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The Fantasy Trip Comes Full Circle

When I first started gaming back in the mid-70s and was in high school, money was hard to come by! This meant that gaming purchases were well thought out as you tried to get the most bang for your buck. After trying Ogre for $2.95 from Metagaming, I thought that purchasing Melee would be a great deal as well. Forty plus years later, that was definitely a great choice!

Melee, and it's sister game Wizard, are two of the best bargains in wargaming history. Produced by the fledgling Metagaming company, for $2.95 you got a lot of game in a small package. Both games came with a small hex map, one counter sheet, and set of rules in a very small format. Looking back now, they were truly "game kits" where it was up to the gam-

er to provide the setting, set up additional scenarios, add extra rules, etc. Sure, both games gave you a basic scenario and some ideas, but it was really up to your imagination to take the game further.

Which is exactly what gamers did. My friends and I played arena matches, encounters against hordes of monsters, reenacted scenes from Jason and the Argonauts, and more. Melee and Wizard were a staple of fantasy gaming for quite some time, which

only changed when Death Test arrived. This was a solo, or programmed adventure that provided hour upon hour, days upon days of excitement for several decades. Metagaming put out several of these adventures and for quite some time they were hard to get.

They also put out a role playing system called The Fantasy Trip (or TFT), consisting of In The Labyrinth along with advanced versions of both Melee and Wizard. At a time when every game company on the planet was putting out RPGs, this one sort of got lost in the noise. Going up against D&D, Gamma World, Runequest, Harn, and many, many others was a losing proposition. It wasn't that the system was bad, but there was some serious competition and then (cont. on p 3)

Inside this issue:

Special points of interest:

- *Complete campaign game and two new Engagements scenarios.*

- *Battle reports for BKC, Ronin, WMM, & Pickett's Charge.*

- *Review of Blitzkrieg Commander 4.*

- *Several board game reviews.*

- *A look back at micro-armor in the 70s/80s.*

The Fantasy Trip Comes Full Circle (cont.)

(Cont. from p 2) Metagaming faded away, leaving TFT in gaming limbo.

Steve Jackson, the creator of Melee and Wizard, who also designed Ogre and heads the very successful Steve Jackson Games, decided to give The Fantasy Trip the Ogre Designer's Edition style treatment. This was to be an epic reworking of the system, the version to end all versions, and give those fans of the system the materials to carry the game forward. After whispered rumors for years, postings in various forums, etc., the Kickstarter was launched. The big question was could it hit its goals, especially with an aging fan base and in this time of a glut of gaming products?

The answer was a resounding yes. Hitting every single stretch goal, spawning a magazine, adventure book, and additional decks of cards, the Kickstarter would give fans the ultimate version of the game. Steve Jackson Games definitely learned a lot from their other projects, so this Kickstarter was run extremely well. The updates, images, emails, and more kept everyone informed, the timeline was followed, and every effort was made to get the game to the backers. If you're a company looking to do a game on Kickstarter, this project is the template that should be followed.

The Kickstarter campaign was run on two levels; the Legacy Edition of TFT, which came in a large box, and the I Want it All edition, which showed up in a massive box with the Legacy Edition plus a whole lot of other goodies. The Legacy Edition is probably what most people will buy as it contains Melee, Wizard, In The Labyrinth rules, megahexes, and

much, much more. There is enough in there to keep you gaming for quite some time, plus you can purchase additional items through Warehouse 23.

The I Want it All edition contained the Legacy Edition, plus all kinds of stretch goals and add-ons. My box had two large playmats, a 14 hex dragon, the pre-made character cards, a hardbound version of In The Labyrinth, game master screen, colored maps, plus the original Melee/Wizard in one of the new plastic pocket boxes. There was so much stuff in there that it took me a few days to just sort through it and give everything the once over to see if it was all there! The quality of the components was nothing short of amazing and the Kickstarter was a very well run, professional project that delivered a product far beyond what anyone was thinking they were going to get.

The best place to start is with the heart of the system and that would be Melee. The original had a small map, a sheet of counters, and a set of rules. Everything was tracked on paper, so at least in that respect not much has changed! The reworked version has larger, color counters, a box instead of a small plastic bag, and a few dice. The rules are fairly easy to get through and in a few minutes you can start creating characters and running them in an arena battle.

Each character has three attributes; strength (ST), Dexterity (DX), and IQ. The average starting human will have 32 points where most gamers give the character an IQ of 8 (only important to wizards and trying to disbelieve illusions), meaning there's 24 points to use for ST and DX. When you start adding armor, shields, weapons, etc., the DX goes down, so there is a challenge here to design and arm your characters for the best chance at survival.

You can give someone a large sword, plate armor, and a shield, but then his DX might go down to a 5 or a 6, which means if you hit something you might kill it, but the odds of you hitting it aren't very good.

All combat is done by comparing the die roll against DX. Doesn't sound terrible until you figure out that's on three D6! If you roll a 3 then it's triple damage, a 4 double damage, and 5 is an automatic hit, regardless of modifiers. At the upper end of the scale rolling a 17 or 18 is bad as you can drop or break your weapon. If you hit, you roll the number of D6s for the weapon, subtract the armor of the defender, then the remaining number is marked off the defender's ST. Once that hits 0 they're dead. Simple, effective, and fun. There's a variety of weapons to choose from as well as armor.

Melee is far different that most role playing systems in that it should be thought of as a tactical level wargame. There is initiative, moving to flank an opponent, advantages to using pole weapons, and you need to use strategy rather than just charge in and attack the first thing that presents itself. It's always fun to watch new players use to the D&D style of game play go charging into a room and attack the first thing that is visible. In Melee that is a good way to get your characters killed! There are also stats included for wolves, bears, gargoyles, orcs, Elves, Dwarves, goblins, and more.

Once you've figure out how Melee works it's onto Wizard, which is the magic supplement to Melee, although it can be played as a standalone game. In fact, much of the Wizard rules are just a repeat of Melee with the magic added in. However, there is a section dealing with (cont. on p4)

Three Custom Dice

12" × 22.5" Game Map

86 Counters

24 Page Rules
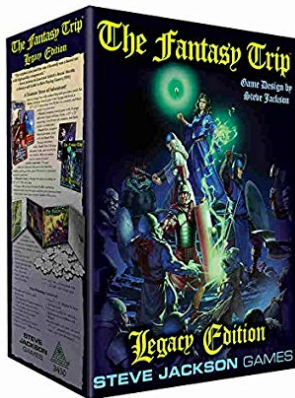
The Fantasy Trip Comes Full Circle (cont.)

(cont. from p3) spells and illusions, which is critical to playing Wizard. Basically, each wizard knows a number of spells equal to his IQ and can choose them from the included spell book, again, up to his level of IQ. The higher the IQ, the more spells you know and the nastier they get.

Wizards throw spells vs. their DX and a successful spell will result in fireballs that do damage, summoning creatures, creating illusions (which can kill!), creating walls, and so on. There is a wide variety of spells and choosing which ones for your battle or adventure does take some consideration. The issue of course is that each spell costs a number of ST, so once a wizard gets down to 1 or 2 they are exhausted or near death. Any damage at all will certainly finish them off. This is the interesting part about magic in The Fantasy Trip system; wizards are powerful in combat, but have no stamina and can be overcome if you can last long enough in a battle.

Once you get tired of doing arena battles in both Melee and Wizard, it's time for bigger challenges. This is where Death Test and Death Test 2 come in. These are what are called "programmed" adventures where you are given a series of choices accompanied by a number. You select the number and go to that page to see what happens. Usually it's combat in a room against a variety of creatures, but there is usually treasure there as well. The Death Test series is pretty nasty and you can expect to lose several parties of characters as you play along.

You can of course use the other adventures created by Metagaming back in the 70s and 80s such as Treasure of the Silver Dragon, Grail Quest, and others. They are all very similar to Death Test (although some are long campaigns) and will give gamers quite a few hours of fantasy adventuring as well as having very good replay value.

Of course there is a role-playing side of The Fantasy Trip, which is called In The Labyrinth. This volume serves several purposes; first, it adds advanced rules to Melee and Wizard, and second, it has all of the rules for running an RPG type campaign. If you've ever read a set of RPG rules there aren't too many surprises here and many of the charts and tables that you will need are on the new game master screen. The role playing rules are not as complex as many other systems, so this could be a good gateway for those who have never run a RPG campaign before or want to go further than Melee and Wizard, but have never participated in any role-playing games.

To get you started they have included the adventure Tollenkar's Lair. This is a fairly short booklet that also has a map of the dungeon, character sheets, etc., which is all you need to play. It is a pretty tough adventure and designed for the TFT system, but it works perfectly for those who may have never played in an RPG campaign. There are a wide variety of rooms, villains, and challenges that give this adventure good replay value as well as serving as an introduction to the system.

The package also contained The Fantasy Trip Companion, which is an interesting, but not exactly a necessary booklet. Most of the content are interviews with the designer, reviews, and several old articles from various magazines from the 70s and early 80s. While some of these were great from a nostalgia point of view, they don't necessarily add anything to the game. There are a few adventures from that time period that can be played once you finish the ones that come in the box, so at least that section of content is useful.

There were also a large number of add-ons that could have been purchased with the Kickstarter and plenty of others that were included as stretch goals. In fact, there were so many it was hard to remember what I had paid for and what just came free! There were two large play mats for Melee and Wizard, additional dice, a 14 hex dragon, additional mega-hexes (which are used to build rooms and encounter areas), and more. To sum it all up, there is a lot of stuff in the box and it is all so very well done that it would be difficult, if not impossible to find much to complain about.

Steve Jackson Games, however, is not done just by simply releasing this new version of The Fantasy Trip. Already there have been Kickstarters for a magazine called Hexagram that will have additional material, plus Adventures which will have even more material. The company provides you with the PDF files of what will be printed when you back their projects, which is a very good idea and it lets you see what is coming out ahead of time. There will also be another Kickstarter to add more cards, pre-made characters, and more. My guess is that at some point all of the old solo adventures will get the new look and maybe even some new ones will come out, which would be most welcome. Regardless, there is enough content already to keep gamers busy for quite some time.

At the end of the day, however, how much of this gets used? My guess is that most of us who backed this project did it out of love for Melee and Wizard, plus the solo adventures like Death Test. The company not only delivered, but went far beyond what anyone thought was possible. I think for most of us, our role-

playing days are behind us, being burned out on it back in the 70s and early 80s! More solo adventures, additional material for Melee and Wizard, extra counters, etc., is probably what most of us are interested in. I've already shown several in my group how to play and it was well received. However, doing RPGs again might not be...
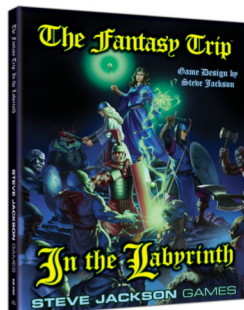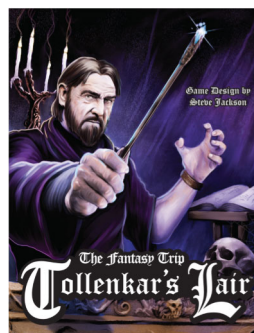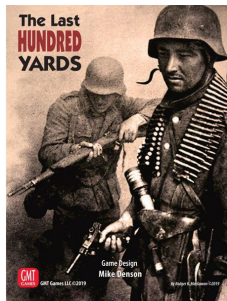
The Last Hundred Yards by GMT Games

Game Review

Every so often a game comes along with completely new concepts and is unlike anything you've seen or tried before. In 2018 we had GMT's Cataclysm, which certainly fit that description. You would think by now that every kind of WW2 small unit action would have been in a game, game system, or gamers would be tired of the subject. ASL, Combat Commander, Panzergrenadier, Advanced Tobruk, and many, many others pretty much have this ground covered...or so you thought.

Into this crowded arena comes a new game from GMT Games and designer Mike Denson called The Last Hundred Yards (LYH). Operational at times, tactical at others, LYH is certainly unlike any other WW2 game that you've experienced. Just by looking at the maps and counters there is a feeling of "been here, done that", but once you look at the play cards, rules, and play book there is clearly more going on here than you first believed.

Inside of the standard sized GMT box is a set of rules, a play book, two sets of player cards, six back printed maps, mission (scenario) cards, some 10 sided dice, and a few counter sheets. The components are high quality, with the counters being two different sizes that are thicker than normal. The maps, while small, are colorful and it's easy to delineate the various buildings, contour lines for elevations, etc., and they match up to provide the basis for larger scenarios. The rules and play book are illustrated with multiple examples of play, so finding how things work is fairly easy.

The rules are not that long, rather they are different. Most games of this type focus on anti-tank and anti-infantry factors, have a combat results table with various step losses, there's a morale phase, routing, etc., so it's a bit of a shock to see that LHY is a completely different beast. Gamers use to an IGOUGO or chit pull system with both sides taking a turn are in for a rude awakening. As I stated before, no one has probably played anything quite like this before.

The first thing you notice is that both sides don't necessarily get a turn as in many other games. The player with the initiative pretty much determines the pace of play, activating their platoons where each squad, tank, or asset (MGs, AT guns, etc.) gets to move or fire. The player without the initiative "reacts", either by firing, withdrawing, calling in mortars, etc. This goes on until the initiative player is finished with their activations and the non-initiative player has no reactions left. This creates a very unusual and dynamic system, which is not going to be for everyone.

The other big change from other WW2 tactical games is that the firing happens as you activate units, then you resolve fire **after** all activations are completed. Each unit has a firepower number and range, so you take the number, add modifiers, then put a counter (green for small arms, red for mortars, and yellow for AT) on the unit you are shooting at. When you get to the fire resolution part of the turn you simply roll a D10 for each marker, adding or subtracting that number to the die roll. If it is higher than the unit's cohesion value it will destroy an armor unit or disrupt and possibly eliminate a step of infantry.

At first I was confused and had to read over the combat sections in the rules and the accompanying player aid card. I saw the counters, charts, etc., and somehow came to the conclusion that this was some kind of ASL/ATS complex combat system that would take many, many plays to decipher. In actuality, however, the combat system works pretty smoothly and is resolved quickly, with no doubts as to what happened.

The reason for this is quite simple and becomes apparent once you've played it a few times. This is a game about maneuvering one's forces to the point of attack, close assaulting the enemy position, and

is a brutal, no nonsense look at WW2 combat operations. The designer has no wishes for you to engage in long range demonstrations of firepower, turn after turn of firefights that go nowhere, and so on. This is about maneuvering your forces to quickly overwhelm the enemy's position and the defender is trying to respond however possible to stop it.

There is also a time crunch involved as at the end of each turn a die is rolled and a number of minutes passes that is tracked. This can figure greatly into the victory conditions and helps to force the actions. There's no let's move this company up for three hours into cover, firefight for two hours, then when the enemy gets ground down take the position. This is a refreshing new approach to WW2 battles and coupled with the casualty difference on the game tracks, makes for a new way to determine victory.

Already, questions are showing up on forums about how this game compares to ASL. The answer is simple in that it is not ASL, nor is it that complex. It's also not Combat Commander or Fighting Formations. In fact, it's a game that is almost in its own category. Operational in nature at times, especially with some of the larger scenarios played on multiple maps, tactical at others with the assault procedure or tanks dueling one on one with each other. Once you get the hang of it, the game can play quite fast.

At this time there are only 12 missions that come with the game. There is, however, a great do it yourself scenario procedure that can be used to generate all kinds of situations once you've finished the original missions. There are also only the Americans and Germans in the base game, but you have to think that this system will lend itself to numerous supplements covering pretty much all of WW2. In summary, this is a fresh take on WW2 actions that needs to be tried. Just when you think you've seen everything in WW2 gaming, things like this come along and change your mind!
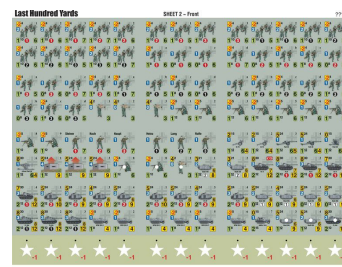
Memoirs of a Miniatures and Board Wargamer Pt. 39

Colonial Rules-Then & Now

My love for the Victorian Colonial period began when an incredible set of coincidences merged together in a matter of days. I was looking for a new period to get into, even though my painting of micro-armor, 15mm ACW, and fantasy figures continued unabated. On top of that I started to see all of the ads for the new Ral Partha 25mm colonial ranges that were coming out, which at that time in the hobby was a big deal. Finally, there were a number of articles in The Courier that had created a huge level of interest in the period.

Armed with a copy of The Sword & The Flame, several packs of Ral Partha Sudan figures, and a huge level of enthusiasm, I set to work on a period that I would still be gaming over four decades later. Along the way there would be continual second thoughts about changing scales, using different rules, what to do about terrain, where to find resources, and so on. Somehow I persevered through all of that and ended up where I am today, with two large collections in 15mm and 28mm for the Sudan and NWF respectively.

I think the first challenge for this period would always be scale. Torn between the epic battles of El Teb, Khartoum, Omdurman, Ulundi, and many others, while at the same time trying to determine if doing all of this in skirmish scale kept me occupied for several decades! For years I dreamed of having massive armies in 6mm from Ros Heroics that could simulate any large colonial battle, but obtaining the figures and what rules to use were always the issue. 15mm back in the 70s and 80s was nothing to write home about, even though Mike's Models had a range, but compared to today's models it wasn't great.

So, the decision was to stick to 25mm for the start and do skirmish gaming in the Sudan. Here I was greatly aided by Lynn Bodin's Savage & Soldier magazines, as well as several well timed articles in The Courier. Back before the Internet, magazines were an essential part of building up enthusiasm for a project. Sometimes an article or two could get you to commit to a one or two year project!

While there are quite a few Victorian Colonial period rules available today, that was not the case when I got into the period back in the early 80s. The Sword & The Flame (still going strong today!) was the leader for skirmish gaming, but if you wanted larger armies, or huge battles then you ran into some major problems with rules. There were some out there such as Zulu, Imperialism, etc., plus some people used variations of WRG's rules, a set out of Miniatures Wargames (from the famous hair curler article), and other modifications to popular sets. The issue was that you either had to start a new scale, or rebase the collection you had as no one used the same basing scheme back in the day!

The other issue about the army scale rules is that none of the games really seemed to work well. It was almost as if you were trying to fight an ACW or Napoleonic battle with colonial and native forces. All of the modifiers, formations, and so on gave the games a weird vibe, so you were left with colonial forces on a tabletop trying to use attack columns to break up native formations because that's what the best melee modifiers forced you to do! While amusing, large colonial games that were not skirmishes seemed to evade gamers interested in the period.

One of the more interesting sets of rules that we tried a few times was the famous blue booklet called Colonial Skirmish Wargames. With each turn a few seconds this was about as tactical as colonial wargaming could get! The decisions about reloading, fixing bayonets, etc., were always intriguing in that you didn't get a lot of second chances. We used them for raids, attacks on convoys, and more. While fun, there were a lot of

people playing and everyone wanted to run at least 10 figures, so the games went on for quite some time. After one game where we had around 70 figs on the table and it went 8+ hours it was back to The Sword & The Flame.

As time progressed, more and more colonial figure ranges began to emerge. Today, there are colonial figures for every major period, some minor periods, and in about six or seven different scales! Not only that, there are rules for different tastes, from simple skirmishes to large battles to fighting on Mars during the Victorian era. There are no shortage of figs, terrain, rules, and more to set up your colonial games. Getting into the colonial wargaming hobby is easier than it ever was.

However, it is still only one of the minor periods in the hobby and my first explanation is once again due to the rules that are available. Outside of The Sword & The Flame, Battles for Empire, and maybe the Black Powder variations, not many others have large followings. Painting information is still hard to get a hold of, creating scenarios is always a challenge, and there are very few campaigns available for gamers. What should be an interesting period that has a lot of interested gamers is still one of those things you pull out once a year.

For myself, I still love the period and have forces in two scales; 15mm for the Sudan using Battles for Empire 2 and in 28mm for the Northwest Frontier using The Sword & The Flame. Even though everyone in my group gladly plays these games each time they are offered, it's usually not more than once a year. Why that is continually escapes me, since everyone has a lot of fun with both sets of rules.

To this day I still look out for new colonial rules as I am always searching for that colonial rules grail, even though I'm quite happy with what I've chosen so far and played with for quite some time. Who knows, maybe some day the colonial period will get popular once again!
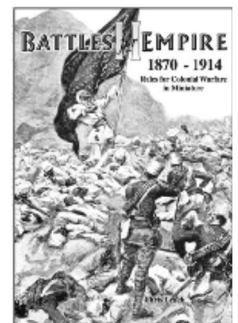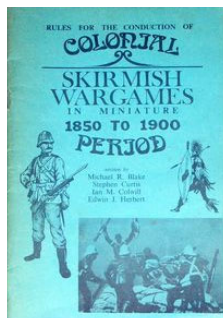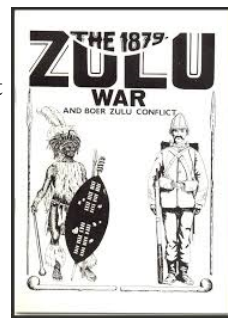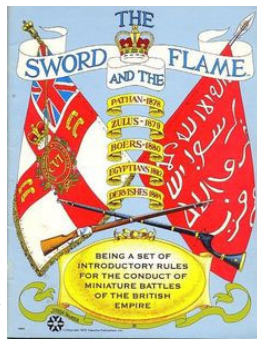
Blast From The Past Pt. 38: Micro-Armor Then & Now

Probably one of the more innovative areas in historical miniatures wargaming and certainly one of the longer running conventions has been the 1/285th or micro-armor scale. Whether it's been for table space restrictions, better use of rules with long ranges, looks better, cheaper, etc., the 1/285th side of the hobby, in particular WW2 and Modern periods, have been around a long time and show no signs of slowing down. Despite all of the other scales, trends, rules, etc., 1/285th micro-armor has survived everything thrown at it.

Gamers today know the incredible, museum like pieces that GHQ produces and even newcomers like Baccus are putting out amazing figures, vehicles and accessories. However, this wasn't always so. In fact, back in the 70s when I started gaming with micro-armor, the choices, were…...well…., not great! In fact, you took what you could get, converted things, pooled your resources, and did whatever you could to get by for scenarios. You have to remember that at the time if you were into WW2 or Modern gaming you either used micro-armor or you built 1/72nd scale kits. There simply weren't any other choices. This meant that for most gamers in those periods at the time, micro-armor was extremely popular.

In the late 70s and early 80s, where my group and I played NATO vs. Warsaw Pact engagements about once a month for over a decade, there were basically three companies that you could do business with on anything resembling a regular basis. GHQ was, and still is, the preeminent supplier of quality micro-armor. Their models are legendary and while they've definitely improved since the 70s and 80s, even then they were considered the top of the line. In fact, you could even find packs of their armor in local stores!

If you didn't need packs of five, then C in C was a good alternative.

While their models were clean and the aircraft were definitely more fragile, they were a great alternative. They also had a few items that GHQ did not at the time, had good service, and when painted up they fit right in with GHQ's models on the tabletop.

The third was the Enola Games line that has been advertised as many other things throughout the last several decades. In fact it was always hard to tell what was Enola, Skytrex, Heroics & Ros, etc., as many game companies combined all of their products in their lists! Needless to say they had everything and I mean everything for WW2 and Modern. Not to say that most of it was any good as the above image shows, but it was cheap and you could get the really obscure stuff you needed.

Nowhere do you see the mention of micro-armor scale infantry in this article so far. The reason was the GHQ and C in C infantry were so bad that they were hardly ever used. Here's where Heroics & Ros came in as they had great packs of infantry, support weapons, etc., so they nicely filled that need and still do to this day. The ability to get 50 figs in a bag for a few bucks that looked close to the real thing was something that was highly valued.

There were other companies who tried to make a go of it, but there was no Internet so many spent what little excess capital they had on advertising in the gaming magazines, meaning that often by the time gamers saw or remembered their ads and placed an order they were out of business! One company that did do well for a while was In Service Miniatures, who had all kinds of support vehicles, trucks, tankers, etc., and some unusual items not covered by GHQ, Enola, or C in C. There were at least one company who had South African modern vehicles and all of the Israeli mods to US and British tanks, long before GHQ produced them.

The huge issue in all of this is that

everything had to be mail ordered, pretty much sight unseen. When you ordered several M-60s from Enola, waited two months for the order, then opened the package to find some blobs of lead that resembled M-60s, it was a bit disheartening! You were literally ordering models you needed from all three and praying that you would get quality items when they arrived. The exception to that was

that you could usually get your GHQ packs at local stores, so you could find the right version of a T-34 or see how many AT guns were in a pack.

Somehow, some way, we survived those micro-armor gaming Dark Ages! We spent time converting models, mixing packs of infantry to field the right units, and generally had a great time playing rules like WRG 1925-1950, Challenger, Tacforce, and more. But it wasn't easy. Finding models, terrain, orders of battle, etc., took a lot of time, plenty of phone calls and letters, plus patience, which is in short supply these days.

Today, GHQ is still going strong with an incredible assortment of vehicles, infantry, accessories, modeling articles, and more. They survived four decades of changes in the hobby and look to be around for quite some time. C in C is being handed off to new ownership, Enola's figs are still available, and even Heroics and Ros are producing much better vehicles as seen below. The future of micro-armor is bright, with new companies producing buildings, a variety of game mats, and much, much more. It's a far cry from converting models and praying your order arrives, but it was worth the trip!
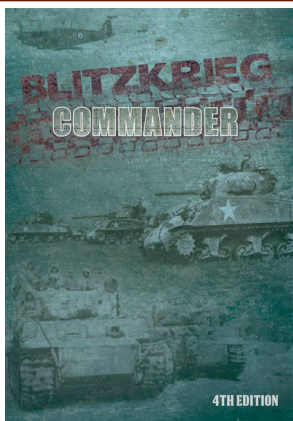
Blitzkrieg Commander 4: Is This The Definitive Version?

When Blitzkrieg Commander first appeared many years ago, it was something of a novelty. Was it an alternative to Flames of War? Could it be used in place of Command Decision, which many gamers were still clinging to? Was it truly Warmaster Fantasy with a WW2 theme pasted over it? As more and more gamers tried the rules and liked them, word of mouth slowly, but steadily increased the number of gamers who were either regularly playing the system or converting to it. When the second edition came out, there was already a well established audience.

BKC2 added additional rules, clarifications, expansion of the army lists, and more. Suddenly, this set of rules became the alternative to Flames of War for those not interested in that system or for gamers looking for something other than skirmish actions. Easy to teach, suitable for group games, fun to play, and accessible only helped to increase BKC2's popularity. As noted in the pages of this magazine, not many issues go by without a battle report using BKC2. When BKC3 was announced there was a huge level of excitement in our group and others to see what enhancements would be made to one of our favorite game systems.

However, that's not what happened. BKC3, even with its good intentions, simply did not work. The special characteristics, changes to the artillery rules, the reworking of the army lists and unit stats, etc., not to mention the errors and errata, made this version something of a mess. Our group tried it twice and went back to BKC2. To Pendraken Miniatures' credit, they saw that the third version was a disaster and they responded by offering a newer version someday in the new future. Not only that, they would send everyone who ordered the third edition a copy for free! That is taking customer service to the next level. After months and months of hints, BKC4 has finally arrived.

The 4th edition looks on the outside very similar to the third, but the inside part has changed greatly. These are some of the things listed from Pendraken and the forums:

• Introduction of Snipers and their effect on the battlefield.
• Changes to the way Infantry Anti-Tank Weapons work to make them more cost effective and realistic.
• Changes to the Artillery Barrage rules – to remove a potential for imbalance.
• The correction of an anomaly around Naval Guns and FAOs.
• Adding a new Tactical Doctrine for Guerrillas/Partisans, with additional features to make playing an insurgency or resistance style game possible.
• Re-working and clarifying the Scenarios.
• Adding to, re-wording and editing the list of Special Characteristics.

One of the biggest changes is an enhanced and expanded Reconnaissance section – making Recce a more important and integral part of the game. There are also 40+ army lists included as well as over a dozen scenarios. The book has a very modern, up to date feel to it, and is an impressive package when you think that everything you need to play the game is contained inside.

In terms of our first two games with the new rules (shown in this issue), the first game was just us trying to learn the system by playing it out while the second game was smaller, with an emphasis on actually trying to learn what changed! In fact, I would suggest setting up a small scenario with armor, infantry, and artillery, then running through a series of turns to learn the changes.

However, there's really nothing major here if you've been playing Blitzkrieg Commander from the start and you can figure things out pretty quickly. Artillery has changed a bit, especially some of the ratings and template sizes, which seems to have helped things at least in our first few games. Some sections have been clarified a bit and nothing seems to be missing, which is always a good sign! Overall, it's hard not to like this version of the rules.

Are there any issues? Some minor typos, but nothing catastrophic. The ability to combine large numbers of units firing on a single target is still there (I thought they might do an optional rule here), and infantry is still almost impossible to kill in fortifications and towns. Certainly these things aren't game breakers, but can be mildly annoying at times.
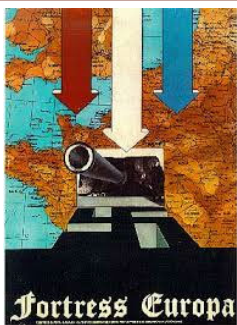
So far, we really, really like this 4th edition. The game play is pretty smooth, it's easy to teach, and no need for multiple supplements to continue playing. Pendraken and Wargames Vault have started to release historical orders of battle with stats included, which is a great addition. Pendraken deserves a ton of credit in producing what is the definitive version of BKC.
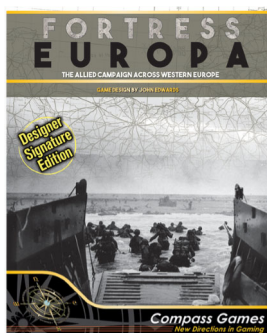
John Edwards designed three of the most popular wargames of all time with The Russian Campaign, The African Campaign, and Fortress Europa. Although the games really aren't in a series or use the same rules, many gamers do consider them to be linked together. That they are still played and discussed even to this day is a testament of their design and the loyal fan base that supports these games.

Compass Games has been re-releasing games from the 70s and the 80s in their Designer Signature Edition series. These are basically the same game, but with updated graphics, cleaned up rules with all of the decades of errata incorporated into them, and additional play aids to improve the games. With all of the D-Day/Invasion of Europe games that are out there right now, will this new edition be able to move back into the top spot that it held for so many years when it first came out?

Inside the box you get two 22 x 34 paper maps, which is much larger than the original design. The map is pretty basic and many gamers were expecting a major graphics upgrade, which didn't seem to happen here. Ports, cities, etc., are clearly marked, so there is little to complain about, except if you were comparing this to similar games on the subject. The same goes for the counters, which are best described as functional. Larger than the originals, they are pretty basic like the map. You get a set of rules, several play aid cards, set up cards, etc., so every tool that you could ask for to play the game is there. This game has a large footprint, so a good 6 x 4 table would certainly be helpful.

What invasion of Europe game would be complete without some special rules for the invasion? With Fortress Europa the Allied player is faced with selecting an invasion area, landing forces, captur-ing ports, then sustaining a drive into Germany. Each invasion area has some pros and cons, plus the Allies can do two invasions per game, so that needs to be taken into consideration as well. Likewise, the German player needs to set his defenses, place the hidden reaction units, then quickly respond to the area where the invasion occurs. Getting ashore in strength is a huge challenge in this game and I've had several games where the Allies pretty much lose on the first turn.

The sequence of play is pretty standard for a hex and counter war-game. Roll for weather, assign air units to their tasks, replacements/ reinforcements, move, combat, move, combat, then the second player takes his or her turn. In the second impulse units usually only move a few hexes, so planning ex-ploitation advances can be difficult. On top of that, combat is mandatory and there are no advances after combat, which creates some unusual situations and takes getting used to. Units often have to make suicidal attacks that in many other games would never occur. This is part of the system, howev-er, and helps to simulate long campaigns or protracted battles in an area.

The air system is unique in that most games on this topic and/or size usually use air points which are assigned to ground combat. With Fortress Europa the Allies assign air markers to strafing, destroying bridges, hitting V2 and U-boat sites (these slow Allied replacements), limiting German replacements, and more. The Germans use their air markers to counter these tasks, but there's never enough to go around. The proper use of the air system is the key to Allied success and it will take a few plays to figure out the best strategies.

There is chrome in this game to simu-late historical events such as commando raids, withdrawing panzer units for an offensive late in the war, airborne drops, mulberries, over strength U.S. infantry units, German military district activation, and more. There is nothing here overly complex and the game system works well. This is a long game, with four turns per month and it can go with the optional rules all the way to Spring of 1945. Usually the outcome will be apparent before then and there is a seven turn tour-nament scenario along with a game that begins with the Ardennes attack.

In the end, how does this game stack up against so many other games on the topic and who would this appeal to? My own personal view which I've held every since I first played it almost 40 years ago is that this is a good, but not great game. The designer's edition really doesn't do anything to im-prove this outside of clarifying a few rules and giving you larger maps and counters. It is definitely a product of a bygone era, which isn't entirely bad, so it will certainly have appeal to those gamers who have been playing with the Avalon Hill version for all of these years.

However, it can be argued that games like Liberty Roads, The Mighty Endeav-or, and others have passed this by. Grant-ed, in some instances not by much. The rigid ZOCs, mandatory attacks, etc., force you to play a different game than most wargames that you may own. This is one of those games where you will often do things not because it makes military sense, but because it make game sense. It does remind me of all of those articles in The General where gamers had their opti-mum counter placement to take ad-vantage of the game's system.

In the end, this is a good product, but there's nothing here you haven't seen before or that is done better with more modern games. It definitely improves upon a classic, but it won't make you get rid of your other games on the subject.
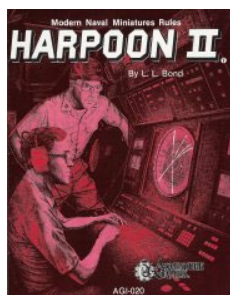
Today's Gaming & Realism: Down The Rabbit Hole   Editorial

A recent thread on TMP regarding how realistic Warlord Games' Bolt Action WW2 rules were and the responses that followed set me to thinking about the state of realism in gaming for today's hobby. Any time the subject comes up, supporters and detractors usually come out of the woodwork in droves to get in their side of the argument. At the end of the day there are still two sides of gamers angry at the slights thrown at them by the opposing side. What usually gets lost in these continual arguments is the expanding size of the hobby, the wide range of interests, different age groups, and so on. Not one to be shy about these things, I'm going to go down the rabbit hole on this topic and see what's on the other side.

I can remember shortly around the Falklands War that I purchased Harpoon II along with some 1/3000th scale ship miniatures. After playing various modern naval board wargames, I felt it was time to get more tactical and this was the way to do it. Needless to say, the amount of paperwork, research into weapons systems, converting miniatures, etc., was a lot of work, but we had some really great naval battles. However, I started to look at other modern naval rules such as Enola Games' Sea Command and a few from England. Why? I felt that Harpoon 2 wasn't realistic enough!

Yes, that was back in the 80s where playing Victory Games' Gulf Strike on a Friday night, then a Harpoon 2 game on Saturday, followed by a huge Starfleet Battles slugfest with all of the expansions on Sunday afternoon was just another weekend! Complexity and realism were the priorities (even with Star Trek games!), with playability, game length, and the ability to introduce others to new games being way down the list after those two. Would any of these games do well today? Not a chance. Times have changed, the hobby has changed, free time has changed, patience is limited, and there's too many gaming items coming out too quickly to just focus on one thing.
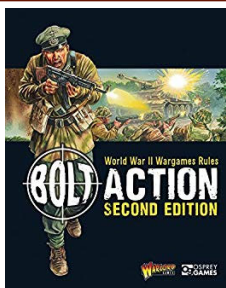
I started toning down the realism side of my gaming after Harpoon 4 came out. The work needed for a campaign was simply more than was necessary, plus keeping track of all of the weapons, sensors, aircraft, ordnance, etc., was getting to the micro-management level for players who were essentially in command of task forces. There weren't many other alternatives and the less complex modern naval rules simply did not appeal to me, so I dropped the period.

This illustrates how I myself deal with the complexity vs. realism argument in the hobby. My rationale is that (at least for modern naval combat) this period is very complex and how the various weapons and sensors interact with each other, while time consuming, must be presented on the tabletop. Rather than go with something like Shipwreck, where those things are glossed over and factored into a die roll, I choose not to play the period. Other gamers may find that Shipwreck meets their needs and all the more power to them. However, please don't tell me that Shipwreck portrays modern combat more realistically or comes up with the same results as Harpoon 4.

This is where the realism argument starts to get nasty. Why? Mainly because various factions of gamers who support certain sets of rules start to *justify* why they use these rules and not some other set of rules. When you point out that the simpler set of rules doesn't cover certain aspects of warfare, too much is abstracted, etc., they only entrench themselves more, then often lash out with the usual arguments. Everyone has heard them before, but for the sake of this editorial, I'll list them again.

"It's only a game", "No wargame is realistic", "The results are all the same", "That's a design for effect feature of the rules", "It's fun to play", "Too many rules in your game", and so on are what usually emerges in many online discussions. Rather than deal with whether a jeep with a MG could destroy a Tiger at 1,000 yards, the proponents of simpler game designs bring up some argument similar to those listed above in an

effort to justify why they play their set of rules. The proponents of the more complex rules usually make matters worse by making fun of the simpler rules and those who are playing them, which certainly doesn't win friends and influence people.

Lately, however, the justification of the simpler game designs has been taken to new heights. Not surprising, especially since the trend in the hobby is towards painting smaller forces, skirmish games, more Euro style board wargames, and trying to keep things under 2-3 hours where possible. Let's take for example, the practice of having artillery assets deployed on the table as you're seeing in Bolt Action and Flames of War.

Clearly to anyone capable of rational thought, the companies that produce these games want you to buy artillery batteries, especially in boxed sets if possible. Then, design the rules where this is allowed and in fact, can be beneficial to your side. The result? Lots of gamers spending a considerable amount of money on extra models which, realistically speaking, would be nowhere near the front lines. Many gamers who are into realism are quick to point out this heresy and board wargamers shake their heads in disgust as with most of their games putting artillery in the front lines is a good way to get them killed off.

To those who play Bolt Action and Flames of War, you can understand their predicament. You've just spent hundreds and hundreds of dollars on figures, rules, army books, paint, and terrain to play these games. Are you going to decry the entire thing and sell everything off? Hell no. You're going to defend the game system with everything you have and anyone who complains about realism regarding batteries of artillery on the tabletop is going to be deemed an enemy of the state.

Similar things can be said about games like Battle Cry and the various implementations of the Command & Conquer system, which are quite popular. I've played them and thought they were fine as quick board games with a historical flavor, but after playing two or three Battle Cry scenarios in a few hours, everything seemed the same after awhile. In fact, it started

Today's Gaming & Realism: Down The Rabbit Hole (cont.)

to get to the point that it didn't matter if we were playing Shiloh, Antietam, or Gettysburg. It was all about the cards and getting certain symbols to come up on the dice. Now here is where things go sideways in the realism debate.

When someone comments that the Shiloh or other scenarios aren't very realistic, those who like the system don't say things like they prefer this system, it's faster, they don't have time for miniatures, etc. Instead they start pointing out that it's as realistic as any miniatures game. Somewhere along the line, from the transition of gaming from the 70s to today, we've reached the point where there is a need to ***justify*** our investments in the hobby. I remember playing Panzer Leader back in the day and a few days later playing a Tractics game. Clearly the Tractics game was far more realistic (although time consuming and complex), but I still liked playing Panzer Leader and do to this day. In my hobby world there was room for both and I could play either at the drop of a hat, no questions asked.

In today's hobby environment, I would only play Panzer Leader and defend it to the death. Any attempts to point out the issues with the game would be met with my arguments about there's no better way to simulate WW2 armored combat than with a D6 odds based combat table, it has fewer rules than more complex games, I like playing it, and it's the most realistic WW2 game I have because a) I own it, b) I have the expansions for it, c) I've invested too much time in it, and d) anything you say against this game just hardens my position.

How did we come to this? In the above example on Battle Cry you can argue that there are levels of realism within the hobby. A large miniatures game using Fire & Fury or Johnny Reb on Shiloh with a thousand miniatures and scenery trying to replicate the battlefield is several levels ahead of where Battle Cry is. You can see the formations, the terrain issues, see how long it will take reinforcements to move to the front lines, etc., where as in Battle Cry it's simply moving up units and getting the right combo on the dice roll. Both are games about Shiloh, but one is certainly more realistic than the other. Back in the day

this was apparent to 99.9% of gamers. Today not so much.

The other caveat to this argument today is that gamers who support the simpler systems seem to want their cake and eat it too, which again annoys the grognards and gamers who play what they consider to be more realistic games. When asked why in Flames of War or Bolt Action there aren't destroyers floating on the river to provide on table fire support, or B-17 formations supporting a single platoon, they answer, "Well, that's not very realistic". News flash, you're already allowing Stalin's Organs, 25 pounder batteries, and everything else on the board, why not those things too?

The unwillingness to acknowledge that there are levels of realism in the games we play and accepting things for what they are seems to be lost in today's hobby. When I'm playing The Sword & The Flame, which is one of my all time favorite games, I know that it is a Hollywood look at the Victorian Colonial era. There is no way I'm going to defend that set of rules to the death on whether it is or isn't the most realistic set of rules for the period. If I wanted that I would play Colonial Skirmish Wargames (the famous blue book), which while pretty realistic, is time consuming and the level of fun fluctuates greatly. If people want to make fun of TSATF that's fine. I enjoy it, my group enjoys it, and we've been playing it for over three decades. However, it's not going to make me challenge someone to a duel for any negative comments about its realism!

I think the reason that board wargamers don't entrench and prepare to fight to the death over realism in their games is due to several reasons: 1) often, you've only invested $40-70 on a game. If it's not great or something you don't think works for the period you can sell it pretty quickly and move on. 2) There's a lot of choice and through word of mouth, online forums, etc., you can pick something you think you will like. 3) Most arguments are about how well something portrays a situation, how close it is to history, and how to improve things. Granted, there are arguments over games, but for the most part board gamers seem more in tune with the realism and complexity issues than miniatures gamers.

I find it mildly amusing that gamers I've seen, read, and known for 30+ years have fallen into this way of thinking. Many of them played Tractics, Empire, Air War, and many other complex miniatures, board, and RPG games over their hobby lifetimes. Now they are involved in Flames of War or Bolt Action games and will defend those systems against any comments that they aren't realistic. Whether it's just old age, worn down by the arguments, little time for the hobby, or something else, they're committed to this course.

So where does that leave us? Unfortunately, right back at the start. Complexity and realism arguments in the historical miniatures gaming community aren't going to end. I think what is needed is a wider understanding of your surroundings and how you respond. When someone tells me that my 128 fig tercio for Age of Discovery isn't realistic, I respond with the fact that they're right! It's not. However, for game purposes it works well, it simulates the firepower to all flanks, and still works to represent an integral part of an Imperialist army of the time. If someone doesn't want to play the rules I'm using so be it. I've come to terms with the fact there are different levels of realism within the hobby.

BKC4 would be another example. Yes, units in real life don't get "double actions/turns", all units can't fire at the same target, and so on. For most of our group it is our rules set of choice for WW2 operational level combat. Why? It's great for group games, we know the system, we understand the limitations, and we get what the designer was trying to do. Is it the most realistic set of WW2 rules ever made? Probably not. However, we're not going to get into petty fights over it versus other rules, make fun of others playing different rules, or go on a crusade to get others to toss out their rules and buy these. If you want to play with our group, then you're going to be using these rules. If not, there's plenty of other rules for you to buy. Everyone just needs to be happy playing what they want-no need to argue to the death about what is or isn't realistic.
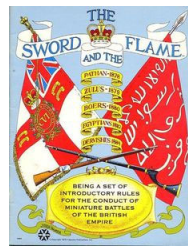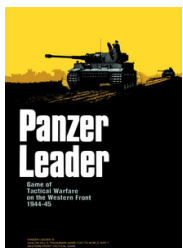
After several of us received our copies of BKC 4, it was time to take the rules out for a test drive. This was also one of the few times in the last year where the entire group was present for a game! This gave us three people on a side, so it would be a fairly large BKC game and would certainly provide a good test for the latest version of the rules. Several of us had only just received the rules a few days earlier, so there would be a lot of checking and re-checking as the game went along.

The scenario was a slightly enhanced version of Engagements 31, which is also in this issue. Inspired by a second reading of Zhukov on the Oder, this scenario sees a Russian force expanding out from a bridgehead during the 1944-45 period. The Russians have two strong armor units already across and are ferrying more troops as fast as they can to the other side. The Germans have blown the

bridge in front of the town and there are sufficient units to defend the outskirts until help arrives. The Russians are trying to cut the main highway leading to the town, which will enable them to isolate and capture it at a later time, then rebuild the bridge to bring up supplies to sustain their offensive.

Unlike in Engagements 31, the river here is only in front of the town. The local German commander has gotten wind of an impending attack and has called for reinforcements, which will arrive shortly. The Germans need to hold on for just a few turns and then the balance of power should be evened out for the remainder of the battle.

The Russians had two reinforced T-

34 battalions, each with 10-12 T-34s along with a company of truck borne infantry. Beginning on Turn 3 the Russians would receive some SU-76s, several SU-122s, followed by some SU-100s, then finally a battalion of infantry. There were three batteries of 122mm in direct support and the chance of some Katyushas from corps. A very powerful force, but short on infantry and outside of scheduled support, the chances of getting artillery during the operation weren't good.

The Germans started with a company of infantry and a company of Hetzers in the town. There was a mixed battlegroup consisting of an 88mm, a King Tiger, and a company of Stug IIIs holding the center. Finally, there was an understrength battalion of infantry holding the fortified area on the extreme German left. There were three batteries of 105mm artillery in support.

Beginning on Turn 1 the Germans could roll for their two reinforcement groups, needing a 6 on 1D6 for the first turn, then getting a +1 each turn thereafter until they arrived. The first group was an armored battlegroup consisting of a company of PZIVHs and a company of Panthers. The second group was a slightly understrength panzergrenadier battalion with a company of Tigers in support. The Germans had some powerful armored units, but they would be coming in piecemeal and would need to contain the Russian spearheads. After some time spent planning, both

sides started the battle.

The Russians drove straight for the center, bypassing the German fortifications on their right and moving to break through the defenses quickly. A large smoke screen obscured the Stugs lying in wait and soon the Russians were almost to the center of the board. The smokescreens kept arriving turn after turn which created an unusual situation, helped in part by the two Russian armored commanders rolling snake eyes on the same turn!

In BKC when this happens that command gets two activations in a row and since the Russians use the Rigid tactical doctrine, the command all has to do the same thing, which in this case was move. Suddenly, the two Russian armored formations were on the outskirts of the town and past the road running down the center of the board. Both sides had each other's units in front of them, to the flank, and to the rear! This set the stage for a several turn no holds barred melee in the center of the board, with both sides firing in every direction! Not only that, two more turns of smokescreens obscured most of the combatants, who were only a few inches apart from each other.

The Russians and the Germans slugged it out, with more Germans arriving to close off the exit routes for the Russian spearheads. The SU-122s and SU-100s seized control of a hill in the center and poured more fire into the melee that continued to grow. A Russian infantry battalion entered and tried attacking the German fortified area, where they were met by devastating fire and the entire battalion was wiped out. By Turn 7 the Russians were bogged down in the center and the Germans were barely hanging on.

(cont. from p12) The Russians renewed the offensive, pushing forward in the center and knocking out most of the Stugs and PZIVHs in the area, even though one of the Russian armored groups was basically ineffective due to casualties. The Russian infantry attached to the armored groups had formed a defensive shield, but there was heavy fire from several German units.

Back and for the battle went until the Russians saw their chance. German casualties had created a slight opening in the defenses and with two successive command rolls several T-34/85s were down the road and off the main exit, earning the Russians a marginal victory. The game had gone for around ten turns and took about four hours.

First impressions of the rules were pretty good. We did notice a few chang-

es to the army lists, but it would definitely take more time to compare them to the last few versions. It appeared as if they had corrected some of the stranger stats and the new "profile' modification did have an impact on fire combat. The greatly expanded section on recon forces was not used in its entirety, so we'll need to focus on that in coming scenarios.

In fact, that brings up an issue with larger BKC games in that you start to forget small stuff. Both sides rarely used their recon assets as you start to focus solely on the armored battles staring at you from the board. There were some new combat modifiers, a few changes here and there to anti-tank units, artillery, etc., that we overlooked, so everyone needs to go over the rules again thoroughly and make notes of the changes.

The one thing that has not changed

and that we were hoping to see some improvements upon is infantry in defensive positions. They were pretty tough before and now seem invincible. The ability to shrug off hits at the end of the turn coupled with being harder to hit, saves, etc., means you need to overwhelm them with massive force, which isn't always available. It's going to take a lot of trial and error to figure out a successful strategy against infantry in towns or defensive positions.

Overall, it was a good first game with the new rules. We made some errors, learned a lot, and still need to learn more. We have yet to try British and U.S. forces, so we'll have to see if there are any changes to those army lists. Hopefully Pendraken will keep developing the rules and it would be nice at some point if they would develop some campaigns.

Engagements 31: Bridgehead to Encirclement

Situation: Red has a bridgehead across a major river, but needs to capture a town lying along a main highway. This will allow for the destroyed bridge there to be rebuilt and for supplies to flow over it to continue the offensive. Blue has received warning of an impending offensive and is moving reinforcements to the area to seal off the bridgehead.

Period: WW2 to Modern, but could be used for earlier periods with some modifications.

Table Size: 6 x 4, but a larger table could be used with more terrain added.

Terrain Notes: The hills are not steep and while the forests are light, they do provide cover. The villages are a mix of stone and wood buildings. The blue line shows the furthest positions that Blue can deploy their forces to. The bridges over the river at the roads have been blown. The river is too deep to ford and needs either a ferry or some type of bridge to support a crossing.

Scale: Can be used with any rules and any scale.

Red Forces: Red's forces consist of the units on the board at the start.

Deployed West of the River in the woods and village:

4 units of infantry

2 units of mech infantry

2 units of armor

2 units of self-propelled guns (Stugs, SU-76, etc.)

Deployed at E:

4 units of infantry

4 units of armor

Deployed at C:

1 unit of combat engineers

Off-board:

3 batteries of medium artillery

Set Up: Red's starting forces can be deployed in the woods and village on the west side of the river. The combat engineers are building/repairing the bridge at C. The remaining forces are deployed at E, waiting to either be ferried across the river at D or for the bridge at C to be repaired.

Red Orders: Get as many units as possible off of road entrance/exit A or B (see Special Rules). This will cut off the town and force Blue to either undergo a siege or evacuate the town, leaving the major crossing in Red's hands.

Blue Forces: Blue's forces are spread out in an effort to contain the various Red bridgeheads. Advance warning of an impending Red offensive has forced Blue to shift additional reinforcements to this sector.

Town Garrison:

4 units of infantry

1 unit of heavy weapons

1 unit of self-propelled/assault guns

Mobile Battlegroup:

2 units of mech infantry

1 units of armor

1 anti-tank unit

1 artillery battery (off-board)

Reinforcements Group A

2 armor units

1 mech infantry unit

Reinforcements Group B

2 infantry units

1 anti-tank unit

1 unit of heavy mortars

Blue Orders: Hold the initial Red attack until reinforcements can arrive. Once they are on board, create a defense anchored on the town and deny Red access to the road exits.

Set Up: The Town Garrison must be deployed within 6" of the town. The Mobile Battlegroup may be deployed anywhere west of the blue line on the map. The two Reinforcement Groups arrive on Turn 3 and 5 (roll for which one appears first) and roll to see if they enter at A or B.

Red Bridge/Ferrying: It takes one turn per unit to ferry from E to the west bank of the river. The combat engineers are trying to repair the bridge, so at least some traffic can cross each turn. Roll 1D6 per turn and once the total reaches 20 the bridge is repaired enough for one unit to cross each turn.

Game Length: 12 turns

Special Rules: Prior to the start of the game Red chooses whether they will try to exit forces off of A or B without telling Blue (write this down to show after the game).

Victory Conditions: Red needs to exit at least 4 units off of either A or B by the end of the game. Red also wins if they seize the town at any point. Any other result is a Blue victory.

Variants: The scenario could also be played as a Blue counterattack against the ferry and bridge repair sites by strengthening the Blue starting forces. Another possibility is Red having a toehold in the town and trying to expand control of the town in the face of Blue counterattacks.

Both sides could also use more artillery and air support to balance out the scenario depending upon how many players there are, the miniatures that are available, and the skill level of the players. Allow Blue to have built entrenchments or have laid down minefields if you find that Red is winning too easily.

A night attack out of the bridgehead would supply both sides with a number of unique challenges.

Engagements 32: Ridgelines Defense

Situation: Red has taken up a strong defensive position protecting the army's flank in the face of a Blue offensive. Blue is trying to punch through this position and then flank Red's main force on the other side of the mountainous area. The key for Blue is to reach the plateau and attack, then seize the village which will ensure a victory.

Period: Ancients to Horse & Musket is suggested, but could be used with WW2 or Modern forces with some modifications.

Table Size: 6 x 4, but a larger table could be used with more terrain added.

Terrain Notes: The ridge lines will present difficulties in crossing, particularly for artillery. The village is a mix of stone and wood buildings. The river is fast flowing and can only be crossed at the bridges. The forests are medium woods, so they provide good cover and would prevent cavalry as well as artillery from crossing them.

Scale: Can be used with any rules and any scale.

Red Forces: Red's forces consist of the units on the board at the start.

6 units of infantry

2 units of cavalry

2 units of artillery

3 units of light troops

Set Up: Red's forces are deployed to the west of the red line marked on the map. They may begin deployed in any formation.

Red Orders: Delay Blue's advance for as long as possible, then defend the village until the end of the game. If the village holds Red can redeploy forces in time to prevent Blue from flanking the main army.

Blue Forces: Blue's forces are entering from the east edge of the board in an effort to maneuver up the ridges and seize the village.

(10) units of infantry

(3) units of cavalry

(2) batteries of artillery

(4) units of light troops

Blue Orders: Attack up the ridges and/or along the main road with the main goal of defeating Red's forces in this area and seizing the town. Once the town is seized the follow on forces can traverse the other side of the mountain and flank Red's main army.

Set Up: Blue's forces enter from the east edge of the map. The cavalry and artillery must enter along the road due to the medium woods in the area.

Game Length: 12 turns

Special Rules: Each successive ridge is higher than the previous one and the first is higher than the valley floor where Blue starts. There should be a movement penalty and possibly fatigue if your rules allow for that. Getting the artillery up the ridges should be difficult except on the road. The bridges are solidly built and cannot be destroyed within the time of the scenario. Modifiers for attacking uphill/downhill are strongly suggested.

Victory Conditions: Blue needs to seize the village without losing more than 50% of its original forces. Any other result is a victory for Red.

Variants: The first variant that could be used here is weather. Attacking uphill in a storm or after snowfall would prove to be a difficult challenge and the attacker would probably need more units to have a fair chance. Rain/snow would also limit the use of the road and possibly even create a flooded river, making use of the bridges a gamble.

Depending upon the era, the defenders could be allowed a series of entrenchments and/or fortified positions. This can be used as a balancing mechanism between new and experience players or different quality of armies that you have available. In most cases, however, the attacker would need some additional forces to overcome the defenses.

Reinforcements could be added to both sides by either expanding the scope of the scenario or limiting the starting forces. This will give both sides a chance to see the battle develop/unfold and then commit forces to threatened sectors or to reinforce a successful axis of attack. If you have access to a larger game board and more units, you could easily expand the scenario to make for an even large attack.

Expanding the scenario to more modern forces would require some additional rules. Certainly a battle between Pakistani/Chinese forces and Indian Army units in Kashmir or along their frontier would be idea for this type of terrain featured in the scenario. The single road, however, may limit mechanized forces too much. Off board artillery and airstrikes would definitely make the attacker's role a bit easier in that they could help to overcome the defenses. Air defense, ATGMs, helicopters, etc., would need to be used in place of several of the units listed in the starting forces. The use of mines, bunkers, etc., would also make things much more difficult for the attacking forces.

Long ago, a game company called Conflict Simulations released a design by John Hill (creator of Squad Leader) called Bar Lev. It was one of the first games on the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and it was unusual for its systems and the bright orange map. Later, GDW released a reworked version that has been popular for the last several decades, usually fetching fairly high prices on the secondhand markets. After a long, long time between versions, Compass Games and designer Chris Fawcett have released Bar Lev: The 1973 Arab-Israeli War Designer's Edition.

Compass Games over the last few years has evolved into a prolific game company, offering several redesigns of classic games. Bar Lev is one of those classic games and is well thought of, so how would this game be approached in terms of improving it? The first thing you notice upon receiving the game is that box art, which is a good indicator of what's inside in terms of overall artwork and components. Two large 22 x 34 maps, several sheets of counters, play aids, rules, a playbook, and dice complete the package. The first impression you get is that this is not a small game.

As one of the few games on the subject (the complete war, not parts of it), the maps for the two fronts are very well done and it also enables you to play the entire war or just one front at a time. The 1800+ counters (!!!) cover all of the major combat units, breakdown units for the larger brigades, aircraft, and plenty of markers. There are several play aids built onto the maps to ease play and there are air tasking cards, reference cards, terrain charts, etc., available for players. In summary, the components are well done, things make sense, and there's not much to complain about.

Taken in its entirety, this is a big game! Almost 1900 counters, two maps, a separate air system, SAMs, bridging units, breakdown units, and more. Those thinking it was just a minor update of the old GDW version are in for a surprise. This isn't the old 500+ counter game that could be set up and played in a single (although long) session. This is a detailed look at air and ground operations on both fronts over the course of the war. Just sorting the counters tells you this is a monster sized game.
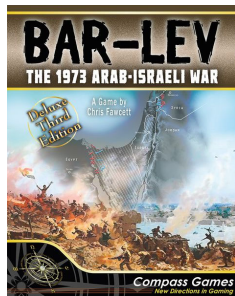
Fortunately, there is a beautiful, well laid out rulebook to help you along. Full of color illustrations, samples of play, and takes nothing for granted. It also does something unusual in that it takes what on the surface to be a complicated game and boils it down into its basic systems, which shows you that while the game is big in scope, the systems are fairly simple. The play book contains the orders of battle, some historical notes, and a detailed example of aircraft tasking and operations. It looks scary, but can be resolved in just a few minutes once you start playing.
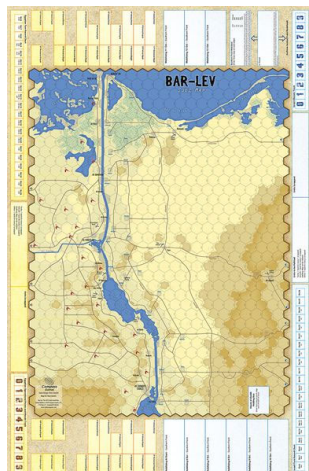
The Arab armies have operation points, which are used to either move their HQs (of which they have few) or to release reserves. As usual, there's never enough ops points to go around. This is followed by indirect fire, then the air segment begins. First, you decide who has air superiority by allocating fighters, followed by tasking of other available aircraft. These can be assigned to ground attacks, escort, or airfield strikes. There's air combat, AAA fire, SAM fire, then attacks. All surviving aircraft are put in the Flown box where they have to roll vs. their service availability number to return to the Available box. Sounds complicated, but it really isn't. However, there are a ton of decisions in this phase such as how many aircraft to achieve air superiority, what targets to attack, how many escorts, what altitude should they fly at (to avoid some AAA or SAMs), etc., which is very challenging.

Ground units then move and then there is the combat phase.

John Hill was a big believer in simple systems and it shows here. Where some games take up 5-6 pages of rules about ground combat, going over who can attack, support, advances, retreat priorities, etc., not so here. You attack who you want to (even individual units), roll a D10 and if you get a D that unit is destroyed. Simple, quick, and effective. In fact, ground combat takes less time than most other phases during the turn!

At the end of the turn there is a Refit Phase where each side can "scrap" a number of units in the dead pile to bring some of those units back. For example, for every three Mig-21s scrapped the Arab player can bring one back or for every two armor units the Israeli player can bring one back. This is a unique and interesting way of simulating replacements, repairs, etc. With the amount of units killed off and the breakdown units, there will be quite a few decisions during this phase, including where the reformed units reappear.
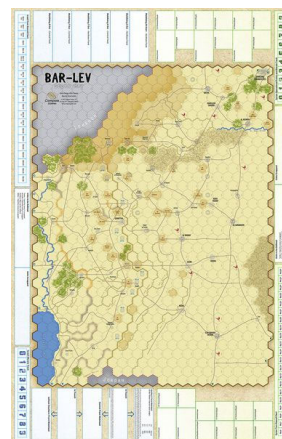
Are there any issues? The set up is definitely one and it will take some time, especially if you are playing the full campaign. As with any game on this war there are special rules for crossing the Suez and the anti-tank ditch on the Golan Heights, which need to be read very carefully. You then just need to get through the first turn or two to catch all of the pieces of chrome spread throughout the rules. It is a surprisingly simple game, but there are a number of special rules that are easy to forget.

At this point, at least for me, this is the definitive treatment on the Arab-Israeli War. The ability to play either front or the full campaign, the air tasking system, and several paths to victory for the Arab side gives this game extremely strong replay value. There are some minor issues, but overall if you are looking for an exciting monster type game on the subject, this is definitely it.
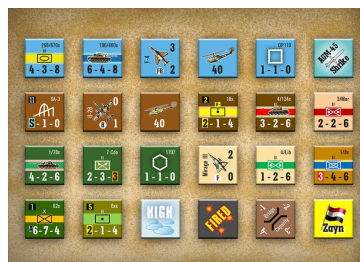
In the last few issues of Warning Order you may have seen reviews on Konigsberg and Across The Narva, both from Revolution Games. These are unofficially part of the A Victory Lost series, which began with the game of the same name as well as A Victory Denied. All of the games are fast moving, low complexity wargames that use a chit pull mechanic to activate various formations.

After giving fairly positive reviews to Konigsberg and Across The Narva, it's now time to take a look at Poland Defiant (PD). PD covers the first 10 days of the German invasion of Poland in 1939. There are no Russian forces, optional set-ups, what ifs, foreign intervention, etc. The Germans are going to attack from three sides and try to either seize Warsaw or most of the cities in the country to win a victory.

PD shares a lot of similarities with the other games in the series from Revolution. It comes in a zip-lock bag, the cover doubles as an information sheet, there's a set of b&w rules, a 22 x 34 map, and one sheet of counters. Not a bare bones game, but there aren't extra components, lavish illustrations, etc., that you may expect from other companies. For the last two games some kind gamer on BGG has created full color set up displays, which is a massive help and hopefully that continues with PD!

The map, while well done and fitting in line with the other games in the series, is oriented in a non-solo friendly way and is clearly designed for two players with the hex numbers running down the length of the map between the two sides. There
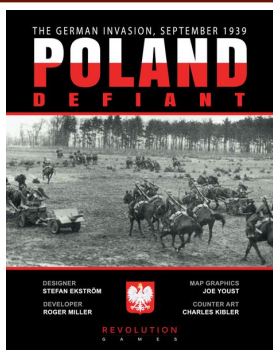
are VP tracks, aircraft holding boxes, activation tracks, special tables for the Poles, and a terrain key. The counters represent all of the combat units that fought in the campaign with many being color coded to work with the chit pull system. There are out of supply/isolated, damaged bridges, and control markers included as well. Overall, the components are very good and work well during the game.

The rules are good and bad. First off, they are the bare essentials and while short, you do need to go over them as there some small changes from the Konigsberg and Across The Narva games. There are no examples of play, the set up is paragraphs of text with the unit numbers/hexes, and not much info about the campaign itself. Basically, you're getting the essentials to set up the game and start play; nothing more. Fortunately, the game is pretty straightforward and I only had to refer to the rules once or twice.

The set up looks dire for the Poles as there are German and Slovak forces deployed on three sides. The German forces, however, are spread out and get a special first turn where all of their units are in command to get the offensive underway. There are really no special rules for the first turn, so it is entirely possible that the first several chits could be Polish formations, which would let them reposition or reinforce their defenses in some areas. This does give the game fantastic replay value, but it can also cause some issues that we'll get to later.

Air attacks begin the turn and the Germans have several units that can be combined for a large odds attack or singly. They can be useful to damage units that you want to attack later in the turn or to force an enemy out of a position. The Germans also have three counters that can be used to interdict Polish movement and the Poles have one lone aircraft that can attack German forces. The rest of the turn is spent drawing formation chits from a cup, then activating the formation matching the color. All of the games in the series have different rules on this, but

for PD all of the chits go into the draw cup and HQs can activate all of their units in command range plus two independent units. Later, more HQs and chits arrive that can activate anything in their range or multiple formations. Again, this is good and bad, which will be explained later.

Combat is voluntary and is odds based, with results being in step losses and/or retreats. Cities, towns, and villages, however, can allow units to ignore some retreat and step losses, so attacking these terrain types is always a challenge! Usually by the end of the game there are a large number of Polish units in the dead pile while there are only one or two German units. However, the Germans are on a strict timetable and need to capture a number of VP cities each turn to keep pace. If they fall behind they lose one activation per turn, which can be disastrous.

There are also a Random Events chit, Polish replacements, Polish group command chits, and enough little pieces of chrome to make the situation very interesting. The game plays fast and is probably the shortest of all the AVL type games that I've played so far. This is not a game where the panzers roll and crush everything in sight, but rather an exercise in trying to cobble together a plan with your activated formations and is very challenging for both sides.

The one issue here is the chit draw, which does seem to make it tough on the Germans. As more German command chits get added to the pool, the odds of pulling a badly needed chit diminish and it's not uncommon to see powerful formations sit for a few turns. Naturally, this gives the Poles a chance at victory and to reshape their defenses. It's not a game breaker and gives the game some chaos, but it can be frustrating at times. Overall, though, this is a fun game and worth a few plays.
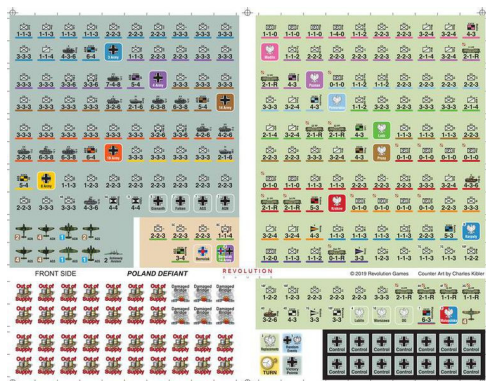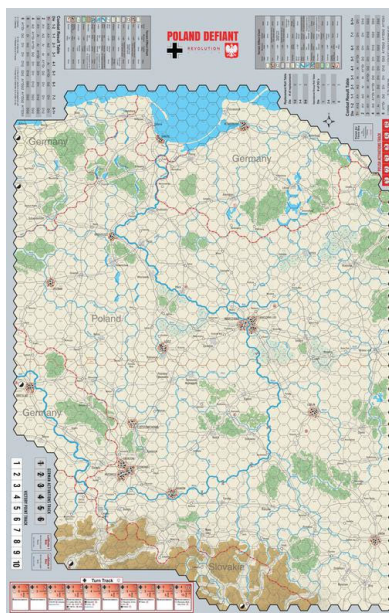
ACW Rules We've Played & Are Playing-Some Thoughts

If you're a histori-cal miniatures gamer, chance are you've participated in an ACW game at some point during your time in the hobby. One of the more popular peri-ods for gaming, the ACW is usually an easy gateway into the hobby with plenty of figures, scales, terrain, and reference material available. It's also one of those periods where there are a lot of rules sets available to go along with the amount of disagreement about them!

Many of us got our start back in the 70s with Rally 'Round The Flag, which was a typical set of rules for that era. Most applied Napoleonic tactics and modifiers to an ACW setting and quite a few rules had no 15mm ranges as that scale was just getting started. You played them because, well frankly, there wasn't much else available and at least everyone could find a copy. Our experiences ebbed and flowed, going to Stars & Bars, trying On To Richmond, and even New-bury's ACW Fast Play (actually slow play) rules. Most, but not all, were high-ly procedural, using plenty of charts, modifiers, etc., to represent ACW war-fare.

The big change and for its part a revo-lution in the hobby, was the introduction of Johnny Reb by John Hill. All of a sudden here was an actual set of ACW rules that introduced new concepts, fo-cused on ACW warfare, and felt like you were playing an ACW battle. Although designed for a failed 10mm miniatures line, gamers quickly determined that the way to go was 15mm and soon orders were sent off to Heritage and Stone

Mountain to get as many figures in that scale as possible!

JR2 as it was known by, was our go to rules for the ACW for close to 15 years, serving us ably for large battles, smaller games, and several campaigns. So why aren't we using them today? Good ques-tion! Basically, Johnny Reb 3 came out, everyone rebased, and we got to playing the new version. Unfortunately, JR3 was one of those games where if you knew the rules you could really take ad-vantage of players who didn't. Also, the new charge sequence slowed things down considerably, and after a few games many of us were wondering if we should go back to JR2! However, that task was daunting, the group was split-ting up into those who wanted to do 28mm and those who already had 15mm armies, plus times were changing in terms of what gamers wanted out of rules. In essence, it was time to move on.

With the new group who was into 15mm there were several ques-tions about how to continue playing ACW. Stay with JR3, go back to JR2, or look for something new. We decided to look around and after a disastrous outing with Piquet we found Fire & Fury (F&F). We also had to base our decision on we had just lost our permanent place to play, where anywhere from 8-15 of us would play huge games on a 6 x 16 table. All of a sudden there was about 5-6 of us playing at a local store, so time became the critical factor as well as how would we introduce new players to ACW with the JR3 learning curve being fairly high. We simply had to be able to after dinner set up a game, get started quickly, and finish the thing in under 4 hours. That was just the reali-ty of the situation for our group for the next several years.

We were one of the play-test groups for Age of Eagles and so this was sort of a natu-ral fit for us. Our first few games went pretty well, so we actually started painting up our new units with the F&F basing scheme. Slowly, but

surely, we converted all of our figures over to F&F and haven't looked back. Today, most rules use a universal basing scheme, but in the 70s, 80s, 90s, and ear-ly 2000s that was still a dream, so you needed to rebase your figures, which is a massive commitment that does not al-ways work out well.

Since we moved to F&F we have tried a few sets of ACW rules. Being in a club usually means that not everyone likes things that others do! This includes wanting to do periods in certain scales, looking for interesting systems, or maybe just wanting to try new things on a regu-lar basis. Needless to say, we have tried our share of rules! Some of these were non-starters and after the first game we could see that they were going nowhere. Others have been tried a few times, but still don't have the traction to be adopted by the group as a whole.

With that in mind, it's time to take a look at the rules that we've played at least a couple of times, which also just happen to be some of the most popular sets of ACW rules out there. (cont. on p19)

(cont. from p18)

Johnny Reb 2 & 3

Summary: a 1:20 set of tactical rules for the ACW. The 2nd version used a wide variety of stand sizes while the 3rd edition went for a 1:30 scale and four stands per unit. One of the first rules systems to use order chits and unlike many rules before it, was designed specifically for the ACW where before many others used variations on other eras rules sets

Pros: The game felt and played like an ACW battle. The order system, artillery, charges, etc., were layered together to produce a well thought out game system that was our primary set of ACW rules for well over a decade. The rules, while of moderate complexity, are fairly easy to teach and are suitable for group games.

Cons: Larger games with more units/players will take quite some time and can easily stretch into multiple sessions. If you're using JR3 players really need to not only know the rules on the various formations, but to have experience using them or they will be extremely disadvantaged.
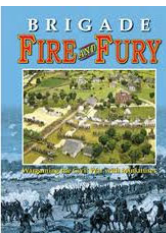
Brigade Fire & Fury

Summary: An operational set of ACW rules where 4-12 stands (on average) represents an entire brigade and one gun model equals an artillery battery. The system uses a unique command & control method where players roll for each brigade to determine how far they can move and/or rally. As units take casualties (stand removal) their proficiency goes down which affects multiple phases of the game.

Pros: Fast playing and easy to teach, making it highly suitable for large group games. Once you play a few turns the system becomes fairly easy to use and in most cases you only need the reference card during play. The larger than normal scale enables many historical battles to be fought in their entirety, which is almost impossible with 1:20 scale games.

Cons: At times the units can seem too generic and while you can fight large battles, you will still need a lot of figures! The need for unit labels and not many scenarios available (the two older books have yet to be re-released) means that games will take some work to get set up.
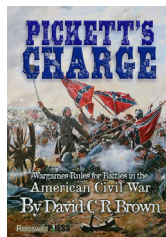
Pickett's Charge

Summary: A 1:20 type game (one base equals 80 men) with an extensive focus on command & control. The combat system derives itself from General d'Brigade and will be familiar to players of that system or any of the spin offs from that set of rules. This system is suitable for group games and you can use any existing 1:20 scale scenarios, which is a big plus. The focus is on getting your troops to the front line and directing effective fire, followed by a charge, so they emulate ACW tactics pretty well.

Pros: If you like newer 1:20 scale miniatures games, then this is probably your go to set of rules or if you like command & control with lots of options each turn. There is quite a lot of depth to the rules and pretty much any type of scenario, from meeting engagements to sieges can be set up.

Cons: A system unlike most rules that will take a few games to get used to. Also, having four pages of charts can be an issue for some players and a firm understanding of the rules by one or two players is necessary. The morale system at times, particularly for brigades, seems odd.

At this time we're doing most of our ACW battles with Fire & Fury as that is primarily how our figures are based and we're pretty happy with the system. We can set up a game, the players know the rules, and we can get through quite a few turns in several hours. We do have one member who loves 1:20 scale systems, so when he sets up an ACW scenario it's done with Pickett's Charge.
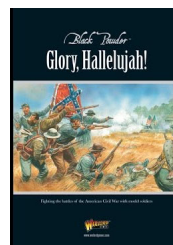
I'm sure the question will be asked about why we're not using the Glory Hallelujah supplement for Black Powder. Certainly that is a popular set of rules for many gaming groups and there are a few of us in our group who do own the rules and/or have played them. While I really like Hail Caesar, my tests with Black Powder using my Sudan armies pointed out a number of issues. Mainly, it appeared like artillery and firearms had been bolted on to the Hail Caesar system without much thought about how it would affect the standard game play.

As mentioned previously, we've tried a few other systems out, but have never tried a second game with any of them. At this stage of our lives, anything involving rebasing is a lost cause! I also think the hobby is at a stage where pretty much every idea for ACW rules has been tried. From large bases in Volley & Bayonet to Warmaster Ancients adaptions, there does not appear to be anything on the horizon that would be such a game changer that we would give up our current rules. Not to say it can't happen, but at this time it appears highly unlikely.

The hobby and our gaming group has come a long way in terms of ACW gaming. From Airfix figs to 6mm to 15mm and now 18mm, we've seen it all. The same goes with rules, from complex, roster driven systems to the simpler F&F, it has been a long, strange, but extremely fun ride!

While we certainly play a lot of War-master Ancients, we rarely dabble in Warmaster Medieval. This is mainly due to the fact that we really only have large Crusader and Saracen forces, plus the odd assortment of Normans, Vikings, and German Landsknechts! Basically, if we need to do a 4-5 player it's time to break out the Crusaders and Saracens, which is what we did here.

We've had some concerns about the Medieval supplement, especially the point values and during this game it real-ly came out. When reading about the period, the Saracens often outnumbered the Crusader forces by quite a bit, de-pending upon the battle. In WMM they have hordes of cheap infantry, lots of heavy cavalry, plus an assortment of light cavalry as well. After having played several scenarios of Infidel from GMT Games where there are usually far more Saracen counters than Crusaders, seeing the board set up was a bit of a shock.

First off, the Crusaders had a pretty standard force, with units of Templars, Hospitallers, and other heavy cavalry units classed as knights. In WMM they are pretty nasty and have a first round bonus that often devastates an enemy's line. In fact, we jokingly refer to them as "medieval panzers"! They were backed by several units of mounted sergeants, dome dismounted knights, then a a few brigades of soldiers mixed with cross-bows. Since these were 3,000 point forc-es there were a lot of units on both sides.

The Saracens had a large mass of in-fantry, eight units of heavy cavalry, arch-ers, skirmishers, and plentiful light caval-ry on both flanks. There were also sever-al units of Gazis (fanatics) mixed in with the infantry brigades which gave the Sar-acens around 20 (!) infantry units alone.

However, outside of the heavy cavalry and Gazis, most of the army was about as generic as generic gets. Clearly, the strat-egy for the Saracens is to overwhelm your enemy with cheap units, use skir-mishing cavalry on the flanks to soften things up, then finish the enemy with the heavy cavalry. Pretty standard and it works for our armies of Egyptians, Hit-tites, and others in Warmaster Ancients.

Not so here. For one, the Crusaders had a higher break point than the Saracens! This could be due to the fact that the Crusaders have few, if any, skir-mishing units which don't count while the Saracens had around 10 or so units. Even then, when added up it seemed like the Sara-cens only outnumbered the Cru-saders by about 8 units. Couple that with poorly armed troops, several leaders with a command rating of 7, and several units of Crusader knights staring at you across the field meant it might be a long day for the Saracens.

We also decided at the last minute to use the Medieval rules at the back of the book that add mod-ifications for the period. This includes having your forces in three "battles" or formations, a big change to the skirmish rules, evades/countercharges, and mixing crossbows and archers with the infantry into combined arms type teams. We probably should have pre-pared this a bit better as we had continuing questions dur-ing the game, did a few things wrong, and were pretty incon-sistent with it the entire night.

On to the battle. Both sides did pretty well on their opening moves, with the Saracen right flank advanc-ing pretty far in the first two turns, while the left did not fare as well. The centers of both sides cautiously moved up, waiting to see what would be determined on the flanks. It was at this point that the Saracen command rolls started to get fairly erratic.

The action opened on the flanks, with the Saracen heavy cavalry charging and countercharging the Crusader knights. Both sides gave as good as they got, with most of the heavy units being damaged to the point of having to be withdrawn. The Saracens pressed the issue, trying to at least elimi-nate a sizeable threat on that flank to the other advancing units. In the end, how-ever, the Saracen cavalry was left with a few damaged skirmish units, unable to prevent much else from occurring on that side of the battle.

On the left it was almost the exact opposite. The Crusaders charged and charged again, eliminating the Saracen heavy cavalry. Sharp counterattacks by the Saracens picked off a few Crusader stands here and there, but with most of the infantry not moving at all, the only thing that was stopping the Crusaders from finishing off the flank was a series of bad command rolls! The Saracens by turn 4 were completely put on the defen-sive on that side of the battle.

After four turns the Saracens were actually ahead; 3 1/2 to 4 1/2 in terms of break points, although the skirmish caval-ry had taken a beating. However, the Saracens could see they were in trouble and sure enough, that's

(cont. from p 20) what happened. The Crusader dismounted knights, soldiers, and crossbows now reached the middle of the battlefield pretty much unmolested. The Saracens moved out to meet them, sensing that there might be one more chance to turn the tide and survive by grinding down the Crusader infantry.

As discussed earlier, here's where the problems began. The Crusaders had not only high quality infantry, but crossbows backing them up, equal almost in number to what the Saracens had. In the end it wasn't a fair fight. The Saracens attacked recklessly, at one point rupturing the Crusader lines, but the knights and soldiers quickly closed the gap and started inflicting some real punishment on the Saracens. By turn 7 things were looking badly for the Saracens, so they threw everything they had at the advancing Crusader forces, who were looking to finish the battle themselves.

A few more rounds of combat and the Saracens reached their break point of 16, which is a lot of units that you need to lose. The Crusaders had just hit 9, which in WMA or WMM terms is as close to a slaughter as you can get. Yes, there were some exciting battles and everyone for the most part had fun, but the game really was never that close. In fact, if the Crusaders had pressed a few combats the game could have been over at least one or two turns earlier.

Now we've had one or two Saracen victories in the 5 or 6 games we played, but even those were either due to bad luck by the Crusaders or it was a final turn, down to the wire victory through attrition. In each game I can remember it just seems like the Saracens are overmatched. There could be a number of reasons for this.

The first is that as the armies get larger and the Crusaders get several more high quality units it's tilting the balance. Two Templar units for 1,000 points are tough, but when all of a sudden there are 6 of them that might be changing things a bit. Yes, the Saracens get more as well, but it could be that the quantity is not offsetting the quality of the knights. The Saracens could be choosing too much infantry and should focus on more skirmishing cavalry and the infantry need to be the full 50% Gazis instead of the 25% they currently have. Still, something does not seem right and I think in the future we may go towards some historical scenarios and try to balance things out that way.

Invasion
A WW2/Modern Mini-Campaign

Introduction

At some point miniature gamers will want to do a coastal invasion scenario, large battle, or even a campaign. While there are many boardgames and individual scenarios that revolve around D-Day, that history is already known and there are few surprises. What is harder to find and what this miniatures campaign attempts to address is a fictional invasion.

Invasion is a low complexity campaign that can be used by any number of players with the miniatures rules set of their choosing. The idea is to present a fairly straightforward invasion scenario that includes airborne troops, attacks against fortified beach defenses, bridge seizures, counterattacks, and more. This fictional campaign tries to add in the features that not only would be involved in most invasions, but what gamers would like to see as well.

The map is broken down into areas and zones, which help to regulate movement and combat. This is an effective system in that gamers won't have to fight
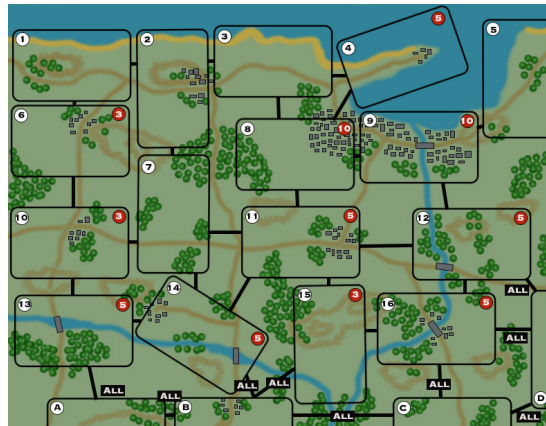
over every inch of the campaign map, but instead can focus on seizing critical areas and focusing the action. The idea of a miniatures campaign is to generate interesting battles, even if they are one sided or not balanced at times. The system is pretty open ended, which allows for optional rules and additional features to be added at the players discretion. Players can even add terrain features to the map if they feel it is needed,

As far as forces go, gamers can use whatever formations they want for the rules they use. If you're using BKC, then the battalions (which is the default unit size) work well. If playing Bolt Action then maybe each unit is a platoon or if using Flames of War maybe a company. Use the scale that fits the number of units that you and your gaming group have available. There are no set orders of battle other than the units that are available for the invasion and as reinforcements. If a gaming group feels each armor battalion should have three companies, then so be it.

The idea behind this miniatures campaign is to of course have fun and generate interesting battles. Breaking through to airborne units holding bridges, armor counterattacks against beachheads, desperate defensive actions at vital crossroads, and more will all come into play during this campaign. It is an interesting exercise in how to seize a defended coastline or how to prevent a breakthrough if you're the defender.

Map

The campaign map features areas and zones that regulate movement and where the battles will take place. There are several map features that players will need to become familiar with.

Area #

Beach

Woods

Hill

Road

Village

Bridge

Victory Point value

River

Movement Connection

Zone

All Movement Connection

Counters

Unit Type

Formation

Formation Color

Range for support

Combat Units

Armor

Airborne

Infantry

Recon

Mech Inf.

Alert Formation

Artillery

Commando

Anti-tank

Fortress garrison

Status Markers

Turn

VPs x10

VP Control

Reserve

Port Open

Air Support

Naval Support

Artillery Support
5/15

Air and naval support markers are placed directly into areas during the combat phase.

Each artillery combat unit has an associated Artillery Support marker that is placed into an area during the combat phase to show which units the artillery will be supporting.

Sequence of Play

Each turn consists of the following phases:

1. Weather Phase-Roll for the weather during the upcoming turn.

2. Red Movement Phase-Red moves any or all of their forces.

3. Blue Reserve Move-Blue moves any forces from the area with the Reserve marker.

4. Red Combat Phase-Battles are fought in any areas where both Red and Blue have forces.

5. Red Exploitation Phase-Red moves and conducts battles with forces from any area containing the Reserve marker.

6. Red Landing Phase-Red lands additional forces.

7. Blue Movement Phase-Blue moves any or all of their forces.

8. Red Reserve Phase-Red moves any forces from the area with the Reserve marker.

9. Blue Combat Phase-Battles are fought in any areas where both Red and Blue have forces.

10. Blue Exploitation Phase-Blue moves and conducts battles with forces from any area containing the Reserve marker.

11. Supply Phase-Both sides check for any isolated forces.

12. Reserve Phase-Both sides place their Reserve markers for the next turn.

13. Victory Check Phase-VPs are totaled and checked to see if there is an automatic victory.

Invasion Phase

The first turn of the game has a special sequence of play that replaces phases 1-5 of the standard sequence. Once completed the regular sequence of play resumes with Blue Movement in #6.

1. Invasion Planning Phase-Red assigns the initial landing forces to their beach areas. Red also assigns the forces that will land in the Second Wave phase at the end of the Invasion phase.

2. Airborne/Commando Phase-Airborne units land and along with Commando units attempt to seize bridges or vital areas.

3. Bombardment/Airstrike Phase-Beach defenses are attacked by naval ships and airstrikes.

4. Landing Phase-Red units assigned to each beach land as part of their movement phase.

5. Combat Phase-Battles are fought in those areas where Red forces landed.

6. Second Wave-Red's forces designated in #1 above are now placed in their beach areas.

Play now resumes with Blue's Movement Phase (#7 of the Sequence of Play).

The weather is automatically clear on the first turn.

Forces for the Campaign

You will notice that the campaign does not include detailed orders of battle. The reason for this is that each gamer/gaming group has a wide variety of forces available to them in different scales, periods, terrain, and in terms of what rules they use. Trying to cover all aspects of this would be nearly impossible, so what follows are guidelines in choosing the forces available for the campaign.

The main principle is to be consistent. If you are using platoon sized stands for an armor battalion, then you need to do the same for infantry, artillery, and/or airborne battalions as well. There must also be some thought given as to whether the units will be full strength, campaign strength, or randomly generated. Most rules give sample orders of battles for units and many can be found online as well.

For example, if you are using Flames of War for this campaign, a Red armor unit might consist of a platoon of five Shermans, or if your group has plenty of

miniatures it might be a company of 15 Shermans. If you're using Blitzkrieg Commander it could be 9-14 stands/miniatures of Shermans, a command stand, a recon vehicle or two, and maybe a platoon of cross attached infantry. The idea is to be consistent from unit to unit on both sides.

Another example would be the Fortress garrisons that are assigned to each beach area during the campaign set up. Depending upon how much terrain you and/or your gaming group has, the beach tables could be fairly simplistic or extremely complex. If you're using Flames of War and playing with small forces, a unit such as Blue F1 may consist of two or three improved positions, some HMGs, a mortar or two, and a few stands of regular infantry. If your group uses BKC and you have access to plenty of terrain and miniatures, then Blue F1 could consist of two bunkers, five or six improved positions, HMGs, LMGs, mortars, some AT guns, minefields, and

beach obstacles. To counter that, the Red infantry units that hit the beach would need to be at full strength with additional assets to have a chance at overcoming the defenses.

Artillery would be another unit type that could cause problems if you're not being consistent. If you're playing a fairly small campaign then each artillery unit could be one or two guns. If using operational scale rules like BKC, then each unit would be 2-3 batteries. This may also affect other units by needing to add FAOs, observers, etc., to call in the artillery.

Most importantly, use common sense when setting up the campaign forces. A company size Commando unit probably shouldn't have a battalion of armor and integral long range artillery! By agreeing with everyone involved in the campaign ahead of time you can come up with orders of battle that will be fairly balanced and that should produce some interesting battles.

Movement Phase

Each side will get a movement phase to begin their portion of the turn. During this phase the phasing player may move any or all of their forces. Each unit may move a number of areas during the movement phase as listed here:

Non-mechanized: 2 areas

Mechanized: 3 areas

Non-mechanized forces include infantry, paratroops, commandos, artillery, and fortress garrisons. Mechanized forces include armor, mech infantry, self-propelled artillery, and recon units.

Units may move singly or in groups. Units move from area to area using the movement connections on the map. If an area does not have a movement connection to another area, then forces cannot move to that area from their current area. Movement from areas to zones and vice versa will take all of a unit's movement,

as indicated by the ALL notations on the map. *Zones represent rear areas, towns, and locations far from the current campaign map.*

When a unit or units enters an area where there are enemy forces, its movement must cease. Once all of a phasing player's forces have been moved, play moves to the Combat Phase where battles are fought in each area where both sides have units. A phasing player's units cannot move through an area where there are opposing units.

If the phasing player's units move into an area from multiple movement connections, track where those forces came from as it will have an impact on the battle that will be fought in that area. During the setup for the battle these forces may be allowed to enter from different sides of the battle area, depending upon how they entered that area.

Reserves

Each side has one Reserve marker that is placed before the game (Blue only) and then at the end of each turn. All units in this area are allowed to possibly move in two different phases of the turn. First, during the Reserve Move of that side, units in the designated Reserve area may move to aid the defense of an area or block a possible exploitation move. During the Exploitation Phase the units in the designated area may move to exploit gains made during the Combat Phase. All normal movement rules and areas that can be moved are the same as in the normal Movement Phase,

Units in the area where the Reserve marker is placed **can only move** during the Reserve or Exploitation movement phases. Any unit that enters the area marked with a Reserve marker is **not** allowed to move during those phases,

Combat Phase

If there are opposing forces in the same area after either side has moved, then play proceeds to the combat phase and a tabletop battle will be fought. Each area that has opposing forces will need to follow the steps outlined for the Combat Phase below.

1. Defender Withdrawal
2. Attacker Assigns Support
3. Defender Assigns Support
4. Terrain & Forces Set Up
5. Conduct Battle
6. Retreat & Losses

Defender Withdrawal: The defender decides if they will remain for the upcoming battle or withdraw. There must be a friendly controlled area or areas with a movement connection to this area in order for the units to withdraw. All units do not have to withdraw to the same area. If the defender withdraws the attacker now controls that area for victory point purposes. If there is no friendly area to withdraw to, then the defender will have to fight the battle, even if it is an unequal contest.

Attacker Assigns Support: The attacker may place any naval, air, and artillery support markers in the area that are in range of that area. After the battle is fought the air and naval support markers are set aside until the next turn, and any artillery units that provided support should be flipped over or turned on their side to signify that they cannot provide support for the rest of the turn.

Defender Assigns Support: Same as above, but the defender assigns artillery

In this example, two Red units join with a paratroop unit to attack Blue's forces. An air support and a naval support marker have been placed to designate support for Red's attack in this area. Blue has added an artillery support marker as well to aid the defense. The terrain will now be set up and the battle can commence.

support (or in case of a Blue counterattack naval and air support) that is in range to the battle area.

Terrain & Forces Set Up: Both sides use one of the terrain set up options, then place their starting forces. The terrain for that area on the map should be featured in the set up for the battle. So, for example, if you are fighting a battle in area #10, the crossroads and a town surrounded by some woods/forest, should be represented on the board.

Conduct Battle: Using the miniatures rules designated by the players, a battle is fought until one side or the other is forced to withdraw or retreat.

Retreat & Losses: If one side or the other decides to withdraw or is forced to retreat, their forces are moved to a friendly, adjacent area at this time. Permanent losses are now figured out for both sides and this ends the combat phase for that area.

Combat could also occur in each side's respective Exploitation Phase if forces in an area with the Reserve marker move to an area containing enemy forces. This would start a new Combat Phase for that area.

Combat Phase (cont.)

Once it has been determined that a battle will be fought in an area, there are several ways of setting up the battlefield. The first is to have both players mutually decide what terrain and/or scenery should be represented. The second is to have a third party set up the battlefield, then each player rolls 1D6 with the highest roll choosing which side that they will deploy on. **Note:** *The terrain on the map is the predominant terrain in the area, so this should be represented on the board where possible.*

A third way is to have each player right down a number from 0-10 for how many terrain pieces that they would like to see on the battlefield. Both numbers are added together, then divided by 2 to get the number of how many rolls are made on the Terrain Table below. Each player then places one terrain piece until the desired number is reached (if an odd number roll 1D6 to decide who places the first piece). Once the battlefield is set up, each player rolls 1D6 and the highest roll decides on which end of the table to deploy.

Terrain Table

Die Roll	Terrain
2	24" Ridge
3	Village
4	Large Hill
5	Small Hill
6	Forest
7	Forest
8	Small Hill
9	Marsh/Rough Ground
10	Farms/Farm Fields
11	Forest
12	Stream

- Forests should be an 18" square area of trees, so for example the strip could be 6x3, 9x2, etc.

- Farms and farm fields can be treated as open or difficult ground.

- No terrain piece other than the ridge or stream should take up more than one square foot of area.

- If a stream is rolled, roll 1D6 for the number of 12" long sections that can be placed. Roll 1D6 and if a 4, 5, or 6 is rolled there is a bridge located somewhere on the stream that can support infantry and light vehicles. Roll a second 1D6 and on a 5 or 6 there is a ford located on the stream.

Conduct Battle

Using the miniatures rules selected for the campaign, a battle is now fought on the battlefield set up by the players. There are no set time limits for the battle, but there should be an agreement before the campaign on how many turns each battle should be. Some rules such as Warmaster or Blitzkrieg Commander have break points and an army withdraws when hitting that target. Others such as Age of Reason have withdrawal checks, which can also end a battle. Finally, one side or the other may voluntarily break off the attack or withdraw from the area, which would end the battle.

Retreats & Losses

If a side is forced to or decides to withdraw/retreat, their forces must move either to the area they entered from (if attacking) or to a friendly controlled area (if retreating). If there are no friendly areas to retreat to, the force surrenders instead and is removed from the campaign.

Once retreats have been completed the

final part of the Combat Phase is to check for permanent losses. Each side rolls 2D6 and consults the following table to determine the actual losses for the battle. These are applied immediately.

Die Roll	Percentage Lost
2	75
3	70
4	65
5	60
6	50
7	50
8	40
9	30
10	25
11	20
12	10

The winner of the battle adds +2 to their die roll.

Optional Rules

Players may feel that the permanent losses are too random. A new table could be created or additional die roll modifiers added to this table to reflect what players wish to see in the campaign. Players may also want to just use the original losses and skip rolling on the permanent losses table altogether.

To prevent one side from seeing the set up, then continually withdrawing after the first turn or two, a pursuit modifier and/or table could be added where if a certain number is rolled, the withdrawing side loses so much of their force. This will prevent players spending a lot of time setting up a battle, then one side or the other withdrawing without firing a shot, which happens at times in campaigns.

Artillery

Artillery moves as per normal forces and can move on turns that it does provide fire support to battles. Each artillery unit has a range expressed by a small number on the upper left corner of the unit counter. This is the number of areas from the area where the unit is currently located in where fire support can be provided.
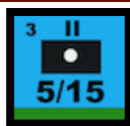
During Step 3 of the Combat Phase, each side allocates artillery support by placing the artillery support marker(s) of any artillery unit(s) in range on the area where the battle is to occur.

Artillery units can only provide support **once** in a turn, so consideration needs to be given for attack, defense, or firing in support of units using the Reserve marker. Once an artillery unit has supported a battle for the turn, its support marker should be set aside until the following turn.

Air & Naval Support

Similar to artillery support, Red has a number of air and naval support markers that are available each turn. Players will need to agree before the campaign begins on what the support represents. For example, naval support markers with a range of 1 (probably representing destroyers and frigates) may be the equivalent of a 105mm battery. A marker with a range of 2 (probably representing cruisers) might have a battery of 155mm and a battery of 105mm.

Naval Support

Each naval support marker has a range that determines how far onto the map its support can reach. Support markers with a range of 1 can only add support to combat in areas #1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. If area #4 has been captured they can support combat in area #9. Markers with a range of 2 can lend support to areas #1 to #9. As with artillery support, each naval support marker can be used only once per turn.

Air Support

Air support markers can reach any area and/or zone on the map. Similar to naval support, players need to decide before the campaign begins on what each air support marker represents. Is it is single plane, a flight of four, or a squadron of aircraft? There is no limit to the number of support markers that can be added to a battle, but the number of markers are all that is available each turn. Each marker can only be used once a turn.

Interdiction

Air support markers can be placed in map areas and zones to reduce enemy movement. If an enemy unit moves into an area or begins in an area/zone where there is an air support marker, its movement for the turn is reduced by one area. It is possible that if there are 2-3 markers placed in an area/zone, no enemy units there could

Bridge Seizure & Destruction

There are several bridges on the map that are vital to both sides during the campaign. Bridges can be destroyed, captured, and repaired. During Blue's Movement Phase any bridge in an area occupied by Blue units can be destroyed. Roll 1D6 and on anything but a 6 the bridge is destroyed and a marker is placed on the bridge.

Bridges can be captured either by seizing the bridges with airborne and commando units, or by capturing the area during battle. If Blue decides not blow a bridge in an area during their movement phase and in the following turn there is a battle in that area, Red can seize the bridge by winning the battle in that area.

Commando and airborne units can seize a bridge by rolling 1D6 and modifying it by the following:

- Blue unit(s) in area +1

- Each commando/airborne unit committed to that area -1

On any result but a 6 the bridge has been seized.

Bridges can also be repaired during the campaign by Red's forces. Red has two engineer units that can either repair bridges or assist with river assaults. Each engineer unit can repair one bridge by spending all of its movement for that turn. At the end of the turn the bridge is considered to be repaired. Enemy units cannot be in the area during the repair attempt.

If a bridge in an area is destroyed, an engineer unit in that space allows Red infantry units to move/attack across a river.

Airborne/Commando Operations and Fortress Garrisons

Airborne and commando units can airdrop in the first turn during the Invasion Phase. Their primary purpose is to seize bridges and vital road areas for Red's advance. All or some of the airborne and commando units can be airdropped into one or more areas. For each unit dropped roll 1D6:

1-4 Unit arrives in area

5 Unit arrives, but takes casualties

6 Unit is lost/scattered/ambushed

Casualties should be determined by the players before the campaign begins using their miniatures rules. Rolling 1D6 x 10 for the percentage of the unit that is lost is a simple and effective method for determining this.

Airborne and commando units that land in an area can then attempt to seize bridges and are assumed to be in defensive positions if Blue's forces move into their area later in the turn. If Blue's forces are present in an area that Red's troops drop into, a battle is then fought. If Red wins the battle they may then attempt to seize any bridges in that area.

Airborne and commando units are assumed to carry supplies for only 4 turns. If they are unable to trace a line of supply by Turn 5 they are considered to be Isolated and are marked as such. Red can use an air support marker to drop supplies to airborne and commando units, which will keep them supplied for that turn only.

Fortress Garrisons

There are several units listed as F1, F2, etc. These are the coastal defense units for each beach area (areas #1-5). These units cannot move once placed for the start of the campaign game. The players will need to decide what these units represent, take into consideration the size of campaign they are planning, then come up with a standard order of battle. They should be represented by bunkers, improved positions, minefields, etc.

Ex.; in a moderate sized campaign where a gaming group has each unit as a battalion, the fortress garrison units might have the following: Two companies of infantry, one company of MGs, one light mortar platoon, two large bunkers, 24 inches of entrenchments, 24 inches of minefields, beach obstacles, and possibly other heavy weapons such as AT guns, heavy mortars, etc,

Landing Phase & Port Damage

Red has a Landing Phase in each turn which allows additional units to arrive for the campaign. This also represents the supplies, ammunition, and fuel required for the units already on shore. Until the port in area #9 is captured, the initial beach invasion areas are the only place where Red's additional units may land.

During each Landing Phase Red may land one unit at each of the three initial landing areas (if they have been captured), which means that until the port in area #9 is captured, Red may only have three new units arrive each turn. If Red is unable to capture the three initial invasion areas or one is recapture by Blue, Red will only be able to land a limited number of additional units each turn.

Once the port at area #9 is captured, Red can land up to three additional units per turn at that location provided the following are in effect:

- Area #4 has been captured (the Blue positions there would prevent entrance to the port)

- The port is damaged

When area #9 is captured after a battle or Blue withdraws from the area, Red rolls 1D6 to determine the extent of the damage; 1=no damage, 2-3=1 turn of damage, 4=2 turns of damage, 5=3 turns of damage, and 6=4 turns of damage. At the start of each turn Red can repair one point of damage. Use the Port Damage marker to note how many turns of damage there are left. Until all of the damage is repaired, Red can only land one unit at the port.

Alert Units

Alert units are scattered forces that are randomly generated that can be used to plug holes, join in counterattacks, etc. They represent scratch forces, stragglers, survivors of destroyed units, and more. Blue has five of these units available during the campaign.

One Alert unit can be added to Blue's forces each turn during Blue's movement phase. There are only five Alert units available, so if they are all in play, Blue cannot add additional Alert units until one is destroyed or withdrawn. Alert forces can be placed in ANY area or zone currently under Blue's control, unless that area is isolated.

The composition of the unit will depend greatly upon what rules the players are using for the campaign and the scale of their units. It is recommended that these be company strength units as compared to most of the campaign units which are battalion strength. Roll 1D6 to determine what type of Alert unit is available:

D6	Unit Type
1-2	Infantry
3	Armor
4	Mech Infantry
5	Anti-tank
6	Recon

Weather

Weather can be a critical factor in the campaign and is rolled for at the start of each turn. There are several possible results:

Clear-No effect on operations

Overcast-Reduce Red's available air support from 5 markers to 3 for the turn.

Rain-No air support allowed for Red.

Storms-No air support for Red. Port damage cannot be repaired and Red can only land one unit during the Landing Phase. Only naval support markers with a range of 2 can provide support during the turn.

D6	Result
1-4	Clear
5	Overcast/Rain
6	Storms

With Overcast/Rain, roll 1D6 and on a 1-3 it is Overcast and on 4-6 it is Rain.

Supply & Isolation

Units must be in supply to use their full movement allowance and to fight at full strength. Units must be able to trace supply to a supply source during the Supply Phase at the end of each turn or have an Isolation marker placed on them.

Supply Sources

Blue-A path of connected areas leading to a zone. This path can be of any length as long as the areas are connected and lead to a zone.

Red-A path of areas leading to either one of the initial landing zones or to the captured port.

During each Supply Phase if a unit is unable to trace a valid supply path an Isolation marker with a 1 at the top is placed on it. A unit with an Isolation marker rotates it to show how many consecutive turns it has been out of supply. Each level has the following effects:

Level 1: No effect

Level 2: Movement reduced by one area.

Level 3: No movement allowed. Only 25% of the unit is combat operational.

Level 4: No movement. Only half of the unit is combat operational.

If a unit is marked Level 4 and is still out of supply on the next Supply Phase it is assumed to have surrendered.

Victory Conditions

VP Control

Red can win the campaign automatically by seizing control of a zone and holding it for one turn. If that occurs, the campaign immediately ends as a Red victory. If Red does not seize a zone and the campaign has reached the end of turn 12, then Red counts up the number of areas that have VPs and compares it to the following table:

VP Total	Result
15-20	Blue major victory
21-30	Blue marginal victory
31-40	Draw
51-50	Red marginal victory
51-59	Red major victory

Players should feel free to adjust the victory conditions as they see fit or to match the experience of the gamers on each side. Players could also experiment with adjusting the VP values of certain areas to emphasize different objectives. There could also be a "sudden death" or "automatic victory" point total added to force players to act more quickly or to keep Red to a more aggressive timetable.

Campaign Set Up, Reinforcements, & Initial Landing Phase

Before play begins, each side sets up their initial forces, with Blue performing its setup first, then Red determining its initial landing phase and second wave forces.

Blue Initial Set Up

Fortress Units-Place one Fortress Garrison unit in each area with a beach (Areas #1-5).

Area #6: 24/15 Inf.

Area #7: 11/15 Mech Inf,

Area #8: 12/15 Inf., 45/15 AT

Area #10: 20/15 Inf., 315 Mech Inf. BG

Area #11: 29/15 Inf.

Area #12: 32/15 Inf.

Any Area: 9/15 Armor, 4/15 Art., 5/15 Art., 210 Art., 72 Recon

Reinforcements

These units arrive during Blue's Movement Phase on the turn indicated.

Turn 1 (Zone D): 147 Armor, 97 Mech Inf.

Turn 2 (Zone A): 43 Inf. BG, 49 Inf. BG, 224 Art.

Turn 3 (Zone B): 10/21 Armor, 15/21 Armor

Turn 3 (Zone C): 177 AT, 311 Art.

Turn 4 (Zone B): 35/21 Armor, 39/21 Armor, 18/21 Art.

Turn 5 (Any Zone): 4/8 Armor, 7/8 Mech Inf.

Turn 6 (Any Zone): 8/8 Mech Inf.

Turn 7 (Any Zone): 9/8 Mech Inf.

Turn 8 (Any Zone): 11/8 Art.

Red Initial Landing Phase

Red can choose up to three areas for their initial landing phase. Each area can have two infantry and/or engineer units land in that area.

The three airborne units and the three commando units also arrive during this first turn.

Second Wave: Red can land one additional unit (including armor) at each area that it controls.

Ex., Red chooses to land 11/4 and 14/4 at Area #1, 16/4 and 20/4 at Area #2, then 23/4 and 410 Engineers at Area #4. In the second wave 27/4 infantry lands at Area #1, 3/7 armor lands at Area #2, and 4/7 armor lands at Area #4.

Follow the special Invasion Phase sequence of play for the first turn.

Optional Rules

Hidden Units-Allow Blue to mark the positions of its units for the first turn and any arriving reinforcements, which will definitely make things more challenging for Red. You could also use one of the hidden movement/recon systems from some of the previous rules sets in past issues.

Detailed Air System-You could greatly expand the air system by adding missions such as CAP, interdiction, bridge destruction, counter-air, etc., and give Blue air units as well. This would force Red to escort their strikes, close air support, etc., as well as generate some air to air battles.

Variable Reinforcements-Create a table that would randomize the reinforcements that Blue receives. Add additional units that may or may not ever arrive in the area.
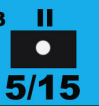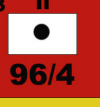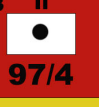
VP Schedule-Set up a schedule for Red that shows the number of VPs they must have by the end of each turn or they lose the game. This will a) force the action, and b) can be used to balance the experience level of the gamers participating in the campaign.

Drive to the Beach-Give Blue a counter-attack force with armor and mech infan-try that is positioned in a random area as a major counterattack force. There should be a die roll for its release and once released it would need to attack the closet (or towards the closest0 Red held beach.

Armor & Special Forces-If Red is having too much difficulty seizing a beach, allow Red to land one armor unit in the Initial Landing Phase and/or allow Red an extra commando unit that is able to open up or destroy a section of beach defenses in one landing area. Allow Red to cross-attach some engineer units to the initial attacking force.

F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	10/21	15/21	35/21	39/21	18/21
4/8	7/8	8/8	9/8	11/8	Alert 1	Alert 2	Alert 3	Alert 4	Alert 5
9/15	11/15	12/15	20/15	24/15	29/15	32/15	45/15	4/15	5/15
147	72	97	315	43	49	177	210	224	311
Turn	VPs x 1	VPs x10							Port Open
301/1	302/1	303/1	CDO 21	CDO 22	CDO 23	79/4	90/4	96/4	97/4
11/4	14/4	16/4	20/4	23/4	27/4	30/4	33/4	36/4	45/4
3/7	4/7	5/7	10/7	11/7	12/7	40/7	41/7	42/7	25/7
95/7	62/7	63/7	72	117	502	428	215	232	410
Air Support	Air Support	Air Support	Air Support	Air Support	Naval Support	Naval Support	Naval Support	Naval Support	Naval Support
VP Control	VP Control	VP Control	VP Control	VP Control	VP Control	VP Control	VP Control	VP Control	VP Control
Reserve	Reserve						Artillery Support 210	Artillery Support 224	Artillery Support 311
Artillery Support 96/4	Artillery Support 97/4	Artillery Support 62/7	Artillery Support 63/7	Artillery Support 215	Artillery Support 232	Artillery Support 4/15	Artillery Support 5/15	Artillery Support 18/21	Artillery Support 11/8

Invasion: Charts & Tables

Turn

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Victory Points

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Clear	Ovecast Rain	Storms

Weather

D6	Result
1-4	Clear
5	Overcast/Rain
6	Storms

With Overcast/Rain, roll 1D6 and on a 1-3 it is Overcast and on 4-6 it is Rain.

Alert Units

D6	Unit Type
1-2	Infantry
3	Armor
4	Mech Infantry
5	Anti-tank
6	Recon

Victory Conditions

VP Total	Result
15-20	Blue major victory
21-30	Blue marginal victory
31-40	Draw
51-50	Red marginal victory
51-59	Red major victory

Each turn consists of the following phases:

1. Weather Phase-Roll for the weather during the upcoming turn.
2. Red Movement Phase-Red moves any or all of their forces.
3. Blue Reserve Move-Blue moves any forces from the area with the Reserve marker.
4. Red Combat Phase-Battles are fought in any areas where both Red and Blue have forces.
5. Red Exploitation Phase-Red moves and conducts battles with forces from any area containing the Reserve marker.
6. Red Landing Phase-Red lands additional forces.
7. Blue Movement Phase-Blue moves any or all of their forces.
8. Red Reserve Phase-Red moves any forces from the area with the Reserve marker.
9. Blue Combat Phase-Battles are fought in any areas where both Red and Blue have forces.
10. Blue Exploitation Phase-Blue moves and conducts battles with forces from any area containing the Reserve marker.
11. Supply Phase-Both sides check for any isolated forces.
12. Reserve Phase-Both sides place their Reserve markers for the next turn.
13. Victory Check Phase-VPs are totaled and checked to see if there is an automatic victory.

Invasion Phase

The first turn of the game has a special sequence of play that replaces phases 1-5 of the standard sequence. Once completed the regular sequence of play resumes with Blue Movement in #6.

1. Invasion Planning Phase-Red assigns the initial landing forces to their beach areas. Red also assigns the forces that will land in the Second Wave phase at the end of the Invasion phase.
2. Airborne/Commando Phase-Airborne units land and along with Commando units attempt to seize bridges or vital areas.
3. Bombardment/Airstrike Phase-Beach defenses are attacked by naval ships and airstrikes.
4. Landing Phase-Red units assigned to each beach land as part of their movement phase.
5. Combat Phase-Battles are fought in those areas where Red forces landed.
6. Second Wave-Red's forces designated in #1 above are now placed in their beach areas.

Play now resumes with Blue's Movement Phase (#7 of the Sequence of Play).

The weather is automatically clear on the first turn.

Quick Reviews

With the review of Bar Lev earlier in this issue, those who are looking for a very good book on this war need look no further than The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter That Transformed The Middle East by Abraham Rabinovich. While I have read several books on the subject, this was one of the first ones I can recall that actually goes into many of the tactical action and doesn't focus on divisional overviews.

In fact, that is what makes this book so very good. For example, in most books dealing with the battles on the Golan Heights, much of the focus is how the Syrians almost broke through, their losses, the Israeli counterattacks, etc. In this book each battle for the forts, tank ramps, the escarpments, etc., is detailed. You learn about the reserves moving up, the confusing situations, battles for the anti-tank bridges, and much, much more.

Again, while many books deal with the SAMs keeping the IAF at bay, no mention of the naval war, then the political and international political struggles, this book focuses on things like the naval missile duels at sea, the airstrike on Damascus, and an extensive look at the Battle for the Chinese Farm and crossings. While most narratives focus on the hard lessons learned by the Israeli armor in the first few days versus the Egyptian Saggers, the author here shows that through numerous tactical situations throughout the entire war that these losses continued. The massive difference is that the Israelis could repair and put their tanks back in action faster than the Arab nations, which was a huge advantage.

Rather than portray the Israelis as supermen, the Arab soldiers as hugely improved from past performances, and settling for tried and true assertions, the author plunges you into battle after battle that decided the war. The lack of Israeli artillery, continually changes in planning, political issues, etc., are all explored throughout each chapter. I believe I learned more in this one book on the subject than probably a dozen others I own. About the only complaint I have is that there could have been more detailed maps for the battles, which were hard to place. Outside of that this is an outstanding book and it will challenge many of the preconceived notions out there.
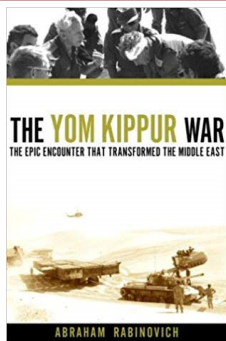
Brigade Fire & Fury: Great Western Battles

The new version of Fire & Fury (reviewed here several issues ago) was a massive improvement over the old version and similar to the newest version of Age of Eagles. Both feature well done presentations, scenarios with unit labels, charts, etc., that should be a template for future rules authors. Way back in the day there were two scenario books for Fire & Fury on the Eastern and Western theaters, but they've been sadly out of print for a long, long time.

Well, the first of the reworked scenario books focusing on battles in the Western theater is out and it looks just as good as the rules do. There are numerous battles that include:

- **Battle of Shiloh**, *April 6, 1862*

- **The Hornet's Nest**, Battle of Shiloh, *April 6, 1862*

- **Shiloh Church**, Battle of Shiloh, *April 6, 1862*

- **1st Day Battle of Corinth**, *October 3, 1862*

- **2nd Day Battle of Corinth**, *October 4, 1862*

- **Battle of Perryville**, *October 8, 1862*

- **Battle of Murfreesboro**, *December 31, 1862*

- **Battle of Champion Hill**, *May 16, 1862*

- **1st Day Battle of Chickamauga**, *September 19, 1863*

- **2nd Day Battle of Chickamauga**, *September 20, 1863*

- **Battle of Atlanta**, *July 22, 1864*

- **Hardee Turns the Flank**, *Battle of Atlanta, July 22, 1864*

- **Cheatham Enters the Fray**, *Battle of Atlanta, July 22, 1864*

- **Battle of Pleasant Hill**, *April 9, 1864*
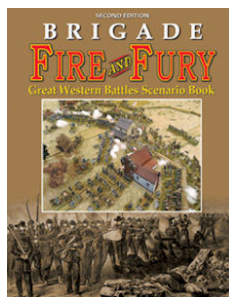
- **Battle of Spring Hill**, *November 29, 1864*

- **Battle of Franklin**, *November 30, 1864*

There are large battles that would easily fill a 9x6 table and others that would fit on a table half that size, giving gamers a wide variety to choose from depending upon the size of your group, available playing time, and the size of your forces. All of the scenarios are in the new format where there is a color map, background, and thankfully, unit labels that can be printed for game use. This is a very good product and I am looking forward to the next volume.

Crescent Root Studios Railway Strips

In many of the Fire & Fury (and the occasional Sudan) scenarios we encounter there are usually railways somewhere on the map and sometimes several that can extend for the length of the board. Trying to simulate these on the tabletop has been a challenge for as long as I can remember. We've tried HO railroad track (too big), N scale railroad track (too small), some of the QRF sections, and even to the point of considering paper terrain!

Thankfully, Crescent Root Studios, the same people who do some incredible 15 and 28mm buildings, have out 48 inch railway strips. Printed on some very thin mousepad like material, they can be cut to any length, rolled up again, and used over and over. Sure, there are no curved sections (as of yet), but you could cut a strip or two with angles to get something pretty close. This is definitely an answer to those ACW scenarios and should make it easier to use with roads, river, and woods. At $12.50 a roll plus shipping it's a steal!

Crescent Root Studios is also offering engines and rolling stock as well, so if you want to add railroads to your miniatures games this is definitely the way to do it. Now if they would only do this in 6mm!

Neoprene Railway Strip (48 inches / 1220 mm long)

We've played Ronin enough by now that most of the games go pretty quickly. Usually it take a turn or two before all of the rules come back to us after playing 20+ other periods and board games, but once you get the system down it's fairly easy to remember. With only four of us able to make it this night, Ronin fit the bill for the table we had available and the time slot.

The scenario was pretty basic, but it probably needed more guile, cunning, and patience, which is in short supply in our gaming group! In effect, what was probably set up to be a protracted battle ended up in a monumental clash that left two of the factions combat ineffective and third merely picked up the pieces leftover for a victory!

There were three factions and the villagers in the scenario. One of the fac-

tions, was led by samurai and featured several ashigaru, including an arquebus. The second faction was Sohei, or fighting monks, who had two archers in the force. The third was sort of a ronin/mercenary/wandering heroes type force that consisted of more figures than the other two factions, but were unarmored. The villagers, meanwhile, were the objective and when contacted, cards would be drawn to see if they willingly went with their captors or fought. The objective was to take the most captives as well as heads of the opposing factions.

All three factions had their own deployment areas and it would take a few turns to get into hand to hand, so that gave each player a chance to think things

through, move up slowly, see what the other factions were up to, and go from there. Which is exactly what didn't happen! The Sohei moved up slowly, but the other two factions saw each other and moved into immediate battle.

This started a long running series of melees that went on for about a dozen turns! Meanwhile, the Sohei slowly advanced up, rounding up villagers (all who were hostile to them) and scoring points. In fact, but the halfway point through the scenario the Sohei could have just walked away and probably scored enough points to win. By turn 6 the Sohei were near the middle of the board, had four villagers under their control, and set up their archers to do some long range sniping.

Now in our previous Ronin games the archers and arquebusiers have been next to worthless! In fact, I can't remember a time when they actually killed someone in long range firing, but they may have caused a few wounds or stunned results here or there. Today the archers redeemed themselves. One of the survivors of the melee who was taking heads was the first to go, with a shot just under two feet away. The next was one of

the Samurai's team who had just escorted a villager to their holding area. Again, one shot, one kill. Who were these guys? Finally, another survivor of a melee showed himself between village dwellings for too long and got picked off as well. Four total shots and three kills is not a bad game for the archers!

By this time the battle between the two factions at the far end was nearing its end. Both sides only had a few combatants left, while the Sohei on the far side of the table were busy scoring all of the points. The interesting thing is that the two factions didn't once think about changing tactics, withdrawing and going around, or considering alternate paths to victory. In true Samurai fashion they just bashed away at each other in hopes of a final victory! Slowly and surely they ground each other down until it was literally the last two warriors of each faction left standing. Both sides continued the combat and when the dust cleared, one lone warrior was left on that side of the table.

This meant the Sohei basically snoozed their way to victory. In fact, the only combat they had during the entire game was subduing the villagers and firing a few arrows at the other factions! The game could have played out any number of ways and it would have been very interesting had all sides avoided combat until they reached the center of the board. A huge 3-sided combat would have been pretty fun. Even with an explanation of the scenario and deployment the game took roughly around two hours, which is about our average for Ronin.

More views of the Ronin battle with the three forces advancing while the villagers head for cover. The 28mm figures are from various manufacturers while the terrain is mainly scratch built, which as can be guessed, takes some considerable time to come up with the right "look and feel" of the Samurai era.

For our second try with the new BKC IV rules, we decided to do a smaller battle with fewer types of units, just to get the rules down for future games. Our first try with the rules was a pretty large six player game with all kinds of unusual units, which forced us to continually check and re-check the rules. This time, especially with only three of us (due to summer vacations) we went the smaller, cleaner route!

The situation is that the British have unexpectedly seized a bridgehead over a large river and put a force across. This force has occupied the high ground overlooking the bridge and will cover the other advancing elements as they make their way over the bridge. However, the bridge is damaged and can only support three units per turn. The British need to hold the heights until all of the remaining units are across the river, then strike out and seize the main village/crossroads as well as exiting units off of the German held edge of the board.

The British had the following forces available:

Holding the heights:

- 6 Shermans including one Firefly

- 3 platoons of infantry and one MG platoon

Across the river:

- 9 Shermans including three Fireflys

- 8 platoons of infantry, including one platoon of MGs and one platoon of mortars plus halftracks for the force.

- Three batteries of 5.5 inch guns (off-board) with one FAO and one Recce stand.

The Germans had a force in place on the board, centered around the village, but only had one commander to cover the entire area at the start.

In and around the village:

- 4 PzIVHs

- 2 Marder IIIs and 1 75mm AT gun

- 4 stands of infantry

- 3 batteries of 105mm (off-board) with one FAO and one Recce stand.

Reinforcements (arriving 1 group per turn)

- 3 PZVs and command stand

- 3 Stug IIIHs and command stand

- Panzergrenadier company with support and command stand.

The British plan was to cross the river and use the woods near the river as a staging area while the forces on the heights kept watch. Once a significant force was at hand everyone would attack towards the village and a smaller group would break off and try to get off the board. A great plan if the Germans had played along! As you will see, this plan went by the wayside on the first turn!

The reason for that was that the Germans weren't going to just sit back and let the British dictate terms to them in this game. Realizing that they only had to prevent the British from taking the town or getting off the board the Germans went with the strategy of holding the village and then seeing if they could prevent the British from getting off the board. In essence, playing for a draw with a small chance of a victory.

Sure enough, the German PZIVH company counterattacked right from the start, moving around to the flank of the British forces on the heights and coupled with some well timed artillery salvos, attacked up the heights. This instantly turned into a multi-turn battle within a battle that forced the British side to redeploy some forces that were crossing the river to this fight. The two Marders appeared and tried to battle it out with the British on the hill and they were knocked out quickly. By the end of turn 3 the British were doing OK and things looked good for the advance.
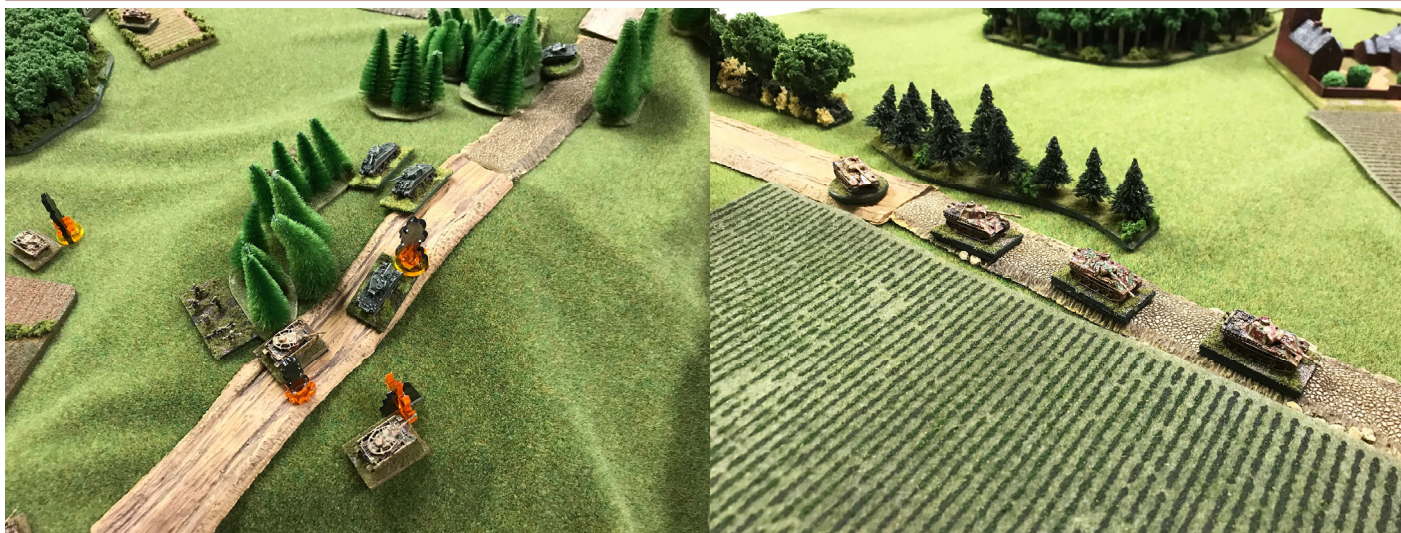
(cont. from p34) However, the battle for the heights was still far from over and the attack on the village would either need to be delayed or with half of the intended forces. The remaining British crossed and moved up the British right flank, knocking out the German 75mm AT gun, but then running into the Panthers that immediately counterattacked from the road.

Here's where things started to go wrong for both sides. The British got two (!!!) double action command rolls, enabling them to knock out one of the Panthers and get a mech infantry platoon way beyond the reach of the German forces, meaning that the Germans really needed to focus on holding the village crossroads, which they did. The Stugs came roaring through the village and counterattacked the British forces on the heights,

who had just finished driving off the PZIVs. The British infantry attack, which had just started, ran into withering fire from the village and the Stugs, which crushed the attack.

The Panthers, meanwhile, couldn't get out of their way, but the Shermans on the right couldn't do much either, so they focused on the Stugs. After an uneven fight that went several turns, the Stugs were all knocked out. The British made one more try at the village, desperately trying to get a toehold on one of the corners to then support future attacks, but that was thrown back as well. By this time there were burning vehicles all around and the British strength was scattered. It was then that the panzergrenadiers reached the village and took up defensive positions.

After looking over the situation the game was called as a draw. The British had a mech company that was only inches away from the edge of the board, which would fulfill one of the victory conditions. However, with the panzergrenadiers and remaining German infantry in the village it would take a force double the size of the current British force to take it now, thus both sides achieved one of their objectives.

A very fun, fast playing, and tense scenario that went down to the final few turns. Both sides had several chances to break the game wide open, but were unable to due to horrific die rolls at the wrong time! Definitely scaling back things for a smaller game was the way to go and it gave us a good chance to learn the changes with the new rules, which will help out for the next game.
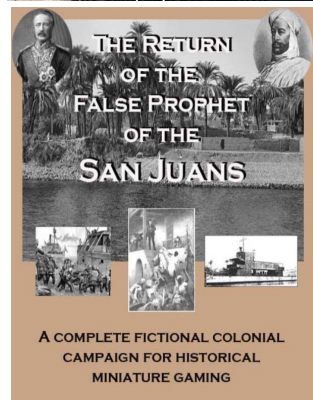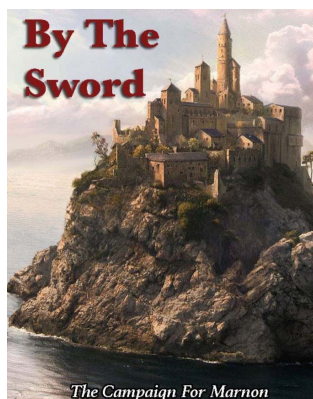
Be sure to check out our various campaigns for rules such as WMA, TSATF, and BFE II on our web site.

I've always had a soft spot for Avalon Hill games, probably because the days of my youth were spent either saving up money for one or playing them with friends. When I first got into wargaming there were basically only two companies that had thei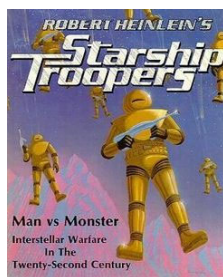r games in stores; Avalon Hill and SPI. Avalon Hill had a limited catalog, but the games seemed to have been of higher quality while SPI had tons of games, but sometimes the games were a lot of work. My first
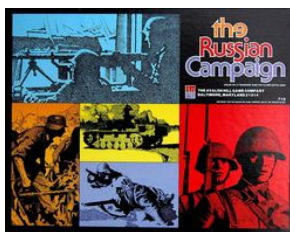
Avalon Hill game was Starship Troopers as I had just picked up the book at a local thrift store and immediately went out searching for a game on the topic. From that point my collection of their games continued to grow, adding Panzer Leader, Arab-Israeli Wars, Third Reich, and many, many more. When Avalon Hill created Victory Games I bought many of those as well as they were a hybrid of both Avalon Hill and SPI. To this day, I still have about 30 Avalon Hill games on my shelves.

Why have I hung onto these for so long? After all, many of them are well over 40 years old now! Surely, there are better games out there, my time could be spent learning new systems, etc., but that's not how I see it. Maybe some of it is just simply nostalgia, needing to return to one's roots when the hobby seemingly gets too big, or it could be that I already know how to play those games. The other explanation is that some of these are just good games and are worth playing more than once, which is something I can't say about many of the non-Avalon Hill games I've purchased over the last 10-15 years. Games like War at Sea, Storm Over Arnhem, London's Burning, etc., can be played at least once a year amidst the avalanche of newer titles that seem to come out each day as they are good games.

As a testament to how good some of these games are, they keep getting reissued, albeit with state of the art components. GMT's Successors, Compass' African Campaign, Phalanx's Hannibal & Hamilcar, etc., are all older Avalon Hill titles. Could all of the buyers be simply stockpiling them for nostalgia purposes? Or, are they good games worth a facelift that can be enjoyed by a new generation? Later this year there will be new versions of Successors from Phalanx Games, Korea from Compass Games, and a new Russian Campaign from GMT, so the desire for these older games still exists. I recently came across the Avalon Hill gamers Facebook page, where there is a very large and active community still enjoying these games. Even in the face of newer games with lavish rulebooks and components, the old Avalon Hill games can survive. Avalon Hill...you did good!