

WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

Warning Order

ISSUE #35



IN THIS ISSUE:
NORTHWEST FRONTIER REAR GUARD
REVISITING METAGAMING
PENINSULA MEETING ENGAGEMENT
REGULAR FEATURES & MORE



Warning Order

NWF: Pathan Rear Guard

I had been slowly working on my second unit of Bengal Lancers for the Northwest Frontier and finally finished them this spring. I can usually finish a 28mm mounted unit in under two weeks by working an hour or so a day on them, but this unit took about three months! Not sure if it was that I already had one finished or the daunting task of getting the turbans and other colors right! Anyway, finishing them gave me the perfect excuse to offer to do a TSATF scenario for the group!

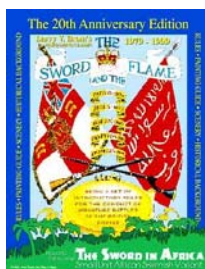
Because of prior commitments we were only going to have four players, so I settled on something that would fit on a 4 x 8 and gave everyone a few units. With the event cards and the reinforcements that ended up arriving, we could easily have fit in another two players.

The scenario was set in 1898 on the Northwest Frontier. A Pathan force had been defeated in battle the previous day and was retreating back to their mountain hideouts, pursued by the victorious British and their Indian allies. During the night part of the rear guard be-



came separated from the remainder of the force and is in danger of being cut off. The main Pathan force is traversing some mountain paths higher up (not on the board) while the rear guard takes up position at the entrance to a mountain pass. The problem for the Pathans is that a tribe has

been cut off at the opposite end of the table and needs to re-join the rear guard.



The Pathans started with two rifle armed infantry units and one mounted unit guarding the entrance to the mountain pass. The remainder of the rear guard comprised

three infantry units that started in a village on the opposite end of the table. The British/Indian force consisted of two British infantry units, two Indian infantry units, two units of Bengal Lancers, and a battery of screw guns. The British force entered at the side of the board on turn 1, although because of the terrain and bad movement rolls, the entire force did not get on the board until turn 3.

The victory conditions were based upon what I call 'negative objectives' and in my experience it helps to balance out games like TSATF where wild swings of fortune regularly occur. When the game is ended for whatever reason, the Pathan (cont. on p3)

Inside this issue:

Peninsula Meeting Engagement	4
Look Back at Metagaming	6
Battle of the Tanks/Bloody April Reviews	14
Fire & Fury-Corinth	16
IABSM3 Early Russian Front	18
Age of Reason Battle Report	20
Guns of Gettysburg Playtest	22

Special points of interest:

- *TSATF Northwest Frontier battle report.*
- *Reviews of Hungarian Nightmare and Bloody April.*
- *Battle reports for Guns of Gettysburg, IABSM3, Fire & Fury ACW, and Age of Reason.*
- *Editorial on the strange business side of the hobby*

NWF: Pathan Rear Guard (cont.)



on the Pathans near the pass. The next turn an event card was drawn that put one of them out of ammo! The pack mules were then sent scurrying through the traffic jam near the board edge to bring up extra ammo. The Bengal Lancers trotted out in front of the force while the British and Indian infantry got themselves sorted out in preparation for the advance.

getting an event which saw another Pathan mounted unit arrive.

The British and Indians were now putting pressure on the Pathans near the mountain pass and it looked as if it was going to be an early night. However, another event card came up and it gave the Pathans three fresh infantry units. Now the fight was really on as one of them emerged right next to the artillery unit. They failed in their first attempt to charge, which then allowed a British infantry unit to get positioned to at least meet them halfway up the hill. In the ensuing melee one of the guns had its crew wiped out and the British infantry unit had heavy casualties, but the position held.

(cont. from p2) side would roll 1D100 to determine if the rear guard action was successful or not. Each Pathan that made it off the road at the entrance to the mountain pass would score one percentage point, so if the starting Pathan force lost no casualties during the game, they would automatically win by achieving 110%. However, they had to subtract one percentage point for each British or Indian soldier who made it off the road and two percentage points for each Bengal Lancer who got off the board edge.

The game began when the British screw gun battery ascended the hill next to the board edge, unlimbered, and fired

Another event card came up (on a roll of 5 or a 6 on 1D6 at the start of each turn) and this time it was bad for the Pathans. Poisoned wells or some type of European plague made several units sick, which affected their shooting and melee! The Bengal Lancers charged the Pathans near the rocks and were countercharged by the mounted Pathans. A massive melee broke out followed by exchanges of rifle fire between the Indians and the Pathans moving out from the village. The melee ended with the Bengal Lancers victorious, but down to less than half their strength. After six turns things were not looking good for the Pathans, despite

Near the village the Pathans were trying to get at least two units to move down the road and join up with the rest of the rear guard. One Pathan unit took up position in a walled field and started a firefight with one of the Indian infantry units that lasted for several turns. The Indians finally charged and took the position, but not before losing at least half of their number. The remaining Indian unit then moved up in support near the center to cut off any Pathan attack in that direction. They also were hoping to cut the road and prevent any Pathans from joining the rest of the rear guard. This was now turning into a desperate fight that continued to escalate. (cont. on p 10)

This is the situation as of Turn 5. The Bengal Lancers have engaged a unit of Pathan cavalry while the second squadron prepares to charge the Pathans in the rocks to their front. The British and Indian infantry have moved up to engage the Pathans, who seem to get increasing numbers of reinforcements! The artillery battery comes under attack by fresh Pathan units while a supporting unit of British infantry desperately tries to move up to support them. At this point the casualties for the British were fairly light, but that would change in the next few turns as there would be a large number of melees across the



Peninsula Meeting Engagement

As with most gamers you seem to have those gaming nights where due to people not showing up, last minute changes about where to host the game, etc., that a scenario and forces get thrown together. Everyone has fun for a few hours, but it wasn't really serious as you just seemed to be passing the time. These kinds of games rarely work out due to a wide variety of reasons, but every so often one game really comes through.

Which is what precisely happened here. Mark had set up a Peninsula scenario for AOE that was pretty basic. Essentially, there were equal forces on both sides in a meeting engagement type of scenario. Now Mark had put some effort into this by doing the labels and forces, but he had no idea how many people would be playing or where we were playing until almost the last moment.

As stated above, this would be a meeting engagement scenario pitting the British against the French in 1810. The French only had two divisions of two brigades each, but they were huge brigades and dwarfed the much smaller British units. There were several artillery batteries in support and a small cavalry brigade, but the main French striking force were the big infantry brigades.

The British had a similar force, but consisting of six infantry brigades that were much smaller (around six stands each), several artillery batteries and one small cavalry brigade. Several of the British units were elite and they seemed to have a better starting position than the

French in terms of fewer obstacles to maneuver around.

Both sides rolled well on the first turn and went right at each other, with the big French brigades snaking along the roads, trying to get into an area where they could deploy. The British right away saw that there would be trouble in the center, so moved some extra artillery into that area. Unfortunately, that would leave the smaller British brigades alone on the flanks against the much larger French ones.

The action got started on the far British left flank where some British brigades ran into a French brigade trying to work itself around the flank. I always thought that Age of Eagles does a good job of portraying the British army of the period by having their stands a bit larger and with more firepower. A very simple, but effective way to show that they covered more ground, particularly on the defense, and could slug it out in a firefight. So it was here where the two sides got locked into a series of firefights that whittled down both brigades.

Another French brigade deployed in a vineyard and the British moved up to the wall of that area to take up defense. This started a several turn firefight that again saw both sides knocking off stands, but otherwise not moving in any direction. Both sides tried bayonet attacks, but they



were repulsed, placing everyone right back where they started.

The real crisis for the British came in the center on turn three. A French brigade charged right in, plowing through a British brigade and crashing into a Portuguese brigade that was deployed behind them in support, shattering them as well. The British rallied, but were struck again by the same French brigade and disintegrated. This time on the breakthrough the French overran an artillery battery and it looked as if the game was going to be called early as the British force was about to be cut in half.

Fortunately, the British had one brigade in reserve and it had taken the precaution of facing towards the center in case things went wrong, which they did. The French brigade rolled so well that it had to continue its move down the British center, leaving it in an (cont. on p5)



Peninsula Meeting Engagement

Age of Eagles Battle Report



(cont. from p4) awkward position. The British brigade charged down the hill right into the flank of the French brigade, driving it back and then followed up the attack by restoring the line in the British center.

There was little to no action on the British left as both sides had second thoughts about being strong enough to actually pull off anything of consequence. There was an artillery duel in the center of the board that was the scene of some bad die rolling and there were a few occasional shots fired at the cavalry units of both sides as they ran back and forth, trying to find an avenue to attack.

Back on the British left the brigades of both sides had worn themselves out. Both sides' brigades were down several

stands after a few turns of firefights, charges, and countercharges. Basically back in the same place they started, but at half strength! The fighting in the vineyard was a see-saw affair, with both sides attacking, but not taking too much ground, with the result that it was turning into a WW1 battle of attrition.

So this is where the game ended. Unfortunately, the store had to close when we were just getting to the interesting part of the battle! The British had exhausted their reserves, two brigades were spent, and they were just barely hanging on to any semblance of a defensive line. The French had one brigade that was spent, another severely weakened, and one that was getting chewed up in the vineyard.

Basically, the game was a draw with a few turns left to decide the affair. One more strong push by the French might have done it as the British were spread pretty thin across the board. However, a few bad die rolls and the smaller British brigades could surround and flank the French positions if those attacks failed.

Overall, a very good game and we will definitely set it up again at a member's house where we can finish it. The game was very well balanced with several options for both sides on attack and defense. We've also found that not only can Age of Eagles work for large multi-player games with each player commanding a corps or more, but it's great for the Peninsula where there were smaller battles.



Blast From The Past Pt. 21: Revisiting Metagaming

One of the most interesting and mysterious stories in the gaming hobby must revolve around Metagaming. At one point in the 70s and 80s they were considered among the top sci-fi/fantasy gaming companies and suddenly they were gone. Nowhere as large as Avalon Hill, GDW (especially during the Traveler era), TSR, etc., but they produced several of the most popular sci-fi games of all time, in particular Ogre and GEV.

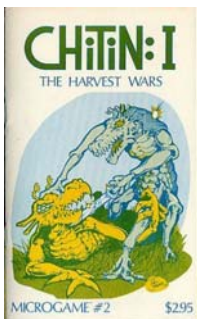
Also, one of their selling points was the \$2.95 microgame. There were some real gems in their catalog as well as a few that are easily forgotten. Some titles still go for 10-20 times on Ebay what they originally sold for back in the day. The games had a profound influence on many gamers of that era and some titles are still well thought of, even in today's market of incredible produced games with their color rulebooks and state of the art components. I thought it might be of interest to go through the games that Metagaming produced along with some comments about the games themselves.

Microgame 1: Ogre

The game that started it all. For \$2.95 you got a map, a sheet of very thin counters, and a rulebook, which by today's game component standards were primitive. However, what you received in terms of game play and replay value was immense. This was a game about giant robotic tanks sent on suicide missions to destroy an enemy's command post, with the defenders using hovercraft, tanks, artillery, and infantry to defeat it. A very clever concept, easy to play, and numerous strategies for attack and defense. Metagaming was off to a great start with this series.

Microgame 2: Chitin :1

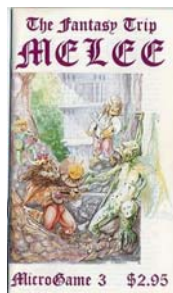
Following up Ogre would be tough for any game firm, but Chitin:1 delivered the goods. Set on an alien world where hives of intelligent insects wage war for food was an interesting concept.



The gameplay was pretty good and this game is still well thought of after all these years. The game was supposed to be part of a wider system, but unfortunately it never came to pass. There is a reworked version of this available for sale that is beautiful, but in the \$45-50 range compared to the original price of \$2.95 back in the 70s!

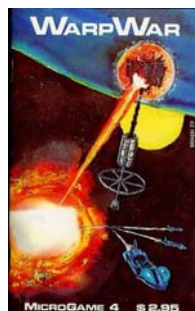
Microgame 3: Melee

Billed as part one of a series called The Fantasy Trip, Melee was a lot of game in a little package. Basically a man to man combat system, there were rules for orcs, dragons, etc., so it garnered quite a following by fantasy gamers who used it as the combat system for their role-playing games. The real strength of this game was yet to come as Wizard and Death Test combined with Melee would make a powerful combination. For \$2.95 this was a very well put together game with a lot of ideas that worked out very well in terms of game play.



Microgame 4: Warpwar

This was an unusual sci-fi game in that no dice are used for combat. Players design their own ships, then choose a range of options during combat that are cross indexed to provide a result. The game is essentially a mini-campaign system that still holds up well today. There is an active Yahoo group and several fan created maps that expand the game. Although not a very solitary friendly game, it still has a good sized cult following.



Microgame 5: Rivets

Definitely one of the more quirkier sci-fi games you'll ever see. All of the humans have been killed off, but robot factories continue their war! Players select a variety of robots, then "program" them to attack specific types of enemy robots. A lot of fun and someone ever designed a scenario



with a factory fighting it out with an Ogre from the first game!

Microgame 6: Wizard

Here's where the Fantasy Trip system really took off. Wizard, like Melee, was a bare bones magic system that could mate with Melee. Even though it was quite simple, it worked and worked well. This game became popular not with just the RPG crowd, but with many sci-fi and fantasy gamers. The game system now allowed players to use warriors and wizards at the same time to fight other humans, Orcs, dragons, and more.



Microgame 7: Olympica

Probably the first placed where the word "webmaster" was found! The Webbies on Mars are causing problems on Earth so a UN raid is launched to take care of the problem. This was a pretty clever man to man system with pretty good gameplay. The orange map took some getting used to, but it was an original idea and again, for \$2.95 you at least got your money's worth.



Microgame 8: GEV

Now here is where the Ogre system became even more popular than it already was. A new map, new units, more scenarios, and a new class of Ogre. GEV helped propel the Ogre system to a game that is still popular to this day and with many different editions. The games were fast and furious, easy to get into so that you could teach it to another gamer in just a few minutes. Still one of my favorite games of all time and I still pull it out for a few plays from time to time. (cont. on p. 7)



Blast From The Past Pt. 21: Revisiting Metagaming (cont.)

(cont. from p.6)

Microgame 9: Ice War

Definitely a product of the Cold War era, this game had an arctic warfare equipped Russian strike force coming over the ice cap to seize the U.S. oil fields. The game featured some interesting units, satellite searches, and melting ice from weapons fire. At the time this was the most complex of the microgames, although compared to many other games in the 70s and 80s it was standard fare. Although it seems dated today, at the time it was a fun game that saw the Russian force trying to remain hidden for as long as possible, followed by a series of sharp engagements that determined the winner.



to research new technologies to combat the aliens. Played on a global map, this game went far beyond what most microgames had offered. It's a good challenge for both sides and spawned a sequel which is discussed later.

Microgame 13: Holy War

This game used the movement and map systems from another Metagaming game called Godsfire. The game, while complex for its size, did a good job of portraying 3D strategic movement. With a vast array of bizarre units and options, this was once again a game that gave you a lot for your money. Not as popular as many of the other games in the series in that it was difficult to play solitaire. The game had a novel concept, interesting forces, and the unique movement/combat gave it a great sci-fi feel.



A brief interlude as this is where the game series seems like it is falling apart. There are numerous articles and stories about the demise of Metagaming and how Steve Jackson (designer of Ogre and other games) left the company, but suffice to say it had a profound effect on the microgame series. Coupled with the rise of RPG games, the popularity of games like Starfleet Battles, other companies coming out with small games, etc., this series was heavily impacted.

Microgame 16: Artifact

Not much good to say about this game other than the system works, but it's a lot of effort for not much gain. Russian and U.S. forces fight it out on the moon for an alien artifact, plus



there's a scenario where the aliens are encountered. It's not great, but not so bad that you shouldn't try it at least once.

Microgame 10: Black Hole

OK, so the science in this game is a bit wacky, but that shouldn't deter anyone from having a great time with this game. Rival factions slug it out on a donut shaped asteroid by firing missiles and lasers at opposing vehicles. The missiles get caught in the asteroid's gravitational field and zoom around several times until striking either an obstacle or an opposing player's unit! Great fun despite the science behind the game.



Microgame 14: Annihilator & One World

Two games in one package, with the first, Annihilator, being a take on the Berserker books. An assault team must land on and disable a giant, planet killing, computerized warship. The map, counters, and theme were a bit bland, but the game is playable. One World was a fascinating fantasy game with a rock, paper, scissors type of combat system! The back story and topic were interesting to say the least, so this game still has a cult following and there are rumors about it being expanded by another company.



Microgame 17: Dimension Demons

Again, a novel concept let down by below average graphics and game play that was less than inspiring. The two worlds portrayed on a single map was clever, but getting the aliens to win was pretty tough. This was becoming a consistent theme where it appeared as if the games had to be scaled back to fit the series format and lost something in the transition.



Microgame 11: Sticks & Stones

On the surface you wouldn't think that this would be a great game as it deals with stone age man to man combat, but it is actually pretty good. I had stayed away from this title for quite some time as it wasn't "sci-fi" enough for me, but the game system works.



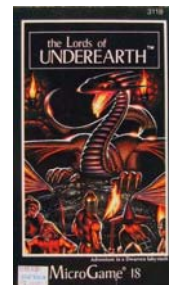
Microgame 15: Hot Spot

Probably the last of the "good" microgames before a wave of mediocrity hit the series. The game is based on a raid against a facility on a molten planet. A very interesting concept and game system that uses floating platforms across the map with combat between fire teams. Not a great game, but definitely good sci-fi and fun for a few hours.



Microgame 18: The Lords of Underearth

One of the few microgames that I have never owned. Basically a dungeon crawl with a fantasy skirmish system built in. Another of you either love it or hate it (cont. on p. 8)



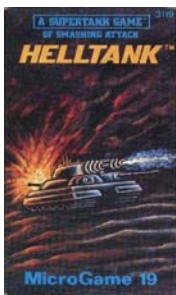
Microgame 12: Invasion of the Air-Eaters

One of the best microgames and there was definitely a lot going on this game. Aliens show up in orbit, land units, and start converting our air to something they can use. Mankind fights back with conventional forces and has



Blast From The Past Pt. 21: Revisiting Metagaming (cont.)

(cont. from p. 7) type microgames that appeared at the end of the series.



Microgame 19: Helltank

With Ogre's rights gone, Metagaming was left with no sci-fi heavy armor slugfest type of game in its catalog. Enter Helltank, which started the inevitable

comparisons between Ogre and itself. Helltank is not a bad game, but if you had Ogre, what was the point in spending time on this? This game got a bad rap, but in reality it's a good little tactical game that was overshadowed by too many other things in that age of the wargaming hobby.



Microgame 20: Trailblazer

An empire building game in a small box that required a ton of paperwork. Games could go on for a very long time and there was a sameness to it that became a big turn off. Again, not necessarily a bad game (especially considering the price), but there were so many other games to play at the time that this one got the short end of the stick.

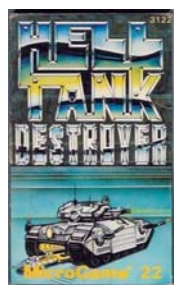


Microgame 21: Starleader Assault

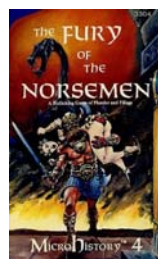
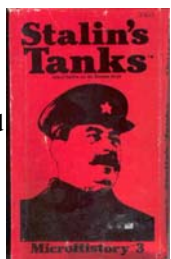
Designed as the Melee for sci-fi settings, this game goes down as one of the most unpopular of the series. Again, complex rules that led you to believe that this was supposed to be far more than a microgame. The game also was on the verge of the RPG craze at the time and it seemed as if it couldn't make up its mind if it was a role-playing or man to man combat wargame.

Microgame 22: Helltank Destroyer

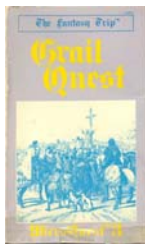
The last of the series as the others were adventures for Melee/Wizard or the new Micro-history series. Helltank Destroyer,



as the name suggests, added new units, a design your own section of the rules, and several other additions to the original Helltank game. Not a bad game, but once again the comparisons to Ogre and GEV proved that it was good, but not great and that was the end of the series.



Towards the end of their run, Metagaming also released a number of historical microgames that included Stalin's Tanks, Rommel's Panzer, Ram Speed, Fury of the Norseman, and Fire When Ready. In reality, these weren't bad little games! They were certainly playable, well thought out, and probably should have received more attention at the time than they did. I think it was the idea of a fantasy/sci-fi gaming company putting out historical themed games that turned off some gamers.

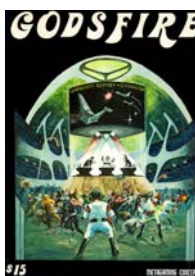


One of the more popular microgame series were the Microquests that were put out to go along with Melee and Wizard. Most of these had maps, counters, and paragraph based adventure guides as they were primarily designed to be played solitaire. I do remember having a great time with several of these, in particular Death Test. The idea of using Melee and Wizard as the basis for the adventure's combat system worked very well. There are still quite a few of these available for sale, but finding Melee and Wizard at a reasonable price is another story!

While Metagaming is primarily known for their microgames, they also did a number of full sized games as well. In fact, prior to the release of Ogre, they did a game called The Ythri, based on Paul Anderson's book, People of the Wind. This was followed by two sci-fi classic games, Godsfire and Stellar Conquest. Godsfire was later re-released by Task Force Games in a boxed version and Stellar Conquest went on to be successful as a re-release by Avalon Hill.



Both Godsfire and Stellar Conquest were heavy duty sci-fi games and products of the late 70s where complexity and long playing times were the name of the day. Both are good games that are still well thought of, although they probably don't see much playing time in the current hobby environment.



Many of these games are still available on Ebay and through other vendors, although a few aren't cheap. Many of them are still worth playing as they showcase some great concepts. The issue with many of the Metagaming games is that they were long on ideas, but short in execution. By that I mean that there were some novel ideas that sounded really good, but because of limits on the components, the game play wasn't as great as it could be. However, games like Ogre, GEV and a few others have definitely stood the test of time.

For my part, I will always be thankful for Metagaming and its microgames. They were an important part of my gaming youth and I have fond remembrances of spending many a rainy day playing them. For \$2.99 they were a great bargain and many were worth far more than that.



Memoirs of a Miniatures & Board Wargamer Pt. 22

Visiting the FLGS

A term that you see used quite frequently on gaming forums is the acronym FLGS, which stands for Friendly Local Gaming Store. For those of us who have been in the hobby for several decades, yes, that's the game or hobby store that we have continually referred to! With the advent of online shopping, catalogs available 24/7, forums, etc., a gamer today can usually get whatever information that they need about a period or range of figures in practically no time at all. Well, it wasn't always this way!

Buying habits in the gaming hobby have definitely changed over the last decade or so and it can be said that is the reason why the hobby has grown so fast. Yes, it is still a niche hobby with a lot of businesses that can't earn enough income to make a decent living off of it, but the amount of offerings that are currently available to gamers staggers the imagination, especially compared to what there was back in the 70s, 80s, and early 90s.

The Saturday trip to the hobby or game store was something that became a weekly or at least bi-weekly pilgrimage. I was blessed by the fact that through my gaming years there were always several gaming/hobby stores located within at least an hour drive of where I lived. At first they were toy stores that sold some wargames, then later hobby stores that primarily sold plastic models, but delved in gaming, then finally actual game stores.

At that time going to a store was usually the only way you found out if a game was released or not! Usually by the time a catalog or mailing got to you the game, rules, or miniatures could have been already out for up to a year! Not only that, you were usually subject to what the store owner ordered and they usually weren't gamers themselves, so you got an interesting variety sitting on the shelves.

Magazines such as The General, The Courier, Strategy & Tactics, and Wargamers Digest played a huge role in the hobby back in this era. To-

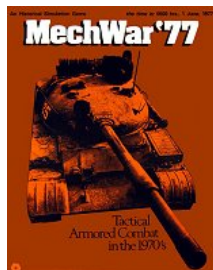


day's magazines are merely warehouses for beautiful images meant to inspire as you already know how to get the rules, miniatures, Ospreys, etc. However, "back in the day", an ad or article in a magazine was usually the only way that you found out that certain games or figures you were interested in were available.

This was another reason that going on these weekly or as often as possible trips to the stores was so much fun. You had no idea what was going to be there each time you went. Would there be a new sci-fi game from GDW sitting on the shelf? Did the recent issue of The General arrive? Did a back order of SPI WWII games come in and maybe now you could pick up that copy of Berlin '85? All that you knew is that you had some money in your wallet that you earned from mowing lawns, working your first job at a fast food place, or later in life you budgeted some cash for a hobby purchase twice a month. You were 99% sure that you would walk out of there with something, but you never knew what.

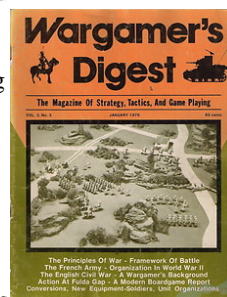
Looking through the miniatures racks was another great experience. Ral Partha, Minifigs, Superior, and more were mixed in so that you had to literally wade through the various packs and all the while thinking about what projects you could use such and such a miniature for. It wasn't uncommon to walk out of the store on a Saturday morning with a new Metagaming microgame, the latest copy of Wargamer's Digest, a pack of Ral Partha elves to use in a fantasy army project, a pack of GHQ T-72s, and two bottles of paint, all for around \$20!

There was also the social aspect of visiting the local store. Often you would meet other gamers and have some great discussions about new games, what projects they were working on, or just to talk about the latest movies. Gamers that you regularly played with would usually stop by and there would be endless discussions about



what the next game would be, what miniatures everyone should order, and then it would conclude with everyone going out to lunch to the closest place near the store.

Often, you would find out about a game going on soon or even that night, a new project someone was starting on and they needed help, or just some news about games coming out soon. Friendly rules discussions would sometimes bring out points you didn't know and everyone seemed more helpful than they are today. You definitely had the sense that you belonged to a big club and everyone wanted you to participate. Sometimes you might end up staying several hours then following others over to someone's house for a game after the store closed down.



Looking back now, those trips to gaming stores provide many fond memories and just don't compare to today. Although we have an excellent FLGS in our area, it's just not the same. I generally know what the store will

have, what I might be interested in buying, and there's no use sticking around. I usually go in, look around for a few minutes, get what I came for, then I'm out the door again. I'll talk to some gamers if they're around, but the conversations are usually brief. If I need to know anything from them I'll text or email them some other time. At other times I just forego the entire exercise and just order the items I need online.

In terms of selection, availability, and information, the hobby is today light years ahead of where it was back when I had these great experiences at local gaming stores. However, there's no sense of wonder anymore. It has become something else on the daily checklist, akin to picking up your clothes at the dry cleaners. It's a shame because these were some great times and you never knew what was going to happen or what you would find each trip. Oh well, back to ordering a new game online.

NWF Pathan Rear Guard (cont.)



(cont. from p3) The Indians now came under attack from the remnants of various units, but held their positions. The second unit of Bengal Lancers repelled an attack from the recently arrived Pathan mounted unit and some Pathan infantry. By the end of this turn there were a combined six Bengal Lancers left out of an initial force of 24. There was a brief moment where the pass was clear and it looked like British forces might move through it and end the game, but a Pathan counterattack sealed it back up. More fighting continued across the board as the Pathans and British tried to reach the entrance to the pass.

One of the British infantry units moved up and attacked the defenders at the entrance to the pass, leading to a

bloody melee that left both units severely weakened. The Pathans tried one more counterattack, but it was pretty weak and while it succeeded in causing some British/Indian casualties, it wasn't enough to stop the inevitable. By this time both sides were bloodied and battered, with only the semblance of any kind of organization left. In fact, units started failing major morale and left the battlefield. By the end of turn 10 each side only had one or two units that were over half strength.

At this point the Pathans decided that it was time to pull the plug and have everyone make for the pass. Despite having almost 200 figures committed to the battle, only 48 made it into the pass, although they did prevent any British from entering ahead of them. One of the Pa-

than players rolled D100 and the result was a 52, which meant that the Pathans lost as they needed a 48 or below for a successful rear guard action.

The game was pretty good, especially since it looked like the British would win easily at least twice, then Pathan reinforcements showed up. There were melees, wild charges, crazy events, and basically all the things that you would expect from a TSATF game! Why we don't play this period and this set of rules more is beyond me, as the games are always pretty memorable. Using the new activation deck along with the event deck offers the opportunity for chaos, which is good with this system. Overall, a great game where everyone had a good time with a decent chance to win at the end.



ATO #31: Hungarian Nightmare

Game Review

You can definitely say one thing about the Against the Odds series of magazine games in that they live up to their name. In this issue the featured game is about the siege of Budapest in late 1944 and early 1945, which is definitely a hopeless situation. Although the Germans did launch several operations to try to reach Budapest, this game is more about the German and Hungarian forces inside of the city trying to fight it out to the last block.

First off, the magazine has some excellent and very interesting information on the actual siege of the city that takes up about half of the entire issue. The game components come with a set of rules in the now familiar ATO style, several hundred counters, and two maps, one of which is only about 12 x 34, but combined they make a sizeable map. The map is the first thing that strikes you in that it is definitely an area game. The city is broken into two distinct areas, Buda and Pest, which are separated by the Danube River. There are a large number of bridges that cross the river that will become important during game play.

The counters have values for morale, firing strength, assault strength, and movement. Artillery units are also rated for range. There are various German and Hungarian counters representing police, engineers, armor, assault guns, flak units, and more. The Russians and Romanians are pretty standard, with most divisions having three regiments and one artillery



unit. Several units on both sides have additional counters for step losses, so the good German divisions, Russian Guards and infantry, etc., will have four steps per unit. At first it appears that the total number of units are pretty even, but when you look at the combat factors you quickly see that the Axis is at a serious disadvantage.

If you've played Storm Over Arnhem, Monty's Gamble, or other area type games, there will be concepts here that are familiar. The one major change is combat, which is much more involved than the other stated games. The rules aren't hard to digest, but special attention needs to be paid to the bombardment phases and the few special rules. Victory conditions are pretty basic for the Germans, namely hold onto certain areas for as long as possible and save up victory points. For the Russians its pretty much obliterate every area of the city until there's very few areas with Axis forces left.

At this point the combat system should be mentioned. At the start of each turn the Russian side gets a number of air bombardment points which can be used anywhere, followed by artillery bombardment by distinct formations with their own artillery supply points. This takes awhile in terms of game time and I was left with the feeling that it could have been better by using counters with various values on them rather than painstakingly tracking each bombardment's points on tracks.

Once combat units in both sides are in the same area, each side rolls for initiative, then units can fire in groups or singly, or assault. Firing is pretty basic, finding the number on a column with the terrain number for the area as the only modifier. Assault, however, is an entirely different situation with a variety of outcomes. You can also choose to bombard with artillery units that don't track their ammo (integrated artillery?). Units take

step losses and disruptions, with some results affecting both sides. Combat can also end by rolling a number matching a track showing how many rounds have been fought. Yes, this system is a bit overwrought and in my opinion could have been simplified. However, as I explain below, it works.

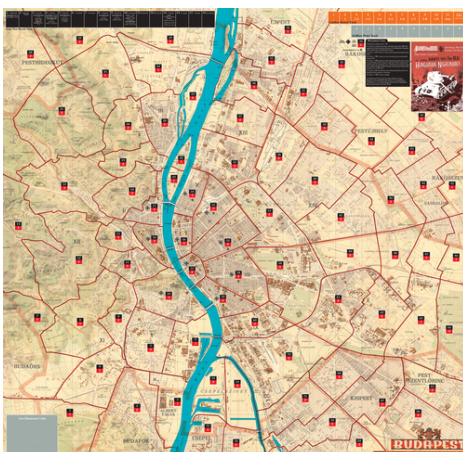
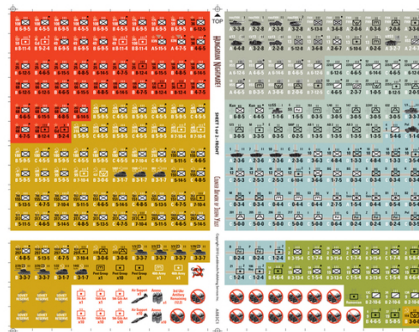
Basically, the Russians and Romanians hammer away at the Axis forces as they gradually give ground. German ammo problems, holding onto the airfield at all costs, blowing bridges, combined arms, Hungarian desertion, and more are all very well added into the game play with a minimum of rules. Russian forces come and go (dealing with the German relief attempts outside of the city) in a

series of withdrawals and reinforcements, but only the stacking rules really prevent them from simply overwhelming the Axis forces.

I found that the game tended

to drag in spots, particularly the bombardment and combat phases. The map is great and you really get the feeling of a desperate defense inside of a major city. However, where Storm Over Stalingrad or Storm Over Arnhem can be completed in 3-4 hours at the most, you're looking at close to six hours here at least with not much of the tension of the other games mentioned. The Germans are going to lose, it's just how bad and can they eke out a victory set out in the rules. Playing the Germans is only for those with strong constitutions and a never say die attitude as you just get brutalized area by area, fall back, then do it all over again.

However, the game does a very good job of simulating the battle. It is a grueling, block by block (or in this case area by area) grind it out death match. Units get vaporized, take losses, regroup, and go at it again. I think the big question is whether or not the players find it entertaining. I thought it was interesting, long, and I'm not sure if I will ever try it again.



Having been in the wargaming hobby for almost four decades you would think nothing surprises me anymore. However, that would be wrong! The one thing that continually surprises me is the lack of common sense most gamers have towards the business side of the hobby. For every well run and successful hobby enterprise such as Battlefront, GMT Games, or Perry Brothers, there are 20 more mom & pop type gaming outlets that are hanging on for dear life.

In fact, you continuously see new companies promoting their wares on multiple gaming sites almost every week and then trying to find them in a year is impossible as they're already gone. You also regularly see notices for shops and businesses closing up for various reasons. The problem with this is that gamers overreact to both ends of the spectrum.

For example, let's say that a company called Lunar Insanity Miniatures comes out with a new range of 28mm figures for the Caste War of Yucatan. A banner and news story is created on TMP, quickly followed by numerous comments of "Beautiful figures", "Can't wait to get into this period", "I only hope that they do the figure of Cecilio Chi right!", and "I've already placed an order for every pack!". Now the pragmatist and realist inside of me says, "First, this is an obscure to say the least period. Second, can there be enough gamers interested to actually sustain the company?" I then tell myself that if they're still around in a few years it may be something worth looking into or if you're going to get into the period make sure that other companies have figures to finish your army in case they go under.

Sure enough, the next year you see a notice that they're discontinuing business due to health reasons (that one seems to be the most regularly used), moving the family, relocating to smaller premises, the dog ate the molds, etc. This is then followed by the invariable comments of "How will I finish my army?", "How come other gamers didn't support this-I hate you all", or "How dare you do this to me. You owe me by finishing the range!"

Actually, they don't owe you anything. You took the chance on a new, unproven company providing product for an obscure period that maybe only 100 gamers on the planet are interested in. If you do the math, you would quickly figure out that no company could make money off of this. That's not to say that people don't have the right to try something unusual like this, but you must be realistic with yourself on the prospects.

But that is the seminal problem with the hobby in general. Most of the business are run by gamers or who have a love of the hobby themselves. Notice I didn't say that any of them had business experience or knowledge of how to run a hobby operation. This isn't something that's unique to the gaming world as I've seen it in model railroading, RC models, and the plastic model hobbies.

Many of us have commented in various places how we go to hobby stores that are dirty, have product sitting on the shelves that hasn't moved in 30 years, bad service, and so on. We've seen companies start to produce a range, stop, and go onto something else entirely. We've encountered gaming companies that will produce a spectacular range of Swiss for the Italian Wars, then anxiously awaiting the company to produce opponents in the form of Italians, French, or Spanish, only to find out that their next release is Scots for the ECW!

People must understand that they are dealing with hobbyists, much like themselves. Most gamers I know have a hard time staying on track during games, let alone real life. For every one "normal" (if that's possible) gamer who has a professional job and business acumen, there's at least five who are barely surviving and it seems at times as if their life revolves around gaming. Most gamers with professional jobs or who have the necessary business experience aren't going to be running gaming enterprises. There simply isn't enough money or future in it. That leaves a lot of gamers who think that they have rules/game system that will sell, set up a store that they

think will be successful, or have plans for a miniature range that will earn them a million dollars. Yes, that is what has made the gaming hobby interesting for so many years, but it's not something you want to bet the house on.

On top of all of that, gamers have a hard time believing that one of their own could perpetuate any kind of fraud or be involved in wrongdoing. Yet, this also happens quite a bit. Breaking of contracts, embezzlement, pirating, fraud, etc., have all been seen at one time or the other in the hobby. The sad thing is that most of it is for ridiculously small amounts of money or stupid things. Look at the incidents with the Michigan Toy Soldier Company or the ongoing saga of Valley/Radiant Games with the new version of Up Front (which hasn't been resolved at the time of this writing.)

The behavior by gamers defending these kinds of things also borders on the ludicrous. It is my contention that if a favorite game designer robbed a bank in broad daylight and it was captured on video, there would be gamers defending him by saying the bank had it coming to them! There would be cries to free him just so he could get the next game or figures out in a favorite series of theirs. For most gamers any end surely justifies the means!

In the end you have what is basically a mom and pop type store driven business that ebbs and flows from day to day. Figure ranges come and go, rules sets come into and go out of favor, a fickle audience with ADD tendencies, and businesses that aren't run that well. Throw them all together and you have the miniatures wargaming hobby. Maddening at times, entertaining at others, but this is what the end result ends up as, which is an unpredictable mess. However, the hobby trundles along somehow, which in a way makes it unique. Most gamers feel that if the hobby ever went mainstream with large commercial entities that it would lose that special something and with that I agree. The alternative, however, is what we have now, which isn't that bad, but it certainly reminds me not to get into the business side of this hobby!



Wargames Factory 28mm WW2 Germans

Figure Review



Amy my WW2 early East Front project rolls along I could see that my group would be in need of more German infantry. Not only that, I was frustrated by the fact that I needed a crew for my Italeri 1/48th 88mm flak gun and couldn't find anything in metal for under \$25! Someone suggested using the Wargames Factory Germans as crew, so I ordered a box on Ebay for around \$15 plus a few bucks for shipping to see what I could get out of the box.

I've had mixed success with Wargames Factory, so I was a bit hesitant on opening the box. However, for the \$15 and change I paid I figured that I wouldn't be out that much if things looked bad.

You get enough parts to make thirty WW2 German infantry and although primarily for late war, they can easily be used for other periods. There are thirty round bases as well, plus you can clearly see from the sprues that you get that having enough parts will not be a problem.

In fact, the bewildering amount of stuff that you do get on the sprues is the major problem here. There are heads in an assortment of headgear, arms holding

a variety of weapons, equipment, separate weapons, and more. In terms of getting enough stuff and the ability to configure your units, Wargames Factory certainly qualifies as giving you value.

There's one thing, however, that really, really hurts this boxed set; no instructions! Yes, some of the parts are self explanatory, but as you start to assemble the figures you will spend a lot of time with trial and error. The torsos/legs that are provided for the figures aren't the problem here. What is the problem are the arms and finding the right combination. Get ready for some frustration as you cut out arm after arm, try gluing them, then looking at it and determining that they're too short, wrong pose, etc.

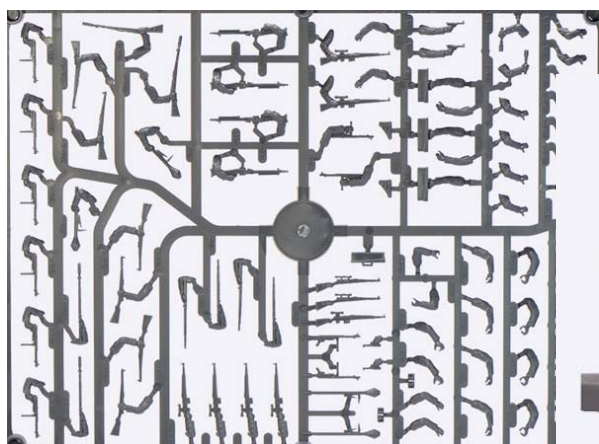
Also, what are some of the spare parts of equipment for? Which figures do they go with? You can spend some time doing online research or looking through your Osprey/Squadron Signal books, but there should have been something included. Also, trying to fit on the smaller bits of equipment can be quite challenging. Finally in regards to equipment, the backpacks/canisters/shovels/etc. are all one piece, but have several weird combinations of attachments on them to fit the backs of the figures. Either some of them don't quite fit right or they didn't put sufficient numbers in to match the torsos, but you will have some problems with this.

However, it's nothing that some cutting, filing, or sanding won't take care of.

Getting the figures to look right as in the image from the WF web site below is going to be a challenge. I build a lot of plastic models and trying to get the arms to match up so that the figures look human and not like some kind of robot takes some effort. Some of the models I finished look really good while a few others just don't look right. Yes, good enough to be in a squad on a table with 200 other figures, but nothing I would put in a painting contest or as an example of good figure design.



I finished about three squads as panzergrenadiers from the early 1941 Barbarossa campaign in what is called "Plane Tree" camo smocks. The figures came out OK in the end, but it was a chore getting there. Again, not too bad for the price, but expect to do a lot of work, experience some frustration in assembly, and I'm not sure it's worth it.

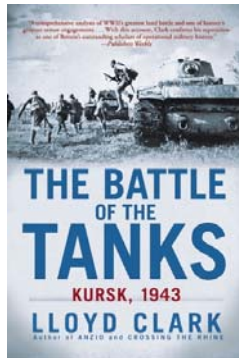


There seems to be two recent trends with military history books that are beginning to get annoying. The first is that the authors have a tendency to assume that the reader knows nothing about the subject, so they feel the need to go over everything leading up to the event. The second trend is to list every single possible reference in the notes, thus taking up valuable space that could have been used otherwise for photos, more maps, etc. Sadly, this book is found guilty on both accounts.

The title is *The Battle of the Tanks* by Lloyd Clark and the subject is the Battle of Kursk which was fought in the summer of 1943. Chances are, if you're interested in this book then you've probably heard about Kursk, Operation Barbarossa, WW2 on the Eastern Front, or even possibly WW2. But no, the author assumes that you know nothing about Germany's invasion of Russia in 1941 and felt compelled to spend the first 150+ pages going over not only the invasion, but even some years before!

By the time I got to the situation in spring of 1943 I was about to put the book up on Ebay and at least try to get back \$5 for my efforts. Fortunately, I stayed with the book and was rewarded by the middle sections. One of the confusing things about the book is the number of styles the author uses in telling the Battle of Kursk. At one moment it's almost like reading fiction as he describes the scenes from the viewpoint of one of the participants. The next it is actual quotes from someone's memoirs or battle reports. Finally, there is a historical overview from the author himself. It's not that annoying, but at times you're not sure what the book wants to be.

Finally, around page 160 you get to the events leading up to the battle itself. There is a significant section of the book that goes into the planning for the operation on both sides, the forces allocated, and the strategies that would be employed by both sides. Great emphasis is placed on Hitler wanting the Tigers and Panthers de-



played before the assault, which pushed the timeline back several weeks and ultimately proved fatal. The German plan was definitely flawed thinking, especially thinking that they could recreate the blitzkrieg tactics of the early years and certainly their intelligence system failed in providing accurate numbers of the massive Russian forces awaiting them.

Finally, you get to the actual battle itself and it's a shame that not more time was spent on this. The author does a good job of going day by day, listing the objectives for each side and noting the amount of armor that the Germans had available. For wargamers and East Front enthusiasts, this is definitely the main course of the book. The air battles are described in an overview fashion and again, it's a shame that more of the earlier sections of the book couldn't have been exchanged for a detailed look at this aspect of the battle. With several thousand aircraft involved it could have been a book by itself, but the book focuses primarily on the armored thrusts.

This has probably been mentioned ten thousand times over the years, but the Russian defensive works were extensive. The book does a good job of describing the different defensive lines, minefields, reserves, and artillery support that the Russians used to great effect. They had decided early on (surprisingly, as Stalin always wanted to attack) to let the Germans waste their strength negotiating the defenses, then counterattack. The one big problem with this strategy was that if the Germans ever breached the multiple defensive lines and got into the Russian rear things would definitely have changed on the Eastern Front that year!



The German armored attacks naturally get caught in the various defensive works and bludgeoned their way forward. The Russians launch numerous counterattacks that are almost always defeated, but seem to have an inexhaustible supply of reserves. The book does the reader a fine service by pointing out that the Germans were able to return many of their damaged tanks to the battle, that their command and control was far superior to the Russians at the point of contact, and that they almost always won the armored engagements. This book along with several recent articles, will hopefully put a final end to the legends of Prokhorovka that stated the titanic armor battle was a defeat for the Germans.



In actuality, although the Russians threw in close to 800 tanks they were tactically defeated. However, the German panzer formations were so weakened that along with other considerations (invasion of Sicily, pressure in other sectors, etc.) the battle came to a close with the Germans withdrawing. Manstein at the end launches a final operation with his forces to try to create a pocket, but is again frustrated by the Russian defenses as well as the number of counterattacks. With that the battle finally comes to a close.

Overall, it is very hard to rate this book. The first several chapters on the history of the German invasion in 1941 were a waste. The maps are OK, but could have been better, but the images in the book are very well chosen. The sections on the battle itself are worth reading, but again are followed by a concluding chapter that I would rate as so-so. I think I will keep looking for the "ultimate" Kursk book.

Fire & Fury: Battle of Corinth

Battle Report

Another Friday night rolls around and we needed something that could be set up quickly and still had the interest of all those involved. Usually this means War-master Ancients, Fire & Fury, or Age of Reason as we a) know the rules very well, b) have a ton of figs for those periods, and c) games can be set up quickly, finished in 3-4 hours, and cleaned up by midnight. This time we chose Fire & Fury, then after looking through the various scenario books found the Battle of Corinth.

I will stress right here at the start that our game was "loosely based" on Corinth! This was due to the scenario map that we had and not knowing that the main waterway portrayed on the map was not a river that had to be crossed only at bridges! In the real battle the Confederate forces attacked across the width of the battlefield, while in our game the action occurred on both sides of the major waterway. It wasn't until about halfway through the game that we checked into this and realized that all of the waterways depicted on the map were in real life not much more than creeks, streams, and canals that would pose no crossing problems, particularly at this scale.

This actually made the problem for the Union defense pretty easy. They loaded up on the Confederate left, essentially forming a wall of fire that obliterated the first Confederate brigade to emerge from the woods. This was a pat-

tern that was followed all through the game in that each time the Confederate brigades came out of the woods for a fight, they had to run a gauntlet of fire, then hit by fresh brigades in charges that drove them back. The only thing it did do was to prevent these Union units from reinforcing the other side of the board, which proved critical by the end of the game.

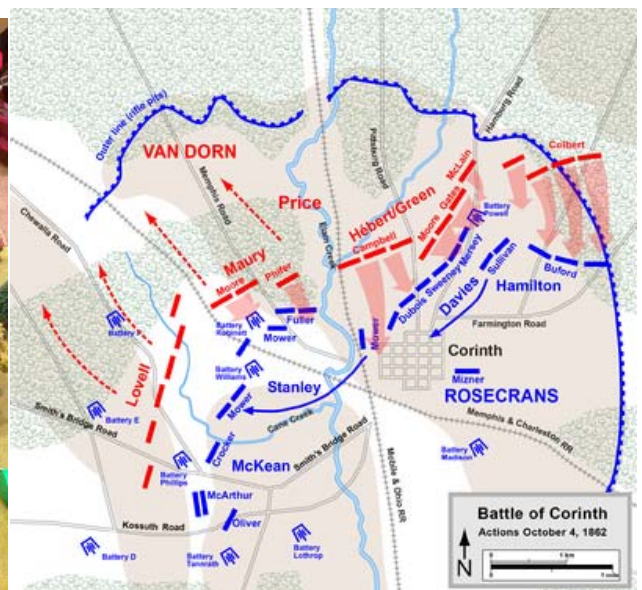
On the Confederate right the leading division crashed through the woods and piled directly into the first Union troops they saw, driving them back. The full weight of the Confederate attack could have proved decisive right then and there, but the second Confederate division got hung up in the woods and didn't get into the attack until several turns later. The Confederates advanced, driving back the Union troops to their supports, who in turn fell back after a series of disastrous melee rolls.

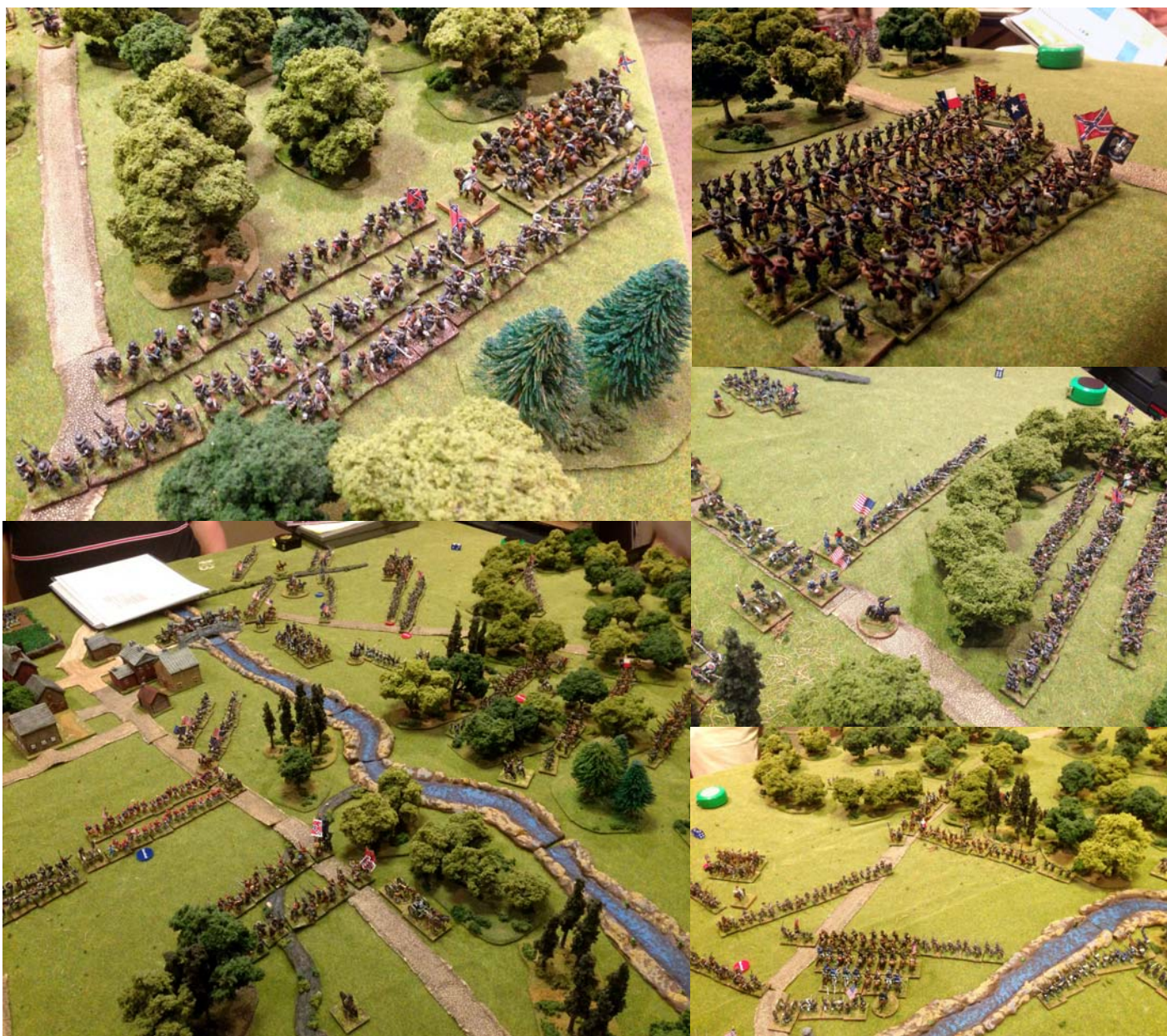
The Union forces put in several counterattacks, including a series of cavalry charges that checked the Confederate attack for a time. However, when the second Confederate division emerged from the woods and joined in, the Union side was in serious diffi-



culty. Both sides attacked and counterattacked, with casualties mounting on both sides. The Union, side, however, was coming off with the worst of it, losing an artillery battery and a leader during a series of assaults.

The Confederates now pressed the attack even more, driving the Union troops closer and closer to the main waterway on the board. The Union continued their unfortunate die rolling at the worst possible times so that many of the counterattacks ended up making their positions worse. With no reinforcements in sight and most of their troops at the spent or worn stage, things were not looking good for the Union side. The Confederates began to have (cont. on p17)





(cont. from p16) traffic problems in getting their forces to converge on the remaining Union defenders.

Back on the Confederate left another attack went in which was easily repulsed, but it kept those Union forces pinned down. One more series of Confederate attacks and the Union side began abandoning the right half of the board. After looking the situation over and it was almost 11:30 pm, we decided that because of the terrain and the state of both sides, the fighting would have to come to a halt.

After adding up the victory points it was determined to be a Confederate minor victory. The Confederates did not seize Corinth, but they had caused sufficient casualties to force the Union out of that area for the time being.

Overall, it was an interesting and fast moving game. Terrain problems aside, both sides had a good chance at victory and it was unusual in that both sides had little to no artillery, but both had cavalry that saw action! The Union had terrible die rolls in hand to hand combat, which

seemed to create that row of dominos effect at times throughout the game. Both sides played well and there were many opportunities for victory.

We have decided to keep the optional rolling 2D6-2 combat and movement system as that keeps the wilder results at bay. Also, the optional supply rules are much better, so there aren't units running out of ammo all over the battlefield anymore. Again, this was an interesting and very balanced battle that gamers interested in the ACW should try some time.

As you can see by the pictures, our WW2 skirmish project continues to come along nicely. Yes, we play with 28mm figs along with 1/48th vehicles (the “one true” scale for skirmish gaming!). We feel that the 1/56th stuff just doesn’t look right with the 28mm figs, so we’re going the extra mile as 1/48th vehicles aren’t cheap or easy to find!

This scenario is set in fall 1941 with the German offensive resuming all along the front. A Russian force is defending a vital bridge and has been ordered to delay the Germans at all costs. The force consisted of a platoon of Russian infantry (three squads), a platoon of T-34s, two 45mm AT guns, two MMGs, two light mortars, and one SMG squad attached to the T-34s. The Russians also had one commissar who would actually play a role late in the battle.

The German force was a mechanized battle group who was trying to force a crossing over a river behind the Russian position. The Germans had a four vehicle platoon of PZIVDs, a light armor platoon of two PZ38s and two PZIIIs, a panzergrenadier platoon (three squads) in halftracks and an understrength infantry platoon of two squads.

When we play IABSM3 we do use the “blinds” system and you can see some



of the oval shaped markers on the board in the pictures. These ovals represent either dummies or real units that have not been spotted yet. In some games it definitely adds to the uncertainty, but in this one, which was a basic attack against a defense, the blinds helped to hide some initial placements, but didn’t radically affect either side.

The T-34s deployed in the middle of the board were going to be a major problem for the Germans as they outgunned and out-armored anything on the board. This at first brought the German attack to a standstill as the PZIVDs try to slug it out with the Russian tanks. This turned out to be a bad idea as after a turn or two half of the platoon was burning. Time for new ideas on the German side!

The German light armor platoon then split, with the two PZIIIs breaking off and continuing to circle around the Russian flank. This would present some command and control issues, but tackling the T-34s head on was suicide. They ran into two squads of Russian infantry which escalated into a series of assaults. Both squads several times tried to knock out the German armor in close assault, but were driven back with massive casualties. In fact, we were playing with the Hesitant Troops and Commissar cards, which were pulled in order. This is one of those rare gaming events that will go down in club history.

For one thing, it fit the narrative perfectly. Two squads just tried to close assault some armor and suffered around 60% casualties for their efforts. Pulling those cards in sequence means that the commissar can take over (cont. on p.19)_





(cont. from p.18) the platoon. Sure enough, the commissar shot the big man in charge and took over the platoon. Obviously the failed attack proved that he was a traitor to the cause! The commissar then led the troops forward again against the tanks which resulted in both squads being wiped out.

Meanwhile, the two Russian 45mm AT guns were finally silenced by combined fire from German infantry and the PZIVDs. This, however, led to a firefight between some German infantry and two Russian MMGs next to the church. The PZ38s put up a brave fight against the T-34s, finally knocking one out, but they lost a tank with heavy damage themselves.

By this time it was doubtful that the

Germans could win the game unless a miracle occurred. The German panzergrenadier platoon was still mysteriously intact and not committed, but it was the T-34s that were causing the problems. The Russians had one SMG squad in the graveyard, two MMGs, two mortars, and one regular infantry squad plus the remaining two T-34s still left. Not a very potent force without the T-34s, but since they dominated the central position the Germans were going to have a tough time getting past them. At this point the Germans recognized that while they might take the church and clear out some more of the Russian infantry, they weren't getting over the bridge.

Overall, it was a fun and fairly intense game representing a situation that

probably occurred hundreds of times in 1941 on the Eastern Front. The Germans had difficulty dealing with the heavier Russian tanks as was the case here. The German players to their credit didn't shy away from taking the T-34s on and almost won the game.

I think the IABSM rules are pretty good, but we still had a few issues. The rules are written in a "friendly" manner, similar to TSATF where there needs to be a lot of interpretation by the players. The armor battles work out very well and are a lot of fun, but there still appears to be something we're doing wrong with machine guns in terms of their rate of fire and damage. Anyway, it was still a great game that played fast and we got a lot of stuff on the board for a few hours.



AOR: Attack From Line of March

Battle Report

With the publication of the revised playsheet for Warfare in the Age of Reason, we decided that it would be a good time to get back into the game. For this night we only had four players, so a 6x4 table with 16 SPs per side (basically 1SP equals one unit) would make for an ideal game. We set up the terrain quite randomly, chose forces, then set up no further than eight inches from the board edges.

The French went for a force designed for the terrain, namely one without a lot of cavalry! The only real open area was directly in front of the main village in the center which under most circumstances turn into a killing ground. Little did everyone know at the time that the cavalry combat would decide the game in the end. The French had two brigades of cavalry numbering three units, three brigades of infantry, and a wide variety of artillery that included several light guns.

The Prussians were constrained in that they usually have to take a lot of cavalry and that's what happened here as well. The minimum was four units, which only left twelve SPs for the infantry. The Prussians decided to try to get to the town in the center first, then dominate the flanks with the cavalry superiority, thus



funneling the French attack into the center. As it would be seen, parts of this worked well and some parts failed miserably!

As with most Seven Years War games I've played over the years, the game began with several cavalry melees

on the flanks. On the Prussian left, the first dragoon unit over the bridge was defeated and sent streaming to the rear while the other forces moved up. The French drew their main movement cards first and thus reached the town in the center ahead of the Prussians. Unfortunately, this put the main striking force of Prussians hung out to dry in the center of the board within range of several French artillery batteries!

This left the cavalry action on the Prussian right to set the stage for the rest of the game. Both sides ran out two cavalry units for what would end up being a series of charges and counter-charges. The Prussians won the first encounter, but not by much, forcing the French cavalry back. A second attack routed the first French cavalry unit and the breakthrough carried the Prussians into the second French cav unit. All of a sudden, the Prussian cavalry had cleared one side of the battlefield.

Or so it seemed. Two French units had moved up the road to attack the Prussians in the flank. This forced the Prussian brigade on that side to stop and change formations to deal with this new threat, which threw the Prussian attack timetable into considerable (cont. on p21)





(cont. from p.20) chaos. Through some nifty handling of cavalry, the two units were attacked, then ran down to the last man. Then, through a second well done maneuver, another Prussian cav unit reversed course and caught the French redeploying their infantry on that flank. A series of charges did some serious damage to the infantry brigade holding the French left.

In the center the Prussians began to counterbattery the French artillery to great effect, forcing them to redeploy more guns to deal with the Prussian artillery. On the Prussian left a second dragoon charge across the bridge carried away the French cavalry unit on that flank and soon the Prussians had a cavalry brigade, an artillery battery, and an

infantry unit threatening that flank.

By this time the French position had been reshaped into a “U”, with the town still being strongly held, but the flanks were in serious condition. The Prussians were reorganizing their cavalry brigades to attack the flanks, the Prussian infantry was setting up for an advance into the center, and the Prussian guns (which in many AOR games have not served us well!) were doing some serious damage.

The French high command saw one last chance and targeted the Prussian infantry which was spread out and fairly weak in front of the town. Two successive charges failed to budge the Prussian infantry and in the ensuing counterattack the town was now opened to a Prussian advance. With that last chance now gone

and surrounded on three sides, the French decided to withdraw.

Including set up and seven turns, it only took us just under four hours to finish the game. Certainly the star of the night was Jeff and the Prussian cavalry on the right flank. By doubling back, taking chances with blown units, and following up on each attack, the Prussians dominated that side of the board, which then forced the French to shorten their lines. The loss of two standards, two routed units, and a KIA commander tipped the scales heavily towards the Prussians, which then forced the French to take some chances on other parts of the field. Overall, it was a fiercely fought contest that was a lot of fun and got us back into one of our favorite eras.



Guns at Gettysburg Playtest

Battle Report



Let it not be said that our group doesn't try out new rules! Once again, we're looking at a new set of rules to play a period that we already have chosen rules for and have been using for decades.

This time it's to try out *Guns at Gettysburg*, which is the ACW version of the popular *General de Brigade* Napoleonic rules.

For those who don't know, *General de Brigade* is a 1:20 tactical level set of rules with strong emphasis on command & control. This is portrayed a series of orders given to brigades and divisions that regulate how the various units must act each turn. For example, if your brigade is under an Attack order, so many units must move towards the enemy and they must charge if in range. Naturally, this can leave players in some bad positions if they can't change their orders and this did happen in this game a few times.

This was to be an elaborate scenario broken into two parts. The first part would be a Union assault into a Confederate defense. Two Union brigades would enter the board and attack a still forming Confederate defense, followed by a counterattack into one of the Union's flanks. It didn't quite work out that way, but close enough!

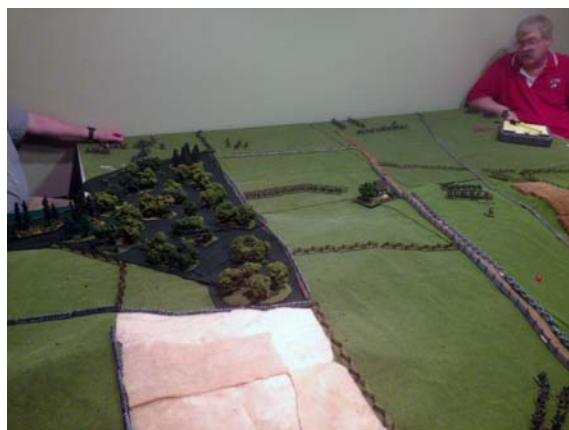
As you can see from the image and map, we had an unusual table set up,



which almost looked like an upside down "T". One Union brigade of four regiments entered on the twin roads while the other Union infantry brigade crossed the stream at the extreme end of the board and progressed through the forest and towards the farm. The first Union brigade consisted of mainly green units, but very, very large, which would make them take a lot of casualties before they would possibly break. The second Union brigade had several smaller, but more veteran units along with one unit of skirmishers. The Union had no artillery or cavalry in support.

The Confederates had one brigade on the board, but it was widely scattered. There were two regiments holding the area near the barn, then another appeared on the large hill after a few turns followed by a fourth regiment at the end of the large hill. There was also an eight gun battery on the hill and for awhile it would be the only obstacle in the path of

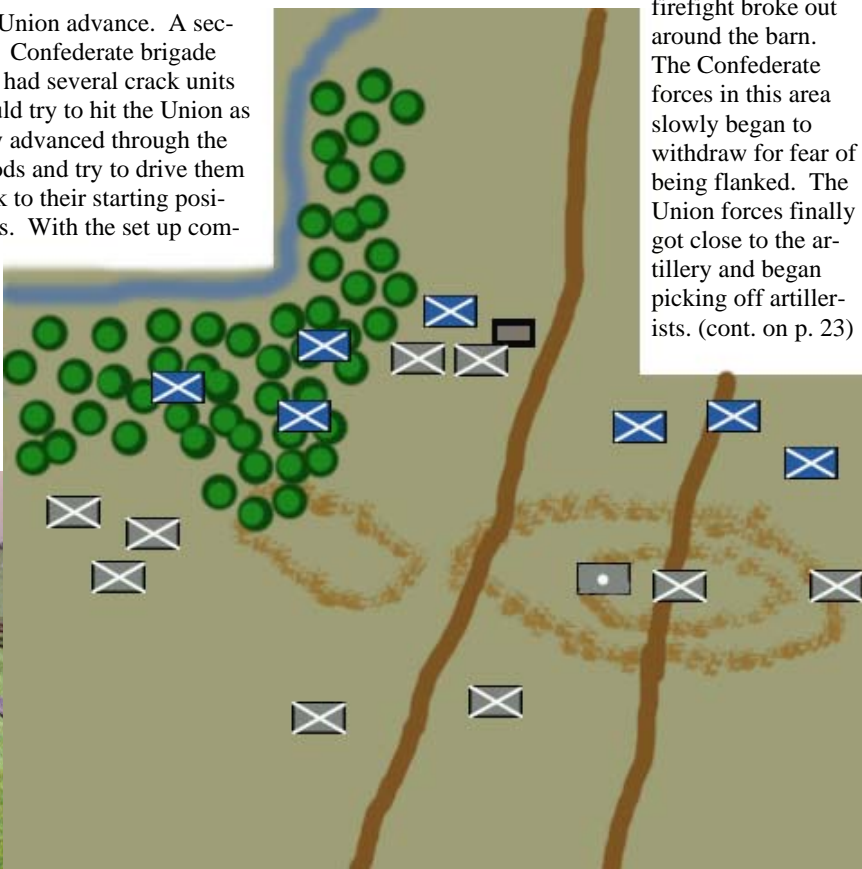
the Union advance. A second Confederate brigade that had several crack units would try to hit the Union as they advanced through the woods and try to drive them back to their starting positions. With the set up com-



plete the game was ready to begin.

The Union forces moved quickly towards the barn/farm and fences held by two Confederate regiments while the remaining forces advanced quickly towards the center of the big hill. The second union brigade started to slowly move through the woods to outflank the barn position. The Confederate artillery came into action and started causing casualties in the leading Union regiment while a

firefight broke out around the barn. The Confederate forces in this area slowly began to withdraw for fear of being flanked. The Union forces finally got close to the artillery and began picking off artilleryists. (cont. on p. 23)





The Confederate artillery battery ceased to exist, but not before a fresh Confederate infantry regiment appeared to plug the hole in the center. However, it had a series of bad die rolls and was forced to fall back in the face of a charge by a huge Union infantry regiment. At that moment, just for a few minutes, the way through the center looked to be clear and the Confederate forces would be split in half which would signal the end of the game.

The Confederate regiment, however, rallied and forced back the Union infantry regiment. Another attempt by the Union to outflank this Confederate regiment ran into a previously undiscovered Confederate regiment at the end of the hill and a firefight ensued. Both sides started to grind each other down, but a series of bad morale rolls forced the Union units to give ground.

Over on the Confederate left a crack brigade of infantry hit the Union regiments right as they were emerging from the woods. The first two Union units, being under attack orders, had no choice but to advance right into the Confederate counterattack! They were sent reeling back and tried to reform. The victorious Southern regiments continued their advance and hit a Union unit that was sent

to plug the gap. It was able to hold up the advance long enough for one more unit to rally and join them in at least for a time holding back the flood.

The firefight at the farm, which had been going on for several turns, now appeared to be at an end. Both sides were wore down to almost half their strength, but surprisingly, the Confederates still

held the position. Several more exchanges of fire and some failed attempts to charge turned into a rout for the Union units.

At this stage of the game this seemed to be the sign for the unraveling of the Union attack. Two units now joined the rout and this forced a series of brigade checks in which both failed. The Union brigades fell back off the board and that was the end of the scenario, or so we thought. Steve had actually set this up as a two part game and now the second part would begin with a Union counterattack against the victorious, but scattered Confederate units.

We began the second night with a fresh Union attack coming from the Confederate right. The Confederates had been repositioned and were waiting for the attack in a line with four regiments up front and one in reserve. The other regiments had formed up alongside the stream on the far left flank, which left three regiments in a small brigade as the only force capable of filling in the obvious hole in the Confederate center. They became involved in a foot race to take up positions before the Union forces struck the new lines. The leading elements along with an artillery battery just reached the farmhouse before Union elements arrived to attack. (cont. on p. 24)





(cont. from p. 23) The Union had some success against the first Confederate defensive line, but counterattacks drove them back to their starting points. Although both sides had suffered heavily, the Confederate brigade held on, but it would be useless to help out on other parts of the battlefield. The Union brigade fell back and away from the action.

The other Union brigade had lost the race for the farmhouse, but launched a general assault on the position. The first regiment was literally stopped in its tracks by the first Confederate volley and the artillery firing at close range. The remaining Union attacks failed as well, which resulted in a second shattered Union brigade that also fell back.

This left the final Union attack

against the Confederates deployed along the stream and with further reserves behind a stone wall at the top of a hill overlooking the woods along with the stream. The Union attack here achieved considerable success, due primarily to the weight of numbers as the Union had some big regiments in this area. They swarmed across the stream and broke the Confederate line in two places, sending the surviving units in headlong flight to get out of the woods and to safety.

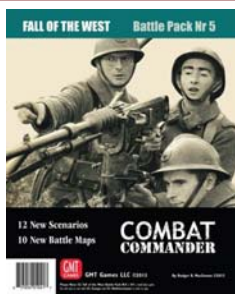
It was here where we had to end the game after two nights. There was still going to be a powerful Union attack against a fairly strong Confederate line, but there were no reserves that could reach that area for quite some time. Overall, the Confederates had held every-

where except for this one last line and that was in doubt as to whether or not the Union could succeed there.

At this time Steve, who had run the games for us, let loose with his surprise. Since it was July when we did these games he had set up a "Gettysburg in reverse"! Yes, the Union took the place of the Confederates in attacking on the first day of the battle. I had been playing the first day of GMT's Three Days of Gettysburg and I thought the terrain had looked familiar! Anyway, it was a well thought out change to the battle and provided everyone with two nights of good gaming. The Guns of Gettysburg rules were remarkably similar to General de Brigade, so if you are familiar with those rules you can get into these quickly.



Fall of the West is yet another "Battle Pack" for GMT's very popular Combat Commander series of games. Fall of the West focuses on the German invasion of France, Norway, and Belgium and includes these twelve scenarios:



- 74 – "Sturmgruppe Granit" starts with the daring glider landings on top of Fort Eben Emael and serves as the opening to the Fall of the West, 10 May 1940;
- 75 – "Sturmgruppe Breton" set near Maastricht, Belgium with another element of the glider landings facing fierce counterattack by Belgian forces, 10 May 1940;
- 76 – "A Most Gallant Dirty Little Imp", set at the Dyle River, Belgium, featuring heroic leadership by the first winner of the Victoria Cross in WW2, 15 May 1940;
- 77 – "The Crucible of Fire" set at Petegem, Belgium, during the early tactical withdrawal of the BEF – features the Bren Carrier, 21 May 1940;
- 78 – "By These Deeds They Shall Be Known" set in Cassel, France during the desperate rearguard work by the BEF to protect the Port of Dunkirk, 27 May 1940;
- 79 – "Battering Ram at Kvam" set in the Gudbrandsdal Valley in Norway with valiant British defenders facing heavy German assault by tanks and bombers, 26 April 1940;
- 80 – "Bitter Isthmus" set at the French frontier town of Monthermé,

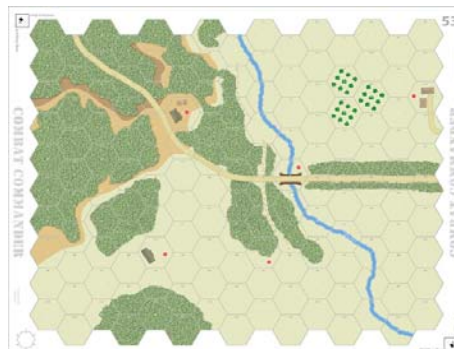
showing that locally the French were equal to the test set before them, 14 May 1940;

- 81 – "The Bottleneck" set near Sedan, France in a fluid seesaw moment during the swift German advance – features the FCM 36, 14 May 1940;
- 82 – "Hidden Guns Lash Out" set at the outskirts of Gembloux, France, where defiant, capable defenders held off a major German assault – features the PzKfw III, 14 June 1940;
- 83 – "Thrust in the Dust" covers the zenith of the heroic French anti-tank defense of Gembloux, facing waves of German armor, 15 June 1940;
- 84 – "Seize the Canal" set at Château-Porcien, France on the River Aisne, with a heavy urban assault by German forces seeking to breach the river line, 9 June 1940;
- 85 – "The Striking Hammer" features a major armored counterattack against the German-held positions at Perthes, France – features the Char B1bis, 10 June 1940.

The battle pack comes with these twelve scenarios and several double-sided maps in the now familiar Combat Commander style. The good thing is that if you are tired of fighting Germans vs. Russians, Germans vs. U.S., or Pacific battles, this gives you a great opportunity to use that Blue deck for the French and minor countries! There's a good variety of scenarios included that are far different than many that have been seen so far, particularly since you finally get to use tanks!

Yes, this was supposed to be the battle pack that broke all the rules by finally including armor. So, how does it look and does it work well? First, you need to get the counters from GMT's in house magazine C3i. Issue #26 had the armor counters included and naturally, a lot of gamers are looking for them in this battle pack, but they aren't there! I don't think GMT did a good job with this, but in the end it's a small point and not worth getting that excited over as they are only in a few scenarios.

The other reason not to get too excited is that the counters are just kind of representations on the board that could be filled in by any spare counter that you have or just use what they suggest. Yes, there are no specific "armor rules", "armor stats", etc. Instead, depending upon the vehicle, an armor unit is represented by a stack of counters off to the



side of the board. For example, an early French tank might have a trench counter, a leader counter, a crew counter, and a mortar or some other gun counter. Do you get it now? The trench represents the defense, the leader is there to activate, and the gun/mortar represents the tank's main armament. Yes, it's pretty abstract and a tad disappointing. It works, but it's not what I thought it was going to be.

For this review I played several of the scenarios and they are pretty balanced, with all of the games going right down to the seemingly last card. I also think that the variety of units and nationalities here is a huge plus as you don't get a chance to use French and Belgians that often in any kind of wargame!

Overall, a very good battle pack, despite the confusion over the introduction of tanks to the system. Next up is Operation Sealion, which should be very interesting and I keep hoping for a Battle for Berlin pack along with hopefully someday seeing the system get into modern combat. If you haven't tried Combat Commander yet, I highly recommend that you give it a shot.





WASATCH FRONT HISTORICAL GAMING SOCIETY

Meets every other Friday night in the SLC, Utah area. We play a wide variety of games in 1/300th, 10mm, 15mm, and 25mm, including Age of Reason, Age of Discovery, Age of Eagles, Fire & Fury, General de Brigade, Warmaster Ancients, TSATF, Phantoms, Mustangs, BKC2, and more...

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I'm not sure if it's just me, but the quality of games in many photos, particularly on blogs and at conventions seems to be going down. I can remember in past years someone would post images from games at Cold Wars, Salute, etc., and it was usually worth wading through as you would come across some beautiful and inspiring games. If it was something really good I would save the image for future reference. However, that seems to be happening less frequently over the last year or so. Many of the games just don't look enticing in terms of subject, terrain, or figures. Every time I see some of these images I keep having flashbacks to the 70s and early 80s where we used masking tape for roads, books under felt for hills, and lichen for woods! I'm not sure if it's laziness, lack of resources, not wanting to put out the good stuff for a convention, or just that standards have dropped. Either way, it's interesting to see how things are changing in the gaming world and I've come across others who were at some of the recent shows that echo my thoughts here. You would think that with the outstanding terrain pieces that are available, modern painting techniques, etc., that you could do an impressive game for just your regular gaming night, let alone for a convention or event. The scary part to me is some of the comments under the reports praising how the game looks! Are they blind or have expectations just dropped so far that any game with more than a green mat and a handful of painted figs looks great? Hopefully things are going to turn around here as it had seemed that games were getting better for the longest time and now there seems to have been a reversal.

First Corps 1/48th T-34

When it comes to gaming WW2 in 28mm with 1/48th vehicles you basically have two options. The first and most obvious one is to do some online searching and then pay \$25-30 for a resin kit, plus shipping. The second is to find a 1/48th plastic model and build it. After having recently completed three Hobby Boss 1/48th KV-1s and an Italeri 88mm, I wasn't looking forward to building three T-34s and assembling close to 600 parts!

Fortunately, First Corps has a 1/48th T-34 available and they were offering a reduced price at the time I ordered. Still, three T-34 kits, a pack of four metal gas tanks, and shipping from England was close to \$100. Could I have found three 1/48th T-34 models for less than that? Yes, but then you still need to put them together!

The usual differences in resin and plastic kits are of course the heft, weight, and detail. I was concerned that the resin T-34s wouldn't look right, would have

issues with parts fitting together, etc., but after finishing three of them there was nothing to worry about at all.

First, the kits come in six pieces and fits together in just a few minutes. There was no flash, bubbly resin sections, or bad fitting pieces as far as I could see. Everything fit together nicely, took a single coat of primer, then I started on the actual colors with the result you see here. I added the log, chains, and bundles from spare parts to give the tank a more "in the field" type of look. The models have just the right amount of detail and look very good compared to some of my 1/48th plastic kits. The only complaint is that it does take time to paint the treads and wheels as

they are one piece.

Overall, my highest recommendation for this kit. It is definitely easier than building a 200 part plastic model and it looks great when finished. Hopefully, First Corps can be convinced to add other items to this line as the cost is certainly worth it.

