game with this lesson already well-known, and should use it to his advantage. The quicker he can get his forces into close contact -- within two or three hexes of the Americans -- the less effective artillery fire becomes.

Of course, the American player won't have to argue with a battery commander who refuses to fire a "danger close" mission, but he will need to be mindful of the possibility of inflicting friendly casualties.

The trick for the PAVN player is minimizing casualties while he works his troops in close to the Americans. Dispersed maneuver can help avoid the pulverizing effects of OBA, but it's a tactic that works against the limited PAVN leadership structure. Typically, the PAVN OOB will have one leader for every seven or eight squads. With so few leaders, spreading out too much risks leaving broken squads scattered around with no way of rallying them. It also further limits the PAVN ability to form firegroups or larger movement groups that can act in a single impulse once the Advance to Contact sequence of play has gone by the boards.

The PAVN player must also wrestle with the problem of air defense. Only his 12.7mm heavy machine-guns are a real threat to American aircraft. Their crews can drag them just 3 movement points per turn, however, so they're not big on mobility. The temptation is to site them in good cover on the slopes of the Chu Pong, but that has to be balanced against their vulnerability to mortars and artillery, and their range limitations against aircraft.

while the American player is constantly on the defensive, the individual scenarios in general manage to avoid a sense of sameness. Each presents a unique element or challenge with which the players must contend.

The first scenario is the most basic. Bravo Company, 1/7 Cav must weather a large PAVN attack, relying on their organic weapons and a single supporting

battery of 105mm guns. The second scenario is a similar attack, but the action switches to Able Company, which is deployed a bit farther west. The Americans also gain the use of a couple of gunships and a Skyraider in support.

Scenarios 3 and 5 cover the attempts to rescue Bravo Company's 2nd Platoon, which would become known as LZ X-Ray's "lost platoon." Scenario 4 tasks the U.S. player with landing elements of 1/7's C and D companies while a PAVN attack rolls in on the landing zone. In Scenario 6, elements of the VC battalion finally get into the action as part of another large assault.

Scenario 7 is the largest and longest of the bunch, and perhaps the most interesting. It covers the final large assault on the LZ on 15 November and involves the entire 1/7 Cav, plus elements of 2/7 Cav -- and, literally, an endless onslaught of North Vietnamese.

In scenario 7, the PAVN player is able to return some of his eliminated squads and leaders to play as reinforcements. The Cav troopers are supported by two batteries of guns and two helicopter gunships roaming the area. They also have a chance each turn to bring in a Skyraider strike.

The use of the *ATS Tabletop* "Advance to Contact" sequence of play puts a new twist on the experience of a large attack for both players. While the utility of an IGO-UGO turn structure is open to debate, the mass movement of a battalion-size force at one go certainly generates a "here they come!" feeling. During the initial approach, it seems to work a bit in favor of the defenders. If the PAVN player gets lucky with the Escalation dice rolls and manages to get a turn at close quarters while still in the Advance to Contact SOP, the tables can turn quickly. **B**





BREAKTHROUGH HAIG DECIDES

REVIEW

by Nels Thompson

DESIGNER MICHAEL RINELLA
GRAPHICS NICOLAS ESKUBI
PUBLISHER MMP



CAMBRAI

MICHAEL RINELLA IS TAKING THE FAMILIAR OUTLINE OF THE AREA-IMPULSE GAME AND TRANSFORMING IT WITH RISKY CONCEPTS OF COMMAND AND CONTROL, EVENTS, AND AN UNCERTAIN GAME END. Area-impulse games lately play shorter and are more simple than the original Avalon Hill games from the 1980's and 90's. This trend now comes to World War One with Rinella's *Breakthrough: Cambrai*, from Multiman Publishing (MMP). Its nearest relatives are Ted Raicer's *Royal Tank Corps*, and Rinella's own *Monty's Gamble: Market Garden* and *Not War But Murder*. The area-impulse genre is currently dominated by Rinella and the loose series of *Storm Over* games, started by Tetsuya Nakamura's work

and reaching the English market with his *Storm Over Stalingrad*. Turns are short after the opening assault, with the impulse number incrementing on each player's move. Gone is the advantage marker that allows a combat re-roll. The marker is still here, but using it turns a combat loss into a stalemate, or grants one-time reinforcements. It can be used to automatically change the weather or extend the game. Operational sectors dictate who fights where during the initial British advance. The clock is ticking. The game can end before the British player achieves a win, even if the win is in sight.

The game is much smaller than its non-magazine predecessors, with fewer

REVIEW

areas and units, similar to *Storm Over Stalingrad* in size. Play time is shorter than *Stalingrad*, mostly because each side gets only a few impulses per turn. It gives up some play depth relative to *Monty's Gamble* and the Avalon Hill games by getting smaller and restricting the opening. The British are rigidly ordered during the opening, and insufficient progress could end the game early.

The campaign game covers the famous battle from its start on the 20th of November through the 3rd of December, 1917. The most commonly played scenario will probably be "To the Green Fields Beyond," covering the first four days of the battle. Each day is one turn. Every area and zone counts toward victory. The British win if they control 21 of them, or if they can get fresh cavalry into one of the three zones in the center of the German side of the map. It takes about two hours to play. In addition to the campaign, there is a scenario covering the German counterattack, and a longer scenario covering the opening assault through the 26th of November. There is one important post-publication errata impacting the scenarios: Bourlon Wood is a British objective, not the town of Bourlon as the rules state.

The classic area-impulse engine drives *Breakthrough: Cambrai*. The phasing player activates the units in a single area each impulse. In combat, each side starts with a lead unit, and adds bonuses for additional units. The defender receives a terrain bonus. Each adds the sum of two dice, and the highest total wins. The defender takes the difference in the total as losses, satisfied by any combination of exhausting units, retreats and eliminations. For the attacker it's all or nothing: win and you're in; lose and your units all become exhausted and retreat.

Recovery is treated in a new way. Units do not become exhausted by movement, nor by combat so long as they win, the point unit excepted. Units may thus activate in more than one impulse in a turn. Exhausted units may not attack, and may only move during a regroup impulse. Very few exhausted units will ever become fresh again, unless they are reinforced. The Germans may flip one exhausted infantry to fresh each turn, but the British cannot automatically restore any during the first few turns. Exhausted infantry can be replaced in the line, however, by incoming reinforcements. The reinforcement is placed in the exhausted unit's area, and the exhausted unit is placed in the rear where the reinforcement would otherwise have arrived. This makes for some tense decisions for the German player early. Units at the front line are obviously valuable, but they are also vulnerable to overrun, and swapping fresh units into the line in this way, desirable as it may be, can be futile and destroy any hope of counterattack. The British player has an additional option. He may dismount his cavalry to restore exhausted infantry to fresh. For every infantry unit restored, a cavalry unit is removed from the game. Unlike most games, deciding which units will recover and how is not trivial. The reinforcement schedule puts a definite limit on the rate of losses a side can sustain, and moving exhausted units to the rear-- though necessary-- removes them from valuable defensive duty at the front. Seeing units teleport from one area to another is jarring at first, but the rule is simple, and I like it.

Breakthrough: Cambrai's area-impulse ancestors have deep attrition engines that favor the defense. Attacker losses affect all attacking units, even in a narrow defeat. Defending units can absorb a lot of step losses, and unless an area is completely cleared, new defenders can be pushed to the front to re-

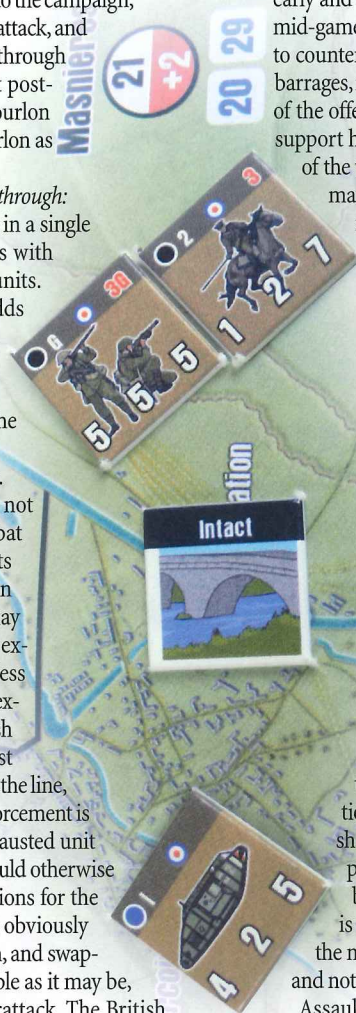
place any that retreated. The system ports well to World War One trench warfare, with its natural edge to the defender, but *Cambrai* is different. Tanks are the most obvious reason. They are twice as powerful as other combat units, plus they get a "tank fright" bonus on the first turn. They are the only units capable of initiating overruns, which allow continued movement and further attacks during one impulse. Tanks break down easily, however, steadily weakening the British side with each passing turn.

The artillery rules impact the game even more than tanks. Each impulse starts with the placement of artillery. Hurricane barrages are executed, then artillery support markers are placed. The artillery order of battle gives the British 12 artillery points and 2 hurricane barrages at the start of the game, then steadily less. The Germans start with no artillery, receive a few points early and one hurricane barrage at the end of turn two and another later. In mid-game, the Germans receive an artillery points allotment enabling them to counterattack. Artillery points are spent for direct support or for rolling barrages, no more than one point per attacking infantry unit. Even at the start of the offensive, the British player will only have enough artillery points to support half or less of what he would like to do. Budgeting artillery is one of the toughest aspects of the game. Each artillery point spent places one marker. Direct support markers add one to the attack, and rolling barrage markers reduce the cost of movement. With movement costs from one to four to enter an area, rolling barrages make all the difference between an activation that clears one area and stops and one that clears several enemy areas. But every rolling barrage is one artillery point that isn't used in direct support, and it's usually a difficult choice.

Hurricane barrages are not related to artillery points. They are executed at the start of an impulse, up to two areas away from the active area. Holding at least one hurricane barrage unused adds one to every defense, the only defensive artillery choice in the game. A hurricane barrage is essentially a medium odds attack against the target area before any units are committed for movement and combat. They have the potential to blow a hole in the enemy line and completely change what the arrayed attacking units are able to achieve in the impulse. They have a fixed attack factor, modified negatively by terrain and weather, and positively by concentrated enemy units. Each side adds only one die to a hurricane barrage, limiting the damage they can do, and weighting the results toward the mean. Once used, they generally have only a one in three or one in six chance to be available on the next turn. In resolution they can fail utterly, or clear an area, or something in between. In short, they change what is possible along the front. No early German position can be completely safe when the British have a hurricane barrage available. The daily hurricane barrage marker recovery roll is the most important roll of the game-- at least that's the way it feels the moment the die is tossed. You could hold them as a perpetual threat and not risk the recovery roll, but what kind of wargamer would do that?

Assaults led by tanks achieve overruns when the defending units suffer more casualty points than they can absorb. All defenders are eliminated and the impulse immediately shifts into an overrun routine. The attacking units keep moving and attacking, if they have any more movement points left. The current area temporarily becomes the active area, new artillery support markers are placed, the overrunning units move, and any new assaults are executed. There is no limit to the number of overruns that can be chained together. The British player orchestrates his opening with this in mind. Using rolling barrages, a single overrunning stack can push several areas deep into the German defense.

There are no stossstruppen in *Breakthrough: Cambrai*. During development, designer Rinella and developer Uli Blennemann removed them when German sources showed that stossstruppen were not deployed in the coun-



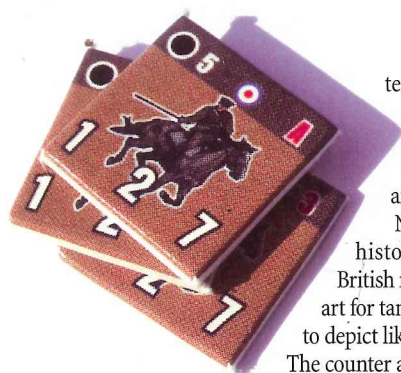
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terattack at Cambrai. The German counterattack, when it comes, receives only the benefit of some stout divisions, a lot of artillery, and exhausted British units.

Nicolas Eskubi's map depicts the historical trench outlines, based on British maps from the period. The counter art for tanks and aircraft was crowd sourced to depict likely silhouettes and paint schemes. The counter art is good, but printed at a resolution

too low for the font and image size, resulting in a slightly blurry look. Counter icons are images of soldiers and silhouettes of tanks and aircraft. Setup information is on the reverse side of the counters. The rulebook, playbook and play aids are printed in color. Bridges are printed very small on the map. On the one hand, they do not interfere with the aesthetic, but on the other hand, they are surprisingly tiny. The main map areas are shown to scale, but the zones on the map edge are generic images. Unlike other area-impulse games, zones are identical to areas for game play.

Some of the new concepts in the game feel as though they are being tried on for size. There are perverse results. A lucky hurricane barrage can clear an area and deny the overrun a player had been aiming for, halting an advance because only an overrun allows placement of additional rolling barrages beyond the area just entered. A vacant area can be a better defense than an occupied one, for the same reason. It's reasonable to ask why a moving division cannot place additional artillery markers as it advances, if the same unit can do so when moving and attacking in an overrun.

German garrisons are weak and immobile, but they live on after elimination, returning to any German uncontested area on the next turn. Only the Germans have garrisons. They work fine in the game, and obviously they are needed for play balance, but personally I'm not a fan. There will be the odd game where the British player would choose not to eliminate a garrison, to prevent its teleporting from where it is now to where it is needed at the start of the next turn. Perhaps it's better than allowing an unreinforceable gap in the German line, but it seems clumsy. To be fair, tricks of this sort are not uncommon in board wargames, where retreating or even eliminating the enemy can be an undesired result.

ORDERS FROM HEADQUARTERS

I playtested *Breakthrough: Cambrai*. Most of it I like, but some of what it attempts is inelegant. The general outline is fairly standard, with some new tricks for tanks and artillery, and with a couple of twists, like limited recovery, and exhausting units only after combat losses. The most discussion worthy direction within *Breakthrough: Cambrai* is not the rules for moving and fighting. The British player is under inflexible orders, far more restrictive than in most wargames. Haig is here. He is large and in charge.

I play wargames for two reasons. First, I enjoy playing a wargame system, with its chosen mix of game and simulation factors. Any game in our hobby breaks down as a simulation under close inspection, but a good wargame has a playable, plausible system.

I can direct my armies to anywhere within their capabilities, and they will fight in some predictable manner when they get there, though there be dice involved. I also play for the vicarious thrill of a counterfactual historical narrative. Wargame narratives are tricky. If the game's structure is too open-ended or

abstract, it feels like a puzzle instead of a conflict simulation. But a game feels scripted if this is countered with too many restrictions, prerequisites, or special units. Balance in these respects is subjective, and with every title a designer faces the challenge of pleasing his audience with the right combination of play and narrative. That being said, Rinella is turning hard toward narrative in *Breakthrough: Cambrai*.

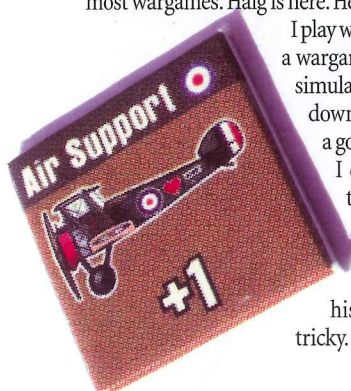
The popularity (indeed, the necessity) of narrative restrictions in wargames is undeniable, whether by event cards in *Paths of Glory*, or special scenario rules in *Advanced Squad Leader*. Command restrictions and uncertain victory conditions add to the narrative of a game. We say we want elegant simulations, with few special rules, but we love chrome. (My thesis on chrome, wherein I show what it is, and how much of it any wargame should have, and prove that we all love it, will be published by the University of Battles Press. For now, just take my word for it.) Wargamers (caveat: in sufficient numbers) choose games wherein they have imperfect knowledge of the combatants' future capabilities or what it takes to win. Game narratives are satisfying

when they contain a semblance of the maddening imperfections that come when applying the operational art of war in the real world. There are daft orders to attack an impregnable position. Other orders are not carried out. Reinforcements might show up unexpectedly, or late. These games have to be carefully drafted lest their artifices appear uncanceled, but there have been many successes. The reader has in mind a list, and to what degree they succeed, although I will name a few.

David Dockter created a branching event tree based on how a card is played, and a heavy incentive for the Whites to take Tsaritsyn early in *Triumph of Chaos*. In Ted Raicer's *Grand Illusion*, the Belgians and Germans are restricted around Antwerp, and British cavalry has an enhanced screening role only at the start of the game. Rinella's first published game, *Monty's Gamble*, restricts airborne divisions to operational areas-- anything outside of the areas printed on the map is off-limits to them, and known to be off-limits by the German player. *Combat Commander*, by Chad Jensen, like Courtney Allen's *Up Front* before it, is predicated on a distribution of action cards, any crucial one of which may not be in a player's hand at the moment of need. *Empire of the Sun*, by Mark Herman, includes rules for triggering and ending command limits through interservice rivalry. *The Napoleonic Wars* by Mark McLaughlin uses a die roll to confirm victory: meet the conditions then roll a die to see if you've won.

Purists are appalled, but the games sell, and fans rave. The modern wargame market demands games with politics or command friction, and even uncertain victory conditions have a place.

To this mix now add *Breakthrough: Cambrai*. Rinella has taken the operational sectors from *Monty's Gamble* a step further. The initial advance of every British infantry division is channeled into operational sectors printed on the map. No division may stray into an area reserved for another. The operational sectors extend up to 5 areas deep for some divisions, but the 12th Division is limited to a single zone surrounded by operational sectors numbers for other divisions. Beyond the op-



erational sectors there are no restrictions. It's a risky design choice. It works, most of the time, partly because it helps



to balance the game against early German weakness, and partly because, most of the time, one or two divisions will be able to threaten areas beyond the operational sectors, making things interesting.



I will go out on a limb and say that your enjoyment of *Breakthrough: Cambrai* will hinge on your tolerance for that phrase: It works most of the time. A British player may cry foul when, on the second day, a hard charging 51st Division cannot take Bourlon Wood in a stumbling 62nd Division's operational sector, or when 12th Division is stuck in its one zone in good order and its partner the 29th cannot make any headway, with no help from the 12th forthcoming.

The victory conditions are more radical. The British player is under General Haig's orders. Take Bourlon Wood and a couple of other key areas, or risk an order to shut down the offensive and tally up the victory points to determine a winner. As early as the second turn, Haig can end the game. The advantage marker can be used (by either player!) to convince Haig to extend the offensive for at least another day.

A common frustration will be felt by the British player who suffers early setbacks but manages to maintain a credible advance into the third and fourth turn. Perhaps his difficult but manageable position was possible only by using the advantage, and now he has no influence over Haig. Perhaps he has hoarded some artillery, planning a last assault to achieve 21 victory points. Sitting on merely 20, and without Bourlon Wood, he will have to hope that Haig got up on the right side of the bed. Perhaps players will love the dramatic tension of needing to get to 21 and risking Haig's mood if they can't get there, but to me the game screams for a window that keeps Haig interested, maybe 16 on the second day, and 19 on the third. Too many good games will be shut down prematurely otherwise.

I can't speak for the real General Haig, but the *Breakthrough: Cambrai* Haig is crafty. He might declare victory and shut down the offensive. There is a believable, if maddening, potential narrative at the start of any play of *Breakthrough: Cambrai*. The opening assault is a smashing success, with tanks rolling over the wire and the trenches all the way to the city of Cambrai by the second day. But the cavalry cannot break through, and a stubborn British command poorly plans the assault on Bourlon Wood, which remains in German hands. A disappointed Haig orders the end of the small offensive. But wait! The British have 21 victory points. The British have won the game. Charitably, this is a loose simulation of command friction. The subordinate player has a goal that doesn't mirror his boss's, Haig's. The player wins by demonstrating only that the tanks can get him to 21 victory points, Haig be damned. He doesn't have to hold them, and he doesn't have to do it the way Haig thinks it should be done. What happens afterward is of no consequence. The Germans could retake everything, but just as in history, nobody cares. Warfare may have changed forever with the "victory" by the tanks at Cambrai, but the Germans did counterattack, and they did throw the British back. A house rule or post-publication change to keep Haig committed when the British have 21 victory points would be an improvement, to keep the game going and allow the Germans to counterattack.

Breakthrough: Cambrai plays swiftly and it has solid mechanics and great drama during the British attack. The operational sector restrictions are a matter of taste, but coddling General Haig is a bit much to ask. 



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REVIEW

by Olivier Revenu

YES, ANOTHER STORM OVER SOMEPLACE. This time, it's China, a fashionable place after *Tiarezhuang* (*ATO Magazine*) and *Kunlun Pass* (*Battles Magazine*), set in the summer of 1944, just in time for another rumble between the Imperial Japanese Army and the forces of the Kuomintang.

At stake is Hengyang, the last communications center in Hunan province still controlled by the Chinese after the losses of Zhengzhou, Luoyang, and Changsha. In one corner, 50,000 Japanese soldiers in four divisions eager to be done with Operation Ichigo. In the other, 20,000 Chinese, the remnants of the 10th "Taishan" Army, with orders to hold to the last drop of blood. The battle raged at the end of June in the rice patties and marshes around the city, before reaching the city itself the following month. A bloody rhythm of attack and counter-attack took hold, with devastating Japanese bombardments. With the arrival of Japanese reinforcements via barges on the Xiang River in the rear of the Chinese defenders, the Chinese corps commander Fang Xianjue addressed a laconic message to his superiors on 4 August 1944: "This is probably our last message, see you in the afterlife." The city was captured four days later when the Japanese invested the Central Bank that housed the Chinese HQ. Losses were enormous, with 10,000 killed and wounded Chinese soldiers and between 20,000 and 40,000 Japanese casualties. It was a massacre that ended with grenades, bayonets, and the broadsword. Gory.

With another game in this series, focused on a relatively obscure subject and covering a situation more or less seen elsewhere, you might think you could pass on this one. **Wrong.** This game was designed by Wayne Cheng Cheng, editor of *Board Wargame Magazine* (see *Battles* #6). And as with most of his designs that we have played up to this point, Wayne has taken a classic system and added his own ideas, all of them clever, refreshing, and subtle, changing the original system but not so much to make it unfamiliar.

STORM OVER SOMEPLACE

This is a new incarnation of an area-impulse system *à la japonaise*, as some have called it (first used in Port Arthur and Stalingrad, in the Japanese *Games Journal*). You will find two (excellent!) reviews of this system in *Battles* #1 and #3, and another (no less excellent) panoramic view of games using the system in *Battles* #4. Accordingly, we will not get into the details of this well-known system but rather focus on the small changes and particularities introduced by Wayne Cheng Cheng.

The major plus is a system of chain of command coupled to a system of action points. Leaders (one per division and one per army corps) are placed on a track at the map's edge according to their command value. During each impulse of the action phase, the player activates a leader that in turn activates one or more units of his division or of his army for the corps leaders, in one zone. One action point is spent to attack or move all of a leader's units, and one is spent to rally one unit (improving it from Spent to Ready). These action points

STORM OVER

HENGYANG

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GRAPHICS MICHAEL LEE
PUBLISHER FORMOSA FORCE
GAMES



are also necessary to activate useful tactical chits.

Leaders have between one to three points to spend each turn, and obviously orders need to be well planned-out in order to maximize the use of these action points. Another consequence is that divisional units are encouraged to be kept together, as isolated and thus probably useless units are liable to stay that way for many turns (as you don't want to waste your action points). This action point system is very simple and increases the number of decisions and dilemmas (especially at the beginning of the game for the Japanese) the player faces, creates different game outcomes, and adds a certain historical feel and coherence to what is happening on the paper battlefield. In addition, by limiting the number of possible actions, emphasis is placed on global strategy and makes the game denser by eliminating less useful impulses. The idea is simple, well applied, and excellent.

There are quite a few tactical chits (five to seven for the Japanese and four to six for the Chinese) and they add their own share of action, decision-making, and chaos. Some of them cost one action point, others are played as an impulse and others accompany actions. A few examples:

- Gas is very useful, as it flips all Chinese units to Spent in a single zone.
- Bombing is self-explanatory.
- Air Strike is a variant of the above and permits the attacker to choose a target unit rather than a single zone.
- Damage Fortification allows the Japanese player to reduce Chinese defenses but depends on a fresh engineer unit.
- Breakthrough increases movement capacity and is useful for piercing Chinese defenses or retreating quickly.
- Interruption frustratingly nullifies an opponent's chit.
- Grenade adds a modest +1 to Chinese attacks greatly in need of the bonus.
- Absolute Defense permits the Chinese to radically reduce their number of losses.
- Defensive Fire allows one free fire by Chinese units.

• Overrun permits the Japanese to move and fire in the same impulse, or vice versa.

- Mine nullifies the above, stops the enemy and inflicts one D3 of losses.

Etc. More than in other games, the tactical chits are not a gadget or a simple addition of chrome. They give the game life as without them the game would be almost totally scripted. They add more possible actions, the number of which is greatly limited by the action point system. Here again, planning and dealing with problems are the orders of the day.

Other dramatic interventions in the course of the game are events, drawn at the beginning of each turn. Clever and historical, drawing them can be nerve-racking:

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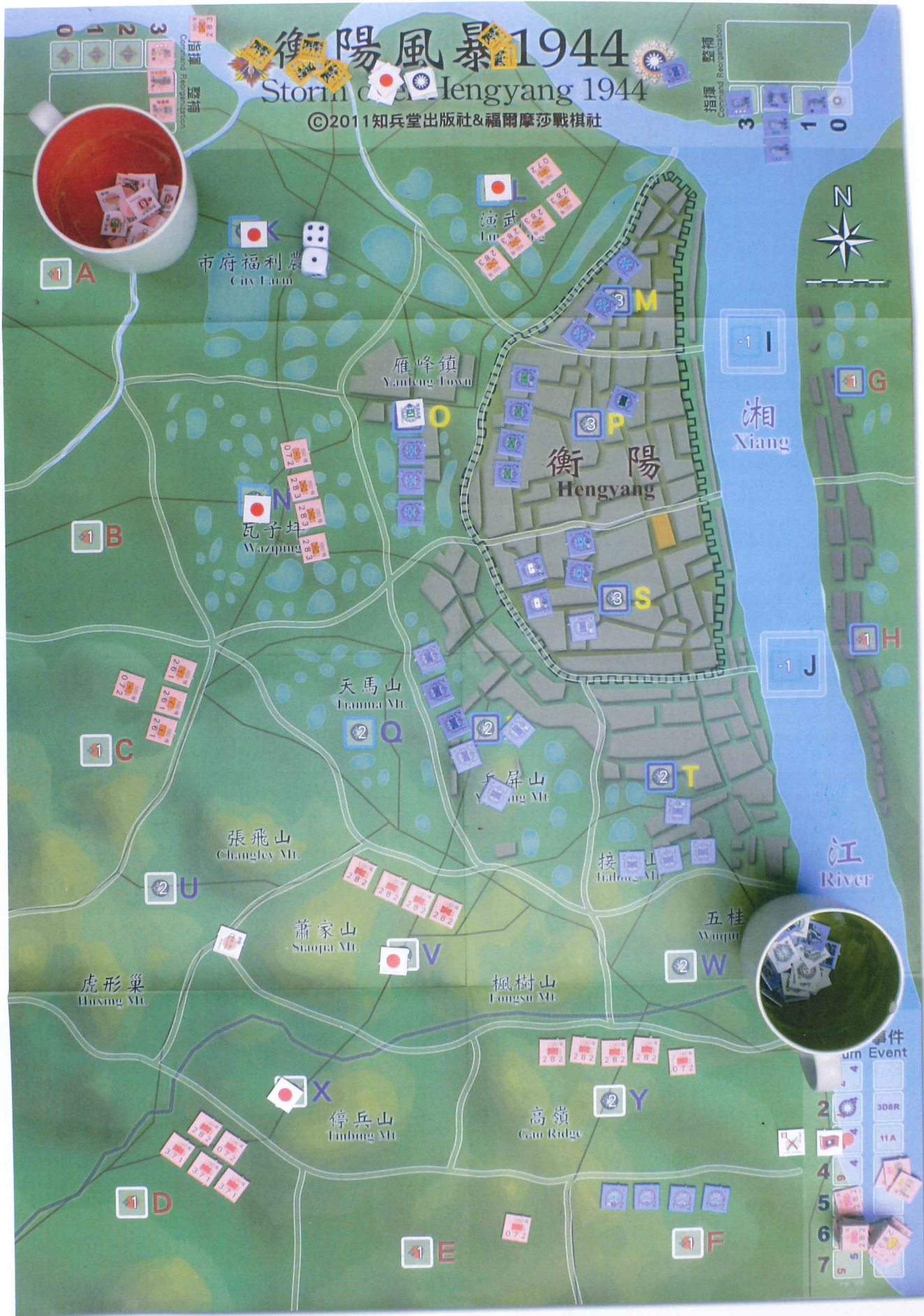
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REVIEW



• 14th Air Force blocks the Japanese use of the Bombing and Air Strike chits.

• Assault Sakuma replaces a Japanese general rated at three points with one rated at two.

• Cease Fire Agreement can intervene starting in Turn 5 (of seven) and stops the game. The winner is the player who has lost fewer units.

Etc. These events ensure that no two games will ever be very similar. For example, losing one action point per turn at the beginning of the game can radically change things for the Japanese (Assault Sakuma).

The map is divided into 24 zones with defense modifiers ranging from +1 to +4, except in the two river zones (Japanese reinforcements can be transported by barge), in which units must stop, from which they cannot attack an adjacent zone, and where a -1 defense modifier is incurred (hot!). Note that defensive bonuses are lost as soon as the zone changes hands. Certain zones (marshes, for example, which almost surround the city) limit movement to three units per impulse, which can make moving needed reinforcements costly in action points.

The game generally favors the defense. A loss causes a unit to pass over from Fresh to Spent, two losses cause the same and force retreat, and three losses cause the elimination of a Fresh unit. An attack by six Japanese infantry units (six being the stacking limit) can at best add a +12 to the attack dice (+14 if the player uses the Close Combat chit). For the Chinese, with their +7 defense value, in a well protected zone, will have a good chance of resisting the attack. Bringing together six infantry units for an attack is not always possible, and attacks are usually attempted several times.

The Japanese always have the option of weakening Chinese forces with artillery fire (+12 at best, starting in Turn 3). The Japanese can also move their engineers to the frontline to reduce Chinese defenses.

TWO HOURS TO KILL

There are six victory zones, those of Hengyang. The game is won by the side that controls the most victory zones at the end of the seven turns (unless the Cease Fire Agreement event is played). In case of a tie, the player controlling zone S (the Central Bank) wins.

The Japanese player begins the game in the zones along the map's edge and is confronted with the first lines of Chinese defense. Behind them, the terrain is almost empty right up to the city that houses a few entrenched Chinese units. The Japanese goal is to pierce one sector and push all the way towards the victory zones, attempting to prevent the Chinese from organizing themselves. The Chinese have to decide between resisting and retreating in order, maintaining the divisional coherence that makes effective combat possible. In the end, it is usually a little bit of both. The key is knowing when, where, and how.

The Chinese player has to worry

less about action point management than the Japanese, and will not lack for action points if a withdrawal is well-planned. Of course, that isn't always very simple. Chinese reinforcements arrive in Turn 2 in the rear of the Japanese, but they can only cause a little trouble. Japanese reinforcements arrive on Turn 3 from the rear, and on Turn 6 via the river. Artillery is posted on the river banks and the infantry mount their assault on barges.

The game plays quickly in less than two hours. It is full of action and tension, and can have many different outcomes. If there is to be a Japanese victory, it is usually played in the final few impulses of the last turn, but seems more likely than a Chinese victory.

Are there any problems? Yes, there are. Firstly, playing the Chinese isn't very exciting as you act as the punching bag. The Chinese player reacts to what the Japanese player does and focuses on not making any errors, which can be decisive in the first two turns. The Chinese game is one of managing a retreat and maintaining some semblance of control in the last few turns. The game is short, however, allowing both players to take a crack at the Japanese.

It would also have been good to give the artillery a support role in combat, rather than limited it to bombardment only. For the Chinese, bombardment by a few isolated guns situated with the infantry has no destructive power (two D6+1). The Chinese player has every reason to concentrate all of his artillery in one city zone as soon as possible to benefit from a relatively effective bombardment under the command of the corps leader once per turn (+9 at best). It isn't very historically accurate and contradicts the historical setup. But this isn't a big deal.

Also odd is that some Japanese units which arrive as reinforcements on Turn 6 won't be used at all. For stacking reasons, the terrain that has to be crossed and the lack of action points, they will at best be able to penetrate one zone of the map before the game ends. The possibility of randomly having them enter a turn earlier might have been better.

Storm Over Hengyang is a (not so) small, really enjoyable game. It may leave some wanting a little more, as we discover a battle that deserves perhaps a more ambitious treatment. Of course, that isn't the game's fault. Those who appreciate tense area-impulse games and can fit a two-hour

wargame into their schedule should definitely pick the game up, should it only be for its clever and original ideas. The game is really a nice surprise.

As already pointed out, Wayne Cheng Cheng's designs are all refreshing and exciting. He's a designer to keep an eye on. After a few youthful misses in his first creations (owing, perhaps, to a lack of development but nothing that a couple of house rules can't fix), I would wager that his next games will figure as some of the best and most surprising releases in the future. For my part, I eagerly await the next releases from *Board Wargame Magazine* and the boxed products of Formosa Games. **B**



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REVIEW

by Richard G. Simon

DESIGNER FREDERIC BEY GRAPHICS PASCAL DASILVA PUBLISHER HEXASIM & CANONS EN CARTON

ALLEMAGNE 1813

FROM LUTZEN TO LEIPZIG



AS A GENERAL RULE, I LIKE GAMES DESIGNED BY EUROPEANS. I can't really explain why, exactly, but I think it's because their design perspective is slightly different from that on this side of the Pond; different enough to make them interesting. For example, Hexasim, publishers of *Allemagne 1813* (*A13* hereafter), published *Marne 1918*, which had a mechanic where combat losses were resolved first, then you figured out who actually won the battle. It doesn't sound like much, and it was hardly the only twist, but it was enough to make you think, and play, a little differently. It's a little more than a design twist; it's a philosophy (or so I view it). Now *A13* is not a Hexasim in-house design (it properly belongs to Frederic Bey's *Vae Victis* series) but I had hopes that the same philosophy would carry through.

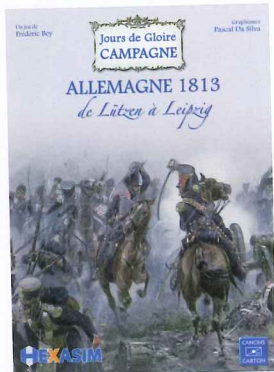
In terms of Napoleonic, while I am far from expert, the 1813 campaign in Germany has always interested me. In fact, the old *Struggle of Nations* is one of my favorite games, as much for the scope and subject as for the game system.

It's puzzled me a bit why some of the battles from that campaign, other than maybe Lutzen, have been so under-represented, not to mention the campaign itself. So when I found that Hexasim was offering *A13*, I was a willing taker (It's subsequently available from GMT, as well). While I wasn't familiar with the *Jours de Gloire* series, from which *A13* is derived, I do know that it has been used in three previous games, published in the magazine *Vae Victis* and has been reasonably well-received. So it wasn't like I was taking a complete flier.

Opening the box offered no surprises. The map sheet is of good quality and resembles a

George Seurat painting viewed under a high-powered microscope; no hexes, the map features a variety of (mostly) boxes, primarily in shades of green (and a few in brown) to delineate terrain, along with a few gray boxed-in circles to represent fortified cities, all over a very light-green washed background. Quite striking. The 216 counters are broken into units and markers. The former are divided between combat units and leaders. The units, primarily corps, consist of an icon, shown in the usual color of the faction (blue for Prussian, Green for Russian, etc), over a very light wash of the same color. There are also leaders, shown in artistic portrait, with their leadership and tactical values, as well as rank. An added touch is that many of the units, particularly the Allied ones, have a small, colored indicator that identifies to which army it belongs in which scenario (This is important because, in the last two scenarios, the Allies have four different armies). All the units/leaders are back-printed with flag-like icons to allow for play with limited intelligence (other than what players bring to the table, naturally). There are also a number of back-printed markers for things like bridges, command status, battle spaces, sieges, and a host of other functions. As is de rigeur, these days, there is also a deck of 24 cards. The play aids are also of good quality, including a rule book, scenario folder, and the usual charts and tables, plus two dice. While the box may give the impression of being a bit light, there is nothing lacking and everything looks quite attractive.

Although the game scale is billed as operational level, it is probably at the very top end of that scale. The map covers a very large area: from the Oder in the East, across Central Germany, to an area west of the Weser. The system is a meld of concepts that should be familiar to many. Units are rated for strength (listed on off-map rosters), quality, as well as any attached cavalry and artillery. Leaders have rank and both a command and tactical value.



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REVIEW



Each turn, there's an initial Administrative Phase, where weather (which affects movement, river crossing, pursuit, and artillery), and the first player are determined (usually Napoleon), reinforcements are placed, and leaders are replaced. Then, in their turn, players determine how many Command Points (CP) they get for the turn for each army (The Allies have four armies after the Armistice). Essentially a die roll plus the army's commander-in-chief's Command Value, these are expended for several functions, primarily movement. While stacking in a box is theoretically infinite, movement is restricted to what a leader can command (generally two infantry and a cavalry corps) so, if a leader was in a box with three infantry and two cavalry corps, he could only move two infantry and one cavalry corps; the rest would require a separate movement action (and CP expenditure). Actual CP cost is determined by whether or not there is a leader in charge of the movement and if so, how far he is from his commander in chief, and whether or not he is in supply. There is one exception to this - Concentration: an army's commander-in-chief can move the entire force stacked with him (for free), at a cost of incurring stragglers, which are casualties that can be recovered later. This can get expensive as stragglers are determined on a per-unit basis, via a die roll on the Forced March Table (with a roughly 50% chance of losing a strength point). Forces can also increase their movement allowance by force marching (+2 mp), also at a cost of a roll per unit on the Forced March Table. (If you force march with your commander-in-chief, you have to roll twice for each unit). I don't recall seeing anything quite like this before; it's familiar, yet different (there's that "twist"). The system seemingly encourages you to adopt Napoleonic maneuver: march dispersed and fight concentrated.

Combat is a semi-involved process that combines a variety of concepts present in Napoleonic warfare and combines them into one routine - sort of. Although generally taking place within the defending stack's box, the process starts when a phasing force moves into an adjacent box. At that time, the defending force has the option of reacting. Should he so chose, he rolls one die, modifies it if he has a Line of communication (four boxes or less) to his commander-in-chief, and if the roll is less than or equal to the leader's Command Value, the defending force may Intercept (move into the moving force's box) or Evade (move one box away). If the defender either fails to make this roll or opts not to try, he is, essentially, pinned in the box (Reaction is not permitted if there is an enemy force either in the defender's box or previously in an adjacent box). If the Defender opts for Interception, he moves into the moving forces box and becomes the defender in an immediate, mandatory combat (gaining any terrain benefits - think of it as an ambush). If he opts for Evasion, he moves one box away, at which point the moving force continues to move (and the process could start again). Remembering that, for the most part, there is some sort of limited intelligence, this is not always an easy choice to make. After the Non-Phasing player resolves possible Reaction, the Phasing Player can opt for combat by moving into the Non-Phasing Player's Box; at that point a Battle marker is placed which will be resolved after all Phasing

Movement is complete.

The combat routine, itself, starts with their selection of a "Tactic Chit," which takes place prior to players revealing the actual makeup of their forces. Each player has a "deck" of four cards, each of which describes a battle "type" (Decisive, Offensive, Screen, or Skirmish) he wishes to fight; each type mandates a number of combat rounds (4, 3, 2, 1, respectively). Players then reveal their selection and compare the round value of their cards, the average determining the actual number of rounds that will comprise the battle. For instance, a combination of Decisive and Screen Battle (4 and 2, respectively), would yield a three round battle. We note, here, that there are some restrictions on available choices. For instance, you can't pick the Offensive Battle card unless you have a leader and at least ten strength points in the force.

Only after discovering the number of rounds, players reveal the strength of their forces, which can be modified by terrain, Fatigue, entrenchments, and Flank attack. Each rolls one die, which can also be modified, which yields the number of SPs the enemy loses. Losses are taken and another round of combat, if mandated, takes place. But this is not all there is to it. If a force's cumulative battle losses are 20% (or greater) of their original total, it has to make a morale check against the force's average Cohesion (=Proficiency); if it fails, the force loses the battle and must retreat. Additionally, at the end of every even-numbered round, players add up their artillery factors and roll on the Artillery Table to see if they inflict additional losses. On top of that, any forces within two MP of a battle hex can March to the Sound of the Guns by rolling against its commander's Combat Value. If less than or equal to, that force can intervene (after Round 2 if one MP away, after Round 3 if two MP away).

After the final round of combat, the force that lost the largest number of SP loses the battle and must retreat while the winner has the option to advance or retreat. Regardless, the winner rolls on the Pursuit Table and may inflict additional damage to the retreating force. Further, winning a battle can score a number of VP's, depending on the type of battle resulting from the card selection. (If the losses are equal, it's called an Indecisive Battle, the attacker retreats, and there are no VP's) The combat procedure looks a bit more complicated than it actually is, although better rules organization would have helped a bit. The tables carry much of the load and the routine becomes familiar enough, soon enough.

There is a variety of other rules that add flavor such as sieges, bridge building and destruction, cavalry reconnaissance, as well as several levels of limited intelligence. For instance, players can play with all forces hidden, have just the leaders face-up, or dispense with inverted counters altogether. There is also a set of solitaire rules that dispenses with inverted counters, substituting variable movement so that the player may know what's in the force but doesn't know how far it will move until he actually tries to move it. It works although it does provide a different play experience than when using inverted counters.





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Jours de Gloire 1813 Allemagne 1813 de Lützen à Leipzig

Legend:

- Units:** Various icons representing different military units, including infantry, artillery, and cavalry.
- Terrain:** Icons for forests, rivers, and other geographical features.
- Other:** Icons for special abilities, such as "Tactic Chit" and "Battle card".

Map Details:

- Regions:** A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H (vertical axis); 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (horizontal axis).
- Locations:** Numerous named locations, including Berlin, Leipzig, and various smaller towns.
- Units:** Various military units are placed on the map, including the XIV corps and the Ivory corps.

REVIEW



The game comes with five scenarios. The first two are introductory parts of the pre-Armistice period and are two and three turns, respectively. The third scenario encompasses the entire Spring Campaign and starts in the second half of March and runs through the Armistice (the timing of which is variable).

The fourth scenario covers the historical post-Armistice period, from the second half of August through the end of October (Five turns) while the last scenario is the entire campaign. Each of the scenarios comes with some Special Rules and they also introduce the use of cards. In addition to cards for Battle Tactics (see above), there are 16 additional cards that reflect various random events. Each card has two events on it: one for the French and one for the Allies. At the start of each turn, the players draw one card, which they can play at any time. Many of the cards offer replacement SPs, some offer combat die roll modifiers, and some reflect the timing of the Armistice; that is, the turn the Armistice takes place can move forward or back. The Armistice, which is a four turn break in which actions are severely limited, historically started in the first week of June and lasted for the equivalent of four turns (two months). In the scenarios where the Armistice is operative, players have the opportunity, by play of certain cards, to move that date forward or back. This can be crucial because, while combat is suspended during the Armistice, both sides received reinforcements and the Allies also received the substantial Austrian Army. To see this effect, the initial ratio of French SP's to Allied SP's is about 1.4; after the Armistice, this ratio changes to a hair more than 70%. So essentially, the French want the pre-Armistice period to last as long as possible and the post-Armistice game to be as short, in order to minimize the time of Allied strength superiority. The Allies, of course, want the reverse. (We also note that the Armistice can be affected if either side has won a Decisive Victory.)

So it looks like what we've got is an uncomplicated, playable, atmospheric game that can provide some insight (and fun) into a fascinating campaign, in one gaming session. Nice work if they can pull it off. But have they?

Did you ever go into a nice restaurant and look at the tasteful décor, the soft lighting, the beautiful food on the plates of the diners (I know that haute cuisine for gamers is usually Fred's Diner but work with me on this) and then, after being seated, you find that you can't comfortably read your menu, the music is a just little too loud for pleasant conversation, the service is a tad slow, and the food, although nicely presented, just doesn't taste as good as it looks and you end up feeling slightly hungry and slightly disappointed? That's something like what we've got, here. Don't get me wrong. This is not a case of false advertising, a bad design, or a bad game. It's just that it is, somehow, disappointing.

Let's take the graphics. As mentioned, this is a point-to-point (or, in this case, box-to-box) game. What that means is that a lot of geographic detail is going to be abstracted out and what remains has to carry the load. I think that A13's map just doesn't cut it. First off, the map covers a lot of area, which means there are a lot of boxes. Because of that, the names of the areas are not only quite small but are written in a script-like font that is difficult to pick up. The fortified cities, which might normally serve to geographically anchor the map, are gray circular shapes that almost disappear when the map is viewed from any distance. (The map example on Boardgamegeek contrasts far better than does the actual map.) As a result, even with the gazette in the rulebook, it is often (too) difficult to locate a particular area for set-up or find out what area you're in. You're not fighting at Lutten; you're fighting in a box. There's also the design decision to include areas that see little-to-no action at all – the notes say why they're included – there's simply too much area. And because of this large area covered, the dark-colored boxes (indicative of defensive and moun-

tain terrain) simply visually overwhelm the map sheet; a "trees-for-the-forest" effect. As a result, the game has little geographical atmosphere; it's more of a collection of boxes than a historical map. It doesn't have to be that way. Take a look at the campaign game in *Risorgimento*, for example, which is much less graphically sophisticated than A13 but conveys the actual geography far better. You feel like you're maneuvering on a map rather than, as here, a collection of boxes.

Then there are the counters; by themselves, they look pretty good. In play, however, they're far less useful. As mentioned, they feature an icon with the unit values in national colors, over a light wash of that same color. In isolation, the counters stand out pretty well but when you place them on the map, the graphic contrast with the map makes distinguishing the blue of the Prussians from the green of the Russians actually difficult. Add in that the units' artillery and cavalry values are in white and are difficult to pick up against the light counter wash (and the map) and you can start to have some issues. I don't have a color-vision problem but I certainly had one here. It turns more serious, though, when you notice, if you can, that the Unit IDs are fairly small and are printed perpendicular to everything else on the counter. Normally not a serious matter, it becomes one here because unit strengths are kept track of via a plain-jane, off-map roster. So you really need to easily ID a unit, to distinguish, say, the Prussian II Corps from the Russian II Corps. Once you do that, then you have to pick up the unit ID off the laundry-list of a roster to find out what strength the unit is (and later mark off casualties). Do this for a couple of mixed Prussian-Russian stacks and you're reaching for the Excedrin.

Then there's the combat system. In isolation, each of the moving parts of the combat routine makes good sense. Take, for example, Interception. This has been an oft-used routine that provides a lot of flavor and has generally worked. In A13, some of the effects are, shall we say, interesting. As noted, when an enemy force moves adjacent to a friendly force, the latter may attempt a reaction. The player rolls a die, modifies it according to the force's Line of Communication situation, and if the roll is less than or equal to the friendly leader's (if there is one) Combat Value, the friendly force can react into the enemy force's box, where that enemy force must immediately attack it. Theoretically, as long as the friendly force keeps winning these reaction battles, it can keep reacting, at times moving almost-astounding distances in doing so. In one game, Marshal Blucher was able to make four interceptions consecutively, engaging in four combats and moving four boxes in the process. Considering that normal infantry movement is six movement points, this is an astonishing distance. Admittedly, a low-percentage occurrence, this felt fairly strange.

If the reaction attempt fails, the friendly (i.e. reacting) force is done if the enemy player either stops moving or moves into the friendly force's box. Knowing the friendly force is paralyzed adds some gamey things into the mix as the enemy player can not only "pile on" but can gain a considerable flank attack advantage by moving a force into the friendly box from a second box. By itself, fairly intuitive, the modifier is size-insensitive: even one SP is enough to secure this advantage (which is a two-column shift in the flanking player's favor). In a small battle, that's one thing – in a large one (i.e. forces greater than 30 SPs a side – about 90,000



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men), it’s quite another. There is also the threat of encirclement if all the boxes surrounding the friendly force are enemy-occupied (at least 3 SPs) but this is less of an issue due to the Command Point costs involved. One ramification of this procedure is that the players will often move a small force into a box adjacent to an opponent’s force. If the opponent successfully reacts and there is a combat, it will likely be low intensity (choosing Skirmish) and intelligence will be gained. If the reaction is unsuccessful, you now have a sitting duck (It may be a very large duck but at least it is sitting). Being able to (repeatedly) pin a large force with a small detachment does seem rather peculiar. Another odd aspect is that the neither the size nor leadership of the Moving player’s force has an effect on the interception. It’s as easy to intercept Napoleon as it is Major Merde; it feels strange.

There are some other ramifications of the reaction procedure. One would note, here, that the Combat Table’s results are not particularly discrete. That is, the chances of inflicting more than a one SP loss per combat round are fairly small until you get to the 30-40 SP column (and there are six columns to the “left” of that one), especially if you’re the Allied Player. (Most of their leaders have only a +1 DRM) As a result of this, even medium-size forces have a hard time inflicting “serious” losses on their opponents. Add that to the above danger of being pinned and we found that players tended to keep their forces in very large stacks. Now if you are approaching one of these large enemy forces, it may prove tempting to move a small force adjacent, hoping for a failed interception and a “cheap” pin; but if the enemy force reacts successfully, it’s adios, friendly force. So you approach large enemy forces differently; creating a large force, yourself, and moving it, united, into the enemy’s box. This gets expensive since the only way to do this is via Concentration, meaning a die roll on the Force March Table for each unit in the force. This, in turn, can easily mean a loss of five or six SPs before you throw out the first grenade, a not inconsiderable loss before a battle. And if the enemy player reacts and moves away, you’ve got to repeat the procedure, with the possibility of losing even more men before the battle starts! What can happen, as we saw several times, is that you end up with two large stacks facing each other without doing anything because neither player wished to sacrifice the SPs required to bring the other player to battle.

The Battle Procedure, itself, has its own ramifications. First and foremost, are the Tactical Cards, which determine battle intensity (i.e. how many rounds of combat). The first step in the battle process, before either player reveals the size of his forces, each player selects a Tactical Card which, as we saw above, determines how many rounds of engagement there will be in the battle. This looks like a good idea as it seemingly adds a decision/indecision to the battle process. Somewhat surprisingly, it didn’t turn out that way. It turns out that the Risk/Reward comparison makes fighting Decisive/Offensive Battles uneconomical. Consider, in terms of Victory Points, winning a Decisive Battle (four rounds) is worth 5 VPs – in the larger scenarios, that’s the equivalent of capturing Dresden or Berlin (French) and greater than capturing Leipzig or Weimar (Allies)! Similarly, an Offensive Battle (three rounds), is 3 VPs, equivalent to capturing the latter two cities. Since there are few geographical victory boxes, losing even one of these battles can cost you the game. And considering that victory is determined solely by the size of losses – who lost less – a battle, and the game, can often turn on one SP. Given the limited intelligence factor, unless desperation sets in, there’s little reason to even think about running this risk. And even if one of the players desires to fight a Decisive Battle, the other player can always thwart the process by choosing the Screen Battle Card, since the actual number of rounds is the average of the two selections. Not only does this cut down the risk factor but it prevents your opponent from bringing in reinforcements through the “March to the Sound of the Guns” mechanism. In four games, we only saw the Offensive Battle card played once (and it was negated by an opposing Screen Battle card), we never used the Decisive Battle card at all, and we never utilized the “March to the Sound of the Guns” procedure. There was simply no percentage in it. While not quite a false decision, the tactical cards add a lot less than you might think.



The
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dly but, as we got familiar with it, it smoothed out a bit. Sadly, the roster system contributed much of the grit and we never did get comfortable with it. After ascertaining the units you’re supposed to be using, which can get a bit difficult (see above), you then have to add up all the unit strengths, tracking cavalry and artillery separately (as well as cumulatively). When you’ve gotten the result, you then have to allocate your losses (keeping track of the losses separately, as well), then recompute your strength for the second (or more) round(s). Even with small forces, it’s not easy; with large ones, it’s excruciating. And solitaire, it’s a nightmare! I can’t say it was my favorite part of the game. To be fair, however, given the scale and unit size, I can’t easily think of a different way to track strengths.

So how well did it model the campaign? I can’t say it did it well but that could well be the players more than the system. Billed as an operational game, one might be lead to believe that there is an emphasis on maneuver. Given the Reaction and combat systems, we didn’t find much of this – at least as much as we expected – especially in the post-Armistice scenario, where it resembled a crash-and-bash (albeit with pillows) rather than a ballet. Much of the map, the eastern third, is essentially out of play (You can move there but why would you?). The game notes make much of the siege mechanisms, which have apparently been changed a bit from previous versions. This was done to introduce a procedure for masking fortresses, which was done in the historical campaign, particularly those on the Oder (Stettin, Kustrin, etc). The French left a garrison behind as they retreated westward, forcing the Allies to deal with them. They opted for screening the forts, which, in the game, is represented by leaving a combat unit (detachment) in the box with the garrison. We couldn’t see the reason for doing even this much, given the cost in Command Points of moving the garrisons, so our Allies simply left them unattended. The pre-Armistice scenario was of more interest but, given the paucity of forces (compared to the post-Armistice scenario), more dependent on leadership (in this case, Napoleon, himself). Two plays of this went the same way: the French went for Berlin, which the Allies will be hard-pressed to defend. Given the combat results at lower strengths, Allied diversions at Dresden were unconvincing.

Although the game seemingly has a lot of interesting mechanisms, it felt, to us, like a lot less than the sum of its parts. The leaders, upon which much depends, are fairly generic; other than Napoleon, they are all close to identical. Geographic atmosphere is next to nil, and that of maneuver not much more (unless you visualize piling on as maneuver). My opinion of the battle mechanisms may well be colored by my dislike of the roster system but it still didn’t strike me as Napoleonic; change the names and this could just as easily have been the Seven Years War. You wouldn’t notice the difference. What makes this difficult is that I think I understand the logic of the design elements and, taken in isolation, they make some sense. But somehow, they just don’t fit together the way you think they would.

We never felt like this was a Napoleonic campaign; instead of the Battle of Nations, it was the Battle of the Boxes. **D**

FRESH BLOOD FOR GRANNIES

We are old (mostly you). Most of us are middle aged men, or worst, portly hairless grumpies, talking about rheumatism or prostate problems between two die-rolls. Look at you! you are old! We need fresh blood. Bringing new players to wargaming is not an easy thing. Our games have the reputation of being austere, complicated, and not much fun. Introductory or crossover games that can appeal to both eurogamers and tried and true wargamers are still small in number. In this section, we'll try to find the gems which could attract younger creatures to our dark side of gaming... You bunch of grannies!

LE COMBAT DES TRENTE

by Denis Sauvage

Le Combat des Trente (The Combat of the Thirty) retraces a major event in the Breton War of Succession. A battle of the Hundred Years' War, it puts Jean de Beaumanoir, supporter of Charles of Blois, against the men of Robert of Barmborough, supporter of the Breton dukes. This engagement was typical of the chivalric rules of the era, following the terms of a duel in which thirty knights and squires, in support of the two rivals, fought on a battlefield chosen beforehand. Like a medieval joust, the spectators witnessed the victory of Jean de Beaumanoir. Unfortunately, while the idea of saving the blood of soldiers by having the elite of both armies fight is noble, the consequences of this engagement were null as the English garrisons continued to treat Brittany like a conquered country.

Hoping that new generations would remember this event, the Coop Breizh society, which defines itself as the "most important cultural enterprise in Brittany entirely devoted to the products of Breton culture", published *Le Combat des Trente*. In other words, this game comes from a completely different world than the wargaming industry. The designers seem to be passionate about this historical event and hoped to simulate it, but they are also novices when it comes to wargame design.

In 16 pages of very airy rules, *Le Combat des Trente* relies on some simple principles. Each player has exactly 31 counters (squires, knights, and a captain). In ten turns, players must defeat their opponents by amassing the largest number of victory points. Each turn, only ten units can be activated. These are chosen before movements are conducted and, alternating between players, they are moved one-by-one on the map. If one of the units is killed before being moved, it counts as a lost action for the player.

Movements are standardized for both sides – four movement points for squires, five for knights, and six for captains. There are no modifiers to these limits as the battlefield is a vast, uniform plain.

Eight squares, however, disturb this monotony. The two central ones represent the Halfway Oak, an important spot considering it gives three victory points per turn to the occupying player. The six others abstractly simulate other aspects of this battle: the weapons of the combatants, their physical capacities, and their mount. Ending movement on one of the oak squares permits the player to draw a card, either "Weapons" or "Strength", indispensable in the

DESIGNER ERIC DANIELLOU, MICHEL DEUNFF, THOMAS POULMARC'H GRAPHICS THOMAS POULMARC'H PUBLISHER COOP BREIZH

fighting that will follow. Entering a "horse" square awards a victory point but also the obligation to engage an enemy anywhere on the map – a game design choice that is a little puzzling as it is more like teleportation than movement on horseback.

Combat is the strong point of the game. A counter that ends its movement adjacent to one or more adversaries must engage one of them. To the roll of a die is added a combination of four cards that add their value. The totals are compared, the difference being the number of life points lost. Each man has four of these precious points (the counters are rotated as in the products of Columbia Games). The choice of combat cards is decisive as those chosen are hidden from the adversary. Of the 13 cards each player receives at the beginning of each turn, plus three left over from the previous turn and those picked up in the course of play, the player must choose at least one "strength" card, as well as "weapons", "heroes", and "specials" cards. Careful management of these cards is necessary to avoid being left at the end of the turn to defend yourself with only one die.

The game basics are garnished with a few elements that add some freshness to the whole package: "hero" cards containing the name of the protagonists that give a combat bonus when the unit of the same name is activated, "special" cards that spice up fighting by, for example, removing one of your adversary's cards, and "mission" cards that are drawn once per turn that provide an opportunity to win more victory points by accomplishing the mission (for example, fighting and winning a duel).

There are various ways to win the game as victory points are awarded for different things: killing an adversary, occupying squares, accomplishing missions, and having some units survive to the final turn. It is not unusual to make a big score in one turn and then do miserably the next. But it can be



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ARMÉE BLESISTE

CAPITAINE: Jean de Blésiste

Chevaliers

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2. Cares de Bodegat
3. Jean Rousselot
4. Geoffroy du Bois
5. Guillaume de la Marche
6. Jean de Trémoigne
7. Jean de Trémoigne
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ARMÉE MONFORTISTE

CAPITAINE: Robert Bamfborough

Chevaliers

1. Raoul d'Apremont
2. D'Arde
3. Perrot de Cennan
4. Guillen Le Gaillard
5. Robert Ades
6. James Audley
7. Jeannequin Belonchamp
8. Hugon de Calveley
9. Hacheton Clamaban
10. Croquart

Ecuyers

1. Jean de Trémoigne
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- Distribution des cartes

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difficult to come back from behind if a player has lost too many men, as it is easier for the opponent to predict what the weaker side will do.

A BOARD GAME BASE...

Le Combat des Trente has the feel of a board game. This is obvious from the opening of the (very nice) box. The materiel is robust and made of thick card board. Everything is legible and attractive and designed to attract a varied audience. The rules are short and precise. There are no errata or ambiguous points to argue over. The rules could have been ever briefer with a better organization. Nothing insurmountable for a wargamer, but it could be puzzling to a beginner.

The use of squares instead of hexes demonstrates the designers' desire to keep it in the board game domain. Since counters can move diagonally, it would have made more sense to use hexes to have the combatants face to face and to cover the different possibilities of maneuver.

The game is completely symmetric, giving the impression of a game of checkers or chess – both sides have the same number and types of counters. The physical characteristics of the combatants are identical. All of these men with four life points, moving at the same rate according to their "class". Mission cards are divided equally and the layout of the squares on the map is uniform, with the Halfway Oak in the center. Playing with the units emblazoned with the black crosses of de Blois or the red crosses of Montfort makes no difference whatsoever.

The historical situation encourages this equality but the mirror-image on both sides of the map puts *Le Combat des Trente* in the board game category. This is due to both sides having an equal chance of winning, taking us far from the usual historical simulation where this kind of equilibrium exists only rarely.

...WITH A TOUCH OF STRATEGY

That is not to say that *Le Combat des Trente* has no strategic elements. For example, leading your men into battle demands a minimum of organization, as there is a tendency to engage the first ten men you move without keeping a few to support the second line. As engagements are often explosive, players can

quickly find themselves without men in the middle of the field and having lost control of the battle.

Management of the cards also requires a particular attention – do you use all the best cards in one major engagement or do you save them and spread them out for the duration of the turn? Also, the game is principally about holding on to the initiative and forcing your adversary to react.

Three factors make the game about seizing the opportunity at the right moment: the multiple sources of victory points, the role of chance in how you draw your cards, and the activation of units, a decision that can become obsolete as the turn unfolds. This combination can ruin the most perfect plan and makes *Le Combat des Trente* a reaction game in which losing your cool means losing the battle.

The length of play, however, puts it more in the domain of the wargame. It takes about three hours to finish a game. In my view, this is a problem as the targeted audience is unlikely to be interested in such long playing sessions.

Le Combat des Trente is thus a board game with a historical flavor. The materiel is attractive and the game can give even a grognard pleasure. It could interest young players or those completely new to wargaming. I played this game with my children, and they enjoyed it a lot. It is, thus, a useful tool for introducing new players to our passion, before exposing them to *Men of Iron* or *Au Fil de l'Épée*. **B**

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9			
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Score Final			

AIDE-MÉMOIRE

CARACTÉRISTIQUES	LES POINTS DE VICTOIRE
ÉCUYER Mouvement : 4 cases CHEVALIER Mouvement : 5 cases Combat : +1pt contre Écuyer CAPITAINE Mouvement : 6 cases Combat : +2pts +2pts de victoire / unité éliminée Soutien à 2 cases	Écuyer éliminé : 2pts Chevalier éliminé : 3pts Capitaine éliminé : 10pts BONUS +1pt Si un écuyer éliminé +2pts Si un chevalier éliminé +3pts Si un capitaine éliminé Occupation de la case : Chêne de tour : +3pts Passage par une case « chêne »

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THE NEXT WARS



The Next Wars series brings battalion-level modern shooting wars to your tabletop. Combat units must synchronize attacks and defenses to maximize their collective combat power. Headquarters units coordinate actions on the battlefield and support battalions maintain supply lines.



Civilians are a fact of life on the modern battlefield, and they are present in The Next Wars. Neutral and benign, local civilians may come to support one faction or another based on the behavior of the forces of the battlefield.



Headquarters units also enable players to deploy command assets that give units special actions or bonuses on the battlefield. Simulating the staff planning process, the mission cards allow units to prepare and rehearse certain missions for later execution.



The Next Wars is scaled at 10km/hex, with 12-hour turns. Units are battalions, headquarters, and specialty companies.

The debut game in the Next Wars series is set in a hypothetical Ukrainian civil war:

Following a series of contentious elections in which both sides accused the other of support from outside the country, the Ukraine began to fracture. When the President of the Ukraine finally ordered the Army to restore order, several units revolted, and the President appealed to NATO for assistance.

Ignoring Russian warnings against intervening, NATO provided a small UK-led force, which the Russians countered with a reinforced mechanized corps, plus reinforcements from their Belorussian allies. The US sent their available forces to the Polish frontier, hoping that their deterrent effect would stabilize the situation.

The first battles were joined near L'viv, as the Interventionists bypassed Kiev and pushed as far west as possible, hoping to prevent the NATO forces from establishing a bridgehead in the Ukraine. Russian and Belorussian reinforcements arrived from the north to try and flank the existing Ukrainian national forces before NATO could join the fight.

The Warfighter System

The Warfighter system from BayonetGames is divided into two levels of complexity: **Warfighter 101** for those interested in quick-and-dirty games, and the full **Warfighter Series** for hard-core gamers who want rules for replicating multiple aspects of modern combat.

Warfighter series games are currently in play around the world, and are in use by both US Army and USMC commanders for training junior leaders in tactics and operations planning.

The Warfighter system is a classic hex-and-turn based wargame, with new twists on zones of control and innovative recon objectives will keep players engaged in on-the-fly tactical planning. Units are platoons and sections, with some individual leaders and key vehicles, all rated for firepower and protection, along with range and movement. Some units have additional frontal armor, extended visual ranges, or broader zones of control.

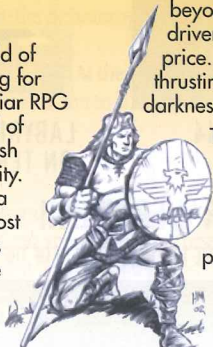
In addition to the fast-paced rules, the Warfighter system lays out its scenarios in a format modeled after US Army operations orders, and the battle tracking charts are designed to resemble military synchronization matrices - two authentic touches from a designer with over 10 years of military service in tank battalions & armored brigades.

The Warfighter System includes rules for reconnaissance units, engineers, and battlefield leaders. It is also a rare tactical system that incorporates civilians on the battlefield, and their varied effects on the combatants.



THE WORLD OF ESAENE

Introduction - BayonetGames' World of Esaene is a detailed and intricate setting for your role-playing games. Built on familiar RPG rules foundations, the game is a hybrid of well-known classics, with the new & fresh ideas of the independent RPG community. The setting is fantasy, but grounded in a harsher reality than usually found in most games. The magic and mythic elements exist, but the game seeks to explore the "why" of existence more so than the "what".



The World - The fabled land of Entallia, living paradise, was broken and destroyed in a war between the Gods and the great evils from the beyond the veil. The ancient enemies were driven from the world, but at a terrible price. The Gods were gone from the world, thrusting its people into a thousand years of darkness.

The land of mortals was saved by the rise of heroes and champions. The ancient king Valar conquered all before him, forming the Dorinethian Empire. Following his example, people around the world rose against the darkness. Valar ruled as God-Emperor of Dorineth for centuries before he was betrayed and

assassinated. The death of Valar shook the foundations of the still recovering world.

Centuries later, the lands of men are just now climbing out of the second darkness. New lands rise to prominence and old evils awaken from their slumber. No one power dominates the world, and many pretenders seek to be the next Valar. A New Age is dawning in Esaene...

The World of Esaene has been in constant use and development since 1989, and has been published in varying forms since 1998. Built on a foundation of folklore and mythology rather than 'traditional' epic novel-based fantasy, Esaene's hallmark is a setting with a rich back story that fits together without being forced together. The next chapter is coming soon...

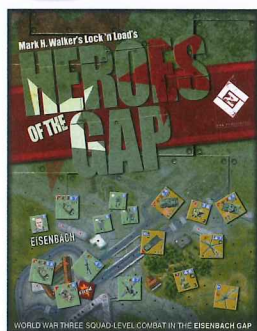
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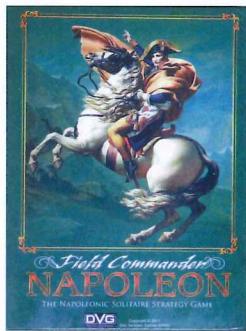
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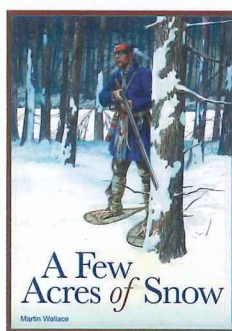
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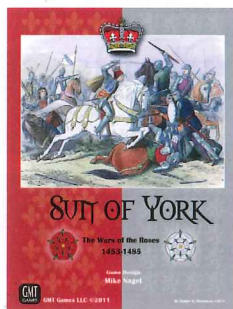
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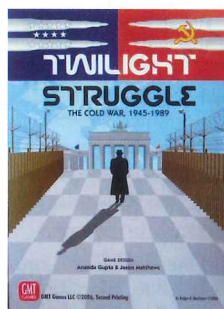
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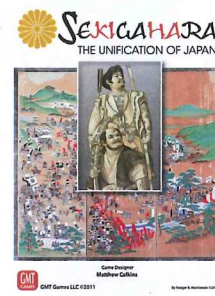
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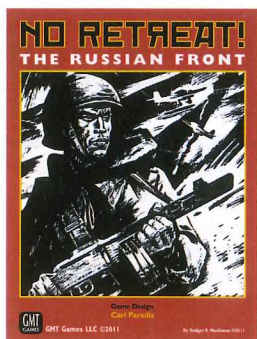
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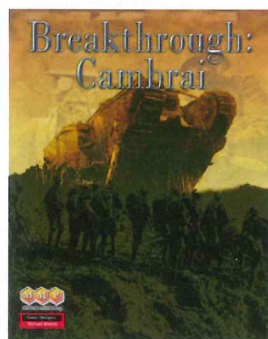
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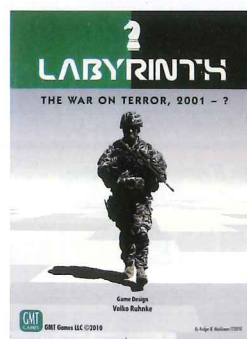
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by Tim Taylor

CAUSE & EFFECT

WHEN PEOPLE SPEAK OF THE TWO DIFFERENT KINDS OF WARGAMES, THEY'RE USUALLY REFERRING TO THE QUESTION OF REALISM VERSUS PLAYABILITY. That's the old wargame dichotomy everybody knows. It goes something like this: the more realistic a simulation is, the more difficult it is to play. And while easily playable games may be fun, but they are never good simulations.

Back when dinosaurs ruled the earth, it was said that SPI published simulations while the old Avalon Hill Game Company produced games. This idea is even expressed in their names — the 'S' in SPI stood for 'Simulations' after all. Each company was known for its unique design style and each had its ardent loyalists. You were either an SPI guy or an Avalon Hill dude, or so it seemed at the time. That's ancient history though, and not even accurate. Playability and realism are not absolutes. It's more of a sliding scale — shades of grey, not black and white.

But like Plato's shadows on the cave wall, this perception itself is actually just a misapprehension of the different philosophies of wargame design. Designers don't really think about game design in terms of game vs. simulation. Every designer feels their wargames are simulations! It's what the designer chooses to simulate that sets them apart. For them, the dichotomy usually boils down to this: Design for Cause or Design for Effect.

I'd like to discuss both of these approaches now. At the end of this article I'll present another design style which is both a reaction to and a synthesis of this dichotomy: what I term Design for Experience.

DESIGN FOR CAUSE

Through game mechanics, wargame designers attempt to answer the questions posed by history in a way that others can appreciate. They first approach a subject by deciding on the focus — salient features of a conflict which are most important, in their opinion. How they go about modeling these aspects

is determined by their choices. Which question will the designer ask? Will the game model the causes or the effects of the struggle?


Let's look at Design for Cause first. Such a design examines the causes inherent in the conflict. This approach answers the question "Why?" It models the reasons why things occur. Why did these things happen as they did in history?

Most times, these reasons for combat outcomes are presented reasonably simply. Take for example *Battle for Germany* (Decision Games, né SPI). Dunnigan's design highlights the tension between the various German front-line commands. Although it can be played by three players (or four), it's in the two player game that Dunnigan's ingenuity shines forth. One player controls the Soviets and the German forces in the west. The other player handles the Western Allies as well as Germans in the east. Notice that Germany is played by both players — each front commander is loathe to relinquish forces to the other front, because that's his opponent. Elegant simulation.

Sometimes though, Design for Cause involves lots of detail. Some might call it "chrome" but it goes deeper than that. Rules exceptions model combat dynamics through detailed minutiae which confront the players with many tasks to perform (and remember). Sometimes the rules grow to a massive size, as every conceivable condition of combat becomes commoditized. *Advanced Squad Leader* (MMP, né TAHGC) is a good example of a rulebook attempting to quantify all of World War II tactical reality — clearly an impossible task and yet the attempt is still made.

If there's a special events table in the game, that's a good indication it's Design for Cause. Since there might be a die roll or a card draw for nearly every situation, the outcome is never certain. The stage is set, but anything goes. Improv.

Design for Cause is most closely associated with the Simulation end of the wargame spectrum. Which is interesting, because besides simulating the de-



tails of a conflict, this design method is not necessarily any more historically accurate. The causes of battle are illustrated, but the outcomes are determined by the player's choices as well as random chance (e.g., dice, cards, CRTs, and so on). As such, the game may stray quite far from historical possibilities.

This is a common gripe about both *War in the East* (SPI) and *Drang Nach Osten* (GDW), for instance. Each is a monster game purporting to be the utmost in World War II eastern front simulation, at least at the time. Yet play either game long enough, and you'll inevitably veer into fantasy-land. I've heard the same said about *Campaign for North Africa* (SPI), although I suspect no one has played long enough to actually find out for certain.

The current King of Cause must be Richard Berg. By sheer number of games published, if nothing else. I can sum up this section and segue into the next no better than to quote him:

« Of course, I hear the Greek Chorus in the background intoning, "design for cause, design for effect; design for cause, design for effect." I have not been shy in coming out squarely on the side of Cause, but that's a personal predilection, "design for effect" games — where you don't learn "why," you just rehash "what" — are popular, as they are geared to competitive play. When done well — and many are — they stand as stalwart defenders of their designer's viewpoint. It's just not my viewpoint. » — Richard Berg, 1995*

DESIGN FOR EFFECT

What Mr. Berg was commenting upon was a pronounced change of emphasis in late 20th century wargame design, from simulating cause to modeling effect. Today, most wargames are Design for Effect games. Instead of modeling the causes, these games present the effects of conflict. They answer the question "What?" As in, what happened?

If the above style, using a theatre metaphor, can be said to be improvisational, Design for Effect is anything but. "The play's the thing," as Shakespeare says. The show must go on. History will unfold on the mapboard before your very eyes!

Design for Effect games do not provide the same insights as Design for Cause, and so they are often thought of as having less simulation value. Yet it must be said that oftentimes play can result in surprisingly historical battlefield outcomes — but for all the wrong reasons, of course.

Consider the 1985 release *Russian Front* (TAHGC) for instance. Historically, Soviet cities like Leningrad held out against enormous odds. In this game, only one ground unit may attack or defend at a time, with naval and air units supporting. Since *RF* has a differential rather than ratio based Combat Results Table, these naval and air assets also contribute to defense, which adds up to some very tough Soviet cities. The effect is right, but the influence of air and naval power is greatly exaggerated in the process. Still it's a good game.

This sort of approach can go wrong, of course.

For instance, if historical constraints are too rigorously enforced, play can become as choreographed as a Broadway musical. Players may feel railroaded in their choices or game play can seem scripted. *Barbarossa to Berlin* (GMT) is often said to suffer from this complaint. Or worse, some aspect of the Design for Effect may be conveyed in way too much detail. For example, *War Without Mercy* (Clash of Arms Games) groans under airpower rules far more complex than any other aspect of the game, and in fact much more complicated than is

necessary. And for no apparent reason other than the designer's whim.

Or the CRT can be counter-intuitive, producing seemingly anomalous outcomes. That's the reason *France 1944* (Victory Games) was so widely panned by critics and gamers alike back in the mid-1980s. The CRT promotes attacking with just the right amount of force and punishes high-odds attacks with attacker losses. Unit morale is actually more important than combat strength. So here we have relatively weak SS panzer units with great morale. Back in the day, your average wargamer gave a big thumbs down to this kind of innovative design, preferring raw combat strength ratios and a linear CRT. That's OK, the designer didn't give up. Mark Herman went on to bigger and better things.

The worst transgression for Design for Effect games, though, has got to be when they're not all that historically accurate. That's their *raison d'être*, after all. If they don't even bother to provide the "What?" then what are they good for? *Trial of Strength* (Panther Games) portrays a Nazi fantasy. Each turn in 1941, marauding Panzers gobble up Soviet units like so much popcorn. It's not uncommon for a Soviet player to face a mapboard nearly empty of friendly units for the first few turns. To compensate for this, the designers greatly exaggerate Soviet reinforcements. It all balances out — except it doesn't. The Soviet player simply cannot accumulate sufficient forces to mount anything like a historical counter-attack in winter 1941.

On the other hand, when a Design for Effect game is done well, it's truly a thing of beauty. Let's look at *A Victory Lost* (MMP). In but a few short pages, Tetsuya Nakamura's rules admirably cover von Manstein's 'Backhand Blow.' Using a chit-pull system, the game illustrates the vagaries of operational tempo in the simplest way possible. You never know when, or which units, you'll get to activate next. In this game, certain rules might make no sense from a real-world standpoint, but they provide the proper effect on the mapboard.

- If no enemy units (or Zones of Control) block your rail lines, you can rail reinforcements wherever they can reach. Unoccupied enemy-controlled cities can be taken one-by-one if you can rail units through a breach in the line. This compels both players to maintain a reserve behind the lines for rapid redeployment. This is especially true for the Axis player and doubly so during the dreaded turn 4 window of opportunity (when all Axis reinforcements enter from the mapboard's south, not west edge). No one is forced to do any of this and there are no rules mandating (or even concerning) reserves in *AVL*, yet a savvy player will do that just in case. To me, this is brilliant game design.

- Supply lines may be any length and may traverse any hex not occupied by an enemy unit or ZoC. That's right, supply lines may even be drawn through enemy territory! But then, units don't even get eliminated for being out of supply in *AVL*. From within the game's time frame, there's no effect other than Out of Supply units cannot move once they're outside HQ command range. That allows attackers a choice of how to proceed once enemy forces have been surrounded — form a Kessel and reduce the pocket by force or bypass the unit knowing that it won't surrender. A player must ask, "Can I afford to bypass these enemy units safely?" It's a terrible thing to have ostensibly powerless, immobile enemy units that used to be way behind the lines suddenly come back to life because they're now within HQ range due to an unexpected counterattack — that can do some real damage!

- In *AVL*, supply is not drawn to the board edge, but rather to three individual hexes for each side. Lose those hexes and your whole army group is out of sup-

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ply! This addresses the 'edge of the world' syndrome so common in wargames, by making the maintenance of a strategic reserve near the board edge (including an HQ) an attractive proposition. If a successful thrust has the potential to put all your units Out of Supply, you should probably work very hard to prevent this from happening. If you leave your hinterlands undefended, you deserve everything you get! You don't literally need to maintain a strategic reserve defending these three hexes — and sometimes you won't have the wherewithal to do it anyway — but there are strong reasons to do so. No rules force a player to do this, but a wise player will protect his supply sources. He will maintain a strategic reserve without there being any need for rules about reserves or 'behind the lines' garrisons, or anything like that. Just blessed simplicity.

These gamey, or more aptly, spartan rules are all part of a subtle methodology which promotes historical play without feeling scripted. Nakamura's brilliant design almost transcends into the next design style, but for the lack of one crucial ingredient: the fog of war.

DESIGN FOR EXPERIENCE

In this case, fog of war refers to everything players cannot know. In the designs discussed above, the fog of war is often nothing more than rolling a die and consulting a CRT. Or wondering if your opponent will play his card for the Event or the OPS. Maybe even the uncertainty of whose HQ chit will be drawn next.

That's not the kind of uncertainty we're talking about here, though. In Design for Experience games the enemy forces themselves, and even their potentials, remain largely unknown to players. This uncertainty is used to represent the salient features of the campaign. So, Design for Experience games provide a feeling for the unknowns of conflict. They answer the question "How?" How did it feel to command? How will it all turn out?

Most of these designs are games first and foremost. Their simulation value is not defined by cause or effect. They simulate something else — the 'friction of battle' mentioned by Clausewitz. Design for Experience games model the chaos of war, the unforeseen. The other player is used to achieve this in a 'double-blind' situation, which limits information available to players. These games are a reaction to the 'Zeus-like' view afforded wargamers in most of the above Cause & Effect games. Instead, Design for Experience games present the player with similar kinds of uncertainties that the commanders faced in history. The treatment is abstracted of course, but the all-important aspects of player psychology and bluffing really come into the foreground here. When neither player knows the composition of his opponent's forces, or even intentions, play acquires a more Poker-like quality.

Of course, you realize I'm referring to block games. Most Design for Experience games are block games, although there exist some exceptions. Many grognards dismiss block games as nothing more than glorified Stratego (Milton Bradley), and so consequently see no simulation value at all in having small upended square wooden blocks represent military units with hidden enemy strengths. Yet that inability to quantify the enemy's force is the key innovation of block games. You can see an enemy-colored block, but you cannot know how powerful it is. Is it a 1 or is it a 4? Is it infantry or is it panzer? All you know is 'enemy block.' That is fog of war.

There's more than just fog of war at work in these games, though. Let's see

what one of the masters of Design for Experience, Craig Besinque, has to say on this subject:

« We aspire to fun, exciting strategy games with a high degree of historical accuracy, but not to the point of spoiling the enjoyment (to our way of thinking, too many games do not recognize this limit). Making strategy FUN is the design intent. These goals require well-developed systems that simplify play while maintaining historicity. » — Craig Besinque, 1991†

Although borrowing aspects of both Cause & Effect style designs, Design for Experience games seldom force players to imitate history. That's just not as much fun as making the history happen yourself! These games encourage players to act within the bounds of history by using various simple techniques. As mentioned above, one method is to keep the opponents' forces hidden until the moment of combat. However, designers use all sorts of other approaches as well.

Often derided as the 'Buckets of Dice,' rolling one die per strength point and hitting on a 6 is the method of choice for combat resolution. Each player gets to roll for his units in battle, sometimes sequentially and sometimes simultaneously, as the designer deems appropriate. This adds great variability to combat results and makes statistical analysis of future events virtually impossible.

Another way to encourage historical play is to streamline game play — to make the design 'system-oriented' and not 'exception-oriented.' That is, the game system functions fairly uniformly, with few special rules. Players focus on playing the game, not looking up rules exceptions. History happens naturally as players play the game, not because historical events are hard-wired into the design. This requires not only extensive development, but also the use of novel methods to simulate events.

Let's look at Craig Besinque's game, *Rommel in the Desert* (Columbia Games). In order for units to replace lost hits, they must first travel all the way back to their respective Home Bases (Alexandria for the Allies, El Agheila for the Axis)! Although this mechanic is historically daft, within the context of the game it conveys the proper historical flavor. As your forces get further from your Base, they become harder to rebuild. Then as you grow weaker, your enemy is falling back toward his own Base and growing stronger. This is a very effective way to simulate the back-and-forth nature of the desert war.

Design for Experience games often use such a novel approach to simulate, rather simply, some aspect of play that in other games would entail pages of detailed rules. These games are often maligned and misunderstood as a result.

SUMMATION

Of course, that's not to say that one design style is superior to another or packs more simulation punch, or even that all wargames can be neatly pigeon-holed into these three discrete design philosophies. No game's design approach is ever going to be 100% pure. Shades of grey all over again.

However, at least one generalization can be made:

- Design for Cause: The history is in the rules.
- Design for Effect: The history is on the mapboard.
- Design for Experience: The history is in your head. **B**

* Kutta, Tim. "Behind the Lines — An Interview with Richard Berg." *GameFix*, issue 7 (May 1995), page 27.

† Besinque, Craig. "EastFront is Here! WestFront is Coming!" *The Canadian Wargamers Journal*, issue 29 (Fall 1991), page 14.

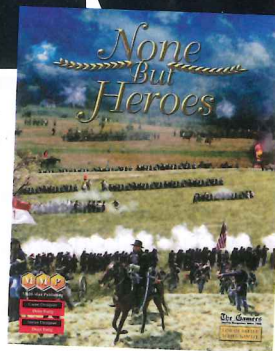
TALK

François Vandermeulen
& Dean Essig

François is passionate about ACW and particularly the Dean Essig series on the subject. Rather than a game review that would have inevitably positive, he offers us a (long) talk with its designer. A good way to discover a game, understand its genesis, its aim and the reason why it was created

NONE BUT HEROES

In 1988, a wargame series (*Civil War, Brigade series*) dealing with tactical battles of the American Civil War, focusing on command, the difficulties of co-ordination, and the personalities of the historical generals, was born. Now, 23 years later, Dean Essig offers the re-birth of the CWB in a new series, *Line of Battle*. Since its creation, CWB has existed in three versions, spawned a Napoleonic adaptation (NBS), and underwent a change in scale in the RSS (regimental sub-series). *Line of Battle* includes many innovative elements, explaining the name change, but the old RSS games are playable with the LoB system. Its system of command animates both series. While this system is remarkable, LoB has other qualities as well. With the help of Dean Essig, let's take a look at the novelties of LoB as well as the grand principles of the series. We will cover the map, the counters, and the command system before describing the mechanisms of the Activity Phase, the heart of the *Line of Battle* series.



DESIGNER DEAN ESSIG GRAPHICS NICOLAS ESKUBI PUBLISHER MMP

• **François Vandermeulen:** If I recall correctly, you started CWB with *In their Quiet Fields*, which had as its subject the Battle of Antietam. LoB is also starting with the same battle.

• **Dean Essig:** That is correct. *ITQF* was the first published CWB game. When I designed the CWB, I put together three games (what became *ITQF*, a Gettysburg, and a Chickamauga). The latter two have little to do with the eventual CWB games Dave designed, but were merely test beds to work on the series' rules in different situations. But the Antietam game was always the one that was aiming at being an actual production game.

• **FV:** Does the Battle of Antietam mean something special to you?

• **DE:** Yes, the battle has special significance for me. Reading Murfin's *A Gleam of Bayonets* many years ago sparked my interest. The field was the first I

ever visited and, since it is in such pristine condition, it actually looked the way it did back then. Situationally, its field was nicely compartmentalized in a way that my young mind could grasp (morning, noon, and afternoon phases). It gripped me in a way other battles have not been able to do.

THE MAP

• **FV:** The treatment of terrain is in many ways a characteristic aspect of your work on this game. Firstly, for its diversity. The *None but Heroes* map shows the topography of the battlefield with precision. The depiction of the relief is particularly detailed.

• **DE:** I had some clear ideas of what I wanted to show, especially at Antietam. There are other games, relying only on elevation, that make the Sunken Road

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THE COUNTERS

• **FV:** On the map, players move their regiments, generals, ammunition wagons, HQs, and their cannons.

There are three types of units in *LoB*: artillery, infantry, and cavalry (which should be thought of as infantry on horseback in this war). As in *RSS*, units are characterized by their ID (making it possible to place the units in the order of battle of their army), by their strength (one point = 50 men), their morale (ranging from A to E), and weapon type. Detail is found in the description of the troops: I counted nine types of light arms and 10 types of artillery for the series (I do not think that all of these weapons are present in *NbH*).

• **DE:** Weapon type matters only in a few minor ways (range and the few special capabilities).

• **FV:** Is it, then, too much detail considering the actual impact on the battle?

• **DE:** Players expect that kind of information in a regimental ACW game. I had to pick and choose the sacred cows I killed. Picking an unnecessary one like that would cause guys to never understand other more important matters. I'd hear about how the game didn't have weapon types for the rest of my life.

• **FV:** What sacred cows did you kill?

• **DE:** The only ones I can think of off-hand are the small arms ammunition rules and the range/weapon type multiplier rules.

• **FV:** Nevertheless, there is no danger of being submerged in this multiplicity of weapons, as in practice two light arms dominate: rifled muskets and smoothbore muskets. The first has a long effective range, while the second has a greater hitting power. It is similar with the artillery, where four types of weapons predominate. Other, more exotic weapons intervene once in awhile, such as with the terribly effective Sharps rifle or the very limited use of pistols.

The front side of the unit corresponds to its combat formation (line for infantry and cavalry, uncoupled for the artillery) and the back side their movement formation (in column, mounted, or coupled).

Several special types of units also exist, those able to act in dispersed order that allows them to approach the enemy and withdraw more easily, and sharpshooters which increase the possibility of disrupting with their fire bonus.

Unique to *NbH* is the introduction of the 'green' category to the Union Army. A part of the US Army was formed of new recruits who were experiencing their first battle. These troops are characterized by technical weakness and not by a lower morale value. Certain newly formed regiments showed good spirit during the battle, despite their lower level of experience with combat and maneuver.

In addition to combat units, counters represent artillery ammunition wagons (not present in *NbH*), markers, and generals and their HQs.

Units in this game, like terrain, are of great variety and add to the tactical aspects of these battles. Armies of the American Civil War might appear to have been homogenous compared to those of the Napoleonic Wars. But with *LoB*, the added detail gives life to these regiments in a wonderful variety of interesting situations. Again, however, it is in the graphics department that the game comes up short. The graphics are minimalist, the backsides (written in gray on a dull background) are difficult to read, the colors chosen to differentiate corps are not harmonious and icons are at times deformed. A lack of effort can be sensed in the graphic design for the counters. The beauty of *NbH*, however, is found elsewhere.

look like a place with a clear field of fire to the north, something that is the exact opposite of reality.

• **FV:** Slopes are depicted by lines where the thickness and the quantity of them per hex reveals their inclination. A symbol might also be added in the hex to define inclined ground.

• **DE:** It is ground that is actually steep. Steepness is something that can (usually) be determined by how far the contour lines are apart, but players cannot judge that at a glance. The inclined ground is my determination of where the steepness actually matters for movement. The slope lines are more for the morale effect and frequently are not on ground that is particularly steep, but "defensible" for one reason or another.

• **FV:** Lines for peaks are added and have an effect on line of sight (LoS). Hexes and hexsides can also be characterized by other symbols: rock legs, sudden dips, quarry pits, etc. They provide a bonus of protective terrain or block the LoS in certain conditions. Woods have an effect on movement and LoS. The influence of orchards and towns introduces a relatively novel way to consider terrain. For the most part, using terrain advantageously is not always simple. Their advantages come in their effects on movement, LoS, morale, and the activation sequence of units. In addition to this, other symbols are included on the map that has nothing to do with the functioning of the game. But they add a little atmosphere and can also be helpful in the drafting of certain orders. To sum up, the map is very full. It takes a little time to get comfortable with all of the symbols. But the map is functional and makes it easy to conduct movement.

LoS often represents a complex aspect of any design, as it is very easy to create a simple rule that is very difficult to use in practice and can have unsatisfactory results. Generally speaking, LoS works well in *NbH*. Terrain is interesting and clear enough, and after a little time spent getting used to the map players will comprehend the ins and outs of the very particular terrain of Antietam.

• **DE:** One cannot understand the way the battle of Antietam worked without having the terrain act the way it did historically.

• **FV:** Graphically, veterans of the *RSS* should not feel disoriented while those of the *CWB* will see the old games in *LoB*. The series' symbols and topographical representations have not changed for a long time, which I personally find somewhat disappointing.

• **DE:** The map graphics are what I wanted. I like my style and could not show the massive amount of detail I had with some other graphic style.



• **DE:** As you know, I did explore the idea of a newer counter style, but bowed to public pressure to maintain the current look. As the original was both functional and what players wanted, I kept it. I'm not unhappy with the result, I like the way it looks and it plays well with it. I did make the data easier to see (larger fonts) and cleaned up the markers some.

• **FV:** I think the order of battle is difficult to get into as, except at the corps level, divisions and brigades are not easily identifiable. My playing partner and I were confused at times. It was even more difficult with the Confederate Army, as divisions are named after a general but led by a different general – and several generals have the same name.

• **DE:** The battle in *NbH* features such confusion. Players need to take care to keep their army sorted as they do things.

THE GENERALS

• **FV:** Generals are assigned two numbers (from 0 to 4) representing their command and morale values. The first is to record the effectiveness of the general in terms of his standing in the chain of command. The second indicates the general's ability to inspire his men. In *NbH*, Lee is given the highest value (1-4) while his adversary, McClellan, is a 1-4. Every combination is present, including generals rated at an abysmal 0-0. How were the generals rated? It is an important but difficult value to assign. Were they rated according to their performance in the battle or throughout their career?

• **DE:** Generally, they are rated for the specific battle, but it would be wrong to think that the general's career doesn't influence the decision. There is no hard and fast rule for deciding who is what, it is all an opinion based on what the general seems to have done and what he was good at.

Take a McClellan. Obviously, the guy was not the greatest for issuing orders but was well loved and able to motivate his troops. Poor command rating, good morale one. You have guys like J.R. Jones who, for the second battle in a row, faked injury to get away from the fighting and was cashiered shortly thereafter. Christian fled the field and left his troops in the lurch. These are obvious 0-0's. There are plenty who were fantastic at everything they did (4-4's). Those are the easy ones to rate. Plenty of others are bland, uninspired, or just not written about much. They are harder. Sometimes, they can be rated based on what happened to them later in the war, other times I need to pull a number out of hat. There is just no way to tell. Some, like R.H. Anderson, Lawton, and Marcellus Douglas were hit almost as soon as action started around them. Those are especially tough. Anderson was hit crossing the hill before his division got into action (at which time the division broke into parts and was poorly used). I rated him down not for that, but because his division pulled the same stuff at Gettysburg when he didn't have the excuse of getting hit. Lawton and Douglas went down before they had a chance to do much of anything and had limited backgrounds to fall back on. I had little to go on regarding them.

• **FV:** In addition to these ratings, the rank and command level of the general is included. Certain generals are also attributed the extra role of being an artillery leader. This gives them more options in how to use the artillery under their command. He can direct his artillery fire better to concentrate on an important target or he could post his batteries (assigning them a position that they hold, without having to respect the command range).

Artillery command is a very interesting

addition to *LoB*, but McClellan's army seems to be less effective on this score.

• **DE:** They are. This is a temporary feature of this battle and the result of throwing the army together on the march north from Washington. They had not formed the larger artillery units they will be using later in the war, so they parceled the artillery out to the infantry in various ways. The guns and crews are good as ever, but their organization is lacking.

• **FV:** The scenario booklet also indicates the seniority of generals in order to be able to replace them if one is killed in battle. It also includes quite a few specific rules for the generals, their interactions, their weaknesses, and their strengths.

What might surprise the newcomer is the number of leader counters. In *NbH* I counted over 125 on the three counter sheets of units. This indicates the importance of command and the chain of command in *LoB*. To me, this gives it a delicious narrative effect, putting names to individual units and giving the impression of seeing the battle unfold.

Leaders represented are the generals in chief, corps generals, generals of the divisions that make up the corps, and generals of the brigades that make up the divisions.

The heart of the system is here. The design of orders and the chain of command is what gives the series its originality. *LoB* has inherited the rules of *CWB* and *RSS* but has modernized them for the better.

The general principle of the series is that the player incarnates the commander in chief. The player creates a battle plan and writes the orders down on a piece of paper. The player indicates to what subordinate he or she is addressing and provides precise orders: objective, route, and eventually a departure condition chosen from a list (dawn, for example).

Worth noting is an important difference from *CWB-RSS*, as army commanders cannot issue orders whenever they want. There is a test first, which emphasizes the difference between army commanders.

• **DE:** Leaders have differing abilities to make up their mind and get the mechanics in place to make things happen (one of the key differences between leaders, that and the ability to figure out the best thing to do).

• **FV:** McClellan has about an 80% chance of sending an order within an hour, while Lee has the same chance of success within the first turn (in 15 minutes).

• **DE:** Before, army commanders were way too able to issue flurries of orders. With a more sluggish rate, it is now possible for a player to "be overtaken by events" and unable to issue orders fast enough to counter what is happening to him. That's good, because that certainly can and did happen.

• **FV:** Depending on the distance between the general and the subordinate, a delivery delay for the order is calculated. At the end of this number of turns, the player consults a chart that, depending on the aptitudes of the general and the subordinate, the complexity of the order (an order to attack takes longer to put into place than a simple move within friendly territory), the situation (a unit under fire has more difficulty than one in reserve), and a roll of a die, indicates the level of delay before the order can be carried out. This level gives a score that must be obtained before the order can be implemented. These charts used to calculate delays is an evolution over the one used in *CWB*. It gives more importance to the quality of the army commander.

• **DE:** It's easier to be a mediocre subordinate with a great army commander. A great subordinate has a hard time making up for a lousy army commander as the army commander won't or can't issue the orders the great subordi-



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nate needs to get the job done (or worse, issues bad instructions). As these are armies, the subordinate cannot just tell the army commander to go pound sand while he does whatever he wants.

• **FV:** Players need to keep in mind the time necessary to get a clear image of the situation, make decisions, transmit them to subordinates, and put them into action. The system's detail also allows players to have an idea of where everything is in this process, without having to refer to an abstract rule with some activation delay. The narration of the battle is improved. Changing strategy in the middle of a battle is perilous as new orders need to be drafted in hope that action will take place quickly enough and that the co-ordination between different formations will be good.

The system also provides some flexibility (for the designer of the scenario, if not the player) in taking into account the order of battle. For example, in *NbH* during the Battle of Antietam, the Confederate Army is not organized into corps. This gives an advantage to the Union Army.

• **DE:** This is true. The Union Army has six major elements to command while the Confederates have nine (not counting the artillery battalions).

• **FV:** Lee (and thus the Confederate player) has to co-ordinate the actions of his nine forces, requiring more activity than the northern player (representing McClellan). In this battle, the US player has the option of carrying out operations implicating only one corps with one single order (and thus only one process of order transmission).

Depending on the army, it is also possible to attach or detach small units (brigades, divisions) for particular missions. Once the orders are received, these units need to accomplish them by moving the HQ according to the order and remaining within the HQ or leader's command radius. There are two major types of orders: attack and movement (the latter only possible in friendly zones). Defense is the default state of a unit that has reached its assigned position.

LoB introduces a refinement in movement orders based on the distance that has to be covered. Short displacements have no specific conditions, but longer routes require units to adopt a marching column, follow roads, and demands more activity from the subordinate: deploying his unit after the march in column. This action is done with the use of initiative, as this order system would not be complete without giving place for the initiative of subordinates.

Another mechanic allows a subordinate to give himself an order. This permits players to take into account local adaptations that generals put into place. This is an important variation for *LoB* compared to its predecessors. Subordinates can succeed in their initiative roll far more easily than before (and there is no more 'Loose Cannon'). However, there are some restrictions, in that local initiative has to be done within the framework of the army commander's orders and cannot constitute entirely new enterprises: deployment after a long march, modification of a route but not the destination, extension of a successful assault, retreat in a catastrophic defeat (skedaddle), and ending the order being carried out. The list is not very long. Initiative no longer allows a leader to conduct an assault. *LoB* centralizes the big decisions in the army's HQ.

• **DE:** Initiative before was too easy and a quick way to by-pass the need for orders from the army commander. For example, it might have been tough to get orders from Lee to change what Longstreet is doing at Gettysburg in This Hallowed Ground, but he'd only be an initiative roll away from launching a corps-sized flanking march and attack. That just wasn't right.

• **FV:** The system also differentiates between how the two armies act. The South, with Lee, Longstreet, and Jackson, benefits from a trio of generals of exceptional quality, all able to act with a great degree of freedom. Their subordinates are competent enough. Decisions can be made rapidly and executed promptly.

For the North, on the other hand, McClellan makes all of the important decisions, and none too quickly. His corps leaders, apart from the excellent Hooker and Franklin, do nothing to make up for the sluggishness of the Union Army.

Confederate leadership outstrips that of the Union. Will this be the case in every *LoB* game?

• **DE:** No. Antietam was an anomaly. The Confederates had some superlative leaders which (in general) gave them an edge over the Union army. But even they had their "issues" develop at Gettysburg which is where the series is heading next.

• **FV:** So the plans are drawn up, the orders are transmitted, and the generals implement them, making any adaptations they deem necessary. The men just have to execute their orders – except that they do not accept to do anything they are told, any time. Another mechanism of *LoB* obliges the commander in chief (the player) to frequently get back into the action: Fluke Stoppage. This is a test that every division (or smaller independent commands) must pass each turn when given orders to go on the attack. In case of a failure, the assault stops and the commanders execute a skedaddle (catastrophic retreat). After this forced retreat, the unit cannot go over to the attack again until it passes an attack recovery test. Contrary to its predecessors, in *LoB* it is not losses that are involved in the Fluke Stoppage but the presence or lack of reserves.

• **DE:** Actually, no change. While the player was required to log everything before, a look at the Attack Stoppage table showed that to have any effect on the chance of stoppage, the corps would have to be ground into the dirt. So, basically, the logging was a waste of the player's time. Now, while "stoppage" might not happen differently with respect to losses, the way the units behave is different. A shot up formation has trouble closing and staying in contact with the enemy, and is a ripe counterattack target. It all works out naturally.

• **FV:** This mechanic permits assaults to have a greater chance of lasting out if the player organizes a reserve (placing a minimum of troops outside of the firing range of the enemy). In the absence of reserves, the risk of a Stoppage is greatly increased. The quality of the division's general is also determinant. For an attack recovery to be successful, losses are involved. Thanks to this system, some assaults can be halted on route, with some offensives implicating several divisions at first can end up involving only one (which must continue with the assault alone). This rule produces more divergences between what is planned and what occurs. In *NbH*, it is possible that a player carries out a frontal assault that will inevitably be a failure, due to the fact that the flanking attack never took place. Frustration is not just a word in *LoB*. This system of command using written orders produces a game that is radically different from those without an order system. In my opinion, it is difficult to capture the reality of Civil War battles without this kind of system. With *LoB*, it does not take a great deal of effort but it does bring you to another gaming level.

• **DE:** Invariably, someone who has never tried the game is envisioning some sort of high-workload "plot all the hexes you move" system. I've played complete campaign games of *NbH* with about eight orders. It's just not that hard. Those who might have difficulty following orders because they need a lot more detail to "keep them from doing something else" or worry that their opponent might be "stretching" the meaning of his orders, might need to either play the game without them or look elsewhere. The game requires a modicum of common sense and maturity.

THE SYSTEM

• **FV:** Everything is now in place. Each game turn begins with the command phase, about which we have just gone through the ins and outs. Then the activity phase takes place, during which players move and fight. There are other separate phases for other actions: the player activates his units one after the other and for each chooses the type of action it will undertake. Two options are available:

Fire Activity: With this choice, the activated stack has only 50% of its mobility. But at the end of its movement it can fire.

Move Activity: Here, mobility is at 100% but there is no firing. It is still possible to fight, however, as it is with this action that a unit can get into hand-to-hand combat.

• **DE:** This is what I am the most satisfied with; the mixed combat and

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movement effects. Running an assault is a lot of fun and a decently swirling experience.

• **FV:** The order in which players activate units is up to them. How did the design of the activity phase come to you?

• **DE:** Going into the project, I knew the most time consuming and (to me) least enjoyable parts of the game system were the fire phases. I wanted to find a way to integrate fire and movement just to keep players involved, if nothing else. All that pointed to a mixed activity phase where the player would do all his firing and movement in any order he liked. It's a better portrayal that way as units were able to take advantage of new local situations created by their and other friendly unit actions before the enemy could "fix" things. This helps add the fluidity that was missing before.

• **FV:** Indeed, the activity phase makes for some particularly interesting combat sequences. A lot of action. Firing and close combat is resolved on the same chart, and provokes losses and morale tests. These morale tests are largely modified by the state of the unit and those around it. A modified die roll produces various results such as disorganization, retreats (often optional, depending on the situation, for example with the presence of an unhitched artillery battery), and losses. This includes those that flee the battle and others lost in the retreat. The stragglers – temporary losses from *CWB* – are not present in *LoB*.

• **DE:** John Kisner brought up the idea of having just one kind of loss. My addition was to include the recovery percentage during the night that allows actual stragglers to return to the units.

• **FV:** The morale chart has changed a little, with morale levels corresponding to fixed columns. So, a unit with a morale grade of A can only have results within column A, meaning excellent units will never flee in disorder if they were in good shape before combat, no matter what the situation.

• **DE:** Maybe, but the modifiers stack up really fast! That can make the best units look bad at times.

• **FV:** Worth noting are "cowardly legs" – a marker that is temporarily placed on a hex vacated by enemy units (eliminated or forced to retreat). For the rest of the turn, this marker weakens the morale of adjacent troops.

Ammunition for small arms is no longer recorded, but that for artillery is, not only in accounting terms but also according to the result on the firing chart. Re-supply can be done in two ways: by battery (artillery must displace to rejoin the train) or by wagon. This second method is the default option (except for the Confederates in *NbH*) and is abstract: if a line of friendly hexes can be traced to the train, the battery is considered to be supplied by wagon. The battery does not suffer from a lack of ammunition, but the train's stock is reduced by a point. This system allows for ammunition stocks to be recorded without much difficulty (no need to count each round) and without certainty on the supply level (the player represents the commander in chief, not the quartermaster).

Certainly, inactive troops will influence the actions of the player during the turn with the 'opening volley', a quick way to simulate reaction fire on a separate table without having to calculate precisely the strength of the troops firing. Their presence (with a valid *LoS*) is enough. This defensive firing is automatic, "free", and independent of the strength of the forces involved (though it does depend on firing range and the presence or not of artillery).

• **DE:** I did the math on the fire table and came up with the expected values and developed a 1D6 table that mimicked that result (plus a little padding to account for the morale loss you won't be taking).

• **FV:** As a consequence, there is no need for the passive player to be involved in resolving this, which is very practical for PBEM.

• **DE:** Yes, that was a side benefit. I hadn't considered that this would be the case.

• **FV:** As opposed to normal firing, opening volleys have no effect on morale.

• **DE:** Very early on, playtesters asked for this or that modifier to the Opening Volley roll. I figured out right then that I could not allow anything in there or

the whole purpose of the roll would be destroyed (speed). Morale really doesn't effect an attacker that much. If they "pass" they keep closing, if they "fail" they stop and have a firefight. In the initial encounter, the attacker is not going to bolt for the rear. Now, once they are trading blows (regular fires), the possibility exists that either side might break—and that is when both sides are making normal morale checks.

• **FV:** For the artillery, changing its formation within range of the enemy can be costly. The mechanism is again very simple and emblematic of the game's blueprint: 1D6 – range = the number of pieces lost, with two added when uncoupled. This very clearly shows the player how dangerous it is to place his or her artillery pieces near the enemy. It is useless to try to mount an assault with these batteries. Instead, it is best to place them on terrain that dominates the battlefield. And if the terrain does not make this possible, the attacker will have to do without his guns.

Enemy fire is not the only thing that can disturb the active player. Nevertheless, zones of control are 'sticky' (except for units capable of being dispersed, and only in cases of withdrawal orders and several other cases).

• **DE:** Locking ZOCs came about as an experiment. In early testing we had too much fluidity; units seemed to be zipping in from all over the place to take advantage of opportunities. The amount of player control was excessive. As an attempt to address this, we tried a test game with locking ZOCs and it worked perfectly. I've been happy with it ever since.

• **FV:** If keeping away from the enemy is not easy, approaching has its own hazards. To move adjacent to enemy troops (to eventually get into hand-to-hand combat), a unit needs to pass a closing roll test. This test (a simple D6) depends on the morale of the unit. In case of a failure, the unit's movement is halted (but it can still fire at a longer range than originally expected, as long as it has not already spent 50% of its movement).

• **DE:** Closing itself came about to provide a reason for why some units just won't do what they are told (making the battlefield more chaotic) and to replace any sort of pre-charge morale check. Closing rolls are filling in for many of the more complicated functions in the old system.

• **FV:** It will be more difficult for a unit to enter into close combat if it is already adjacent, as it will be reticent to leave a well-protected position. Regiments do not always do as they are told.

• **DE:** Closing rolls and morale. Closing becomes much more of a problem with shot-up units. It is impossible to close with a wrecked unit and units that are not wrecked, but getting close have a difficult time staying up in the line (they might be subject to the inadequate frontage or "wrecked in stack" modifiers). If they fall out of the line, they must close again (resulting in more chances to fail that roll as well as to open themselves up to additional opening volleys).

• **FV:** All of these simple elements create little difficulties that combine to produce real challenges.

THE BATTLE

• **FV:** The Battle of Antietam was the bloodiest day of the American Civil War. To my gaming partner and I, it appears that the terrain was responsible for the heavy toll of the battle. Most of the combat was deadly because they took place at point blank range.

• **DE:** In part true. Also part of that was the skimpy Confederate ranks and the urge of the Union army to "get even" with the embarrassments of the past few months. The Union troops wanted to amend the loss of face from the Seven Days and 2nd Bull Run and could sense how close they were, so they pushed that much harder.

• **FV:** I (sadly) have not been able to play the whole campaign game yet, only a few scenarios from *NbH*. What can you say about this battle? It seems the fighting starts right away with the attack of the 1st Corps.

• **DE:** Oh yes, the fight becomes very tight right off the bat. Because of the system, the very close and active fighting that characterizes the whole battle doesn't bog down into a time consuming "Fire Phase" exchange. There is tac-

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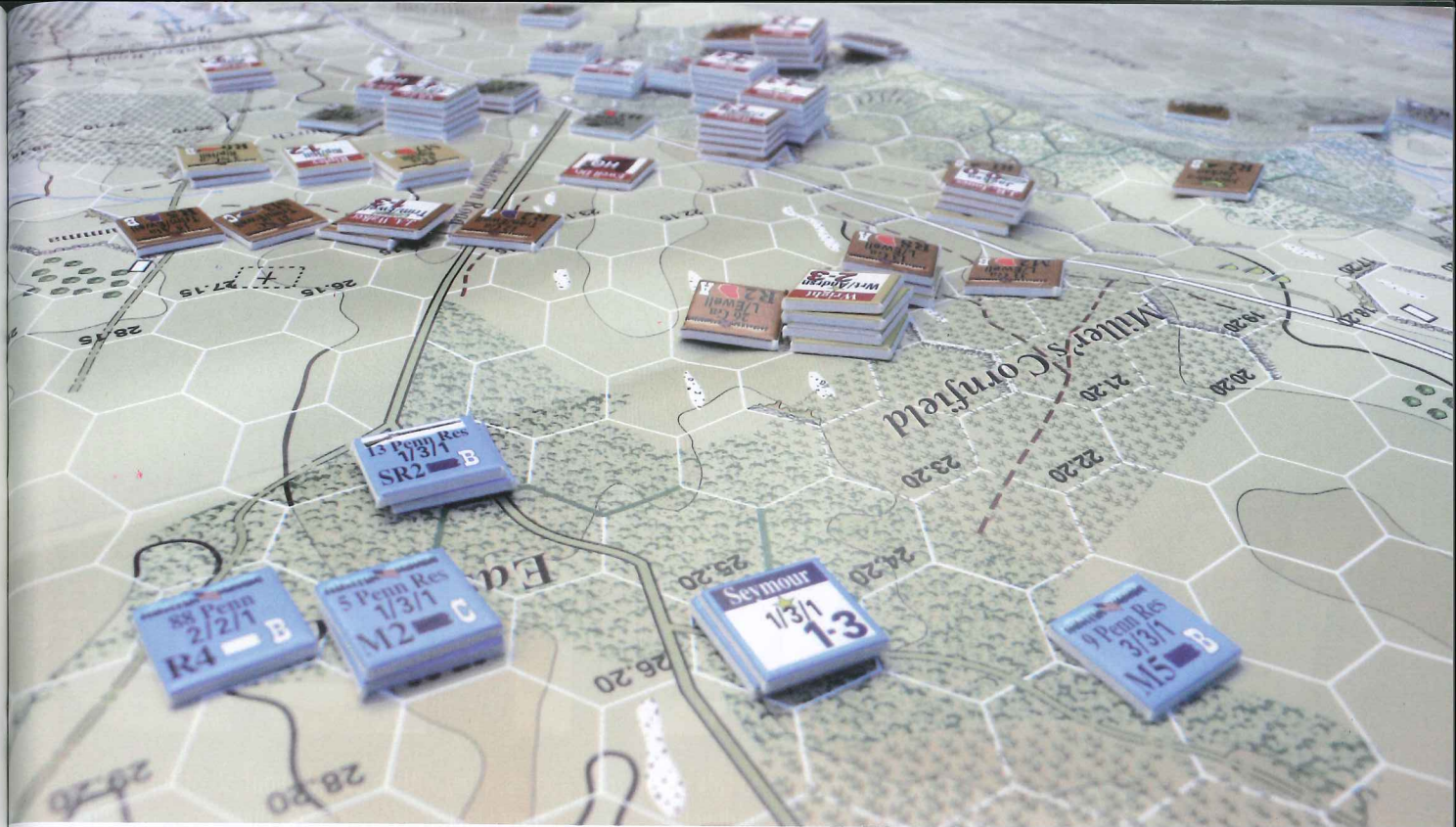
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tactical movement, holes developing, attacks trying to take advantage of those holes, combined arms in the form of artillery fires being integrated. There are a lot of things going on and a lot of game tactics playing out while the fires are going on. The battle itself does not feature a lot of maneuver. The terrain does not allow this. There are a number of grand tactical decisions the player makes that are all important, but the Union is not in a position to "march a corps around the Confederate flank" or some such.

• **FV:** The Union has a larger army, but McClellan is unable to make the best use of it. Lee, in a delicate strategic position, is more mobile and can save his army. The two players in *NbH* are encouraged to go onto the offensive. It is a very dynamic battle.

• **DE:** Certainly. The Confederates must attack. Numerous Confederate brigades attacked back into the Cornfield at various times (most notably Hood). McLaws attacked Sedgwick out of the battle. Obviously, A.P. Hill's division did nothing but counterattack.

• **FV:** Victory conditions take into account the strategic and tactical parts of the battle. Historically McClellan did win the battle tactically but was unable to turn that into a strategic victory.

• **DE:** Actually, McClellan came close to a tactical victory but missed by one terrain feature (Cemetery Hill). I think victory conditions are more important here than in many battles. Not only are some very important events tied to how the armies do here (Lee risked the destruction of his army, McClellan opened the door for Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, which formally turned the war into a moral campaign to end slavery).

• **FV:** What is the importance of victory conditions in this game, and generally in your designs?

• **DE:** In my case, I tend to put less importance on victory conditions than some might prefer and the reason has been simple and consistent for the 23 years I've been designing professionally. That is, I see the fun of a game to be the actual playing, not the tallying of points at the end. I certainly have had a great time in games getting my butt kicked and would not feel that fun isn't worth it if the point total at the end says I lose. I try to provide victory conditions that make sense and allow players to gauge how they did, but for a guy who feels he must win or else or that a game isn't worth playing if each side doesn't have a 50% chance of winning, he might be disappointed. I prefer victory conditions that measure against the historical result. If you did better than

your historical side did, you win. That teaches what was involved in the historical result, but since the historical result isn't likely to be the middle of the distribution of possible results, the chances of being greater or less than that result are not going to be 50%.

THE FUTURE

• **FV:** To conclude, it seems to me that *LoB* is an excellent system, combining history and the fun of gaming. There is a lot of action – resolved with fluidity – and a lot of tension. The rules are available on The Gamers website, as well as updates that allow players to play the four RSS games with the *LoB* rules (the adjustments needed are really minor). Antietam is a battle that lets the system show off its strengths. *None but Heroes* is, without a doubt, a great success. Next is a new edition of *This Hallowed Ground* (Battle of Gettysburg), and then?

• **DE:** The next one after Gettysburg will probably be Monocacy and Fort Stevens. Early tries to win the Battle of Monocacy and get to Fort Stevens while there is still a chance to take Washington DC.

• **FV:** It will be a smaller game, then. A one mapper after *TGH2*?

• **DE:** Yes, exactly.

• **FV:** Do you intend to 'retro-fit' the new system to all of the *CWB* games?

• **DE:** Sales will determine that. Brigade is different enough from regiment that many of the features that make *LoB* what it is wouldn't be needed or would definitely be out of place in a brigade game. It would be a lot of work and without a game to release with the rules, I can't justify the time expenditure (I have to feed my family with this work).

• **FV:** What was the best part of creating the *LoB* system?

• **DE:** That is an interesting and very difficult question to answer. The process lasted several years and came in small steps the whole time. I loved every minute of it. I got the chance to re-assess many assumptions made by designers for over 30 years and research the details of what went on. It was probably the most enjoyable design project I've ever had. Especially satisfying was being able to watch my 15-16 year old son mature into a fine wargamer and excellent playtester. It was a labor of love. I hope guys enjoy it and learn something more about the way Civil War battles worked than they knew before.

• **FV:** Thanks very much for speaking with us, Dean. I hope the *Line of Battle* series will have as much success as it deserves. **B**

MOST WANTED

The designers talk - This section is a place for designers to talk about their games. They will be asked about all of their games, from those about to be printed, or those in P500, to those in development or barely starting playtests. As there are many games planned, only a selection of some of the ones we are most eager to see coming out will be covered.

Bomber Command

GMT

by Lee Brimmicombe-Wood (designer)

Bomber Command was not a game I'd expected to make. My first raid-scale air game, *Downtown*, had been about my love of fast jets and my second, *The Burning Blue*, was on that familiar old chestnut, the Battle of Britain. I'd never considered the night bombing of the Reich as material for a game design. The subject matter exists in a twilight place, not forgotten but maybe something not dwelt on. It brings to mind words such as 'firestorm' and 'Dresden'. One might feel a touch guilty at turning the area bombing of cities into an entertainment.

But this is what I have done. In searching for a sequel to *The Burning Blue* I avoided the well-trodden path—the daylight raids on Germany—to settle instead on the night battles. When I began the project no-one had made a dedicated game on the subject. It was virgin territory, full of arcane lore about electronic warfare and pathfinding and complex bombing techniques. *Bomber Command* would be another raid-scale game in which the raider plots his attack and then executes it while his opponent deploys interceptors against the raid.

Development kicked off with the usual library

research. And then a strange thing happened. I put the raid-scale game on hold to make a game on tactical nightfighting. By the time I returned to *Bomber Command* I'd spent two years immersed in night raiding lore, allowing the design to stew. The result was not the detailed game I'd originally envisaged but something simpler, with the ingredients boiled down to a rich sauce.

The first design problem I faced was that of scale. I wanted a fast game, not something that turned raids to Berlin into an interminable slog. The *Burning Blue*'s scale had been set by the decision/action cycle of the RAF fighter controllers, for which I had solid metrics. I had no such numbers for the German nightfighter force and I spent a while storyboarding raids before I determined I could get away with a thirty minute turn.

From this a lot of things fell into place. I'd always admired the ginormous hexes of John Butterfield's *Battle Over Britain* and this seemed a good time to indulge myself. A fifty mile hex would be two inches across on the map and inside such a space I could bury all sorts of locations, such as cities, radio beacons and flak. At two hexes a turn a journey to Berlin would take twelve game turns for the round trip, or around two and a half hours of play. A hop to the Ruhr would take an hour and a half on the table.

Now I was motoring.

Unit scales for the German aircraft were easy.



Counters representing nightfighter Gruppen gave me a manageable Nachtjagd order of battle. But my dream of having counters for each *Bomber Command* squadron seemed excessive. So how should I handle raids of 550-plus bombers? The answer was to represent the bomber stream as a wandering monster; a three-hex snake of bombers, slithering across the map. As in my earlier games I'd represent casualties as individual bombers. Aircraft losses of 5% or more (about 28 bombers) would push the British player into the loss column.

I wanted the game to portray the major night fighting techniques. I'd hoped to cover the early night raids, but up to July 1943 the German air fighting centred on the Himmelbett ground controlled intercept system: a thin line of defences running from Denmark to France. These were of limited effectiveness and offered the German player few choices. The more interesting free fighting techniques—Wild Boar and Tame Boar—came after this date, in response to the attacks that devastated Hamburg. The electronic warfare that characterised the late bombing campaigns also flared white-hot after this time.

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BOMBER COMMAND Berlin Scenario

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Loss Track & Victory Points

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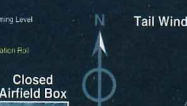
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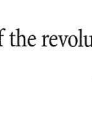
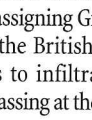
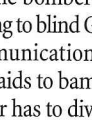
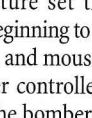
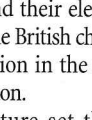
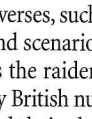
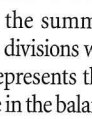
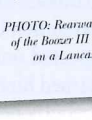
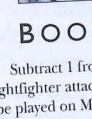
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Closed Airfield Box



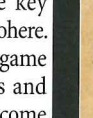
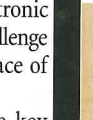
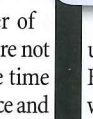
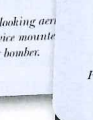
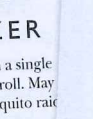
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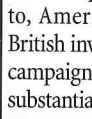
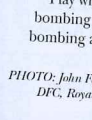
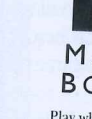
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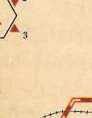
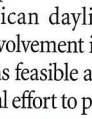
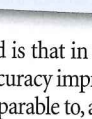
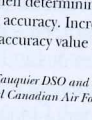
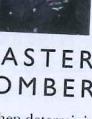
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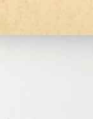
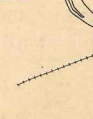
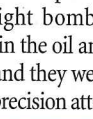
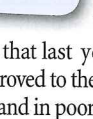
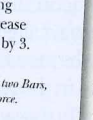
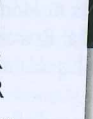
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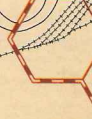
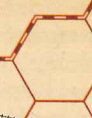
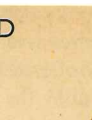
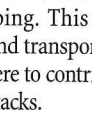
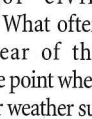
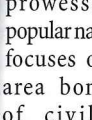
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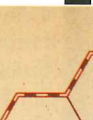
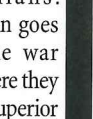
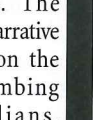
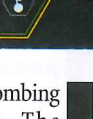
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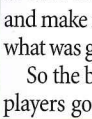
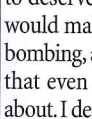
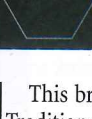
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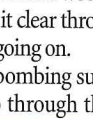
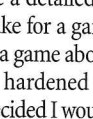
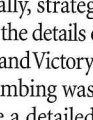
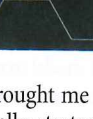
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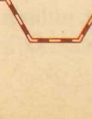
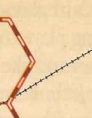
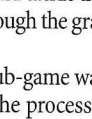
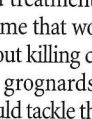
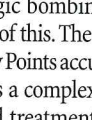
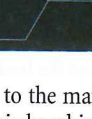
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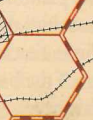
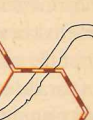
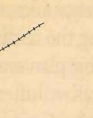
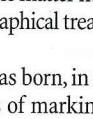
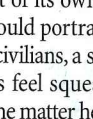
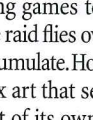
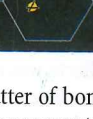
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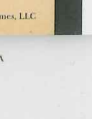
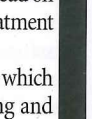
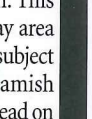
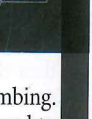
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England



BOOZER

Subtract 1 from a single nightfighter attack roll. May be played on Mosquito raid.

PHOTO: Rearward-looking view of the Boozer III device mounted on a Lancaster bomber.

MASTER BOMBER

Play when determining bombing accuracy. Increase bombing accuracy value by 3.

PHOTO: John Fauquier DSO and two BAs, DFC, Royal Canadian Air Force.

British bombing prowess. The popular narrative focuses on the area bombing of civilians. What often goes

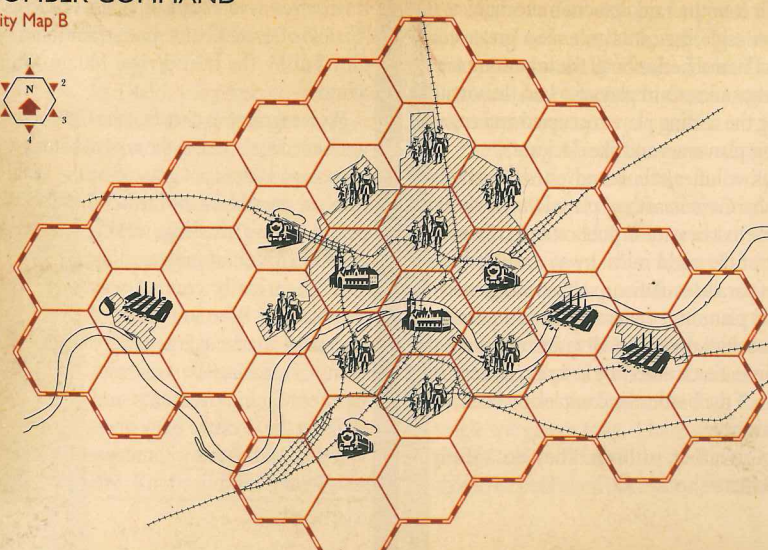
unnoticed is that in that last year of the war British accuracy improved to the point where they were comparable to, and in poor weather superior to, American daylight bombing. This made British involvement in the oil and transportation campaigns feasible and they were to contribute a substantial effort to precision attacks.

This brought me to the matter of bombing. Traditionally, strategic bombing games tend to gloss over the details of this. The raid flies over the target hex and Victory Points accumulate. However, British bombing was a complex art that seemed to deserve a detailed treatment of its own. This would make for a game that would portray area bombing, a game about killing civilians, a subject that even hardened grognards feel squeamish about. I decided I would tackle the matter head on and make it clear through the graphical treatment what was going on.

So the bombing sub-game was born, in which players go through the process of marking and

BOMBER COMMAND

City Map B



#XXXX

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MOST WANTED

bombing targets, managing the scatter of bombs and creepback of bombing from the aimpoint. All this takes place on a hex map of a German city, with icons of factories and trains and families showing whether you are hitting industrial, transport or residential areas. The British player chooses his mix of high explosive and incendiary bombs and tries to start fires across the city. Firestorms are a faint possibility. In the later scenario he must try to hit precision targets with a lot of new tools at his disposal.

The result is a system that, like *Downtown*, describes an evolution in bombing from its less accurate origins to its increasingly precise apogee.

Another key design choice I had to make was how to cram in all the arcane lore of the night bombing war. There were so many tactics and electronic systems it was hard to know where to start. *Downtown*, with its big lists of systems and their effects, was not the best model to work with. And the electronic war seemed so chaotic. Tactics that worked well on some nights failed on others, and jamming coverage was intermittent in effect.

The result was the separate card decks for the British and German players. This is not a card driven game but a card-modified one, with cards calling out obscure codenames like Monica, Boozer, Village Inn, Airborne Cigar. These cards modify die rolls or cancel out enemy card plays. Some contribute to the gradual improvement in the German air picture or influence the bombing sub-game.

It may seem odd to some players that I don't have a card for Window, the British radar jamming. It was so ubiquitous a technique that I built it into the raid detection mechanics. But Window aside, the cards gave me a 'greatest hits' series of namechecks for all the important tactics and electronics. Card play also had the virtue of keeping the raiding player occupied and engaged while his plan unwound like clockwork.

It was well after I'd built and tested the prototype of *Bomber Command* that I played *Duel in the Dark*, the game that beat me to publication on the subject matter of the night raids. I was delighted to see signs of parallel evolution, pursued independently: the raid planning, the gradual accumulation of raid casualties, and so on. Here are two games that compliment each other: the simpler one capturing the zen of the battle, the complex one delivering more history.

Choose either, or both. They do a difficult subject matter justice. **B**

BRACCIO DA MONTONE

ACIES EDIZIONI

by Marco Gnagnetti (designer)

When we started ACIES Edizioni one year and half ago, we decided to focus on those games, amongst the submissions we received, that really interested us for historical periods and arguments involved. The first game we published was *Sa*

Battalla, a simulation of the most important battle of the middle-age Sardinia. It was based on the *Guelphs*

& *Ghibellines* system previously published by ES (for more references about this system see *Battle Magazine* issue 2).

Because of the fact that my family has its roots in Montone (a little village in Umbria), and that Braccio is the local hero, I proposed to realize his old project about a game on Braccio's battles.

Andrea Fortebraccio, also known as Braccio da Montone (Perugia, 1 luglio 1368 - L'Aquila, 5 giugno 1424), was the most famous and respected Italian Condottiero in the timespan between the end of 1300 and the first quarter of 1400.

Governor of Rome and Bologna, Lord of Perugia, Prince of Capua and Great Chancellor of the Kingdom of Naples, with his action he struggled to carve his dominion in central Italy and, more interesting in the wargaming point of view, was one of the most important reformers of military tactics, founding a military system (the so called "Scuola Braccasca") so successful that almost all of the professional Condottieri of 1400 divided themselves as followers of "Scuola Braccasca" or "Scuola Sforzesca" (the more traditional system founded by the friend/rival Muzio Attendolo Sforza).

We recognized at once that the G&G system was well suited for simulate the type of battles we wish to treat, and this is not granted by the fact that the rules are created for the medieval period. The real challenge was the goal to recreate in a fun, interesting, and historically correct way the peculiar Braccio's tactic of piecemeal attacks of little cavalry groups, searching the weak spot in enemy's deployments and striking the decisive blow once founded. And all this without too much rules modifications! We

decided that the game would be about two battles, S. Egidio and L'Aquila. Not only those are the most important battles in Braccio's career, but also the more documented.

S. Egidio battle (12th of July, 1416) was fought near Perugia by Braccio's Condotta against Perugia and the Condotta of Carlo I Malatesta. The problems posed by this engagement focuses on three factors that were to be incorporated in the "basic" and tested G&G rules system: the unusual (for the times) length of the battle, that lasted 7 hours, the very hot temperature and the peculiar tactics used by Braccio as seen above.

Moreover, all the literary fonts describes the battle in detail, but are not so precise about numbers and orders of battle. After many efforts we managed to reply the most probable ongoing of the battle, and with a good simulation value. The Perugia player has the bigger army but time runs against him; Braccio leads a smaller army but with higher morale and tactical flexibility.

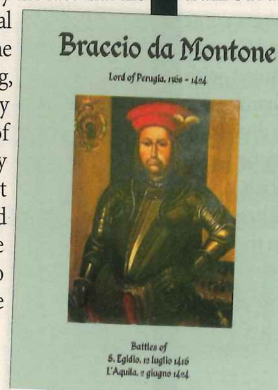
The other battle, L'Aquila (3rd of June 1424), presents a completely different problem about documentation: there are many, even too many, because each one contradicts others. 8 years after S. Egidio Braccio followed a path that made him (from a common Condottiero, even if a brilliant and respected one) to a full feudal Lord. This career earned him a lot of enemies, as usual, the fiercest being nonetheless the Pope Martino V. The Pope put up a coalition army against Braccio, with Milano and the Kingdom of Naples, the Collegati army. Braccio was besieging the city of L'Aquila and the enemy marched to help the city and destroy Braccio. Their leader was Caldora, one of the Braccio's ex-pupils (not one of the better). We can say that the better leader in Collegati army was the young Francesco Sforza, future Duke of Milano and son of Muzio Attendolo Sforza, deceased one month earlier.

In this battle both players must use wisely their troops because timing is absolutely important, even decisive for final victory.

Our challenge was to simulate those two battles so different, always maintaining an historical truth but avoiding to insert too many new rules.

It's important for us not to "force" a player on a certain behavior (a common problem in many wargames), and in the same time put them against the problems the historical leaders met, as deploying errors and even wrong battle plans.

Braccio da Montone is in final playtest stage and should be available in November by ACIES Edizioni. **B**



SIMULATING WAR

CONTINUUM PUBLISHERS

by Marco Gnaquetti (designer)

Life has been really hectic this summer, since at the same time as producing and shipping my deluxe *Lost Battles* boardgame (as described in the last issue of *Battles* and in my column in the current issue), I have been finishing off my next book, entitled *Simulating War*. It may seem strange to cover a book in a section devoted to upcoming wargames, but it is in fact entirely appropriate, since this work is even more of a hybrid product than was my original *Lost Battles* book four years ago. This time the book contains the full rules and design notes for no fewer than EIGHT simple wargames, and the plates are used to provide the components for you to assemble full colour maps and counters as shown in the accompanying illustrations, without even needing to print them out for yourself.

Whereas *Lost Battles* used conflict simulation as a means to the end of gaining a better understanding of the dynamics of ancient land engagements, my new book focuses on simulation techniques as a subject in their own right. The book is squarely in the tradition of now aged classics such as Nicky Palmer's *Comprehensive Guide to Board Wargaming*, Jim Dunnigan's *Complete Wargames Handbook* and Peter Perla's *Art of Wargaming*. It draws on the thousands of board and computer wargames which have been published over the past 50 years, and on my own 30 years of experience in designing wargames and using them to help educate both military and civilian students.

The main aim of the book is to build on the wonderful design accessibility of manual wargames and to give you the skills you need to modify and design such wargames for yourself. As Dunnigan famously put it, 'If you can play them, you can design them'. I have been getting my MA students to do just this ever since 2003,

and the existing grognards among them have sometimes produced games of publishable quality. Andrew Mulholland's *Assault on Narvik* and Arrigo Velicogna's *An Loc* have both been published in *Against the Odds* magazine, while Garrett Mills's *Roma Invicta*? has not only been published by the Society of Ancients but now forms the basis of an entire

class in my BA course on ancient warfare at King's College London. A further revision of this game, designed jointly by Garrett and myself, appears in the new book. Electronic versions of several dozen other past student projects on conflicts from Arbela in 331 BC to Lebanon in 2006 are available for free download from the course website – just Google 'Sabin KCL'.

A second aim of the book is to help teachers, academics, defence analysts and military officers to use manual wargames as educational vehicles in class and even as tools to provide novel research insights, as in my previous work *Lost Battles*. I have been doing just this for years in order to convey a better sense of the interactive dynamics of force, space, time and command in conflicts ranging from ancient to modern times and from the tactical to the grand strategic level. The book has proved very timely, since I have recently been closely involved with the drive by the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre of the UK Defence Academy to encourage greater use of manual wargaming for education and force development. Peter Perla at the Center for Naval Analysis in the USA and Brigadier Andrew Sharpe (head of research at DCDC) have both been kind enough to provide glowing testimonials for the back cover.

The book sets wargaming in the context of established scholarly techniques such as mathematical modelling, operational research, game theory and role playing, and explains how it unites all of these approaches in a synergistic whole. It contains over 150,000 words of detailed content, plus thousands of references and several dozen colour plates and text figures. The main sections are as follows:

1. THEORY

Modelling War, Accuracy vs Simplicity, Educational Utility, Simulation Research

2. MECHANICS

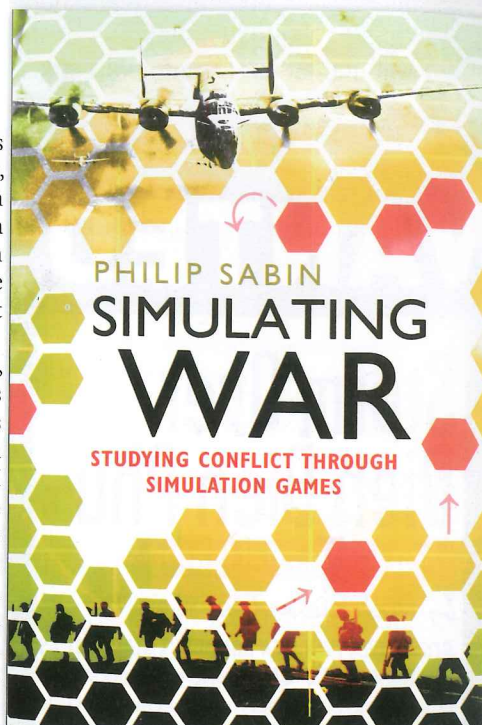
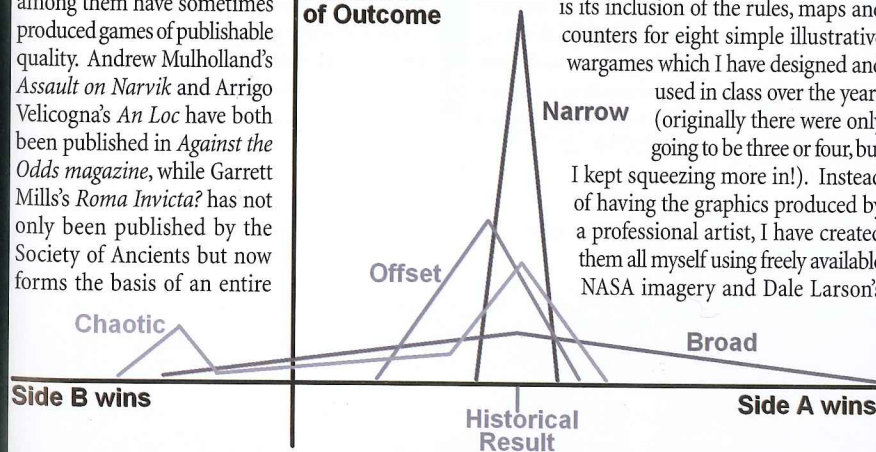
Designing the Components, Modelling Conflict Dynamics, Modelling Command Dynamics, Integration and Testing

3. EXAMPLES

Ancient Warfare, World War Two, Tactical Combat

As I said, a key feature of the book is its inclusion of the rules, maps and counters for eight simple illustrative wargames which I have designed and used in class over the years (originally there were only going to be three or four, but I kept squeezing more in!). Instead of having the graphics produced by a professional artist, I have created them all myself using freely available NASA imagery and Dale Larson's

Likelihood of Outcome



wonderful Cyberboard programme, and I provide lots of detailed advice to help you to do the same in your own designs. The eight games are as follows:

- Second Punic War (multiplayer diplomacy)
- Roma Invicta? (Hannibal's early campaigns in Italy)
- Kartenspiel (card game of Napoleonic battle)
- Hell's Gate (the Korsun pocket, winter 1944)
- Big Week (US bombing raids, February 1944)
- Fire and Movement (WW2 British infantry battalion attack)
- Block Busting (WW2 urban combat)
- Angels One Five (grand tactical aerial dogfighting in WW2)

Once the book is published, graphics files will be posted for free download from the book's website to allow you to create even larger versions than the sixteen inch square maps provided in the book itself. We will also post Cyberboard versions to allow you to play the games on your PC screen instead if desired. As with *Lost Battles*, we have established a Yahoo group for you to discuss the issues raised in the book and to get feedback on your own simulation design ideas. This already has a few dozen members even though the book has not yet appeared.

Publishing this work as a conventional book rather than a boxed game not only has the advantage that it can reach a wider audience through bookstores and libraries but it also helps keep the cost down. My column elsewhere in this issue discusses the dismal economics of manual game publishing today, but you can already order *Simulating War* through Amazon and get this entire hardback book with all its games and detailed advice for little more than the price of a single wargames mag. I have just signed off the proofs and completed the index, and the book should be published in January 2012. **B**

MOST WANTED

Storm Over Dien Bien Phu

MULTIMAN PUBLISHING

by Nick Richardson (designer)

STORM OVER DIEN BIEN PHU DIDN'T START OUT AS A "STORM OVER..." GAME. I had originally started doing some preliminary research on the battle (collecting maps, working on an order of battle, and coming up with a rough time frame of the key events during the siege) with the thoughts of possibly making a game using the Grand Tactical System, originally designed by Adam Starkweather and first seen in *The Devil's Cauldron*.

However, *Storm over Stalingrad* came along, and I got to work with Adam doing a little bit of development work on the game, which meant working on creating new cards and getting the rules in as strong a shape as possible. We both really liked the system, and thought it would be well suited to other battles. We proposed a few games to the folks at Multi-Man publishing, and several proposals were accepted. A few of them are available for pre-order right now, including Adam's *What Price Glory* co-designed with Tetsuya Nakamura which takes the system in a different direction from what I'll be describing.

After Brian Youse and Perry Cocke accepted *Storm over Dien Bien Phu* as a possible game to place on pre-order, they asked to see a playtest copy of the game so they could try it out, and Brian could start doing some development work on the game. The initial game was rough in spots, but after being played a few times, most of the major problems were worked out, and then it just became a process of refining small pieces of the game to make it as fun as possible, while keeping the historical feel for the battle.

The game covers the Battle of Dien Bien Phu, covering the battle from March 13th until the first week of May 1954. Each turn is one week long, and the units for the most part are companies (the few French tanks are platoons). The map covers all the

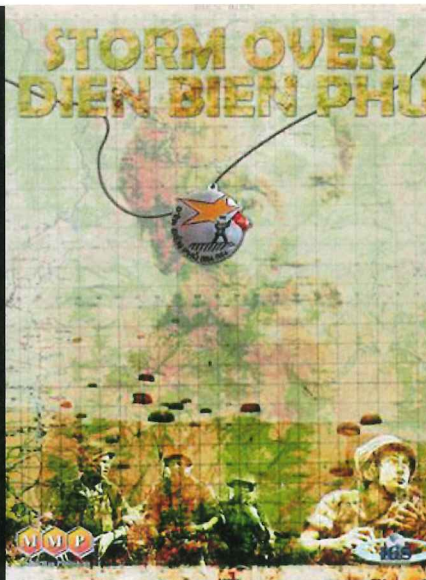
named strongpoints except Isabelle, though there is a card that may bring a small relief force in from Isabelle.

Let's first look at the key changes to the game mechanics in *Storm over Dien Bien Phu* compared to *Storm over Stalingrad*. The basic mechanics are the same, alternating impulses, stacks of units in the same area can move or fire into adjacent areas, there are cards that add chrome to the game, and at the end of the turn reinforcements arrive and "spent" units are flipped to their "fresh" side. Where it gets interesting are the modifications to the game (and the reasons they were added).

Starting first with the Viet Minh player, there are several key changes from *Storm over Stalingrad*. The one that is immediately obvious is that Viet Minh units are not allowed to move into a French-controlled area containing any French units. Instead, for an impulse they can perform an Assault action. The Assault action is basically a fire attack into an adjacent French-controlled area, and if all the French units are forced to leave the area or eliminated, the assaulting Viet Minh units are moved into the area, become spent, and one unit is eliminated (assault were a bloody affair for the Viet Minh). On the first turn, there are no restrictions as to how assaults are launched, but for all the other turns, assaults can only be launched from areas with trenches.

And this brings up the second new impulse type for the Viet Minh player, and that's the Sap action. Each card in the Viet Minh deck has a number printed on it. This is the Sap number. As an impulse, the Viet Minh player can discard a card (or cards) and increase the Trench Level by the value of the card(s). Once the Trench Level is raised to 3 for an area, fresh units in the area can perform an assault as an impulse. The effect of this is to force the Viet Minh player to pause his assaults as he builds the trench level up (and the French player can use some of his cards to try and reduce the Trench Level), such the historical pace of the Viet Minh attack can be matched. The required Trench Level of 3 was found to give this desired result, thought it took quite a bit of playtesting to discover this value.

Historically, the tempo of battle was controlled by the attacking Viet Minh forces, and in order add this to the game, we made a modification to how each turn ends. In *Storm over Stalingrad*, when both sides pass on consecutive impulses, the turn comes to an end. In *Storm over Dien Bien Phu*, the turn ends if the Viet Minh player passes, but the French player can extend the turn by immediately discarding a single card. This allows the Viet Minh player to dictate when fighting will



take place, and it also forces the French player to be very careful with how he controls his resources, and typically the he will want to hold at least one card to prevent the Viet Minh player from ending the turn at a time that would be disastrous for the French.

The final changes to the game that have an impact on the Viet Minh player, and these are closely tied to how the turn ends, are reinforcement placement and replacements. Reinforcement placement takes places one unit at a time, with the Viet Minh player placing his units first. This is important as if there is a gap in the French line, Viet Minh units can be placed into empty French-controlled areas that are adjacent to Viet Minh controlled areas. This means that a string of empty French-controlled areas can suddenly fall to a group of Viet Minh reinforcements. Both players have to keep a very careful eye on the French lines, and if a gap develops, the Viet Minh player can be rewarded for passing early in a turn, forcing the turn to end, and grabbing areas during the reinforcement phase. This is why the French player should almost always hold a card, as it will allow him to keep a turn going for at least one more impulse and close the line. The other significant change for the Viet Minh is the inclusion of low-powered generic replacement units that are received most turns, ranging from 1 to 3 units, depending on a die roll. These units represent the replacement troops that came in to fill the ranks due to the massive casualties suffered during the assaults. The Viet Minh player has to be very careful where he places these... he needs enough force

to launch assaults successfully, but also enough force to hold against French counterattacks, and these locations may be on opposite sides of the map.

For the French player, the modification to the Storm over Stalingrad rules are minimal compared to the Viet Minh rule changes. The big change is the inclusion of a supply rule. As the airfield at Dien Bien Phu was overrun, the French supply situation became more tenuous. In the game, we model this by having a supply roll made at the end of each turn, modified by how much pressure the runway is under. The result will either be 0, 1, or 2 (or 3 with card play). This is the number of areas, selected by the Viet Minh player, where the French units do not flip from spent to fresh. This means the French units in the area will not be able to attack the next turn. One of the reasons we added this is that initial playtesting showed that players could abandon the runway early on the game, and there was no significant consequence for doing so. We wanted to add something into the game that would make the French player want to hold the airfield for as long as possible, and the supply rule (originally suggested by J.R. Tracy) was a great solution to the problem.

Probably the biggest concern I have right now for the game will be its initial reception, and possible concerns about the game balance. The game is clearly challenging for both sides. The French player has to control and ever shrinking ring of areas, time his counterattacks carefully, and ensure his resources are managed well. The Viet Minh player has to plan and time his attacks in order to take as many areas as quickly as possible, without leaving himself open for French attacks. Both players feel stressed and like they cannot possibly win. However, it takes more experience to play the Viet Minh side well, and we've seen this many times in playtesting. The first time someone plays the game as the Viet Minh player, they may take 1 or 2 or the victory areas, the second time 4 or 5, and by the third playing he'll be taking 6 or 7 areas (7 is the standard number required for Viet Minh victory). The fear is the game will be played once, declared broken, and shelved, never to be played again. This would be a great shame, and we are working on adding a section to the rules to give pointers for strong Viet Minh play.

Finally, as I closing comment, I want to give a big thank you to the playtesters. Without their help, this game would be nowhere near as strong as it is now. Without strong playtesting, we don't get strong games. The 20+ playtesters who've worked on this game have really made it something I'm very proud of. **B**

Honneur et Patrie

LOCKNLOADGAMES

by David Julien (designer)

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED BY THE FACE-OFF BETWEEN NATO AND THE WARSAW PACT. As a child, I asked my utterly baffled schoolteacher to explain to me the so-called "Euromissiles" crisis. As a teenager I used to read all books and magazines I could find on military forces deployed in Europe, with, sometimes, the fear of a surprise Soviet attack on a Friday evening, in the Spring*.

As the upcoming release *Heroes of the Gap* (HoG) was announced, I was thrilled, of course. I immediately thought of possible expansions, including one on the French army ... chauvinisme oblige. From 1949 to 1992 the Forces Françaises en Allemagne (French Forces in Germany) numbered up to 80,000 men. Even though France was not part of the integrated NATO military command, it remained a full member of the Alliance. Even with the victory of the Socialists in the 1981 presidential elections, the defense treaties, notably between France and Germany, were never called into question. To the contrary: during the European missile crisis, President Mitterrand famously quipped in front of the German Parliament that "Pacifists were in the West, and missiles in the East." So I quietly (surreptitiously) got to work on my own. As I had gathered a lot of documentation on the French army to design counters for my own consumption, the design of the counters (drawings and stats) as well as the order of battle was fairly quick. I then submitted the project to Mark H. Walker just before the release of *HoG*. He was immediately enthusiastic about the project. The title would be *Honneur et Patrie* (H&P) (*Honor & Fatherland*), which are the words embroidered on the French army's regimental flags**. At that point, I was joined by Nicolas Michon who helped me a lot with the finalization of the counters' stats, and

volunteered to design about half the scenarios. We just had to turn this into a product that would be both publishable, and playable.

We settled on the following format: 121 counters, to wit: 76 infantry-size counters, 3 weapons teams and 42 vehicles. For those of you who wonder, this figure was imposed, partly, by the number of spaces available on the countersheets. Like all wargame designers we have had to bow to the Diktat of the countersheet. But rest easy, what needs to be there, is there. These counters will see action in 12 scenarios, the French Army's opponents being, of course, the Soviet counters from *HoG*. The counters cover most of the hardware available in 1985, as well as a good sample of troops of varying types and quality. With *H&P* one can easily play an infantry company (elite, regular or conscripts) with the requisite support weapons. For hardware, the core is here: AMX-30B and B2 MBTs, light, wheeled AFVs like the AMX-10RC or ERC-90, AMX-10P IFVs or VAB APCs, attack and transport choppers, as well as some lesser known vehicles. In 1985 the French Army is well equipped with support weapons. It has started receiving ammo capable of destroying the latest generation of Pact MBTs. On the other hand, its vehicles are thinly armored – the AMX30 is likely NATO's least protected tank – and it has to rely on speed and accuracy to defeat its adversary. That makes it an interesting army to play, as one cannot rely on Behemoths like the Leo II, Challenger or M1 to do the heavy lifting, and creative, light horse-style tactics are in order. Other weaknesses show, for instance, in the air defense department, where no MANPADs are available at the time (the Mistral was several years away). Finally, unlike the US or British armies, it is, at the time, an army that relies heavily on conscripts, who only serve for 12 months.

The toughest question was that of the maps. Indeed, *HoG*, unlike other LnL games, does not come with a set of geomorphic maps, but with a (gorgeous) map of Eisenbach, focal point of the World at War universe. We couldn't use it again for *H&P*, as the expansion's interest would have been very limited – we could not have developed original scenarios. We also just couldn't include a new large map, or a new set of geomorphic ones,



MOST WANTED

as the price of the expansion would have been as high as that of the basic game – not good for an expansion. So we had a choice between those included in *Band of Heroes* and those included in *Heroes of the Blitzkrieg* (HoB). We chose the HoB ones. Apart from being gorgeous, only they offer sufficiently varied terrain, appropriate for both Western Germany and Eastern France (as opposed to the Norman bocage), to play all 12 scenarios. Therefore, this expansion requires two basic games: *HoG* and *HoB*. The series' fans will already own them. This could be a significant expense for those who did not own *HoB*. However, quite apart from *HoB* being one of the greatest games ever published on the 1940 campaign***, with very clever scenarios, the other expansions being planned for *HoG* (the British Army of the Rhine will likely be next, and the Bundeswehr may follow) will, in all likelihood, use the same maps, so this will be a good investment.

Maps and counters are one thing, but they are useless without scenarios to make them come alive. When all is said and done, they are what makes a great tactical game. In *H&P*, they are arranged around three major themes. First, fighting in West Germany, featuring the French mechanized corps. Then, the actions of the Force d'Action Rapide, which gathered most of the French army's elite units (Legion, French troupes de marines, paratroopers, alpine troops, as well as a full airmobile division). Last, but not least, comes the desperate fighting on French soil. Major assaults, coups de main, delaying actions, recon in depth.... All have been inspired by French Army drills from the 80's, or by both



sides' tactics and doctrine. To get a true tactical experience, French army men were involved in the creative process: Yvan Descotes, a former NCO in French recon Marine unit and a French Foreign Legion major.

For instance, to design a small scenario between a couple of French platoons and a Soviet armored recon column, I drew inspiration from the « Interdict » chapter in the French Armée de Terre's tactical manuals. In such missions, the goal is to prevent the enemy to access a particular area for a given time. It is part of the broader missions that can be given to an infantry company. In this scenario, one French platoon must defend a crossroads. The Soviets – an armored recon unit – are tasked with taking, and securing, said crossroads. To succeed, they need not only to take it, but also clear the area around it – just as would be expected of them in real life.

The French player – just like a real platoon leader – must deploy his troops as best he can to defend his positions, being careful about his fields of fire and LOS, modify the terrain to some extent (he can dig two foxholes) – and, finally, plan for a possible fallback to a secondary line of defense. Once the game has begun, he will need to trigger AT, AP and artillery fire at the right time – as well as make good use of his reinforcements.

To have any chance of winning, the Soviet player will also need to heed basic tactical

an objective. He will need to spot his adversary, or force him or her to reveal himself or herself (in *Lock 'n Load*, units in cover can only be targeted if they move, fire, or are spotted). Above all, he or she will need to manage his assets very carefully to secure his progression and outflank his adversary. During a test game, I badly used a T-72 which was supposed to protect my troops, and the sanction was immediate: by the end of the second turn it was plain I had lost the game. As you can see, this expansion, like other *LnL* modules, puts you in the shoes of a platoon leader or company commander. Your wise use of cover and your tactical mastery will allow you to win games – and very rarely will poor dice lead to defeat. And even if they do (rotten luck happens in real life, too), games are fairly short – for a tactical game – and you'll get a second chance very quickly.

In addition to twelve scenarios that detail the French forces, there are a handful of counters, and two scenarios, covering a Belgian town's struggle against the invading Soviets. Players will get to command not only typical Belgian fare, such as Leopards and a JPzK C90, but also some crazy tanks "liberated" from a local museum.

As of this writing, it looks like *Honneur & Patrie* has received enough preorders to be published. We wish to sincerely thank all of those who have made the effort of placing an order. Indeed, this was not the most expected expansion – many would have imagined that the first expansion would have covered the Bundeswehr or the British Army Of the Rhine. But don't worry, it looks like they're being planned. But as you may have understood, *H&P* is the labor of love of a group of passionate players that have anticipated the release of the main game to be able to play, and share their interest in the French Army. **B**



* At the time, many thought that a surprise Soviet attack, if it were to take place, would start on a Friday evening, after the conscripts had left on a Friday night. Fortunately, as a practical matter, such a surprise attack would have been almost impossible. The preparation would have been detected, and they would have been heralded by an increase of the tensions between East and West. The Warsaw Pact, even under cover of major "drills", would not have been able to hide its intentions. Indeed, for instance, the air corridors to Berlin allowed NATO to openly monitor what was going on in East Germany (25 000 flights during the Cold War.)

**Except on those of the Légion Etrangère (Foreign Legion), where the words are "Honneur et Fidélité".

*** That's pretty true! (note of the editor)



Storm Over Kunlun Pass is a two player game simulating the Battle of Kunlun Pass from December 18 to 30, 1939. One player plays the Japanese army and the other plays the Chinese KMT troops. The game is 13 turns long with each turn equal to one day.

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STORM OVER KUNLUN PASS

A game by Terence Co

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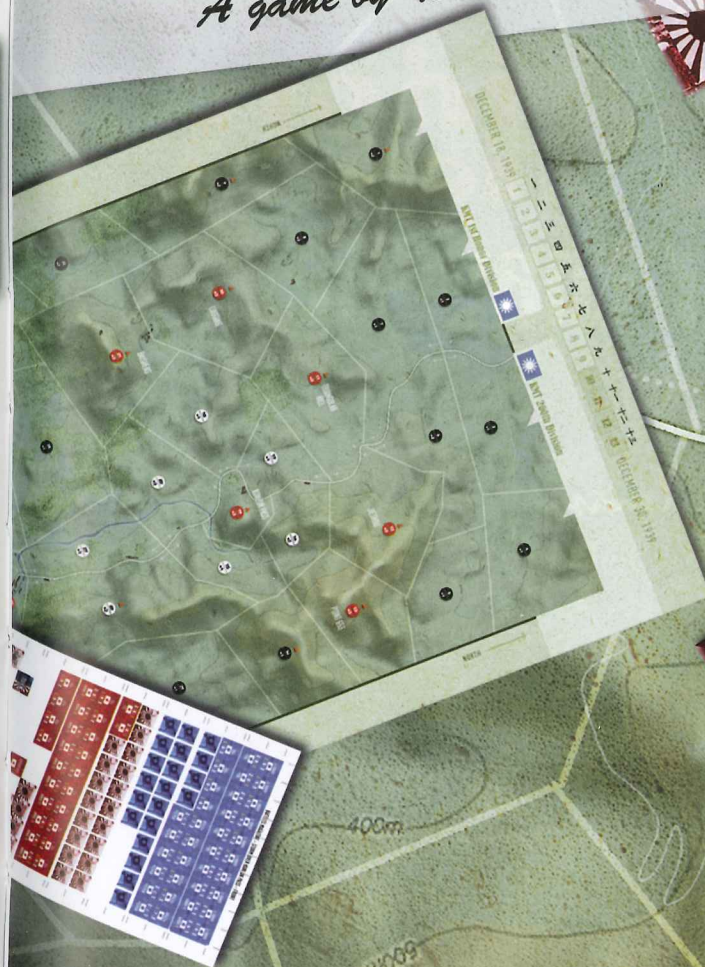
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«A must-play!» Chiang Kai-shek (general) «Absolutely charming!» Mao Zedong (hairstylist)

ZIPLOCK GAME: 140 die cut counters, 17x22 Map, 8 pages Rules Booklet

IN the literature of World War II, the war between Japan and China is the least studied, the great unknown war that is hardly given a paragraph in the history books. What happened there beyond the initial campaigns of 1937-38 and the rape of Nanking is mostly uncharted territory. From 1941 onwards, Western historians naturally focus on the Pacific theatre.

Should China be mentioned, it is in relation to the British or the Americans, or what Westerners did there. Consider the level of detail we get on this sideshow of Burma compared to Ichigo, the greatest campaign ever conducted by the Japanese Army. Consider the controversies around the Stilwell - Chiang relationship compared to any investigation of Chiang - Mao diplomacy. Consider the multiples of books about the handful of Flying Tigers compared to the vacuum on field armies of millions of men. Even the Manchurian operations opposing Japan and the USSR, both in 1938-39 and in 1945, are a wealth of documents compared to the Chinese theatre. Anything that relates to a third party has been decently investigated, yet not the Japan-China war proper.

The war between Japan and China is a controversial topic among its actors. The Chinese Army did not beat the Japanese Imperial Army and did not liberate its occupied territory. Although allied with the winners, Chinese contribution to final victory was not, to put it mildly, major

compared to the contributions of Russia, America, Britain, Canada or Australia. A Chinese history of the war could not be glorious. Moreover, the bulk of the conventional fighting involved Chiang's Nationalist troops, expelled from China in 1948. Taiwanese historians may not have the best access to continental sources, while Communist Chinese may not want to praise the fighting of the Nationalists too loudly. Japanese historians are well aware of the crimes committed by the IJA in China, and hence do not focus on their seldomly defeated military operations. The war also had its sequel - the 1945-48 civil war - and this dispersed documents and witnesses, so sources are scarce and incomplete. Military history of the Japan-China war still awaits an objective and fact-based review of the military operations, which would probably uncover countless of "forgotten battles", just like David M. Glantz found on the Eastern Front.

And yet, so many questions, so many topics to explore! What was the actual performance of the Japanese and of both Chinese armies? What was Japan's actual commitment to China and its impact on the Pacific war (latest research suggests China did not divert any assets from the Pacific; quite the opposite happened: the Pacific war distracted assets from China)? What economic importance had China within Japan's war effort? Were the operations actually led by Tokyo or triggered by local generals? How could Japan put together an operation involving

Growling Tigers

The Battle for Changde 1943

by Daniel Feldmann

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half a million troops as late as 1944 and what did it actually achieve? What impact did American lend lease and bombers have? From how much "lack of will to attack" did Chiang suffer and what could he have really done differently? What lessons can be drawn from the guerilla war and how relevant could have they been for the wars of de-colonization in the 1950s and the 60s? How much has this war - its crimes as well as its combat - shaped the collective memory of Taiwan, China and Japan?

Before I focus on the battle, let me underline that, while the available documentation on the various campaigns of the war is thin, it borders on a total void for the 1943 Changde campaign. In the specialized English literature, the campaign, if mentioned at all, is hardly given a paragraph. Only in one book - 1971's *History of the Sino-Japanese War* - can one find a map, an order of battle, and a general overview of the battle; but this Taiwanese source, written in broken English, has such a Chinese bias that any reported facts need be taken with a grain of salt. I am not aware of Chinese books focusing on this campaign (but let me admit that my Chinese language skills could be improved), but I did spot a Japanese source, published in 1983 and long out-of-print. On the web, besides the contradicting stances in Chinese and Japanese Wikipedia articles, a deep search would give almost no additional data. The 2010 movie *Death and Glory in Changde* may trigger some serious historical work, however.

THE WAR OF ATTRITION IN CENTRAL CHINA

In 1943, the Sino-Japanese War had been a war of attrition for a few years. The frontline had not significantly changed since 1939. In spite of all the territory ceded to Japan and all their military losses, the Chinese government had showed no inclination for surrender. The Japanese had hunted the Nationalist government in Nanking, then in Wuhan, but it eventually relocated to distant Chungking. In 1940, Japan tried a major bombing campaign against Chungking, only to realize it had had no impact on the Chinese will to fight. So Japan tried another way. It put a puppet government in Nanking in 1940 to isolate Chiang Kai-shek politically and decided that "peace and order" should be its primary goal in China. Destruction of the Nationalist would come from "a long siege" and the army would avoid unnecessary expansion of the frontline, since it lacked means to control the occupied territory against guerrillas.

In 1943, the closest frontline was 600 km and one mountain chain away from Chungking. The general staff of the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) in China had studied what it would take to get to Chungking and concluded it did not have enough strength to get there: plans were shelved at the end of 1942. Moreover, the IJA had faced stiff Chinese resistance during its limited operations in central China since 1939. The Chinese even put together a large-scale counter-offensive in December 1939 that showed how vulnerable the widely dispersed Japanese could be.

It was also in 1943 that Japanese land assets first start being diverted from China to the Pacific. Most of Japan's air force had focused on the Pacific as soon as the war against the USA had broken out. Given the weakness of Chinese Air Force, that did not create serious military issues in China, at least until the first American long-range bombers began operating from the country in late 1943. By the time the Changde operations kicked off, the American-supported air forces were not a major nuisance yet, and Japan had yet to realize what a threat they could eventually become. However, following Guadalcanal, Japan started reinforcing its Pacific islands with units from the Asian continent. Some experienced divisions had been relocated from China to such distant place as the Marianas. Priorities had changed: the Japanese army lost its reserve, and so its ability to conduct strategic penetrations into Chinese-held territory.



The most powerful component of the Japanese Army in China, and the only operationally effective force, was the 11th Army, located in the central part of the country. Centered on Wuhan, it held a front facing south and west along the Yangtze River. The 11th Army has been relatively active since 1939. It had extended its grip along the Yangtze up to Yichang, the furthest point reachable by large ships, at the gates of the mountains leading to Chungking. It had also conducted a series of offensive operations, the most famous being the campaigns against Changsha. Since permanent occupation of conquered territory was not possible because of insufficient manpower and overextended supply lines, the primary aim of the 11th Army was to forestall any enemy counteroffensives and to keep up army morale. The 11th Army's typical pattern was an advance to capture a limited objective, followed by a retreat to its starting positions. Even if it captured important points (such as Changsha), the 11th Army had to abandon them and return to its lines. The Chinese were quick to adapt, first by refusing fight in open terrain and retreating to fortified positions, and then by re-occupying territory as soon as the Japanese left. The Changde campaign is a variation on this theme.

THE CHANGDE CAMPAIGN: CONTEXT AND OPERATING PLANS

Changde itself is located west of the large Dongting lake in Hunnan province. The city was approximately 40km south-west of the frontline, where the Japanese had secured a 10km-deep foothold on the south bank of the Yangtze River. Changde belonged to the Chinese 6th war zone, which also included Changsha, 170 km in the south-east, on the other side of Dongting Lake. Although Chungking was 400km east of Changde, no valley or road linked the cities. The terrain is rather flat but divided by sub rivers of the Yangtze (running north-south) and by numerous small lakes. Two large rivers that feed Lake Dongting ran west-east: the Li, north of Changde, that formed the main path of attack, and the Yuan through Changde and into the lake.

By late 1941, Changde was the site of an intense bacteriological attack. It is not clear why Japan picked this location to test its infamous weapon, but it certainly did not intend to follow-up with a land invasion. Airplanes dropped material infected with plague on the city, causing sizeable epidemics in March 1942. Chinese historians have conducted deep investigations into the matter, finding more than 7,600 confirmed deaths linked to the bacteriological attack. The epidemic did not seem to have significant impact on military operations, however.

The Japanese 11th Army, led by General Yokoyama, launched two campaigns west of the Yangtze in 1943. A first operation involved six divisions in May 1943, between the Yangtze and Li rivers. The 11th Army had previously attacked south (towards Changsha), and this move west surprised the Chinese. The operation seemed to be an attempt to test Chinese strength in the area and to disrupt any offensive preparations, rather than to secure any long-term objective. The fighting lasted a few weeks after which the Japanese returned to their starting positions. During the Changde campaign, the IJA would fight along the Li River again, conquering positions it had occupied and evacuated in May.

General Yokoyama decided to mount another operation in the area in November 1943. This time, the objective was to destroy Chinese capabilities by seizing Changde. The plan was not to hold the city indefinitely, and some sources say the Japanese had orders to leave the place after three days. Other sources mention another objective: to distract Chinese units from Burma. Although this could have been an argument to convince Tokyo, operational



reality (time needed to move units from southern to central China and the actual threat of the 11th Army) made it irrelevant.

The Japanese force included more than eight divisions involved in a complex plan. From starting positions on the right bank of the Yangtze, the bulk of the divisions would advance west along the northern bank of the Li River, just as they had done in May, securing the bridges, from east to west, in Jinshi, Lixian, Shimen and Cili. In the north, a limited advance from the 39th Division would secure the main thrust's right flank. On the left, the 40th Division would advance at a slower pace to the south-west, directly towards Changde. The overall idea was to deceive the enemy into thinking the main move to the west was targeted at Chungking. The second phase of the operation was to have the main force make a 90° turn to converge on Changde. The city would then be assaulted by three columns, coming from the north-east, the north, and the north-west. Except to secure the city itself, there was no plan to cross the Yuan River and move further south than Changde.

Attacking to the west along the Li River had one advantage: putting the weight of the assault at the junction of two Chinese war zones. However, the Japanese plan had two obvious shortcomings: the most advanced division had to run 70 km west up to Cili, then another 40 km to get back to Changde, stretching its supply lines. Also, the Chinese could create choke points at each crossing on the Li River to delay or frustrate operations south to Changde.

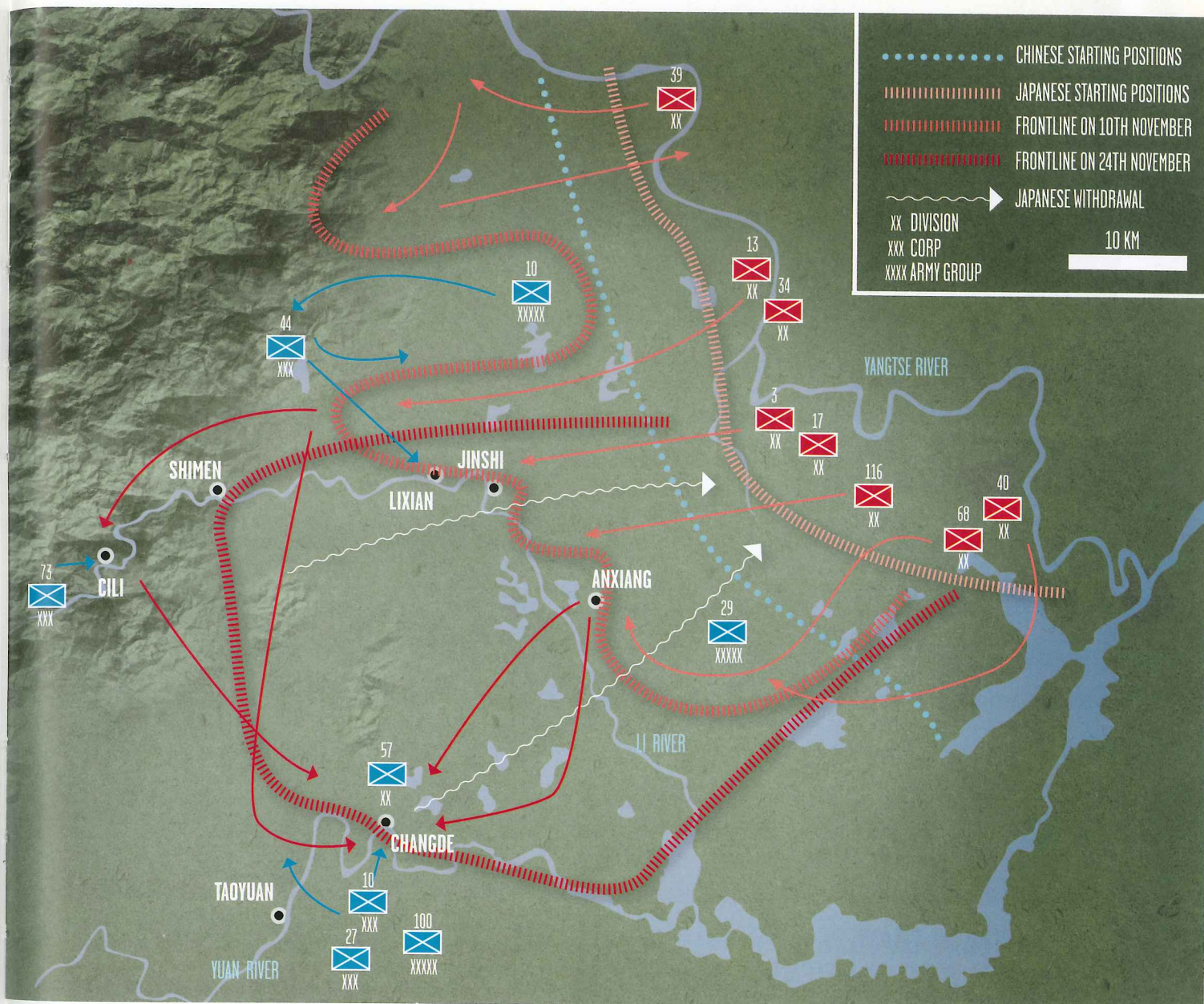
The Chinese were probably aware of a coming attack by having observed the Japanese reinforce their bridgeheads on the right bank of the Yangtze. Their defense had two main lines: first a "river defense force" holding a continuous line a few kilometres west of the Yangtze; then two army groups

(10th and 29th) for a deeper defense. The Changde area itself was under the responsibility of another army group, the 27th, sometimes named after its general, Wang Yao-wu. It included the 57th Division, specifically in charge of the defense of the city. As we will see, the Chinese reacted to the attack with a defensive plan seemingly like Stalingrad: luring the attacker into an urban battle in order to encircle it.

Although the campaign took place deep inside China, navy services had some role to play. Some Japanese supplies were to be shipped from ports on the Yangtze River across Lake Dongting, and eventually up the Yuan River to Changde. Meanwhile, a Chinese river force tried to mine the Japanese ports. It is not clear how many ships and barges were involved in the campaign, but US air forces routinely strafed these exposed targets on their way to or from Changde.

THE ADVANCE TO CHANGDE (NOVEMBER 2ND TO 20TH)

The Japanese moved to their jump-off positions at end of October and attacked on the night of November 2nd. After crossing the river defense line, the main Japanese force (3rd, 13th, and 34th Divisions, as well as the 17th Mixed Brigade) advanced in parallel columns to the west, a few kilometres north of the Li River. They progressed 30 km in five days until they were stopped by serious resistance from the Chinese 79th Corps around Nanchu- isheh and Wangchiashang on November 8th. The 116th and 68th Divisions, which were to seize the bridges across the river, could not advance quickly



enough. On November 10th, they had secured the first bridge (in Jinshi), but were still 20 km east of the main force.

Meanwhile, the right and left columns made little progress. In the north, a limited attack by the 39th Division progressed 20 km before moving back to its starting positions around November 10th. They had accomplished their mission: fixing Chinese units to protect the main force's right flank. Further south, the 40th Division, which was taking the shortest way to Changde, had a harder time against the Chinese 29th Army Group, and only got to Anxiang (15 km into Chinese territory) on November 10th. Part of the Japanese force actually crossed the lake on barges to speed up the attack.

At that point, the Japanese front showed a long salient that the Chinese considered cutting. The Chinese 73rd and 44th Corps, both from the 10th Army Group, attacked facing southeast with the vague hope of linking with the 29th Army Group, but the Japanese reacted with enough flexibility to check them.

But the Japanese had to divide their main force into three groups. Some troops moved backwards to help the 116th and 68th Divisions at their next

crossing point (Lixian); others moved immediately south of Wangchiashang to seize the Shimen bridge; and the last division (the 13th) pushed further west to keep the Chinese at bay. Since the Chinese 10th Army Group had seemingly exhausted its energy, that was a reasonable risk.

It took almost a week to secure the crossings (finally accomplished on November 15th). The Chinese had a tendency to be routed and dispersed when pursued over flat terrain, but was at its best when entrenched in fortified positions, for example around a bridge or a city. Moreover, this was the time US planes engaged in harassing missions against the Japanese, targeting ground units and river shipping. The Japanese, who had insufficient air support, had feared enemy air would be a severe issue, but it did not become decisive. These delaying actions gave time for the Chinese staff to prepare for a trap. Having guessed that the Japanese may target Changde, they started pouring reinforcements into the city and called for support from the 9th war area. Fresh troops moved from the Changsha area along the southern shore of the lake to defend the Yuan River.



The trenches of Deshan.
Images from *Death & Glory*



THE BATTLE OF CHANGDE (NOVEMBER 20TH TO DECEMBER 9TH)

The Battle of Changde was actually two battles: the conquest of the city (November 20th – December 3rd) and the Chinese attempt to annihilate the Japanese who were locked up in the area (December 3rd–December 9th).

The first Japanese columns reached Changde on November 20th or 21st and an advanced party of paratroopers were briefly surrounded in TaoYuan, a few kilometres upstream from Changde. The Japanese assaulted the city but got bogged down in house-to-house fighting by the Chinese 57th Division. After securing the area between Changde and Lake Dongting to allow for supply to get through by motorboats sailing up the Yuan River, the other Japanese columns joined the fight. By November 24th, three Japanese divisions were fighting in the city. The Chinese reinforced their besieged troops with their 10th Corps, clearing the south bank of those Japanese that had crossed the Yuan. The Japanese entered Changde fortress on November 28th. On the next day, they published a statement warning they would systematically burn the city (which proved difficult). The city was literally on fire, yet the 8,000 men of the 57th Division, supplied by air drops from American A-29s, showed fanatic fighting spirit. Just like the Russians did at Stalingrad, the Chinese tried to

cut off the attacking forces by surrounding the city. One source mentions that four Chinese corps did encircle the city by November 27th, yet this did not seem to decrease the fighting effectiveness of the Japanese or to trigger any rescue operation. It could be that the bulk of Japanese supplies came by the river – unhampered by strafing and river mines.

What exactly happened during the last days of the Changde siege is unclear. Chinese sources mention that the Japanese made liberal use of poison gas to reduce Chinese strong points. This would be realistic as Japanese frontline units routinely included gas specialists, and it demonstrates how tough the fight became. Japanese sources report that after the fortress had been invested on November 28th, an exit route was left open, through which the most senior Chinese officers escaped. The Chinese fail to confirm the anecdote. Similarly, it looks like no reinforcements were sent across the river to the defenders (contrary to Stalingrad). What is certain is that the 57th Division defended until it was almost completely annihilated. When the last defenders eventually surrendered, they controlled an area no wider than 300 metres, and numbered about 500 survivors. Casualties amounted to 95% of officers and 90% of heavy weapons – again resembling Stalingrad.

Yet the battle was not over. Chinese forces mopped up around the city and attacked the Japanese. US aircraft could now bomb the city without hitting friendly units, and did so liberally. They repelled a weak interception attempt

THE BATTLE FOR CHANGDE

● ●
POSITIONS ON 18TH NOVEMBER

● ●
POSITIONS ON 25TH NOVEMBER

● ●
POSITIONS FROM 28TH NOVEMBER TO 1ST DECEMBER





Banzai Charge at the East door of Changde.
Images from *Death & Glory*



by Japanese fighters and kept control of the air until the Japanese temporarily froze enemy activity by bombing airfields on December 15th. By December 9th, the Chinese had taken the city back from the Japanese. Whether the Japanese made a deliberate withdrawal (after all, their original plan was to keep control of the city for three days only) or were forced to do so because of enemy pressure has not been properly investigated. Similarly, what happened during the Japanese retreat and the casualties inflicted by the Chinese is not documented, but the fact the US air force was not at all called for support after December 9th suggests the Japanese did not have a hard time getting back to their lines, on foot or by sailing across the lake.

THE AFTERMATH

The total campaign involved about 100 000 Japanese troops (including an unknown number of Chinese men enrolled in four puppet divisions) facing 40 to 50 Chinese divisions (or 13 to 16 corps) that may have totalled some 200,000 troops. Casualty estimates are rather vague. Japanese records mention 2,977 dead and 1,274 wounded, of which a mere 148 dead and 72 wounded would be related to the siege of Changde itself. The number of prisoners in Chinese hands was not reported. Chinese losses are only estimates and range from 10 000 to 30 000 dead, to which one should add 15 000 prisoners. The 10:1 ratio between Chinese and Japanese losses would

be surprising in other theatres, but is common on the Chinese front.

So, who won? Both sides claimed victory, no one admitted defeat. The Japanese reached their target and destroyed the capabilities of the Chinese armies facing them by inflicting more than 25% casualties. Their own losses, although significant given lack of replacements, were not proportionally important, as the success of the same 11th Army in *Ichigo* proved only six months later. Yet the Chinese kept control of the battlefield and showed such stubborn fighting spirit they even put the Japanese Army in embarrassing situations. Obviously their case was easier to publicize than Japan's: press reports and official communiqués claimed they frustrated the Japanese offensive. Their best argument could have been the famous photograph showing a demoralized, kneeling Japanese prisoner guarded by two Chinese soldiers. The Japanese could argue that the whole operation was just a spoiling action, but, even if true, it would not be convincing.

The Changde campaign was the last "invade-destroy-return" campaign of the Sino-Japanese War. From 1944 on, strategic priorities changed: having lost control of the seas, Japan looked for a land link from Indochina to Manchuria; the threat of American bombers, which could reach Hong Kong, Taiwan, and maybe Japan, had to be eliminated; and securing a major victory somewhere (be it Burma, Leyte or China) could give Japan a chance to get a conditional peace. Japan engaged its reserves and launched. ●

Changde.



© China Film Group Corporation (CFG)

DEATH & GLORY

Death & Glory will probably not be the best war film you will have seen in your life. But it will undoubtedly be far from the worst, and is well worth the 90 minutes.

The action starts when the Japanese advance on Changde. The cities and villages around the objective fall one after the other. The Chinese fight to the last man in the trenches, giving us scenes of grisly hand to hand fighting right from the beginning of the film. The Japanese are confident, but for General Yokoyama the heavy fighting and his heavy losses should be cause for concern.

The film follows the entirety of the battle right to the final counterattack. A highlight of the movie is the epic seizure of one of the gates to the city by the Japanese, using suicide squads, banzai charges, and finally gas before succeeding. Urban combat is depicted very realistically and should meet the approval of any self-respecting ASL player.

The look of the film is quite good. The colors have a tinge of sepia and give the film the look of a news report from the front. The camera is usually at shoulder level, plunging us into the heart of the battle without any grand or panoramic views. Combat scenes are violent but not overly so, with more suggestion than depiction. Violence is everywhere in the film, but isn't glamorized and the war isn't romanticized.

The film focuses on five main characters. The general in charge of the city's defense. A tough-as-nails young company commander, archetypal warrior. His future wife, an artist who becomes a nurse. A young sniper who dreams of

joining the famous Growling Tigers (a dream that is fulfilled but quickly becomes a nightmare). And his sister, also a nurse, who represents the collateral victims of the fighting. There are many compelling secondary characters.

The film doesn't forget the Japanese, focusing on three officers: General Yokoyama (an anachronistic samurai attached to the Bushido way), his second in command (his complete opposite, pragmatic, ready for anything, embodying the realities of the modern war), and a young officer, the ideal of the Japanese ethos, a poet warrior and cherry blossom whose death symbolizes the end of old Japan. Overall, the actors are good.

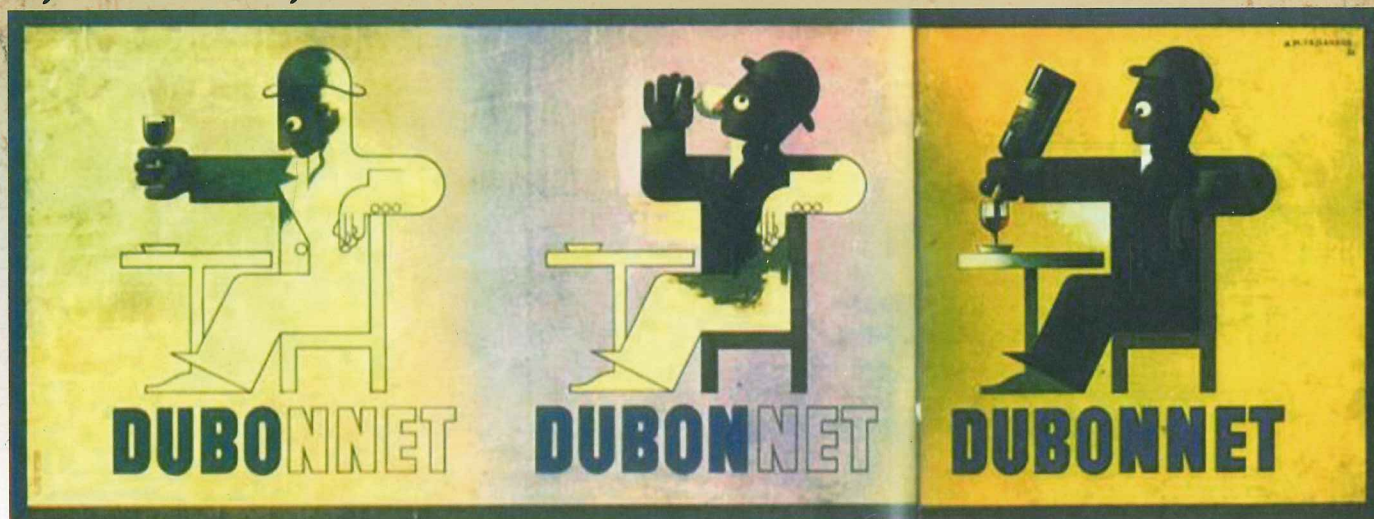
Certainly, the film is not free from caricature. But it manages not to fall (too much) into nationalist propaganda nor does it romanticize war. Soldiers on both sides are afraid before and during the fighting. From soldier to general, they fight because they have no choice, for their own survival and for the survival of their comrades. Even for the most courageous and fierce, there are better things in life than killing the enemy. From this perspective, this film is, thankfully, far removed from the film *Assembly*.

The film is generally true to the history. Except for a somewhat grotesque (short) scene depicting the final counterattack, *Death & Glory* gives us a good idea of what the battle was like.

A good little war film that achieves its goal without going overboard, on a conflict and in a setting far removed from the usual Western war film. Definitely worth seeing. *O.R.*

THE LAST PAGE

by Charles Vasey



RED SALES IN THE SUNSET How different our present Hobby is from the one many of use enjoyed in the Seventies; in general I believe for the better, though this may simply be my universally sunny disposition. One area where I really see differences is how we sell our games.

Back in the Good Old Days (when, you'll remember, I was a boy) we had these things called magazines run by hobby worthies (and me). If you had a new game to publicise you might take a quarter-page advertisement in a professional magazine, or drop a letter to a fanzine publisher like me. Usually, the details were quite scanty as many rules sets were related obviously to each other. I can still remember looking at a copy of a J. J. Petit game on the Franco-Prussian War where despite it being in French I could easily identify the underlying armature of SPI rules. Review copies were despatched and after a couple of months reviews would appear in the magazines which would harvest you sales. In the meantime you hoped to have been selling by the distribution network in things called shops (no kids, really, shops). Because there were not a lot of games in print, and (GDW aside) most were on similar topics it was fairly safe to order six of everything. Independent games were around but not that common, because you had to design, develop and publish them before anyone ever heard of them. I still remember some horrors that must still exist in garages and lofts of the erstwhile design team.

Fast forward now (as you cool kids would say) to the Tennies, few magazines and few shops are now in evidence, yet the number of games coming out has increased. We sell very differently today. Firstly, we sell in advance; we pre-sell you on the concept, on the artwork and on the game reports, and we do so interactively on the Internet. If you (or a noisy facsimile thereof) do not like *Storm of Stuff* with cards then it may well morph into *Storm of Stuff: The Meeples Are Coming*. Pre-selling is not always a presentation but may be a proposal for negotiation.

Secondly, we not only sell in advance because we can (the internet giving us a bully notice-board) but because the period from idea to box is quite long, far longer than development alone requires. Selling games is like selling Lamborghinis; you don't actually have any for sale, so you might as well whip up the excitement for next year's production.

Thirdly, we have developed a number of selling styles. In the old days (and still to some degree now) the designer would stand up and, shuffling nervously from foot-to-foot (eyes downward), mumble a few comments. "*Storm of Stuff is an area game on the War of Devonian Succession...*" The designer would then sit back, begging bowl in front of him, in total silence. But this is now but one method of many.

We have Crude Shilling in which the designer constantly repeats his pitch usually linked to progress in design or artwork. A few bits of artwork may be

swiped from the Net and included to give the appearance of a presentation. The problem is that like adverts on the TV you can skip them.

We have the Indirect Shilling Method practiced by popular Swedish designer Lee Brimmicombe-Wood in which he prepares discrete presentations on topics within the ambit of his game; one week an interesting personality, the next a piece of kit, then the next week an amusing piece of trivia. You read these because they are inherently interesting and absorb the game message as a passing infection. They sell by talking about history, whereas the Crude Shillers sell the game with only a light frosting of history. I suspect the fact that Lee and other practitioners know sufficient about their topic to prepare these presentations gives us confidence that they know their stuff. It goes to credibility.

We have the Enthusiastic Mob Method. In this case the game is kicked into play by the designer and then carried forward by a series of his chums making a series of forward runs. The Mob depends on numbers and enthusiasm to drive their game forward. To work well this method needs some thought on building the adjectives so they build to a crescendo rather than, for example, claiming the game cures blindness in the first feature. The weakness of this method (which lacks the content of the Indirect Shilling Method) is that after a while the chorus of bubbling excitement can get right up people's noses. Additionally, with one designer boosting another's game the whole process can look like the incestuous book reviewing scene where Author A recommends Author B's book knowing the favour will be returned. The advantage of the Enthusiastic Mob Method is simplicity and our excitement for the new. In board-gaming there is no shock of the new, we openly welcome new games like addicts welcome a shipment from the Golden Triangle.

Finally, we have the Look At Me Method in which the excitable designer keeps himself (and sometimes his game) in the public eye by projectile posting. The concept being (I suspect) that if we too see him as interesting we'll see his game as interesting; and, much as an annoying advert can lodge in the brain, this method can work. It involves little extra effort compared to the Indirect Shilling Method and is particularly useful because it deals with the topic closest to the designer's heart – himself; a picture of his cat, why not?

The most recent selling tool is the review video in which the reviewer shows you the game in action. This is extraordinarily powerful because I am certain the look of the game is of great importance to us. Whatever style the reviewer uses (from thoughtful to, in one case, rambling incoherence allied to a loud soundtrack) this is selling up close and personal. It builds on the strengths of the Net, but (I believe) is open to fixing as some reviewers are favoured by publishers – excellent, I'll have me some of that!

Designing nowadays is not just about history books and testing, it is about presenting, persuading and transmitting your enthusiasm. I am not persuaded that is anything but good (though lose the loud soundtrack, son). **R**

THE EVERLASTING GLORY

Chinese War of Resistance 1937-1945

COMING SOON!



The Everlasting Glory 英烈千秋 is the 1st independent box wargame made by Formosa Force Games in 2011.

It is a two-player operational wargame simulates the War of Resistance 1937-45. One player commands the Imperial Japanese Army 日本帝國陸軍 and the other commands the National Revolutionary Army 國民革命軍.

Leonard To who is the designer of War of the Suns 天無二日 tried to use another perspective to show the history of War of Resistance in this new game.



人不分男女老幼，
皆有守土抗戰之責任！

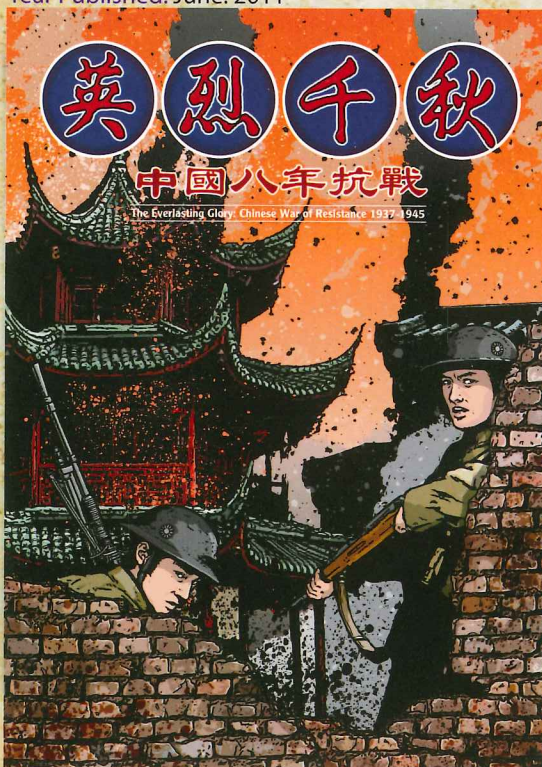
GAME COMPONENTS

540 5/8" counters, 60 cards, one 22*34" map
one rule book, one scenario book

Designer: Leonard To

Artist: Sawshun Yamaguchi

Year Published: June, 2011

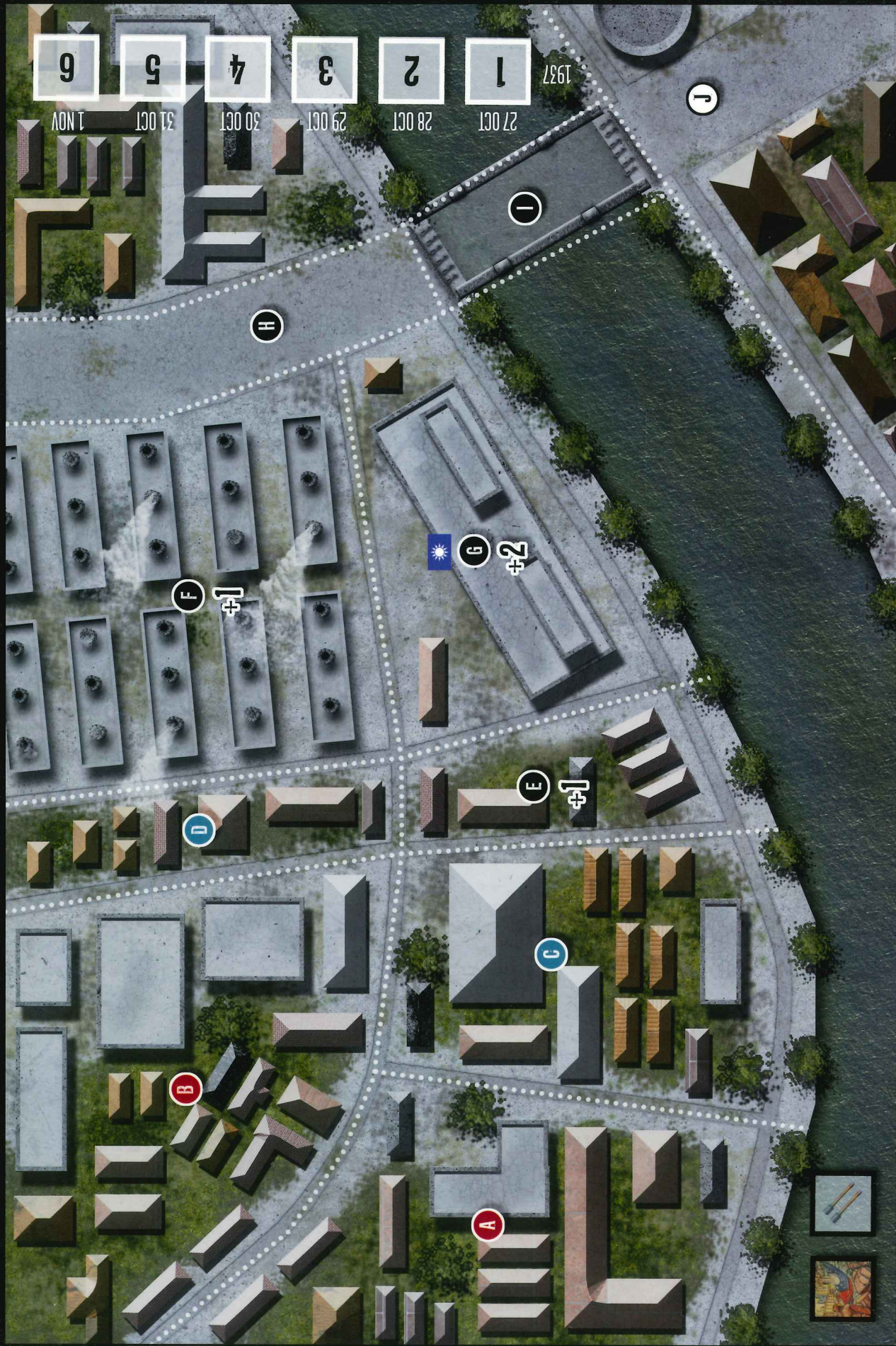


Go to

<http://www.formosa-force-games.blogspot.com>

or <http://commandmagazine.jp/index.html>

for more information.



800 HEROES DEFENSE OF SIHANG WAREHOUSE

A GAME BY WEI CHENG CHENG
BOARDGAME MAGAZINE
Graphics by DANIEL HERBERA
and OLIVER REYEN