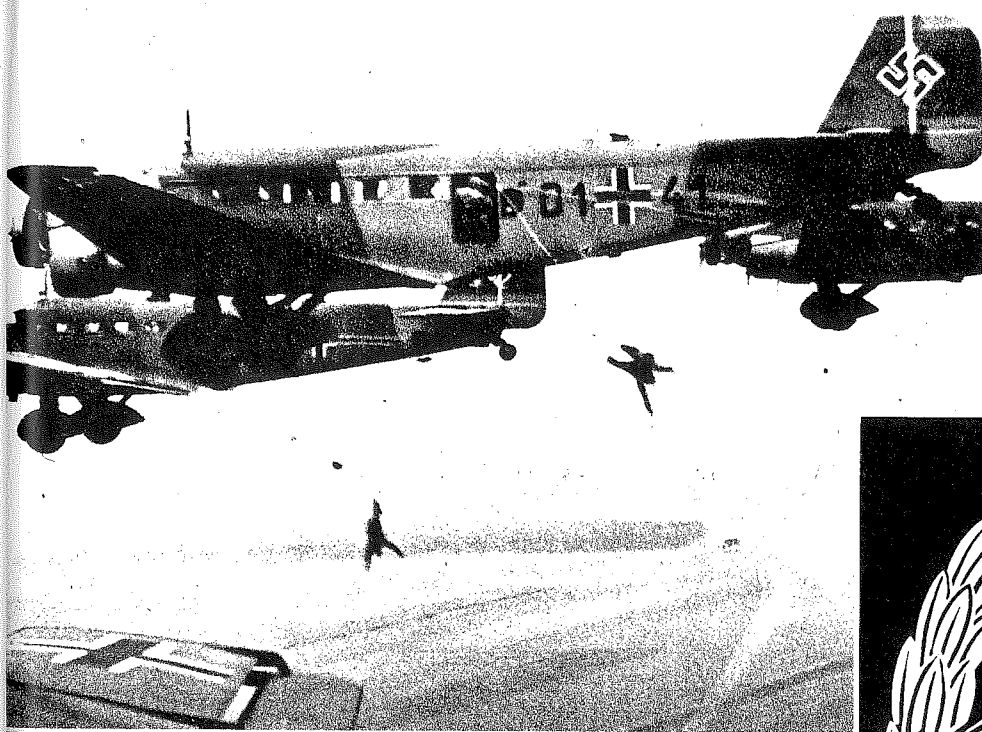


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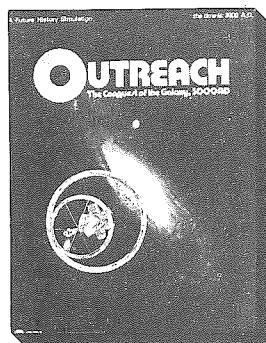
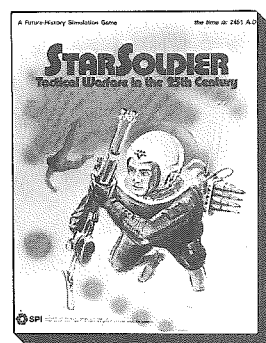
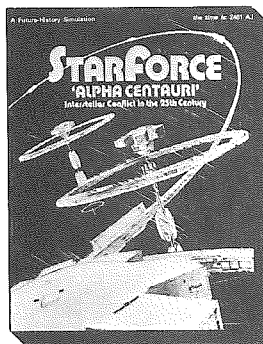
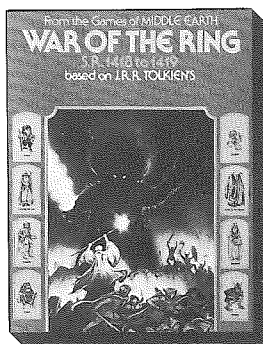
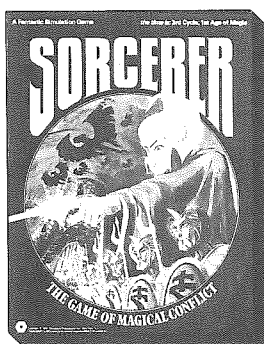
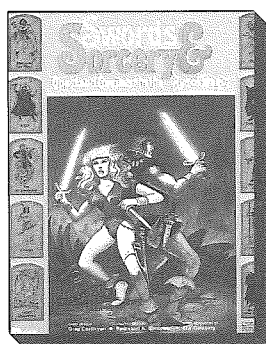
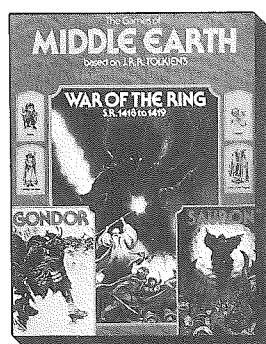


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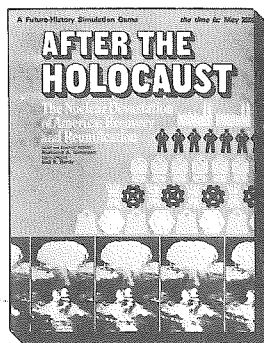
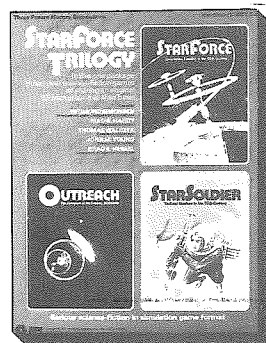
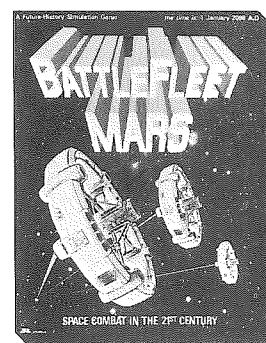
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"Harold," she whispered softly, "I never knew what a winner you were!"

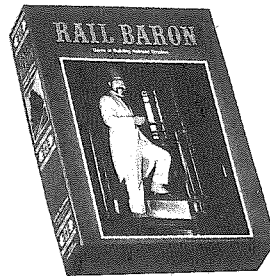
It was late at night and soft jazz music filled the air. Everyone had just left the smoke filled dining room where the potted palms were wilting slowly.

"Harold," she said, "you saved my party!" A tear of gratitude welled up in her left light blue eye.

"It was really the *Rail Baron* game," Harold answered modestly.

"Yes," she said, "It's really loads more fun than cards, much more social than charades. Actually, I've never had such a splendid time."

"Indeed," Harold agreed. "I love you, Gloria, but I know at a party you are two left feet when it comes to dancing. So, naturally, being considerate of you, I brought the *Rail Baron* game to your party.



"And you," she sighed, "won. And I," she said triumphantly, "came in second!"

"Well," Harold mused, as he lit a cigarette with his Eaton crested lighter, "when 3 to 6 people vie for the 28 snazzy Railroad Title Cards with the money they get for hauling freight, with an eye toward cornering the better lines while preventing their opponents from doing so in an avariciously clever manner to beat the others out . . . everyone really puts their all into the

challenge."

"Goodness, but you're right," she breathed heavily, "and the 12 Superchief and Express Cards and those marvelously exploitive Payoff Charts made *Rail Baron* the social event of the weekend . . . Why, Smedley got so excited, he almost blurted out a rather colorful word!"

Buoyed by the euphoria of the super evening, Harold, at last, made the promise Gloria had been waiting for all along, "Monday morning, first thing, I will revisit the Game Emporium in quest of more Avalon Hill games. Because—to play an Avalon Hill game is an exhilarating challenge; to give one a subtle compliment."

"Or, use the coupon below," answered Gloria, breathlessly . . .



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ROMMEL & TUNISIA

Last Chance for Glory

- Command Structure and Logistics
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From November of 1942 to May of 1943, Axis and Allied forces staged at once the first of three enormous struggles for Europe and the last campaign for the continent of Africa. All of the great characters of the World War II drama engaged in the campaign: Rommel, Patton, Eisenhower, Montgomery and Kesselring. The victories and defeats they made here were the lessons and premonitions they carried with them into Italy and finally to Normandy and the end of the Reich.

As a prelude to the fall of Axis dominated Europe, the Tunisia campaign is complete and instructive. Opening just after the Torch landings, the campaign revolves around control of the all-important port of Tunis—the last Axis bastion in Africa.

In the game the campaign is portrayed not as a battle of attrition, but as a conflict of maneuver, command, and logistical organization. All combat units in the field function in direct relation to the quality of their chain of command. In a sequence of play developed to reflect the rapid decisive armored attack and the paralyzing infantry battle that characterized the campaign, both Players participate in each of the five game Phases, including Command, Joint Movement, and Joint Combat. All record keeping activity is confined to the Com-

mand Phase, leaving Players free to concentrate their attention on Tactics.

The graphics are of the highest professional quality. The detailed game map portrays the Tunisian battleground from Bone to Tunis in the north and Medenine and the wastes of Chott Djerid in the south. Terrain ranges from the flat open coastal plain to the broken uplands of central Tunisia, to the convoluted and torturous mountains of the north. The various hill ranges (Djebels) which shaped the flow of the campaign so immensely stand out vividly, giving Players a clear picture of the task before them. The back-printed counters represent battalions, regiments, and divisions of the various nationalities with color and precision. Air units are at the squadron level. The important Commanders and battlefield leaders are given special treatment to clarify their distinctive functions.

The history and the game are vitally brought together in the Campaign study—a detailed treatment in words, maps and pictures, designed to enhance appreciation of the vivid events portrayed by the game. OSG offers *Rommel & Tunisia* as an exploration of the effects of command on combat performance, as a history of a great military event, and as the first definitive game on this decisive campaign.



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Von Manstein in the Ukraine, 1941-44

- An exciting new game design by John Prados
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Panzerkrieg: Von Manstein in the Ukraine is the tool in question. It portrays in eight individual scenarios the immense events of WWII in Southern Russia. Opening with an examination of the Kiev Pocket, proceeding to the first Soviet Winter offensive, Operation Blue, Stalingrad through Zita-

delle to the Korsun and Cherkassy Pockets, *Panzerkrieg* offers a complete picture of the fighting as no other game on the market. Rather than a long campaign game which players can seldom conclude, the campaign is broken into easily managed pieces (the longest scenario is twelve turns). The Game-Turn is divided into two Player-Turns each with Maneuver, Combat, Exploitation, and Protection Segments giving the weekly turns a truly operational feel. Players must plan decisive allocation of Reserves and Air Power and deploy effective Battle Leaders in the crucial sectors for the *Schwerpunkt* of Exploitation. Never before has the operational terrain of the entire Ukraine campaign area been so graphically displayed, not just the double- but single-line rails, along with roads, towns, cities, ports, minor and major rivers and the all important river crossings, each with its own unique effects on Play.

With a single 22"x34" map, 600 counters, 20 pages of rules, plus pages of maps and historical commentary, *Panzerkrieg* explores the enormous and complex events of the south Russian front in a concise, complete, and entertaining manner. The men and their Divisions, Corps, and Headquarters are included in the professional *Panzerkrieg* box to offer you an insight into the overwhelming scope of warfare in the steppes.



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Objective: Atlanta is both a gamer's game and an historian's delight.

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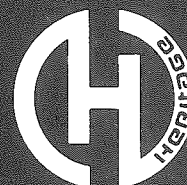
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La Bataille de Preussisch-Eylau



Soldiers of France! Be advised, the gathering storm of Oriental tyranny and the tattered remnants of Hollenzollern folly advance again to disturb the peaceful winter of a free Europe. Driven on by the gold of shopkeepers, these mercenary beggars seek the destruction of all you hold sacred. Join your Empereur on the snowy fields of Preussisch-Eylau where we will once again dash these forces of tyranny and oppression.

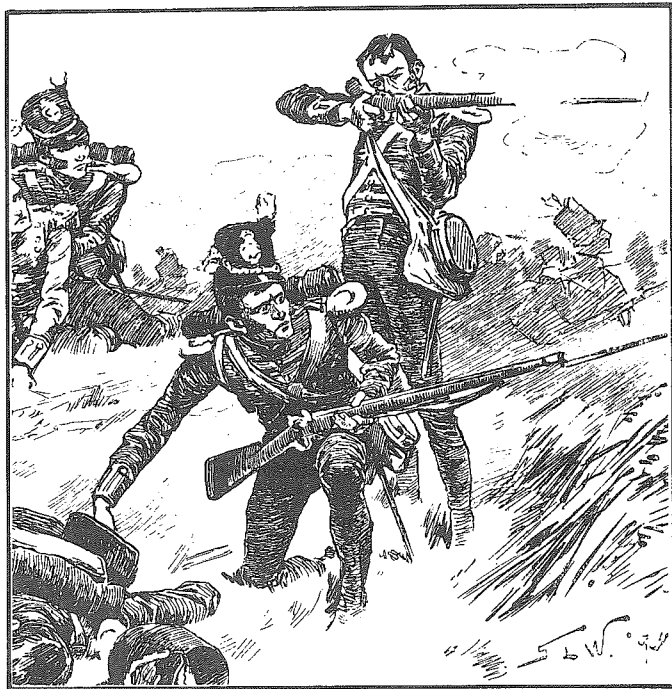
But soldiers beware, even the common continental despot whose pockets bulge with English gold, can become a part of history.

La Bataille de Preussisch-Eylau, the second game in the Les Batailles dans l'age l'Empereur Napoleon 1er series is from Marshal Enterprises. This unique game features 600 multi-colored unit counters, a 34 x 44 inch playing map, and a second edition rules booklet.

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FIRING LINE

It appears timely to reaffirm some of our editorial philosophies. (No, rest assured, this is *not* the first of fifty installments on the *F&M Credo*!).

First, and perhaps most important, is that we have no intention of letting literal interpretation of 'policies' interfere with common sense. To us, policies are like traffic laws — they may be disobeyed, but not habitually and only for good reasons.

Our principal policy, and one we intend to adhere to closely, is to be and remain a *'Forum of Conflict Simulation'* open to all and with preferential treatment for none. This applies to discussions on game design philosophies and techniques, ethics, trends, etc., as much as to our main function of reviewing and dissecting games.

With respect to coverage of games, we are attempting to strike a reasonable balance between products of the big companies and what is often called the 'Third World'. That the majority of our reviews deal with games from the principal publishers has a good reason: these games are most widely available, bought in greatest quantities, and therefore of interest to the greatest portion of our readers. But we are also making every effort to bring games from smaller producers to our readers' attention — and are happy to have received many letters thanking *F&M* for having done so.

Almost needless to stress, we are trying hard to bring reviews that are unbiased. To steer clear of conflict-of-interest situations, we do not normally accept a review by a writer involved in any way in the design, development, production, or publication of the game or having a financial interest in its sales. Also, we do not normally print a review written by a person so connected with a current or future competitive game on the same or a similar subject. (The discerning reader would tend anyway to discount such reviews with the thought, 'He has an axe to grind'.) But there may be a good reason for accepting or inviting a contribution from a person who is not a 'disinterested party' — for example, if he is a first-rate technical expert. In such a case, we usually balance his presentation by publishing it side by side with others on the same subject (e. g., see Stephen Newberg's article on *Up Scope!* in #13). Occasionally, we even print a 'Designer's Review' in which a notable designer, from his vantage point, analyzes a colleague's game (see Phil Kosnett's review of *Yalu* in #11), but not without

giving the game's designer the opportunity to reply. In any event, any connection or association known to us which might consciously or subconsciously affect a writer's opinion is brought to the readers' attention.

Apart from such considerations, any review (Player's Notes excepted) is 'reviewed' by the editor or a qualified staff member who is familiar with the game and will question judgments that appear overly subjective. Moreover, our writers are encouraged to discuss their evaluations with the respective designers, and the latter are given an opportunity to object to criticism which they consider unfair or factually incorrect, in time for revision of the review by mutual consent.

Of course, differences of opinion are likely to remain. To take care of these, we offer the designer or publisher space for rebuttal in 'Designer's Notes' that accompany our major reviews. However, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink: if the designer does not avail himself of that opportunity in time, the issue must go to press without his Notes.

Incidentally, it pleases me to see how quickly this format of reviewing has caught on. I have received letters berating *F&M* for 'once again' having printed a (somewhat critical) review without a designer's rebuttal. Let it not be forgotten that it was *F&M* that introduced this review format, barely over two years ago, and that we are still the only magazine in the hobby practicing it rather consistently. Could we ask for a greater compliment than to see our practice taken for granted as the only proper way to review games?

There may be other reasons for an absence of Designer's Notes. For example, the article may address a point of design philosophy or the like and use a game merely for illustration (e. g., Ralph Vickers' article on *Panzergruppe Guderian* and the 'Elements of a Classic'). Designer's Notes might then distract from what the author intended to convey.

Another problem we have to contend with is that of conflicting demands of timely and in-depth coverage. Many a reader looks to us for an indication whether a new game is 'his cup of tea', and he doesn't want to wait for the answer. At the same time, our reviewers are expected to be thoroughly familiar with the respective games and their historical or other subjects, so that they can speak with authority. It is rarely possible to meet both expectations. For a reasonably thorough coverage, the fastest job we can hope to do is to equal that on *Drive on Stalingrad*, in #11. That Close-Up was written five weeks after receipt of the review copy; yet, with discussions with the designer, Designer's Notes, editing, typesetting, printing, assembling, and shipping it did not reach the reader until almost five months after publication of the game. (And few games offer a reviewer so easy a target — sorry, Brad!)

In answer to this problem we have evolved a three-tier system to cover games, and I'd like to be sure you understand its implications. The first tier is our *Out of the Wrapper* column which lists, without commentary, new games and their 'vital statistics'; these games we have actually seen, up to a time about three to four weeks before the issue reaches you. The next tier is our *Player's Notes* and *First Impressions*; these are prompt, brief, and preliminary reviews based on first acquaintance and neither exhaustive nor necessarily free of misconceptions. Apart from less well known older games, they typically cover games published within the last two to five months. On the third tier are our *Battle Reports*, *Operational Analyses*, *Close-Ups*, etc., with high demands on the reviewer's familiarity with the game, and usually accompanied by Designer's Notes. For this category, we select games of major interest; unavoidably, they will have been around for half a year or more. Sometimes we might not know whether to classify a review in the second or third tier, and then we tag it as a *Profile* or give it some other suitable or noncommittal label. What is really important in all this is that you are aware of the rationale for, and preliminary nature of, our Player's Notes and First Impressions.

Continued on Page 55

FIRE & MOVEMENT

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Rodger B. MacGowan

Editor: Friedrich G. Helfferich

Art Director: Rodger B. MacGowan

Publisher: James Steuard

Advisor to the Editor: Mark Saha

Assistant Editors: Allen Doum, Ralph Vickers

Contributing Editors: Pete Belli, Alfred Bisasky, Martin Campion, Frank Chadwick, Gary Charbonneau, Edward Coe, Omar DeWitt, Roy Easton, Brent Ellerbroek, Bill Farone, Jack Greene Jr., John Gresham, Bill Haggart, John Hill, Phil Kosnett, Steven List, Ray Lowe, Marc Miller, Dave Minch, James Murphy, Dennis O'Leary, Tom Oleson, Stephen Peek, John Prados, Randall Reed, Jay Reese, Scott Renner, Bill Sanders, Clifford Sayre Jr., Shelby Stanton, S. Craig Taylor Jr., John Vanone, Warren Williams, Kevin Zucker

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Nr.14

NOVEMBER — DECEMBER 1978

Air Assault/Descent on Crete

by Gary Charbonneau and Allen Doum

AH's and SPI's recent games on the same subject, the German airborne invasion of Crete in May of 1941, reflect the different design philosophies of the two companies. F&M's Close-up analysis of game systems, strategies and tactics is supplemented by a lively response from designers Vance von Borries and Eric Goldberg and developer Randy Reed...28



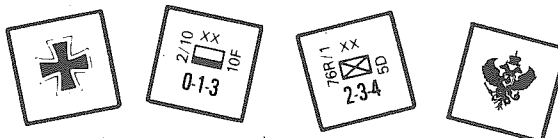
Their Finest Hour



by Bill Stone and Friedrich Helfferich

GDW's package on the Battle of Britain has deterred many by its profusion of interlocking games and rules. F&M's Game Profile shows that the air game is not as forbidding as it may look. Marc Miller contributes Designer's Notes.....10

Tannenberg



by Friedrich Helfferich

This new game from SPI's *Strategy & Tactics* proves that a World War One simulation can be sweeping maneuver instead of static slugfest. This F&M Battle Report features a detailed After Action Report and Designer's Notes from David Isby.....50

FORUM

ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER SCIENCE

by Dave Minch.....27

THE 'CHARLIES' IN 1979

by James Steuard.....56

HYBRIDIZING

by Pete Belli.....56

Verdun

by Shelby L. Stanton and Pete Belli

GDW has completely redesigned John Hill's World War One 'classic'. F&M's Game Profile includes a comparison of Old and New versions, an authentic German Order of Battle, plus Designer's Notes from Marc Miller.....46

Napoleon at Bay

by Roy Schelper

A new game company, Operational Studies Group, releases its first game — a double-map simulation with all the professional 'flare' you would expect from a long established company.18

Kesselring

by Ralph Vickers

Here is 'Albion's Answer to Anzio.' From World Wide Wargamers a strategic level simulation on the Italian front in WWII. F&M's First Impression Report compares Kesselring with the AH 'classic'.21

Player's Notes

A series of short game reviews on: *Operation Crusader* by Fred Helfferich, *New Orleans 1815* by Bill Haggart, *Source of the Nile* by Roy Schelper, *Atlantic Wall* by Dave Minch, *Dresden 1813* by Jack Greene Jr., *The Battle of Monmouth* by Dave Minch, and *38th Parallel* by Phil Kosnett.....23

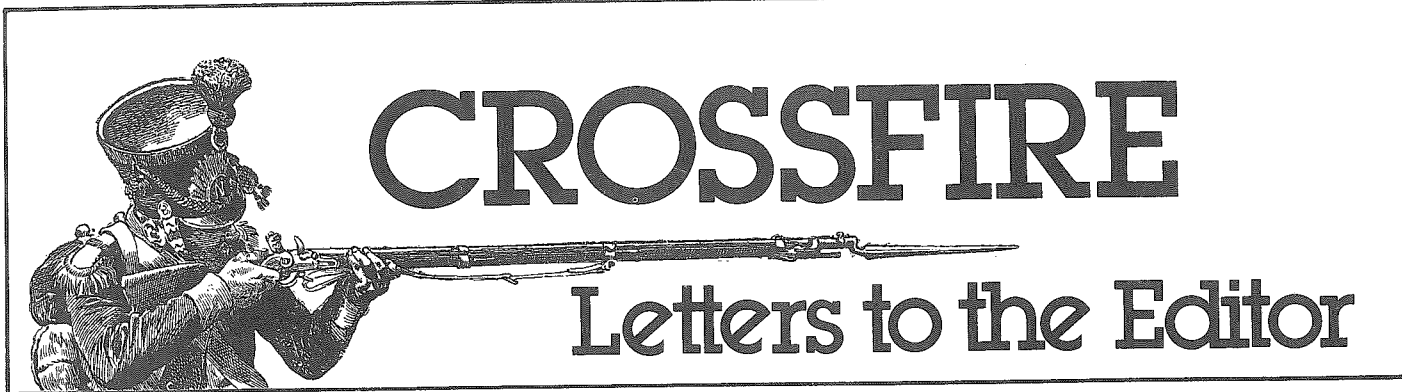
DEPARTMENTS

Firing Line.....6
by Fred Helfferich

Crossfire.....8
by The Gamers

Out of the Wrapper.....57
by The Staff

Feedback.....58
by The Staff



CROSSFIRE

Letters to the Editor

RALPH VICKERS, KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR....

Ralph Vickers is without a single doubt the best writer known to our hobby. His writing is not only highly intelligent, but also highly *entertaining*. After all, that latter quality is why I am in this hobby.

Allen H. King
Austin, Texas

Panzergruppe Guderian may not be a classic, but the article was great. Mr. Vickers said that which many of us thought but couldn't put into words.

Feedback Card from
Portland, Maine

...OR ARCH VILLAIN?

I wish to take issue with F&M's publishing of Ralph Vickers' article setting forth his standards on what constitutes a classic and how these standards apply to **Panzergruppe Guderian**.... I think I can show that Mr. Vickers ... is an incompetent critic and his article should never have been published. I think I can show this by setting forth my opinions on what a critic should be, in the hope that you will agree, and then showing you where Mr. Vickers fails these standards. The standards in question are:

1. A critic should be knowledgeable of games and of a game's historical era, and should produce evidence supporting his assertions.
2. A critic should neither lie nor misrepresent the actions and statements of those he criticizes, but use their factual actions and statements or none at all.
3. A critic should criticize something for its failure in its intent, but not for its failure to be something it was never intended to be...

In his criticism of **Panzergruppe Guderian** as a prospective classic, Mr. Vickers fails these standards. For example:

Considering **Guderian's** highway net, Mr. Vickers says: 'To have roads disappearing into swamps and no roads at all joining most major towns must have been a decision made for the expediency of play balance.' Here Mr. Vickers fails Standard One in his lack of knowledge of the conditions of highways in Russia in 1941 — he ignores that they have a history..., and does not support his assertion at all.

There were, in point of fact, few hard-surface highways and the rest of the road net was abysmal....

In a similar vein, Mr. Vickers fails two of these standards in his criticism of the 0-0-6 Soviet units. Again, he ignores their historical background; and moreover, he contrives to criticize the decision to include 0-0-6s by creating three fictions: a memo from SPI's Board of Directors, a conversation between designers, and a formal conference on the inclusion of the units. The point of these ... is to make SPI's designers and Board of Directors out to be dolts, fools, and clods. The statements are hardly factual....

Coming to the last standard, Mr. Vickers fails it as well. He criticizes **Guderian** because Soviet units moving by rail can move to the west of German units if no German units block their path. He bewails this, as a failure of the game as an illusion. An illusion of *what*? If Mr. Vickers knows anything about the eastern front, he knows that German unit frontages were stretched to the extreme, gaps were left even in static lines, and that the treatment of railway movement reflects this. And here lies my point: Mr. Vickers fails to realize that **Guderian** was designed as a half-and-half playable simulation, not as a playable illusion like **Squad Leader**. To criticize the game for its failings as an illusion, as he does, is indeed to 'damn a cat because it's not a dog.' But Mr. Vickers, as long as he lacks background in a game's era, will fail to recognize a game's intent and will continue to damn attempts at illusion. Perhaps as a historian he considers no wargame as better than 'a pretty sketchy simulation.' I know I disagree if he does, and I believe many others do too....

Daryl B. Brandel
Geraldine, Montana

Ed.: Ralph tells me he is unrepentant — and that it's his critics who fail to recognize his intentions....

JOHN EDWARDS AROUSES DISSENT

I fear [the editor's] 'clarification' of John Edwards' allegations regarding how many times I did or did not play **The Russian Campaign** prior to writing my Battle Report on the game in F&M #5 may have created an erroneous impression. I would like to correct that impression with the following facts:

1) It is true that I have never played the Jedko version of **The Russian Campaign**. It was unnecessary to do so for the purposes of the review, however, since the Battle Report dealt solely with the First Edition of the Avalon Hill version.

2) In order to compose a play-by-play chronology which was to appear in the review (but was cut for lack of space) Frank Aker and I played both the campaign game and the Berlin scenario once in face-to-face encounters.

3) In addition, I personally played *all* scenarios and the campaign game several times over a period of weeks prior to writing the review.

I am not surprised that John Edwards 'misremembered' the facts of our one and only conversation since it occurred back on March 21, 1977 (after all, he doesn't have the tapes of the interview to refresh his memory, as I do). It would be unfair, however, to allow his misstatements to pass without comment. I do not want the readers of F&M to hold the false notion that F&M game reviews — even the 'first-impression, peek-in-the-box' type like that of **The Russian Campaign** — are published without adequate playtesting. Thank you for allowing me to set the record straight.

Richard F. DeBaun,
Ventura, California

Ed.: If you think this Richard pours it on, listen now to Richard Lionheart in verse and prose:

THE CRAVEN

Once, upon a midnight's jag, while
reading in my wargame mag —
Over many a quaint and curious item of
gaming lore —
I found a letter from 'down under', where
the author volleyed thunder,
Where he made a massive blunder, where
he attacked American lore:
A blunder enough, forevermore.

FIRE & MOVEMENT was where I read it;
John Edwards was the one who said it;
Said those arrogant and awful words that
make me angered sore.
Those he wrote he did not need to; nor did
he heed what they would lead to —
Indeed, it's shame for John they lead
to — unlike any for him before:
Shame to last, forevermore.

He's set his ship adrift and rocking, and,
intent upon his mocking,

*He'll find it, oh, so very shocking, to meet
the looming land and shore.
He claimed his critic, Ray, maligned him,
so down to hell he has consigned him;
Down to the dim and pur-blind glim of
that dreadfully dreary shore,
Where dwells the Craven, forevermore.*

*His rage at Ray he's spent in spite upon
our troops, by making light
Of the fame of their bloody fight, upon the
desp'rate Norman shore.
If he would read a bit more hist'ry, he
would solve for him some myst'ry —
But I fear he is too blist'ry to rightly take
what's now in store.
Will he be so, forevermore?*

*He calls 'all' our troops at D-Day 'green'.
I have my doubts that he has seen
A unit that is green, or veteran, ever
before.
If he would read in Omar Bradley, soon
he'd know how very badly —
Soon he'd see how very sadly his learning
is lacking in D-Day lore:
Alack, Alas, forevermore.*

*From his Kingdom, far 'down under',
John has made a fatal blunder —
As the Light Brigade did blunder, in dimly
distant days of gore:
He said Ray Lowe in knowledge lacked; he
called him narrow-mind, in fact!
Despite a Lackland's lack of tact, this John
is just a bothered bore —
And this is all — forevermore!*

*It's he who has his facts not right, and
since he started this damned fight,
I'll give him fight from each metaphoric
cannon's cacophonic core!
I'll fire out fact and prove him wrong; I'll
slap his slurs where they belong;
I'll bash them back to the teeming throng,
upon the stagnant Styx' stifled shore:
Where lurks the Craven, forevermore.*

*One thing now I know is certain: on John
Edwards I draw the curtain,
To silence forever his ignorant and
insulting roar.
He thinks, perhaps, he is romantic; I
think, perhaps, he's just pedantic —
And is pretentious down to the heart of his
amateur core:
A croaking Craven, forevermore.*

But to croak in print? — Nevermore!

I make no pretense of judging Mr. John Edwards' game **Fortress Europa**; I have not played it, and thus I do not have the requisite practical experience. I do, however, have the prerequisites for judging Mr. Edwards' incorrect, insulting, and pretentious comments in Issue #12's *Crossfire*. I intend to do so.

I have played from 100 to 200 games a year since 1960. My competition during that period has continually demonstrated the plethora of ways in which different people can interpret the same rule; quite often this interpretation is influenced by the brand of wargame one has, or has not, played. While a designer knows how his game plays, the rules that transfer that knowledge instantaneously to the learner

are rarer than the Duke Of Wellington's defeats in battle. Someone learning a game of even moderate complexity cannot be expected to see the designer's Total Picture until he has gone through the learning process; this process takes time, and tolerance, and Mr. Edwards reply to Mr. Lowe seems to be lacking in the latter quality. His advice to 'forget other games when interpreting rules' is not always practical, because of the human factor.

Mr. Edwards says that a zone of control which doesn't extend into certain types of terrain is a 'unique' feature of his game. If he had a wider experience in the field of wargaming he would know that his statement is not only pretentious, but is also at variance with fact.

Mr. Edwards' attack unloads ill-considered aspersions upon the fighting qualities of the American forces at the D-Day landings. First he derides quality and accuracy of history as written in the United States by calling it 'popularized', all inclusively. Then he writes, 'at the time of D-Day all the U.S. troops were, in fact, 'green'.' Were the 82nd Airborne and the 1st Infantry Divisions (U.S.) 'in fact, 'green' when both saw combat first in 1942 and were veterans of the North African and Sicily campaigns? The 1st was making its third combat beach assault at Normandy.

Mr. Edwards snidely slights the fighting achievements of the troops at Utah and Omaha in contrast to that of those on Gold, Sword, and Juno. That contrast was due to the easier terrain of the Commonwealth beaches; it was due to the longer bombardment time that the tides allowed at the Commonwealth beaches; it was due to the brilliant success of General Hobart's 'Funnies' at the Commonwealth beaches; above all, it was due to the lower calibre of the opposition initially encountered at the Commonwealth beaches. Since Mr. Edwards wants to be an expert on the Orders of Battle at D-Day he should know that the 352nd German Infantry Division was no static division but was a full-strength line unit. It was in position at Omaha Beach for a practice invasion alert at the time of the landings and was singularly reluctant to suspend practice and depart. It was induced to do so by the 'green' troops he holds in such apparent low repute.

It might be amusing to listen to Mr. Edwards' explanations as to why Field Marshal Montgomery was unable to get as far as Falaise, 32 miles distant, and 'knock about a bit down there', as the Field Marshal so quaintly put it, before the passage of 68 days and a goodly part of the German forces in Normandy had occurred — especially since the Field Marshal had intended and hoped to 'knock about' on D-Day itself and is on record as so declaring. Could the 21st Panzer Division around Caen have caused the same sort of difficulties as did the 352nd at Omaha? If so, does this detract from the fighting qualities or achievements of the Commonwealth forces? Of course not!

Why then does Mr. Edwards make reasonless comparisons to no good point? There was 'glory enough for all' at Normandy, and 'it were honor enough to have been there'.

The wargaming fraternity look up to their game designers as informed leaders in the Art. In exchange for that deference, however, they expect certain things from them; among these are accuracy, competency, credibility, and fairness. Mr. Edwards' reply was none of these. Mr. Edwards should learn, before casting, that stones which are needlessly thrown in anger, quite often are hurled back with painful effect upon him who threw first.

R. Richard Land,
New Orleans, Louisiana

PLAYTEST MUST BE TEST, NOT PLAY.

...Let me say how much I enjoyed your **Drive on Stalingrad** in F&M #11. ...I am pleased to see that like most of us you do indeed feel that a magazine should speak up and protect its readers when major faults are uncovered. ...One hundred letters from isolated individuals would not have disturbed SPI from its slumber, but the threat of an unfavorable review...in a good magazine was enough [to get them to] virtually redesign the game. ...Brad Hessel's reply, in which he blamed the fiasco on prejudiced playtesting, hit the nail on the head. ...The trouble is that playtesters enjoy themselves too much, and forget that the reason they are there is not to play a standard game, but to force the design to its limits, and to abuse it as much as possible. If the design limitations are not tested before publication, they certainly will be by the more devious minds in the hobby after. A test-pilot does not take a new plane up, fly it straight and level, and then report that it is ready for commercial use; similarly it is the playtester's job to force the design through every acrobatic in the book, and some which are not!

Marcus Watney
Reading, Berks., U.K.

SINK THE RISING SUN!

Dear Sir:

I enjoyed Mr. Haggart's article [on **Red Sun Rising** in F&M #12] immensely, but I do take exception to his rather gruff dismissal of the naval game as a 'less than polished facet'. Granted, the Russian Navy is outclassed, but certainly not outnumbered. In the hands of an aggressive Russian player it can give the Japanese player premature grey hairs. Time and weather have tremendous effect on any tactical naval situation, and the more engagements the Russians can force, the more chances they have of wounding or killing Togo. Consider the stakes: Togo, like Jellicoe ten years later, 'could have lost the war in an afternoon'.

David O. Schoepke,
Streamwood, Illinois



THEIR FINEST HOUR

The Battle of Britain

by Bill Stone

WHEN SO MUCH WAS OWED BY SO MANY TO SO FEW

Historical Commentary by Friedrich G. Helfferich

...The Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. ...Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say, 'This was Their Finest Hour'.

These words, spoken on 18 June 1940 and perhaps Winston Churchill's most famous, marked the beginning of the strangest campaign of World War II.

The 'Battle of Britain' was an operation for which the participants were singularly ill-equipped. None of the military leaders on either side had foreseen that Germany would so quickly acquire a firm position all along the French coast, a basis for a direct attack on the British Isles, launching points for an invasion.

On the German side, no such invasion had ever been dreamed of, let alone been prepared for, and attempts to improvise remained half-hearted. The task of subduing England fell to the *Luftwaffe* by default; a strategic task of the first magnitude, to an air force built and trained for tactical operations.

England was similarly unprepared and ill-equipped. For a while, the defense rested on little more than wreckage salvaged from the disastrous Dunkirk evacuation of the continent, a motley assemblage of Home Guards, a fledgling RAF fighter force, and the iron will and determination of a single man, Winston Churchill. Facing one another for the show-down were a nation of seventy million and the 'empire over which the sun does not set', and neither could field more than a few thousand men in their flying machines. Never before in history had two great powers fought one another with such inadequate weapons.

Actions were dramatic and heroic, even underneath the gloss lavishly applied by the propaganda machines on both sides, but they remained indecisive. In the end, the handful of hard-pressed and dedicated RAF fighter pilots and their valiant support, while not forcing the stumbling *Luftwaffe* to their knees, managed to weather the onslaught as an effective fighting force. And that was what counted; anything short of a tactical defeat was a brilliant strategic victory for Britain. But where defeat would almost certainly have ended the war then and there, victory could merely postpone the decision — for another five years filled with suffering and destruction.

Meanwhile, of those who had withstood the tide, Winston Churchill was to say:

Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.

THEIR FINEST HOUR

Game Designers' Workshop
203 North Street, Normal, IL 61761

Design: Marc W. Miller, Paul R. Banner, Frank Chadwick

Artwork: Paul R. Banner

Topic: Battle of Britain, 1940. Package includes **Battle of Britain** air game, its simplified version **Europa V**, and **Sea Lion** game of hypothetical invasion of southern England. Campaign game combines **Battle of Britain** and **Sea Lion**.

Size: Three 20-inch x 28-inch maps, ca 1000 counters

Scale: Division/regiment level, individual ship counters, counters for air 'groups' (ca 20-30 aircraft in **Battle of Britain**, ca 40-60 in other games). Map scale 16 miles per hex for **Europa V** and 12 maps, 5 miles per hex for **Sea Lion** map of southern England. Four-day turns in **Battle of Britain** and **Sea Lion**, half-month turns in **Europa V**.

Game System: Game turn consists of air, naval, and ground segments. Player phases are consecutive within segments (with exceptions in air movement).

Complexity: Moderate for **Europa V**, high for all others.

Published: March 1976. Now Out of Print.

EUROPA V.

It took two years, but I finally learned **Their Finest Hour**. I happened to be at the Center of the Universe (Normal, Illinois, that is) in about March of 1976 when the maps for the game came back from the printer, and I was pressed into the assembly line, stuffing ziplock bags full of components which then went into cardboard mailers to be immediately whisked away by UPS. I got a copy for myself that day, so I've always considered it Consumer Copy Number One...I should have had the boys autograph it.

The next day I returned to my temporary base in Indiana and started setting the thing up on a lady's floor. It looked like a lot of rules. The package included material for several independent games: an eight turn, group level, **Europa-scale Battle of Britain** air game; entirely separate rules for the same battle at squadron level with a twelve turn scenario and a twenty-three turn scenario; a regiment/battalion level **Sea Lion** invasion game with ground, naval and tactical air rules for July or September scenarios; and the combined **Battle of Britain/Sea Lion** campaign game of twenty-three turns. As an effort at programmed learning, I decided to start with the simple **Europa V** air game. Sorting the maps, charts, rules and pieces took almost as long as playing a quad or one-twenty, but I stuck to the task. The rules themselves looked reasonable enough, only six pages and based roughly on the previous **DNO/UNT/Narvik** air system with which I was already familiar. Then I got down

to cases. As part of the greater package, *Europa V* seemed to have received the least attention on the part of designers and testers. The rules were ambiguous and incomplete, with a full range of typos, inconsistencies, contradictions, and omissions. Within the first pages, the time limit was given as two different lengths, the reinforcements were repeated under two different headings, and the radar rules were presented as two incompatible schemes. In short, I sent over thirty questions to GDW (probably before anyone else had a copy of the game) and sadly removed the maps from the lady's floor. At least she was thankful.

Their Finest Hour had gotten off to a shaky start in the first place, very nearly reaching distribution with incorrectly printed maps on which all the German airfields had been cut off. This was rectified with the new set of maps that I helped pack, and the rules were quickly amended with an April package of errata and clarifications which included a set of corrected counters and entirely rewritten rules for the basic *Europa* air system, the *Europa* air replacement system, and game rules for *Europa V*. This revision package was mailed free of charge to everyone who had ordered the game. If the original game ranks as one of the greatest screw-ups in publishing history, then the revision package surely rates as one of the most conscientious gestures ever made by a simulations publisher.

The update even found its tortuous route to my relocated Virginia command post. In the ensuing blitz of new titles, the game laid dormant on my shelf for almost two years until I decided to apply myself to the mysteries of the *Europa V* game once more. It was considerably easier the second time around.

COMPONENTS

Their Finest Hour, like its companion game *Case White*, is forced into a multi-map configuration by the *Europa* layout, when the battleground — in this case, Great Britain and continental airfields — would fit on a single sheet. The two maps (*Europa* #11 and #12) include all of Ireland, the north coasts of France, Belgium, Holland and Germany, most of Denmark, the southwestern nose of Norway, and all of the British Isles. For future use, all terrain, cities and railways are charted in a manner consistent with the other games of the series.

MECHANICS

Europa V counters represent 'groups' of forty to sixty aircraft. In keeping with the *Europa* scale, each hex is sixteen miles across, and each turn is a half month. There are eight turns in the game. Aircraft types include bombers, scout/scout bombers, dive bombers and fighters; all planes are also classed for either day or night operations. Each group is identified by model (as Ju88, for example), type (in this case it could be bomber, night bomber, or night fighter), and factors for range, tactical bombing, strategic bombing, air attack and air defense.

Machines are based by players on any printed fields, two per onboard field and four per board-edge fields in France and Germany. The primary tactical formation is the 'wave', which may consist of one, two, or three groups. Groups take off as waves or form waves in the air and move toward targets, trigger 'patrol attacks' as they enter zones of control of enemy fighters, and perform specified missions over target hexes. Missions include interception, escort, transfer, and bombing of factories, radar stations, airfields, or cities. (The latter, considered 'Terror Bombing', is a guaranteed crowd pleaser.) Fighters may intercept bombers and escorts over the target hex, and aircraft that survive interception must undergo antiaircraft fire before they can unload their bombs.

Air-to-air combat ensues when interceptors engage escorts or bombers. The interceptors must commit against the escorts at least the equivalent of 50% of the escort strength; any remaining interceptors may attack the bombers. The opposing forces are arrayed by waves and fight round-robin style, each against all enemy waves one by one. Fire is considered to be simultaneous. The North Sea makes a perfect tactical display board for ease of resolving combat.

Patrol attacks are an *Europa V* innovation that in effect allows limited interception of bombers in route to their target. Each British fighter has a zone of control encompassing every hex within a radius of one half its movement range; zones of control of German fighters on French fields extend only into adjacent hexes. A fighter group may elect to scramble and perform a patrol attack on any enemy planes that enter its air space. Each fighter group may make one patrol attack per turn in addition to its regular mission allowance. Combat factors are matched and a die is rolled, possibly forcing one enemy unit to abort.

Aircraft can be lost in air-to-air combat, to patrol attacks, to antiaircraft fire, and when bombed on an airfield. Losses consist of 'aborts' (planes are damaged, abandon their mission, and must undergo repair before returning to active duty), and 'kills'. Kills are relatively rare.

Special rules cover operations at extended range, fighter-bomber missions, night operations by day aircraft, and the British radar line.

Two separate sets of victory conditions are provided which divide the game into a contest of either city bombing or destroying enemy air strength. The first game is won on a greater proportion of Terror Bombing hits on cities, and usually deteriorates into a slugging match of separate, predictable battles: the *Luftwaffe* day offensive against RAF Spitfires and Hurricanes, and the Bomber Command night offensive against a few German night fighters. The big loser in this case is the terrorized populace of the belligerents' cities. The second scheme requires each player to destroy a higher proportion of enemy air strength than is destroyed of his own. This seems much more conducive to a challenging, competitive match, and is what the Battle of Britain was originally about. But there remains a nagging fear, perhaps founded on the faulty premise of gut-feeling, that neither set of victory rules quite copes with the game situation and mechanics.

THE AIRCRAFT REPLACEMENT CHART

The Aircraft Replacement Chart is to *Europa V* what the Production Spiral is to *War in Europe*. In conjunction with the Order of Battle and Order of Appearance for each side, the chart determines and visually displays the numbers of trained crews available, new production machines available, aborted aircraft, planes destroyed over friendly territory, planes destroyed over enemy territory, and 'remnants'. The *Europa* basic air replacement system governs the use of the chart, outlining the flow of counters into and out of the game, funneling each group through various boxes on the chart.

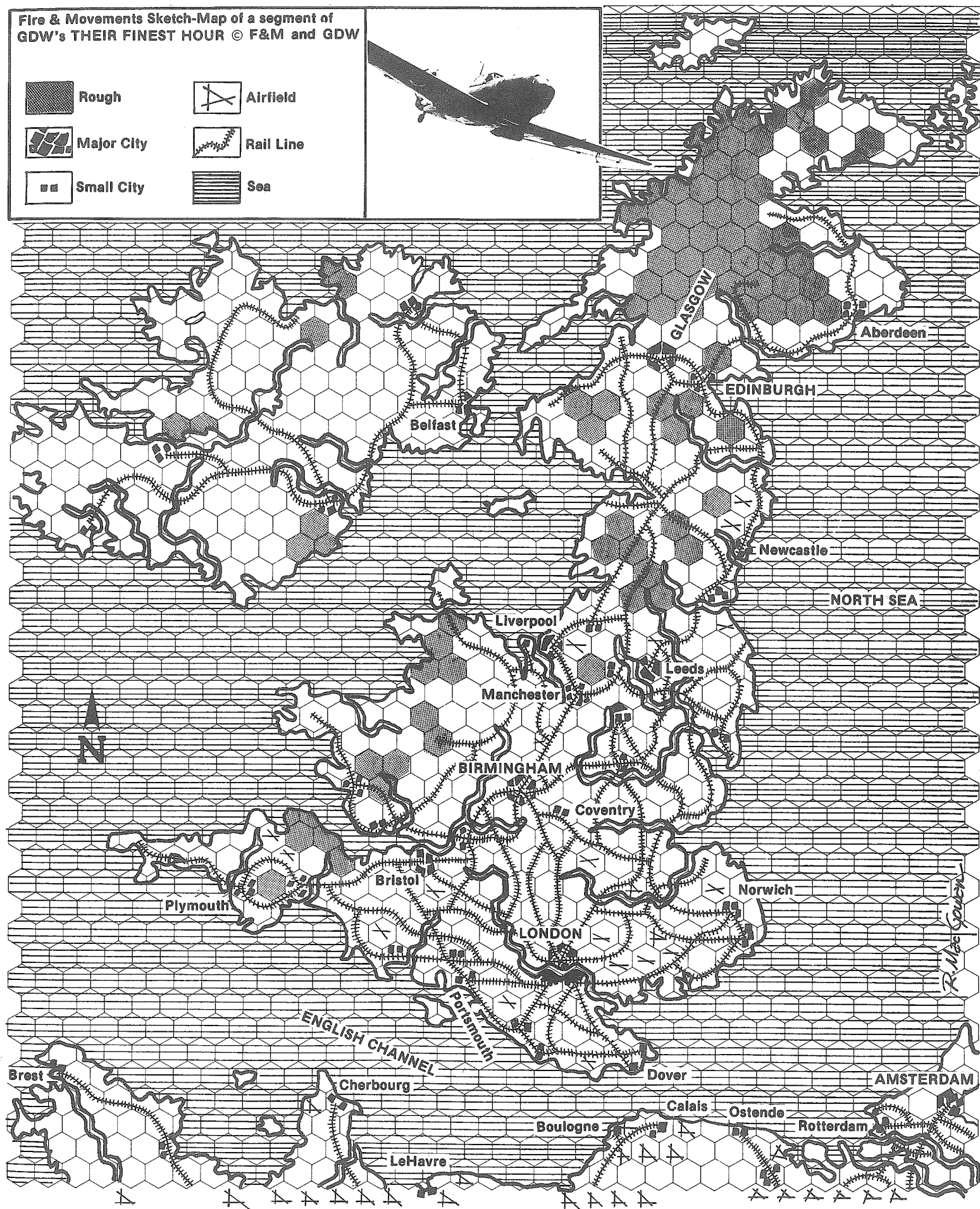
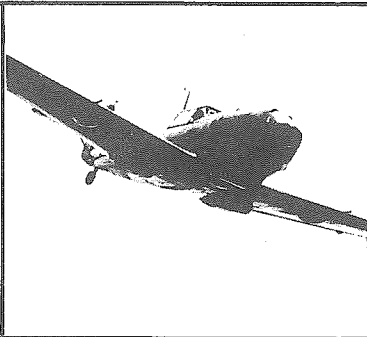
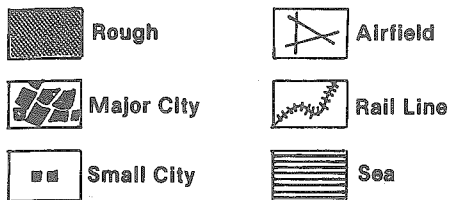
At all times, the number of groups that may be in action is restricted by the maximum number of crews available. The British begin with forty-five crews, the Germans with seventy-six, and both sides increase this allowance by one on the September 1 turn. The Germans also have the option of deploying their 'training reserves', which allows a 10% increase in their group allowance with the subsequent loss of later arriving crews. By mobilizing these pilots from instructional facilities on the first turn of the game, the Germans may use them for the entire campaign, foregoing only the single reinforcement group in September.

Both players begin with more machines than crews, and they must be selective in choosing aircraft from counters initially available in the new production box. The remainder, along with new production planes that arrive later, are available for future use as aircraft are destroyed.

As units suffer combat losses, they are placed in the appropriate boxes: aborted, destroyed over friendly territory, or destroyed over enemy territory.

The aborted, damaged aircraft are returned to the game by repair. At each reinforcement/replacement phase, each player rolls one die, and that many units move directly to the game map. As the battle continues, the number of units waiting to undergo repair will usually climb beyond the ability of the maintenance facilities to return them to action.

Fire & Movements Sketch-Map of a segment of
GDW's THEIR FINEST HOUR © F&M and GDW



In keeping with the fact that air groups were seldom wiped out to the last plane, units on the destroyed boxes are cycled by batches of groups either back into action or permanently out of play. Crew losses are required by this cycling and must be removed from that track's level. In this way, the number of crews and aircraft is continually being balanced.

'Remnants' are wastage, left-overs, and retired machines; this box is usually the last stop before units are removed from play. (In the *Europa* scheme, it will be possible to earmark these craft as 'lend-lease' and transfer them to allies.)

Whenever the number of planes in the new-production or remnant boxes swells, each player must cull units, removing 10% from play to simulate the attrition on unused aircraft for parts, accidental damage, unauthorized use, etc.

My only real quibble with the Aircraft Replacement Chart is the fact that the abort box too often ends up as the ultimate graveyard of planes, removing them (and their crews) more permanently from play than a lot of destroyed units (many of which are cycled back into the game). The difficulty is not so much with the chart itself as with the high number of abort results in combat. What really hurts is the number of crews who are idled (performing maintenance, recovering from wounds, on leave?) while the new-production box overflows with machines for which there are no pilots. I imagine that Goering and Dowding had the same complaint.

DAY AND NIGHT

The rules for day and night operations present a dichotomy of separate, non-interacting missions: night bombers cannot be touched by day fighters, nor may day bombers be intercepted by night fighters. This stipulation often divides the game into two distinct contests.

At this stage, few of the aircraft were truly equipped for night operations. (In the words of one Bomber Command captain, 'They used to tell us to bomb Krupps Works, but we were lost as soon as we left the airfield.') On the part of both sides, planes were often committed to night missions, even with the consequent reduction of efficiency, simply because they were too vulnerable to be in the air during daylight hours but too much in demand to be withdrawn altogether.

While night bombers are restricted to night missions only, day bombers may be flown in darkness if committed to a wave containing at least one night group. However, this halves their bombing efficiency. Additionally, to reflect the primitive nature of German airfields in France, *Luftwaffe* day planes must accept a 33% chance of damage when returning to French fields at night. Night operations may be fine for avoiding Hurricanes and Spitfires, but they subject the German to a whole new set of difficulties.

On the other hand, the British are compelled to fly night raids simply because of the dearth of day bombers. This works for the best, though, because of the scarcity of German night fighters. Bomber Command is usually able to deliver its pinpricks with impunity.

The fact that day and night missions are not susceptible to patrol attacks or interception by fighters of the opposite persuasion offers a tactical ruse. Since it is normally impossible to catch Spitfires and Hurricanes on the ground, the German can send up only night bombers; day interceptors, having no targets, must then remain parked and can be bombed on their strips. Unfortunately, the combination of British night fighters, reduced payload, and primitive airfields seldom makes this a profitable operation. The British normally do the same thing, with greater success, evading the few *Luftwaffe* night interceptors while the Me109's and 110's look on helplessly.

BOMBING MISSIONS

There are four possible missions that bombers may undertake, each with its own challenges and rewards. Radar stations are especially frustrating. Each is backed with a hidden hit capacity of from one to fifty, with an average of slightly over ten. Six

counters are selected at random from the pool of twenty and placed on the Channel coast of England. They may be attacked by the *Luftwaffe*, but only the British player knows how many hits each station can take; and until four are actually destroyed, the German has no knowledge of the status of any of them. There is no reward of victory points merely for hits delivered. The pay-off is that when the line is finally broken — four stations are knocked out — the zones of control of all British fighters are reduced from half range to just the adjacent hexes. The chance of breaking the radar line in time to take advantage of it in an eight-turn game is so slim that this can scarcely be considered a viable mission.

Terror Bombing is performed with the strategic bombing factor and may be directed against any non-port British city and any German city or Ruhr hex. When playing under the 'Target Destruction' victory conditions, this is the only mission that gains victory points and should be utilized by every bomber group on every turn. Each target can take an unlimited number of hits...the pieces of rubble get smaller every turn. Under the other victory conditions, Terror Bombing is useless. The only conceivable benefit is if it generates some air-to-air combat on favorable terms, but it is unlikely that an opponent will be so accommodating.

The third category of bombing missions is Factories. The British player is provided with one counter each representing the production centers of Hurricanes, Spitfires, Blenheims and HP-52's. One is located in Bristol, one outside Coventry, and two may be placed at the discretion of the British player. If a factory has four hits at a time, it is removed, and each turn a corresponding group of aircraft must be taken permanently out of play from the Aircraft Replacement Chart. Each factory may be repaired at the rate of one hit removed per turn. Bombing is done by day craft with their strategic factors, by night craft with their tactical factors. The Spitfire and Hurricane plants are prime targets unless they are heavily guarded by the RAF. If the plants are bombed, each one should be attacked *en masse* and knocked out in one turn so that the bombers won't have to face its flak factor more than once.

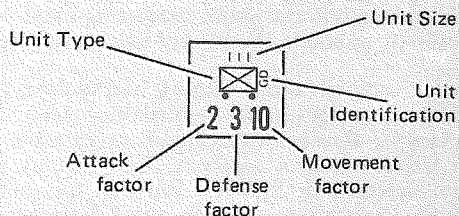
The most interesting mission, and probably the most often performed outside the Terror Bombing victory conditions, is the airfield bomb run. Using their tactical factors, groups may attack air strips in an attempt to render them useless and abort machines on the ground. Four hits on a field halve its capacity; any groups thus overstacked are aborted. Alternately, for each two hits, the bombing player may attempt to abort parked aircraft rather than damage the field. Each field may remove up to three hits per turn.

The theory is simple enough, but the practice is much more complicated. Most aircraft, especially British, have a low tactical bombing factor to begin with; the Wellington 1C, for example, sacrifices a strategic factor of ten for a tactical factor of one if it wants to attack airfields. This alone makes the airfield raids less productive. Secondly, airfields have a respectable antiaircraft factor, which will usually take its toll. Even under optimal conditions (no patrol attacks, no interception), average losses to the attacker are so great compared with results that the mission is actually counter-productive for the many one-factor bombers. It is better for such machines to stay on the ground than make airfield attacks. Planes with tactical factors of two will be cost-effective under optimal conditions, but not with one or two patrol attack aborts. It is only the few bombers with tactical factors of more than two that can safely make the raids without regularly sustaining more losses than they inflict.

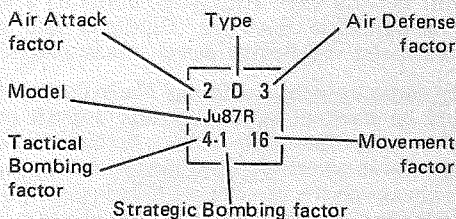
All this points up the fact that the variety of effective missions and the resultant choice of strategies is limited. This becomes more apparent when viewed in the context of the victory conditions; it is very difficult to achieve the desired ends with the available means. I make no excuse for a lapse in competitiveness of play, but evidence points toward the not uncommon ascendancy of 'simulation' over 'game' in GDW design: *Europa* is an historical model, not a toy. The subtle pleasure of historic necessity must suffice.

"THEIR FINEST HOUR"

Ground Units



Air Units



A single bombing factor on a unit is tactical.

FINALLY

Europa V is not the only game in **Their Finest Hour**. The **Battle of Britain** game is a much more detailed treatment of the same subject. The maps are the same, but the number of counters is increased dramatically, causing leaning towers of cardboard. The rules are very similar to **Europa V**, but have been expanded for more thorough coverage. Three bombing missions are added: ports, shipping, and naval vessels. Every target has its own hit table and antiaircraft rating. The turn sequence is altered to approximate simultaneity of operations more closely, and weather variables are introduced, along with a system of 'scramble' rules that allow fighters to be caught on the ground.

The **Sea Lion** invasion game covers the hypothetical landings from weather to shipping to the bombing of embarkation ports to Royal Navy intervention. To this end, a complete naval system for **Europa** is presented, along with counters for the British fleet and the entire *Kriegsmarine* (including hypothetical products, like the **GRAF ZEPPELIN**, or never completed building programs). The ground operations are conducted on a blown-up map of southern England at 5.33 miles to the hex. There are twenty types of ground units and combat is at regiment/battalion level with two-hex artillery ranges. The strategic availability of aircraft is handled abstractly with tactical deployment determined by each player. However, the **Battle of Britain** game is built to be grafted onto **Sea Lion** for a full twenty-three turn air/land/sea extravaganza.

Next to all of this, **Europa V** may seem like the least dramatic and colorful part of the package, and to some extent it is. There is still much to recommend it, both as a simulation unto itself and as an introduction to the rest of the game package. Marc Miller has constructed a work horse of an **Europa** air system for what is basically a land oriented war; that it performs admirably on its own is testimony to the soundness of the design. The rules continue to require some unravelling on the part of the players, and, by failing to mesh effortlessly with the selection of air missions available, the victory conditions impart some hollowness to an otherwise satisfying system. On the whole, however, **Europa V** goes a long way toward faithfully modelling the opportunities and dilemmas of the aerial confrontation over Great Britain.

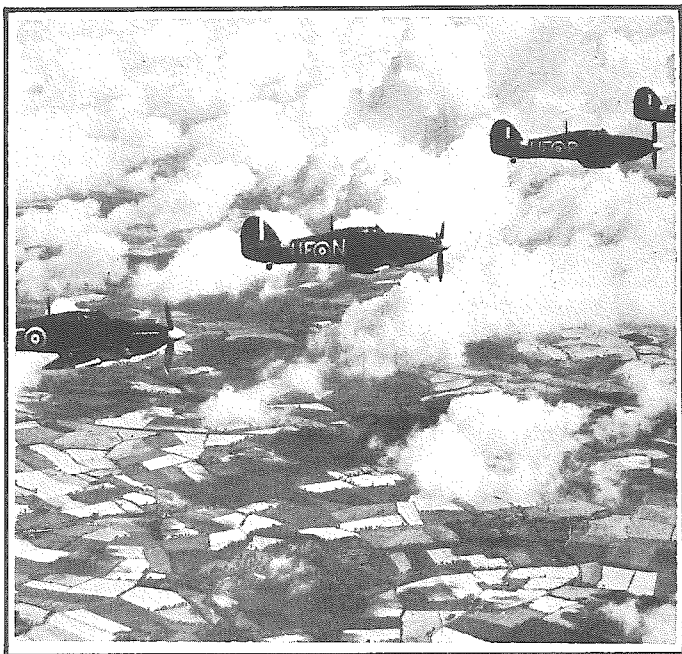
Their Finest Hour is practically a grab bag of surprises. Each game could stand on its own feet and be marketed separately... in fact, the Workshop is considering, with further rule revision, to do just that.

HINTS FOR PLAY

- 1) Everything is dependent on which victory conditions are in effect. This should be the first thing decided in the game and kept in mind through every step, from group selection to set up to operational planning. Why Terror Bomb under Relative Air Strength rules?
- 2) Both sides should bear in mind the relative effectiveness of various aircraft. It's too easy to fall into the rut of merely pitting stack against equal stack when the actual key, as always, is combat factor. The 1.5:1 column makes it especially important to beware of some specific match ups (like Me109's against Hurricanes).
- 3) Flying missions for the sheer joy of having machines in the air is suicidal. Weigh each mission carefully. It is better to keep planes on the ground than to squander them.
- 4) It's not altogether impossible that the British will want to keep his bombers off the board. Apparently, nothing prohibits him from having fewer groups on the board than the crew maximum will allow. Leaving them in the new production box is one way to avoid having them plastered on the runways.
- 5) If the German wants to fight a night game to avoid Hurricanes and Spitfires, let the British oblige him. The odds are stacked against Goering.
- 6) When losses result in lowered force levels and less crowded conditions, the German can disperse his groups enough to make the already weak British airfield attacks useless. If there are only two planes per board-edge field, Bomber Command will be hard-pressed to damage them. The same goes for RAF stacking.
- 7) The German should not beat his head against the brick wall on radar station attacks. To have time left to exploit the success in an eight-turn game is an opium dream.
- 8) Heinz Guderian's adage, 'Boot 'em, don't spatter 'em' seems highly apropos to **Europa V** air combat, especially in the opening turns. A few mass bomber missions run much less chance of ruinous interception than many small missions. Likewise, massed interceptors are preferable to dribbles.

ERRATA

- 1) When a unit is in the abort box, is its crew available to fly other aircraft (from new production)? NO
- 2) If a wave of more than one group bombs an airfield or performs Terror Bombing, does the wave sum its bombing factors and make one roll, or do the groups roll separately on the bombing table? EITHER method, at the option of the owning player.
- 3) When bombing a factory or airfield which is in a city hex, are the antiaircraft rates of both target and city used? NO, only the AA value of the target is used.
- 4) May the German select his units from the counter-mix after he has seen the British set up? NO, selection from the counter-mix is done by both players simultaneously. The German may then choose units for use from the new production box after seeing the British set up.
- 5) May Terror Bombing be conducted against dot and reference cities? YES
- 6) For Terror Bombing purposes, are these considered ports? Exeter— NO. Southampton— NO. Bristol— YES. Gloucester— YES.
- 7) What is the story on these incompletely marked airfields? next to LeHavre: TREAT as a board-edge field next to 4906: TREAT as a board-edge field, 1 MP to enter next to 4932: TREAT as a board-edge field



Their Finest Hour DESIGNER'S NOTES by Marc Miller

It's hard to realize that *Their Finest Hour* comes from the early days of the Workshop. When it was published (March, 1976), we had put out only ten games or so, and *Their Finest Hour* was really a big moment for me: it was the first *Europa Series* game in whose design I had had a hand. Now, I was around throughout the publication of *Drang Nach Osten* and *Unentschieden*, and I take credit (when work initially bogged down on *Marita-Merkur*) for suggesting that we do *Narvik*, but until *Their Finest Hour* I had not actually designed within the *Europa* framework. This was my big chance!

At one point, I went to Rich (Banner, he's in overall charge of *Europa*) and said, 'I'd really like to do an *Europa* game one of these days', thinking perhaps I would get to do the Spanish Civil War or some aspect of the Battle of the Atlantic. To my surprise, he responded immediately, 'OK, think you can handle Battle of Britain?' I was off and running!

I was pretty much restricted to the *Europa* air system, and I was also expected to 'clean it up' if it needed it. I immersed myself in the system, checking out aircraft values and cross-checking the errata and comments people had sent in on aircraft ranges and strengths, and every other detail. In the end, I spent about \$100 on aircraft reference books just to help me get my facts straight. The result was a cleaner and faster air system (I think) with somewhat more historical realism. That system was plugged into *Their Finest Hour* and also went into the files for future enhancement of the *Europa* air system overall.

Briefly, I found four things needing improvement or fixing within the framework of the system: interception, rates of appearance, stack density, and night action.

Now, the Battle of Britain is just a splendid situation for the research of period air combat. The basic data is there, often in several different volumes for cross-checking (and in English!), and the battle is an air conflict, rather than air support or

long-range strained fighter encounters. It's different from the Eastern Front, where combat is localized and essentially tactical, and always subordinated to the concept of ground gains. So the lessons to be learned in studying the history of the Battle of Britain leap out and show interesting ideas which can then be universally applied. The first of these was interception.

If the technologically advanced English had to spend so much time and effort vectoring aircraft to incoming enemy bombers, then the fallacy of Russian interception at extreme range in *Drang Nach Osten* becomes apparent. That was my first 'fix': half-range interception by fighters. But that was not enough, because British aircraft scrambled to attack German planes as they crossed over on the way to a target. I lifted the concept of transit attacks (renamed 'patrol attacks') from *SPI's Global War* and applied it to fighters on airfields. It covered the problems of enemy aircraft moving over a friendly controlled area. It was deliberately designed to force the Germans into saturation flights to overwhelm the British patrol attack potential.

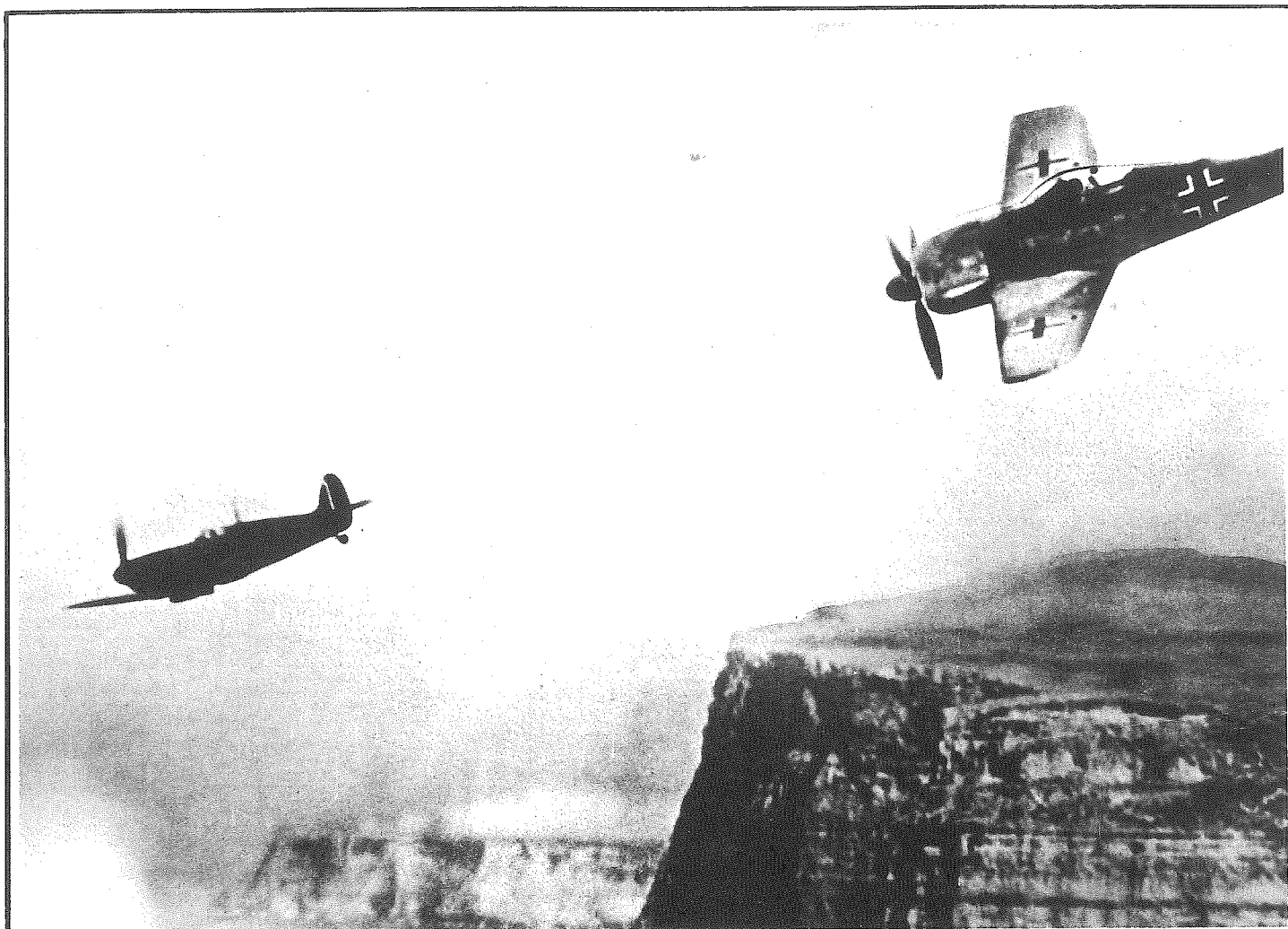
Stack density came up next. In *Drang Nach Osten*, up to five 'groups' could be stacked; at roughly fifty aircraft per group, that allowed routine 250 plane raids. Further, it seemed to mandate large stacks where airpower concentrated, because the enemy could always do the same. Such large stacks also tended to blur the individual aircraft strengths, which I took to be one of the truly shining parts of the *Europa* air system. After trying, and discarding, the idea of no stacking at all, I adopted and playtested stack limits of three air counters. It led to some beautiful results. First, pure fighter stacks (the screen) could always be created, often with shorter ranges, but of some value in the escort role. Granted, this could also be done in the old system, but now, with smaller stacks, the alternative of putting fighters in the mission force severely curtailed the bomb factors delivered to the target. Second, air counters could now be more dispersed across the map. Since any single stack would be smaller, and thus weaker, it was possible to allocate fewer aircraft to any one area. (Remember, I was working with an air system originally designed for the Eastern Front; the rules I was coming up with were intended to cover both Britain and Russia, hopefully cross-fertilizing the two theaters for a greater feel of realism.)

Rates of appearance is the rather mundane subject of *Order of Battle* and balancing historical data with the expected losses in the game. In *Drang Nach Osten*, air losses generally proved to be rather slight, but new aircraft kept coming in, and both sides ended up with simply huge airforces by the end of 1945. But just mandating the removal of certain aircraft during the game has a false ring to it. The replacement system for *Their Finest Hour* was developed to cover this problem. In essence, each belligerent is given a 'group allowance' which determines how many air groups can be fielded at one time. It is admittedly an abstraction, but it does serve to restrict the air counters present and to point up that air groups are made up of men as well as machines. Losses of air groups result in the gradual reduction of air strength in planes and trained pilots. The lesson of the Battle of Britain — don't lose pilots over enemy territory — is included, as is the idea of calling up the training establishment (a German trick) to augment air group strength.

Night action was an aspect of the war common in the Battle of Britain, but ignored in Russia (at least in most tactical accounts). It also had greatest potential for later in the *Europa Series*. Basically, it added an extra phase to the game; night aircraft move independently of day aircraft, and have their own strengths and vulnerabilities. In the strategic bombing offensive against Germany, this was important; in Russia, it was not nearly so. But when the new rules were applied to the Eastern Front, they started showing more of the cross-fertilization that I had expected.

When *Their Finest Hour* actually came out, we truly had mixed feelings. The game included both group- and squadron-level *Battle of Britain*, a *Sealion* game, and a combined game. For the average player, figuring out which rules applied to what game was a nightmare, and yet I, for one, felt it to be one of the

Continued on Page 57

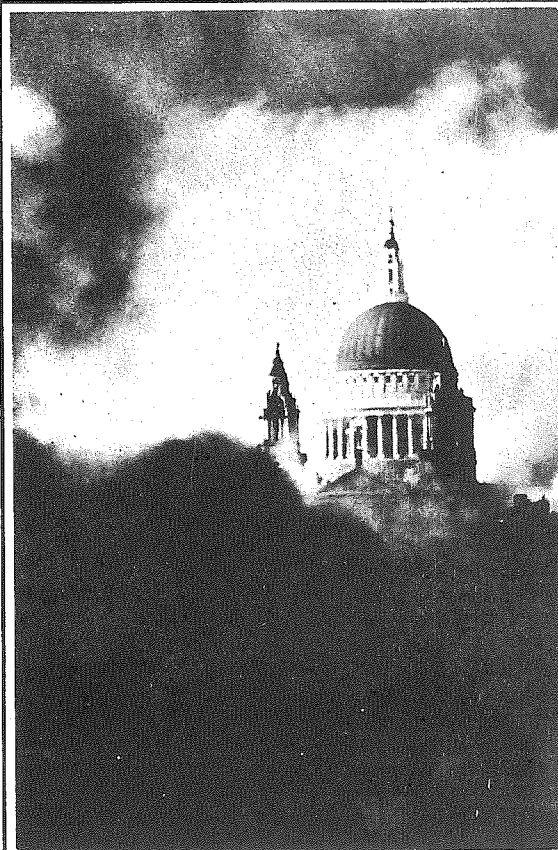


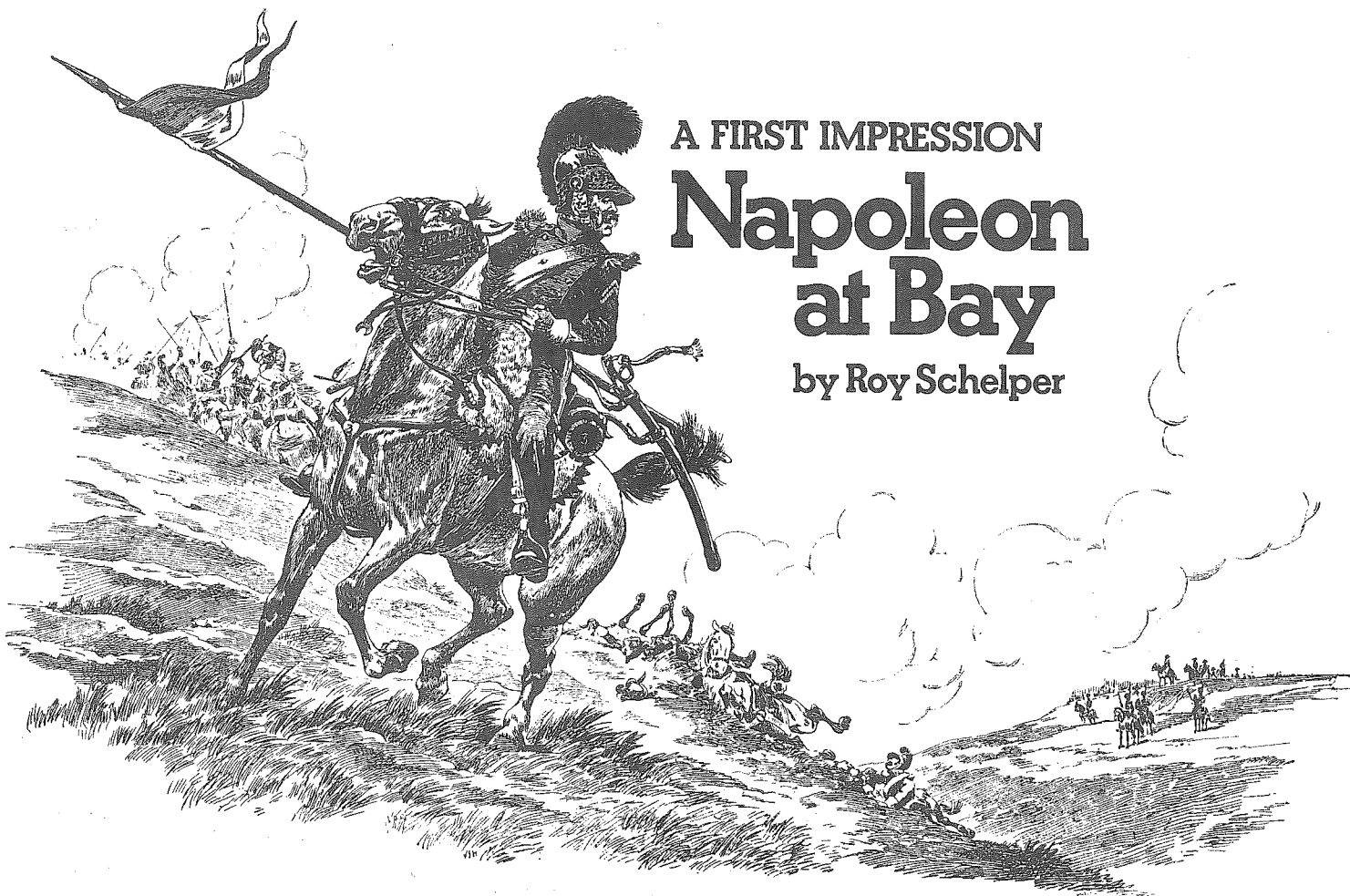
What do I do . . .

if I hear news
that Germans are
trying to land,
or have landed?

I remember that this is the moment to act like a soldier. I do *not* get panicky. I *stay put*. I say to myself: Our chaps will deal with them. I do *not* say: "I must get out of here." I remember that fighting men must have clear roads. I do *not* go on to the road on bicycle, in car or on foot. Whether I am at work or at home, I just *stay put*.

Cut this out—and keep it!





A FIRST IMPRESSION

Napoleon at Bay

by Roy Schelper

NAPOLEON AT BAY — Prelude to Waterloo
Napoleon's Late Campaigns, Study Nr.2: The Campaign in
France, 1814

Tactical Studies Group
P. O. Box 456, New York, NY 10024

Design and Graphics: Kevin Zucker

Topic: Napoleon's flexible defense in France, January to April,
1814.

Size: Two 22-inch x 34-inch maps, ca 400 counters.

Scale: Division level, 2 miles per hex, ca two days per turn.

Game System: Alternating player phases consisting of command, movement, and combat segments. Extensive command control and administrative rules, attrition, limited ability to move in combat segment, limited intelligence.

Complexity: Moderate

Price: \$18.00

Published: July 1978

A FIRST IMPRESSION:

Trained as a historian, I've often lamented the lack of historical accuracy in conflict simulations, which say 'Historical Simulation' right there on the box. In my view, something that calls itself a 'wargame' should be judged as a game; historical validity is nice, but not absolutely necessary. However, when a product starts touting itself as history, it should be evaluated as a book. Therefore, to omit historical facts (at least the vital ones) is ludicrous. Differences in interpretation of history is one thing, but omissions prompted by design compromise (whatever that means) should be regarded with extreme skepticism. Unfortunately, few designers to date have made more than a token effort to truly recreate history.

Tactical Studies Group has released its first title, **Napoleon At Bay**, which is one of the few real attempts to merge history and game. Indeed, **At Bay** is one of the first simulations that tries to be a historical tool, a cardboard laboratory, or any of the other rationalizations people use to justify wargames. It is filled with data presented in an attractive format, and features a blend of innovation and tried game systems.

In any publication there are people behind the final product, and simulations are no different. Those involved in the design, development, art work, and playtesting inexorably stamp their personality on the game. The designer, when consumers deign to acknowledge the human element, gets most of the credit (or blame), but the others are equally important. **At Bay** bears the mark of a Kevin Zucker design — subtle complexity, flashy graphics, and high playability coupled with an occasional attempt to extemporize. The distinguished Development Staff (Edward Curran, J.A. Nelson, Tom Walczyk, Frank Davis, and David Isby) have added individual parts. Zucker, wearing the artist's smock, has contributed a great deal to the final product from the graphics angle.

The obvious question is 'Do too many developers spoil the wargame?' Largely, the answer is no. **At Bay** is a most ambitious undertaking, and is full of innovations. There are flaws, but should this fledgling company stay solvent, the mistakes will be corrected, and the hobby will benefit from the fascinating titles that flow from TSG.

GRAPHICS

At long last, those tireless people in the Art Departments of the industry are starting to receive some of their fair share of the glory. As wargaming moves into its third decade, discriminating buyers are examining graphics. Kevin Zucker, former denizen of Redmond Simonsen's art department at SPI, learned his lessons well. **At Bay** has some dazzling graphics. The game maps are excellent, the counters vivid, and even the rules booklet is graced with illustrations. Furthermore, the historical

booklet features over twenty situation maps using the game's own map. However, this feature doesn't coincide with the historical narrative (Esposito's *History and Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars*) and the names of the town are absent, thereby invalidating the entire *raison d'être* of the maps. Nonetheless, the idea is excellent, and I hope to see more of this sort of practice, as well as Zucker's imaginative graphics, which add enormously to *At Bay's* feel.

RULES

Napoleon At Bay blends elements from previous works, e.g., the command/initiative rules from *War Between the States* and the Forced March Interphase from *Frederick the Great*. Backed by these proven ideas, the numerous innovations form a bold new game system. However, *At Bay* reveals unmistakable signs of a rush job. (Obviously so it could be premiered at ORIGINS '78).

The relatively few flaws are things that would have become apparent in serious 'blind testing', such as 'Does blowing up bridges require a movement command?'; 'What is the initial deployment of the Centers of Operations units in the Campaign Game?'; and 'What happens when a line of communications can't be traced on Primary Road hexes? Furthermore, the entire logistics system (or, rather, lack of it) is a farce; after creating an excellent system for 'administrative' functions, the staff copped out, leaving supply largely implied. Rules similar to those used in *Shenandoah* (Battleline, 1976) would have been at once more flavorful and more realistic. Given the low unit density of *At Bay*, rules for logistics would not have added excessive complexity to the game and would have been far superior to the present void.

To be fair, the majority of *At Bay's* rules work quite well, though parts are very convoluted. Until players become familiar with the game, the rules seem to confront them with an endless series of charts and die rolls.

Au fond, though, *At Bay* is a solid design, but with a bit more time it might have been outstanding. Hopefully, *At Bay's* system will be refined in the future Napoleonic titles projected by TSG.

AT PLAY

Maneuver, economy of force, and the indirect approach are concepts that few modern military thinkers stop to consider, and these notions occur to even fewer game designers as the Clausewitzian ideas of mass and power have obliterated these subtle concepts. *At Bay* is a remarkable departure from the established norm. The rules concerning lines of communication make it mandatory to maneuver against enemy communications. Battles should only be fought as a last resort, and those who try to 'panzer' their way to victory are liable to find themselves on the wrong side of a retreat. Napoleon himself nearly won the campaign by brilliant maneuver, only to lose it because of his obsession that every move should be capped with battle, thus playing into the haphazardly adopted attritional strategy of the Allies. Consequently, *At Bay* realistically captures much of Napoleonic warfare.

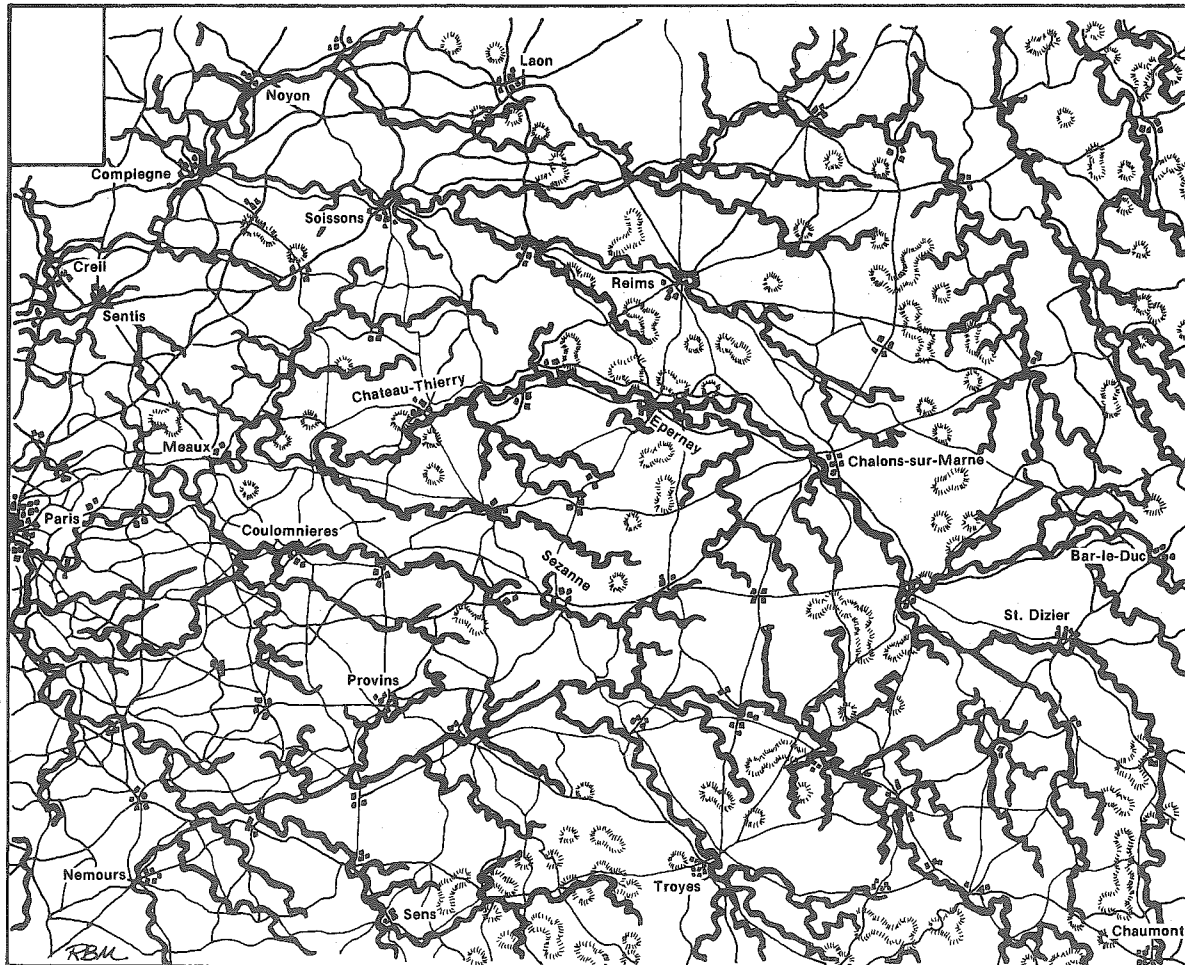
PLAYERS' NOTES FROM 500 B.C.

The rules charmingly close with Designer's Notes by Leo Tolstoy (from *War and Peace*), but perhaps the best advice that could be given to those about to play this game was written over two thousand years ago by Sun Tzu, a Chinese military theorist. He wrote the following in *The Art of War*:

'Supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.'

'In all fighting the direct method may be used for joining battle, but indirect methods will be needed to secure victory.'

'To take a long circuitous route, after enticing the enemy out of the way, and though starting after him, to contrive to reach the goal before him, shows the artifice of *deviation*. He will conquer who knows the artifice of deviation for such is the art of maneuver.'



Fire & Movement's Sketch-Map of TSG's *Napoleon at Bay* © F&M and TSG

DIPLOMACY WORLD

DIPLOMACY WORLD is a quarterly magazine on Diplomacy which is edited by Walter Buchanan, R. R. #3, Box 324, Lebanon, IN 46052. The purpose of each 40-page offset issue is to present a broad overview of the postal Diplomacy hobby by printing articles on good play, listing rating systems, game openings, and printing a complete variant game and map with each issue. Subs are \$4.00 (\$4.50 foreign) with single copies \$1.25 each (payable to Walt Buchanan).

Diplomacy is a registered trademark for a game copyright by the Avalon Hill Game Co., 4517 Harford Rd., Baltimore, MD 21214. The set is available from them for \$11.00 plus postage.



AVAILABLE FROM

WALTER W. BUCHANAN
RURAL ROUTE NO. 3
LEBANON, INDIANA
46052

ROBERT THE BRUCE

The death of Alexander III in 1286 unleashed the Scots Wars of Independence, in reality 50 years of bitter baronial struggle between the houses of Bruce and Baliol into which Edward I of England would enter with the avowed intention of destroying the kingdom and annexing it to England. Armed with his claim to overlordship and his powerful army he would invade Scotland again and again, aided by the fact that the two factions hated each other even more than they hated him.

The game *Robert the Bruce*, designed to accommodate from 2 to 6 players in a number of different scenarios, simulates these baronial struggles in an exciting, accurate game for adults, 15 up. *Robert the Bruce* is sturdily and colourfully presented with:

[1] 4-colour mapsheet in antique style mounted on 4 connected mapboards giving a playing area of 20" by 22".

[2] 240 die cut counters in 4 colours representing the Scots nobility (coloured heraldic shields), galloglas, knights, clansmen, spearmen, bowmen, fleets etc. as well as plain counters in 6 colours to denote the different baronial factions.

[3] 32 page, antique style rule book containing, besides a set of clear rules for play, an extensive section of historical information on the period, Lords and Lordships of Scotland, the Warriors, chronology of the Wars, Family Trees etc. etc. - all profusely illustrated with medieval works of art.

[4] a sturdy 12" by 11" box with 4-colour artwork depicting a late medieval map of Scotland.

Robert the Bruce is available from *Fusilier Games* at 27 Ashvale Place, ABERDEEN, Scotland U.K: for only £7.00 post and package paid, or foreign equivalent. Or ask at your local shop. Attractive dealer/shop rates available on request.

Driving straight for Paris or the Allied bases will not do in *At Bay*; so be prepared to move, for it is a game of maneuver, and there are fewer than twenty units per side on the two maps with lots of roads. In other words, just moving around won't cut it; devious, purposeful maneuver will.

EN FIN

Napoleon at Bay is one of the most ambitious designs I've seen in quite a while. It tries to break so much new ground that it occasionally forgets to cover the older. Though several of these features falter or fail, the overall quality is high. *At Bay's* faults are those of haste and excessive division of responsibility among the developers. Nonetheless, the game is worthwhile and, more importantly, well worth the price. *Napoleon At Bay* is a diamond, poorly cut, but still a gem.

NAPOLEON ERRATA

OFFICIAL ERRATA (August, 1978)

Sequence of Play, paragraph 5. Pursuit is always given in hexes. (The reference to movement points is incorrect.)

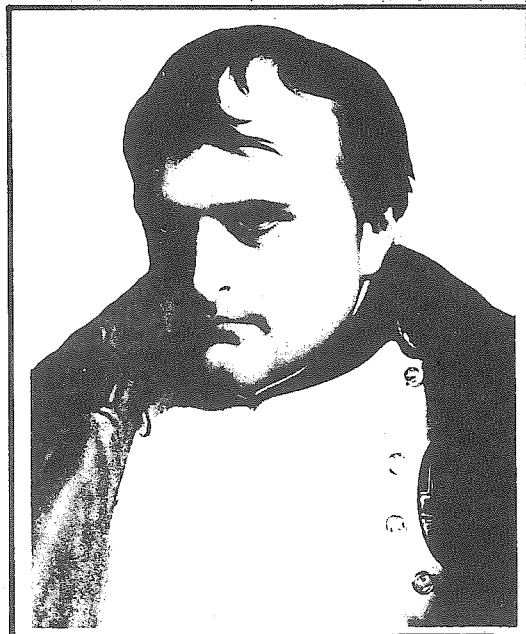
Combat, paragraph 13. If an attacker occupies more than one hex and is required to take strength point losses, the owning player decides which hex begins the casualty taking procedure.

Combat, paragraph 13-14. A force which does not participate in an attack, but which is adjacent to an enemy force which is being attacked, *must* retreat the number of hexes indicated by an adverse combat result suffered by the friendly attacking units — but it may *not* be pursued by the defending units nor does it suffer any combat strength loss. If the attack is successful, the non-participating friendly force does nothing (that is, it may *not* participate in pursuit).

Scenarios, paragraph 18 (Six Day Scenario). The French Curial Division is erroneously listed twice; it is subordinate to Ney with a strength of 3; delete listing under Napoleon. Replace Allied Horn Inf 4 by Kluex Inf 4. The Karpov Cavalry has a strength of 2, not 4 as listed.

Campaign Scenario. The Centers of Operations begin the game in the following hexes: French W-3633, Army of Silesia E-3731, Army of Bohemia E-3754.

Historical research personages inform us that Bluecher believed himself pregnant with an elephant *not* by Napoleon but by a Groggnard of the Old Guard. Note that this corrects previous Erratum.



KESSELRING

A First Impression

by Ralph Vickers

KESSELRING

World Wide Wargamers

74 Cherry Tree Rise, Buckhurst Hill, Essex, United Kingdom

Design: Bob Latter

Graphics: David Green

Topic: Allied Invasion of Italy, September-December, 1943.

Size: One 21-inch x 31-inch map, ca 170 counters.

Scale: Division level, ca 9 miles per hex, sixteen one-week turns.

Game System: Novel sequence of play with *three* intermingled movement phases for each player per game turn, movement in two of these phases being limited to units under HQ control. Rigid and active zones of control. Step reduction. Extensive rules for supply, air and naval support, demolitions.

Complexity: Moderate

Published: May 1978

Price: £ 2.00 (with #5 of *The Wargamer*); £ 4.49 separate sales edition.

Play of magazine edition requires errata, to be printed in *The Wargamer* #7 and available in UK on receipt of SASE, for overseas on receipt of \$20 for postage. Separate sales edition contains revised rules.

Is it possible to design a better game about the World War II Italian campaign than the classic *Anzio*?

The Wargamer, Britain's answer to *Strategy & Tactics* magazine, has tried in its 5th issue with *Kesselring*. Admirers of *Anzio*'s famous map at first glance will be disappointed — *Kesselring*'s map is strictly functional. But it does give us Italy's toe and heel. Impossible here is the strategy of 'sealing off' Italy's deep south with the zones of control of a few weak German units. But those who delve deeper into this game than a glance at the map will find much new material of interest.

Why did they try to improve on *Anzio*? Actually the emphasis is to approach the Italian campaign from a different angle. Designer Bob Latter, a great admirer of *Anzio*, felt the classic's supply rules are too abstract. Nor, he felt, does *Anzio* reflect the mighty devastation of the massed artillery bombardments which were frequent in the campaign. Also included in *Kesselring* are less abstract air bombardments, plus fighter dogfights high in the skies, as optional rules. This is one of the few land games that simulates air war in some detail.

Kesselring does not offer the practically limitless strategic permutations of *Anzio* — there are just three scenarios. But the heart of this game is command control. In every game turn there are three movement phases for each player, and two of them — the strategic and tactical movement phases — are directly controlled by headquarters units. This system is deceptively simple. At the beginning of each game turn both players adjust their headquarters units to give them their

tactical-strategic 'mix'. For instance, if General Clark's 5th Army HQ unit is placed with a 1-3 uppermost, during strategic movement Clark can command one Allied unit to move, and during tactical movement he can move three. Clark's reverse side is 3-1.

It's a game mechanic that provides an element of advanced planning initiative. This makes the game a real brain-twisting challenge. Command range is five hexes regardless of terrain and enemy zones. Movement in these phases is the same as regular movement, but the effect is that if you've planned wrong, you can find yourself being out-maneuvered. This is a rule that deserves study. It may be a 'technological breakthrough' for the hobby.

There are other rules that are also perhaps original (although, with so many games, who can be sure?). A nice little rule simulates fog of war: at any time each side may replace one unit with two '?' units. When these two '?' units fork off in different directions, that's fog of war. The 'real' unit is marked on the reverse side. This rule, too, deserves study as a significant breakthrough in an area of wargaming that is still primitive.

There is road, port, and bridge demolition, and ambushes — both real and fake. Engineers can build bridges.

Much of *Anzio* has been retained, such as sea transfer, stacking points, beachhead supply and build-up restrictions, and step reduction. A difference in this last case is that a unit may never be completely eliminated. At worst it becomes a 'remnant' which can be rebuilt after a certain interval. This rule does tempt one to 'bad generalship' — a crass disregard for casualties — but it's an interesting experiment. There are two Combat Resolution Tables (not counting the Bombardment Table). To use the more favorable Combat Table requires the expenditure of a supply unit. In combat both sides may suffer losses. Only at the higher odds are retreats mandatory, and in an open-ended diversionary attack at anything lower than 1-3. In the early stages this does tend to slow the action. Most early combats are toe-to-toe slugfests with neither side ceding ground. This may be more realistic. On the other hand, because combat is mandatory, when there's been a stand-off you've either got to fight again or slink away. Mandatory combat — perhaps a rule that's a bit old-fashioned — does, however, nicely dovetail with the rules on tactical and strategic movement in that in a stand-off where you're weakened you have a chance to bring up reinforcements.

Another perhaps original idea is a 'running' victory point total. Points are won by cities captured. (Too bad they didn't print the city victory point values on the map.) The game runs 16 turns, but if at the end of Turn 3 the Allies have won less than 30 points, they lose; if they have more than 76, they win. This keeps both sides under continuous pressure.

Game Turn Phases are: Allied/German HQ Planning, Weather, Allied Movement and Supply Status Determination, German Strategic Movement, Allied Tactical Movement, Allied/German Bombardment, Allied Combat, Allied Replacements and Reinforcements, then the exact reverse, including another Allied/German Bombardment.

There are three kinds of weather, and Bad Weather is very tough on supply. But weather is tightly controlled so that on the average you get the kind of weather you should expect.

Considering its subject matter and the possible originality of quite a few of its rules, this game is important. It's therefore doubly unfortunate that there were serious production snafus in the magazine edition. The rules themselves are not much worse than usual, but the set-up instructions are so badly fouled that the magazine edition is virtually unplayable except perhaps for highly experienced wargamers who are also familiar with *Anzio*. They even forgot to provide a few essential unit counters. There is now available a revised 'separate sale' edition, but for the magazine edition you need the errata.

No, *Kesselring* is not a better game than *Anzio*. But it's different, and that's really what they set out to do.

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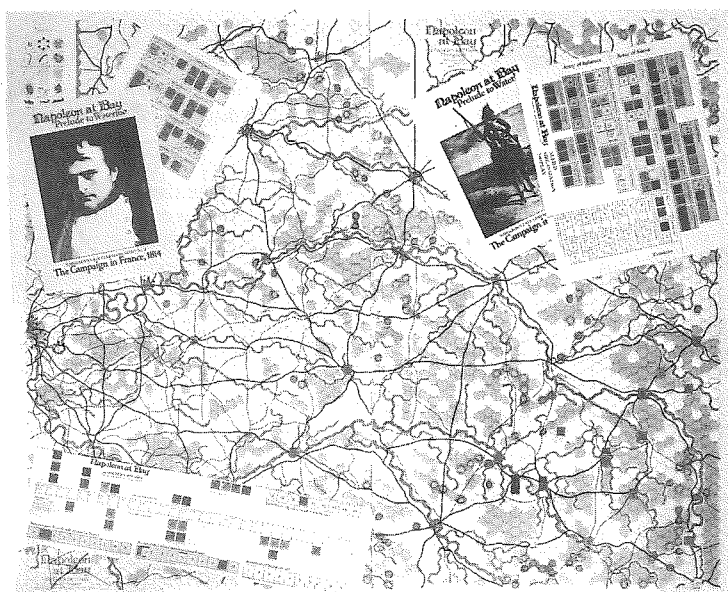
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(See Review on Page 18 of this issue)



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Latter-Day Crusade
OPERATION CRUSADER
 Game Designers' Workshop
 Designer: Frank Chadwick
 Game Preview by Friedrich Helfferich

The name of the game is unintentionally apt: you will embark on a crusade into the unfamiliar, to the frontiers of game design, and surely for a long, long time. It will be quite a while before this chunk of a game can be evaluated authoritatively. The present note has no such ambition.

Operation Crusader is a company-level game simulating the British operations against Rommel near Tobruk in 1941. Three scenarios of widely different lengths and unit densities and the 469-turn campaign game cover the Operations *Brevity*, *Battleaxe*, and *Crusader* of May, June, and November/December 1941. At first glance, the gamer is impressed with beautiful craftsmanship, and a little overwhelmed — not so much by size and scope (five maps from El Gazala to Sidi Barani at 1.5 miles per hex, ca 2400 counters, one-hour turns) as by the complexities of a radically new game system which may be the most innovative of the decade. It lets you contend with an elusive enemy of whose strength and whereabouts you have only a faint idea. Moves are plotted ahead of time in secret, and executed simultaneously. On the mapboard you rarely see more of the enemy than 'columns' whose compositions and status (encamped, traveling, etc.) you can only guess — even when you must decide whether to stage an immediate assault on what you have run into.

One rule more than any other conveys an idea of the game's flavor: a unit striking out into the desert must move straight ahead and to the limit of its movement allowance if no terrain feature such as a mountain, wadi, or trail crossing can serve for orientation or an enemy is encountered. This evokes visions of a bowling alley; you send a unit off in a well calculated direction toward some real or imagined target, never knowing what, if anything, it is going to hit. And yes, that way a company can get 'lost' out there and have a hard time making it back.

Operation Crusader can be played by two. But it seems the game will be at its best when played by teams, with limited intelligence and communications, and with an imaginative umpire well versed in the rules.

The game is excellently produced. The maps are on par with those of award-winning *Avalanche*. Well designed charts facilitate play. The counters are every bit as good as we have come to expect from GDW. For a change, it is the aircraft counters that carry silhouettes. (A nice touch: the silhouettes are drawn to scale, so that a Bf 109 appears appropriately smaller than a He 111.) The overall impression is most pleasing.

If this game turns out to be as good as it looks and proves as enjoyable in play as it is interesting, challenging, and innovative, then it must be counted among the best ever published.

Old Glory Can't Lose ...
NEW ORLEANS, 1815
 Challenge Games [PO Box 8861, Greensboro, NC 27410]
 Design: Dennis Lutz
 Game Review by Bill Haggart

The way *New Orleans* plays belies the name of its publisher, *Challenge Games*. The game covers the dramatic, if meaningless battle where 'Old Hickory' decimated the British. It simulates extremely well the rather considerate way in which the Empire's veterans walked into the Americans' waiting guns, but it can't be called a game.

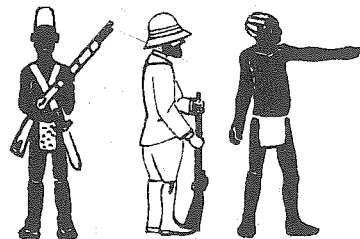
The mapboard is well done in three colors on heavy stock; the counters are thin. The game system is good and straightforward in presentation. Each turn has a mutual artillery fire phase, then first player movement, mutual infantry fire, and finally melee; the sequence is repeated for the second player. Morale is included. Artillery can fire shot or cannister, and batteries are able to silence enemy guns. Officers can help rally troops, and modify die rolls in melees. There is even a provision for creating detachments from regular units.

There are errors and omissions, as one might expect in a first effort. Artillery is given neither stacking values nor melee values. It is not clear how morale applies to detachments from regular units. There

are no special rules for cavalry, which behaves just like fast infantry. The victory conditions are vague; the Americans gain points for occupying the 'Jackson Line' — what that is, I can only guess (a railway trunk line out of Miami ??). And do American guns on the west bank of the river count as captured for victory conditions?

The canal or ditch which the Americans so cleverly used for defense divides the map in half. The right flank is protected by the Mighty Mississippi, the left by an extensive, nearly impenetrable cypress swamp. The only option for the British is to suggest his opponent stay on key when singing, 'we fired out guns and the British kept a-comin' ...'

I played *New Orleans* three times. After being slaughtered as the British twice, long before the twelve game turns were over, I thanked my opponent for offering to switch sides. He pulled all troops back out of cannister range, sent a thousand marines and sailors across the river to silence my guns on the west bank, wisely used counterbattery fire against my others, and then assaulted the canal under protection of more than twenty skirmisher detachments. The skirmishers were annihilated, but the British carried the canal! I was impressed: the British *could* break the line after all! And the game had been exciting. But when we counted the victory points, it turned out to have been a lopsided American victory despite the obvious British success I find it very hard to believe that this game was even playtested.



Publish Before You Perish
SOURCE OF THE NILE
 Discovery Games [POB 3395, St. Paul, MN 55165]
 Design: Ross Maker and David Wesely
 Game Review by Roy Schelper

The search for the Nile's source and the exploration of the southern half of Africa is the topic of this historical simulation.

Using a very complex game system, *Source* pits one to six players against Africa, and it's a lucky expedition that avoids catastrophe. Hostile natives, stampeding elephants, and disease can smite the unwary, but as a Malian told me when a road disappeared during a flash flood, 'C'est la vie ici en Afrique, eh.'

Players represent nations in Europe who compete for scientific glory in a rather sedate struggle. Part of the struggle for Africa was for glory, but the designers seem to have omitted the entire commercial aspect of the era. However, the parts of history that they do portray are well

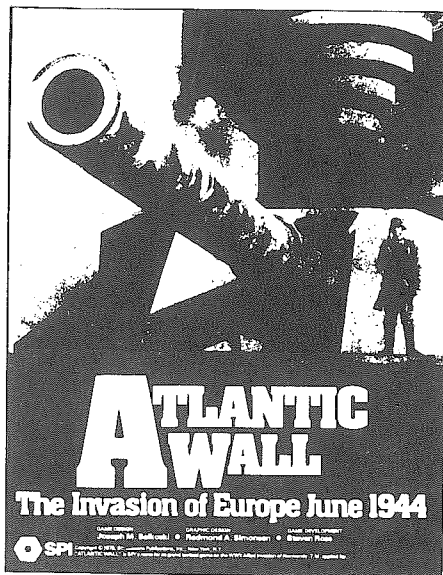
done. The idea of a virtually blank map that players fill in with crayons is good, even if the crayons resist being removed from the map. (I switched to grease pencils under a sheet of glass.)

Basically, the game is played as follows: Players draw 'event cards' to raise money to finance the expedition. Once in Africa they organize the expedition, and then, it's off into the bush. The explorers, which may be any of several types of specialists, discover what is in each blank hex, using a complicated random-generation system. The rules are poorly written in spots, especially the river generation rules, but every major system hangs together.

The victory conditions are quite varied, but the fundamental criterion for victory point acquisition is 'publishing' the contents of each hex back in Europe. This is harder than it sounds, because the explorer has to return to Europe alive to write his account. It is a real case of *publish before you perish* in *Source of the Nile*.

The game is fun and absorbing, and the history, such as there is, is reasonable, though it would have been nice to see counters for Burton, Speke, and Livingstone.

Source of the Nile is highly playable, and a magnificent solo game. Discovery Games is to be applauded for this product which any history buff will find quite enjoyable.



As Big as its Topic

ATLANTIC WALL

The Invasion of Europe, June 1944

Simulations Publications, Inc.

Designer: Joe Balkoski

Game Review by Dave Minch

Atlantic Wall, SPI's attempt to do the ultimate D-Day game, comes with five full-color 22x34-inch maps and 2000 unit and informational counters which cannot be stored in the spaces provided. This, I know, is a flippant way to begin a review but there aren't many ways to review a

game this big, in a short space. It's like asking for a capsule description of *War and Peace*.

The game comes in a box 11½x9x4-inch which is to be the next generation in SPI packages. I bought games from them when they were shipped in an envelope and any package is superior to that. After punching out the counters for *Atlantic Wall*, I began looking for a large envelope. Tightly packed, the counters might barely fit into the two compartmented trays provided, but you will need to store units in a way which preserves divisional organization. I have about 400 counters in ziploc bags.

I haven't had this game long enough to do much with it so my impressions are all tentative. Apart from the storage problem, I haven't found much wrong with the assembly, save that it is overwhelmingly big! I guess that's a recommendation.

The game system reminds me of many others. The closest relative is *Wacht am Rhein* but there are borrowings from systems like *Cobra* and other World War II games. There's also a lot of new stuff. Truthfully, it would be a good game without much new in the way of rules, because the scope is big and well handled.

It is well handled, I think despite the usual rules overkill; there are two and a half pages devoted to the sequence of play, for instance. Not to the mechanics of each segment, mind you, those are covered individually. All of the space on the sequence of play is devoted to the sequence of play. If credit is given for completeness of rules, *Atlantic Wall* is at the head of the list.

Despite the fact that this is a big game, done with SPI's to-be-taken-for-granted complexity, it can be handled for play, especially in the mini-games, most of which use only one map and cover some small portion of the fighting. Though I can't recommend this game to an amateur, experienced wargamers should have very little trouble grasping the mechanics of play and getting started. Most of the operations of the sequence of play will be used only a few times. The real combat takes place in a sequence of air allocation, Allied movement and combat, German movement and combat. Interlarded with these operations are stages and phases for all of the facets which are necessary to the game system and the model of an invasion.

When paying \$28 for a game, the purchaser has the right to expect that some portion be first-rank or exceptional. On the face of it, *Atlantic Wall* meets the expectation by size alone. It also is done with superior physical systems for which SPI is known. If you like big games, this one is worth the price.

I know that's not much to say but the thing is bigger than I am.

Familiar System — Period Decor

DRESDEN, 1813

World Wide Wargamers [formerly UK Wargamers]

74 Cherry Tree Rise, Buckhurst Hill, Essex, UK

Designer: Ken Broadhurst

Game Review by Jack Greene

The Battle of Dresden was fought between the French and the allied armies of Austria, Prussia, and Russia. Although not an overwhelming victory for the French, Dresden did bloody the Allies' nose, especially in view of the fact that their troops numbered 200,000 versus the 120,000 that Napoleon put onto the field of battle. Ultimately, the Allies would win the campaign in Germany in 1813, but battles such as Dresden showed that Napoleon had not lost his magic touch.

The game arrives boxed. Its graphics, by David Green, are outstanding. The die-cut counters are uniquely color-coded in very pleasing tints so that Corps can be distinguished easily. The 24x32-inch map-sheet is very colorful and has hills, forest, clear terrain, city, fortress, walls, a river and streams, and a sewage canal in which your troops may be forced to wade through you know what! Some hills have lines indicating they cannot be crossed — the only not immediately apparent feature. A lot of pleasing hues are used, and the map is made to appear like an old document — quite a welcome change from the standard fare.

Ken Broadhurst — I hesitate to call him a designer — has done his research and development work well. My only disagreement with him is that I believe he overvalues the French horse; after the disaster of 1812 the French were hurting for good horses! But, what is more serious, Ken has not really come up with a new design; the rules are basically those of *Napoleon's Last Battles* (SPI), with a few embellishments. That is unfortunate. To those who want real history in their Napoleonic game I would recommend *La Bataille de la Moskowa* (GDW; or *La Bataille d'Auerstadt* (Marshal Enterprises). But if you want a good game, *Dresden* is it.

Mr. Broadhurst has put together a fine game covering a unique battle. Picture St. Cyr's French Corps surrounded on three sides by an immense enemy army which, hampered by the lethargy of its commanders, advances only slowly. Fighting starts at one flank and gradually spreads as more Allied troops join the fray and Napoleon with his forces comes to St. Cyr's rescue. The Allies, driving for the Elbe bridges and the city proper, encounter forest, gardens, walls, and fortifications — and more and more Frenchmen. Usually, in the midst of street fighting, the reinforced and more mobile French army seizes the initiative and starts to push the Allies back, out of the city. The second day then sees the armies locked in classic combat over possession of the open battlefield.

Dresden is fun to play. The graphics add to this, and so does the lovingly crafted detail of the map — the Paper Mill, the carefully inserted names of the suburbs. For a first major effort the game is good. And it has 'class'!

(Jack Greene is a Contributing Editor of WWW's magazine **THE WARGAMER** but has not been involved in the design or development of **Dresden**.)



Dog-Day Afternoon **THE BATTLE OF MONMOUTH**

Denron Amusements

13 MacFarlan Avenue, Hawthorne, NJ
07506

Designer: Ron Magazzu

Game Review by Dave Minch

I've been playing wargames for a long time and could count the titles I've seen based on the American Revolution, using the fingers of one hand; if I bothered to try and remember them. The truth is that most of those games aren't very interesting, even when they are playable or otherwise 'good'. That means the designers aren't doing their jobs.

The American Revolution was a revolutionary conflict. It created the basis of the system of combat known as 'Napoleonic' tactics, by fusing line and formation maneuvers with the *ad hoc* systems developed by the colonists. As fascinating a period of history as this deserves better games.

Now there's **The Battle of Monmouth**. This game has some new approaches. In organization, **Monmouth** is a fourth or fifth generation descendant of the earliest Avalon Hill games; the units are infantry, cavalry and artillery, the cavalry and infantry have combat and movement allowances and the terrain, in ten different types, is the usual mix of clear, road, slope and miscellaneous obstructed. As a bonus, the map is provided with the usual AHKS letter/number designations on rows and columns, a convenience for play by mail, etc. A number of later techniques have been layed on over this, though, to capture the feel of the period and of the particular battle.

The American player is faced with a superior force, in a prepared condition and position (the rules allow for reasonably free set-up). The initial American forces,

under General Lee, are subject to some aggravating restrictions on retreat intended to simulate the disorderly behavior of the units. On the twelfth game turn (of twenty-two), the relief force under Washington appears and it's all downhill for the British after that.

The British player has an opposite problem. He must win, if he's going to win, early in the game. That requires a lot of movement and some good tactical sense. Many players come equipped with the latter but the British forces don't have much in the way of movement allowances. Theirs are less than the Americans' in every case but a few. If the American can keep his forces together, the game may become a foot race, which the American is sure to win.

From this comes the most interesting idea in the game. Each player is allowed to force-march his units, at a cost in 'fatigue'. More than this, because of the severe heat on the day of the battle, combat results from the differential results table are advance/retreat and either disruption, elimination, or fatigue. A unit's fatigue status is tracked by means of numerical counters, concealed under the unit. Fatigue reduces the movement of infantry or cavalry and the firepower of artillery. Enough fatigue will eliminate the unit.

This system reminds me very much of the concealed factors in **Manassas**, a Charlie winner and quite a popular game itself. It may be that this is a good design route to follow in doing games of the pre-repeating rifle era. The approach in **Monmouth** is distinct from that of **Manassas**; Mr. Magazzu tells me it's a case of independent invention. I can see ways that the same or similar systems could be adapted to many 19th century topics. You might be well-advised to take a look at these.

The game system is innovative but familiar enough to be easily learned. The rules are well organized and printed, as are all of the requisite charts and figures. The unit counters are acceptable, if nothing special, and the map is in black and white. All of this makes an interesting game with serviceable production standards. If you have any interest in games of this period, this one is worth your notice. It's not free of faults, like all games, but it's well enough done to be played and it has some very interesting solutions to design problems.

No Substitute for M*A*S*H*

38th PARALLEL

Wellington Wargames Inc. [Box 18, S-590
40, Kisa, Sweden]

Designer: Claes Henrikson

Game Review by Phil Kosnett

Readers of F&M will know that the Korean War is a particular interest of mine. So it is with more than usual regret that I warn you: stay away from the 38th Parallel — it is a wretched place to visit.

Wellington Wargames from Sweden has

yet to register a hit, and in this case the reason is obvious: they know little about the Korean War. Many rules are lifted practically unchanged from SPI's old **Korea** (itself less than brilliant). Even the mistakes made in **Korea** are present — a Turkish unit accidentally undervalued in that game is equally short-changed here. The Swedes have also swallowed a bit of North Korean propaganda: their battalion-sized mechanized 'brigades' and regiment-sized armored 'divisions' are absurdly overblown in power. The order of battle explains that a UN unit marked 'P' is Pakistani; it is from the Philippines. The U.S. 1st Cavalry Division is weaker and faster than the infantry — logical enough, except that this unit was a regular infantry outfit with an old name.

Besides the factual errors, there are dubious interpretations. The U.S. may make amphibious landings only on the west coast of Korea, presumably because they made their historical landings there. North Korea units cannot retreat into China, but UN troops may freely invade. The Communists may contest control of the air and can even use air units for ground support — the Communists *never* made a serious air effort down at the front, and if they had tried, the UN Air Forces would have wiped out their sanctuary bases in China. The designer has a pretty pessimistic idea of the speed of Chinese mountain troops in difficult terrain; at the same time he gives them the same road movement rate as the Americans, who, of course, had motor transport.

There is one nice, innovative rule: mechanized units that move or retreat while out of supply abandon their trucks and are treated thereafter as slow infantry (the 'leg' strength is printed on the back of the counter). Unfortunately, there is a discrepancy regarding units retreating across rivers: the rules say such units are eliminated, but the Terrain Effects Chart only says the trucks are lost and does not state what happens to the soldiers. And there are replacements for units aplenty, but not for lost trucks, though the UN had countless vehicles around.

Overall, the rules are scanty, and it takes an experienced player to figure out what is supposed to be going on. But unlike Wellington's previous efforts they are written in reasonable English. The 17x24-inch blue and gray map is clear enough, though mountains and valleys are in strange places and most of the rivers are missing. The 228 backprinted, one-color counters are slightly smaller than standard, but serviceable. The 8-page rulebook is typed, not set, as is the chart sheet. What puzzles me is that Wellington is talking about an expansion kit for a 1980 Korean war — why didn't they include it?

Maybe next time the designers at Wellington will try their hand at a subject they know. For now, I suggest you spend your money elsewhere — or turn on M*A*S*H* for better fun.

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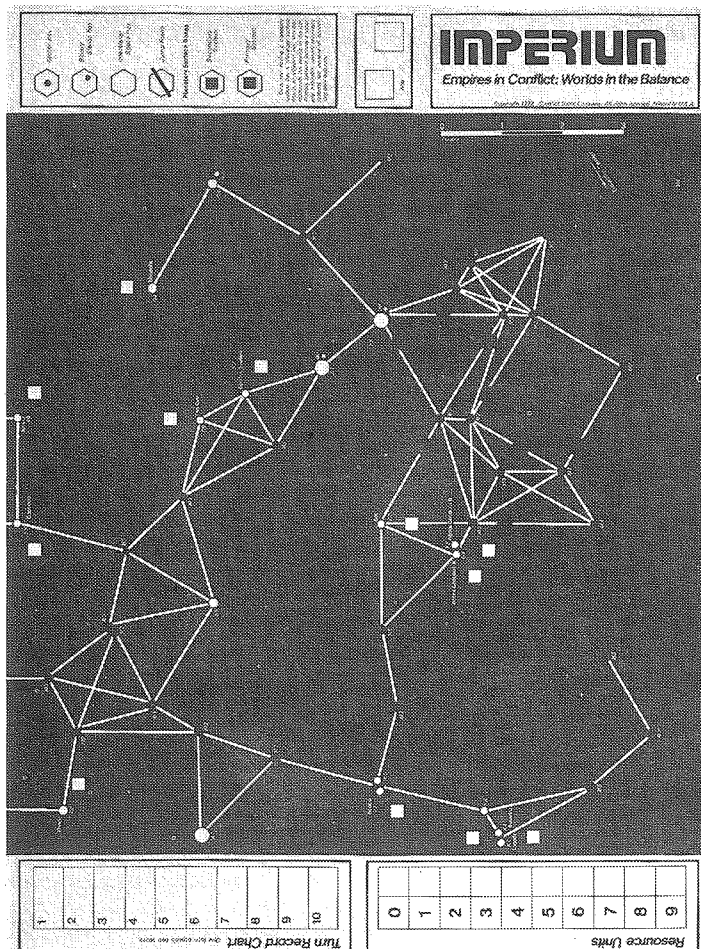
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ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER SCIENCE

by Dave Minch

Wargaming in America is not very old, as a serious hobby with a large commercial aspect. At the outside, it's twenty years old, dating back to the founding of Avalon Hill by Charles Roberts. In those twenty years the hobby has undergone many changes, in the number and type of games available, in the preferences of the gamers, even in the people who make up the hobby and in the state-of-the-art in game design.

The latest change to our favorite pastime is the appearance of dozens of Science Fiction Games. There hasn't been a surge like this one since the outpouring of east front games after the publication of *Kursk*. There are good games and bad in the bunch — life is like that — so let's take a look at the state of such games today.

There are many parallels between wargaming and Science Fiction fandom. Most notable is the large crossover of people. Many people who like Science Fiction — StF ('steff') to many devotees — are also gamers. Thus, it's not surprising that there's a market for StF games among fans and gamers who want something a little different.

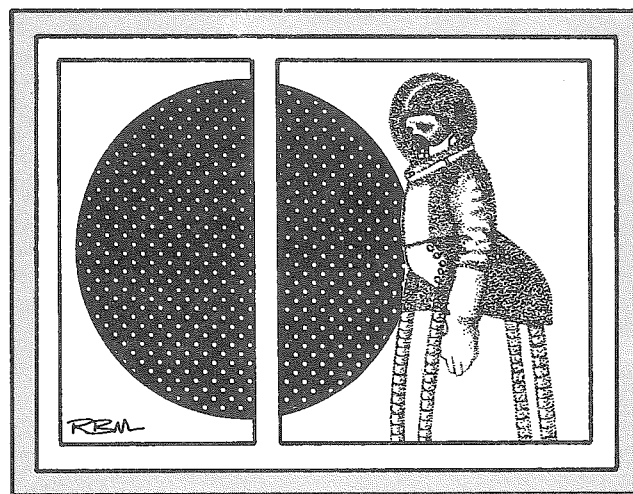
Despite the fact that there are knowledgeable StF fans playing and designing games, there hasn't, yet, been a StF game which has the impact of *PanzerBlitz* or *Napoleon at Waterloo*, games which changed the shape of the hobby. *Dungeons & Dragons*, a fantasy game, has had that influence but StF fans are still waiting for something like that to happen for science fiction. Instead, the majority of StF games in print could best be described as 'Space Opera'.

Space Opera was a term coined to describe the type of StF popular in the pulp magazine market of the '30's. It indicates the kind of story which is interchangeable with a western, a detective story, or a tale of pirates on the Spanish Main. If, by changing 'blaster' to 'six gun' and 'alien' to 'Commanche' you have the same story, it's Space Opera.

There's nothing wrong with Space Opera, if that's what you like, but it has been many years since there has been a place for it in StF literature. Not since the '30's has much been published and what has seen print has not been well received by readers; we know that better stuff is available. Space Opera is good, if simple minded, adventure entertainment. It is suited to the sort of thing gamers expect from a role-playing game.

So that's what we're getting in role-playing StF games. If you like Space Opera, you'll love the run of role-playing games available. If you don't, you're out of luck. Most of them are entertaining but I have a low tolerance for space pirates and green aliens who are after Earth's radium and/or women. It was done better in *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, circa 1935.

Sadly, that's what we're getting for StF role-playing games. Adventure games should not be constructed solely on this kind of foundation. There are other ways to do it — after all, there are still stories of adventure published in science fiction magazines. These adventures, though, do not usually involve



the rescue of scantily clad blondes from the clutches of slaving bug-eyed aliens. I would bet that a role-playing game set in a framework like Larry Niven's *Known Space* would do very well. Adventure does not have to be Space Opera. Compared to the adventure stories written since Space Opera went out of fashion, it's not very good.

The majority of all StF games are set, at least partly, in outer space. This indicates shortsightedness on the part of designers since space is only one of many environments treated in StF, though it may be the most common. *Assassin*, the mildly popular pencil-and-paper time-travel game is the only real exception to the prevalence of outer space games. If any designer has read Fritz Lieber's *The Big Time*, or any of Lieber's other stories of the Change Wars that range across time, he could redo *Assassin* in an entirely different, probably better, fashion.

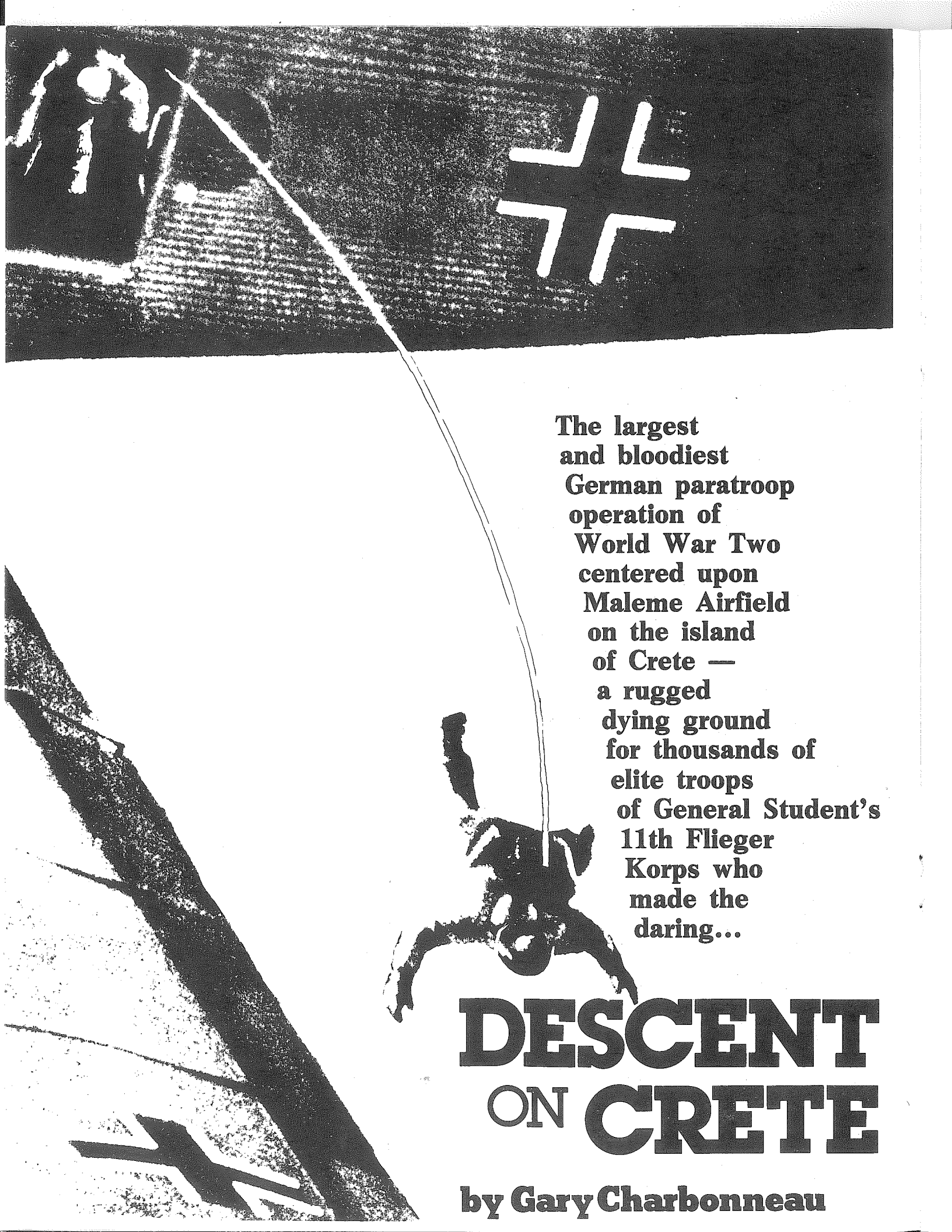
Despite the variety of games set in space, there is little variety in the treatment of 'terrain' or the central objectives of the conflicts. Some sort of faster-than-light (FTL) space drive is assumed to make the battles possible, and the players' forces flit about with little concern for the difficulties that would accompany the 'real thing'. In contrast, the literature of StF is full of alternate methods of getting from *here* to *there* in a reasonable period of time. *Imperium* adapts one such method, jump routes, and does it fairly well, creating a terrain which is contested in the course of each game. There are many other such FTL travel systems in StF, and it's past time that some were built into games. How about a drive which gives travel time inversely proportional to the distance travelled? It takes longer to go a short distance than a long distance; try that in a game and see what it does to the strategies!

StF games are also overloaded with such things as Galactic Empires and evil aliens out to conquer the human race. Why should any intelligent race want to subjugate another? While you *might* find a justification for destroying a competing race, conquering them is not productive. How big an occupation force would you need to keep an entire planet in check? Why would it be worth the trouble?

Historically, the empires of Earth have been short-lived and unstable. They have been toppled more often by internal weakness than by force from outside. They have also been small potatoes, often collapsing from over-extension, the way Rome got too big for its own organizational systems. Imagine the bureaucracy it would take to govern just this planet. Now imagine how big it would have to be just to govern as few as ten planets; where would you put all of the bureaucrats? Anyone why can believe in a Galactic Empire has never read *Parkinson's Law*.

The major flaw of StF games, to date, is that they are so *conventional*! Very little in the way of new systems and ideas has been added to the state-of-the-art and all of that comes from only two or three games, of the dozens in print. This is

Continued on Page 54



**The largest
and bloodiest
German paratroop
operation of
World War Two
centered upon
Maleme Airfield
on the island
of Crete —
a rugged
dying ground
for thousands of
elite troops
of General Student's
11th Flieger
Korps who
made the
daring...**

DESCENT ON CRETE

by Gary Charbonneau

DESCENT ON CRETE May 1941

Simulations Publications, Inc.
44 East 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010

Design: Eric Goldberg

Artwork: Redmond A. Simonsen

Topic: German air landings on Crete, May 1941.

Size: Three 22-inch x 23-inch maps, ca. 1200 counters.

Scale: Company level, 640 meters per hex, two-hour day and four-hour night turns.

Game System: Similar to **Highway to the Reich**. Various command, organization, fire, and movement phases of both players are intermingled in game turn. Complex command structure. Ranged artillery.

Complexity: High

Price: \$15.00

Published: May 1978

Historical Context: ELEVEN DAYS IN MAY

The Battle for Crete was the culmination of a long series of strategic blunders by both sides. It all started because Benito Mussolini was jealous of Adolf Hitler, who seemed to be enjoying great success in conquering Europe all by himself while Italy sat back and did nothing. Therefore, he decided to conquer Greece, a country whose political system bore much greater resemblance to those of the fascist dictatorships than it did to that of democratic Britain. Mussolini launched his attack without consulting his Axis ally. He also failed to consult his generals, who might have told him that the Italian forces in Albania were woefully inadequate for their assigned task. The result was humiliation at the hands of the Greeks.

Hitler was not very interested in the Balkans, but he could not afford to provide the British with an opening to harass the flank of his 'Barbarossa' build-up, nor could he permit the RAF to come within striking distance of the Ploesti oilfields. When an anti-German coup in Yugoslavia further threatened to upset the balance in the region, he decided to act.

The German campaign in Yugoslavia and Greece was a walkover. Britain rushed in a small expeditionary force to help the Greeks, but only at the cost of calling off their successful offensive in the Western Desert. Soon, Rommel was to arrive and turn the tables on the British there as well. The British in Greece were thoroughly 'Dunkirked', with the loss of much badly needed equipment. However, they succeeded in evacuating their men, most of whom were dumped on Crete en route to Alexandria.

At this point, it occurred to Churchill and other British leaders that Crete might be just the place to deal the Germans their first real defeat of the war. If the Royal Navy did its job, no enemy troops would be able to come by sea. Those that came by air would be handicapped by the lack of tanks and heavy artillery. It was decided that Crete would be held. In Berlin, Hitler came to the conclusion that it would be desirable to consolidate the Greek victory and to push the RAF still farther away from Ploesti. The stage was set for an aerial operation on a scale hitherto unprecedented in history, and one which would prove to be a very 'near run thing' indeed.

The Germans drastically underestimated the strength of the Commonwealth forces on the island, and overestimated, if not by much, the ability of numerous but widely dispersed landings to paralyze the opposition. They chose to land their men right in

the heart of the enemy positions, not really appreciating just how strong those positions were. When the 7. Fallschirmjäger-division dropped, it dropped into a bloodbath.

Churchill might have had the victory he wanted, had not German errors been offset by even more serious errors on the other side. General Freyberg, the Commonwealth commander on Crete, has been characterized by a recent historian as a man who 'always could be counted on to misunderstand a situation'. The judgement may be a bit harsh, but it is clear that Freyberg erred badly in his assumption that the German transports did not really need an airfield on which to land reinforcements. Thus, he failed to give airfield defense the absolute top priority which it should have had. He also had to fight his battle with one eye always on the lookout for German seaborne landings. He correctly believed that German air superiority would make British command of the seas precarious at best, and he failed to appreciate the staggering difficulties faced by the Germans in scraping together enough seaworthy craft to make the short hop across from the mainland. Finally, he was ill-served by British intelligence, which did not advise him on the size and composition of the available German airborne forces. He was never really sure that General Student, his opposite number, might not have an ace or two up his sleeve in the form of uncommitted reserves.

Still, if the odds are calculated on the basis of a simple headcount, the more numerous Commonwealth forces should have won on Crete. It was only the premature withdrawal of a single New Zealand battalion from the hill overlooking Maleme airfield which enabled them to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. However, they had decimated Germany's crack parachute division. Never again would or could the *Wehrmacht* employ airborne forces on such a scale.

The struggle for Crete has a number of things to recommend it as the topic for a wargame. It was finely balanced, and short. It should thus make for a good, tense, quick game. Nevertheless, it confronts the designer with two major problems: what to do about the fact that the German landings were scattered up and down 80 miles of coastline, and, above all, how to simulate the fog of war which played so large a part in determining the course of the battle. Avalon Hill chose to deal with the first problem by using a small-scale map encompassing every German landing area; SPI decided to examine the decisive Maleme-Suda sector in great detail. Avalon Hill built in the fog of war with inverted Commonwealth counters; SPI gives the Germans no choice of initial landings zones, and handicaps the Commonwealth with a severe command control problem. You may decide for yourself which of the two approaches you prefer.

Descent on Crete: THE GAME

IS CHROME ENOUGH, OR SHOULD YOU CHECK UNDER THE HOOD?

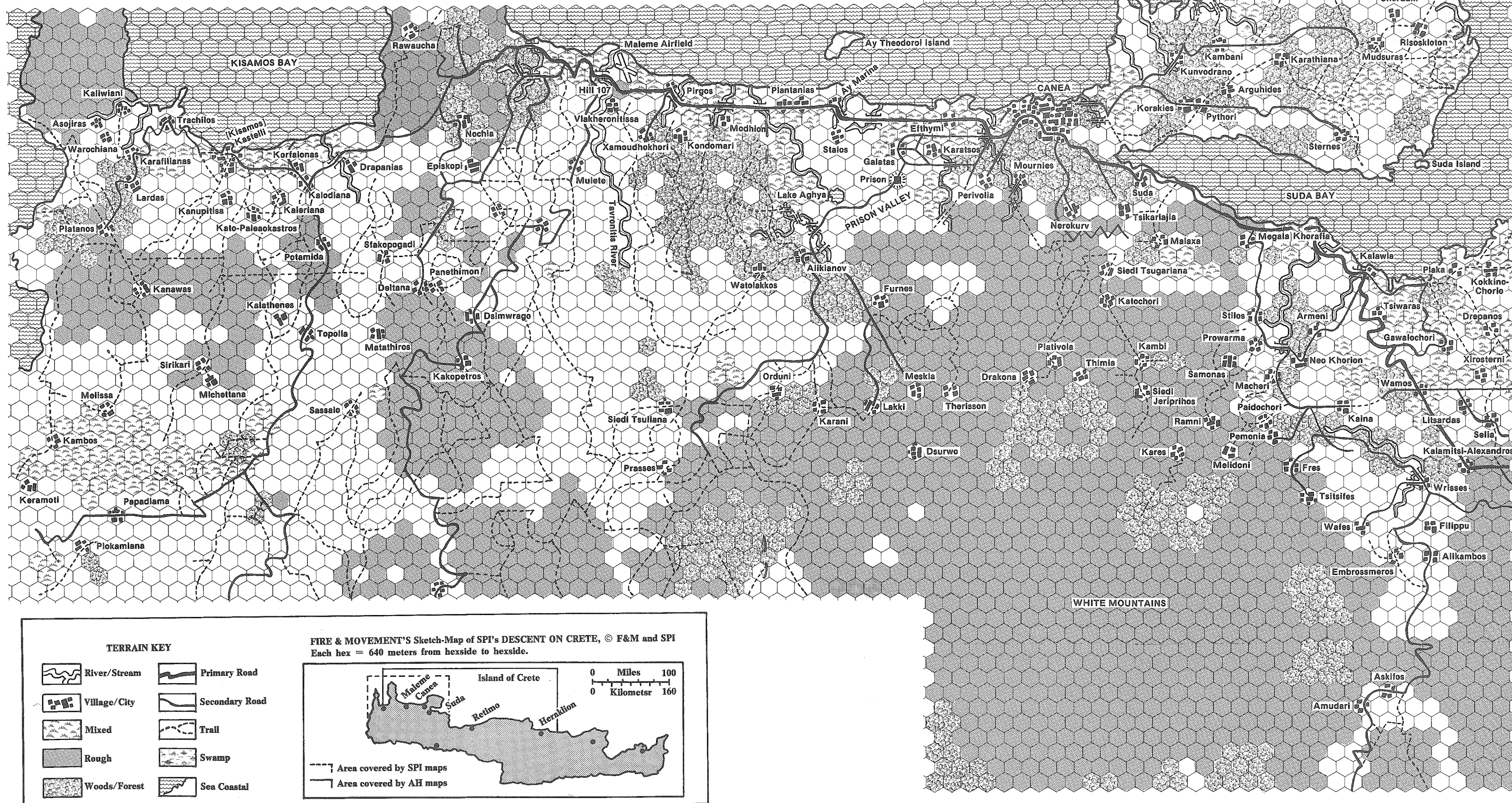
According to the back cover of SPI's **Highway to the Reich**, the airborne invasion mechanics of that game on the 1944 Arnhem drop were 'based on a statistical analysis of European Airborne operations in all conditions'. It was perhaps in order not to let such research go to waste after a fine first effort that the indefatigable New York game factory chose to crank out another game on a similar topic, the German seizure of the island of Crete in 1941.

Descent on Crete is certainly a pleasure to the eye. For once SPI has done a better job with its box art than AH. The cover, in attractive blue and brown, shows German parachutists leaping out of the open door of a Ju-52. The photo was, I believe, actually taken over Holland in May of 1940, but who cares?

Inside, the color is even better. The two standard-sized SPI game maps, placed together in 'T'-fashion, are a nice

DESCENT ON CRETE

The German Airdrop on Maleme,
20-28 May 1941



combination of yellows, browns, grays, and greens, set against the sparkling blue of the Mediterranean along the north edge. If there is perhaps a bit too much brown rough terrain to create a truly perfect aesthetic harmony, that has to be blamed on Mother Nature and not on SPI. The counters are pretty, too. The Germans have field-gray paratroops and green mountain units, with a few gray panzers to slip onto the board through the port of Kisamos Kastelli at endgame. The Commonwealth forces are almost kaleidoscopic. The British are red, the Australians orange, the New Zealanders brown, and the Greeks, in what is presumably not a reflection on their courage, are yellow. The days are gone, thank goodness, when Redmond Simonsen could seriously pretend that color tends to detract from a game.

Most of the rules to *Descent* will be familiar to veteran *Highway to the Reich* players. A number of small changes have been made, most of them to plug up holes or to correct inadequacies in the original *Highway* system, which is probably the best World War II tactical system ever applied to a board game.

Most units are companies, with a few exceptions such as the two Matilda tanks the British had at Maleme airfield; each of the latter has its own separate counter. Game scale is 640 meters to the hex, just a bit larger than the 600 in *Highway*. Each turn represents two hours scale time. The combination of 'large' hexes and small units has made it possible to simulate fairly sizable actions on a reasonably detailed level for perhaps the first time. The tactical flavor of the game is preserved by extensive rules outlining the strengths and weaknesses of the various specialized units, yet the forest of strategy does not get lost among the trees of tactical detail.

Combat is essentially of two types, fire and close assault. Fire combat is further subdivided into two subtypes, direct fire and indirect fire, which use slightly different Combat Results Tables. The value of any particular fire attack is determined by crossreferencing the effectiveness and current strength of the firing unit on a 'Fire Value Matrix' to obtain a 'Fire Value'. This is then plugged into the Fire Results Table, which utilizes a two dice system to provide for a much greater range of outcomes than would be possible with only a single die. A very ineffective fire attack would have as little chance as one in 36 of inflicting any kind of loss on the enemy. In a typical infantry firefight, with both sides having gone to ground in good protective terrain, the chances for inflicting a casualty seldom exceed one in 12. Thus, a lot of die rolls are usually needed to cripple or destroy an enemy unit, but then, a lot of dice get rolled. Critics of the *Highway* system who have found it too bloodless can never have played a scenario long enough to show just how rapidly losses can mount up over the course of one or two days' scale time. And if fire combat is bloody enough, close action is bloodier still. Fire wears units down a strength point at a time, with most units beginning the game at about four or five strength points. Close action, if conducted properly, makes it possible to wipe out units wholesale.

Movement allowances are not printed on the playing pieces. All units have a movement allowance of four per movement phase, but the distance a unit may actually move depends on what type of unit it is, the type of terrain it is moving through, and the unit's current organization. A unit may be able to move as little as one hex per movement phase, or as much as 32. There are two movement phases for each side per turn, arranged so as in effect to constitute a dual 'impulse'. Firing occurs before movement, and if a unit shoots, it cannot move. The enemy gets a 'free fire phase' between friendly impulses.

Unit organization provides for some very interesting trade-offs. Most units can assume either of two basic 'modes', dispersed or concentrated. Concentrated units ordinarily move faster than dispersed units, and generate more firepower, but are much more vulnerable to enemy fire. A few fortunate units possess transport, and can assume travel mode. Using this mode, a unit on a road can really eat up the miles, but it is virtually useless for combat purposes. With a couple of exceptions, a player may

make voluntary mode changes only once per turn, so a good deal of preplanning is necessary. Units which have to move should be in concentrated or travel mode, while units which have to fight should be dispersed. However, it is necessary to be careful when changing modes. If this is done in an enemy zone of control, it triggers opportunity fire. So does leaving an enemy zone of control. As a result, units committed to battle tend to stay committed, since disengagement while in dispersed mode is slow and brings down enemy fire. The value of an uncommitted reserve under such circumstances should be obvious.

Unit integrity plays a big part in the game. For the most part, supply lines are traced down the chain of command, beginning with the owning player's highest headquarters on the island and extending all the way down to the lowliest battalion command post. Moving a unit too far away from the appropriate headquarters breaks the supply chain and creates the risk of depletion if the unit fires. A depleted unit is a sitting duck for the first enemy unit which comes along looking for somebody to pick on, so players tend to watch their supply lines quite carefully, and to keep units grouped around the proper headquarters units. There is also usually a penalty for firing units from different battalions at the same target at the same time, a further incentive to maintain battalion integrity.

When all of the rules for the *Highway/Descent* system are put together, the result is a very effective simulation of World War II combat at the tactical/operational level. The inevitable penalty for realism is complexity. The rules for *Descent* are 27 pages long, with another four pages of orders of battle and special rules for the various scenarios. Fortunately, most of the major rules are introduced by a paragraph or two of commentary, both to justify the rule and to explain the designer's intent. If this commentary had any drawbacks, it is that there was not enough of it. In *Descent*, as in other giant games, SPI has pushed legalese to the limits of the tolerable. More use of plain English would be desirable. It is unfortunate that some of the English in Eric Goldberg's commentary is a bit too plain: 'During a military operation such as the one that ravaged Crete during the last days of May 1941, it is necessary for combat units to move around to gain strategic advantages on the enemy or to attain objectives.' No kidding?

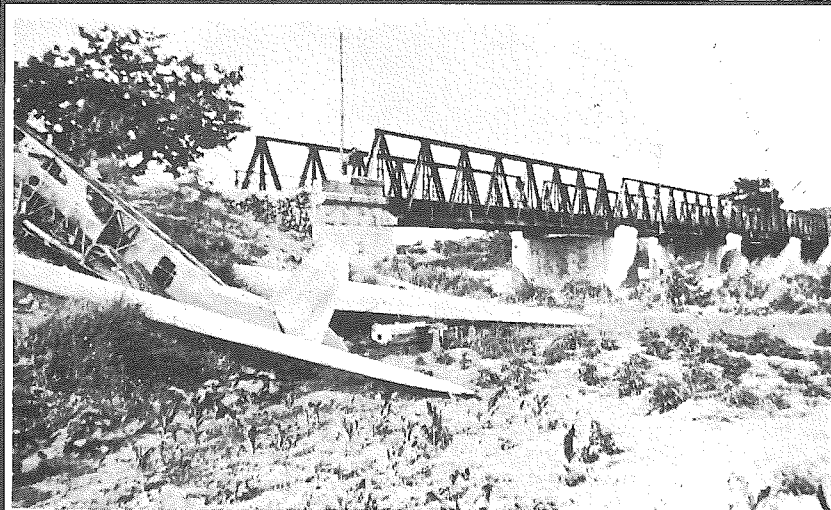
But once you have read the rules, and once you have punched out the counters and placed them on the two detailed line-and-block 'formation displays', you are convinced that you have a classic simulation spread out before you. You are wrong, as you soon discover when you actually sit down and play the game.

Your first mistake, probably, is to try to tackle the 'Introductory Scenario'. Although the first scenario presented in the game, it is actually the last from a chronological point of view, depicting as it does the British retreat from the island. Using this scenario as an introduction to the game makes a certain amount of sense, since the Commonwealth player does not have to cope with the command control rule (all units may move without command restriction), and supply is somewhat simplified for both sides. The scenario pits a decimated force of German mountain troops against an equally mauled Commonwealth army. The Germans are heavily outnumbered, but, because of the special advantages enjoyed by the mountaineers in rough terrain, it is if anything the New Zealanders and their allies who are outgunned.

In theory, this 'Retreat of Sfakia' should be easy enough to play. In practice, it turns out to be almost unworkable. Most of the forces for both sides, 56 Commonwealth counters and 33 German, begin the scenario in an area measuring scarcely ten hexes on a side. Almost all units are badly worn down by pre-scenario fighting, so the 89 unit and leader counters at the scene of the action have to be accompanied by 66 strength point markers, for a total of 155 counters. Most counters are piled in clumps about four to six high. It is difficult enough to sort through the stacks to determine the composition of one's own forces, much less worry about what the enemy has. Movement



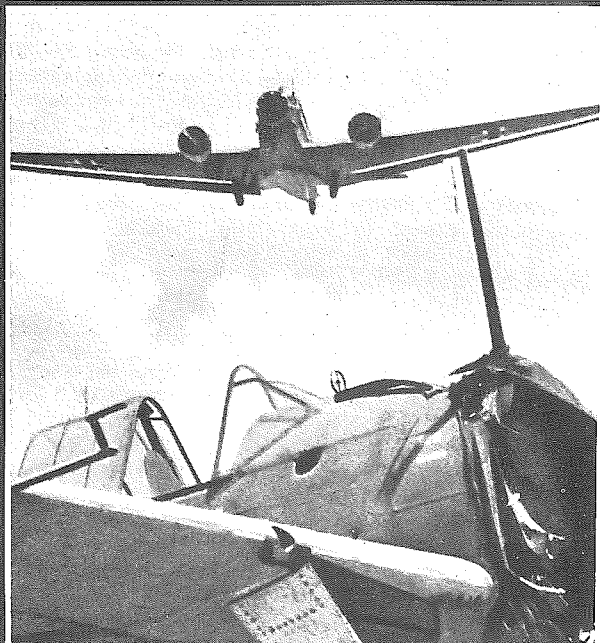
Above: German paratroopers advance in the stony, broken countryside near Maleme.



Left: The Tavronitis Bridge with a wrecked German glider of the 1st Battalion, Assault Regiment.

Bottom Left: British troops surrendering to German paratroopers.

Below: A German Ju 52 about to land at the 'conquered' Maleme Airfield.



becomes such a painful process that it scarcely seems worth the effort. Still, things could have been worse. Stacking in the **Highway** system is measured in strength points. The number of strength points which can be crammed into a hex varies according to terrain, but in the least obstructed hexes is 24. Hypothetically, then, as many as 24 units, each with a remaining strength of one, could be stacked in such a hex. Each unit would, of course, be accompanied by its own strength point counter. Throw in a couple of leaders (which stack free) or informational markers, and you have a stack of 50 counters in one hex. The stacking problem doesn't often reveal itself in **Highway** because of the greater dispersion and higher initial strength point size of the units, but there are times when it can be an annoyance in **Descent**. The 'Retreat to Sfakia' scenario is one of those times.

And as if the retreat scenario did not have enough problems with stacking, it becomes apparent on trying to set it up that it has been a victim of sloppy proofreading. For starters, the Germans are supposed to get a counter for General Student. The formation display simply does not indicate where. The set-up location for the 2nd New Zealand Division HQ is also omitted, a mistake which is all the more embarrassing because it is the source of supply for all Commonwealth units in the scenario. The Germans have some recon units which set up in rough terrain. The terrain effects chart clearly prohibits them from entering such terrain. So how did they get there? Your guess is as good as mine. The recon units are lucky, though, since in their assigned positions they can make a legal move into other types of terrain. The same cannot be said, alas, of one poor German artillery battery, which is also set up in rough terrain. There is no rule which prohibits artillery from entering rough terrain *per se*. However, artillery may only move while in travel mode, and units in travel mode may not enter the rough. Explaining how the battery got to its assigned position requires the implausible assumption that it was pushed bodily (*sans* parachute, presumably) out the side of a Junkers. Worse, since the unit's set-up hex is entirely surrounded by rough terrain, there is no way it can possibly go anywhere. It is the single most powerful unit the Germans possess. No doubt it is still there today, haunting the Cretan hills.

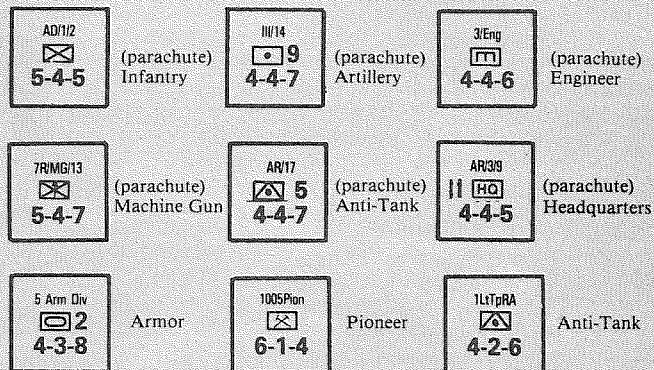
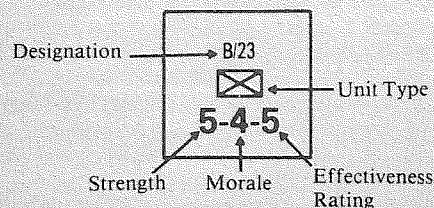
So you give up on the 'Retreat to Sfakia' after a turn or two and forge boldly ahead to Scenario Two, the 'Drop of the 7th Parachute Division'. Fortunately, the stacking problem here disappears. Most of the Commonwealth units are in play, but they are spread out down the length (if not the breadth) of the mapsheet. Nor are the Germans likely to run into much of a stacking problem. Watching them try to come down intact onto the map is probably the most enjoyable experience a sadistic Commonwealth player is going to have during the whole game.

Avalon Hill's **Air Assault** simulates the German intelligence muddle on Crete by permitting Commonwealth units to be set up inverted. **Descent** uses a different approach. General Freyberg's troops are deployed historically and 'face up', but the Germans are not allowed any freedom in choosing their landing sites. Each paratroop unit is assigned a specific landing hex, and that's it. On the first turn, the German player may reasonably expect to lose about 35-40% of his available paratroop strength points. Several units will be completely wiped out before they even hit the ground. Since the 7th Parachute Division is heavily outnumbered even before the drop begins, one might well inquire how the Germans can expect to win the game.

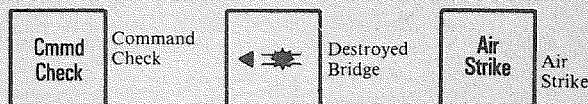
A large part of the answer is the Commonwealth Control and Activation rule. Each turn, the Commonwealth player is allocated a certain number of 'command points', each of which may keep the equivalent of one battalion active. On the first game turn, five command points are available. It is a bit difficult to give a precise figure for the total number of Commonwealth battalions in the game because of the plethora of independent units with no battalion subordination, but the number is somewhere in the neighborhood of 40. It does not take a mathematical genius to figure out that on the first game turn Freyberg is only going to get to play with about 1/8th of

SAMPLE UNITS

INFANTRY UNIT (Front)



MARKERS



his army. It is only later that a steady build-up in command points enables the Commonwealth player to bring about 30 battalions into play toward the end of the second day. There is a further command control limitation: the first battalions to be activated must be those that were involved in combat during the previous turn. If there happen to be any command points left over after paying for the activation of those battalions, only then may other battalions be activated, at double the cost for ordinary activation. This rule effectively hands the initiative in the first few turns of the game to the German player, since he can virtually dictate which battalions get activated and which do not. For all practical purposes, if the Germans don't shoot at a unit, Freyberg cannot use it.

But this last bit of gamesmanship aside, the command control rule works well enough in simulating the sluggish response of the Commonwealth forces to the actual German landing. Unfortunately, designer Eric Goldberg apparently felt that more than mere Commonwealth command paralysis was needed to give the Germans a fighting chance. He declares at the very outset of the rules, 'Serious students of history will note that the German landing sites and strengths do not exactly correspond to the historical ones. The designer chose to do this for two reasons: one, for the obvious reason of playbalance, but also so that several situations that occurred in the actual battle would be recreated in the game.'

One seldom reads so open an admission of design failure in any set of wargame rules. What Mr. Goldberg appears to be saying is, 'If the Germans are put where they are supposed to be put, the game doesn't work'. I have not tried rearranging the German drop pattern to correspond to historical reality, so I cannot vouch for the validity of this assertion, but I will take his word for it. In any event, what SPI is asking us to do in **Descent** is to play a highly complex and demanding game, taking fifty to seventy hours to complete even by SPI's own probably overly optimistic estimation, knowing as we do that the only possible justification for such monster games, historical



LIEUTENANT GENERAL KURT STUDENT

Commander of the German 11th Flieger Korps (parachute) which made the daring descent on Crete.

accuracy, has been abandoned in one very crucial instance.

How significant is this fudge factor in the German initial deployment? Very. Let's tick off a few instances. Half of Koch's I Battalion of the *Sturmregiment* historically landed on the southern slopes of Hill 107, overlooking Maleme airfield. Most of Koch's men were butchered, and Koch himself was seriously wounded. Mr. Goldberg gives Koch four companies in the vicinity of Maleme instead of the correct two, and places two of them *north* of Hill 107, right on the beach next to the airfield. Koch himself gets to come down to a fairly safe landing west of the Tavronitis River, about where General Meindl actually touched down. As for Meindl, well, he gets to take Koch's place east of the Tavronitis, where his chances of surviving the first couple of turns are minimal. Koch lands with the II Battalion, which is not particularly helpful. He has no command authority over that battalion whatsoever. *Leutnant* von Plessen, whose gliders historically made the closest landing to the airfield, coming down in the bed of the Tavronitis right next to it, is assigned a landing zone at least a mile off its proper location.

All of the inaccuracies described thus far occur in a single small sector. Things are at least as bad, or worse, elsewhere. Colonel Heidrich assumed command of the German forces in Prison Valley after General Süssmann's glider failed to arrive. In the game, Heidrich doesn't even land in the valley at all. He comes down with a heavy weapons company next to the hex containing King Phillip of Greece. Killing Phillip is a major German objective in the game, since he is worth a pile of victory points. In reality, if the Germans were even aware he was on the island, they certainly could not have cared less about him. They had other things to worry about. Phillip's counter, incidentally, is placed on the game map no less than 16 hexes from its proper location in the village of Therisson.

But perhaps the worst example of erroneous placement involves the landing of the Altmann Detachment. This was a company-size force which was detailed to land in the middle of

the Akrotiri Peninsula, north of Suda Bay, to destroy an anti-aircraft battery there. The Altmann Detachment was so ineffective that it is mentioned only twice in the 500 pages of the excellent New Zealand official history. Goldberg gives Altmann eight companies and a battery of artillery, and plops him down, not in the middle of the peninsula, but across its narrow neck. And look who is hiding in the peninsula. Why, it's General Freyberg and Creforce HQ (which Mr. Goldberg, for some unfathomable reason, has chosen to call CHCHQ: 'Commonwealth High Command Headquarters'). 'CHCHQ' is the only available supply source for Commonwealth units which are unable to trace a supply line 12 hexes long or less off the south or east edge of the map. With the HQ virtually cut off from the rest of the army by Altmann, that affects a lot of people, none worse than the poor 22nd Battalion trying to hold the airfield at Maleme.

The Commonwealth supply rules are, to put it shortly, badly handled. There is simply no historical justification for treating either 'CHCHQ' or the southern or eastern edge of the map as supply sources. The headquarters after all, was not a supply dump. As for the southern coast of Crete, there were only a couple of ports there worth noting, Sfakia and Tymbaki. Neither of them could accommodate anything larger than a fishing boat. Tymbaki was well to the east of Maleme-Suda, and was therefore ill-placed to serve that area. Sfakia was due south of the eastern edge of the SPI map. However, the road to the port ended abruptly on an escarpment far above the town. The only way up or down was a goat track incapable of being used by vehicles. The bulk of the Commonwealth supplies were brought in before the battle through Suda, and were largely stockpiled there. It is Suda which should be the Commonwealth supply source, and it should be a primary German objective. Instead, it is worth no more in victory points than any other worthless village on the island.

The incorrect supply rules and the erroneous placement and composition of the Altmann Detachment completely distort the whole game. Altmann is not the cipher he was historically; he is the key to everything. The results can be downright silly. If 'CHCHQ' is eliminated, the Commonwealth player gets to use the 2nd New Zealand and Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation headquarters as supply sources — but not until then. Thus, the Commonwealth player has every possible incentive for getting 'CHCHQ' killed off as soon as he can. One can picture the scene now: Freyberg and his staff officers march up to the muzzle of the nearest German machine gun, thumbing their noses and shouting, no doubt, something like 'Hitler is a momma's boy!' To which the Germans manning the gun replay, 'Ve are sorry, Herr General, but ve haff schtrikt orders not to shoot you. Now please go away. You are making us laugh too hard.' Meanwhile, Altmann and his boys can amuse themselves by taking pot shots at the helpless dock workers on the other side of the bay. In the 'Drop of the 7th Parachute Division' scenario, the latter are not even allowed to move. Then there is Altmann's colleague, *Leutnant* Genz, who lands south of Canea. With three companies instead of the one he is supposed to have, Genz can work his way in towards Suda and close assault the dock workers out of existence altogether.

Why did the designer feel compelled to go to such absurd lengths to give the Germans a fighting chance? The reason may have been a mistake which he probably made right in the very beginning, when reproducing the terrain around Maleme on the map. He made the Tavronitis River something of a Cretan counterpart to the mighty Mississippi, calling it impassable, except at the bridge, for seven hexes above its mouth. This certainly eases the task of the New Zealanders in defending against the threat from across the river. Actually, a photograph of the Tavronitis shows it to be much like many rivers in the American Southwest: flat, broad, and, in hot weather such as that which occurred during the battle, likely to shrink to a trickle. It certainly *was* crossable, because the Germans crossed it, and well downstream at that. They even landed in it -- or at least in its largely dry bed. Now, if the Tavronitis were made crossable, and if the Germans were given a thousand troops on the west bank instead of the 350 or 400 assigned by Mr.

Goldberg, the situation of the New Zealanders at Maleme would be critical enough without resorting to increasing the size of the Altmann Detachment by 800% and then dropping it in the wrong place.

Even some of the 'chrome' elements in *Descent* are a bit tarnished. Many of the Commonwealth leaders have the wrong ranks, apparently because the designer copied the ranks straight out of the index in the New Zealand official history. He might have noticed that the index assigned a man the highest rank he achieved before retirement, not his rank at the time of the battle. Thus we have the spectacle of 'Lieutenant-General' Ian Campbell of the Australian 19th Infantry Brigade apparently outranking his divisional commander, Brigadier Vasey. In reality, Campbell was a lieutenant-colonel. Kiwi brigade commander Howard Kippenberger is a 'Major-General'. Should we attribute the fact Kippenberger entitled his wartime memoirs *Infantry Brigadier* to modesty, perhaps? In the game, he should be a colonel. Gentry, GS01 of the New Zealand Division, should be 'demoted' from major-general to lieutenant-colonel, while the divisional commander, 'Lieutenant-General' Puttick, should be a brigadier.

The worst example of faulty chrome is Maleme airfield itself. It is the center around which all else in the game revolves, the principal German objective. If it is captured, the 5th Mountain Division can land and conquer the island. If the New Zealanders can hold on to it, the 7th Parachute Division is probably doomed to annihilation due to casualties, fatigue, and lack of supplies. The airfield is depicted on the map by two conventionally crossed runways. Unfortunately, it had only one.

When I buy an Avalon Hill product, I usually expect to get a game with some of the elements of a simulation. When I buy an SPI product, especially, a big one such as *Descent*, I expect to get a simulation which may be too long or too complex to be a really good game. If Allen Doum is right, *Air Assault on Crete* is, as one might guess, a bad simulation, but it is also not all that much of a game. *Descent on Crete* is indeed too lengthy and complicated to appeal to the competition-oriented gamer, but it is not a valid simulation either. If we assume that the two games represent the best efforts of the two major companies in the field, it is clear that third-world designers do not have such formidable competition as they might think.



Descent on Crete DESIGNER'S NOTES

Eric Goldberg

Mr. Charbonneau has put together an entertaining criticism of my *Descent* game and justly scores it for some major flaws. With wit reminiscent of Richard Berg, he presents an SPI product from the vantage point of one weaned on Avalon Hill games (and does not allow the fact to unduly affect his judgment). The author very carefully presents each of his complaints so that the reader does not miss his points. All in all it would seem to be a very well-written and thought-out critique. Regretfully, it misses being the work of a topnotch reviewer because Mr. Charbonneau did have neither the time nor the inclination to ferret out the answers to some of his objections.

First, a bit of history: I received the *Descent* and revised *Highway* rule assignments at the same time. It seemed logical that the same person would rewrite the (atrociously disorganized) *Highway* rules and design the second game in the system. As I liked the *Highway* system very much (I agree with Mr. Charbonneau's assertion that it is perhaps the best World War II tactical system devised to date), *Descent* was seemingly a very good project to get into. But as I began the design for *Descent*, one problem became glaringly apparent: the battle for Crete was highly reminiscent of a World War I trench battle. Not only that, the situation at Crete did not possess the mobile fluidity that worked so well in *Highway*. At the time, I had neither the authority to divest myself of the project nor did I impress the powers-that-be with the immensity of the problem. Ironically, the decision to try and fit the Crete situation into the *Highway* system was to make more work for me than the entirely fresh design which I would have preferred.

Mr. Charbonneau mentions in passing that *Highway* has a highly realistic Air Landing system. This is certainly not true, as I discovered in the initial design work for Crete. The *Highway* system, however, is great fun for gamers, because of the variables it throws into the game. The *Descent* system for Air Landing, while not as much fun, is an accurate reflection of

what occurred on Crete. There just was not that much scatter — most of the German drops were exactly on target. The casualties are also in line with what actually happened — here and in other World War II airlanding operations. Where the landings are fudged, the reason lies in the Highway system — units landing directly on top of enemy positions would be destroyed. So the landing positions of certain German units were moved to the positions occupied after their initial skirmishes — else they would have been annihilated. (This is easy to see; just try a Close Assault with a German unit after it has taken fire on the 16+ line). The only other solution was to write special Close Assault rules for the first turn, but the game was becoming so complex that I decided to change the landing zones slightly to make the German landing work.

One of the main problems any researcher of the battle of Crete will have is the many conflicting sources that are all 'Official'. Undoubtedly, Mr. Charbonneau had access to only certain of the histories of the battle, and made a judgment that the material from which I compiled my data was wrong. Mr. Charbonneau does score me well on the matter of the ranking of the Commonwealth officers (it was, as he surmised, taken from the index of the New Zealand Official History) and the placement and size of the Altmann detachment (which was done to prevent a game problem), but my research is nowhere near as faulty as he would lead the reader to believe. This is not unusual: Vance von Borries, designer of *Air Assault*, indicated that he had a similar problem with his sources when I talked to him at ORIGINS '78. Apparently Mr. Charbonneau was at least partially aware of this, because he noted that he wished he had been able to converse with me before the article was written. *C'est la vie*.

But in his zeal to indict me for faulty research Mr. Charbonneau misses some crucial errors and makes a few mistakes along the way. For instance, he cites the depiction of the Tavronitis as a River an error, and likens it to the Mississippi to properly emphasize the point. Apparently he didn't note that it is crossable in the game — just slightly more difficult to cross than the average Stream (i. e., at higher cost in Movement Points). The German paratroopers may indeed cross it directly opposite Maleme Airfield, just as they did in real life. Then Gary informs us that the gravest error is the graphic representation of the Maleme airstrip as a two-runway field. I am fully aware that the 'airfield' was indeed only a one-runway affair, but the symbol with crossed runways is one recognized by gamers everywhere, and undoubtedly will be used by SPI no matter how many runways the airfield in question may have. Gary also repeats an error that I made — he calls the Greek King Phillip and tells us he was quartered at Therisson. Unfortunately, the King of Greece at the time was named George, the last Greek King with the name of Philip being Philip of Macedon. History tells us that King George was kept at Therisson until the day of the landing, at which point he was moved to the B Company of the 18th New Zealand, which served as his bodyguard.

Mr. Charbonneau starts off with noting that the 'Retreat to Sfakia' scenario is unplayable because of congestion. This is to an extent true — but it is also what happened. I could hardly in good faith present a fantasy scenario in which the forces were well spread out. And it was chiefly my fault that the scenarios were not more extensively checked — the job was entrusted to someone not entirely familiar with the game. Those units that are in terrain they are not normally able to enter may move as Dispersed Infantry until they reach terrain in which they may normally move. You may keep a ghost German artillery unit — the idea is at least amusing. But the real question of *Descent* is: are the players willing to put up with very little movement and large stacks to simulate what occurred on Crete in the last days of May 1941?

Mr. Charbonneau continually assails some decisions that he would not have made — he insists that Colonel Heidrich, for example, does not land in the Prison Valley because he does not land in a clear terrain hex; in actuality I do have him landing in

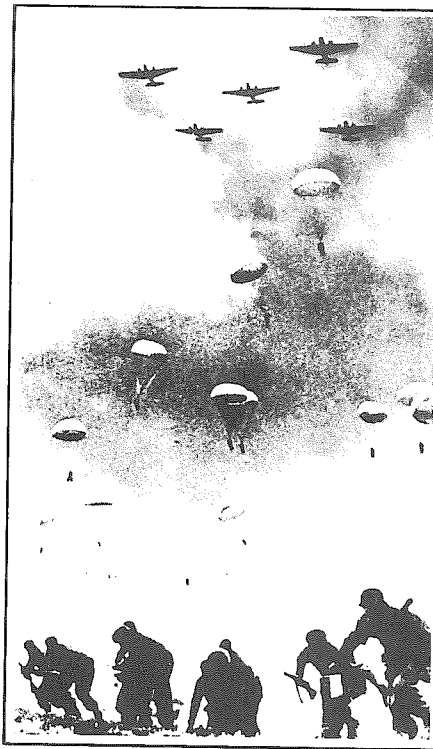
the Valley, though I did not outline the exact edges of the Valley. The reason I called Creforce HQ Commonwealth High Command was as a reminder to players who would undoubtedly be unfamiliar with the byzantine Order of Battle the Commonwealth had at Crete. And while Mr. Charbonneau is certainly correct when he tells us that the King of Greece did not matter to the German paratroopers, he neglects to tell us that his death while guarded by Commonwealth troops would certainly have been a grievous blow — and something that the British greatly feared.

Mr. Charbonneau further tells us that the 'huge' Altmann and Genz Detachments can easily destroy the dock worker units (Support Group). Unless the German player is very lucky, this will not in fact be the case — the Commonwealth units activated in the process will make short shrift of the advancing German units, who will derive satisfaction from having eliminated several useless Commonwealth units and freed more Command Points for use about Maleme. This is the key in the early turns — the German player can and will decide which Commonwealth units are able to fight. This represents exactly what did happen; there are countless examples of thousands of Commonwealth troops standing in place while battles raged less than 600 meters (one hex) away. Not until the Germans attacked did most Commonwealth units respond. This may make for a boring start of the game for all but the sadistic player Mr. Charbonneau mentions, but this is war, not games.

When the design was initiated for *Descent*, there was an extremely complicated supply dump system, the last vestige of which is the German supply rules. It was dropped in favor of the current system, and its demise reduced the counter density somewhat. The rules as they stand now simply reflect the fact that the Commonwealth tended to place their supplies behind their lines, and in any logical development the Commonwealth rear area will be to the south or east.

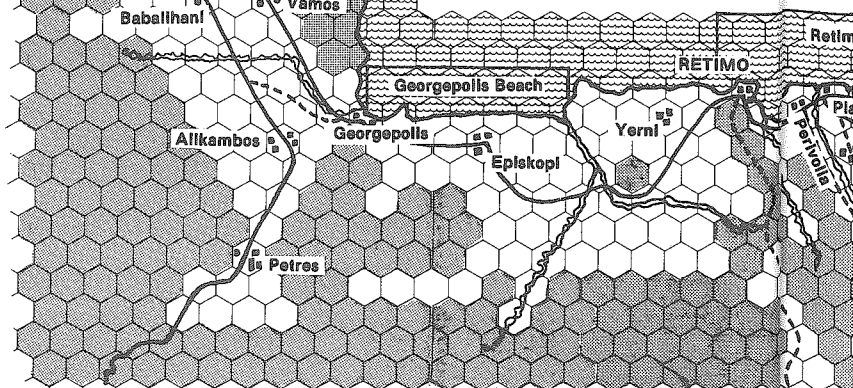
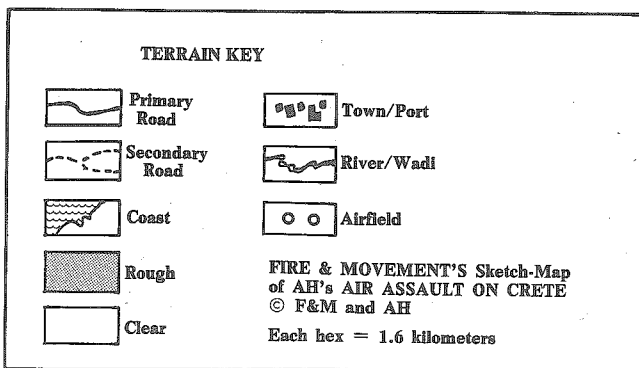
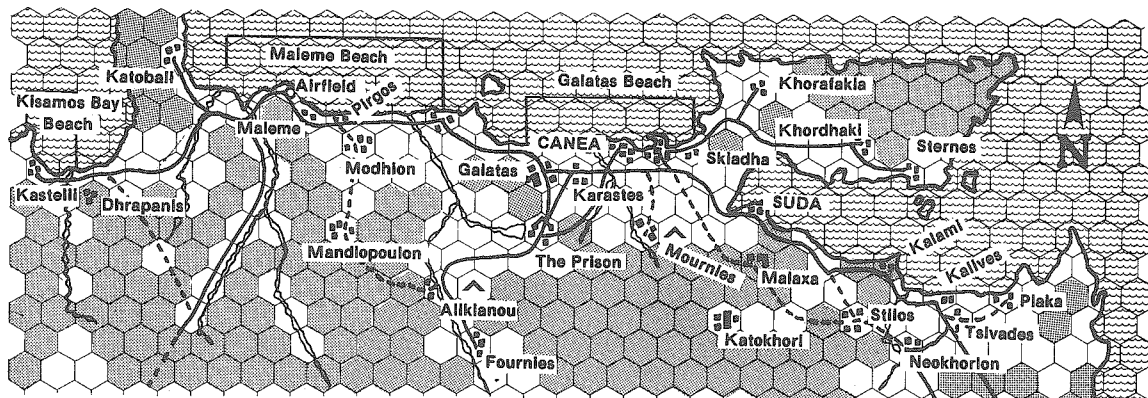
In conclusion, I realize that *Descent* will never be a game-player's game, and it has certain faults as a simulation owing in part to the Highway system and in part to my research. But I would prefer to have it regarded as an *interesting* failure, because I believe the new rules and the handling of the system have merit.





AIR ASSAULT ON CRETE

by Allen Doum



AIR ASSAULT ON CRETE

Game of the Epic German Airborne Attack

The Avalon Hill Game Company
4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214

Design: Vance von Borries

Graphics: Randall C. Reed

Topic: German air landings on Crete, May 1941.

Size: Three 8-inch x 22-inch maps (mounted), ca. 300 counters.

Scale: Company/Regiment level, 1 mile per hex, six-hour turns.

Game System: Alternating player segments, with air phase, sea movement, ground movement, combat. Ranged artillery and flak. Air drops subject to drift. Limited intelligence.

Complexity: Moderate

Price: \$12.00

Published: March 1978

Includes **Malta** game on hypothetical air and naval invasion of that island, with one 11-inch x 16-inch map (mounted) and ca. 200 counters.

have entered an era of direct competition between titles released almost simultaneously: **Up Scope!** and **Submarine, Swords & Sorcery** and **Magic Realm**, and, of course, **Air Assault on Crete** and **Descent on Crete**, all published within weeks of one another.

Air Assault on Crete (or just **Assault**) is Avalon Hill's counterpart to the SPI game (**Descent** for short) on the same subject. It is gratifying to see, however, that a rather narrow and specialized historical topic has brought us two entirely different games.

The first impression one gets of **Assault** is that the game box is incredibly ugly! The front cover is a strange montage of paratroopers and aircraft, topped with the game title splattered with either (a) flak, (b) blood, or (c) ink spilled from the lettering. It looks, in fact, like the cover of a *Monty Python* book! The back of the box carries the usual advertisement, informing the prospective buyer, among other things, that the game is meant for 'adults and precocious adolescents'. The box's one redeeming feature is that it may serve as warning example for future box designers.

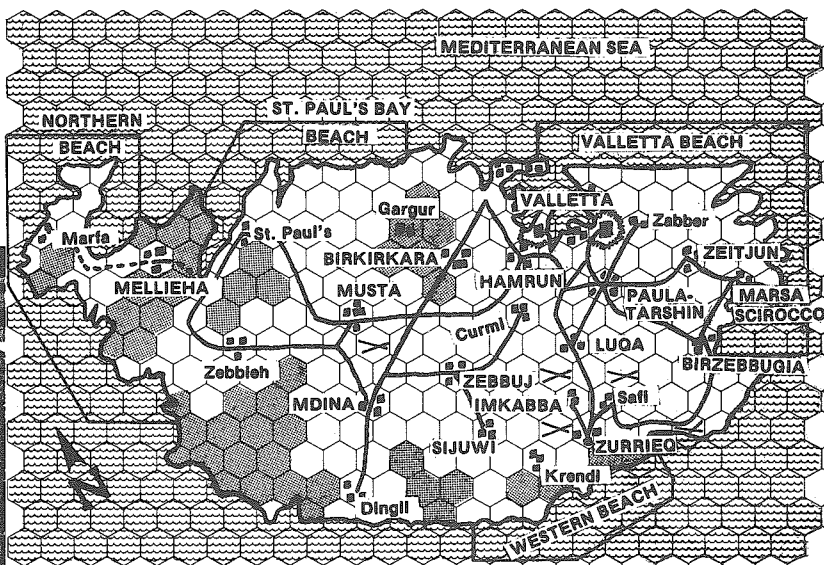
Once inside, the graphics improve. The three-section board is a pleasant combination of browns and blues on white, covering the coast of Crete from Kisamos Bay to Heraklion. The counters are red, orange, and yellow for the Allies, blue and green for the Germans. Printed on the counters, in addition to the usual symbols and strengths, are the units' stacking values.

Two comments on the counters: First, the unit symbols have been assigned 'historically', not by game function. This means, for instance, that there are twelve different symbols for 'infantry-type'. Second, packaged with **Assault** is a separate, game, **Malta**. Most of the units of the two games are separate, but there is a small overlap in the two counter sets. This is

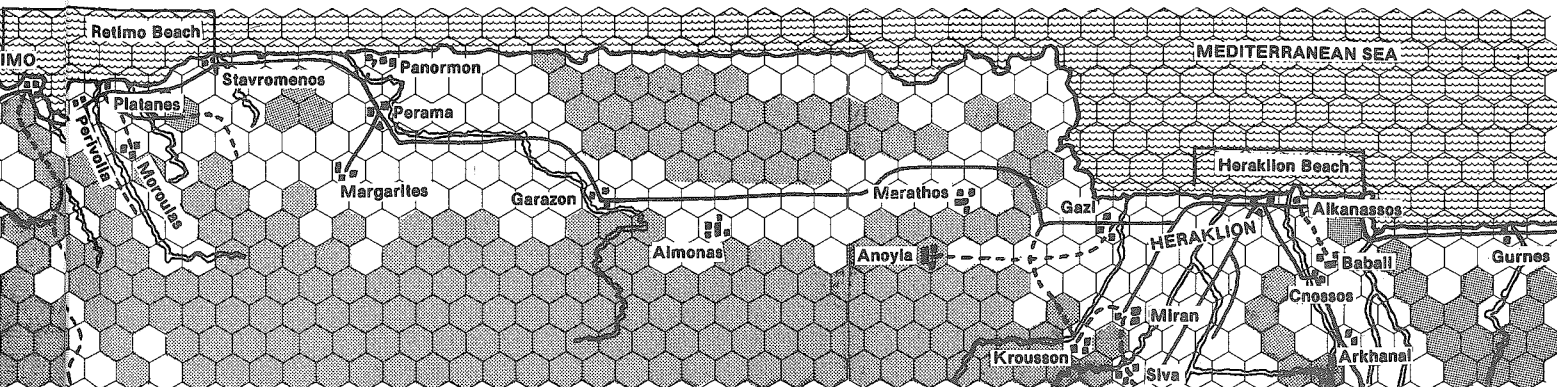
OLD DOG LEARNS NEW TRICK

For years, Avalon Hill and SPI have come out with games on the same subject. **Panzerarmee Afrika** seems a conscious redesign of **Afrika Korps**, **Gettysburg '77** resembles **Cemetery Hill** and **Terrible Swift Sword**, etc. More recently, we appear to

invasion of MALTA



FIRE & MOVEMENT sketch-map of AH's INVASION OF MALTA-1942 © F&M and AH



unfortunate because, instead of blank counters, the counter sheets could have provided the required duplicates. Aside from this, the counters are colorful and well printed, with all necessary information clearly marked.

The rules booklet is very well done, with examples of play, unit types, and terrain effects chart rendered in color. Included are the basic and advanced rules for *Assault*, the changes required for *Malta* (odd that the larger game must be learned first), as well as tactical and historical notes. The back cover of the booklet provides an extensive and quite helpful rules summary.

Charts include Axis and Allied organization charts for both games and a sheet with the combat results table, scatter diagram for air drops, etc. Unfortunately, the terrain effects chart appears only in the rules booklet.

The rules for the basic game take up no more than five pages in the rule book. The additional two and a half pages of advanced rules are preface with: 'Caution! Adding these rules will increase game complexity and playing time.' This should be ignored, and so should be the disclaimer that the impact of some of the 'long and comlex' advanced rules on the game is minor. It is the advanced game which makes *Assault* worth playing, and it is not complex or lengthy at all compared with other current games.

In scope and design emphasis, *Assault* differs markedly from its counterpart, *Descent*. While the latter covers just the main actions at Maleme, Canea, and Suda and does so in great detail, *Assault* includes the fighting at the other two airfields -- Retimo and Heraklion -- and is a much simpler and faster game. The scale is larger with 1 mile versus 640 meters per hex, and six-hour instead of two-hour turns. On the other hand, the advanced game of *Assault* adds a completely new twist by entrusting the Allied player with a large number of non-combat units such as hospital personnel, military police, repair shops, dock worker gangs, truck pools, and a communications unit; these have no combat value whatsoever, but become highly important because their evacuation is one of the two main sources of victory points for the Allies. Indeed, in the advanced game, apart from holding onto the airfields as long as possible, the Allies' prime objective must be to bring their non-combatants to safety. This, despite rather conventional and uncomplicated game mechanics, makes *Assault* a game unlike any other.

The play of the advanced game can be broken into three phases: set-up and planning, assault, and wrap-up.

During set-up, the Allied player places his units on the board. Most must be placed within specified sectors, but some, including ten decoy counters, may be placed anywhere. All units are placed inverted, so that the German player has only a foggy idea of where the Allies have made themselves strong. Meanwhile, the German player must plan his seaborne landings, specifying both time and location of arrival of his two convoys in a way that keeps them secret from the Allies. (The convoys are unlikely to be of much use, however, because they have only half a chance of arriving intact and can then still be shot up on the beaches by coastal artillery.)

The assault begins with German airdrops in the Maleme and Suda sectors. For the drop, the paratroop battalions must be broken down into companies, and these and the other units (also company-size) scatter individually. The presence of an enemy unit in the 'target' hex of the drop adds to the scatter, even if the unit is merely a decoy, and so do anti-aircraft units within range. Since the troopers must be dropped near their objectives and thus in the midst of the enemy (except for a glider battalion which may land anywhere on suitable terrain), they may scatter widely, and some may even be eliminated in the drop. Moreover, units which come to land on top of an enemy must make a disadvantageous 'drift combat', and the scattered companies make easy pickings for the Allies in their first turn. What helps the Germans is that Allied units may move no more than one hex in the first turn. The paratroopers at Retimo and Heraklion, landing on Turn 3, must contend with an enemy not so handicapped.

The assault continues over the next several turns. For the Germans, the first order of business is to consolidate their companies into battalions or, at least, into strong stacks which are less vulnerable. They must then attempt to seize on or more airfields and, at the same time, block the evacuation routes. The airfields are important for two reasons: if none has been secured by the end of the second day (Turn 8), the Germans lose the game then and there; also, the fields are needed to fly in the mountain troops, badly needed for the added punch they can provide. With their arrival, the third phase of the game begins.

The final phase is one of two things. If the paratroopers have blocked the evacuation routes, it is best termed a mopping-up. If they have not, it becomes a bug-out. Either way, the game will not last much longer. Although the rules provide for 28 game turns, the point of decision will usually occur within the first eight turns, and even the 'bitter end', the final fulfilling of the victory conditions, cannot drag out much beyond Turn 12.

The mechanics of movement and combat have a number of interesting features which the players must appreciate if they are to do well. Here are some of them.

Zones of control are not as rigid as in most other Avalon Hill games. Attack is always voluntary, and units with a movement allowance of 4 or more (this applies for most) may move one hex from one zone of control to another. At night, all Commonwealth units may do this. In any other instance, however, a unit disengaging from a zone of control may not enter another one in the same turn.

The combat results table is all new. Besides conventional 'eliminated', 'retreat', and 'no effect' results there are losses to the attacker (one unit, his choice) and a new type of 'exchange' which allows the attacker to determine the level of casualties. German paratroop battalions can be broken down for combat resolution and thus may shed a single company if loss of 'one unit' is called for.

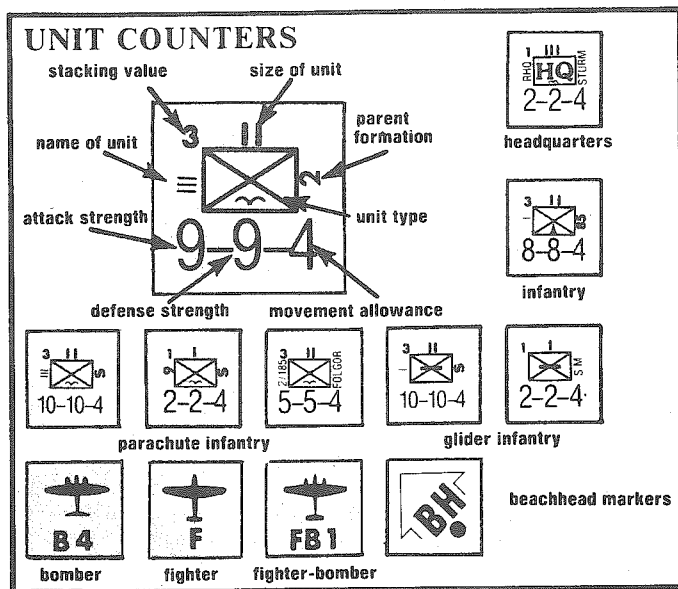
Ranged artillery may add their combat factors to attacking units as in other games, but on defense they may only fire separately at one or several attackers, with scant chance of success.

The Allies' main advantage is the fog-of-war rule which allows them to have their counters inverted at all times except when adjacent to German units or engaging in combat. The uncertainty for the German player is enhanced by the ten decoy counters, which, however, are removed from the game when they are brought into zone of control. (Because of the inverted and decoy units, the game is difficult to play by mail, and unbiased solitaire play is next to impossible.)

The Germans have their own advantage: air power! Bombers and fighter bombers may add their strengths to attacks, like artillery, or they may bomb ports or artillery positions to incapacitate them for one or two turns. Fighters and fighter bombers may interdict road movement. Aircraft have unlimited movement allowance, are not subject to losses, but may not fly at night. The 26 air factors are the most flexible weapon in the German arsenal.

The Allies win the game if they hold all three airfields at the end of the second day (Turn 8) or on (ha!!) Turn 28. Failing this, the Allies still win if they inflict 75 points of casualties on the Germans and evacuate 80 points of their own. Point values of units range from 1 (for Greek regiments) to 15 (for German airborne battalions). For the Allies, non-combat units and headquarters are best for evacuation purposes, at 5 points each. Evacuation routes are the few roads off the south edge of the mapboards or, only at night, by sea from the ports of Suda and Heraklion. Evacuation may not begin until Turn 8, nor may Allied non-combatants move out of their sectors before that time -- unless the Germans foolishly enter the Georgeopolis sector earlier.

The victory point levels seem to create a problem. Consider for the moment the following Allied plan:



1. All mobile 'anywhere' units are placed at Heraklion.
2. Deployment at Heraklion, Suda, and Maleme is 'loose' so that the airborne troops must land on or among the Allied positions.
3. The headquarters and three battalions from Retimo immediately head for the south edge of the Georgeopolis sector with its two evacuation roads.
4. The coastal steamer ferries a headquarters and a small unit from Suda to Heraklion over night (thus avoiding air attacks).
5. Non-combat units are lined up by Turn 8 at Suda for evacuation at night.

The possible results are as follows:

1. The Allies, with help of the additional 'anywhere' units, should be able to destroy by Turn 8 the 63 points of paratroopers dropped at Heraklion.
2. The 'loose' deployment at Maleme and Suda will lead to at least 12 more points of paratroop losses, making up the 75 points needed for victory.
3. The Suda forces should fall back slowly and be able to hold the port until Turn 8.
4. The Maleme forces should manage to hold the airfield until late on the second day. If possible, some Maleme units should make for the south edge of the board.
5. At Retimo, the available troops should hold the airfield until the second day, so that German reinforcements airlanded at Retimo cannot affect the action at Heraklion.

Granted these premises, the Allies are likely to achieve evacuation of more than 80 points from their Heraklion force (70 points including 'anywhere' units), Retimo escapees (20 points), steamer cargo (7 points), and from Suda port (30 points of non-combat units). Any troops escaping from Maleme would be a bonus.

This plan may not be as perfect as it looks. Allied casualties at Heraklion and efficient German thrusts at Maleme and Suda might leave the Allies with less than 80 points to evacuate. With all-out bombing in the evening the *Luftwaffe* has a two-thirds chance of closing Suda port over night. The glider battalion and air support, committed at Heraklion, could wreak havoc with the plan. (But the German player is not likely to send his gliders to this out-of-the-way place without knowing whether the concentration of inverted counters there is a true build-up or a collection of decoys.)

The reason that this kind of strategy has a chance to work lies in some unhistorical consequences of the rules. In reality, the

Allies prepared to repulse a seaborne invasion, not an air assault. And the decision to evacuate was made during the confused battle, after it became apparent that the Germans could not be stopped. The Allied player is under no such misconceptions. He can plan for an aerial assault and for evacuation when he sets up, with the benefit of historical hindsight. The German player, in contrast, is not given such an advantage. His paratroopers must land when, and near to where, they historically landed.

The scatter rules aggravate this situation. Paratroopers have only two chances in six of landing on the drop hex, and enemy units in the drop hex and anti-aircraft guns within range add to the scatter. Because of the predominant wind direction, scatter is to the northeast, in the direction of the sea. The combination of these effects can be devastating. As an example, a German company foolish enough to select Maleme airfield as its drop hex, occupied by an Allied unit and in range of one anti-aircraft unit, would have only one chance out of six not to drown in the Aegean, and that lucky roll would not put the unit on the airfield hex. Even without any Allies around, a unit dropping on Maleme would have a 50 percent chance of elimination. Yet Maleme field was one of the historical landing zones.

It is clear that the scatter rules were meant to reflect the initial disorganization of the airborne forces. However, its effect, if the Allies set up 'loosely', is to spread the German units on top of and among the Allies so that they can be defeated in detail. A three-hex scatter at Crete, where the Germans came in at low altitude to avoid scatter, is simply not realistic -- and it invites the Allies to use the 'loose' set-up as an effective and quite unhistorical tactic.

The inverted counter rule is also quite questionable. It is true that the German planners did not appreciate what a daylight assault against a prepared foe would entail, but after the landings it was the Allied Command that was in a state of confusion. Moreover, the Germans, not the Allies, had the advantage of unchallenged air reconnaissance.

But to fault *Assault* on historical grounds is to miss the point. This becomes quite clear when one realizes that the evacuation was ordered on May 27 (Game Turn 28); if there are still units of both sides on the mapboard by then, both sides have been doing something very wrong. *Assault* was developed not as a simulation, but along the lines of the 'classic' games (a much misused term), and largely succeeds as such. It has plenty of action, nicely conveys the flavor of the uncertainties of an airborne assault, and provides both sides with strategic options and room for tactical finesse. Its movement and combat mechanics, core of any game system, are sound. And there are nice touches of chrome and some unusual elements. What problems *Assault* does have as a game could be corrected with some minor changes. As a simulation it is seriously flawed, although perhaps not beyond repair. And, of course, it needs a brand-new box!

APPLES AND ORANGES

Any comparison between the two *Crete* games is difficult. Differences in scale, mechanics, and playing time make each a different type of game. *Assault* could be said to be more exciting; *Descent*, more interesting.

More difficult is to answer the question why the games were released. If, as the SPI feedback indicated, *subject* is the most important factor in whether a given game is liked, why are the two largest wargame manufacturers releasing games on the same subject? Surely, interest in the battle for Crete is limited (when compared, for example, with the Eastern Front). Or has the feedback itself created sufficient interest to support two games? At *ORIGINS '78*, Jim Dunnigan said that sales were not hurt by such direct competition. Whether this will prove true remains to be seen.

Now let's see, when is GDW's *Marita/Merkur* due to come out...?



Air Assault on Crete DESIGNER'S NOTES

Vance von Borries

A COUNTER TO THE DOUM DEFENSE

Much as I hate to disappoint Allen Doum, I cannot accept his plan as the ideal recipe for the Allies. Let me suggest the following counterplan for the Germans. It is not perfect, but it illustrates the deficiencies in Allen's defense. (Remember, Allen gave only an outline.)

1. On the first turn the Sturm Regiment lands mainly to the southeast of Maleme. While the hill overlooking the airfield is a bit more difficult to attack from this direction, the presence of the main body of the regiment to the east of Maleme completely shuts off all Allies communication to Maleme. Depending upon the Allied set-up, small blocking forces could be landed to the south and west to seal in the Allied Maleme force.

2. The Suda sector may be tricky. Because of Allen's 'loose' set-up there are a great many targets to hit and many will not be weak. But Allen's glass jaw might be Suda port itself. Assuming only one unit per hex, which is what 'loose' must mean, there will be many unguarded non-combat units in the general area of the port. Since Allied defense strength will most likely be found on the perimeter, a jump right to Suda port with about two and a half battalions combined with a Turn 3 convoy landing at Galatas might prove Allen's undoing. The remaining paratroops will land in the relatively 'safe' Prison Valley.

All suspected AA positions should be bombed before the paratroops arrive. Eight positions can be attacked. This attack will neutralize Allied positions and may reveal a flak-trap; if this is around Suda port then it would be better to land the 3rd Regt. in the Prison Valley.

3. The commitment of the glider battalion is crucial. There are several possibilities: (a) jump into Heraklion sector to try to draw out the defense, (b) reinforce Sturm Regt. at Maleme, (c) land at Suda port, or (d) land just to the south of Suda in order to cut off Allied escape routes. It is possible Allen may have

tipped his hand in the Heraklion sector because of the heavy stacking there; Allen will be going for a quick kill and then the quick evacuation. German strategy should be to prevent the latter by cutting off every evacuation route. The above options (a) and (b) would only reinforce other German detachments, not cut evacuation routes. The best bet is probably a combination of options (c) and (d).

4. The second convoy will land in Turn 6 at Georgeopolis, coordinated with the airborne reinforcements. The emergency convoy could make for Georgeopolis or Galatas depending upon the status of coast defenses.

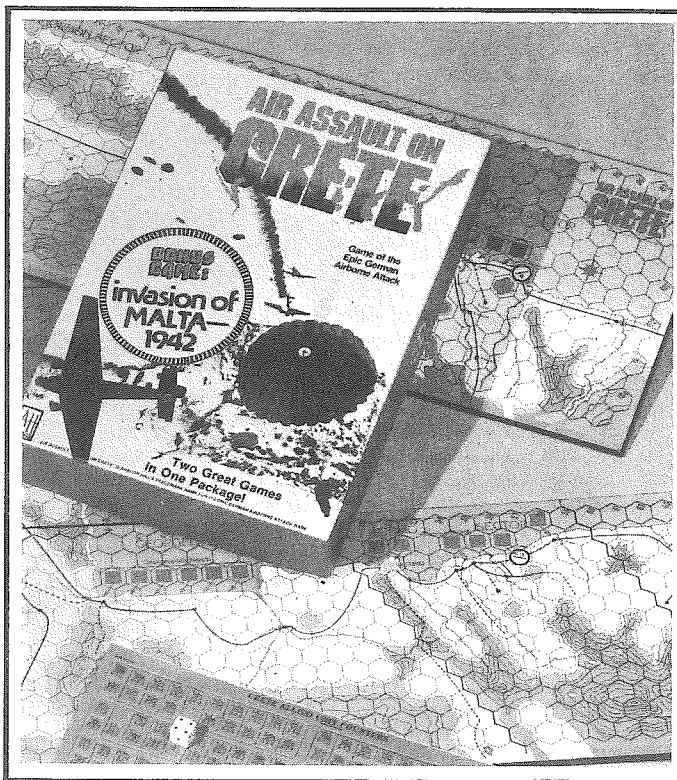
5. On Turn 3 the 2nd Regt. lands at Retimo and, due to Allen's fatal fade-away, the airfield should be German by morning. All airlanded units move for Georgeopolis while the paratroops march for Heraklion, arriving that night.

6. The 1st Regt. will indeed have a tough time at Heraklion but of the 35 possible units there (probably 28 since surely Allen does not want to risk *all* immobile decoys and coast artillery), 26 (probably 19) have no or only one defense point. So with nearly three quarters of the Allied force woefully weak the 1st Regt. has a chance of containing it. At worst, the surviving paratroops can dig in on either of the two ridges. Finally, before the Allies have an opportunity to evacuate, The Germans can reinforce with more paratroops and renew the attack.

Basically, what the German player hopes to accomplish is to freeze the Allied garrisons in place by preventing speedy evacuation and then mop up each garrison one by one. This is why the game may stretch out the extra turns.

Allen's strategy has dubious possibilities because it automatically concedes an airfield, depends on evacuation through easily bombed ports, and ignores the effects of a convoy landing and the airborne reinforcements. Allen further errs in assuming the German attack plan is obvious. The key to winning this game, as it should be for many games, is to maintain strategic flexibility, to keep the other player guessing about your real objective: whether evacuation or airfields. CRETE has many strategy options but there are no pat answers.

Vance von Borries is a free-lance designer with no previous association with Avalon Hill. He submitted his designs Crete and Malta on his own initiative. (Editor's Note)



INVASION OF MALTA

by Allen Doum

1942



RANDY'S RHINESTONE.

At the Professional Design Seminar at ORIGINS '78, Randy Reed spoke, among other things, of the 'little gem of a game' he had worked on recently: *Invasion of Malta, 1942*. *Malta*, according to Reed, has all of the elements a good game should have: proper piece density, a playing surface with no 'dead' zones, short playing time (one to two hours in this case), good graphics, good work on the Order of Battle, a quickly reached decision point, and a good number of play variations (different strategies) for both players.

The graphics of *Malta* are the same as those of *Assault*, with the Italian units a shade of light green. And it is hard, of course, to argue with the Order of Battle for an hypothetical action. (The game is based on a German-Italian plan for summer 1942, cancelled in favor of Rommel's drive to Tobruk and beyond.) But most of Randy's criteria for a 'good game' deal with play, not historicity, so I shall attempt to examine just that.

The rules of *Malta* differ little from those of *Assault*. It is the units and some of their capabilities that are different. In *Malta*, Axis paratroop battalions need not be broken down into companies for airdrop. The Allied artillery, anti-aircraft, and coastal defense batteries are stronger and more numerous. The Axis seaborne forces are much larger and have a *much* better chance of actually showing up.

In *Malta*, there are six anti-aircraft battalions which add 3 to the die roll for scatter (instead of only 1), but these must be set up near La Valetta and at the three airfields. In addition, the Allies have eight anti-aircraft units adding 1 to the roll for scatter. Since any roll above 9 eliminates the airborne unit, attempted landings near La Valetta or on the airfields are suicidal. With his other eight anti-aircraft units, deployed inverted among the ten decoy counters, the Allied player can easily set up a 'flak trap' at some other part of the island. Landing in such a trap is deadly.

To win, the Axis player must essentially clear the island while keeping his casualties of airborne troops (only these count) below 120 points. Here, a German battalion is worth 21 points; an Italian battalion, 11. Headquarters and company-size units

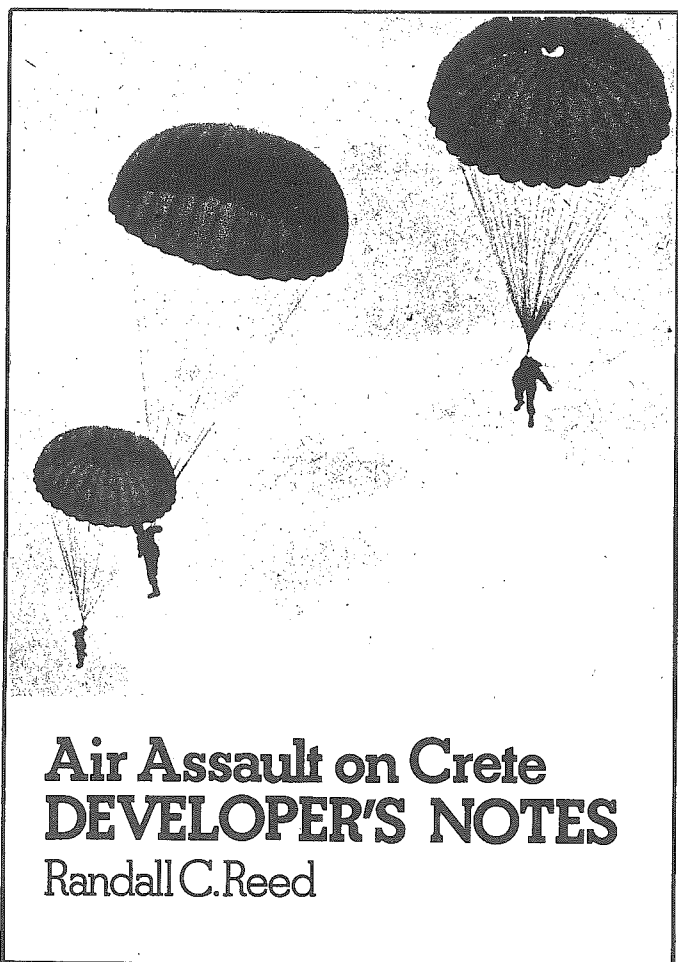
count less. Not only must the Axis player worry about the total count, but also about the German casualties separately; if they exceed 50 points, the German airborne forces may no longer attack and must be withdrawn from the island as quickly as possible. Three bad scatter rolls on Turn 1 can cost the German forces 63 points. Talk about a quickly reached decision point!

Even after the Axis troops have landed, their troubles are far from over. The Allies have three strength-8, range-7 artillery units which, when concentrated, can turn the smallest Allied unit into a powerful attacking force. And the rules for zones of control make it easy to surround any unit.

The landing of the seaborne forces is another dice-crossed affair. In the *Assault/Malta* system, *each* coastal battery can fire at *every* invading unit within range, with at least one chance in three of eliminating the target. In *Assault*, the coastal batteries are few, the coast is long, and convoys are unimportant. But the opposite is true in *Malta*, where, moreover, the Allies have four heavy batteries of practically unlimited range and with the ability to fire regardless of intervening terrain.

Scatter, anti-aircraft and regular artillery fire, and any Axis attempts to neutralize artillery by air attacks, all these are chance factors. The Allied set-up and the Axis seaborne invasion commitment are both made without any knowledge of enemy intentions. The airborne assault, against possible 'flak traps', is not much better off.

I am not inferring a lack of play balance. If the Axis player lands his troops away from flak and if his air support chances onto the proper coastal batteries, the stronger Axis forces will have a romp. What dissatisfies me is that all the important decisions are made on the basis of limited or no information. In *Assault*, the set-up restrictions and the lesser importance of each individual unit lead to a situation in which movement and combat largely decide the game. In *Malta*, the pre-game decisions are everything. They set up a confrontation between a hidden set-up and a random set-up (and not for the first time either, as players of Randy Reed's *Starship Troopers* can testify), with all the strategy of just one hand of showdown poker. And for that, any playing time of more than a few minutes is too long.



TURNING THE TABLES: A Review of a Reviewer

After putting my head in the lion's mouth, as it were, by calling game reviewers, as a group, largely incompetent, it is nice to see that Allen Doum didn't hold that against me. For the record, Allen your review of *Assault* is at least a 'C+' (Which from me is nothing short of phenomenal!)

On the whole, this is a very positive review. That is most gratifying. The only area of importance at which our erudite reviewer takes umbrage is in the 'historicity' of the design. I hereby object to his objection.

On reflection, it seems to me that the first Great Sin that a reviewer can commit in reviewing a game design is to spread misinformation about the way a game *plays*. If he is misdirected in this area, it is likely due to the fact that he played the game very little. In defense, some reviewers will moan and groan that they just don't have time to do a proper job anymore, what with the profusion of game titles. Fine. But the hobby only asks them to do one at a time. Fortunately, Allen Doum had done a competent job of play analysis. Reading his words, I sense that he *knows* what happens in a typical game well enough to draw relevant conclusions. This is vital. A game can be 'historical' as all get-out, but if a player cannot translate that onto the mapboard, the designer or developer has not done his job. He has presented only a half-finished game. This is something that a game reviewer **MUST** explore and inform his readers about.

The second Great Sin a reviewer can commit is to spread misinformation about the historicity (historical analysis) put into a game. This is fraught with much more danger than a straightforward analysis of game play. In the ideal situation, the designer lays down a great body of groundwork research as a first step in designing a game. As a second step, this information must be digested and *synthesized* into basic historical conclusions. It is not enough to *collect* historical data. It must be analyzed and converted into something that a game

system can handle. When finally applied to the game, this end-product of research will have represented a vast number of man-hours spent in gathering and synthesizing information. It represents the conclusions of an historian (the designer) and, as such, may or may not reflect the popularly held concepts about that war, campaign, or battle. In short, in the best situations, the designer becomes a temporary expert on the subject of his design. Unfortunately, the reviewer isn't. He can't afford to be. If he reads even *one* book on the subject, it is probably a lot. The reviewer, no matter how many games he plays, is not necessarily an expert on that particular historical event. To make statements about, to contradict, to critique the historical conclusions made by the designer is to outstrip the capabilities of most reviewers. The reviewer risks spreading misinformation about the historical content of a design almost every time he opens a game box.

Unfortunately, Allen fell into this same trap. His final summation lauds the playability, then asserts '*Assault* was developed not as a simulation...' Says who? For the record, *Assault* was designed to be every bit as much of a simulation as any other title ever published. The historical knocks that Allen makes are, for the most part, spurious and derived largely from a superficial understanding of the campaign. This is of only momentary concern. What is more troubling is his tacit assertion that since the *game* is clean, efficient, economical (read: 'simple'), it must not be a *simulation*. It appears that he and a great many others in the hobby assume that only gritty, complicated, obscure, or ponderous games (like *Descent*?) can be 'simulations'. The catch-phase has been, 'either it's a good game or it's a good simulation, it can't be both.' Wrong. In point of fact, a game *can* be both a good game and a good simulation. The terms are NOT mutually exclusive. A very high-powered simulation can be contained within an elegant, efficient, clean game system IF the designer is skilled enough and *is given enough time* to excise all superfluous verbiage. Most complicated game systems are that way NOT because that is the only way to handle historical information, but because the designer lacked the time, skill, or energy to manipulate, process, integrate, convert, synthesize, etc., etc. his data base into a more applicable form. The numbers are unimportant. What is important are the differences and similarities that those numbers convey. It is indefensible to require the game player to go through 18 steps when the same thing can be accomplished in three.

There are many 'heavy' simulations on the market today hiding a lot of 'light-weight' historical conclusions. To assume that *Assault* is a light-weight simulation because it is 'simple' is to do an injustice to Vance von Borries and to me. We worked very hard on our data base and historical analysis and then redoubled our efforts to arrive at what we thought was a truly elegant yet powerful game system. We feel the system accurately conveys the essential truths of the campaign. To ask the obvious: Who, then, is competent to critique the historical research of *Assault*? Who has done as much or more research? Probably no one except another game designer who has done a game on the same subject. Ouch! In truth, historical research can always be fudged, short-circuited, or fabricated. There is no obvious penalty for a designer when he outstrips his data base. It is a relatively safe way to cheat, save time, or catch up on a production schedule. How does the game-buying public protect itself? It can't. It can only rely on the reputation and personal integrity of the designer...

It may seem pedantic to respond to criticism in an otherwise very favorable review. Be that as it may, in this case it is important to respond as valid proof of the 'reviewer-as-nonhistorian' argument outlined above. This is not meant as any sort of personal attack on Allen Doum. His problems are our problems since this is a phenomenon common to anyone who attempts to review games. *Assault* is a game in which economical play mechanics in no way diminish the historicity of the game-as-simulation. Allen has made certain statements to the contrary which readers might find interesting. To wit:

1. **Doom:** *'In reality, the Allies prepared to repulse a seaborne invasion, not an air assault...'*

Reed: The overwhelming historical consensus clearly shows that the British *were* expecting an assault from the air. By this time, the idea was not novel. It had already been used in Norway, Holland, Belgium, and (only weeks before) the Corinth Canal in Greece. As early as mid-December, 1940, then-garrison commander Brigadier Tidbury forecast an airborne assault with the primary objective of taking Suda Bay, the attacking troops being dropped at the three airfields. Even a cursory examination of the Allied defenses shows that most of their attention was directed towards an airborne assault. What they didn't expect (and what made Crete such a radical undertaking) was a *totally* airborne attack of that magnitude, launched, reinforced, and supplied *solely* from the air.

2. **Doom:** *'...the decision to evacuate was made during a confused battle, after it became apparent that the Germans could not be stopped.'*

Reed: The final evacuation order was given almost a week after the air assault. But evacuation from Crete had been going on since the fall of Greece. The procedures, routes, rally points, and collection points were all well-established. In one sense, Crete was simply one large holding camp for the refugees from Greece. In the weeks preceding the invasion, there was a desperate race to evacuate the thousands of vital technical personnel (from the expeditionary force sent to Greece) before the attack fell. There had been a provisional evacuation plan (using Sfakia) on hand since before the attack. When the order was given *from London* on May 27, it was preceded by several days of planning and preparation to implement the previously written evacuation scheme. It was not a last-minute, last-ditch effort.

3. **Doom:** *'(The Allied player) can plan for an aerial assault and for evacuation... The German player is given no such advantage. His paratroopers must land when and where they historically landed.'*

Reed: CORRECT!!! The Allies knew *when* (to the day) and *how* (to the units involved) the attack was going to occur. The Germans completely muffed the intelligence planning by grossly underestimating the strength, location, and composition of the defenders. There is very little probability that they could have or would have attacked differently. I must stand by the game's historical pre-dispositions 100 percent.

4. **Doom:** *'Maleme Airfield was one of the landing zones.'*

Reed: Wrong again, Allen. The major landing zones were west and southeast of the airfield, and in the Tavronitis River wadi (dry riverbed). The scatter rule accurately reflects the amount of drift that most German companies suffered on a percentage basis. Your supporting arguments are spurious because they do not take into account the extraordinary circumstances required for a three-hex drift. Not realistic you say? The Drift Diagram can accurately re-create the landings as they occurred. What more can one ask?

5. **Doom:** *'The inverted counter rule is also quite questionable.'*

Reed: A poor historical appraisal. The Germans began the campaign with a terrible intelligence picture that went downhill after that. They were harassed by Cretan guerillas who provided the British with much intelligence information as to the German dispositions and movements. Aerial reconnaissance was a consistent failure in Crete. It failed to pinpoint artillery and AA gun locations, headquarters, supply dumps, etc. The British knew the land and the Germans were the invaders. I stand by the rule 100 percent.

6. **Doom:** *'As a simulation, it is seriously flawed...'*

Reed: I spent three months researching the campaign and correlating the data with Vance's research as well as with several outside historians. We covered our bases, did our homework, and played devil's advocate with each other's research. With all due respect, Allen, just whom do you think you are kidding? You haven't proved that assertion to me. In

fact, your review shows your knowledge of the campaign to be very rudimentary.

But, that is not at issue here. What is central to this essay is the question of why uninformed reviewers INSIST on critiquing the historicity of a design.

Is it simply mistrust? But why, after a man spends six months living and breathing a certain slice of history, would one automatically assume the designer — any designer, for this is a common tactic in many reviews — would not know the rudiments of the war, campaign, or battle. Wouldn't one first give benefit of the doubt? And why would a reviewer — any reviewer, not just Allen — criticize the historicity without hitting the books to back up his criticism? Is it because the reviewer has no fear of retribution? Is it because he has the last word? Perhaps. But, if they mean to have war, let it begin here...

MALTA: PARTHIAN SHOT

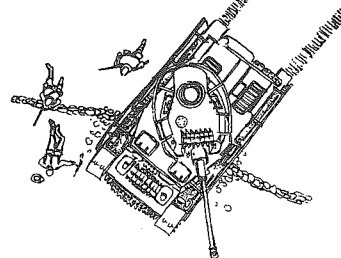
by Randall C. Reed

Dear Allen:

I do think that you did an above-average job on *Assault*. But, about *Malta*... I must freely admit that I have a bit of an advantage on you. It seems like someone told me that you played *Assault* many times (and it shows in your commentary); *BUT*, he says you didn't play *Malta* more than a couple of times. Frankly, Al, that shows also. That you went overboard to show that the Axis player is so hobbled attests to your limited play experience. (Played the Axis side, didn't ya?) *Malta* is not a crap shoot. There are a good half-dozen major set-up options *for each side* which will yield better or worse play experiences. Put together, there are no less than thirty major combinations of Axis and Allied strategies. Dozens of playtest games failed to find the Axis pitfall. So lucky of you to find it on only your first or second play-through. Contrary to your experience, important decisions can be made on the basis of on-mapboard display. But, the display is subtle, a rare attribute today. In my own humble opinion, *Malta* is the better of the two games, and in fact would be worthy of consideration for 'Game-of-the-Year'.

Best wishes,
Randy

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THE MAGAZINE OF COMBAT
THROUGH THE AGES

PURSUE AND DESTROY



Verdun

by Shelby L. Stanton



VERDUN

A Dagger at the Heart of France

Conflict Games/Game Designers' Workshop
203 North Street, Normal Illinois 61761

Design of Second Edition: Marc W. Miller

Art Direction of Second Edition: Paul R. Banner

Topic: Unsuccessful German offensive against French fortress Verdun, February through June, 1916.

Size: One 19-inch x 25-inch map (mounted), ca 350 counters.

Scale: Regiment level, ca 650 meters per hex, 15 one-week turns.

Game System: Simple movement-combat system with fluid, inactive zones of control. Two-dice Combat Results Table based on odds, with column shifts for difference in value of attacker's and defender's terrain. Extensive artillery rules with spotting and line of sight.

Complexity: Moderately simple game.

Price: \$11.98

Published: March 1978

Redesign with little resemblance to first edition.

THE OLD AND THE NEW

Verdun, First Edition, is a battalion-level bloodbath, whereas the Second Edition is a regiment-level grinding match. Both games have distinctly different flavors, owing to their scales and combat systems. Since the revision has not improved the accuracy of the German Order of Battle, it is up to the player to decide for himself which game better represents the 'feel' of World War I combat — and this will depend on his perception of how it should be represented: as a grueling slugfest (revised *Verdun*) or as a horrendous mutual slaughter

(original *Verdun*). One can get equal pleasure out of playing both.

Part of the reason why these are totally different games is that the original map has been completely overhauled. While the old map was rendered in a nice style, it did suffer from certain terrain oversimplification as well as having the rather primitive flavor of Conflict Games of that time. In the new game, the entire Verdun area (well beyond the previous map, which ended just west of the Meuse) has been covered in a graphically superb fashion, giving more room for maneuver as well as being vastly more accurate. The only omission I could discover was the absence of Fort du Chana, which should face west on hex 1616. (I mention this picky point only because an extra French fort counter with no corresponding placement hex is provided.)

The original game spans the time from February 21 (or, if the Germans choose to attack early, February 19) until March 27, 1916. This gives 19 game turns, each lasting from one to three days. In the revised game, play begins in the last week of February and ends in mid-June, after 15 turns of one week each.

The combat system is the principal reason for the different 'feel' of the two games. The sequence of play has stayed basically the same, but the Combat Results Tables are completely changed. In the old game, artillery had a better chance of destroying a unit or 'demoralizing' it (halving its movement and fighting potential). Also, if the defender had been demoralized, assaulting infantry got the benefit of a better chart with a chance of 'routing' the enemy (opening a hole and moving and attacking again, possibly even routing the defender a second time). If the defender was 'in good order', losses on both sides tended to be heavy. The system lent itself to furious battle and frightening losses — one could feel the machine guns clattering as the dead piled up. The new game catches the spirit of grinding attrition in a more detached manner. Units are harder to destroy, and bloodletting is toned down considerably;

at least in the opening stages, both players should be able to pull many 'disrupted' units back for reformation. The reduced losses may reflect the fact that regiments are torn up less than battalions — it depends on how you visualize World War I. Characteristically, in the old game the six German flamethrower battalions are the first to go, whereas in the revised game one should be able to hang onto them for a long time.

There are also important differences in artillery effects. In the original game, all four types of artillery fire (standard and intermittent barrage, saturation fire, counterbattery fire) were resolved in slightly different ways on one and the same table. No spotting was required, except that counterbattery fire could only be directed against adjacent enemy troops. The revised game has a much more realistic artillery system (and much more artillery to use), with numerous special modes, a thorough spotting requirement, and German observation balloons. Shortage of ammunition plagues players in both games.

Phosgene, for some unknown reason, is optional in the revised game. Is this a humane gesture to permit German commanders to practice chivalry? The original game had weather rules, which were dropped in the revision; since weather only affected the degree of misery in which soldiers died at Verdun, it probably didn't matter much.

Extensive research indicates that, on the German side, both the number of regiments participating and the reinforcement schedule are quite inaccurate. A detailed German Order of Appearance is provided here. In the game, the much stronger actual German forces (15 versus 7 elite, 44 versus 46 standard, and 50 versus 21 reserve regiments) would overwhelm the French, and the French replacement rate may therefore also be unrealistic. With respect to Orders of Battle, neither game meets expectations.

VERDUN — GERMAN ORDER OF BATTLE

R = Reserve
B = Battalion
Bav = Bavarian

E = Ersatz (Replacement)
F = Fusilier (Infantry)
GJ = GebirgsJäger (Mountain)

Gd = Garde (Guard)
Gr = Grenadier (Infantry)
J = Jäger (Light Troops)

L = Landwehr (Militia)
Lb = Leib- (King's Own)

TURN	DIVISION	DATE	ORIGIN OF DIV	5-1-9	4-1-9	3-1-9	2-1-9	REGIMENTAL DESIGNATIONS
1)	2L	21.2 - 9.9	Wurttemberg			4		120L, 122L, 124L, 125L
	5	21.2 - 31.5	Brandenburg	2	1			8Lb, 12Gr, 52
	6	21.2 - 16.3	Brandenburg		3			20, 24, 64
	9R	21.2 - 21.4	Posen (Polish)		1	1	3	395, 102L, 6R*, 19R*, 9RJB
	10R	21.2 - 13.4	Posen	1	1	2		37F, 155, 37R, 98R
	11R	21.2 - 15.5	Silesia		2	1		22, 156, 10R
	12R	21.2 - 15.5	Silesia			3	1	23R, 38R, 51R, 12RJB
	13R	21.2 - 9.9	Westphalia			3	1	13R, 39R, 57R, 13RJB
	21	21.2 - 28.4	Hesse-Nassau	1	2			80F, 81, 87
	25	21.2 - 28.4	Hesse	2	1			115Lb, 117Lb, 116
	30	21.2 - 9.9	Alsace		3			99, 105, 143
	39	21.2 - 9.9	Alsace		3			126, 132, 172
	14R	21.2 - 9.9	Westphalia		1	2		159, 16R, 53R
2)	Bav.E	2.3 - 16.5	Bavaria			4		4R, 15R, 28E, 81L(Prussian)
	5L	27.2 - 31.7	Rhine			4		25L, 65L, 66L, 36L
	11Bav	2.3 - 16.5	Bavaria		2	1		3, 22, 13R
	22R	2.3 - 14.6	Hesse-Thuringia			3	1	71R, 82R, 94R, 22RJB
	113	28.2 - 12.4	Saxony	1	1	1		36F, 48, 32R
3)	121	4.3 - 7.5	Mixed German		1	2		60, 7R, 56R
4)	19R	15.3 - 12.7	Hanover, etc.			5		73R, 74R, 78R, 79R, 92R
	58	12.3 - 6.4	Saxony		2	1		106, 107, 120R
6)	43R	25.3 - 15.6	Prussian			4	1	201R, 202R, 203R, 204R, 43RJB
	44R	25.3 - 15.6	Brandenburg			4	1	205R, 206R, 207R, 208R, 44RJB
7)	50	5.4 - 9.9	Westphalia	1	2			39F, 53, 158
8)	1	13.4 - 30.7	Mixed German	2	2			6Gd, 7Gd, 357, 358
10)	4	25.4 - 25.8	Pomerania		4			14, 49, 140, 149
12)	1 Bav.	9.5 - 15.7	Bavaria		3			1, 2, 24
	2 Bav.	9.5 - 15.7	Bavaria (Swabia)		3			12, 15, 20
13)	38	13.5 - 8.9	Thuringia		3			94, 95, 96
	54	11.5 - 9.9	Schleswig-Holstein		1	2		84, 27R, 90R
14)	7R	25.5 - 9.9	Saxony			3	1	36R, 66R, 72R, 7RJB
15)	56	25.5 - 13.7	Hesse	1	2			35F, 88, 118
	Alpen	28.5 - 9.9	German/Bavarian	4			4 (Bn)	Alpen-LbGJ, 1 Bav GJ, 2 GJ, 3 GJ, 201, 202, 205, 209 GJB**

* These regiments provided a Storm Battalion each into the battle

** These battalions were Machine-Gun Alpine battalions

NOTES: The regimental designations are those of the divisions at the Battle of Verdun; German formations constantly switched regiments and this accounts for the wide discrepancy in German divisional compositions. The Alpen 'division' was actually titled the 'Alpenkorps'. Except where noted, all Bavarian divisional regiments are those of the 'Königliche-Bayerische Armee' (Royal Bavarian Army) and possibly will duplicate German Imperial regimental numbers.

Principal Source: *Ruhmeshalle. Unserer Alten Armee*, Militar-Verlag, Leipzig (ca 1925).



VERDUN

GameProfile

by Pete Belli

Verdun is a new, and different, version of Conflict Games' simulation of the climactic battle between German and French forces in early 1916. The scale is one kilometer per hex, and the game is played in 15 one-week turns. Counters represent units of regimental or battalion size or portray observation balloons, supply points, railroad artillery, and various game markers. The map is mounted and quite colorful, although not all that visually appealing; it is historically accurate and seems to have been based upon the *West Point Atlas*. Several types of terrain are shown and the graphics are adequate, but some aspects (like river hexes and hexsides or trench hexsides) could have been handled better. The 300-plus glossy counters are oversized (to fit the oversized hexes, a nice touch) and are done in shades of gray and blue. Playing aids are printed on separate sheets and are generally well arranged.

The next subject must surely be one all gamers are getting tired of hearing about... rules problems. Conflict Games (the original publisher) was well known for a 'easy-going' style of rules writing and GDW generally adheres to that practice also. I'm sure no one is really all that fond of 'legalese'; I personally prefer a good solid set of rules over the general description format. Problems in *Verdun* include, among others, contradictory zone-of-control rules for units in fortresses and vague wording regarding control of the city hexes of Verdun and French replacement allocation.

The game system is unmistakably John Hill. Heavy emphasis is placed on artillery with bombardment as well as *five* special missions including rail interdiction and balloon spotting suppression! Terrain effects are handled in a unique manner for movement and combat (as well as spotting for almost all artillery fire) by means of an imposing array of charts and tables.

The combat system uses a double die roll Combat Results Table with terrain effects and other considerations reflected by modifications of the die roll. The attacking player must allocate

all of his assaulting troops in advance, for which a good supply of blank counters to mark units or some sort of attack listing sheet is very helpful. Next, the attacking player makes artillery attacks. A defensive artillery phase follows. Surviving units then assault. Combat results in either elimination or disruption, in which case the unit is inverted. But wait... surprise! The reverse side of the counter is blank! As you might imagine, heavy fighting results in a blizzard of white counters whose ownership is doubtful. Obviously, marking the reverse side is the only answer, but why couldn't the counters have been backprinted?

Additional rules cover ammunition supply in great depth, as well as combat engineer units and fortresses. One question, a historical one, about the automatic artillery capability of fortresses. In Georges Blond's *Verdun* a good deal of space is devoted to showing how unprepared the French were at the start of the battle. The 'artillery pieces and personnel' were removed 'from the belt of surrounding forts' (according to Blond) yet in the game each fort is equal to a regiment of field artillery. Some designers abstract rules 'for effect', so maybe there is a reason for the forts' ability. Too bad the game did not contain designer's or developer's notes--- they would have been helpful.

Victory is awarded on the basis of casualties and control of Verdun, with several levels of victory. Optional rules are included, but their use may subtly alter the game and indeed affect play balance. Playing *Verdun* requires patience. The procedures for attacks and the use of artillery along with the spotting and ammunition supply provisions *are* time consuming. The artillery units (which seem to comprise nearly half the units, about right for World War One) are very important, and successful employment of them is crucial.

It may be that the system used is simply not for everyone but, in my opinion, *Verdun* suffers from several small problems which, added together, reduce a potentially good game to relative mediocrity. To me this is especially unfortunate since I was very enthusiastic about the game at the beginning. Well, as one of the defenders of Verdun might say, '*Chacun à son goût*'. Every one to his taste.

VERDUN ERRATA

Official GDW Rule Clarifications

September 1978

Question: May French artillery set up in the front trench line (so that all front line trench hexes can be occupied)?

Answer: Yes, but they are very vulnerable there.

Q.: If an attack is declared against a unit and that unit is eliminated by artillery fire, may the attacking infantry advance into the vacated hex?

A.: Yes.

Q.: The Terrain Effects Chart omits 'Towns'. Does only 'City' terrain (*Verdun*) affect combat?

A.: No. The entry in the chart should read 'City and Town'.

Q.: The rules for zones of control and for fortresses contradict one another. Do zones of control of units extend out of fortresses?

A.: Yes.

Editor's Question: It seems that, appropriately, the Germans have little chance of reaching Verdun, but that, inappropriately, they can win by not even trying. To do so, they can attack during the first two turns (during which they enjoy the stacking advantage) at high odds to inflict more losses than they take, and then settle down in their front trenches and only shoot with their more plentiful artillery. Should not the victory conditions be altered to prevent this stratagem?

Answer: Yes, the victory conditions should be altered. French casualties suffered during the first two turns should count only half for calculation of victory points.

Designer's Notes

VERDUN

by Marc Miller

I originally got involved in the *Verdun Redone* project in late 1975, when the Workshop staff was discussing the required alterations and updates required for our newly acquired line of Conflict Games. We felt that the entire range of games needed work in one form or another. Frank Chadwich had already produced *The Fall of Tobruk* in the Conflict Game series, and laid claim to *Kasserine Pass*, *Overlord*, and *Bar-Lev*. Although that left me little choice but to take on *Verdun*, I was nevertheless delighted. World War I was a primary field of interest for me although much of that work has never seen the light of day. In addition, I had some strong ideas on what needed work in *Verdun*, and was anxious to follow them through.

The actual work on *Verdun* was quite a long time in the mill. That allowed a nice, long gestation period for the revised game, and let some of the rough edges smooth out through playtesting and reexamination.

When I first started working on *Verdun*, I assumed that I would simply revise the game system and reformat it for the new box and map sizes — I quickly disabused myself of that notion. The game was incomplete and unplayable, didn't cover the battlefield in any real sense, and generally seemed a disappointment. To John Hill's credit, he stopped doing *Verdun*-type games and started doing *Kasserine Pass*-type ones

right afterwards. Nevertheless, I soon realized what a task I had in front of me.

First on my agenda was getting my thoughts in order, in effect formulating a statement of what the game should turn out to be. I find this process rarely reflects the true final product, but does lend direction to the preliminary efforts in research and design. The statement came out something like this—

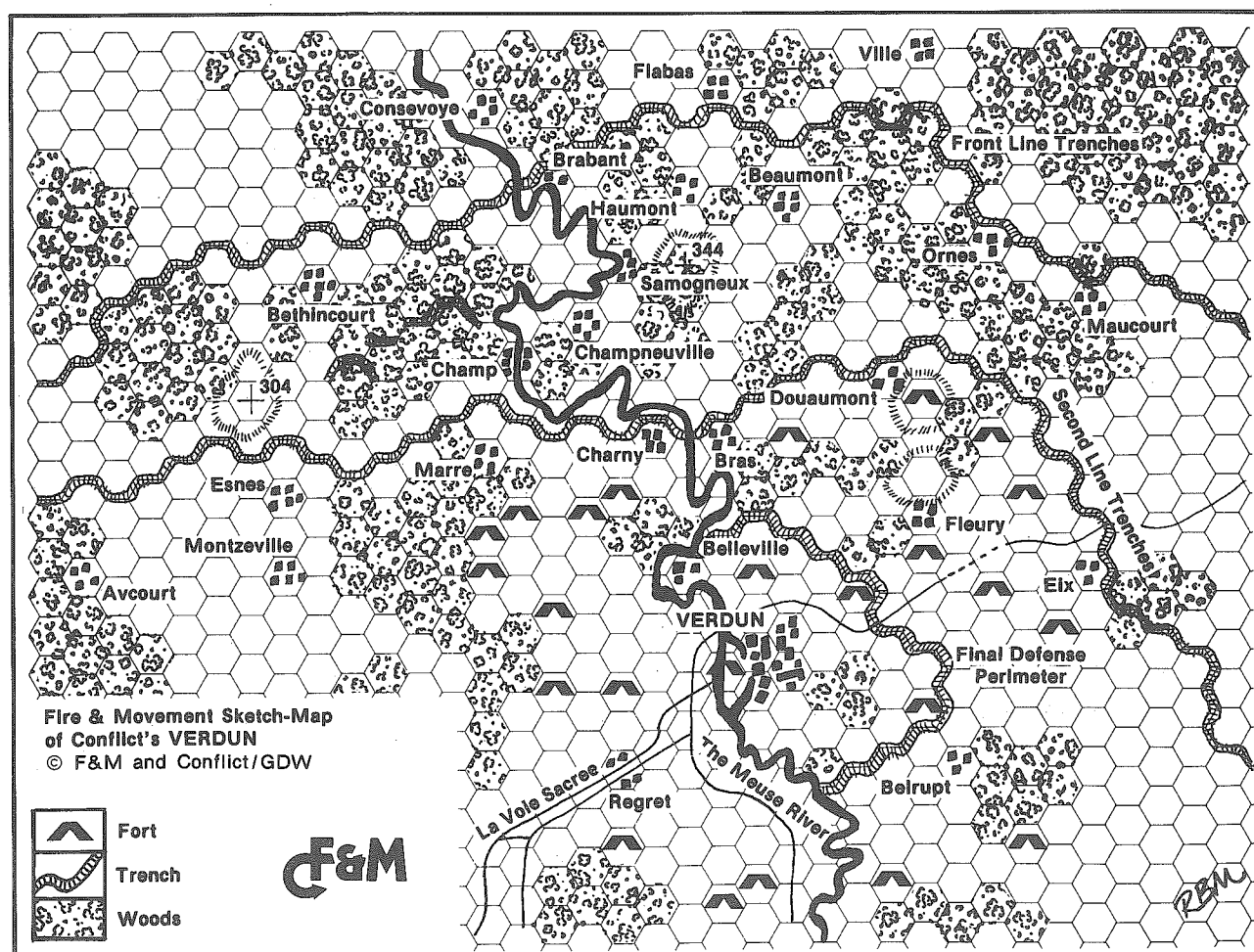
A regimental level game on a larger scale map (showing more territory and allowing more movement options). Map terrain to be similar to *Jerusalem 1948*. Counters to reflect artillery silhouettes, and military infantry symbols. Essentially realistic artillery rules which prohibit destruction of enemy units without infantry involved.

Now that paragraph does not say very much, but it does open up what areas I had to devote attention to first.

The new map meant that I had to find out what the locale was like. I now regret that I didn't just go to the *West Point Atlas*; it would have been easier. Instead, I went to the *French Official History*, photocopied the battle maps that it contains, and then photostated those copies at a percentage increase, so that the final product was exactly the right size for tracing onto a hex grid. Against this basic map, I then compared several other maps, including an aerial view perspective drawing, and a few combat sketches.

One problem was the trenches and their placement. I certainly knew where the original trench lines were, but I got hung up on how to allow the digging of new trench lines as the French fell back towards Verdun. I like to allow the greatest possible latitude for players, but the creation of individual trench hex sides along the way during the game seemed a bit of a burden. Finding the second-line trenches and the final defense perimeter marked on some of the maps solved the problem rather nicely, and allowed me to have them printed on the map.

Continued on Page 57





TANNENBERG

The Opening Guns, August 1914

by Friedrich G. Helfferich

TANNENBERG

The Opening Guns, August 1914

Simulations Publications, Inc.

44 East 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010

Design: David C. Isby

Graphics: Redmond A. Simonsen

Topic: Destruction of Russian armies invading East Prussia at start of World War I in Battles of Tannenberg (August 1914) and Masurian Lakes (February 1915).

Size: One 16-inch x 22-inch map, ca 200 counters

Scale: Brigade/Division/Corps level, 8 miles per hex, three-day turns.

Game System: Consecutive movement-combat sequence. Fluid zones of control. Stringent command control rules.

Complexity: Moderately low.

Price: \$10.00

Published: August 1978 (in S&T #69)

Prototype of World War I East Front Quad.

Tannenberg — no other name in history is more deeply engraved in German memory; none evokes as much reverence and nostalgia, conjures up stronger visions of valor and dedication and sacrifice in victory and defeat in battles that shaped the German peoples' fate.

Tannenberg is, or was, a sleepy little settlement in the midst of the vast forests and lakes of East Prussia, cradle of the German Nation. It entered the history books in 1410 when it became the site of a great battle — a decisive defeat of the Knights of the *Deutsche Orden* at the hands of the Poles and Lithuanians, marking the end of two hundred years of Germanic colonization of the east.

Five centuries later, in August 1914, two powerful Russian armies converged on East Prussia from the south and east while Germany was concentrating her forces against France. One invading army was annihilated by the vastly outnumbered defenders; the other was to suffer a fate almost as disastrous two weeks later. Although not the actual site of the fighting, near-by Tannenberg lent its name to the first of these battles, in remembrance of the past. The man who had worked the 'Miracle of Tannenberg', General Paul v. Hindenburg, instantly became a national hero, acclaimed like no other since Frederick the Great. He was revered as the savior of the nation — so much so that his defeats of 1918 were never held against him and that he, the general, nobleman, royalist, and conservative, was elected and reelected by sweeping margins as the President of the Socialist Weimar Republic.

After the 'Wooden Titan' had passed away, a grand national shrine was built at Tannenberg as a symbol of glory of German arms and of deliverance from the enemy. But that shrine is no more, and Tannenberg today calls itself Stebark and seems immeasurably far away from where German is spoken.

Tannenberg is SPI's new World War I game, published in *Strategy & Tactics* No. 69. A first glance at the game brings a pleasant surprise. While the counters are SPI's standard fare, the map is much nicer to look at than what we have become used to. Although still subdued, SPI's colors have progressed from drab to pastel, with soft tints very appropriate to the cool summer haze of sylvan East Prussia. The surprise turns to delight on first playing; this is not a 1914-style slugfest, as some may have feared, but a contest of skillful maneuver, with a gamut of strategic options for both sides and with ample opportunities for tactical finesse.

The campaign game, covering the fighting from August 9 to September 19 in fourteen three-day turns, is the only one really worth playing. Here, the two Russian armies, posed to invade East Prussia from the general areas of Kovno and Warsaw,

command over a respectable numerical superiority. However, they cannot effectively establish a coherent front because any unit outside the very limited 'command radius' of the Army Chief (3 hexes) is apt to remain stationary, apart from being handicapped in combat. Yet, the Russians must penetrate deeply into East Prussia to achieve their victory conditions, and they have little other choice than to do so with vulnerable flanks. With skillful use of interior lines and the railway net, the German defenders can concentrate on one enemy army and, perhaps, defeat it decisively while opposing the other only with a delaying screen. But they must be careful of their timing and, if necessary, shift their forces before the other army has penetrated too far — into supporting range of their comrades. The game is usually a quite close contest.

An objection that could be raised against the campaign game is that the probably strongest Russian strategy is unhistorical. Putting up with the delays this entails, the Russians can shift their forces by rail to concentrate *both* armies side by side against either the east or, preferably, the south of East Prussia. Even though there will still be a gap between the two armies until Turn 10 (their headquarters having to remain at least twelve hexes apart until that time), the Russians are then much harder to defeat — especially since the Germans, for lack of mobile supply units, cannot risk to advance much beyond their borders even where they find no opposition. Players wishing to refight the historical battles should agree not to use such a strategy, or introduce a simple rule to prevent it.

The short 'Encirclement and Destruction' scenario, spanning Turns 5 to 10 of the campaign game, starts with both Russian armies engaged on their respective fronts and so prevents the Russians from using a combined strategy. However, in this scenario the Russians start with so high a score of victory points that they can collect a cheap marginal victory simply by retreating to safety to avoid losses. In view of the reasonably short playing time of the campaign game, this scenario is hardly worth considering.

The game offers still another scenario, which covers the winter battle of the Masurian Lakes, February 7 to 24, in six turns. This match is fought only on the northeastern portion of the map, and so there is but a single front. In addition to their other handicaps and woes, the Russians here are badly outnumbered and have no chance to seize the initiative. All they can do is scramble for the relative safety of their rear-area fortresses (Kovno, Olita, and Grodno). There is no real contest, and the scenario seems to have been included only because it is suitable for solitaire play.

Tannenberg is a game of maneuver even on the tactical level. Units can move through enemy zones of control at a quite modest penalty in movement points. A novel and fairly bloodless Combat Results Table gives the defender, *but not the attacker*, in many instances the option to retreat instead of taking losses. Frontal attacks, even at high odds, thus tend to be counterproductive. To be effective and not suffer more than the enemy, the attacker must seek to surround the defender or cut his supply line. German units especially are as slippery as eels: they can retreat even through enemy zones of control. That they can do so is not the only advantage they derive from their higher 'tactical competence rating', which overall makes them more agile and capable of swift reaction.

The twelve pages of rules find room for matters such as fortresses, supply, railway capacity (with distinction between single- and double-track lines), and firing of the German Army Commander (Hindenburg's predecessor) when things go badly. There seem to be few problems, despite the novelty of the movement and combat rules and the degree of detail. However, one facet is annoying: since **Tannenberg** is the prototype of a World War I East Front quadrigame, the players must switch back and forth between the general rules for the Quad and the exclusive rules and exceptions for **Tannenberg**; in fact, for matters such as railway movement they must piece the needed information together from entries in *three* different places, not counting the charts printed on the mapsheet. If you think some

rule is missing, you are apt to find out days later that it was only carefully hidden.

Overall, the rules are well integrated. Moreover, they represent quite faithfully the conditions in that summer of 1914, from terrain to logistics and from superior German tactical competence to strategic options for both sides. Last but not least, they lend themselves to an enjoyable contest, present challenges and opportunities for both opponents, and duly reward skillful play.

The game also shows signs of greater care in production than what we have come to expect. Errors, inconsistencies, and misprints are few although not entirely absent (e. g., there is an obvious position error of one supply unit in the Destruction scenario). Even the spelling of the place names, a bane of SPI games, is almost faultless. (Yes, Virginia, Isby is right that there is a *Tannenberg* — not *-burg*, which to a German is like seeing the Fourth of July misnumbered; he slipped up on *Neidenburg* and *Hoffmann*, though, but there he is in the distinguished company of the *West Point Atlas*!)

Tannenberg, in my view, is the best S&T game to have come out since **Panzergruppe Guderian**, and its appeal should go far to overcome the wide-spread prejudice against World War I simulations. We can only hope that the future games of the Quad (*Serbia/Galicia*, *Hindenburg in Poland*, *Brussilov Offensive*, and *Caporetto*), with topics which may be less conducive to design of playable simulations, will be as pleasing.

TANNENBERG — AN AFTER-ACTION REPORT

Jim and Joe (not their real names) have preferred to remain anonymous because this was their first crack at **Tannenberg**.

Preliminary Comments

Joe (Russian): We agreed not to use both Russian armies on the same front, so they'll have to press on separately from Kovno and Warsaw. I stand no chance unless I get the 65 points for triggering the German West Front reinforcements. The only reasonably sure way to achieve this is to get both my army headquarters at least four hexes into East Prussia. Therefore, I'll advance on both fronts, even if it means sticking my neck into two nooses. Samsonov is rather weak until well into the game, but I can't afford to hold him back lest the Germans can concentrate all strength on *Rennenkampf*. I'll also have to push small detachments forward to keep the railways at *Willenburg* and *Lyck* interdicted, to protect my flanks. My aim will be to advance, mainly with *Rennenkampf's* army, far enough that by Turn 10 I can establish a coherent front between *Osterode* and *Insterburg*. If I succeed, that should win the game for me.

Jim (German): The key to this game is *Hindenburg* and his West Front reinforcements. If I could manage without them and so deny Joe the 65 points, I'd have it made. But I don't think I can. The trouble is, there is a four-turn delay in the reinforcements' arrival (seven turns for the cavalry), so if their appearance is triggered late in the game they don't do me much good and I still lose the 65 points. I'd call for them voluntarily right now, to receive them in Turn 5, except Joe could then just stay home and rest on his laurels — good enough for a Substantive Victory. (Devilishly clever, this chap Isby!) Therefore, my plan is to hit one or the other of his armies hard in the first few turns to build up a good lead in points, good enough that I can safely call for *Hindenburg* and the reinforcements before we are far into the game. Where I'll hit will depend on Joe's first move.

Turns 1 to 4. *Rennenkampf* advances slowly toward *Gumbinnen*. He is effectively delayed by the German cavalry (they can usually evade combat by prior retreat) and does not manage to cross the border in force until Turn 4. Meanwhile, *Samsonov's* cavalry can't resist the temptation to sneak into *Soldau*, hoping for a few cheap victory points. But retaliation is swift and bloody. The Germans concentrate two corps and all available independent units and not only clobber the impudent Cossacks, but succeed in cutting off and wiping out an infantry

corps at Mlava. Samsonov, tail between his legs, must beat it back to Polutsk. The German reinforced 20th Corps then cleans up at Lyck, where the Russians, hampered by command control problems, lose another cavalry division and infantry corps.

At the end of Turn 4, the Germans are 50 points ahead and call for the West Front reinforcements.

Turns 5 to 8. *Rennenkampf*, steadily reinforced, advances. German counterattacks by the 1st and 20th Corps (the latter rushed over from Lyck) are costly and to no avail. Gumbinnen falls. However, three Russian divisions are trapped in the Eichwalder Forest and wiped out. Samsonov, now facing little opposition, again advances toward the border and has his cavalry stage a successful raid on Strassburg.

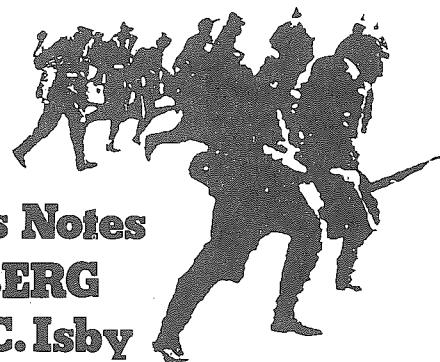
Turns 9 to 11. *Rennenkampf* takes Insterburg and occupies Tilsit. He anchors his left flank on the Masurian Lakes and guards their passages with cavalry. Samsonov attacks and takes Lautenburg. On his left, the new 10th Army builds up (a painfully slow process, with only a single-track railway to carry the troops forward). But the German reinforcements now arrive and make themselves felt immediately. Strassburg is cleared by the 11th Corps, which then proceeds to clean up at Neidenburg and Willenburg; the Guard Reserve Corps breaks through *Rennenkampf's* cavalry screen at the Masurian Lakes.

Turns 12 to 14. The initiative is now firmly held by the Germans. von Frommel's cavalry arrives and takes over in the south, screening and delaying forward of Osterode, Deutsch-Eylau, and Marienwerder. All other German forces gang up on poor *Rennenkampf*, who narrowly escapes a double envelopment with pincers advancing through Tilsit and the Masurian Lakes. He is forced to give up all German territory and loses almost half his army. But German losses are high, too.

Score: A Substantive German Victory.

Post Mortem. The Russians paid dearly for the premature raid on Soldau and their preoccupation with the German railways at Willenburg and Lyck — and they had bad luck there with command control. They were about to even the score with *Rennenkampf's* well-coordinated offensive when the arrival of the German West Front reinforcements tipped the scales. What won the game for the Germans was Jim's wise decision to call for the reinforcements early and while he was well ahead in points.

While the game did not lead to a 'Tannenberg', it nearly produced a comparable 'Gumbinnen', strangely enough just what the German High Command in 1914 had originally had in mind. And it did so because the Germans were able to take advantage of their interior lines and higher tactical competence in much the same way as in the actual campaign. What more can one ask of a simulation? Perhaps only that it should also be fun to play. *Tannenberg* is.



Designer's Notes **TANNENBERG** by David C. Isby

Tannenberg is a simple game on a broad and complex subject. With all the inevitable compromises this entails, I'm glad Fred liked it. The Art Department really did a good job. I especially like the little Russian Imperial Eagles (for towns in Russian control) and the effect of the German player moving formations of grey *Eiserne Kreuze* — take that, GDW!

On the debit side, there is the problem of having to refer to rules in two separate folders. I had hoped to have a nice game summary, but until literally the last moment we did not know there was extra space — so we ended up having to repeat charts from the mapsheet to fill up space, and I wrote my Designer's Notes in 20 minutes flat.

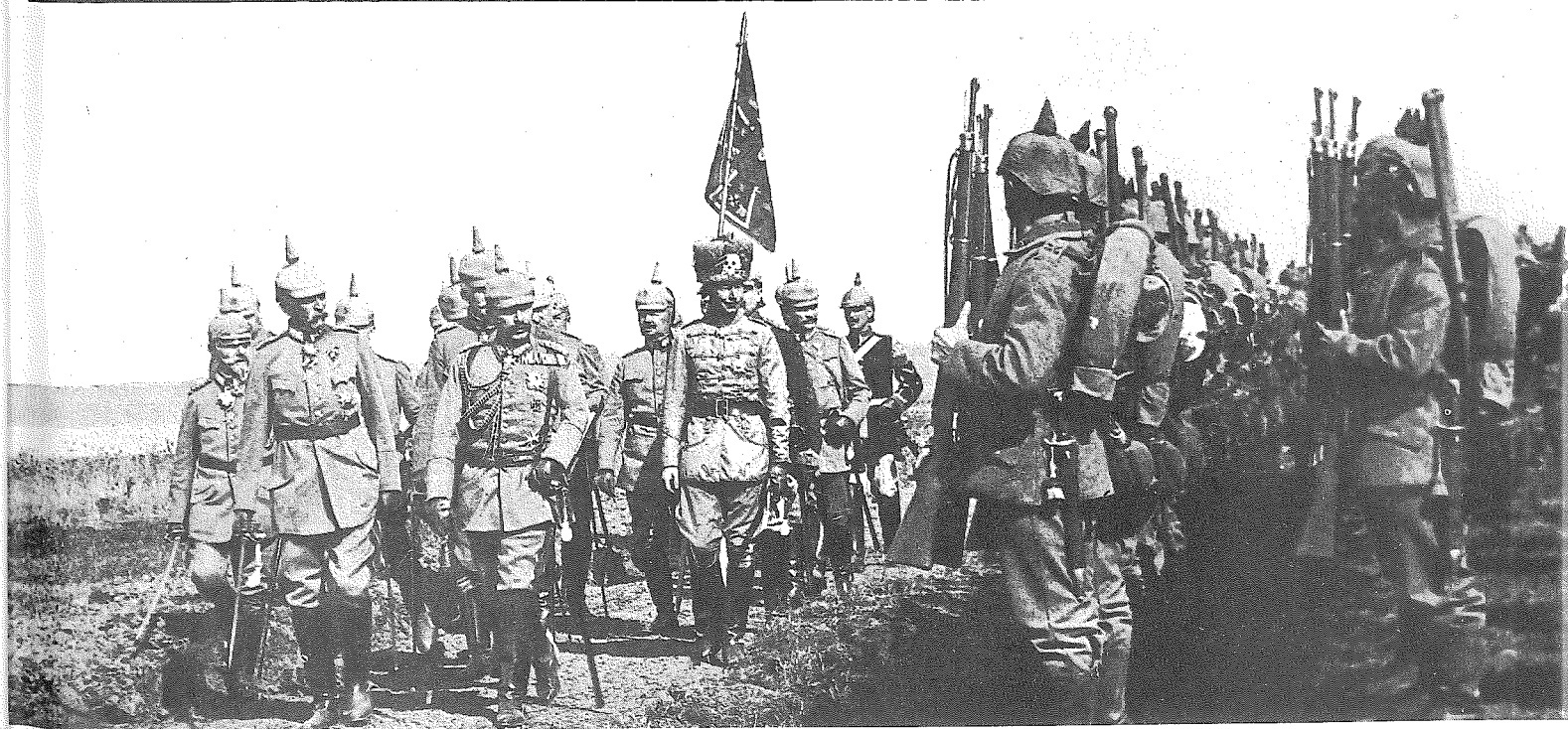
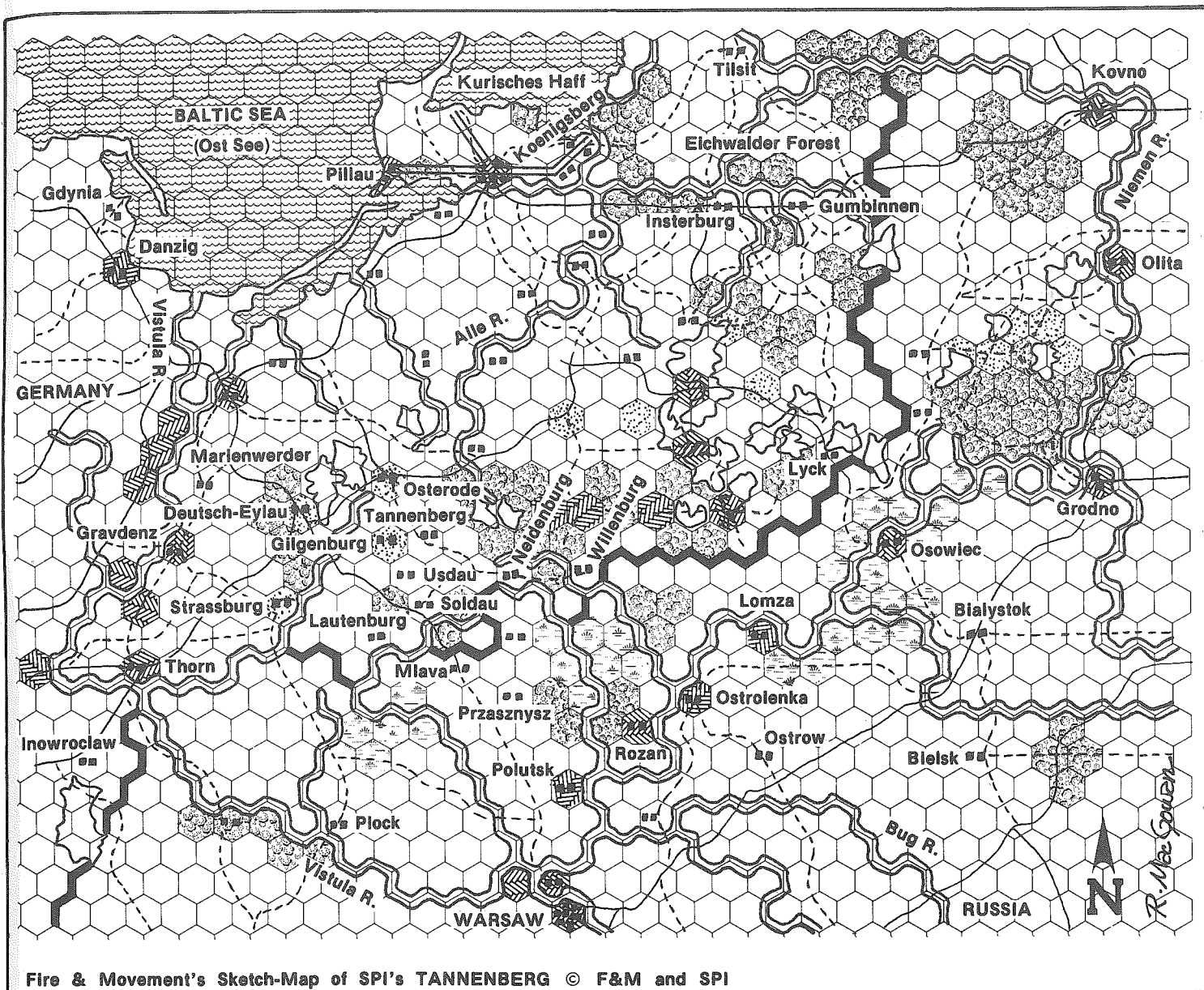
The Russian strategy Fred suggests for the campaign game — unifying the two armies in the south for a joint offensive — has its limitations. The Russian Army Integrity Rule (17.11) keeps the two key Russian command units at least twelve hexes apart; only in Germany, and then only from Turn 10 on, are they allowed to be as close as six hexes. Remember also that from Turn 3 on the Germans collect 20 victory points if there are no Russians in Germany north of the 20xx hex row. A combined Russian attack is very strong, but the Russian player must also weigh the possible disadvantages. Waiting for the 10th Army to arrive and then attacking *en masse*, another possible strategy, will not give the Russians sufficient time to gain the necessary victory points.

In the *Encirclement and Destruction* scenario, a Russian player might run for the border, but remember that the German player gets the first move; if he is aggressive (as indeed he is supposed to be in this scenario) he can engage the Russian II and XV Corps so that any large-scale Russian disengagement will result in their loss as well as that of other units.

The *Winter Battle* scenario appears in the game not solely for its solitaire value. When I first started designing *Tannenberg*, I had hoped that it would be possible to combine it with the *Serbia/Galicia* and *von Hindenburg in Poland* games to make one complete game of the Eastern Front 1914-15. Therefore I wanted to make sure all the German units that took part in the fighting were included. However, for various reasons of time and budget, no one (including myself) bothered to make the games interlock, so that effort was rendered moot. Second, I have always considered the execution of a withdrawal in the face of the enemy to be one of the most demanding military operations (witness Rommel in 1942 and Heinrici in 1945), and the Russian player will need all his skill to pull it off in the *Winter Battle* scenario. From playtesting experience, however, I do not suggest that the Russians 'run for the fortresses' but rather swing their line south to try to form an intact east-west position in the Suwalki-Augustovo sector and keep a foothold in East Prussia. It's a *fun* little scenario, lasting about thirty to forty-five minutes, and it's worth playing.

The only real error that has come up is in the Russian set-up for *Encirclement and Destruction*: the supply unit in 1017 should be in 1007.

76R/1 XX 5D 2-34		× 1 Positive	76R 1 XX 0-24
15/2 XX 2426 2-16		× 10 Positive	15 2 XX 0-16
1/1 X 2-14 0303	Full Strength - 1	 RR	1-8-2 vB1R (1)8 0915
2/10 XX 10F 0-1-3	Fort Dest	OCC	2-27-3 R1 (1)8 0303



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related to the fact that few of the games have been designed or developed by people with any real knowledge of the genre. It is much the same as what you would get by basing a game system of the Battle of Gettysburg on the Classic Comic version of *The Red Badge of Courage*. The best way to change this would be for all of the StF fans in the audience to finish those pet games now languishing in the bottom of closets across America. The other way to change things is for some of the already successful designers and developers to read enough science fiction to find out what it's all about. It would also be a good idea for these people to read one of the books on how to write science fiction. These give good advice on how to construct believable worlds, races and technologies, things lacked by most StF games at present. One good book of this nature is *Science Fiction Today and Tomorrow*, edited by Reginald Bretnor. This book has copious notes and bibliography to guide the newcomer, or even the old hand who wants source material.

The current crop of StF games also is badly related to the subjects covered in StF literature. The conflicts in modern science fiction are more involved than the shoot-'em-ups of days gone by. There is more thought given to the subject, and the treatment of warfare is less romantic and more realistic than ever before. If you are a StF fan, think about ways to improve the quality of the games. None of them are immune to revision. If you design games, don't think that changing a howitzer to a laser cannon makes your game 'science fiction'. There's more than fancy names to the field. You must know it before you can hope to successfully design StF games, or write StF.

Not every author believes that. That's why we have *Throne of Saturn*, *The Stepford Wives* and *Joshua, Son of None*.

A short list of suggested and recommended reading, with notes:

The Forever War (Joe Haldeman) *Starship Troopers* retold by a Viet Nam combat veteran. Frightening, just like war.

Bill, the Galactic Hero (Harry Harrison) *Starship Troopers* retold as a comic opera. Pointed and funny.

Tales of Known Space (Larry Niven) Good, hard StF, long on adventure. There are some dandy weapons and technologies in here.

Wolfbane (Frederik Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth) Not their best but a good novel of Earth under the last of alien invaders and how it's freed. Pohl and Kornbluth were great collaborators.

The Moon is a Harsh Mistress (Robert Heinlein) This is Heinlein's other Hugo-winner and it could make a great politico-military game. The story recounts the Lunar War for Independence.

The Stars in Shroud (Gregory Benford) A revision of *Deeper Than the Darkness*, a novel about an unusual war between humanity and a mysterious alien race. This is a good novel and there's an equally good game in it.

The Long Afternoon of Earth (Brian Aldiss) A truly peculiar future history. If you think you know the basics of science fiction, read this. It is bound to teach you something.

Dorsai!, Soldier, Ask Not, The Tactics of Mistake (Gordon Dickson) The chronicles of the Dorsai, a warrior race who make the Huns look soft and the Viet Cong seem amateurish. Somebody should turn these into a game.

The Squares of the City (John Brunner) A science fiction novel based on a political conflict in a very special banana republic. More than this, the novel mimes a particular chess game. There must be a game in this one.

The 'Warlock' Stories (Larry Niven) So far uncollected; see the bibliography in *Tales of Known Space*. If you want a touch of fantasy but have a hard time with most. These have a set of rational rules for magic which are unlike anything else. Good stories, too.

FIRING LINE [Continued from Page 6]

If you like what we are doing, tell your friends. If you don't like it, tell me so that we may try to improve.

A CALL FOR YOUR HELP...

FIRE & MOVEMENT has been a true 'grass roots' venture from the beginning and we are calling again on your assistance in getting the word out. We have grown to a circulation of about 6000 in fourteen issues, but we don't want to stop there. By expanding our retailing base, we can increase our cash flow, and that will allow us to make improvements in our magazine as well as — we hope — avoid rate increases as costs continue to rise.

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PLEASE, BEAR WITH US...

A problem we haven't licked yet is how to have F&M free of typesetting errors. Complicating factors are the great distances between printer and editors, making it impossible for the latter to proofread without causing delays, as well as the fact that the typeset texts tends to fade when xeroxed for proofreaders. But, please, bear with us; we are working on it!

I'm bringing this up to apologize not only to our readers, but also to our contributors. Apart from the usual, easily recognized misprints, we have had our share of more insidious errors. Manuscript lines have been omitted or set twice, sometimes with devastating effect (e. g., in Bill Haggart's *Wargaming's Ugly Histories* an argument of his was completely turned upside down; in game theory there are, of course, no 'irrational, unsuccessful decisions based on information!'); 'materiel' has come out as 'material' (in *The Day the Blitzkrieg Was Born*); and so on. Such errors are harder to catch, and they are doubly embarrassing to us because they make the writer look like a fool. Please, do not judge him or us by such slip-ups.

Now, if you should happen to know a professional proofreader with background in military history, living near La Puente, and willing to work for a pittance ...

GOINGS-ON

WINTERCON VII in Detroit is scheduled for December 2-4. For information write to Al Slisinger, 19941 Joan, Detroit, MI 48205.

ORIGINS V is now set for July 19-22 at the George Washington Motor Lodge (near Valley Forge interchange of the Pennsylvania Turnpike). Watch for further announcements.

The *University of Pennsylvania Wargaming Club* meets every Thursday 6-12 PM on the 3rd floor of Houston Hall, 3415 Spruce Street. Visitors are welcome. Call Richard Hopkins at 748-3260 for information. Founded in 1971 as a chapter of *Spartan International*, the club has gained recognition as an official University student activity, accumulated a library, and organized the *Kingmaker* tournaments at PHIL CON 77 and PENN CON 78.

WINTER WAR VI, sponsored by the University of Illinois Conflict Simulation Society, is scheduled for January 19-21, 1979. There will be D&D, Diplomacy, naval miniatures, and other tournaments. Entrance fee \$1 per day or \$2 for the

weekend. For information, write to Alan B. Conrad, 2215 S. First St., Champaign, IL 61820.

World Wide Wargamers in Britain held their first BATTLE-FIELD convention in Walsall, September 8-10. One hundred participants, mostly members, voted 'Silver Hexagon' awards to *The Conquerors* (SPI), *Blenheim* (WWW), *Dresden 1813* (WWW), *Gettysburg '77* (AH), *Squad Leader* (AH), *Cobra* (SPI), *Fulda Gap* (SPI), *Starship Troopers* (SH), *THE WARGAMER* magazine, and Secretary Keith Poulter.

GOSSIP

BATTLE, a notable British wargame magazine addressing itself mainly to miniatures, will cease publication with its October issue and merge with MILITARY MODELLING magazine. BATTLE subscriptions will be transferred to MILITARY MODELLING.

A few new games reported in the offing are *Korsun Pocket*, a multi-map monster simulation of that 1944 battle south of Kiev by new publisher J. Radey in Oakland, California; *European Theater of Operations*, a strategic/economic GDW game comparable in scope to *Third Reich*; and *Desert Rats*, a World War II North Africa game by UK's Simulation Games (associated with World Wide Wargamers). Also, rumor has it that Avalon Hill will bring out its classic *Anzio* in a new edition with updated rules and new packaging. Attention, East Front Collectors: Jedko of Australia, whose original *The Russian Campaign* has been out of print for some time, is now offering a new book-case edition.

Tactical Studies Group (TSG) has become *Operational Studies Group* (OSG), a change of name to avoid possible confusion with TSR Hobbies, Inc. *Wellington Wargames* of Sweden will change their name to *Svensk Spelproduktion KB*.

We welcome a new game publisher, Mishler Company in La Mesa, California. With their first releases, *NORAD* and *Nebula 19*, Mishler have been picking up pieces from defunct SDC.

READ REED, SAW RED...

In *PERFIDIOUS ALBION* #30, Randy Reed of Avalon Hill was quoted making derogatory, if humorous remarks about the competition and especially about one well-known and respected designer. This occurrence, unusual even among our firebrands, has set the hobby's tongues to wagging. F&M has approached Mr. Reed whether he would care to comment. Here is his statement:

'The incident was due in part to my lack of judgment and my excessive trust in editors. The statements made do not reflect my true feelings of Richard Berg, neither professionally nor personally. I sincerely apologize for any hurt this caused to him.'

Mr. Reed explains he had permitted *PERFIDIOUS ALBION* to print the 'gist' of various personal letters and remarks dealing in part with points of game design and its philosophy, expecting the editors to extract those ideas. Regrettably, he did not ask to see, and was not shown, the text before publication.

PERFIDIOUS ALBION's editors comment they had unconditional permission to print the letters in question (the 'gist' appears to be in dispute). Nevertheless, ever the perfect gentlemen, in their #32 they 'tender Richard and his comrades at SPI [their] profound apologies for subjecting them to what was intended to be mere vulgar talk behind their backs'. May the hatchet now be buried.

MORE OF THE SAME BRASS TACKS

We repeat: please help us avoid delays by addressing editorial correspondence to F. G. Helfferich, Editor, 347 Knipp Rd., Houston, TX 77024; and all correspondence regarding subscriptions, orders, and advertising to Baron Publishing Company, PO Box 820, La Puente, CA 91747.

HYBRIDIZING

'Surprise' in Wargaming

by Pete Belli

A recent article in MOVES (#35) dealt with 'the need for true surprise in wargaming' and suggested a few ways to provide some much-needed unknown situations. One idea was to play the SPI Quads 'one game at a time' so to speak. Another was to change the forces from one side to the other, in this case give the French player the Austrian units and vice versa. I propose to take this idea even one step further.

Let's say we take the units from one game, SPI's **Chickamauga**, and using slightly modified rules play the game on another map, like the **Wurzburg** map. Right now I can hear everyone out there screaming, 'But that's not historical, that's garbage'. Well, it's not historical, but it's not garbage either. Remember, the purpose of this experiment is not to simulate history but rather to create a situation where both players are treading on familiar, yet unknown, ground. The example above was actually tried, and resulted in a completely unhistorical Confederate romp off the designated map-edge.

The true enjoyment of a game such as this is not really derived from measuring one player's performance against that of the other, but rather to test both player's ability to adjust and adapt to unknown situations — perhaps much as real-life commanders must react in combat situations.

Possible match-ups are practically unlimited, but again using the SPI Quads we've tried playing **Cauldron** on the **Wagram** map (which by the way is not as crazy as it seems) and a variation of **Wurzburg** on the **Arnhem** map (you could even justify this one historically, or hypothetically, by assuming the Russians break through in Germany, cross the Rhine and...). Oh well. There are many more ideas.

As mentioned before, it is not historical simulation, but it is a challenge to one's ability to adapt to new situations. After slogging through **Highway to the Reich** or **War in Europe** it might be a good way to put some 'recreation' back into your gaming! With a little juggling of the entry of reinforcements (try Phil Kosnett's idea used in **Yugoslavia**), special rules (try to throw in some random command control or untried units), and victory conditions (make up several objectives for both sides, each player draws one and your opponent doesn't know if you're going for casualties or territory or both), some play balance can be added.

Give it a try!



THE CHARLIES IN '79

Facelift for the Awards

by James Steuard

During ORIGINS 78, an open meeting was held to determine the future organization and structuring of the Charles Roberts Awards. The meeting was well attended by members of the wargaming industry, along with quite a few interested spectators. Chaired by Bill Somers of the Detroit Metro Gamers, those present included John Mansfield (originator of the awards), Randy Reed (AH), Richard Berg (SPI), and Frank Chadwick (GDW), among others.

After lengthy (and often noisy) discussion, those present decided to restructure the awards into the following categories:

- Best Pre-Twentieth Century Game
- Best Twentieth Century Game
- Best Futuristic and Fantasy Game
- Best Amateur Game
- Best Physical Systems and Graphics in a Game
- Best Professional Magazine
- Best Amateur Magazine
- Hall of Fame Award

Before going into the organization of nominating and balloting, let me take a moment to amplify a few of the above descriptions. The Hall of Fame Award, to date, has been awarded only to individual persons (James Dunnigan, Redmond Simonsen, et al), but in the future any person, game or

magazine is eligible for this award. The 'Period' awards are no longer structured in regard to amateur or professional games; any game properly nominated may be awarded one of the period awards.

At the end of the ORIGINS 78 awards meeting, an awards committee was selected to oversee the nominating procedure for the 1979 Charles Roberts Awards. The committee consists of three members: John Mansfield as Chairman, an as-of-yet un-named member of the ORIGINS 79 committee to handle the on-site arrangements for the awards, and Allen Doum, one of the assistant editors of **Fire & Movement**, to assist and handle the housekeeping for the committee. The committee is now functioning to receive incoming material and to prepare for the nominating ballots.

The nominating procedure for the 1979 'Charles' is as follows. The various wargame manufacturers are invited to submit a list of their eligible games to the awards committee (addressed to Allen Doum, c/o Baron Publishing Company); this list of eligible games consists of games manufactured and released in 1978 which the company wishes to place into consideration for nomination. The deadline for receiving material from the game manufacturers is December 15th, 1978. In the January 1979 issues of **Fire & Movement** and **Signal** (John Mansfield's Fanzine), the list of eligible awards will be listed in the form of a nominating ballot. Other publications who wish to perform a service to the hobby by publishing the nominating ballot may obtain a photostatic copy of the ballot upon application to Allen Doum. You, the readers, may then utilize the ballot from the magazines to nominate games for the Charles Roberts Awards. Nominations will be sent directly to the ORIGINS 79 committee member (and the address will be included on the ballot), and voting for awards, of course, will be conducted during ORIGINS 79. The awards committee invites comments from interested persons within the wargaming hobby. If you would care to make such comments, please address them to Allen Doum (c/o Baron Publishing) and Allen will forward them to the appropriate person.

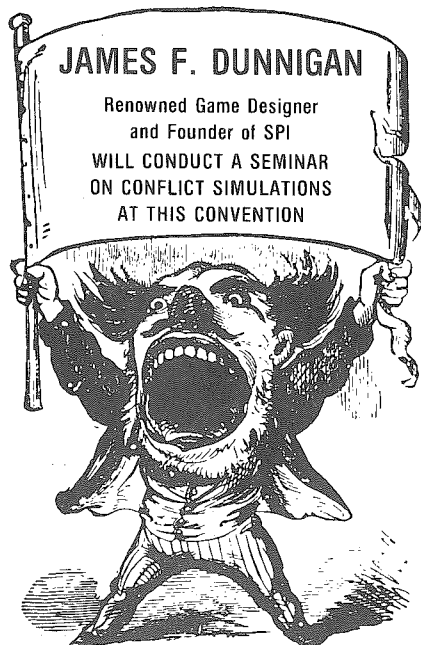
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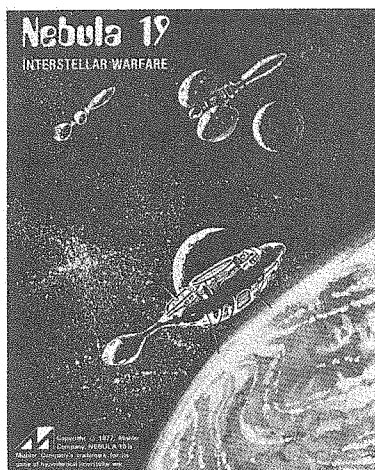
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OUT OF THE WRAPPER

Games Received at F&M

(Most but not all of these games will be reviewed in future issues)

Condor (World Wide Wargamers, 74 Cherry Tree Rise, Buckhurst Hill, Essex, UK). Design: Ken Broadhurst. Hypothetical invasions of Spain in World War II by Germans or Allies. One 22x26-inch map, ca 200 counters. £ 2.00 with Issue #6 of **THE WARGAMER**.

Nebula 19 (Mishler Co., PO Box 2626, La Mesa, CA 92041). Design: Harry M. Mishler. Interstellar Warfare. One 19x24-inch map in duplicate, 240 counters. \$10.00.

The Next War (Simulations Publications, Inc., 44 East 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010). Design: James F. Dunnigan. Hypothetical East-West conflict in Europe in near future. Three 22x34-inch and two 8x11-inch maps, ca 2400 counters. \$28.00.

NORAD (Mishler Co., PO Box 2626, La Mesa, CA 92041). Design: Dana Lombardy. Strategic air defense against Soviet nuclear bomber attack on U.S. One 20x24-inch map, 60 counters. \$6.00. Revised edition of SDC game of same name.

Swords & Sorcery (Simulations Publications, Inc., 44 East 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010). Design: Greg Costikyan. Character/Army fantasy game. One 22 x 34-inch map, ca 400 counters, 56 character and magic cards. \$13.00.

Target Gotland (Wellington Wargames, Inc., Box 18, S-590-40, Kisa, Sweden). Design: Hans Anderson. Hypothetical Soviet invasion of Swedish island in Baltic Sea. Five 8x11½-inch mapsheets and ca 300 counters (all unmounted, xeroxed). \$2.50 with Issue 1/6 of **COMBAT**.

Agincourt (Simulations Publications, Inc., 44 east 23rd St., New York, NY 10010). Design; James F. Dunnigan. Famous victory of British over French at Agincourt, 1415. One 22x23-inch map, ca 270 counters. \$10.00.

Quebec Libre (Simulations Canada, P. O. Box 221, Elmsdale, Nova Scotia, Canada B0N 1M0) Designer: Stephen M. Newberg. Simulation of the politics and economy of the Canadian Confederation and separatist movement, 1976-1981. One map 22x28-inch, ca 250 counters. \$9.75.

IJN (Simulations Canada, P. O. Box 221, Elmsdale, Nova Scotia, Canada B0N 1M0) Designer: Stephen M. Newberg. Simulation of tactical surface naval and naval-air combat in the Pacific, 1941-1945. One 22x28-inch map, ca 250 counters. \$9.75.

The Crusades (Simulations Publications, Inc., 44 East 23rd St., New York, NY 10010) Design: Richard Berg. First and Third Crusades, 1097 and 1191. One 22x33-inch map, 200 counters. \$9.00 (In **STRATEGY & TACTICS** #70)

Designer's Notes: Verdun [Continued from Page 49]

Without totally disputing Shelby Stanton, I went back to my sources, and did not find a Fort du Chana indicated. Originally I differentiated between forts and *ouvrages* or batteries on the map, but as the scale changed from 1/3 mile to 1000 meters, I dropped the differences. On that scale, their distinctions became more obscure. I used the same reasoning to provide the forts (and batteries) with artillery fire power early in the campaign. The forts lost their artillery, the batteries did not; I had already dropped any distinction between the two, and had to decide whether all would retain or lose their artillery factors. I retained them.

An aspect of the terrain I felt players might find puzzling was the fact that a river can be crossed, but not followed. I reasoned that any river can be crossed generally (by fording or bridging), but that the nature of artillery and its harassing fire made the simple, open following of the river line nearly suicidal. I might add that I very carefully drew the river line on the map to correspond to known bridges and shallow, fordable areas, while making sure that the sections with high bluffs and other features crossed hex sides.

The best way to discuss the order of battle in Verdun is to talk about Shelby Stanton's comments. Frankly, I do not agree with them although I respect his work as an historian. In effect, he is 'cannon counting', while I felt forced to manipulate the forces in order to make the game work. Early on, the suggestion was made to include regimental designations on the counters. I spent at least three weeks on it before I rejected it. The problem is that those designations do not reflect the reality of what was going on. A list of units involved might show certain regiments present, but their physical location is impossible to express using a single counter. For example, a regiment might be shown as in action on a certain date, but close analysis would reveal that less than a quarter of the unit strength is in the front line trenches, the remainder are back, farther behind the lines. The proper level for the hex size is the company, not the regiment; but then the proper price for the game is \$25 and the proper audience is severely restricted. Instead, I cut and filed to fit, adapting the counters and the rules to still reflect my reading of the situation. As a matter of fact, I had the data that Shelby has shown, and I worked from them, it just seems that we disagree as to how to use them. For example, that same source shows all of the artillery pieces present, and their parent units. In many cases, one artillery regiment would have three or four different types of guns, each with a different range and caliber. After struggling to retain John Hill's caliber designations on the new units, I finally went to the field, medium and siege artillery designations because they better reflected what was being used. As to the regiments in the game, they are amorphous units generally representing what an individual regiment will do in combat. Since both sides kept part of their strength out of the front line, but available for reserves, or for assaults, the reduction in manpower cancels out. Units are identified by their higher headquarters (corps for the Germans, division for the French), because to call them by a regimental designation is misleading. Similarly, strict order of appearance is not given. Instead, a constant flow of replacement troops is allowed, to be used by the player to fill holes, or to reinforce assaults. A strict order of appearance can only be used if the battle is going as it really did. My vague OA was necessary because the game can go in several directions. In essence, Shelby's data is an interesting OB/OA adjunct to *Verdun* and could be interesting to insert into a game (if only he had also give the French). But the real contention we seem to have is between 'cannon counting' and forging the data available into a game.



Designer's Notes: Their Finest Hour [Continued from Page 16]

best games I had done. Looking at the game from today's vantage point, I can see that the whole package bit off more than was prudent. At the time, we added orientation sheets to try to cover most of the errata and explain what parts went where. That was only a half-measure in making sure that the game is playable and enjoyable.

As of late 1978, the game has exhausted its current print run, and we have allowed it to go out of print, though not to die. The decision has been made to split the game into two *Europa Series* games, one dealing with the Battle of Britain (probably to retain the title 'Their Finest Hour') and one to cover operation Sealion. The separation of the two into distinct packages should help greatly in simple comprehension of the games, and thus in player enjoyment.

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FEEDBACK

Fire & Movement No. 14, November-December 1978.

Please rate the articles in this issue for interest and information value (first rating) and quality (second rating) on a scale of 1 (poor) to 9 (excellent).

1. and 2. **Descent on Crete**
3. and 4. **Air Assault on Crete**
5. and 6. Crete articles overall
7. and 8. **Their Finest Hour**
9. and 10. **Tannenberg**
11. and 12. **Verdun**. Old and New
13. and 14. **Verdun**. Game Profile
15. and 16. Verdun articles overall
17. and 18. **Napoleon at Bay**
19. and 20. **Kesselring**
21. and 22. **Astounding Stories of Super Science**
23. and 24. **'Hybridizing'**

Please rate the Player's Notes in this issue (overall rating):

25. **Operation Crusader**.
26. **New Orleans 1815**.
27. **Source of the Nile**.
28. **Atlantic Wall**.
29. **Dresden, 1813**.
30. **The Battle of Monmouth**.
31. **38th Parallel**.

32. and 33. Please rate Player's Notes overall for interest and information value (first rating) and quality (second rating).

Please rate the columns in this issue for interest and information value:

34. **Firing line**.
35. **Crossfire**
36. **Out of the Wrapper**
37. **Feedback**.
38. Please rate Issue #14 overall.
39. Was this issue better than last? (Y or N)
40. Assume you don't subscribe to F&M. Would the quality of this issue alone motivate you to subscribe? (Y or N)
41. Did you send a feedback card for the last issue? (Y or N)
42. F&M has introduced the 'Panorama' review comparing the most notable games on a common subject or era (for example, WW II East Front games in #5, WW II North Africa games in #10, WW II Pacific games in #12). Would you like to see more such Panoramas? (Y or N) If yes, please feel free to suggest topics or eras.

43. Beginning with F&M #13 we have introduced 'Capsules' accompanying reviews (other than Player's notes) and giving the game's 'vital statistics', for ease of reference and to unburden the review from such details. Mark what best describes your reaction: The capsules are (1) useful; (2) a waste of space; (3) I don't care either way.

44. What is your favorite type of wargame? (1) land, tactical; (2) land, operational; (3) land, strategic; (4) naval, tactical; (5) naval, operational or strategic; (6) air, tactical; (7) air, operational or strategic; (8) naval/air, tactical; (9) naval/air, operational or strategic; (10) land/naval/air.

45. Considering the number of published games of this type, and that other readers may have other interests, do you feel coverage in F&M is adequate?

Would you like to see F&M increase coverage of

46. Miniature rules? (Y or N)

47. Political games? (Y or N)

48. Sports games? (Y or N)

49. Other non-military conflict simulations? (Y or N)

50. Fantasy games (Y or N)

51. Discussion of game design philosophies and techniques (Y or N)

52. Would you like to see F&M introduce a game rating chart? (Y or N)

53. If you answered yes, should ratings be established (1) by poll of readers, or (2) by consensus of F&M staff members? Please use the Comment space for writing in your choice for 'Best Game of all time'

Feedback Results from Issue No. 13

(First number is for interest and information value; second number, for quality)

Crossfire.....	6.14/ —
To The Green Fields Beyond: The Day the Blitzkrieg Was Born.....	7.06/7.27
To The Green Fields Beyond: Battle Report.....	6.89/6.99
Up Scope!: Inlegant fun.....	6.14/6.18
Up Scope!: Game Profile.....	6.34/6.20
Up Scope!: Pacific Scenarios.....	5.64/5.62
Up Scope!: Critical Analysis.....	6.26/5.78
Kasserine Pass: The Old and the New.....	6.78/6.64
Kasserine Pass: Operational Analysis.....	6.95/6.89
Wargame's Ugly Histories.....	6.80/6.80
No More Errata!.....	5.98/6.07
Player's Notes Overall.....	7.27/6.82
War Zones: San Diego.....	4.52/5.14
Combat Under Sail.....	6.82/6.80
Out of the Wrapper.....	5.91/ —
Feedback.....	6.40/ —
Issue No. 13 Overall.....	— 17.08

Slim majorities of readers favor the new double rating scale (52%) and are against combining contributions on the same game into one article (57%). World War II (47%) leads the modern period (14%) in reader interest; in each era except the pre-Napoleonic, a majority of readers are satisfied with the coverage we provide (average 76%). Only 17% find us biased in any way, and most of these attribute it to individual reviewers rather than F&M, finding it mostly aimed at SPI. A majority (66%) consider our balance between major and minor publishers 'about right' (with a sprinkling of comments 'too much SPI'). Only small groups favor more 'scoops' (28%) or find our Close-Ups too long (16%). Each issue except #2 and #3 received at least one vote for best so far, and the staff's choice #11 leads the field (19%), with #13 a surprising runner-up (16%). Only 45% of the neighborhood game stores carry F&M. Most notable request: 'In-depth review of *Torgau* or, failing that, a centerspread on *Elise Gygas*'. Thank you for sending your card!

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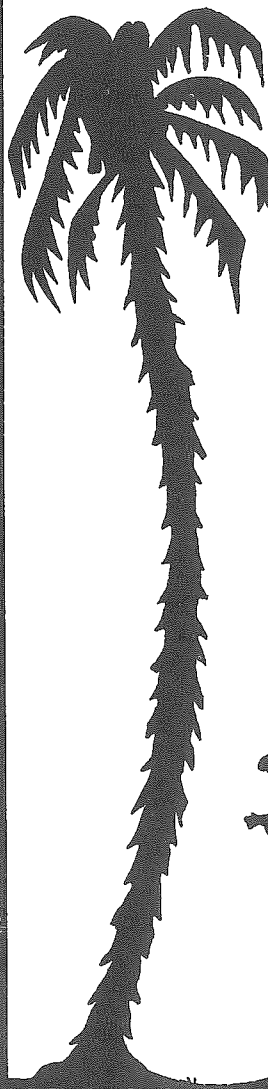
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