

# PAPER WARS



Issue #6

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SPI's

Jackson at the Crossroads

Game Designers' Workshop's  
White Death

SPI's

Cobra

The Gamers'

Stalingrad Pocket

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Cover Illustration: Reproduced from the front cover of SPI's *Jackson at the Crossroads*

HEN'S TOOTH

SPI's

# Jackson at the Crossroads

Published in 1981 • Designed by Joseph Reiser

reviewed by **George Chrestensen**

During May and June of 1862, Major General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson and his Confederate Army of the Shenandoah Valley were involved in a cat and mouse game with three separate armies commanded by Generals Banks, Fremont and MacDowell. Playing the part of the aggressive mouse, Jackson led his 16,000 strong force against Banks' contingent of 9,000 men at Winchester, Pennsylvania. After soundly thrashing Banks' forces, Jackson made plans to attack Harper's Ferry, cross the Potomac River and threaten an invasion of Maryland. President Lincoln, instead of rerouting Fremont or MacDowell north to counter the threat, had Fremont and MacDowell go into the valley to hunt down Jackson and destroy his forces once and for all.

Upon learning of Fremont's and MacDowell's intentions, Jackson had his forces turn south, travel along the Valley Pike, and with the help of Brigadier General Turner Ashby's cavalry, narrowly escaped the Union forces when they passed through Strasburg on June 1st, 1862. Reaching New Market on June 3rd, Jackson thought he had reached a temporary haven, ensuring this by burning the bridge across the north fork of the Shenandoah River behind him. Jackson's hopes were shattered, however, when Fremont's forces constructed a pontoon bridge across the river.

Jackson moved his forces toward Port Republic, a small town at the confluence of the north and south forks of the Shenandoah River. If he could outdistance Fremont and the spearhead of MacDowell's forces, which had joined in the chase, he could se-

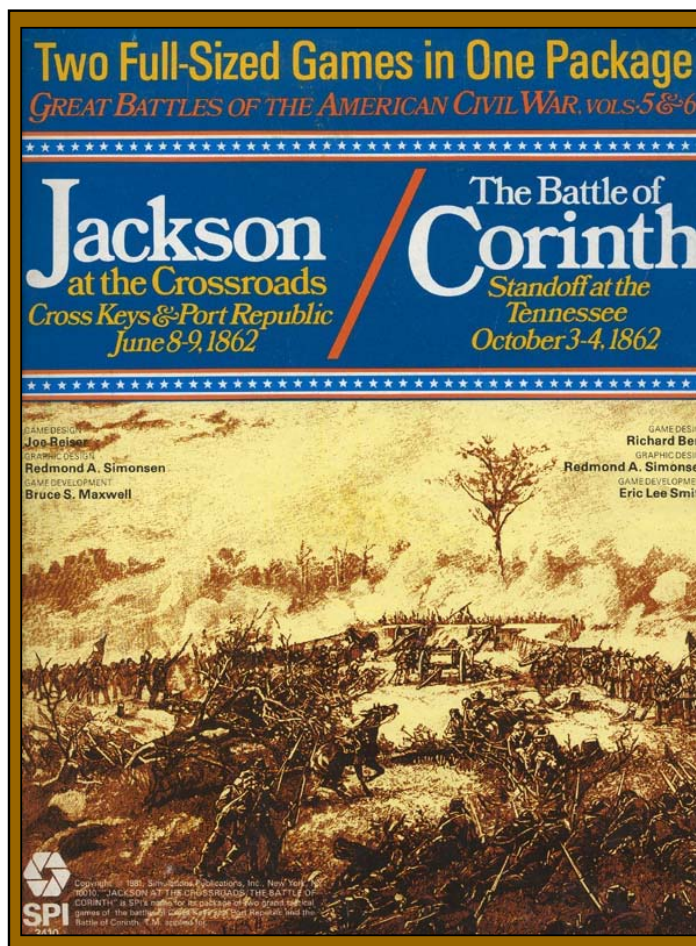
cure an eastern escape route across the Blue Ridge Mountains via the bridge at Port Republic. Despite heavy rains and the loss of Ashby, he was able to reach Port Republic on June 7th, where his forces encamped and rested. The next morning began with elements of Shields division fording the Shenandoah and entering Port Republic...

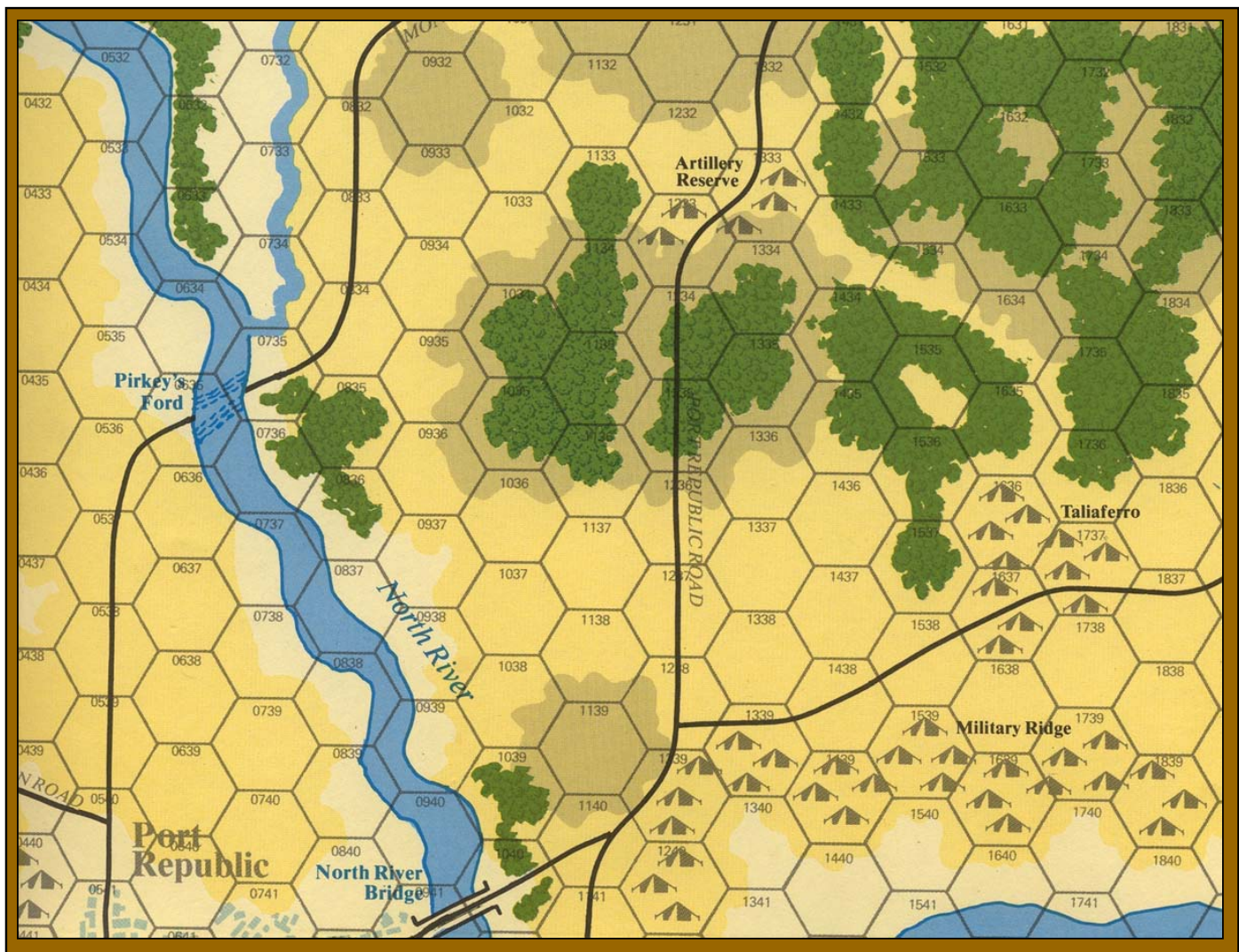
*Jackson at the Crossroads*, designed by Joseph Reiser, is volume five of SPI's *Great Battles of the Civil War* series. All six volumes share the same set of standard rules covering such areas as melee and fire combat, movement, formations and facing. These rules were covered in detail in the review of *The Battle of Corinth* in issue #4.

The map, scaled at 210 yards per hex, depicts the terrain around Cross Keys and Port Republic with impressive detail and esthetic appeal. Mill Creek and its accompanying ravine, running from east to west across the map, dominates the northern half of the battle area and provides an excellent initial position for Ewell's command at the start of the game. His division is the smaller of the two that the Confederates have, comprised of three brigades and seven artillery batteries, the latter

divided into sixteen sections. Jackson's division, encamped initially north of Port Republic, between Mill Creek and the Shenandoah River, has four brigades and three artillery batteries, the latter divided into eleven sections. An artillery reserve of four sections accompanies them. Only through one ford and a bridge across the North River can Jackson's men reach the town.

The remainder of Jackson's forces, the supply train, some rather weak cavalry, and three sections of ar-





brigades under his control to the attack. This is regulated by Fremont's initiative level, set via the Fremont Momentum Track, which in turn is set via the relative levels and total number of casualties on both sides. If a Confederate commander loses his brigade combat effectiveness due to combat with Fremont's division, Fremont gains momentum level points. Likewise, if one of Fremont's brigade commanders loses their brigade combat effectiveness, the opposite happens. This fits Fremont's attitude toward battle; if he appears to be winning, finish the job - if not, back off and fight another day. Brigade commanders may attempt to achieve individual initiative for units under their command, but the odds aren't easy; only one brigade's commander can do this per turn, and a die roll of one is required. Needless to say, such fighting abilities will leave the Union player wishing for loaded dice and the Confederate player ending up in the hospital from falling off his chair too many times due to uncontrollable laughter. Oh, and if Fremont's initiative level drops to zero, brigade commanders with individual initiative can be recalled by Fremont on a die roll of one or two.

The result of all of this is a hard row to hoe for the Union player if played historically. Blenker's forces have an even shot at routing if led; the chances of holding together drop to one chance in three without a leader, and to less than one chance in five if Blenker's units are enfiladed. With Blenker's Restraint holding Blenker's forces close to Fremont's, Ewell's division faces attack from only one direction. Any attempt at a vigorous attack could be reigned in by Fremont, or if setback occurs, could lead to Fremont putting on the brakes, resulting in at best stalemate and at worst disaster.

Always having been a strong believer in free will, especially for wargames, the last issue tends to get my goat - I can make my own mistakes, thank you. I understand that these rules make for a closer simulation of the historical event, but I also want a chance at changing history, having a little fun in the process. *Jackson at the Crossroads* does provide free-play scenarios, with modified victory conditions which give both sides a fair chance to win. The Union player's best strategy in this situation would be to use Fremont's force as the primary strike force, while Blenker distracts enough of Ewell's forces from another direction to prevent it's avoiding being overwhelmed by Fremont. Of course, you'd be wise to hit hard and fast, before Jackson rushes to Ewell's rescue. As the Confederate player, I'd strongly advise a fighting withdrawal toward Port Republic with Ewell's forces until Jackson's forces are officially alerted and can aid in your counterattack using Patton's and Taylor's brigades. Winder's and Taliaferro's brigades should

be used to secure Port Republic and both fords spanning the south fork of the Shenandoah River. In a pinch, they could be sent north to aid Ewell, but must return to Port Republic once all of Shield's forces enter the game.

*Jackson at the Crossroads* has three scenarios: Cross Keys, The Crossroads, and Port Republic. The Port Republic scenario depicts the battle on June 9th, when Jackson, after defeating Fremont, sent the bulk of his army south to attack the two lead brigades of Shield's division. It's short and sweet (eight turns and no Union idiocy rules), and make for a good introductory scenario. Cross Keys....

My favorite is the complete Crossroads two-day campaign scenario. It provides both players with the widest number of options if the free play option is exercised. Besides, nothing beats trying to steal into Port Republic and capture ol' Stonewall himself. Wahoo!!

*(Publisher's Note: See issue #4 for a review of Battle of Corinth, the other game in this package.)*

## THE CLASSICS

Game Designers' Workshop's  
*White Death*

Published in 1979 • Designed by Frank Chadwick

reviewed by **Randy Moorehead**

*White Death* was published by Game Designers' Workshop in the fall of 1979. It is an operational-level game of combat on the Eastern Front in the winter of 1942-1943. Components include one 22" x 28" map, 480 counters (full color, back-printed), various charts and tables, and two excellent, full color organizational displays. The cost of the game when first published was \$12.98 retail. The game comes in the late-1970's Game Designers' Workshop flat box, with cover art by Roger MacGowan.

The game received an excellent review in *Fire and Movement* #21 (April 1980) by Bill Sanders. Those collectors interested in a more in-depth analysis would do well to consult that issue. The game is unique for a number of reasons, but most especially in that it is a damn good game.

Unique? First, it set new standards for in-depth original research on a little known topic - the battle of Velikiye Luki. Shelby Stanton consulted original (microfilm) sources to construct the order of battle, and Frank Chadwick constructed the game system around it. The depth of this research is paralleled perhaps only by *Korsun Pocket* and *The Longest Day*. But, unlike either of those games, the designer created a first-rate game system to show off this research. Second, the slice-of-time game turn, with its alternating impulses, was a great way to solve the time-space problem created in so many standard move and fight games.

German units (battalion infantry, artillery batteries, platoon armor) must defend a city and rail line that runs the length of the map. Soviet units (regimental infantry) must rupture the German line, capture the

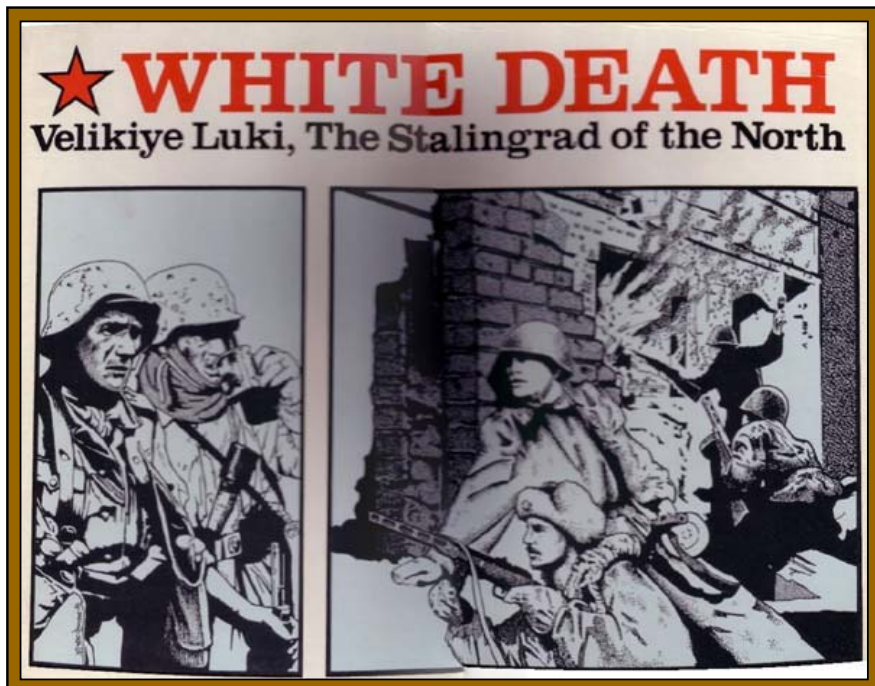
city and its bunkers hex-by-hex, as well as seize significant portions of the rail line to garner victory points. The counter mix is pleasing to the eyes, with feldgrau German units, light blue Luftwaffe troops, bright red Soviet Guards, brown Soviet regulars, and white (camouflaged?) ski troops. Units have standard unit symbols for infantry, artillery, etc, with vehicle silhouettes for armor. Strengths and movement categories are given on the counter front, with all other ratings on the counter back (morale, defense, antitank, barrage, support, etc.). This gives the game a nice feel of limited in-

telligence without becoming overbearing. Movement categories are tracked, wheeled, foot, ski, and draft animal.

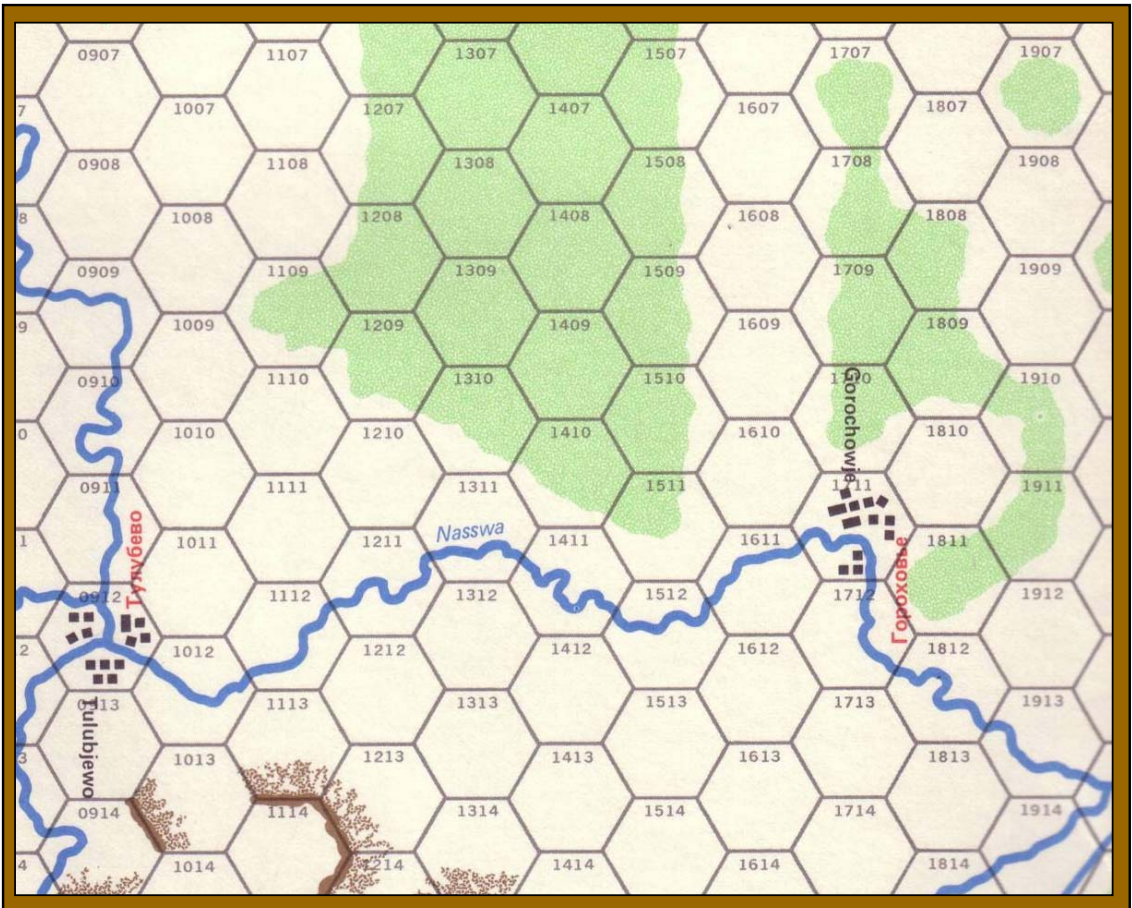
Veteran gamers will recognize many elements from other games, especially Game Designers' Workshop's *Avalanche* and *Operation Crusader*. But the most unique feature of *White Death* is its impulse movement system. Each turn allows each player ten movement

points to expend. Within each impulse, a player expends the number of points he wishes (within certain limits). Thus, a player may opt for several small impulses, or one or two large ones, with movement and combat intermixed. The Germans are allowed a greater flexibility in choosing action impulses, while the Soviets are somewhat restricted in theirs, reflecting doctrine and command limitations. What is amazing is that more games did not copy this system. Game Designers' Workshop's *Suez '73*, as well as Simulation Canada's *Inchon* and *Ortona*, are the only ones that did. It deserves to be rediscovered.

Collectors who have never played this game should



play at least the first scenario. It is only four turns, has the lowest counter density and quickest set up. The scenario should take about three hours to complete. If the Germans haven't caved in completely - which can happen if players are not experienced with the system - players can continue and play the full campaign. They will not be disappointed. The game balance is tight, and victory often hinges on a single German flak battalion hanging onto a rail town, desperately fending off hordes of Soviet infantry and tanks, while a column of Panzer IV's and Luftwaffe field troops drive to their relief. Great stuff!



towns must be defended to the death. The bridges at 1637 and 2025 should be covered by the initial set up, and destroyed on the initial German impulse. This means that the Soviets must bring up their own bridges. And, if the weather is thaw, players must remember rule 16-B (under Weather). It states that tracked, wheeled, and draft units may cross rivers only at a bridge. Still, if one player is more experienced with the system, he should probably play the Germans. Between equally experienced players, play balance is really not an issue.

Some players have commented the game is slightly unbalanced in favor of the Soviets. While I have never had a problem with the Germans, several comments are necessary concerning play. Make sure that you have the official errata, dated December 1979. The two most important changes are, first, the Soviet supply points are corrected, down from four on turns two through three and five on turns four through six, to three on each turn, and second, that ski units can retreat before combat (Rule 21-E).

Together, these rules changes mean fewer Soviet attacks, and the ability of the German ski units, if properly placed, to retreat before the advancing hordes of Soviet infantry, while screening them. I would also recommend use of optional Rule 23-Abandoned Equipment. This allows trapped German units the realistic option to save themselves and fight another day.

As for hints on actual play, much of the German strategy must be based on the Soviet line of advance. In general, though, the German must realize that Velikiye Luki will eventually fall, and that the majority of Soviet victory points will probably come from occupation of the rail-line towns. These

## Various Doings

by **Rich Erwin**

Pacific Rim Publishing's *Blood and Iron*, an operational game on the battles between France, Germany and Austria from 1859-1873, has been expanded to six hundred counters and is going through final pre-production fixes. Other games being prepped for publication are *Grant Invades the South* (a companion game to *Lee Invades the North*), *Frozen Chosin*, *To Make Georgia Howl*, *Kestenga* (a companion game for *Salla*), and a game on the World War II battle of Arracourt. No word as yet on when CounterAttack #4, with its future Korean conflict game, is due out.

GMT Games' two newest games, *Arctic Storm* (Russo-Finnish War) and *Operation Mercury* (Van Von Borries revision of *Air Assault on Crete*) should be on show at Origins. They also plan on having their future Korean conflict game out come mid-October, *Lion of the North* (based on the campaigns of Gustavas Aldolphus during the Thirty Years War) in February 1993, and *The American Civil War*, a "graphic masterpiece," according to Gene Billingsley, that will make *SPQR* pale in comparison, out at Origins 1993. (The last will also be an interesting project to watch, as Gene, Mark Herman and Richard Berg are co-designing the final product.) Among other titles being worked on are Vance Von Borries' *Italian Campaign*, A five-battle set on the campaigns of Frederick the Great, two World War II air warfare games (*Down in Flames* and *Corsair*), and *Three Days of Waterloo*, a quadrigame which, like *Napoleon's Last Battles*, can be combined into a single campaign game. We've been told the game system will be very different from that of Kevin Zucker's Napoleonic designs, however. Sadly, for all of you Bulge fans out there, *Eagles in the Snow* is just not working well and may be shelved until other designs are completed.

Among the many titles The Gamers have under consideration or development are five new titles in their Tactical Combat Series. These are on the invasion of Maelme airfield in Crete (tentative title is *Hunters From the Sky*), the battle of Kransi Bor (Eastern Front, February 1943, involving the Spanish Blue Division), Arracourt (France, Summer 1944), Matinkatu (battles around Guadalcanal) and a game concerning the German Gross Deutschland division. Also possible in The Gamers' Operational Combat Series format, after their upcoming *Guderian's*

*Blitzkrieg*, are games on Sicily, Burma, the drive on Leningrad by Army Group North, and a monster North Africa game.

Columbia Games should have *WestFront* out for Origins. It will deal with The War in the West from 1943 - 45, and can be connected to *EastFront* and their newest project, *MedFront*. *MedFront*, due some time in '93, will provide an expansion board and units for the North African Campaign and also provide units for a France 1940 and Operation Sea Lion variants. Both new games are expected to sell at approximately \$50.

*Napoleon*, essentially out of print with Avalon Hill and reverting back to Columbia Games' ownership is expected to be released in an improved and modified second edition sometime in the summer or fall of this year.

## FUTURE GEM

The Gamers'

*Stalingrad Pocket*

Published in 1992 • Designed by Masahiro Yamazaki

reviewed by Rich Erwin

I know, I know. I promised you something on *Omaha*. But trust me, what we'll be talking about is the Mazda Miata of wargames - a Japanese creation, very hot, with a heavy emphasis on red(s) (or Reds), and very tough to keep in stock. All we need now are the game stores requiring buyers to pay higher than list price! ("Gee, I dunno, that game goes awfully quick, but with a little up front, I suppose I can talk my distributor into sending a few extra my way...")

What I'm talking about is The Gamers' *Stalingrad Pocket*, designed by Masahiro Yamazaki. The American hobby's first view of his work was the recent 3W game *Zitadelle*, which had promise but also holes in its development that kept it from being an excellent product. Integrating the game into Dean Essig's new Standard Combat Series system, *Stalingrad Pocket* has been transformed from what could have been another flawed diamond into a product that, had its release date been better timed, would have been a Charles S. Roberts winner hands down.

The game's topic is the 1942 Soviet winter counteroffensive in and around Stalingrad, which led to both the destruction of the German Sixth Army and of any further chances of Germany's conquering the Soviet Union. Each game turn represents two days, and each hex covers 5.5 kilometers.

As with their most recent designs, The Gamers include two rule books; one for the Standard Combat Series, and one for *Stalingrad Pocket* in particular. Each are eight pages long, and the only wrinkles that will both upset and fascinate the old grognards concern Soviet headquarters and calculating odds in

attacks. While it may seem strange to have two rule books, in a production sense it's quite wise. With a standard set of rules, as in the Tactical Combat Series, Standard Combat Series and Operational Combat Series games, The Gamers can shorten their production schedules by not having to reintegrate the same rules into each new game designed. Players, in turn, don't have to hunt for the rules specific to the game they're playing.

The hex designation system can be frustrating at first when setting up the scenarios. Read the North section on page one of the *Stalingrad Pocket* rules, keep cognizant of the direction of North in the game, and it should work out.

The sequence of play is simple. Check for supply, move, fight, and exploit (move again/conduct overrun attacks) if your units are qualified to do so.

The map maintains The Gamers' level of quality established with their most recent Civil War games, and everything you need is on it - no creeping chart disease here. The counters, depending on your opinion of whether numbers should have a three dimensional effect or not, as well as whether every

color under the rainbow should be used to simplify differentiation of units, are either very garish or among the best in the hobby. I personally don't think non-silhouette counters could look much better than these.

The game portrays a slow, sledgehammer-oriented force against a more agile but very thinly spread opponent. This is best shown in the Soviet headquarters and exploitation rules. Soviet units must be within a specified range of their related army headquarters unit, or they go out of supply and become





fresh meat for the German mechanized forces. The Germans will watch their Rumanian allies melt away like snow before a blowtorch, but with exploitation, it will be possible to attack a Soviet unit out of supply, eliminate it, and move a safe distance from the mass of Soviet forces.

The biggest surprise is, when setting odds for attacks, you round in favor of the attacker, not the defender. All those five to two attacks will finally get the three to one odds you've always felt they deserved! Of course, that cuts both ways, so be careful when defending.

When *Panzergruppe Guderian* came out, it electrified board wargaming with a simple set of rules and just enough chrome and design twists to attract new people into the hobby while keeping it interesting for experienced gamers. With *Stalingrad Pocket*, we have another one of these rare items that will serve well as a teaching tool and as an exciting game, worth every penny.

## HIDDEN JEWEL

SPI's  
*Cobra*Published in *Strategy & Tactics* #65 in 1977 • Designed by **Brad E. Hessel**reviewed by **Graham Stephen's**

One of the offshoots of the venerable *Panzergruppe Guderian* system is the operational level simulation of the Normandy breakout entitled *Cobra*. Most games about the Normandy campaign fall either into the game or simulation category. This game, interestingly enough, fills a niche between the two extremes. While not in the same class as *Atlantic Wall*, this is definitely not a game for the uninitiated. Although based upon a straightforward system, the game has a great deal of chrome which would tend to confuse the newcomer.

Combat, for example, is the usual routine of determining odds and rolling a die. However, due to the plethora of factors which shift final odds, the player must learn several nuances of the game before he will feel comfortable playing either side. Examples of chrome include Allied air power, terrain, leadership and tank superiority. Each of these provide at least one shift to the right or left on the final odds. In addition, all the shifts are cumulative. Air power, for example, is abstracted in the form of points which can be applied to any attack of the Allied player's choice. The result is a shift of one column in favor of the attacker (to the right). The Allied player receives six points in clear weather and three points when clouds appear. The other effect of air power is to reduce German movement by two thirds or one third depending, once again, upon weather. The Allies are also allowed one carpet bombing attack per game, more of which, anon.

Terrain is probably the biggest help the German has in this game. Most of this battle occurs in bocage country. This automatically provides one defensive

column shift to the left. In addition, other terrain such as hills and forest provide additional shifts. This makes a panzer division defending in dense woods a tough nut to crack.

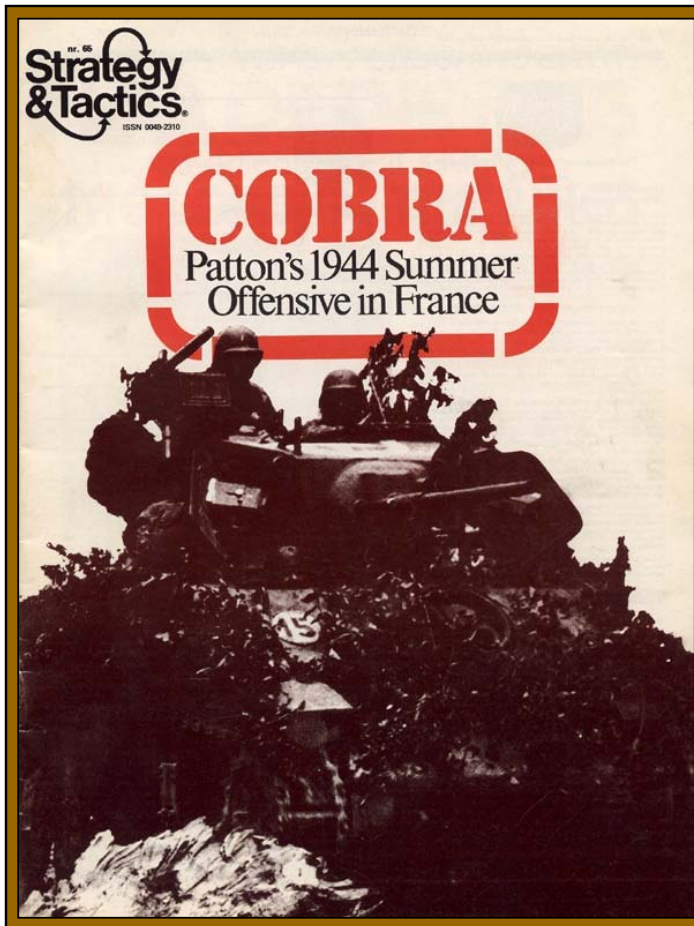
Leadership is represented in different ways for both sides. The Germans have several corps level headquarters which provide one column shift (defensive or offensive) to all units within their leadership radius. The Allies, on the other hand, receive a Patton counter which can give up to a two-column shift in attacks to the combat of choice.

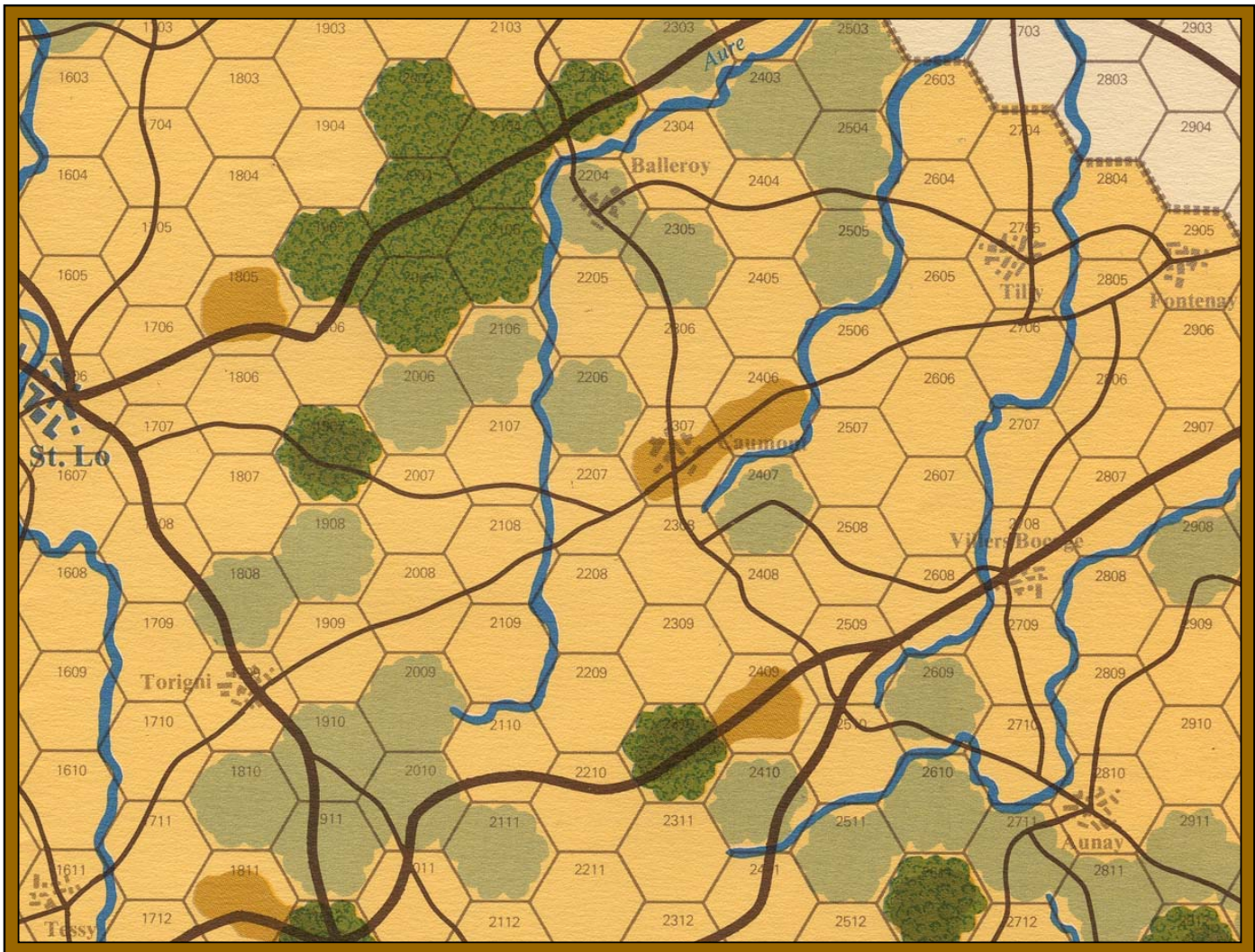
The Germans also have four Tiger companies. These gentlemen only have a combat value of two. However, they do not count against stacking and give a favorable shift in whatever combat in which they are involved. The Allies (surprise!) have no equivalent unit.

The above rules combine with a combat results table which does not include an outright defender eliminated to give the player an excellent feel for this battle. Combat results are satisfied by either step losses or retreats. Therefore, even at ten-to-one odds, the only way to assure a unit's destruction is to surround it, which isn't easy in bocage. This combined with the fact an at-

tacker may only advance one hex after combat in bocage will realistically produce the same sense of frustration which was felt historically by the Americans. Obviously, the result is gains will be measured in yards rather than miles. The Allied player will easily identify with the poor G. I. who was constantly called on to make one more attack and constantly saw one more hill to go.

While bocage will effect mainly the Americans,





British and Canadian forces will have their own problems in the form of several Waffen SS Panzer divisions. The majority of German armor is located on the Allies left flank to protect the open terrain and the city of Caen.

Lest things appear too grim for the Yanks, we should look at conditions on the German side of the coin. The German player starts the game with most of his infantry divisions depleted. When the weather is clear, these units will be unable to disengage themselves to replenish themselves. Due to this and the thin trickle of reinforcements provided, the German will see himself on the thin edge of disaster (and rightfully so). The German will look at the overwhelming force at the enemy's disposal and realize that his line is like an eggshell. If the Allies achieve a breakthrough, the entire line will be shattered. The German player will have the same feeling of impending doom which was prevalent in the participants involved in 1944. Additionally, the German player will find himself praying to the god of the die for stormy weather at the beginning of each turn which is the only thing which will provide relief from Allied Typhoons.

The supply rules have an interesting twist. Supply lines can be any length; however, the Allied player only gets six points per turn (three for the British and three for the Americans—they are not interchangeable). One point must be spent for each attack - no points, no attack. This, in my opinion, is a simple and elegant way of simulating the limitations placed on the Allies due to the Mulberry docks situation.

Another interesting nuance of this game is the fact the same factors which hinder the Allied advance will also effect German offensive operations. This simulates the same hard lesson that Panzer Lehr learned in 1944.

When discussing the components of this game, a distinction must be made between the two editions. SPI first published *Cobra* during their heyday during the 1970's. TSR reprinted *Cobra* after it obtained SPI's assets. The first version can best be described as vintage SPI. The map is functional with many colors to represent the different types of terrain. The colors do not clash with themselves or the counters. TSR's version is basically a reprint of

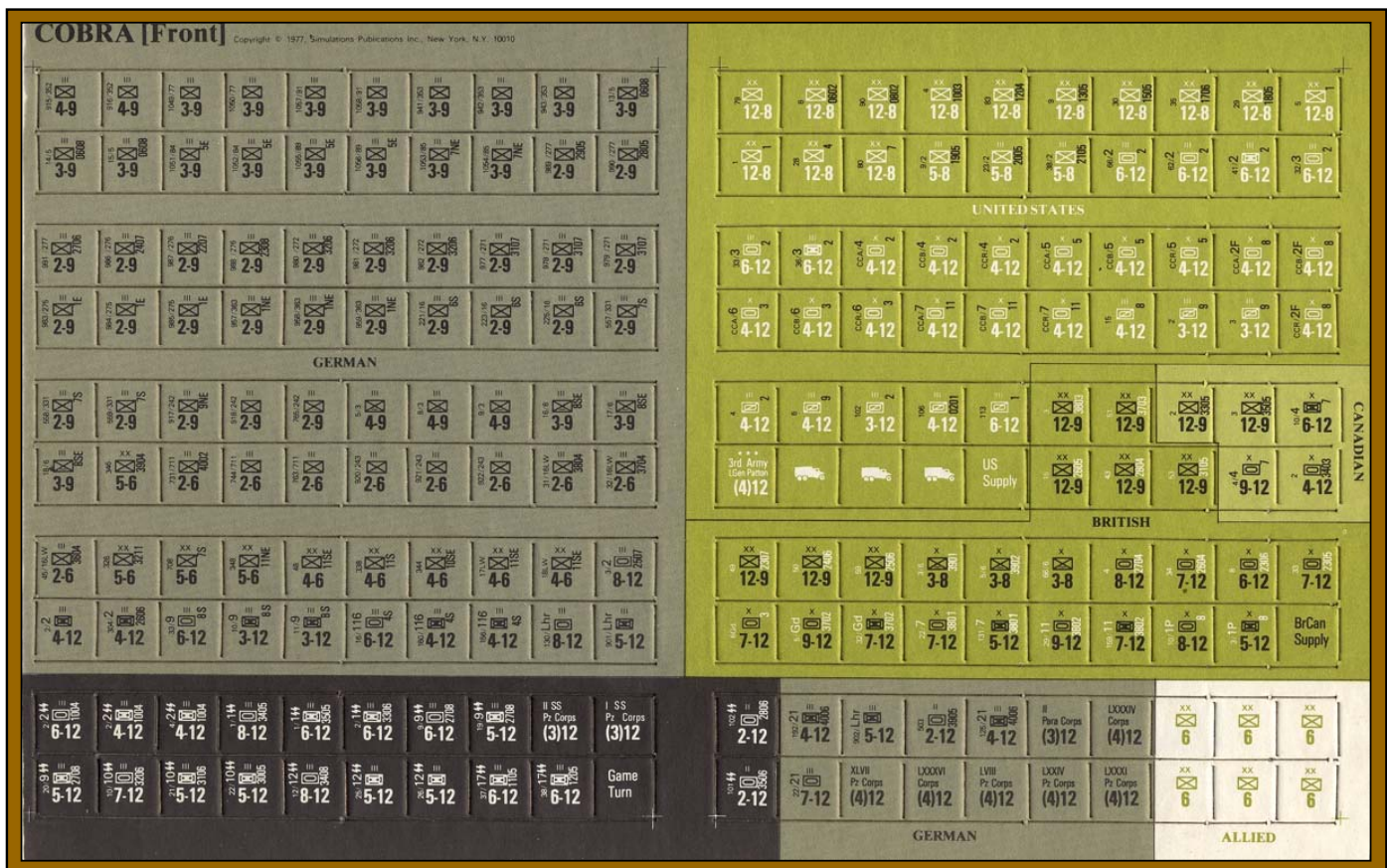
the original with a few minor rule changes to correct the very few problems which appeared in the first edition. In addition, TSR's version includes an extra map which covers the original beach invasions. If you buy this version, you will, in essence, obtain an extra game with five extra pages of rules to simulate this aspect of the period. There is also a significant difference between the counters. As stated above, the original version was what you would expect from SPI in that period. TSR, however, put a glossy finish upon the counters.

When reviewing the components, I have to admit to a certain bias to SPI's products. I have a tendency to get eyestrain from counters with a glossy finish. I also feel that, for the most part, when TSR made significant changes to the original product in their reprint series, it was usually for the poorer. This is the one reprint which I know of where TSR made changes which actually improved the product. One of the examples of the rules changes is, in the reprint, the weather is automatically clear on the first turn. This will allow the Allied player to carpet bomb the area of choice on turn one thus leading to a more historical result. I have played the original game where the German player got three turns of bad weather at the beginning of the game. I can assure the reader that this has a very significant effect on how the game plays.

As stated in previous articles, I have a fondness for

games which require historical tactics to produce historical results. In my experience, this game can recreate history in an almost uncanny way. In my experience, given clear weather, the Allied player is best served by carpet bombing a weak section of the German line such as II Para Korps east of St. Lo. This is the one time in the game when the German player does not have the option to retreat rather than take casualties. The Allied player can then use a combination of overruns and attacks to punch a hole in the German line. After this breakthrough, the Allied player should exploit to the southwest toward Granville. He will then have about one fifth of the German forces, including three mechanized divisions, in the bag. While substantial forces will be tied down eliminating this pocket, the remaining forces will be busy turning the flank of the remaining German units. At this point, maneuver is more important than firepower (sounds like the real life Operation Cobra to me).

The Allied player must then drive in a southeast direction while he takes advantage of any weak points in the German lines to attack and rake up casualties. Believe me, there will be plenty of such points in the line. As you can probably imagine, the German player will not share the enthusiasm of his opponent as he watches his dead pile get higher and his line more stretched. Do not despair, though, German player, this is where the magic of victory points comes into the picture! If the German player can



keep a solid line, preserve one half of his units, and position his mechanized units to exit off the east side of the board; he will achieve a marginal German victory based upon victory points. You are invited to imagine the look on the Allied player's face when, at the end of the game, he discovers this fact for the first time.

The German player must look upon his line as a door with the hinge at Caen. The power of the SS units in that location will make it impossible for the British to penetrate the line at this position for most of the game. The German must retreat with his left flank toward the east and keep as solid a line as possible under the circumstances. He will receive a trickle of reinforcements which, given average luck and skill, should be just enough to keep his line from being ripped open. As the game progresses, he will be forced to fill some gaps with mechanized units. The very thought of this should be enough to make any would be Guderian nauseous, however, this simulates the tactics the German generals had to adopt in an increasingly desperate battle.

Having discussed what works, it is only fair that I mention what will fail. There are a few things which may suggest themselves to the players the first time they set up *Cobra*. The first is for the Allies to attack with the British in the Caen area. The British have more armor and supplies than the Americans on the first turn as well as the clear terrain. **DO NOT DO THIS!** The German panzer divisions along with their headquarters support and Tiger tanks will repulse the British with heavy losses. One of the basic doctrines of the successful blitzkrieg is to attack the enemy where he is weakest. Here, that means the American sector.

The other major mistake of which I am aware is to attack along the whole line rather than specific weak points. Although this is an attrition technique which was used by Eisenhower in the weeks prior to this offensive, the combat results table and supply limitations will not make this a viable alternative in this situation.

The German player must also guard against mistakes which will cost him the game. His major mistake is to denude the Caen area of armor too quickly. This will invite an attack and breakthrough from the British. Due to the terrain, this will cost the German player the game very early. The German must keep in mind that, no matter how grim the situation looks at this time, that he will always have victory conditions to pull his bacon out of the fire.

Intellectually, this is a very satisfying game. After playing this game several times, I read *Overlord* by Max Hastings and discovered that my tactics produced results which were so close to history that it

was almost like *deja vu*. I can recommend this game to any wargamer with any interest in this campaign. The game is a very playable simulation. As stated previously, this game can be confusing to the newcomer, however, to someone with only moderate experience, *Cobra* can be learned with a minimum of effort. It will be playable for these people in one evenings time! I believe that most readers can see the charm in such a characteristic.

For those who cannot resist the pleasure of messing with the rules, I would suggest reading *Battleplan #2*. (*Publisher's Note: Battleplan magazine is no longer in business.*) This includes a few rule changes which add a little spice to the game. I would also suggest a rule change of my own. The rules as written permit the Allies to replenish any number of units they desire subject to being three or more hexes from the enemy. Although this is probably realistic for the Americans, the British were running out of men. It might be reasonable to give the British some limits regarding their ability to replenish infantry divisions. Considering how quickly the tank losses of Operation Goodwood were replaced, they should be allowed to replenish their armor divisions as much as needed. Although I am only an amateur historian, it might be reasonable to restrict the British to a maximum of three infantry steps per turn, which is the same limit placed upon the Germans.

## *Across the Pond*

by **Rich Erwin**

The Private is a newsletter out England, and a fine start so far. Alan McClenahan and Duncan Maclean provide a quick overview of new games, a couple of in-depth reviews of what strikes their fancy among the latest entries, various game variants and other odds and ends, and a mild obsession with *Sirocco*. In fact, the only weakness I've seen in the entire rag has been Private Investigations, where various wargaming personalities are given a set of questions to answer. So far, it hasn't exactly shone (though not for want of trying by the editors). The Design Feedback section they tried in issue #1 provides a much better picture of the mindset of today's movers and shakers, and should be expanded. Highly recommended.

In 1989 Mike Siggins began to create a newsletter that discussed continental European (non-British, non-American) board games.. Sumo's Karaoke Club, now up to issue #8, is jam-packed with anything and everything you can imagine in the board gaming industry, covering everything from war-games to the latest Ravensberger release. The emphasis on his original intentions is still there (with a major focus on German products), but if you have any interest in this area, Europe is where the action is for general board games, and Mike has his pulse on the action better than anyone else. To top it all off, Mike is in the process of collecting English translations of European games you've bought and would actually like to play someday.

## Editorial

by **Rich Erwin**

Once again, short and sweet...

I apologize for the excess on World War II; I usually succeed at covering a diverse set of periods in the game reviews, but that's the way the cards fell this time around. Of course, all you panzerheads out there ought to be in seventh heaven with this issue. You'll be even more so when Rhino Games' *Campaign to Stalingrad* and The Gamers' *Guderian's Blitzkrieg* get reviewed in the next issue (as I cross my fingers and hope and plan...). It looks as though we'll have reviews on *Bonaparte in Italy* and *Belleau Wood* for Issue #7 as well, so we should return to the right mix with the next issue.

I now have the finalists and winners for every year of the Origins and Charles Roberts awards except for 1986. If anyone can give me a helping hand on this, I'd really appreciate it.

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### How The Wargame Collector's Journal Works

Every issue, The Wargame Collector's Journal will publish articles on four types of games:

- **Future Gems:** Current games with a potential for good investment;
- **Hidden Jewels:** Inexpensive collectibles with high playability;
- **Hen's Teeth:** The rarest of the rare.
- **Third World:** Wargames produced by very small publishers.

We'll also let you know about games of note that don't quite fit the above four slots, as well as new games we consider worthy of note but not quite a Future Gem. We'll also publish articles on the history of various wargame companies and the opinions of the leading lights of the hobby. We'll be glad to accept any collectible game reviews that you're willing to send us. We do ask that articles be around 1,200-2,000 words, with a full discussion of the components, the playability, the collectibility and the quirks of the game.

## THIRD WORLD

Perry Moore's

*Last Battles of the Reich*

Published in 1991 • Designed by Perry Moore

reviewed by **Scott Hannon**

*Last Battles of the Reich*, from Perry Moore, is comprised of four different games, each covering a late-World War II Axis offensive. For those unfamiliar with his games, they are amateur productions, with photocopied components and uncut counters mounted on thin card stock. While the rules vary greatly in clarity and presentation, all contain enough omissions and foggy rules so as to make them unsuitable for new gamers. They are also unsuitable for rules-lawyer types for the same reason. A basic understanding of wargaming concepts (as well as some historical background and common sense) are needed to play the games. That said, they can be quite enjoyable for those willing to work around the games' faults.

*Defend Berlin* covers the German spoiling attack around Frankfurt am Oder and Küstrin in late March of 1945. The aim was to force a Soviet withdrawal from their bridgehead over the Oder river between Frankfurt and Küstrin, or force the Soviets to waste their supplies on a counterattack. Historically the attack failed. This was the last German offensive of the war.

The game is an odd mixture of standard wargaming concepts applied to an unusual sequence of play, with harsh supply rules and victory conditions. Combat is odds-based, with terrain modifying the defender's strength or the combat resolution die roll. Combat results are either no effect or defender retreat one, two or three hexes. An unusual feature is that any advance after combat depends on the defender's strength. Artillery units may either support attacks (but not defenses) in the combat phase, or fire separately in a barrage phase. The aim of barrage attacks is to disrupt enemy stacks, which gives them unfavorable die modifiers in the combat phases.

One of the main features of this game is the supply rules. All units must expend ammo points to attack, and the Axis player must also expend fuel points to move stacks containing mechanized units. These are limited for both players, but the game is small enough that the bookkeeping required is rather minimal. The whole emphasis of the game is to do as much as possible with as little as possible. The Soviet player in particular is severely penalized for initiating more than a few combats.

Although the rules are a bit unclear in spots, and the set up instructions contain a few mistakes or omissions, the game plays fairly smoothly. The main problem with the game is that it's dull. The penalties for the Soviet player initiating more than two or three attacks are so severe, they rarely do any attacking. With locking zones of control which may only be exited as a result of combat, he doesn't do a whole lot of moving either. As noted in the rules, the Axis player must keep reserves, else he'll get bogged down too!

I tried doing some historical research on this battle, but didn't find much. Two sources, *The Russo-German War: January 25-May 8, 1945* by W. Victor Madeja, and *Stalingrad to Berlin* by Earl Ziemke, say Küstrin was already cut off by the time this battle began. In this game, Küstrin is still attached to the German lines. Fortunately, the city generally plays only a minor role in the game. Apart from this error/fudge, the game seems to capture the situation quite well.

*Nordwind* covers the German attack into the Alsace region of France in January of 1945. The Germans hoped to recapture Strasbourg, or at least inflict enough damage on the Americans to cause a diversion of effort away from the Ardennes. The attack failed. The game also has a few variants that tend to give the German player a better chance of success.

The game uses odds-based combat, with the odds column dependent on the terrain in the defender's hex. Artillery units may only support attacks (no defensive support or barrages). The final combat odds may be effected by combat potential, which is based upon the number and quality of the attacking units. Units are either elite, line, or depleted, and remain as such throughout the game. Once the sum of the combat potential of the attacking units is found, a die is rolled to see if any combat odds shifts result. Combat results in no effect, defender retreats, disruptions, and defender eliminations. Disrupted units may not move nor attack, and cause unfavorable die modifiers when defending. The German player has an extra combat phase after his movement phase where his units may attack again. However, line and depleted units automatically disrupt after the attack. Units roll a die to recover from disruptions in their Recovery Phase.

The German player usually expends one ammo point per attack. By expending two, he gains a favorable combat odds shift, while expending none leads to an unfavorable shift. When all of a corps' ammo points have been expended, its units attack at half strength. Only the German player must keep track of ammo.

The other major design feature of the game is the zone of control rules. It requires two US/French battalions or three German battalions to exert a zone of control. All regiments exert them as well. Due to the historical deployment, the US player soon finds himself in big trouble, as German units move past lone battalions and surround them. The piecemeal release of US player reinforcements, along with the attrition of front line units, can pose serious problems for the US player, as he must make carefully considered decisions on when to withdraw, where to reinforce, and where and when to counter-attack. Quite exciting!

Historically, I could find no major faults with the game, although a few trivial fudges were apparent (the 10th SS starts on the map instead on entering, and elements of a few US task forces are assigned to other divisions). For those who might be interested in this battle, there was a nice article on it in World War II magazine, May 1990, by wargame designer Danny Parker.

Overall the game is a winner, providing interesting challenges for both players. While the combat potential calculations can be tedious, and the Germans tend to do a bit too well compared to history, the game remains tense and challenging from beginning to end. Well done, Mr. Moore. If only the production standards of this game were improved, it might prove to be quite popular.

*Operation Spring Awakening* covers the Axis attack and Soviet counter-offensive near Lake Balaton in Hungary in March of 1945. The Axis hoped to cut off the salient south of Lake Balaton, and thereby divert Soviet attention from a possible offensive against Vienna. The game covers only the northern pincher of this battle. In the game's introduction, the battle is described as being similar to the Battle of the Bulge; In some respects, I find Kursk to be a closer parallel. Historically, the Axis lost badly. The game includes three variants that tend to give the Axis player a better chance of success.

While the game uses a standard move-fight sequence, an anti-tank fire phase at the beginning of each turn gives armor units the potential of being attacked twice per turn. Each unit, based upon the size of the formation it represents, has an anti-tank strength. During his anti-tank fire phase, a player may use this rating to attack any one adjacent enemy armor unit. The results of this combat are no

effect, or a hit on the enemy armor. A unit taking a hit is reduced in strength via step reduction. The German player has many weak panzer divisions on the front line, so he is especially hard hit by this combat.

Combat is resolved using a standard odds-based results table, with terrain, air power, and armor superiority column shifts and die modifiers. While these are all workable, I found the implementation of the armor superiority rules quite cumbersome. Combat results only in retreats, but units unable to retreat take step losses instead. Stacks containing German units are allowed to retreat through enemy zones of control, while Soviet units may not. Victorious attackers may advance along the defenders path of retreat.

The Axis player must expend attack points to enable his units to attack. These are quite limited, so his attacks should be planned carefully. If the Axis player has not captured an objective hex by turn eleven, he is required to withdraw his units toward the start line. Around this time the Soviet player receives strong reinforcements, and so will usually launch his own offensive against the already over-extended Axis forces.

The game tends to follow history, with the Axis player making a slow advance, followed by a withdrawal toward the start line and beyond. I found the game rather tiring, as initial Axis progress is rather slow, and they seem quite unlikely to capture an objective. All three games I played followed the same course, and generally ended in disaster for the Axis. It might be better to end the game if the Axis can't capture an objective hex on time, as the Soviet offensive is rather one-sided, and adds a few hours to the game's length.

Overall, the game does a fairly good job of recreating history, but play is a bit cumbersome. Victory conditions are such that the game must be played to a conclusion, and with eighteen turns, that's just too long.

*Sonnenwende* covers the German attack towards Arnswalde in mid-February 1945. The attack was an attempt to cut off the advance units of the Soviet forces between Arnswalde and Kuestrin. While failing to trap the Soviets, it did worry Stalin enough that he delayed any assault on Berlin until Pomerania could be cleared. The game includes a few variants that help the German player.

Unlike the other three games in this set, this game uses a strength differential, as opposed to an odds ratio, to determine combat results. Headquarters units, which also represent divisional artillery assets, can be used to assist attacks, but not defenses. They may also use counter-battery fire to try and

disrupt enemy headquarters in range that are attacking friendly units. Terrain, air power, armor superiority, and anti-tank effects are all handled using either die modifiers or column shifts. As with *Nordwind*, units are rated as elite, line, or depleted, and this rating is used for determining retreat length. The rating is also used to determine combat potential, which may lead to column shifts when resolving combat, but unlike *Nordwind*, the implementation here is very quick and easy to use.

The game uses a rather involved command and control system for the Germans (but not the Soviets). During the Corps Activation Phase, the German player rolls a die to determine how many corps headquarters may be activated. The corps headquarters must be within range of the army headquarters (ten or seven hexes) to be eligible. Only activated corps may move or attack. For a unit to attack, its divisional headquarters must be within four movement points of its corps headquarters. These requirements, along with the supply rules, force the German to attack along roads on a rather narrow front. The army headquarters must be shifted back and forth behind the front lines to allow the different corps to be activated, and leads to corps launching generally uncoordinated attacks.

Victory points are earned by the German player for capturing towns and cities, as well as for destroying Soviet units. Unlike many other games, the captured hex need not be in supply for the German to gain his victory points; thus the Soviet player must assault captured hexes to regain their control. The German player also gets victory points for exiting units off the south map edge, but unless playing one of the variants, this is unlikely to occur.

The game plays rather smoothly and quickly. The command and control rules force the German player to deploy his headquarters very carefully. In addition, he must use the advance after combat option to try and keep the battle mobile rather than static. The Soviet player has few units on the map, and his reinforcements arrive rather late (they enter the south map edge on or after turn six), so he can't afford to lose more than about ten of them before uncontrollable breaches occur in the front lines.

While the game does have its share of foggy rules, as well as a few unit set up omissions, overall I was pleased with the game. The game presents any interesting battle that is challenging and fun for both players.

In summary, I found both the *Sonnenwende* and *Nordwind* games to be quite good; well worth looking into for interested gamers. *Nordwind* in particular has the potential for being popular if its components were brought up to professional standards.

# Atlanticon '92 Game Auction

by **Andrew Reibman**

The Atlanticon '92 Auction was held July 4 and 5th. Mercifully, the stock sold out after two days, so no Sunday morning session was necessary. As usual, Bill Jaffe ran the auction at a blistering pace, using the hold up your cards until you can't stand the pain auction system. The infamous continuous Saturday session was broken by the auctioning of a mint condition can of Spam, reportedly purchased by Crazy Egor's buyer and eaten on the spot. In general, prices were down (do I hear recession?), and selection was poorer than in past years, but this may be caused partially by memories of attending last year's combined Origins/Atlanticon auction. I imagine that most of the real rarities went to Origins/Gencon. High price honors were captured by excellent copies of Avalon Hill's *Year of our Lord* and *Air Empire*. Piles of mint post-#40 Strategy & Tactics' and post-#20 Wargamers were available at an average price of about \$5. Recent games went for more than common older out-of-print (re: not collectible) games. Large volumes of the more common SPI, Game Designers' Workshop, and older Avalon Hill games also sold at very low prices.

## Notable collectibles in the regular auction:

Fury in the West (Battleline) M5  
 Stand and Die (Game Designers' Workshop) M26  
 Franco Prussian War (SPI) M24  
 Iron Bottom Sound (Quarterdeck) M15  
 Cannae (IES) M23  
 Great Western Railway (Gibson) M23  
 L. Grand Armee (SPI) P10  
 DNO/UNT (Game Designers' Workshop) P20  
 Eylau (Clash of Arms Games) M30  
 Trireme (Avalon Hill) M26  
 To the Green Fields Beyond (SPI) P23  
 Leopard II (Tsukuda) M17  
 Next War (SPI) P24  
 Malaya & Burma (Hobby Japan) M23  
 Ceasar's Legions (Avalon Hill) P16,P12,P11  
 Speed Circuit (Avalon Hill) (with metal cars) M16  
 Flying Tigers (Zocchi) M6.50  
 Norway 1940 (Hobby Japan) M17  
 Malaya (Excalibur) M6.50  
 Yamato (Tsu) M10  
 Verdun (Conflict Games) M40

## Collectors' Auction Section prices were:

War in the East (1st + 2nd Rules) P31  
 Russian Civil War (SPI) P44,P45,P30  
 Broadides (Milton Bradley) (no booklet) P16  
 Siege of Port Arthur (Strife) M10  
 Dogfight (Milton Bradley) (no booklet - 11), M35  
 Napoleon's Russian Campaign (Strife) M1  
 Hit the Beach (Milton Bradley) M35  
 Stalingrad (Avalon Hill - big box) P16  
 Skirmish (Milton Bradley) M16  
 U-Boat (Avalon Hill) (metal ships) 14  
 Chancellorsville (Avalon Hill - 1st) P7  
 Crimea (Game Designers' Workshop) P17  
 Verdict (Avalon Hill) Poor 4  
 Mukden 1905 (S&G) M13  
 Fortress Rhodesia (Raymond) M9  
 Dispatcher (Avalon Hill 58) M56  
 Phalanx (Whitman) M15  
 Dispatcher (Avalon Hill 61) M56  
 Triplanetary (Game Designers' Workshop) M10  
 Dispatcher (Avalon Hill 48) no box/beaten up 10  
 Conflict (PB) M25  
 Air Empire (Avalon Hill) P82  
 Hannibal (Reziki) M19  
 Year of the Lord (Avalon Hill) pristine 100  
 Foil-Gamette (3M) M16  
 Candidate (Avalon Hill) M15  
 Albania (Taurus) P21  
 Mr. President (3M) M26,M22  
 Wooden Ships & Iron Men (Battleline) P10  
 Next President (Reiss) M26  
 Guadalcanal (Avalon Hill) P11,P12,P5  
 King of Kings (Good Industries) M15  
 1914 (Avalon Hill) P18,P17,P17  
 Diplomacy (GR - wooden blocks) no rules 12  
 Operation Condor (SIG) M13  
 Kaiserslacht 1918 (S&G) Xrox rules 60  
 Imperialism (FB) M15  
 Viva Espana (Battleline) M24  
 Command #1 M25,M24  
 Market Garden (3rd Millenium) M10  
 PBI (3rd Millenium) M9  
 First Indochina War (3rd Millenium) M11