

25th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

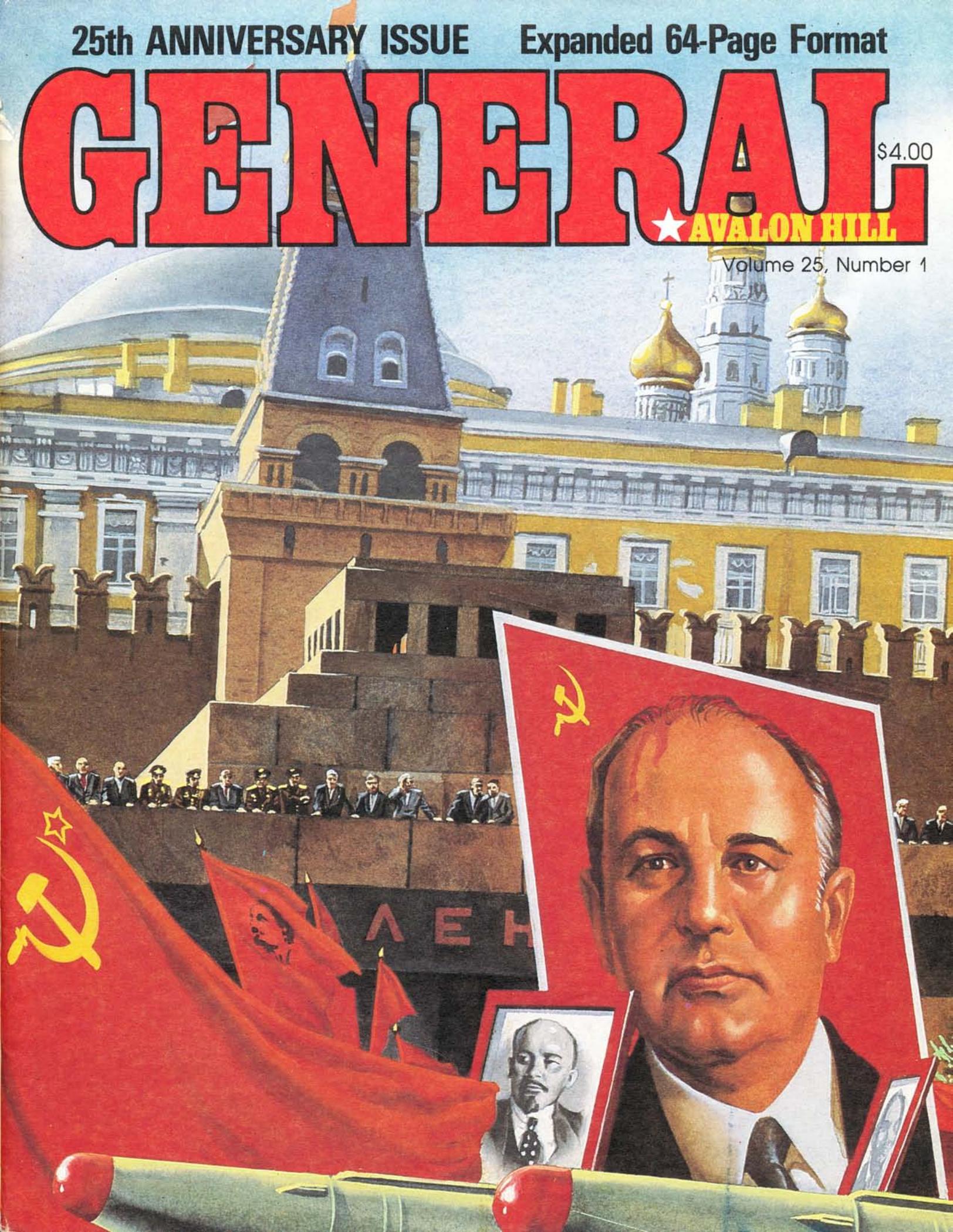
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# GENERAL

\$4.00

★ AVALON HILL

Volume 25, Number 1



# ★ ★ The AVALON HILL GENERAL

The Avalon Hill Game Company's *GENERAL* is dedicated to the presentation of authoritative articles on the strategy, tactics, and variation of our games of skill. Historical articles are included only insofar as they provide useful background information on current AH titles. The *GENERAL* is published by The Avalon Hill Game Company solely for the cultural edification of the serious game aficionado, in the hopes of improving the game owner's proficiency of play and providing services not otherwise available to the game buff. The Avalon Hill Game Company is a division of Monarch Avalon Industries, Inc. The shares of Monarch Avalon, Inc. are publicly traded on the NASDAQ System under the symbol MAHI. For information about the company write to Mike Bruno at the executive offices at the company, 4517 Harford Rd., Baltimore, MD 21214.

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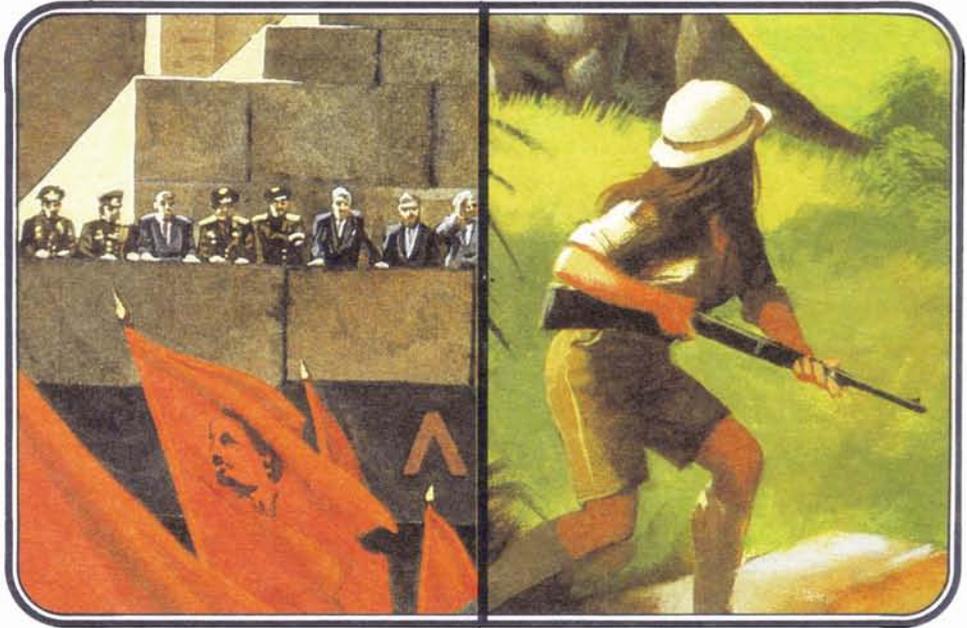
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**Rules Questions:** R&D. NOTE: all questions should be diagrammed. No questions can be answered which are unaccompanied by a self-addressed and stamped envelope. Questions must be based on rules of play (not historical or design matters) and be based on the current rules edition. Questions on more than one game must be listed on separate pages and accompanied by a separate \$ASE for each game.

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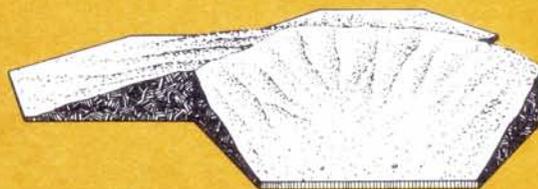
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# WEST OF ALAMEIN



**March 31st, 1941...**The 5th Light Division, just recently arrived in Libya, is on the attack. Its goal: to drive the fresh but green troops of the British 2nd Armoured Division out of their prepared defenses in the coastal bottleneck near Mersa el Brega. Men of the 8th Machinegun Battalion battle their way forward across the undulating sand dunes as Stukas prey on the defenders from above. Suddenly in the swirling dust they encounter minefields and wire. "Sappers forward!" comes the cry. A new chapter in the history of war is beginning, and a new legend—that of Rommel, the Desert Fox—is about to be born.

**April 7th, 1941...**In confused and headlong retreat, the British are falling back across the Cyrenaican bulge to Derna. But German armored cars and motorized infantry have cut the road atop the coastal escarpment, trapping those still in and west of the town. Colonel Drew of the 5th Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment, organizes a breakout with a mixed bag of

troops and vehicles. Surveying the situation, he knows he has no options: He must lead his men up the steep, twisting escarpment road past a huge crater blown in by overanxious sappers; and, once over the lip of the escarpment, must locate the German anti-tank and machinegun positions in the shimmering heat haze and blast a way through. The afternoon promises to be hot in more ways than one.

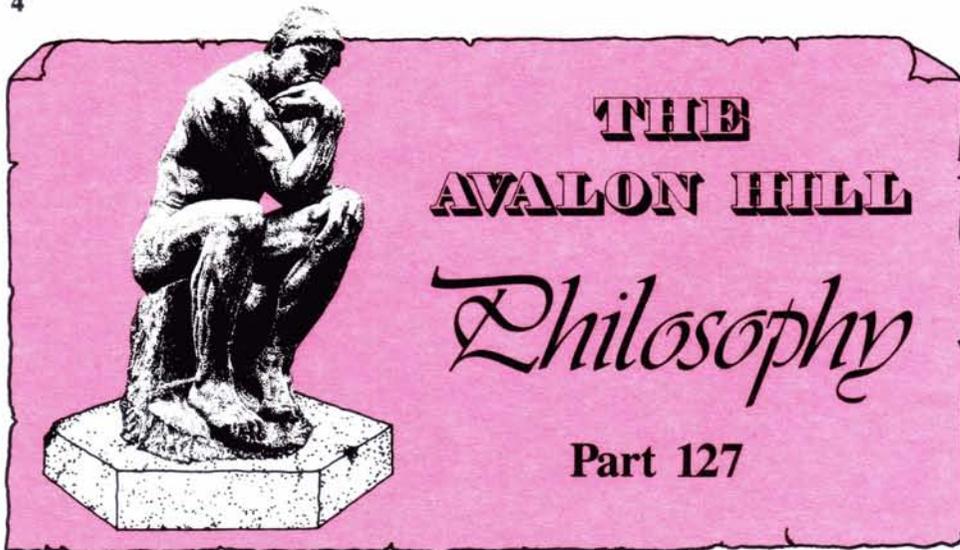
**November 23rd, 1941...**As part of the drive to open a corridor to Tobruk, the 25th New Zealand Battalion, supported by Valentine tanks, has just captured Point 175 atop a high inland escarpment. However, instead of halting to prepare for the inevitable German counterattack, the Kiwis continue their advance almost nonchalantly—and walk right into the sights of the veterans of the 361st Infantry Regiment "Afrika", who at the moment happen to be under the personal command of Rommel. For many, Germans and New Zealanders alike, the bloody battle about to begin will make Point 175 their point of no return.



**This is WEST OF ALAMEIN**—the long-awaited British addition to the **ASL** system. As the title implies, it focuses on battles between the British 8th Army and Deutsches Afrika Korps in the North African desert in 1941-43. **WEST OF ALAMEIN** contains the *entire* British order of battle, including all U.S. Lend-Lease vehicles, ordnance and support weapons, thus enabling you to command every major vehicle, gun and troop type used by British and/or Commonwealth forces in *every* theater throughout the war. Also contained herein is Chapter F of the **ASL** rules, which covers the terrain types encountered in the desert and other arid regions: scrub, wadis, hillocks, escarpments, soft sand, dunes, deirs and hammada. Chapter F also provides rules for the special climatic conditions that were so much a part of desert combat, such as dust, heat haze and sun blindness. Of the *five* mounted mapboards in **WEST OF ALAMEIN**, four (#s 26-29) depict flat open desert, with the dominant terrain features on separate, moveable overlays so as to maximize flexibility. The fifth board (#25) represents a rugged hill mass as is found in Tunisia, and can be

converted to a large escarpment by means of an overlay specially designed for this purpose. A Design-Your-Own system for the random selection and placement of overlays is also provided, which in combination with the vehicle and weapon point values, historical notes and DYO charts, will provide an endless variety of situations for those who enjoy creating their own scenarios. And as if all this weren't enough, simple rules have been included to enable the desert boards and overlays to represent the steppes of the Ukraine, providing added flexibility for these components. Of the eight scenarios enclosed, four can be played using the **ASL** rules and **BEYOND VALOR**; the other four also require rules, counters and/or a board from **YANKS**. No other boards or modules are needed.

**WEST OF ALAMEIN** is now available for \$45.00 from The Avalon Hill Game Company (4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214). Please add 10% shipping and handling for domestic orders; 20% for Canadian; 30% for overseas. Maryland residents please add 5% state sales tax.



Be it person, institution, or publication—anyone deserves a bit of a celebration upon surviving the trials of our hectic world to reach the age of twenty-five. That magic mark is something of a watershed in life, bringing (if nothing else) at least a certain grudging respect for one's maturity. With this issue of *The GENERAL*, we begin our 25th year of coverage of Avalon Hill's line of games of strategy.

This issue is the first of our expanded format. And it serves as the vehicle for our celebration—a look ahead as well as a look back. There are, as you'd expect, some articles on good games. But these are on games that are among our most recent releases, that have yet to have much ink spent on them. These games, and the many other new classics Avalon Hill has released over the past two years, are our future.

But, of course, this issue is primarily devoted to a look at some history, some concerns, and some friends of *The GENERAL*. When Volume 24 was drawing to a close, I realized that there were no plans to celebrate this magazine coming of age. It seemed a shame that the oldest wargaming periodical would turn silver with no one taking notice. So, I began canvassing some of the folk who helped make our magazine the best in the business—badgering them to draft a few lines. I was amazed, a bit, at the enthusiastic response. When asked by some what to write about, I replied that so long as it dealt with our hobby or our company or our magazine, I didn't much care for I was sure that given the abilities of these folk, anything they put down would be of interest. So the casual reader will find reminiscences and controversy, ramblings on favorite games and on "where we are going". Indeed, this issue became as much a celebration of wargaming as of *The GENERAL*—which given how irrevocably linked those two are, perhaps is only proper.

In these articles you'll find all the familiar names. Some are professionals; some are simply players (extraordinary players to be sure, but still primarily just wargamers). The thread that links all of them is their ability with the written word and their love of this hobby. No matter how varied the background or what they profess, scratch a wargamer and you'll find a closet author. Luckily for Avalon Hill, Tom Shaw long ago tapped this natural resource. The result was *The GENERAL*. Today, virtually every important figure in the history of our hobby has written for this magazine at one time or another. Just looking over the contents for this issue is like reading a "Who's Who of Wargaming". And, almost surely, some of the folk whose work will appear in the next year will—someday—be the new "movers and shakers".

But it is the players themselves who have contributed most of the words that have appeared in

these pages, not the "professionals". If not for the likes of Nixon, Burnett, Stahler, Medrow, Sinigaglio and the many others who have continued to find time in their busy lives to write on our games, *The GENERAL* would have died long ago. As I said above, "scratch a wargamer . . ." In fact, I firmly hold that the best of pieces on strategy and tactics come from those who have the time to play these games hundreds of times—a luxury few who labor to design them can afford. Since I have always believed that the strength of *The GENERAL* lies in precisely these types of articles, that means that these gamers who are willing to share their insights are the backbone of this magazine and the reason it has survived for so long. Perhaps a new cliché is warranted to describe *The GENERAL*—"Good gamers teaching gamers to be good". And it does, you know, become a self-generating activity. After 25 years, *The GENERAL* is proof of that.

This is what sets *The GENERAL* apart. There have been any number of publications, both professional and amateur, that deal with our hobby. Most are given over to reviews of new products or the history "behind" the games we play. It has always struck me that in that curious term "wargame", the latter syllable should be stressed. These, after all, are not meant to be exercises in the classroom or library. These are *games*, challenging exercises for the mind; and while the history that they teach is certainly useful and engaging, I can learn quite a bit more from a well-written book on the subject. I certainly don't need a few pages of reshaped verbiage on an aspect of military history. What I do need, and cannot get elsewhere, is hints on how to play and how to play well, on how to find opponents and how to judge myself against them, on what the game covers and answers to common questions on play. And what better review is there than a Series Replay or a look at the design process of a game, its mechanics and concepts and assumptions. Some benevolent, superficial review by one who has played the game a half-dozen times isn't going to give me—as gamer—the insights that a couple of pages from other *gamers* who have played it hundreds of times will.

The prime ingredient in any *game* should be "fun" (whether you define that as the intellectual challenge involved or the amusement at strange turns of fate or the social interaction of players or whatever); we've done our best with the magazine to make sure that that operative word remains foremost. While the humorous articles are certainly part of this, more indicative is the excitement and enjoyment for a title that shows through in each author's words. Playing games is FUN (else why would we spend so much time and money on our

## AREA TOP 50 LIST

Rank	Name	Times		Previous Rank
		On List	Rating	
1.	K. Combs	62	2563YOW	1
2.	D. Burdick	61	2305HHP	2
3.	J. Kreuz	56	2190IGR	3
4.	J. Beard	51	2188IIR	4
5.	B. Sinigaglio	47	2179GIJ	5
6.	J. Noel	15	2168DDJ	6
7.	P. Siragusa	56	2114FHL	7
8.	D. Garbutt	60	2108HJP	8
9.	E. Mineman	32	2073DFG	9
10.	H. Newby	27	2051VJP	12
11.	P. Flory	38	2039EHL	10
12.	P. Gartman	27	2030HHK	11
13.	S. Sutton	29	2029GHN	14
14.	R. Beyma	37	2014DDG	15
15.	P. Landry	36	1987HIO	13
16.	G. Schnittker	9	1983DFG	16
17.	C. Corn	11	1970FEA	17
18.	T. Oleson	71	1965ZZZ	19
19.	J. Spontak	6	1963DCE	20
20.	B. Remsburg	45	1960HIQ	21
21.	T. Deane	14	1947EBB	22
22.	R. Berger	2	1932DEE	23
23.	F. Reese	42	1931IDJ	24
24.	K. McCarthy	16	1914CFI	29
25.	J. Eliason	10	1910FIM	25
26.	W. Scott	59	1909MKW	26
27.	L. Barlow	9	1896JKU	27
28.	B. Schoose	1	1891GIM	—
29.	E. O'Connor	21	1888FHN	31
30.	D. Mattson	4	1896KJW	33
31.	B. Laboon	1	1884QIM	—
32.	M. Rogers	22	1880CEH	28
33.	B. Salvatore	29	1871GKO	30
34.	D. Kopp	7	1852GIO	43
35.	F. Preissle	59	1850MOZ	18
36.	E. Miller	9	1849HKR	32
37.	M. Frisk	16	1845CEI	38
38.	S. Johns	15	1831HFI	35
39.	R. Shurdut	7	1827FHL	36
40.	G. Smith	16	1826FGM	37
41.	R. Cox	1	1821XJL	—
42.	K. Kinsel	7	1815GGJ	34
43.	R. Costelloe	2	1814CEH	50
44.	F. Ornstein	45	1786GHM	39
45.	J. Lutz	7	1783HGP	40
46.	L. Carpenter	7	1781CEF	41
47.	K. Blackwell	3	1775GFB	42
48.	M. Cox	4	1771GDA	44
49.	M. Dultz	4	1757OSZ	45
50.	D. Greenwood	7	1756GFK	46

## MEET THE 50 . . .

Mr. Peter Halfman is 38, single, holds a BS in English Education, and is employed as a computer programmer in Lexington, Massachusetts.

**Favorite Game:** PB and TRC  
**AREA Rated Games:** PB, TRC, STAL, BB  
**AREA W-L Record:** 30-4  
**Gaming Time/Week:** 10 hours  
**Hobbies:** Chess, Reading, Skating, Sailing  
**Pet Peeve:** Rolling "1" on a TRC 4-1 Atuka-assisted attack  
**% Time PBM:** 90%  
**Play Preference:** FTF Multi-player games

Mr. Halfman looks for opponents: "I joined AREA seven years ago, and have really enjoyed playing PBM games. AREA is convenient and lets one match wits with the best players in the hobby. Other Top 50 players looking for a game can write me. For FTF gaming, players in the Massachusetts area should look for me at the North Shore Game Club."



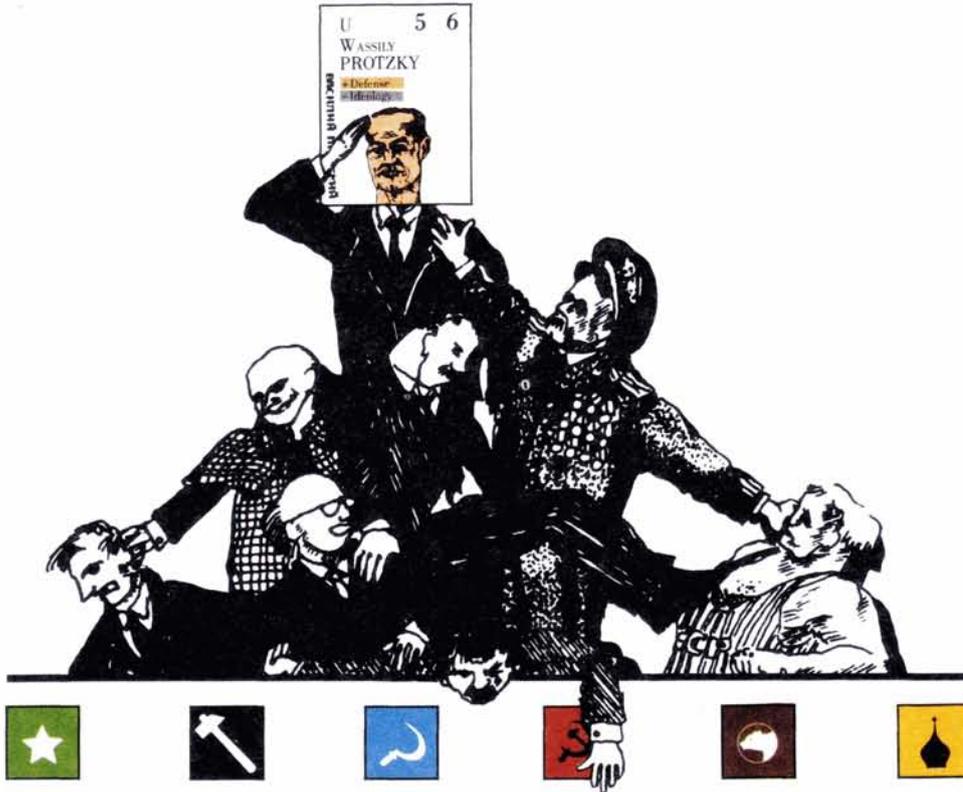
**Change history at the Battle of Gettysburg!** The Battle of Gettysburg was the most decisive battle fought in the east during the American Civil War and the bloodiest single battle ever fought on the North American continent. Now, with this fast-moving and competitive game, it is once again July 1, 1863. The war could be won or lost in the next three days, but this time **YOU** are in command.

**GETTYSBURG** is a game played by moving blue and gray units representing the infantry, cavalry and artillery formations present at the historic battle on a detailed mapboard representing the actual battlefield's terrain. **YOU** can be General Robert E. Lee and command the hard-hitting Confederate Army of Northern Virginia...or **YOU** can be General George G. Meade and command the stubborn but unlucky Union Army of the Potomac in its

greatest crisis. Will history repeat itself or can it be changed? **YOUR** decisions will make the difference.

Recommended for ages 12 and up, **GETTYSBURG** is not just a revision of the earlier titles but an entire new game intended as an introduction to the hobby of wargaming. This fifth version was authorized as a celebration of the 125th Anniversary of the battle. A "Battle Manual" helps players by introducing them to the history of this most famous campaign and battle in our history.

**GETTYSBURG** is now available for \$15.00 from The Avalon Hill Game Company, 4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214. Please add 10% shipping and handling to your order (20% for Canadian customers; 30% for overseas). Maryland residents please add 5% state sales tax.



# POWER POLITICS

## An Introduction to KREMLIN

By Donald Greenwood

Given the lengthy required lead times of this publication, *KREMLIN* will have already been on store shelves for several months as you read this. Nonetheless, this will probably be the first review of it you'll see (inasmuch as I'm scooping the industry by writing it prior to the game's release). I can do that because I developed the game for Avalon Hill. That certainly enables me to be the first reviewer you might say, but it doesn't speak much for my objectivity. Agreed. I'm biased. So shoot me, Comrade—but first listen to what I have to say. I admit I've worked on the game, and that I generally admire my own work. This is no exception. I like *KREMLIN* . . . a lot. But just because I enjoy the hell out of it doesn't mean you will. Of course, that's true of any review. Siskel and Ebert may give thumbs up to a film you absolutely detest. "Different strokes for different folks" as one of my peers from the Big Apple was fond of saying. So I'm not going to order you to like *KREMLIN*; but I will ask that you read this description of the game and make up your own mind. Suffice it to say that unless you have the mindset of a Neanderthal, you will run—not walk—to your nearest gamestore to acquire *KREMLIN*.

*KREMLIN* is a game of power politics for three to six players. Hermits who can't gather a group of three or more can stop reading now. However, I would point out that *KREMLIN* is an extremely simple game and can be played by family members easily scared off by more intimidating fare. Believe me, if my wife can play it, anybody can! The game takes from 30 minutes to two hours depending on the style of play, number of participants, and the success or failure of any early power plays. *KREMLIN* has both a Basic (actually, two versions of the Basic Game) and an Advanced Game. Although I much prefer the Advanced Game, we will limit our discussion to the Basic Game for now.

The game begins by shuffling a deck of 26 Politician cards and dealing them out randomly to man the initial Politburo positions. The Kremlin hierarchy is represented on the board in pyramid fashion with a Party Chief at the apex, three 1st Level Ministers (KGB, Foreign, Defense), four 2nd Level Ministers (Ideology, Industry, Economy, Sport), and five Candidates. The 13 remaining Politicians are put aside to form the People and will be used to replace those who fall by the wayside as the game progresses. Generally speaking, the higher a Politician is placed on this pyramid, the more powerful and valuable he is—but the more potential enemies he has also.

The Politicians themselves are humorously depicted in caricature with such colorful and descriptive names as "Nikolai Shootemdedsky" or "Andrej Purgemoff". To complete the satire, each card back summarizes the colorful career of its namesake in true *Mad* magazine lampoon fashion. However, in game terms the only information of consequence (in the Basic Game) is the character's age printed at the upper right. Age is a two-edged sword. The older a character is, the more likely he will be promoted to join his cronies in the Kremlin's Geritol set without risk. However, with the advancing years comes an increased chance of sickness, stroke, or even death.

### SETUP

At this point, each player consults his own "Influence Point Sheet" (which lists the 26 Politicians) and secretly records his stake in ten of them. Each player has a total of 55 *Influence Points* (hereafter referred to as IP) which he may allocate to ten Politicians in declining amounts of 10, 9, 8 . . . 3, 2, 1. These IP represent his faction's degree of control over each Politician. To control a Politician's

actions you must have *declared* the most IP on him. You can declare IP at any time. However, by declaring them, you mark your Politicians as a target for your enemies. Therefore, the game in its simplest form boils down to a matter of timing—deciding when to reveal your IP and seize control in an attempt to gain a winning position. Along the way all sorts of events transpire to tempt players to play their IP prematurely to control events and thereby protect their interests. However, by keeping his IP secret, a player can sit back and watch somebody else maneuver his politicians to the top or suffer in silence with the demise of his favorites. As long as you keep your IP secret, no one knows for sure just who is controlled by who. The fellow who maneuvers his nine IP Politician to the top rung of the Politburo ladder is taking a chance that no one else has ten on the same guy. The uncertainty is exquisite torture. And if that weren't enough pain, the decision on whether or not to declare your IP is further tempered by the fact that the first to declare wins any tie!

You need not declare all of your IP at once. Let's say you have ten IP written down for Viktor Wasolin but only have declared three of them. When someone else takes control of Viktor by declaring four IP on him, you can groan, utter curses and otherwise carry on in an attempt to make him think you can do nothing about it. Then, when your opponent has laboriously moved him to the top, you can reveal the rest of your IP and take over control. This is one of those social games where demeanor can be as important as a winning strategy.

The game always begins with sick, 80-year old Nestor Aparatschick as Party Chief. In the Basic Game, no one can place IP on Nestor so the trick is to guess how long aging Nestor can stay in power and to be in position to succeed him when he dies. The game is won by the first player to control a Party Chief (or Chiefs) who is healthy enough to wave from the rostrum throughout three year-end parades.

### SEQUENCE OF PLAY

The game is played in up to ten turns of eight phases each. If no one has won by the end of the tenth turn, an 11th is played and the player controlling the current Party Chief thereafter wins.

### CURE PHASE

During the Cure Phase, all ill Politicians are asked if they will remain at work or go to the Sanatorium in search of a cure. The decision is made by whatever player currently controls that Politician (i.e. has the most *declared* IP showing on his card). Ill Politicians are on the horns of a dilemma. Not only do they take the chance of their health worsening if they stay at their posts, but they also age if they do so. Yet, if they seek a Cure by visiting the Sanatorium they forfeit their vote in any Party Trials and become an easier mark for purges. From such decisions are born the personnel turn-overs that make room at the top for a new crop of Kremlin leaders. The Party Chief, burdened by the responsibilities of his office, always ages one each year; other Politicians do not. For game purposes, time literally stands still for those who are healthy and not involved in stressful actions.

### PURGE PHASE

The KGB Head may now announce an attempt to purge any Politician in the Politburo. If he succeeds, he ages one year and may continue. If he fails, he ages three years and the phase ends. Purges are resolved by dice roll—the higher the standing of the intended target, the more difficult the purge. It is at this point that players will often lose their patience and declare any hidden IP they may have on the KGB Head in an attempt to change his intended target away from one of their other Poli-

arians. It takes real resolve to keep your silence when one of your own is sent to Siberia and you have (or think you have) the power to stop it. The decision as to whether you should try is rarely clear cut.

### SPY INVESTIGATION PHASE

The Defense Minister may now bring to trial any one Politician currently under suspicion of being an Imperialist Spy; but if his victim is acquitted, the Defense Minister will age three years and the victim will be cleared of suspicion. Trials are resolved by vote of the top eight Politburo slots. All those accused are convicted unless they can muster two "Innocent" votes. As the accused retains his own vote unless away at the Sanatorium, the chances for success are greatly increased by accusing someone not at his post to defend himself. Again, the situation may prompt players to reveal some of their hidden IP—either on the Defense Minister to change his accusation or on the other Politburo members to change their votes. If the Defense Minister feels that he lacks sufficient votes to get a guilty verdict, he may instead *condemn* any Candidate-level Politician and age two years. The victim is sent to Siberia without recourse. The Defense Minister may then end the phase by aging one year for each investigation of another Politburo member he initiates. The affected Politicians are marked with a "?" marker which will age them in subsequent Cure Phases and leave them vulnerable to future Trial proceedings.

### HEALTH PHASE

The eight Politicians who make up the Politburo must each roll on the Health Table. There are five possible results: recovery, no change, sicken (one cross), stroke (two crosses), and death. Any Politician who accumulates three red crosses dies. The Table is much kinder to the young and those in the Sanatorium—but no one is guaranteed life eternal.

### FUNERAL COMMISSION PHASE

This phase is resolved *only* if the Party Chief slot is vacant. The Foreign Minister then nominates a successor for Party Chief who is then put to a vote. Three "Nay" votes are required to block succession. If his nominee is blocked, the Foreign Minister ages one year and nominates one of those who voted "No". If this nominee is also blocked, the Foreign Minister ages another year and rises to Party Chief himself! Still more hidden IP generally find their way onto the board here to change votes or nominations.

### REPLACEMENT PHASE

The Party Chief may now flex his muscles and stack the Politburo in what he thinks will be his favor by changing the positions of any Politician *within their current levels* for free. He may also promote or demote Politicians one level, at the cost of aging one year for each such move. When he's finished, other Politicians may promote (only) others to vacant positions beneath them. Positions left vacant are filled automatically by the oldest eligible Politician at the next level.

### REHABILITATION PHASE

In descending order of rank, each of the top eight Politburo members is asked if he will sponsor the release of any of the poor unfortunates in Siberia. As such action ages the sponsor five years for each rehabilitated Politician, there aren't many traffic jams at the prisoner release center. Still more hidden IP are often declared here to prevent someone else from aging your Politician—usually a 2nd Level Minister with only a few declared IP—by using him to release his other people in the gulag. Rehabilitated Politicians return to the People with a new lease on life.

### PARADE PHASE

A healthy Party Chief gets credit for a wave. Those in poor health must chance a dice roll which will age them further whether successful or not.

And that is how you play the Basic Game of *KREMLIN*; the very essence of simplicity, yet ingeniously clever, suspenseful, and captivating.

### THE SWISS VERSION

The Basic Game also has a "Swiss" rules variation which drastically changes its feel with what is essentially a single rule change. In the Swiss version, the game is won by controlling a *single* Party Chief who waves three times and if someone else has the same number of undeclared IP on that Party Chief he will win rather than the player who controlled the Party Chief during the game. In this way, players can rarely be certain that they have won the game until it is over and all IP on the Party Chief are declared. This version was very popular in Europe and won *KREMLIN* "Game of the Year" accolades in Germany. However, it was met with disdain by our veteran stateside playtesters and I personally much prefer our version. Nevertheless, we've included both versions in the game so players can pick and choose the one they like best. Both combined take up less than three pages of rules.

### THE ADVANCED GAME

The Advanced Game adds just two more pages of rules, but increases the depth of strategy applications greatly. I much prefer it to the Basic Game and use the former only to introduce new players to the game.

At the core of the Advanced Game is the addition of a set of 34 "Intrigue" cards which give their owner special powers to circumvent the normal flow of play (as can be readily seen from the accompanying examples). Each player receives three of them at the outset and can refer to them before allocating his initial IP outlay. In this version, players can also allocate IP to sick old Nestor from the outset. As with the declaration of IP, cards can be played at anytime unless otherwise specified. Cards can also be given as bribes to other players in exchange for favors.

At the end of every three turns, all players are allowed to place an additional *two free* declared IP or draw new Intrigue cards instead. The first player to reach 11 declared IP on a Politician is given undisputed control of him. The opportunities for bluff and counterbluff exhibited in the Basic Game are thus multiplied many times over by this simple mechanic which increases the importance of keeping IP hidden as long as possible.

The Advanced Game also allows resolutions of IP ties by vote of all players with declared IP on a Politician rather than such control automatically going to the first to declare on that Politician. This makes every IP potentially important—even if someone else already has declared far more on a Politician than you can hope to have. It also increases the opportunity for deals, negotiations, and player interaction as you can well imagine.

Lastly, each Politician has a "Strength" and "Weakness" (i.e., a Politburo slot for which he has a particular talent or ineptness). When occupying his Strength, he is less susceptible to aging and Purges; and when occupying his Weakness, he is easier to Purge and ages faster due to job-related pressures.

I suspect veteran gamers will share my preferences for the Advanced Game once they've tried both. For very little added complexity, the game takes on a new character with a much greater variety of possible outcomes and sudden twists of fortune. Alan Moon, a recent comrade-in-arms, differs with me in this respect. He feels that the chance cards bastardize the pure strategy aspect of the game. For my part, I feel that they *increase* the opportunities to formulate a strategy and, more importantly, introduce hilarious opportunities for sudden twists of fate. "Different strokes . . ."

In fact, I felt so strongly about the benefit of the Intrigue cards that I designed a second set of them to augment those included in the game. These are available separately with the rules for our historical variation *Revolution* which takes *KREMLIN* back to the era of Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin. Now talk about a game that plays differently! But that's another era and another article . . .



# BLOOD IN THE POLITBURO

## One Man's Rise to the Top

By Don Greenwood

*This five-player game is being reported as seen through the eyes of one of the participants, Don Greenwood, as he played. The reader is thus kept in the dark about the resources and intentions of the other players and forced to view events through his limited perspective. By delaying your inspection of the sidebar comments provided by the other players, you can be in Don's shoes, seeing only what he sees and able to second-guess him based only on the facts revealed up to that time. So, if you want to play along, read the article without reference to the colored sidebars. You can then read the post-mortem by the other players to see how right or wrong you (and he) were.*

For ease of reference, the situation at the start of each year will be reported in the following format:

1. Name, Age, Health, Suspicion, Number of Declared IP.

The initial number is the Politburo position in voting order (1. = Party Chief, 2. = KGB, etc). Absence of "+" or "?" following the age entry should be self-explanatory. The factions with declared IP are identified as Br (Brown), G (Green), B (Blue), Y (Yellow), and Bk (Black).

(G) RED ARMY MILITARISTS: Don Greenwood  
(Br) HARD-LINE STALINISTS: S. Craig Taylor  
(B) LYSENKO EVOLUTIONISTS: Bruno Sinigaglio  
(Y) REFORM EXPANSIONISTS: Bob Coggins  
(Bk) OLD-LINE MARXISTS: Rex Martin

### YEAR 1

1. Aparatschik, 80, +
2. Patina, 58
3. Badenuff, 53
4. Shootemdedsky, 69
5. Palavrian, 70
6. Talksalott, 67
7. Mischif, 68
8. Protzky, 56

CAN: Schukrutoff, 75; Purgemoff, 71; Doberman, 65; Bungaloff, 54; Wasolin, 50

The opportunity for the application of strategy in *KREMLIN* can be very subtle and is either not readily apparent to neophytes or is so mistakenly obvious that there seem to be no alternatives. New-comers invariably allocate their IP to the Politicians dealt initially into the positions of power so as to control them from the outset. However, a heavy allocation of IP at the top commits the player to seeking an early win and if he is unsuccessful, it's likely to relegate his faction to relative obscurity for the remainder of the game when he loses his key people to the ravages of a purge or stress-inflicted old age. While the early power play is a viable strategy which has won on numerous occasions, the frequency of its success is in inverse proportion to the number of players. The more players there are, the more Intrigue cards which can do in the leader and the more chance that somebody else will have allocated ten IP to your 9IP guy and ruin all your plans. Thus, I tend to shy away from early power plays in games with more than four players.

My Intrigue cards are pretty non-descript (Siberian Oil, Assassination, and the Cuban Missile Crisis) so there is little there to base my initial IP allocations on. If I had gotten the "KGB Head's Son Defects" and "German Teenager Lands in Red Square" cards I might have entertained the notion of an initial Power Play because Patina and Badenuff

are very young for such high posts and could last a good while if their back is protected. However, the other players are likely to have made similar observations and that is reason enough to avoid them. One player in particular, Black—otherwise known as "Martin the Merciless"—is famous for always trying to control the KGB from the outset. Lenin's definition of politics "kto kogo" which is loosely translated as "Who gets Whom?" dictates that I stay away from Patina. Let the other players waste their IP battling Martin the Merciless while I bide my time on the periphery and await my chance after they turn young Patina into an old hag with a flood of purges.

When all other factors fail to bring to mind a viable strategy, the overwhelming rule of thumb is to put your IP where you think others haven't. Nothing is quite as crippling as being out-influenced—especially on your higher IP Politicians. Of course, you can never be sure your guys are truly yours, but you can try to avoid what you think are the obvious choices to be heavily influenced. This will be the cornerstone of my strategy—avoiding Politicians who appear to be the most desirable in an attempt to control as many bodies as possible. Consequently, I will concentrate my influence on Politicians still in the People—trusting to the other players to block each other's power plays and cause casualties among their ranks so that my people can rise to the top unscathed in the end game. This laid-back strategy is one which I have used effectively on numerous occasions in the past and for that very reason I should probably give more thought to an alternative rather than blindly becoming a creature of habit. However, early wins are rare in a five-player game so I prefer to husband my strength and bet on the long haul. I invariably follow this strategy if I've drawn one or more Flu cards—hoping to decimate the Politburo with illness before any of my people rise to that level. Even though I don't possess those cards now, the strategy strikes me as still valid as one of the other players is likely to have and play them (as they tend to fall early in the game).

Consequently, my strategy will be to avoid the Politicians currently in the Politburo and concentrate on those in the People. Bungaloff (W) becomes my top choice because Y and Z as the youngest invariably draw high IP from those following the "end game" strategy. The rest of my high IP allocations (9 through 5) proceed backwards up the alphabet, skipping those currently in the Politburo—the oldest getting the smallest IP allocations as they tend to be less desirable. A single IP on a Septuagenarian has a good chance of controlling him.

There is one very big exception to all of this. I'll venture four IP on Aparatschik in an attempt to steal the first wave. Old and sick, the reigning Party Chief rarely draws much in the way of IP because he isn't long in the game. But he's well worth a few IP for a chance at a wave on Year 1. The trick is—how "few" is enough? All four other players have played at least three games so I doubt whether any will spend much on old Nestor but probably all of them will be willing to spend a couple. So, I'll opt for low middle-of-the-road status and hope it's enough to steal a wave. My earliest win in *KREMLIN* occurred on Turn 5 of a six-player game and was made possible by stealing a first-turn wave with Nestor. He's worth 4 IP which is a long shot to control anyone else—even though unsupported at the top he can be expected to die early anyway. So my IP allocation is:

10. Bungaloff
9. Nogoodnik
8. Strychnin
7. Nikotin
6. Zenjarplan
5. Manjak
4. Aparatschik
3. Gofebrook
2. Niewitko
1. Krakemheds

**1.1 CURE PHASE:** Blue declares one IP on Aparatschik. This is premature as the only thing he can decide is to send him to the Sanatorium which he declines. Why identify himself now as having a vested interest in our beloved Party Chief if he is not going to send him away for the Cure? This clumsy move only invites a purge attempt or spy investigation—something I'd rather not see. On the other hand, perhaps he had only one IP on Aparatschik and was anxious to be the first to declare on him. That's probably it. So far, so good. The Party Chief ages two to 82. Shootemdedsky and Palavrian, occupying their weak slots, age one each to 70 and 71 respectively.

**1.2 PURGE PHASE:** Unbelievable! No one declares on the KGB. Usually control of the KGB is resolved with spirited bidding but now . . . silence. Hmmm.

**1.3 SPY INVESTIGATION PHASE:** Incredible! Again silence reigns. The two positions of power left vacant . . . no . . . they've got to be sand-bagging. Still, I wish now I'd invested a few IP on the 1st Level Ministers.

**1.4 HEALTH PHASE:** Talksalott comes down sick and the young Turks (Badenuff and Protzky) suffer strokes. Our beloved Party Chief holds steady with his consistent cough. Things are looking good . . . strange, but good.

**1.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE:** There are no vacancies in the Politburo but, even so, Blue can rearrange members within their current levels without aging the Party Chief. He declines and sponsors no promotions/demotions. Then why show himself at all in the old fool's camp? He must be following my strategy and, like me, has no other Politicians in the Politburo. I'll wager that one IP is his only hold over Aparatschik. Why else show himself at all? What a bunch of sand-baggers! Nobody is giving away anything. Fine . . . I'll oblige them by stealing a wave. Keep hiding guys. At the very least, Blue could have moved Talksalott to his Weakness in the Economy Ministry. What a non-turn!

**1.8 PARADE PHASE:** I declare two IP on Nestor before Blue can wave. There is no other declaration. I was right. Aparatschik waves and ages to 83. Chalk one up for Green. So far so good.

### YEAR 2

1. Aparatschik, 83, +, 2G, 1B
  2. Patina, 58
  3. Badenuff, 53, ++
  4. Shootemdedsky, 70
  5. Palavrian, 71
  6. Talksalott, 67, +
  7. Mischif, 68
  8. Protzky, 56, ++
- CAN: Schukrutoff, 75; Purgemoff, 71; Doberman, 65; Bungaloff, 54; Wasolin, 50

**2.1 CURE PHASE:** Aparatschik ages two to 85. Blue declares one IP on Badenuff to send him for the Cure. Shootemdedsky and Palavrian both age one to 71 and 72 due to being in Weak slots. Talksalott ages one to 68 due to being sick. Blue declares another IP on Protzky to send him to the Sanatorium.

**2.2 PURGE PHASE:** There are still no declarations on the KGB. I'm convinced she is an "Orphan" (a Politician with no initial IP allocations). If I had any IP on her I might not be able to resist trying to purge Badenuff and Protzky while at the Sanatorium.

**2.3 SPY INVESTIGATION PHASE:** Silence again. Shootemdedsky must be an Orphan also. Who would have guessed it? The two positions of power—the most obvious and valuable politicians—left vacant by everyone. In my exuberance over Aparatschik's apparent lack of enemies I blurted out (and instantly regretted) my declaration of my remaining two IP on the Party Chief to win any ties at 4 IP. The move was foolish. Anybody with more IP on the old boy would have declared it before he waved. By playing my "4" now, I've warned the others that it would be pointless for them to place their two extra IP on him at the end of Turn 3 should he last that long. Stupid! I've also furnished any IP counters (some players keep track of what you've declared in notes on their sheets, a sign of calculating experts) additional information.

**2.4 HEALTH PHASE:** Yellow plays a Flu Intrigue card. This looks like an opportune time to add to Blue's troubles by playing my Cuban Missile Crisis card and cancelling all Sanatorium visits. Bring Comrades Badenuff and Protzky back to work! The State needs them (in a box). Aparatschik's condition worsens but the old goat is still kicking. Shootemdedsky and Mischif catch colds. Palavrian has a stroke as does Talkalott, who succumbs to his. Poor Protzky also takes a turn for the worse and dies. Sigh . . . if only he had gone to the Sanatorium. Such loyalty to the Party . . . remind me to send flowers.

**2.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE:** What great luck—but I'm completely out of position to exploit it. Aparatschik is poised for a second wave and I haven't lost a thing—but all my power is in the People. Nestor could promote Bungaloff out of the Candidates but that would make him a marked man. I am now clearly the leader and anyone I promote will have instant enemies. The chances of Aparatschik lasting a third year at his ripe old age are slim and the New Order will not look kindly upon anyone so much as suspected of tipping a vodka bottle with me. I can protect Bungaloff for one more year and if Nestor lives to the next Replacement Phase I can promote him to KGB, but he would be all alone in a hostile world. When in doubt in this game do nothing and let somebody else win the game for you. I've got lots of time. I could promote someone else to mislead the others but why age Aparatschik? If he does last through the next year, I can win. So I pass with Aparatschik but Blue doesn't—using Badenuff to promote Bungaloff to Industry Minister and Wasolin to Sport—aging two to 55. I can hardly contain my delight. Goferbok and Niewitko move up to the Candidates by age.

**2.8 PARADE PHASE:** Brown tries to rain on my parade by playing a Visit Sanitarium card on the Party Chief but stalwart that he is, he shakes it off when Craig fails to roll  $\geq 11$ . Thus inspired, Aparatschik waves with a "19" and ages to 87. What a Hero! Let's hear it for old Nestor! Hmmm, my Comrades don't seem as joyful as Party loyalty would dictate on this festive occasion. It is clear that a Green marker on a Politician has the life expectancy of a SS stormtrooper in Red Square from this point forward. I must let the others do my work for me henceforth and trust to stealth. Sooner or

## LYSENKO EVOLUTIONISTS PARTY PLATFORM

By Bruno Sinigaglio

10. Eatstumuch
9. Karrienko
8. Satin
7. Manjak
6. Wasolin
5. Bungaloff
4. Protzky
3. Badenuff
2. Aparatschik
1. Palavrian

Cards: Alibi; Release from Sanatorium; Glasnost



I'm the least experienced of the five players but in the games I've played I've noticed Greenwood likes to hang back and win at the end, so I concentrated my power in the middle-aged ranks of the People in an attempt to thwart his usual style of play. He also won our last game when he stole a wave at the outset with a single IP on Aparatschik so I've allocated 2IP to him to prevent that from happening again. I've also chanced a few IP on the youngest Politburo members irrespective of their position simply because I expect their youth to protect them from the Health rolls.

**YEAR 1:** So much for youth . . . the two youngest guys had strokes. I was tempted to move Palavrian out of his Weak slot but that would have given him away as one of mine—even though I only have 1IP on him. I chose to keep them guessing instead. After all, nobody else volunteered any information.

**YEAR 2:** I sent both of my ill Politicians to the Sanatorium. With the KGB uncontrolled, this is the perfect time to do so, but Greenwood closed the Sanatorium with his Intrigue card. My only solace is that I'm now sure that Green has no IP on Badenuff or Protzky or he'd have allowed them to go to the Cure. I purposely promoted Bungaloff into his Weakness in Industry to see if the Party Chief shifts him and betrays any interest in him.

**YEAR 3:** I sent Badenuff to the Sanatorium again. He better get out this time because the KGB will be active next year. Although I didn't realize it at the time, I'm glad Yellow outbid me for the acting Foreign Minister. By moving up to KGB, he becomes the highest controlled Politician and gives me the chance to declare on the orphan Party Chief Patina first. Although ill, she's a bargain for only 2IP at age 60 with strong recuperative powers.

**YEAR 4:** I sent Patina for the Cure—expecting that the 30% chance for a successful purge would discourage any attempt vs her but I didn't reckon on "Machinogun Palavrian" running out of targets. Sheesh!

**YEAR 5:** Yellow's position is too strong. I fear another reign of terror could end the game but he took over my 8IP-man Satin and prevented my getting anyone out. Fortunately, Brown shares my concern and was able to free five from the gulag. Unfortunately, they are his five—not mine—and I've blown my 8IP to no effect.

**YEAR 6:** I could have stopped the Defense's condemnation of Eatstumuch (my "10") by playing my Alibi card but decided against tipping my hand this soon. In retrospect that may have been a mistake. What good is the card if you don't use it? But it has been demonstrated to me that this is a game of patience and everything comes to he who waits. So, I'll wait. My two free declared IP on Karrienko are designed to rob Black of a vote. I'm counting on Yellow having more hidden influence on Schukrutoff to prevent Black from leap-frogging him there.

**YEAR 7:** There are only four Candidates left. We must restock the People or Black can win by default. I hate to age my 10+IP man 15 years but what choice do I have?

**YEAR 8:** Losing Karrienko (10+) hurt. I'm now totally without representation on the Politburo, but I have points on the entire Candidate level. The People is empty though and now Yellow can win with a reign of terror. I need to revitalize the People to discourage Yellow from purging the Candidates but that bonehead Rex has stopped Green from sponsoring anyone with Krakemheds and Yellow has stopped Brown with Boremtojev. I better get my luggage packed for Siberia again.

**YEAR 9:** Argh! Bonehead play by Rex gives Yellow the game. If he hadn't prevented Green from bringing people out we'd still be playing. More importantly, if he had refilled the People, Yellow might not have purged at all to try to survive the Health rolls by keeping his men from aging further and trying to win by longevity. And my people would still be in position to move up. Now we'll never know.

later they must promote one of my people to the top. Bungaloff is already halfway there thanks to Blue.

### YEAR 3

1. Aparatschik, 87, ++, G4, B1
2. Patina, 58
3. Badenuff, 55, ++, B1
4. Shootemdedsky, 71, +
5. Palavrian, 72, ++
6. Bungaloff, 54
7. Mischif, 68, +
8. Wasolin, 50

CAN: Schukrutoff, 75; Goferbok, 74; Niewitko, 73; Purgemoff, 71; Doberman, 65

**3.1 CURE PHASE:** Aparatschik ages three to 90. There is no point in sending him away for the Cure at his age. If he lives through the year I could win in the minimum turn span. The uncontrolled blocks at KGB and Defense will end this year. It's now or never for old Aparatschik. Blue again sends Badenuff to the Sanatorium. Shootemdedsky ages two to 73, Palavrian ages three to 75, Bungaloff ages one to 55, and Mischif one to 69. I wonder if Palavrian isn't also an Orphan. This is the last turn the KGB will be uncontrolled. There will never be a better time to send him for the Cure.

**3.4 HEALTH PHASE:** Aparatschik worsens and dies, and with him goes my chances for an early win. Call me paranoid but I question the sincerity of the great show of remorse suddenly shown by

my Comrades. But Aparatschik won't go to his reward alone. The Orphan Patina and the young Wasolin suffer strokes. Regretably, er . . . thankfully, Badenuff and Mischif recover. Praise be.

**3.5 FUNERAL COMMISSION PHASE:** With Badenuff at the Sanatorium, the nomination passes to the ill Ideology Chief. Blue declares one IP on Palavrian but Yellow outbids him with 3IP and nominates the ill orphan Patina. No one declares on the remaining Politburo members to vote, so she rises to Party Chief unopposed. I wonder why either faction cared enough to show themselves on Palavrian. The choice was limited to an ill 58-year old Orphan or a sick 78-year old Orphan. Who cares? Or did they think both would be voted down so that Palavrian would accede? Small chance of that, but possible I suppose.

**3.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE:** Palavrian progress by age to KGB Head and Schukrutoff does likewise to Ideology Chief, as does Krakemheads to the Candidates. Everyone is still playing a waiting game. I'm not about to expose my 10 (Bungaloff) for the sake of promoting a single Candidate.

**3.8 PARADE PHASE:** The orphan Patina ages two for waving at the Parade but remains unclaimed. **INFLUENCE DECLARATION PHASE:** As Yellow controls the highest active, *controlled* Politician (Palavrian), he must declare last. Blue starts by claiming ill Party Chief Patina with 2IP. She is his unless someone wants to risk a tie and trust someone else to throw away an IP to break the tie. Fat chance of that. No one wants to help anyone unless it is to put a knife in my back! Black declares one on Patina and one on Wasolin. That's Rex. He

knows no one would vote him into power, but he's hoping to tempt someone else to tie Blue so he can play the kingmaker and accept bribes. Good ol' Martin the Merciless . . . never a dull moment. This game has his name all over it . . . his middle name that is—"Devious". Brown declares one on Shootemdedsky and replenishes his hand with a third

Intrigue card. Now it is my turn. Taylor is clever and he also loves to bide his time, so the card draw does not surprise me too much. The lone IP play on Shootemdedsky bears some thinking. I am convinced that he has been an Orphan all along, so surely Taylor knows I can beat his 1IP with two of my own. He is doubtless banking on his strength as tie-breaker to discourage my placement on Shootemdedsky because I know Yellow can match my two and Brown will never vote for me. But I have

## A FEW OLD-LINE MARXISTS

By Rex A. Martin

10. Zenjarplan
9. Karrienko
8. Badenuff
7. Nogoodnik
6. Gofebrook
5. Satin
4. Niewitko
3. Strychnin
2. Krakemheds
1. Eatstumuch



Cards: KGB Head Reveals Dossier; Blackmail; Plan to Export Russian Cars

My allocation of IP bears some thought—and I guess explanation. Everyone here expects me to try to seize the head of the KGB (I've bid as high as 8IP for the post in the past), and the Defense Minister if I can get him cheaply. Then I purge hell out of everybody to open slots for my folks down below amongst the unwashed masses. But they all try to block that now, and the cost has been more expensive the past few games with Craig, Bob and Don. So, I think I'll cross them up and change my strategy. With relatively strong cards, and some points spread among young fellows, middle-aged folk (who I hope to bring up the youngsters) and a few old guys (to bring up the middle-aged ones), I will play Don's usual strategy of a waiting game. I've put points on Badenuff just to give me that chance to begin promoting from the People, and to act as kingmaker should the opportunity arise. Most don't view the initial Foreign Minister as worthy of many points, but I like this position for what it can bring. I put my ten IP on Zenjarplan just because I have always liked the play on words. The old Party Chief is usually worth a few points, but probably more than I want to invest in this game.

**YEAR 1:** My strategy backfired—*nobody* put IP on "Luddy" or "Niky"! That puts Greenwood in a powerful position, as for three years—given their ages—he faces no threats but from age and chance cards. I'm going to keep Boris' head down and hope he survives till then.

**YEAR 2:** Bruno shows points on Badenuff just to send this young fellow to the hospital? I was tempted to bid him up to prevent this vacation, which only serves to make him a target if someone is being sneaky and does have points on the lady in the KGB. But why bother? he can't do much for another year—and maybe he will improve. Don errs and tips his hand on Nestor—so first order of business is to get rid of him. Since I've no points on any of the Candidates, Bruno's nominations with Boris don't excite me much; why bother to prevent them since Leonid and Viktor are now such lovely targets? It also serves to open the door for two old Fogeys I do have IP on.

**YEAR 3:** No point in getting involved in the Funeral Commission—unless they manage to maneuver Boris up to head this zoo. Then he's mine! Unless Bob or Bruno are playing a heck of a subtle game, who cares which of these Orphans are Party Chief. Promotion brings a third creature of mine to the Candidates but I still have only one in the Politburo (and I think you need two at least to have any impact). My extra IPs are placed on Luddy (pure speculation in hopes to cut a deal in a tie resolution) and on Viktor (who may be uncontrolled).

**YEAR 4:** And KGB Bob goes nuts. He sends everyone in sight packing. I tried to short-cut him by directing him at Leonid, but that only whetted his appetite. My weakest puppet in the Candidates joins the parade too. Bruno took Wasolin from me just in time to wave bye-bye! Unfortunately, he knocks off the lady at the top too, and that puts Yellow firmly in control! Why did Bruno send these folks to the Sanatorium; I can understand

his concern for their health, but only a fool couldn't see what was coming. As ordained (I would have nominated him too), despite an inept assassination attempt, Diwan reaches the heights of power. When the dust of promotions settles, Black is actually in a good position (with IP on four Politburo posts and the two oldest Candidates). To add icing to the cake, Bob can't make a wave.

**YEAR 5:** Palavrain is not long for this world; if I'm going to move, it has to be now. Unfortunately, Mischif knocks off the Borises, and I'm forced to blackmail him to save Gofebrook! Then he takes Niewitko in trade! A definite crimp in my plans now, for I've little power (although Tigrin's promotion certainly helps). I'll use him to see who likes Putschnik (and the other people, for that matter). Damn—Bob put down "10" on Zenjarplan too! Guess my position isn't as good as I thought.

**YEAR 6:** With no Party head, Bob's purges and investigations should show where all his power lies; he'll use every bit of it to reclaim the post and freeze us all out of the Politburo. Down go three he obviously has no use for. As it falls out, I get to be Party head, but Bob still holds the power. No point to declare on my man yet though, for Craig does a credible job of scrambling Bob's position and inadvertently brings up some Black "pigs". As long as Craig doesn't do anything outstandingly stupid, I'll let him take the heat—at least until the wave. I want Pitr and Karel to promote by age next year, so everything's fine.

**YEAR 7:** I'd counted on the old Lecher (oops—Lech) to counter any threat to my Party Head; the responsibility must have been too much for his heart. That sicky Stricky has to go; Mischif comes up for I think Bob's shot his wad and is the best of a lot of bad choices. Too, I think I can cut a deal with Bob. The bribe for Satin is unfortunate, for I was going to try to split all these posts and encourage the others to fight among themselves while my Candidates quietly slid up. Now the second wave just makes me a target and I've got to rely on my wits (short as they are) to win.

**YEAR 8:** The last year for Gofebrook. Luckily I'm able to stop the purge threat to him (knew I could deal with Bob). And to top it off, am able to finesse Yellow into playing this useless (for me) card on himself! In a fury I guess, he goes berserk. Now to weather the sneaky Taylor . . . but he doesn't go for my argument that he'll get to be KGB and what are the odds of Alexej waving when he's so old (which would make Craig's fellow heir apparent). I think my days in the sun are over. With all the purges, I think Craig may have thrown the game to Yellow, for guess who'll be new Party Chief now.

I have a faint chance only, actually two-fold in nature, to still win this. But I can't let any of my folk die off! If Mischif dies, or Bob leaves enough politicians to fill all the slots (since Mischif won't last past the parade next year), I need three votes to insure I can block any nomination for Party Chief. Indeed, one of my creatures are likely to then move into that post. But I need every one of them and so must block Don's move with Krakemheds; let someone else empty the gulag. Too, Zenjarplan will be mine with 10+IP at the end of Year 9. All I need is a little luck now, and I've a good chance to pull this game out yet.

**YEAR 9:** Too bad Bob goes crazy yet again and purges all kinds of folks. His luck at this has certainly affected this game. But then Don makes things worse by trying to save Mischif instead of some other old fool! I wanted Mischif dead. Now I'm going to be the villain when someone else dies. So, what else in new?

no other decent options other than drawing two Intrigue cards and discarding the one I like the least. Putting a point on Bungaloff so I could go to 10+ on him would mark him as mine. Tying Blue for Patina is pointless. Even devious Rex would never side with me now. So I play my two on Shootemdedsky, realizing full well that it is probably fruitless because Yellow will take him away from me. My only hope is that Brown can be convinced that Yellow (who controls the KGB) will then have too strong a position to be trusted with both positions of power—but even I don't believe that argument. Yellow crosses us both up however by declaring one on Schukrutoff and refilling his hand with a third Intrigue card. I'm more than pleased. Now I can at least investigate everybody in the Politburo before Shootemdedsky gets demoted. Yellow must figure I'm no threat because the new Party Chief will demote me anyway. Even so, he must want that third Intrigue card awful bad.

## YEAR 4

1. Patina, 60, ++, 2B, 1Bk
2. Palavrian, 75, ++, 3Y, 1B
3. Badenuff, 55, +, 1B
4. Shootemdedsky, 73, +, 2G, 1Br
5. Schukrutoff, 75, 1Y
6. Bungaloff, 55
7. Mischif, 69
8. Wasolin, 50, ++, 1Bk

CAN: Gofebrook, 74; Niewitko, 73; Krakemheds, 72; Purgemoff, 71; Doberman, 65

**4.1 CURE PHASE:** Blue sends our new Party Chief to the Sanatorium and she ages to 61. Yellow keeps Palavrian at his post and ages two to 77. Bob must be in a hurry to purge someone. With Patina at the Sanatorium this would be a great chance to send Palavrian away also. Badenuff ages one to 56, Shootemdedsky ages two to 75, and Bungaloff one to 56. Blue declares two IP on Wasolin to send him to the Sanatorium. Why would he be more interested in sending him away than Black unless he has a big investment in him?

**4.2 PURGE PHASE:** No purges in three years. Something tells me the ill Palavrian will be making up for lost time. I'm glad I don't have much in the Politburo right now. Black starts the proceedings by playing a "First Purge Attempt" card versus the Industry Minister and Yellow gladly obliges by sending Bungaloff to Siberia. But he's going to have company in the cattle car because Yellow is going berserk. Bob obviously feels the ill Palavrian is not long for the world so he's leaving a legacy of broken careers behind. First, Candidates Doberman, Purgemoff and Krakemheds follow Bungaloff to the gulag, leaving only Gofebrook and Niewitko among the Candidates with a decidedly yellowish hue. The KGB's ire then spreads to Wasolin and the soon-to-be ex-Sports Minister is an easy mark while at the Sanatorium. Black loses his declared IP on Wasolin and Blue loses a pair. On a roll now, Yellow (who is beginning to resemble Genghis Khan) lifts his sights to the Party Chief herself—also more vulnerable while at the Sanatorium—and makes her reign a short one. Poor Patina is sent packing to the cattle cars, social diseases and all. Blue and Black again lose two and one IP respectively. The reign of terror finally takes aim at my own Shootemdedsky. My luck holds. Palavrian ages nine years to 86 but the cattle car is full of old comrades.

**4.3 SPY INVESTIGATION PHASE:** Yellow's reign of terror has played right into my hands. Not only has he opened up channels for advancement of my people but he's left only four others in the Politburo . . . obviously all disloyal dogs with Yellow leanings. Shootemdedsky investigates them all.

**4.4 HEALTH PHASE:** Yellow plays his Miracle Drug card to reduce Palavrian's suffering and Badenuff actually cures himself at work after spending the previous year in the Sanatorium with no change. I wonder what that says about Russian hospitals?

**4.5 FUNERAL COMMISSION PHASE:** Blue nominates Killer Palavrian of the KGB. His election is assured . . . unless he is assassinated first, and I hold the card that can do it. If I can kill Palavrian before the election (a 35% chance) and survive the resulting accusation (45% chance), Badenuff *must* nominate Shootemdedsky and there aren't enough votes to block his election. I have no real choice. Palavrian will demote Shootemdedsky if he becomes Party Chief and then the KGB will nail him. Here is a chance to win the game. Drat! I miss, but so does the Accusation die roll which nonetheless leaves Shootemdedsky under suspicion. Palavrian wins the resulting election over only Shootemdedsky's nay vote. Guess how long the latter will last.

**4.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE:** Yellow switches Shootemdedsky and Badenuff preparatory to playing an Intrigue card which breaks the new Foreign Minister Shootemdedsky to the People. Badenuff is demoted to Sport Minister and Mischif is promoted to KGB. Gofebrook is promoted to Industry. Party Chief Palavrian ages three to 89. Lech Schukrutoff moves up to Foreign Minister and Gofebrook to the Defense Minister by age. Yellow then declares IIP on new KGB Head Mischif (big surprise) and promotes Strychnin, Putschnik, Satin and Zenjarplan to Candidates, aging four to 73. Yellow is not through though. He now uses new Foreign Minister Schukrutoff to promote Strychnin to Ideology and Satin to Industry, aging himself two years to 77. Yellow now declares one on Gofebrook ostensibly to complete his promotions but Black declares two and Brown three. Brown uses new Defense Minister Gofebrook to promote Zenjarplan to Economy and then refills the Candidates with Karrienko, Nikotin and Manjak, aging four to 78. I'm actually relieved that Shootemdedsky wasn't brought up. With a hostile KGB and Defense I'd have lost my control of him for sure. Better he waits in obscurity until I can sneak someone else into power.

**4.7 REHABILITATION PHASE:** Blue ages Badenuff five years to rehabilitate Bungaloff. He is obviously interested in him and that's fine with me because he's my 10. Keep advancing Bungaloff, Blue.

**4.8 PARADE PHASE:** Palavrian fails to wave and ages one to 90 in the attempt. I still love my position. I have the only two waves, only one dead (my "4"), and only one in the gulag (my "1"). My 8IP and 6IP politicians are secretly in the Politburo and no one knows who any of my people are, save for Shootemdedsky who was a bonus I didn't expect anyway.

## YEAR 5

1. Palavrian, 90, +, ?, 3Y, 1B
2. Mischif, 73, ?, 1Y
3. Schukrutoff, 77, ?, 1Y
4. Gofebrook, 78, 3Br, 2Bk, 1Y
5. Strychnin, 57
6. Satin, 62
7. Zenjarplan, 60
8. Badenuff, 61, ?, 1B

CAN: Niewitko, 73; Karrienko, 63; Manjak, 61; Nikotin, 59; Putschnik, 52

**5.1 CURE PHASE:** Palavrian ages three to 93 and Schukrutoff ages one to 78. What a disgustingly robust Politburo.

**5.2 PURGE PHASE:** Brown primes the purge

pump by playing the Olympic Boycott card against the Sport Minister and Yellow gladly obliges with his new KGB executioner Mischif. Blue loses one IP on Badenuff. "Beria Bob" is on a roll again—decimating the Candidates with purges of Nikotin, Manjak and Karrienko. Next, he casts bloodshot eyes on Defense Minister Gofebrook. This elicits a bribe from Black and Yellow backs off with his new Intrigue card in hand. Why did Black save Brown's Defense Minister? Does Black have more than two IP on Gofebrook? Or was he really just wary of Yellow's burgeoning power as he claims? Yellow turns his attention back to the Candidates and polishes off Niewitko before ending the phase voluntarily, having aged five years to 78. Why stop now? Could it be that Putschnik (and everybody else remaining in the Politburo) has Yellow sympathies?

**5.3 SPY INVESTIGATION PHASE:** Brown declines the opportunity to condemn Putschnik or investigate anyone with Gofebrook. Putschnik is obviously in both the Brown and Yellow camp, and you can bet Brown's people are rife throughout the Politburo or he'd have been tossing "??s" like confetti. I'd be real worried except that no one has been visibly hurt yet, so it should be hard for anyone to grab a three-wave hold on the top rung.

**5.4 HEALTH PHASE:** Old Palavrian's condition worsens, Gofebrook catches a cold, and Zenjarplan has a stroke.

**5.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE:** Yellow realizes Palavrian is through so he demotes Gofebrook to Sport Minister and promotes Zenjarplan to Defense Minister, aging himself two to 95 and ending his activities. The wave attempt will send him into retirement. Yellow passes his promotion opportunities with Mischif and Schukrutoff but Black declares three on Zenjarplan to promote Nogoodnik to Candidate. This touches off a bidding war with Yellow who declares four and then ten to rescind Nogoodnik's promotion, allowing Putschnik to promote automatically by age to Economy. I'd say the Politburo is loaded with Yellow pigs now. The remaining five Politicians in the People all move up automatically to Candidate. Suddenly the People are non-existent and the gulag is teeming with enemies of the State. Given the natural proficiency of Yellow KGB activities, it behooves the rest of us to open the prison gates lest Yellow win without a wave by decimating the Candidates.

**5.7 REHABILITATION PHASE:** Black declares one on Strychnin to sponsor rehabilitation but Yellow bids two to stop him. Blue steps forward to open the prison gates with Satin, but Yellow again wins a bidding war that goes all the way up to nine to prevent it. Brown now leads the sudden battle for possession of the keys to the gulag by opening the bidding on Putschnik. Yellow again moves to block the release but must drop out of the bidding at six and Brown takes control of the Economy Minister at 7IP. As his reward he gets to age his new Politician 20 years by sponsoring the release of four prisoners and frees another with an Intrigue card. The Great Emancipator Putschnik has averted the crisis.

**5.8 PARADE PHASE:** This is a rare sight. Every Politburo position is showing Yellow IP. Bob has to be fully committed, but Palavrian fails to wave and must retire. Good riddance.

## YEAR 6

2. Mischif, 78, ?, 1Y
  3. Schukrutoff, 78, ?, 1Y
  4. Zenjarplan, 60, ++, 10Y, 5Bk
  5. Strychnin, 57, 2Y, 1 Bk
  6. Satin, 62, 9Y, 8B
  7. Putschnik, 72, 7Br, 6Y
  8. Gofebrook, 78, +, 3Br, 2Bk, 1Y
- CAN: Shootemdedsky, 76, +, ?, 2G, 1Br;

Boremtodev, 66; Eatstumuch, 64; Bungaloff, 56; Nogoodnik, 55

**6.1 CURE PHASE:** Schukrutoff ages one to 79. Yellow sends Zenjarplan for the Cure. Apparently he feels secure in his control of the KGB. Goferbok ages one to 79.

**6.2 PURGE PHASE:** Mischif purges Nogoodnik and Bungaloff from the Candidates, but fails against Eatstumuch and ages to 83.

**6.3 SPY INVESTIGATION PHASE:** With Zenjarplan at the Sanatorium, the Defense chores pass to Schukrutoff in the Foreign Ministry who condemns Eatstumuch. Is Yellow blind? Shootemdedsky is sitting there for all the world to see with my 2IP on him and they all know I control him from his days as an Orphan. He should be a dead man. Could they possibly bungle this bad enough to let him move up into the Politburo? Schukrutoff investigates Goferbok and Putschnik and closes the investigation of Mischif while aging five years to 84. Why didn't he cancel the investigation of himself? Could it be that he only has 1IP on Schukrutoff and is not very sure of his loyalty?

**6.4 HEALTH PHASE:** Mischif and Schukrutoff get sick. What a shame! Blue plays a "Release from Sanatorium" card on Zenjarplan to try to kill off Yellow's "10" but he lives anyway. Nice try. Putschnik also comes down with a cold.

**6.5 FUNERAL COMMISSION PHASE:** Brown plays the "Afghan Setback" card to break the Defense Minister to the People, forcing Yellow to nominate Mischif. Black declares three on Strychnin to change his vote to "No". Yellow bids four for "Yes". Brown enters the bidding at five and finally wins Strychnin over with nine IP after extending Yellow to eight. Putschnik and Goferbok also vote "No" and the nomination fails. Schukrutoff ages one to 85 and nominates Goferbok as the least objectionable of the rebels. Yellow's remaining Politicians Mischif and Satin vote no but with Schukrutoff forced to vote for his nominee, it isn't enough and Goferbok becomes Party Chief.

**6.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE:** Goferbok demotes Mischif to Sport and promotes Strychnin to KGB, Putschnik to Defense, and Nikotin and Karrienko to Candidate and passes after aging five to 84. New KGB Head Strychnin now promotes Karrienko to Ideology and Nikotin to Economy and ages two to 59. Niewitko, Krakemheds and Purgemoff promote by age to Candidates. Why did Black allow all these promotions? I would have sworn Black had more points on Goferbok after bribing Yellow not to purge him. Black couldn't have agreed with all of those promotions. I must have been wrong. Black must have just been trying to weaken Yellow rather than saving himself. Uncharacteristic generosity by Martin the Merciless . . .

**6.7 REHABILITATION PHASE:** Blue declares on Karrienko to sponsor rehabilitation. Brown bids two to stop it (what a difference a year makes), but must drop out of the bidding at five. Brown has an unexpected ally in Black who takes up the bidding to nine. There will be no rehabilitation for Karrienko. I smell a rat . . . a Black, cigar smoking rat.

**6.8 PARADE PHASE:** Black declares 6IP on Goferbok who waves and ages one to 85. Why did he wait so long? Now he has to contend with a Brown-controlled KGB and Defense Ministry, or does he?

**INFLUENCE DECLARATION PHASE:** With Black controlling the Party Chief, Brown must start and places two on Strychnin to go to 10+ on the KGB head. It is now my turn. My only remaining penetration of the Politburo is Nikotin, on whom I have 7IP. My 8IP on Strychnin is useless now that Brown has gone to 10+. Reinforcing my 7IP is liable to do more harm than good as it will make him a target. With two waves I am still the biggest

## THE VIEW FROM THE REFORM EXPANSIONISTS

By Bob Coggins

10. Zenjarplan
9. Satin
8. Strychnin
7. Mischif
6. Putschnik
5. Boremtodev
4. Talksalott
3. Palavrian
2. Goferbok
1. Wasolin

Cards: Flu; Grain Deal Breaks Foreign Minister; Blackmail



My allocation of IP was basically done at random, except that I made a conscious effort to avoid the Candidates and Patina. Rex always goes after the KGB and having gotten it immediately starts purging everybody in sight starting with the weak and infirm. As there are seldom identifiable foes on the first turn he can be counted on to quench his thirst for blood with the Candidates.

**YEAR 2:** Rex crossed me up! With both the KGB and Defense Ministry uncontrolled (what are the chances of that?) and effective "blocks", Green could win it all with old Aparatschik. So I play my Flu card even though I have three of my own Politicians in the Politburo. Naturally, I shoot myself in the foot as all three of my people sicken or die while old Aparatschik comes through it unscathed.

**YEAR 3:** I outbid Blue for the acting Foreign Minister because I wanted the ill Patina nominated rather than the healthier Shootemdedsky. I also wanted the KGB post vacated because with an Orphan as Party Chief, Palavrian will promote by age automatically into the KGB slot. I chose to draw a card because I'm not sure whether I could convince the tie-breakers to give me control of either the Party Chief or Defense while I already control the KGB. Besides, Green is universally feared and will doubtless be demoted and disposed of soon. I'd rather draw a card (which turns out to be the Miracle Cure) and put 1IP on Schukrutoff who at 75 may well be an Orphan.

**YEAR 4:** What a turn! I might have gotten a bit carried away with the purges (I had no intent at the outset to go after the Party Chief) but it appears to have paid off. I control the Party Chief, KGB and Foreign Minister and have big (hidden) points on three others. I needed a wave out of Palavrian though as my top three are awfully old.

**YEAR 5:** My planned purge of Goferbok was stopped when Rex blackmailed Mischif. It is a cinch Rex has more than the two IP he is showing on the Defense Minister. Well, that won't save him from a demotion by Palavrian. The success of my purges has opened the chance of winning by default if I'm that successful again next year. I'll try to block any rehabilitations. I have all my people up on top now anyway. It's now or never.

**YEAR 6:** It looks like never. I once controlled six Politburo posts and now have but two—both in the 2nd Level. I've shot my wad. I can't expect to win now.

**YEAR 7:** Black obviously has IP on Mischif but does he have more than me? I'll chance it. The free promotion is too good to pass up. I'll use my Blackmail card to get Satin promoted to Foreign Minister. Satin is much younger though (68 to Mischif's 85)—perhaps I should have used the Blackmail card to get the younger man to the KGB slot. In any case, we must now vote Goferbok out of office or Black can win.

**YEAR 8:** What is this? Do I see the light of a win at the end of the Kremlin corridor? I had thought I was through, but maybe not. If I keep rolling high I can win this thing next turn. I'd better, because Mischif is not long for the world at his age.

**YEAR 9:** Is this poetic justice or what? After failing to wave three times due to lousy die rolls I can now win by eliminating the Candidates with good die rolls. Only an Intrigue card, bad Health rolls, or low Purge dice rolls can stop me now. I aim to purge everyone in sight and hope two of my top three survive the Health Phase. If this doesn't work I'm dead . . . because two of my guys are ill and I'm bringing one of them out of the Sanatorium to keep his Condemnation power. Of course I totally forgot this during the heat of the firing squads and went after the wrong target with my last purge attempt, but I'd rather be lucky than good anyway.

perceived threat. I could put two on Goferbok (even though I can't top the Black 6IP) in an effort to fake Black into wasting his IP there also. I'd rather do something positive for my own cause so I take two cards, which unfortunately offer little help (Bee Hormone Cure and Space Program Success). Yellow puts one on Satin to go to 10IP and prevent Blue from leap-frogging him and draws a card. Blue puts his two on Karrienko and declares a hidden 9th IP to go to "10+". Black places his two on Schukrutoff in the hope that Yellow is fully committed there.

### YEAR 7

1. Goferbok, 85, +, ?, 6Bk, 3Br, 1Y
2. Strychnin, 59, 10+Br
3. Schukrutoff, 85, +, ?, 2Bk, 1Y
4. Putschnik, 72, +, ?, 7 Br, 6Y
5. Nikotin, 59
6. Satin, 62, 10Y, 8B

7. Karrienko, 63, 10+B

8. Mischif, 83, +, 1Y

CAN: Shootemdedsky 79, +, ?, 2G, 1Br; Niewitko, 73; Krakemheds, 72; Purgemoff, 71; Boremtodev, 66

**7.1 CURE PHASE:** Goferbok ages three to 88, Schukrutoff ages two to 87, Putschnik ages two to 74, Mischif ages one to 84.

**7.2 PURGE PHASE:** Brown announces a purge of Foreign Minister Schukrutoff. Black offers Brown a bribe to take his firing squad elsewhere but Brown, to his credit, cannot be bought. Unfortunately, the purge attempt fails and Strychnin ages three to 62. Brown obviously hasn't got Yellow's flair for the job.

**7.3 SPY INVESTIGATION PHASE:** Putschnik condemns Shootemdedsky out of the Candidates and ages two to 76. At last someone who can see! Trust Taylor to shoot a sitting duck when he sees one. I lose my 2IP on him and Brown loses one. I'd be

disappointed but I can't believe they let him float this long.

**7.4 HEALTH PHASE:** Young Strychnin has a stroke (*C'est dommage*) as does Schukrutoff who dies. My joy is short-lived however when Nikotin (my

7IP and only penetration of the Politburo) also suffers a stroke. Karrienko catches a cold.

**7.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE:** Black demotes KGB Head Strychnin to Sport and replaces him with Mischif. Yellow bribes Goferbok to promote Satin

to Foreign Minister. Goferbok ages three to 91. New KGB Head Mischif promotes Zenjarplan to Candidate and new Foreign Minister Satin brings him up to Industry. Drat! Yellow's "10" has safely crossed the Candidate Level back to the Politburo.

## THE HARD-LINE WHO??

By S. Craig Taylor

10. Putschnik
9. Strychnin
8. Nikotin
7. Zenjarplan
6. Satin
5. Karrienko
4. Eatstumuch
3. Goferbok
2. Krakemheds
1. Boremtodev



Cards: Visit the Sanatorium; Setbacks in Afghanistan; Olympic Boycott

The fall of the cards nudges me into a strategy of "hold back and wait". These cards would be of limited utility in trying for a quick win, so they'll be used to keep anyone else from winning while I wait for the incidental promotion of my staunch but secret partisans. With the exception of Bruno, I've played *KREMLIN* against everyone else here numerous times and, based on these earlier experiments in terror, fully expect the first controller of the KGB Head to perform a chainsaw massacre on the Candidate level. Therefore, with few prospects at the top and no desire to control a mob of Siberian exiles making big rocks into little rocks, my selected politicians are all from the People level, with a mixture of ages. Let somebody else take the heat in the early going.

**YEAR 1:** Nobody controls the KGB and Defense! No purges, no investigations, no fun! What kind of a chicken outfit is this? To work, my "sneak your way to the top" strategy requires more boogie in the high halls to open the dance, but no one seems to be cooperating. Could it be that everybody is holding back, or are they just shy? Humph!

**YEAR 2:** Don still controls that senile old reprobate Aparatschik at the top, so I play the "Go to Sanatorium" card on him to try to prevent a second wave. That fails and Don, that die rollin' devil, has Aparatschik wave again. The old cluck can barely move, but somehow he manages to keep his arm going like a piston. If Aparatschik can wave again next turn, this sucker is over before it starts.

**YEAR 3:** That sorry rascal finally kicks the bucket. Urra, urra! Bob's pig Palavrian is acting Foreign Minister and he takes a "stop Don" strategy—nominate that sick and unloved KGB femme fatale and hope that Don doesn't suddenly reveal that she's been his mistress all along. Patina, dressed in her best peasant outfit and still uncontrolled, rises to the top like bad cream in good coffee. To end the turn, I play one IP on Shootemdedsky (at Defense—I'll either get him cheap or force someone else to use both his to top me) and draw one card ("Get One Rehabilitated Comrade out of Siberia Free"). Anyone who outbids me for the DM has bought himself a lot of trouble because I hold the "Break DM" card.

**YEAR 4:** Bob has his Palavrian creature at the KGB purging like he was born to the job. He even gets Patina with a natural "18". The man is dangerous, but this is what I wanted. The only partisan I lost was Krakemheds (with two IP, how much chance is there that I really control him). Later this same year, during the Funeral Commission (but she didn't die, just took a long trip), Bruno has no choice but to use his Foreign Minister to nominate Bob's crazed KGB head to the top slot to keep Don's Defense Minister from going up for a possible third wave. Don tries to assassinate Palavrian to prevent this, but the attempt fails. Don doesn't know it, but even if he had succeeded, I would have used my card #25 to prevent Shootemdedsky from moving up in the world.

That Party animal Palavrian grasps the brass ring, and Bob uses him and his other top-ranking flunkies to run amok with an orgy of promotions and demotions. Nothing like the good clean fun of bureaucratic infighting! My prospects now look *real* good, with many of my secret admirers in positions of power. When the smoke clears, Bob has promoted my Goferbok to Defense Minister, my Strychnin to Ideology, my Satin to Industry and my Putschnik and Zenjarplan to the Candidate level. I then reveal three points on Goferbok and promote Zenjarplan to Economy and Nikotin, Karrienko and Manjak (no points—but he's promoted to confuse the issue about who I do control) to the Candidate level. My strategy is working and my strength has moved up nicely.

**YEAR 5:** Bob controls the KGB again and foams at the mouth until five more politicians are purged (including my Karrienko and Nikotin). The man is a menace. He wanted to purge Goferbok, but Rex bribed him with some card to go after Niewitko instead. Something smells here (besides

Rex's cigar) and I suspect that Rex is just letting me "control" Goferbok until he's ready to make a run for the roses. These constant purges have filled up the gulag and the game could be called due to depopulation. I hate to reveal my points and age Putschnik so much (20 years—where's that picture in the attic to do the aging for you when you really need it), but he's my only *reliable* (not trusting Goferbok's soiled loyalties) politician available for some rehab. I use Putschnik and card #12 to bring out several folks; two have none of my points, but now everybody thinks they do—heh, heh. Bob openly controls the Politburo.

**YEAR 6:** Bob is still on a tear with his control of the KGB (Mischif), but missed all of my men stout and true. Since Defense Minister Zenjarplan is taking the cure (good booze and bad women, you know), Bob's Foreign Minister Schukrutoff condemns my Candidate Eatstumuch and there's nothing I can do to stop it. During the Funeral Commission, I use card #25 at last to break Bob's DM back to the ranks. KGB thug Mischif's nomination to be top dog gets defeated and, with Defense vacant, nominations are open. Goferbok, who is openly my kind of guy, becomes party Chief with Rex's blessings (I wonder why?). Although I trust Goferbok about as far as I can throw him, I still formally control the old boy and use him to put my Strychnin into KGB, Putschnik into Defense, and Karrienko and Nikotin into the Candidates. Strychnin then promotes Karrienko and Nikotin into the lower levels of the Politburo. I now potentially control the Politburo but Rex reveals his six points on Goferbok (gasp!) and the old drooler manages to wave.

I end the turn adding two points to Strychnin (making a 10+) to keep Bob from possibly taking his control from me. Quite frankly, it's starting to dawn on me, as Bob, Bruno, Rex and myself duke it out, that Don is invisible. Where the blazes are Don's slimeballs? Don got two waves right out of the box, and has hardly shown any points and has hardly said anything the entire game beyond, "Slow down so I can record what's happening," and, "Shut up, Rex." It sure is a wonderment.

**YEAR 7:** Rex got his wave, but he only openly controls two Politburo pols—Goferbok at the top and Schukrutoff with the Foreign Ministry portfolio (just enough to block the people's righteous investigations). I control the KGB and Defense and have secret allies throughout the Politburo, but I've got to deal with Rex's terrible twins before they get me. Civics classes in the Soviet Union should include marksmanship and backstabbing. If I purge one, I can eliminate the other with an investigation, so let's purge that nasty old Schukrutoff. Oops. An "11". That purge failed and I fear that I've shot myself in the foot. In frustration, I condemn Shootemdedsky on general principle; but that's all I have to show for my brief moment in the sun. Stop gloating, Rex!

I can still hope that Goferbok keels over during the health rolls, but Rex is doing the rolling. Damn. Goferbok not only stands tall, but both my lads Nikotin and Strychnin have strokes and roll down the demotion slope to Second level oblivion. Things are going terribly wrong!

**YEAR 8:** Bob still has Mischif at KGB and the man is another Beria. After their untimely strokes, I felt that I had to chance sending Nikotin and Strychnin to the Sanatorium, and he promptly purges both of them. This really cuts into my power base and some real luck will be required if I hope to win now. Not wishing to give Rex another wave, my Defense Minister Putschnik investigates Goferbok and ships him from comfortable *dacha* straight into the Siberian woods—although this leaves Putschnik alone in a herd of Bob's doddering old fools in the Politburo. I can always hope for an epidemic next turn. Bob's Mischif becomes king of the mountain, but trips over the podium and fails to wave. Still no signs of Don's presence in the game.

**YEAR 9:** Bob's Satin at KGB sends four politicians (including dear Eatstumuch) to Siberia and his other terrorist at Defense condemns Wasolin. My Putschnik dies of "natural causes" (sure) and we run out of politicians. It's an easy game when you have a succession of sharpshooters at the KGB, isn't it Bob?

I still think my overall strategy was sound. Hell, it must have been—it was the same strategy used by everybody else in the game. Next time, maybe I'll just seize control of the KGB from the first and start squeezing the trigger. Or, maybe not. The nice thing about *KREMLIN* is that you don't have to justify your actions to future historians. If you lose, you won't even be *mentioned* by the historians. "The decision was unanimous, you see." You disappear, become a non-person, get edited out; you . . .

The Candidates remain at four in number due to a lack of newcomers. It is time to empty the gulag again or we could have a sudden end to the festivities.

**7.7 REHABILITATION PHASE:** Yellow ages Satin five to rehabilitate Z. Brown declares 1IP on Nikotin to sponsor Eatstumuch out of the gulag. This is too much. My only penetration is being aged to bring out an enemy. Nikotin is already in ill health—I'd best get some use out of him while I can. If he is going to age, let him do it bringing out my people. But the bidding war for control of Nikotin finds me on the short end of an 8-7 score. So much for my penetration of the Politburo. Fortunately, Blue has similar goals—aging Karrienko (his 10+!) 15 years to rehabilitate Bungaloff, Badenuff and Manjak—two of my people. Only Nogoodnik—my 9IP—remains in the gulag. Suppress heavy sigh of relief . . .

**7.8 PARADE PHASE:** Old Goferbok waves throughout the parade and Black now assumes my mantle of Public Enemy #1. It becomes Rex more than me. Maybe now they will be more worried about him and I can finally sneak someone to the top.

## YEAR 8

1. Goferbok, +, ?, 6Bk, 3Br, 1Y  
 2. Mischif, 85, +, 1Y  
 3. Satin, 68, 10Y, 8B  
 4. Putschnik, 76, +, ?, 7B, 6Y  
 5. Nikotin, 59, ++, 8 Br, 7G  
 6. Zenjarplan, 60, ++, 10Y, 5 Bk  
 7. Karrienko, 78, +, B10+  
 8. Strychnin, 62, ++, Br10+  
 CAN: Niewitko, 73; Krakemheds, 72; Purgemoff, 71; Boremtodev, 66  
 PEOPLE: Five

**8.1 CURE PHASE:** Beloved (?) Party Chief Goferbok ages three to 95. The old coot could still win it all with a wave before he retires if we let him. Putschnik ages two to 78. Then the ambulance pulls up. Brown sends ill Nikotin to the Sanatorium. Yellow follows with the equally ill Zenjarplan. Not to be outdone, Blue sends Karrienko who only has a cold! Brown likewise sends the ill Strychnin. What is this—a Blue Cross convention in Moscow? There is an awful lot of trust being shown in KGB Head Mischif. Do they all have more IP on him and think they can protect their people's backs while they're away? Or are they trusting in the crisis with Goferbok to hold his attention? I can see why the critically ill would chance it, but Karrienko only has a cold. He's been in worse shape following his annual inebriated New Year's dunk in the Volga. Look at those 50+ declared IP to be harvested with a lousy Purge number of "7". The entire 2nd Level . . . what a field day they're setting up for the KGB! I sure hope they have cards to stop this impending bloodbath. Yellow would have to be blind not to see it.

**8.2 PURGE PHASE:** Yellow isn't blind. He announces a purge of Sports Minister Strychnin. I fully expect to see Brown play a card or declare more IP on the KGB to stop it. Silence. Strychnin is gone and so are Brown's 10+ IP on him. Good—now my 8IP on Strychnin are meaningful again. Brown and Blue now sound the alarm: "Black!" they cry as one! What if Black has hidden IP on someone else in the Politburo (I'm suspicious of Mischif personally)? "Don't rely on the trial to get Goferbok" they moan. Is Yellow gullible enough to swallow that? Taking out the Party Chief with a purge is only a 15% long shot. He has a 65% chance against Karrienko and Nikotin and can thereby rid himself of 25+ enemy IP. I know what I want him to do—evaporate that 2nd Level and make room for my guys to move up, but I can't say that. It would probably convince him to do the opposite. Hmm

. . . maybe I should join the clamor for Goferbok's head in hopes of swaying him the other way. Too late . . . he's going after Goferbok. He really is that gullible. Incredible . . . I can't fully appreciate his position obviously because I don't know the full extent of his dispositions or the Intrigue cards he holds, but it strikes me his best chance of winning is to purge Nikotin and Karrienko while he can and destroy the power base of Blue and Brown. While it is true that Black can possibly win this turn, there are at least three chances to stop it: bringing Goferbok to Trial, the Health Phase, and whether the old coot can manage to wave again. At his age he'll get only one shot before he must retire. Plus there is always the chance that someone will play a Visit Sanatorium card on him.

Whoa! Black may save Yellow from himself. He has bribed Yellow with an Intrigue card not to purge Goferbok and Yellow has accepted to the groans of Brown and Blue. They immediately send up a hue and cry over this—trying to convince Yellow that Black has something up his sleeve besides tobacco stains. Yellow apparently agrees because now he plays the KGB Dossier card on himself forcing all hidden IP on Mischif to be declared. There were none—other than Yellow's remaining six IP. Boy, has he been snookered! Now he looks elsewhere for revenge. Karrienko is purged and Blue loses his "10+". I hope the nurses were pretty, Boris. Nikotin follows him into the cattle car with "8" Brown and "7" Green IP. The reign of terror ends with a try against Defense Minister Putschnik. Mischif ages six to 91.

**8.3 SPY INVESTIGATION PHASE:** Brown has just lost 18+ IP and two Politicians to Yellow's purges. Will he refuse now to bring Black's Goferbok to trial to spite Yellow? Black offers Brown the KGB slot if he doesn't bring the Party Chief to trial. Good ol' devious Rex . . . always thinking. Brown will have none of it though and brings the old bolshevik to justice. Black loses his 6IP, Blue three, and Yellow one on Goferbok—who now is truly broke. Brown completes his phase by investigating the three surviving Politburo members and ages to 81.

**8.4 HEALTH PHASE:** KGB Head Mischif's condition worsens and Satin becomes sick but there is no change in the others.

**8.5 FUNERAL COMMISSION PHASE:** There is no intrigue here. Yellow has Foreign Minister Satin nominate Mischif. There are not enough votes to block it. The old boy rises to the top after eight straight years in the Politburo—such staying power is rarely seen.

**8.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE:** New Party Chief Mischif shifts Satin to KGB and Brown's Putschnik to his Weak slot in the Foreign Ministry. Yellow's ill Zenjarplan then promotes by age to Defense. All remaining promotions are handled strictly according to age. I wonder how many IP are left unaccounted for? Few, I hope. Maybe now at long last I can begin to make my move. I'm running out of time.

**8.7 REHABILITATION PHASE:** The People are again empty. With a young KGB Head, it behooves me to get people out of the gulag again. I pass up the chance to declare on Niewitko in Ideology to protect him. At 2IP he is my "strongest" penetration of the Politburo. I hope the others will think of him as an orphan. I declare 1IP on Krakemheds for rehabilitation but Black declares two and stops me! Obviously he doesn't want his man to be aged in this way, but it won't matter if Yellow conducts another reign of terror. Brown shares my concern and declares one on Boremtodev but Yellow blocks him with two. Uh-oh! Yellow could conceivably win if six people are disposed of.

**8.8 PARADE PHASE:** Mischif ages two to 93 but fails to wave. Now only Black and I can win with

a third wave. Yellow's best chance is to purge everyone in sight and end the game while his old buzzards are still on top.

## YEAR 9

1. Mischif, 93, ++, ?, 7Y  
 2. Satin, 68, +, ?, 10Y, 8B  
 3. Putschnik, 81, +, ?, 7Br, 6Y  
 4. Zenjarplan, 60, ++, ?, 10Y, 5Bk  
 5. Niewitko, 73  
 6. Krakemheds, 72, 2Bk, 1G  
 7. Purgemoff, 71  
 8. Boremtodev, 66, 2Y, 1Br  
 CAN: Eatstumuch, 64; Manjak, 61; Badenuff, 61; Bungaloff, 56; Wasolin, 50, ++  
 PEOPLE: 0

**9.1 CURE PHASE:** Party Chief Mischif goes to the Sanatorium to prevent him from having to retire. Even so, he ages two to 95. Satin ages three to 71, Putschnik three to 84. Uh-oh! Zenjarplan, although ill, returns from the Sanatorium and ages three to 63. This can mean only one thing. As long as Yellow controls the KGB, Zenjarplan is safe to convalesce at the Sanatorium. Risking him to a Health roll at work means that Yellow is going all out to win the game this turn with a reign of terror and needs Zenjarplan to condemn a Candidate. There is liable to be Hell to pay this year. Purgemoff and Boremtodev each age one due to being in their Weak slots.

**9.2 PURGE PHASE:** It begins. Manjak, Badenuff, Bungaloff and Eatstumuch are all purged from the Candidates with nary a card played to stop it. The reign of terror ends when an attempt against Candidate Wasolin fails. Wasolin? The fool! Yellow doesn't deserve to win. He got carried away with his own bloodbath! He could have taken Wasolin out with a condemnation by Defense.

**9.3 SPY INVESTIGATION PHASE:** Zenjarplan condemns Wasolin. There are 13 Politicians in the gulag. If anyone dies during the Health Phase the game is over.

**9.4 HEALTH PHASE:** I play my Bee Hormone card on Mischif to reduce his age to 90. He was the most likely to die even while at the Sanatorium. I hated aiding a Yellow Party Chief but what could I do? If anyone dies the game is over. The others congratulate me on my clever play. Mischif survives the Health roll with flying colors . . . didn't even need my Bee Pollen card. The old fool actually got better. So far so good. Satin gets sicker. Putschnik has a stroke and dies! The game ends and Yellow wins.

Recriminations against Black for stopping my rehabilitation with Krakemheds fill the air but I'm too busy blaming myself. I now realize that I misplayed the Bee Hormone card. The chances were that someone would die anyway. If anyone was going to die it should have been Party Chief Mischif so we could hold a new Funeral Commission. With Foreign Minister Putschnik dead, the nomination falls to Ideology Chief Niewitko (my 2IP). I could have passed him off as an orphan and if the first nominee (by age) failed, Yellow might well have blocked the second nominee to elect an Orphan Party Chief so that he could win as the highest ranking controlled Politician. What a surprise that would have been when I revealed my 2IP on Niewitko as the new Party Chief. (What a bigger surprise it would have been when Rex revealed his 4IP!) I guess it just wasn't meant to be.

## POSTMORTEM:

A look back at the total initial IP of the five players provides an interesting glimpse of lost opportunities. The eight initial Politburo members are shown in italics. From this list we see that there were actually four Orphans in the game, although all but

Purgemoff eventually drew later declarations. Yellow's strong position—initial control of seven (out of a possible ten) Politicians goes a long way towards explaining his eventual win. Black was second with control of 5.5 Politicians, followed by Blue with four, myself with three, and Brown with 2.5. So much for my skill at putting 'em where they ain't, or as Lenin would say "Kto Kogo".

- A. *Aparatschik*: 6 (4G, 2B)
- B. Schukrutoff: 0
- C. Goferbok: 12 (6Bk, 3G, 3Br)
- D. Niewitko: 6 (4Bk, 2G)
- E. Krakemheds: 5 (2Bk, 2Br, 1G)
- F. Purgemoff: 0
- G. *Palavrian*: 4 (3Y, 1B)
- H. *Shootemdedsky*: 0
- I. *Mischif*: 7Y
- J. *Talksalott*: 4Y
- K. Boremtodev: 6 (5Y, 1Br)
- L. Doberman: 2Y
- M. Eatsumuch: 15 (10B, 4Br, 1Bk)
- N. Karrienko: 23 (9Bk, 9B, 5Br)
- O. Satin: 28 (9Y, 8B, 6Br, 5Bk)
- P. Manjak: 12 (7B, 5G)
- Q. Zenjarplan: 33 (10Bk, 10Y, 7Br, 6G)
- R. Nikotin: 15 (8Br, 7G)
- S. *Patina*: 0
- T. Strychnin: 28 (9Y, 8Br, 8G, 3Bk)
- U. *Protzky*: 4B
- V. Nogooodnik: 16 (9G, 7Bk)
- W. Bungaloff: 15 (10G, 5B)
- X. *Badenuff*: 11 (8Bk, 3B)
- Y. Putschnik: 16 (10Br, 6Y)
- Z. Wasolin: 7 (6B, 1Y)

In retrospect there isn't much I would have done differently—other than putting IP on Patina and Shootemdedsky from the outset—but who wouldn't. Little did I know that I actually controlled so few Politicians, and hamstrung by my early lead I couldn't place more IP on Turn 6 to get more. My big guns were not particularly popular with the other players and consequently I wasn't able to sneak them to the top, although goodness knows Blue kept trying with Bungaloff. Why Rex didn't make more of an effort to move Nogooodnik (his seven and my nine) up is a mystery to me. If only Yellow wasn't such an effective Purger. If only Yellow didn't control seven men from the outset. If, if, if . . . that's how policy is made in the *KREMLIN*.



## REVOLUTION

If you've played and enjoyed *KREMLIN*, but miss all the fun fellows that brought Communism out of the dusty corridors of academia and into the hearts of the people, we've just the thing for you. You'll want to expand your horizons with Avalon Hill's deck of historical variant cards for the game, depicting caricatures of such lovely folk as Joseph Stalin, Leon Trotsky, Laurenti Beria, and old Vladimir Lenin himself. In all, 26 new politicians crawl out of the pages of history to help you purge, plot and power your way to the top in *Revolution*, the *KREMLIN* variant. And if you need help getting them to the top, Don Greenwood included a complete set of new Intrigue cards, designed to reflect their times. Even if adding the historical characters doesn't appeal to you, the *Revolution* variant cards will greatly enhance your play of the contemporary game through the added possibilities of a combined Intrigue deck to draw from.

The *Revolution* Variant Kit is available for \$8.00, plus the usual 10% for shipping and handling (20% for Canadian, and 30% for overseas orders). It can be ordered direct from The Avalon Hill Game Company (4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214). Maryland residents please add 5% state sales tax.



## LOOKING AHEAD

By Bill Peschel

*This inaugurates our regular column devoted to the electronic arts—in this case, computer games. Here you "hackers" will find information on the design, and hints on play, of the computer games from Avalon Hill. Who better to pen this feature than Bill Peschel, development head of MicroComputer Games. Here Bill takes a look at some of the recent titles he'll be dealing with in future installments.*

This morning found me driving through the mountains of southern Iran test-driving the U.S. Army's latest armored fighting vehicle. This afternoon I was coaching the Chicago Bulls, watching Michael Jordan shoot (and shoot, and shoot, and . . .); and before I left work for the evening, I took a quick stop in America of 1863 to go over a few strategies with Jeff Davis and Honest Abe.

So goes another typical day in the Computer Games division. We've been working like this since 1979 when the popularity of the Apple II and the TRS-80 series of computers opened up a whole new area of game play. Since that time, we've published a large number of games, some of which will be appearing in this space in issues to come. For now, in keeping with the general nature of this issue, this is a list of some of the games in the line which defines, better than any manifesto, what we're trying to do.

### UNDER FIRE!

No, it's not *SQUAD LEADER* or *ASL*, but it's close. This game of WWII infantry combat received rave reviews when it first appeared on the Apple II; and with publication of the IBM-PC version, it is still the best game on the subject on the market. In development for close to two years, *UNDER FIRE!* expanded on the IBM to take advantage of 256K of memory (translation: it runs faster) and to include a number of innovations that makes it easier to play—such as keyboard-based menus, the ability to move units from the situation map, and controls to set how often units are spotted. The game design itself underwent significant revisions in light of the research uncovered during the *ASL* design, and the game was thoroughly debugged both in-house and out. A future column will be devoted both to a discussion of the design as well as tactics to use. A Macintosh version is being programmed as well.

### COMBOTS

Earth has been invaded, and it is up to you to defend the planet. They used large robotic machines bristling with weapons, sensors and shields. The only way to fight back is to learn their technology and come up with "Combots" of our own. *COMBOTS* (Commodore 64) promises to be a very exciting game, pleasing to science-fiction fans and gamers alike. The game is full of interesting nuances, from the initial construction phase where you build your

combot to the relationship between the weapons systems. Nothing was created without a sound game purpose behind it. There's a lot of flashy detail, but they're not empty details.

Take the construction phase. While pre-set combots are available, you'll want to build your own. The heart of the system is the pool of "kilocredits" you have available. With an initial fund of 250KC, careful consideration must be made in the design between speed, firepower and shields. It is possible to design anything from a speedy "scout" (one hit and it's gone) to a combot with a lot of offensive smack but barely adequate shields. The trick is to survive the early scenarios long enough to earn more KC. In addition, fallen combots can be stripped of useful devices, which can be either attached to your machine or sold back to the machine pool. The more KC earned, the more powerful and varied devices can be added.

And what devices! There's enough here to please any tech junkie. Combots can move on legs, air cushions, wheels or treads, and can have from zero to four arms. They can be armed with energy weapons, rocket launchers, or solid-shot guns; and can be defended by armor of varying thicknesses and energy shields. A sensor package can choose between enhanced vision, radar and mass sense—and these can be jammed as well. Additional devices, both human and alien, can be added, including ammunition magazines, batteries, snorkel, external fuel tanks and a battle computer. A future column will go into detail about the design and play of *COMBOTS*.

### NBA/SUPER SUNDAY

Yes, friends, the Avalon Hill tradition of sports games continues with the microcomputer, and we're planning major new products in this area for the future. We're committed to producing stats-based sports games and supporting them with season and general manager disks.

Take *SUPER SUNDAY* as an example. League players love it, and we felt it needed a utility program to make running a league easier. Thus was born the *General Manager* (Commodore 64/Apple II), a spiffed-up database manager that anyone can use. The best feature, surprisingly, is found on the game disk: a keypress to suppress the graphics in the autoplay version that allows a game to be played in about two minutes. In five minutes, a game could be played, its stats saved, and the computer is ready for another game. A full roster of games not only could be played in a reasonable amount of time, but the player could take command of whatever teams he wants and let the computer control the rest. The feeling of being involved in an active league, competing not only with other players but with computer-controlled teams, is hard to describe. It's

competitive and challenging, frustrating when you lose to a computer but a lot of fun.

*NBA*, the basketball game licensed by the league, plays along the same lines as *SUPER SUNDAY*. It has an autoplay function and, with the season disks available, leagues are very easy to run. A trade and create-player program is being developed for it as well.

#### WOODEN SHIPS & IRON MEN

What can I say about this game to the audience that loves it already? The Commodore 64 version replicates the boardgame exactly, minus the wind effects table and the critical hit chart. It comes with 25 scenarios, and more can be constructed with the "dockyard" program. This version is limited to but 20 ships on the board at a time, but the spectacular IBM version is being tested with the full-blown Trafalgar scenario. There is no better simulation of Napoleonic and Revolutionary War sail than this.

#### POLICE BLOTTER

This new game is an interactive text adventure combined with the paragraph system found in Victory Game's *Ambush* series. As a detective in the 13th Precinct, your mission in these seven stories is to investigate and solve the baffling mysteries. Each action you take—reading reports, questioning witnesses, searching for clues—results in a paragraph number which is looked up in the book that comes with the game. If you think you know who the criminal is, get an arrest warrant and find out.



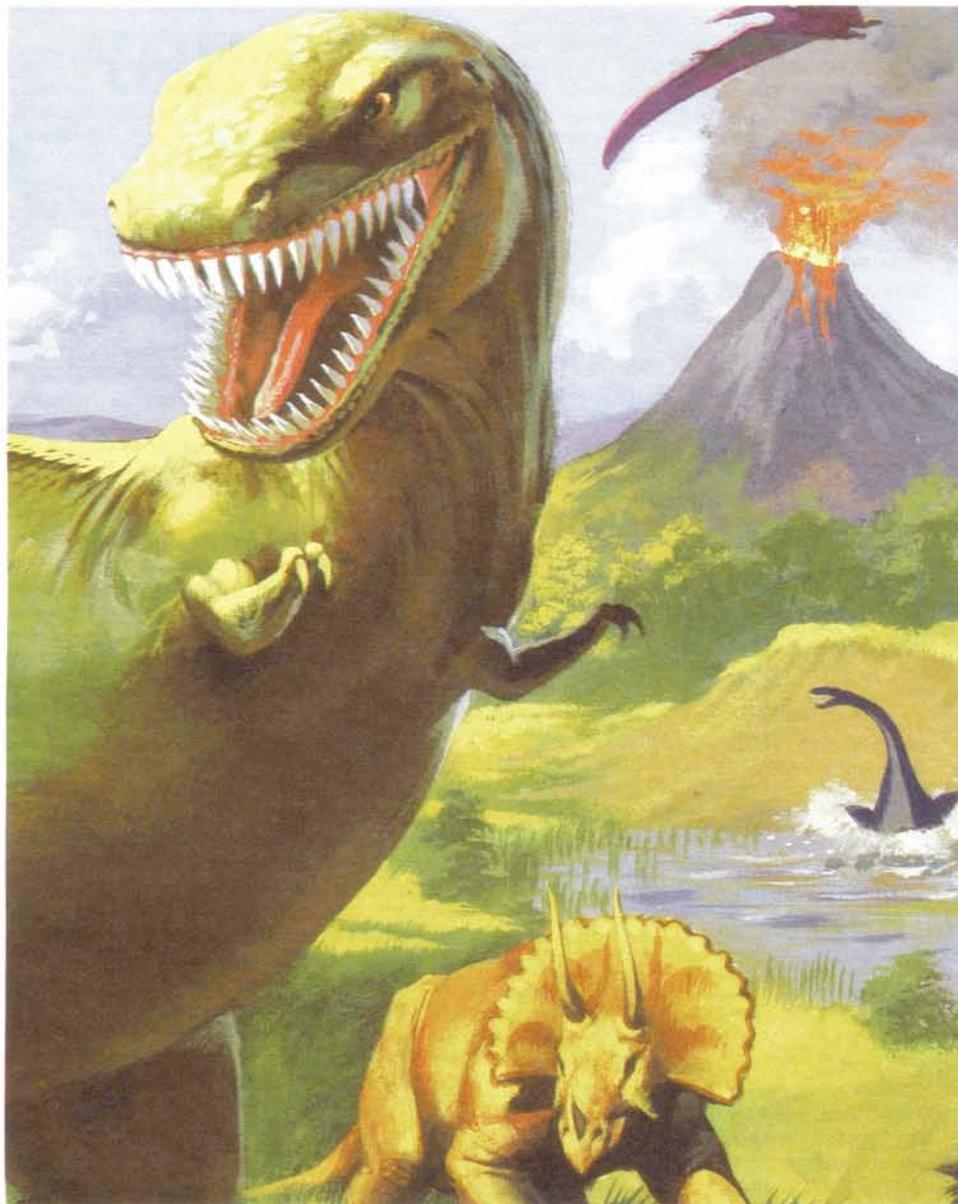
## SO THAT'S WHAT YOU'VE BEEN PLAYING

Titles Listed: 157

Total Responses: 789

Rank:	Title	Pub	Rank Times		
			Last	On	Freq.
			Time	List	Ratio
1.	Advanced SL	AH	1	15	6.5
2.	St. Nazaire	AH	8	3	3.5
3.	Third Reich	AH	3	44	3.0
4.	Beyond Valor	AH	15	10	2.7
5.	Up Front	AH	10	2	2.2
6.	Squad Leader	AH	7	44	2.1
7.	Yanks	AH	12	6	1.8
8.	Russian Front	AH	9	6	1.7
9.	VITP	AH	11	2	1.7
10.	B-17	AH	5	16	1.6
11.	Russian Campaign	AH	4	44	1.5
12.	Panzerblitz	AH	—	1	1.4
13.	Patton's Best	AH	6	5	1.3
14.	Civilization	AH	14	3	1.2
15.	Empires in Arms	AH	13	7	1.2
16.	Diplomacy	AH	2	16	1.1
17.	Guns of August	AH	16	2	1.1
18.	Flight Leader	AH	—	1	1.0
19.	Hedgerow Hell	AH	—	1	1.0
20.	WS&IM	AH	—	1	1.0

With the impetus of the recent "Reader's Survey" sweeping it along, input for this column still provides a solid basis for judgment of what's popular with the readership. Obviously, *ASL* and some of its modules continue to dominate. But some of the other games also show strongly—games that may not have been given enough coverage in these pages in recent issues. *FLIGHT LEADER* and *WS&IM* and *PANZERBLITZ* all reflect sound designs, ones that are truly "timeless". At a glance, *ST. NAZAIRE* seems to be replacing *B-17* in the hearts of those who like to play in splendid isolation; but the fact that both are on the listings (along with *PATTON'S BEST*) indicates that solitaire wargame designs are definitely going to be part of the expanding Avalon Hill line.



# DINOSAUR HUNTING

## Strategy in the Lost World

By Donald Greenwood

### INTRODUCTION

"Dinosaurs! What the heck are dinosaurs doing in my wargaming magazine? !%!&@!\*!"

Go ahead, get it out of your system. There . . . feel better now? Good, because this is just the first part of an article on one of my favorite games. Although many of you are not interested in things non-military, I won't apologize for trying to broaden your horizons. I dare say I've pushed more panzers and stacked more grenadiers than most, and if I can make the transformation from "wargamer" to all-purpose "adventure" gamer, then so can you! And what's more . . . I'm glad I did. Although it's a different kind of fun, it's unpretentious enjoyment nonetheless and that's what gaming—any kind of gaming—is (or should be) all about. As I've grown older I've discovered I need an occasional change of pace from the heavy-handed simulation to something more socially interactive that my whole family can enjoy. As a result, I now number such games as *DINOSAURS OF THE LOST WORLD*, *TV WARS*,

*MERCHANT OF VENUS*, and *KREMLIN* among my all-time favorites. Still not convinced . . . well, chalk it up to the price you have to pay for the expanded 64-page *GENERAL* format; or humor me as your thanks of coverage for *ASL*, *RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN*, *THIRD REICH*.

*DINOSAURS OF THE LOST WORLD* can be played by one to four players in one to three hours (depending on the number of players and style of play). Each player represents an expedition of three explorers marooned on a plateau peopled by denizens of a world that time forgot. To win, a player must explore the plateau—earning points for filming or collecting specimens of prehistoric life. Unfortunately, the dinosaurs are intent on collecting their own specimens of modern-day life, and therein lies the crux of the adventure. The first player to amass 25 points and escape from the plateau wins.

The gameboard is actually a conventional large-hex map laid within the confines of a *Monopoly*-style outer track. Players roll the dice to move their

Expeditions along the outer track; the square landed on specifies what further actions the player may undertake that turn on the inner map. Each square lists an action which can be taken that turn and the hex movement allowance of that player on the inner map. However, the arrow-shaped Expedition markers just don't circle the board mindlessly as in so many roll-the-dice-and-move games. Players must score sufficient points to be allowed to pass each corner square onto the next side of the Movement Track. If they lack sufficient points to cross the corner, they must turn about and head back—doomed to traverse the same section of the Movement Track until they earn the right of passage. This is an interesting mechanic because each side of the Movement Track is progressively more rewarding. For example, the average hex allowance on the first Track side is only 1.6. It climbs to 2.3 on the second, 2.7 on the third, and 3.3 on the fourth. The net result is that the game's speed escalates as the player's score increases, and the player reaching the fourth side of the Movement Track first is at a considerable advantage. Presumably this reflects that with increased experience, our heroes are better versed in avoiding trouble.

While the Movement Track determines the flow of the game, it is on the inner mapboard where the game will be won or lost. The 60-hex map contains four conspicuous landmarks indicated by red stars where players can experience "Adventures" and earn points. In addition, there are 30 hexes with white stars which are covered with randomly dealt tiles. When entered, these tiles are flipped to reveal the hidden contents of that hex. These include another 11 Adventure sites, three hazards, three Escape items, two bonus sites, and 11 non-discoveries.

An Expedition must stop when it enters a previously unexplored hex. If it discovers a Landmark (such as the Lava Pit or Pterodactyl Rookery) it scores a point. More importantly, however, players may trade their next movement on the outer track for an Adventure in any landmark hex they occupy. Having done so, they spend that turn trying to safely navigate a 16-part obstacle course lined with dinosaur booby traps and baited with Victory Points. Each part of the Adventure is a separately illustrated cell depicting the action taking place if the Expedition's die roll causes it to land in that frame. Alternatively, the player may use any Experience cards he has to avoid having to chance a die roll and may then move exactly the number of frames specified on that card—presumably to an advantageous resting place. However, it is rare that a player will have enough Experience cards—or the right combination of them—to guarantee safe passage all the way through the Adventure, and at some point he will have to reluctantly chance fate. Deciding when to take the sure thing and when to trust to luck is not always easy and adds an element of skill to the procedure. His turn ends when he either successfully completes the Adventure or is forcibly evicted from it—usually by a large, ugly, unfriendly creature of some kind.

At this point we should pause to describe the "combat" system. Dinosaurs attack with a Base Strength ranging from "2" (Pterodactyl) to "8" (Tyrannosaurus). To this Base Strength is added the role of a single die. The Expedition defends with a Base Strength equal to the roll of a die. If the Expedition rolls  $\geq$  the dinosaur, they succeed in scaring the creature off. If not, the creature proceeds to chase the fleeing Expedition all the way back to camp—and woe to the explorer who stumbles along the way. It doesn't take a math major to come to the conclusion that dinosaurs aren't particularly impressed by mankind as anything other than a menu ingredient. Fortunately, our intrepid explorers didn't come bare-handed. Among the equipment each Expedition can carry are two rifles and two bombs. Bombs automatically scare off any attacking creature but are removed once used so they should be

saved for the direst of emergencies. Each rifleman has five clips of ammunition. Each time he uses his rifle he expends a clip of ammo, but is allowed to add a die roll to the Base Strength. By using both rifles, they can add two dice and thereby amass enough firepower to give themselves a sporting chance against even an amorous Tyrannosaurus. The trick is in the need to husband the ammunition. Once it runs out, an Expedition is almost defenseless, so some tough choices have to be made on whether it's better to fight or run.

Losing a confrontation with a dinosaur isn't the all-encompassing disaster you might imagine, although it's no walk in the park either. At the very least it means that you must return to camp and lose a turn. More often than not, you return minus some of your equipment in the bargain. To resolve the Chase sequence, the Expedition is placed at the start of an 18-space Chase Track and the dinosaur one, two, or three spaces behind (depending on its speed). Each alternate rolling the die and moving that many spaces; every time the Expedition is caught it must discard an item of equipment. Those among you who tend towards violence can satisfy your blood lust by imagining another flattened native bearer. Along the way, the Expedition can be slowed or helped by terrain, or saved outright if the creature is attacked by an intervening dinosaur.

Let's retrace our steps to the outer track again for a more thorough explanation of the surprises contained in its 36 squares.

There are only two *Climb a Tree* squares, but because one of them occupies a corner, there are in effect two of them on the first side of the Track and one on the second. They don't appear on the later sides because their use is usually superfluous once players have advanced that far (except in the Solitaire game). Landing on this square allows you to secretly look at one of the unexplored site tiles without entering it. This can be quite handy as long as there are undiscovered Landmarks or the Camp of Maple White still to be found. In a four-player game, most tiles have been explored by the time someone reaches the third side of the Movement Track.

A player landing on a *Find a Tool* square may add to his equipment by randomly drawing a Tool counter. Tools are important for two reasons. Having the right equipment at the start of an Adventure entitles you to draw Experience Cards to use in that Adventure which, in turn, increases your likelihood of scoring points and escaping unscathed. Tools are also useful as something other than Victory Points to discard when being chased. There is one Tool square on the first side of the Movement Track and two each on the others.

The *Event* squares force those who land on them to draw an Event card. Sixteen are printed black and convey good news (such as points, means of escape or protection). These can be used immediately or held in secret until any conditions for their use can be met. The other 18 cards are red harbingers of ill fortune and must be read aloud immediately and acted upon. There are two Event squares on each side of the Movement Track.

There are seven *Experience* squares, but because three of them occupy corners, the number on each side of the Movement Track escalates by one per side as the Expeditions advance. Landing on an Experience square entitles the player to draw an Experience card. These have many uses—the most obvious being the already referred to ability to move a predetermined number of frames in an Adventure. However, they can also be used to move that same predetermined number of *spaces* on the Chase Track or *squares* on the Movement Track. In addition, each card has an alternate use ranging from moving extra hexes, rerolling the dice, escaping from Chase, or additions to Battle and Chase die rolls. Obviously, Experience cards are a very good thing to have in abundance, but there is a five card limit

at any one time. Using one returns it to the deck and exiting an Adventure causes forfeiture of all those currently held, so they can't be hoarded long. Deciding when and how to use them is one of the major areas for implementation of strategy.

There are ten *Move a Creature* squares; four on the first side, declining by one per side to a mere one on the fourth side. Landing on this square allows a player to move any creature one hex on the map—usually with the intent of attacking an opposing Expedition. The abundance of these squares on the initial side of the Movement Track (40% of possible outcomes) not only depicts the Expedition's lack of experience at the outset, but also acts as a play-balance mechanism. Those who have not scored sufficient Victory Points to advance further on the Movement Track are thereby given more opportunities to send creatures against the leading Expedition to slow him down.

There are only three *Find a Path* squares; one on the third side and two on the fourth which add to the speed of the final side of the Movement Track. They give any player landing on them another turn and consequently are often well worth the sacrifice of an Experience card to guarantee arrival there. This is especially true later in the game where a single extra turn can be enough to garner a win.

Having scored 25 points, a player need only escape the plateau to win; but that is easier said than done. To escape, an Expedition must have one of six Escape items and successfully exit a corresponding Adventure site. Three of the Escape items are found when flipping unexplored site tiles. The others are conveyed by drawing Event cards. Players who don't have any must ambush other players to steal theirs. Being well-armed is crucial here, for in the end game the main danger comes from forays by other Expeditions—not dinosaurs. Thus, the player who rules the roost at game end is most likely to be the one with the most ammunition—not necessarily the first player to amass 25 points.

## STRATEGY

As promised, the second part of this article will be devoted to tips on how to win the multi-player game. I apologize in advance to those among you who belong to that school which treats every game as a fresh adventure rather than a competitive test of skill. While I belong to the latter group, I can certainly sympathize with those who eschew facts, figures, and analysis *ad nauseum*. After all, the game is the thing. Those of you who enjoy a game less the second time around because you've already discerned some of its surprises will probably want to skip this trip, because I hope to lay bare the very secrets you'd choose to discover for yourself. Those of you who, like me, cherish winning, read on and prepare yourself for a victorious return trip from the Lost World.

The first lesson to be learned is to dispel the myth that the game is decided by luck. All too many gamers mistakenly dismiss any game in which the die determines movement as the second coming of *CandyLand*. Anyone schooled in probability will tell you that is not necessarily true. If dice are rolled every turn, "luck" should even out over the course of an entire game. If that happens, the winner more often than not will be the player who makes the right decisions regarding the other game mechanics not controlled by the dice. There is no luck factor where decisions are concerned—you either make the right ones (which increase your probability of success) or the wrong ones (which decrease it). Luck can still overcome the right decisions and save the wrong ones, but that is the lament of a loser. Show me a gamer who ignores probability, and I will show you a loser. One can make the right decisions only by knowing the full parameters of the game's capabilities. What is the likelihood of scoring "X" points in this Adventure as opposed to becoming a

dinosaur's lunch? Know the answer going in and maybe you'll come out *with* a dinosaur as opposed to *in* one.

Our analysis will be based on a four-player game. The stratagems proposed become less valid as the number of players decreases. The multi-player game is very much a matter of timing. Throwing lots of "6's" helps you win *Risk*, but knowing when to make your move to topple your opponents is the real essence of that game. Here too the trick is not just to score points, but to know when and how to score them. The player who establishes himself as the leader too soon succeeds only in uniting the others against him. With skilled players, it is very much in your interest to lose yourself in the pack and remain poised for a leap into the lead only when it will result in a quick win. Otherwise, dinosaurs will be beating a path to your door as if you were under some sort of primeval Golden Arches. For that reason, it is usually best to avoid being the first expedition to cross onto the second side of the Movement Track. Such a move paints you as the clear leader in the eyes of those left behind on the initial side of the Movement Track—a side with 40% of its squares allowing vengeful players to "Move a Creature". Do you really want to win that race? This is one instance where the tortoise truly does hold an advantage over the hare. So, if you must be the first to enter Side Two, try to exceed the 12 Victory Points required to enter Side Three in the same Adventure. Generally speaking, once you've been branded the leader you must try to end the game as soon as possible or slip back to the pack bruised and battered for another try.

So how do you avoid being the first to score six points? Basically, by not being the first to enter an Adventure. Spend the early turns in movement on the Outer Track, moving dinosaurs against the others, and flipping Unexplored Site tiles. Although you'll score one point for each Adventure location you find, the real prize is Maple White's lost camp (with its bonus of three free tools). As long as it remains undiscovered, you could do worse than spending every turn looking for it. Stay away from known creature hazards as long as possible while still aggressively exploring site tiles. Even if you aren't the leader, that won't protect you if you are in striking distance of a creature and the leader isn't.

### Outfitting Your Expedition

Your initial eight tools should vary from game to game, but as far as I'm concerned there is no choice for half of them. My expeditions always enter the Lost World armed to the teeth with the maximum weapon allotment; i.e., two rifles and two gas bombs. Carrying less weapons may get you more points sooner but you will have problems holding onto them. More often than not, it has been my experience that the game is won not by the first player to amass a lot of points, but by the player who has the most weapons left when players enter the final Movement Track. My other four tools usually come from among the camera, gifts, food, lariat, machete, and protective cage.

The Camera is useful in 11 Adventures to score 13 points. As such, it is the single most useful tool as far as point harvests are concerned. I've never ventured into the Lost World without one.

Gifts are good only at the Indian Caves, but I invariably take them because I always attempt to adventure there. The reason is threefold. The location of the Indian Caves is known from the start; you don't have to worry about being on the other side of the plateau looking for it when it is found. It is one of three escape Adventures which must be completed to win and the only one of the three with appreciable points to offer in the bargain. Lastly, and perhaps most important, it offers the possibility of an added weapon in the form of Indian Allies. Allies are even better protection than another rifle

as they eliminate altogether any attack by that former "creature". The Indian Caves are the only *known* spot on the map where you can go in search of them. While Apetown allies offer the same advantages, no one Tool offers the three Experience Card bonus at Apetown that Gifts do at the Indian Caves. More important, you have to find Apetown first; and even when you do they can't help you escape the plateau in a later visit as the Indians can. If you do manage to get Indian Allies but have been unable to get the escape item for the Indian Caves, it may be worth your while to trade or steal it away from another player as your chances of successfully completing the Indian Caves Adventure with Indian Allies is greatly enhanced.

The Lariat is an all-purpose tool—useful in no less than six Adventures (including a two-Experience card bonus when attempting to escape from the Pinnacle). Among those six Adventure sites are three of the better point producers: Iguanodon Glade, Phorusrhacos Nest, and the Pterodactyl Rookery. The Machete is standard fare because it buys Experience cards at two of the most productive point sites: Phorusrhacos Nest and the Tree Fern Grove.

The Protective Cage is only good at one site, but trying to visit the Pterodactyl Rookery without it is like trying to reach the offramp on the Santa Monica freeway. It not only buys three Experience cards but neutralizes two bad frames by voiding premature exit. Talk about the key to the city! Inasmuch as the Pterodactyl Rookery is far and away the safest and most rewarding point location extant, the Protective Cage is well worth lugging around in search of it.

The Food and Flashlight "tool" set owes its value in my scheme of things to my fondness for allies. Not only is this the principal beneficial tool at Apetown but it adds a fourth Experience card to the three granted by gifts at the Indian Caves. That amounts almost to the equivalent of a hidden weapons cache that you can tap when you need it. It is a security blanket I am especially fond of.

The others all have their uses but require being at the right place at the right time. I prefer to make sure I have these and trust to luck to find the rest.

### Experience Cards

Before proceeding further we should take a closer

look at the Experience cards. Of the 26, 20 are evenly divided between one, two, three, and four frame moves at five cards each. The other six consist of three fives and three sixes, making the larger numbers 40% rarer than the others. Other things being equal then, it is easy to conclude that it is better to save the higher numbers as they are harder to replace. Circumstances are rarely equal, however, so let's dig a bit deeper.

The play of Experience cards is a player's best way to decide his own fate. Neophytes tend to forget them for everything but safe advances on the Adventure charts, but they have far more uses. The consequences of each usage should be carefully weighed against the circumstances and the loss of the card. While it is often nice to land on a "Find a Tool" square for example, it may not be worth sacrificing an Experience card unless the probability of finding something you want is very high. So when is it worth playing an Experience card outside the realm of safely negotiating an Adventure?

On the Chase Track any Experience card which will deposit you on the Dinosaur Encounter space thereby ending the chase is usually a card well spent. However, if it is late in the game and you have more tools than you need, the Experience card will probably be worth more than any tools you'll lose. In such a case, it is best to let the dinosaurs trample your excess equipment bearers and keep the card.

Decisions on when to use an Experience card on the Movement Track are less clear cut and require more consideration of the circumstances. Nevertheless, there are some situations which come to mind which warrant near "automatic" plays. A guaranteed "Move a Creature" which will bring a powerful attack to bear on the leader is usually a good investment. "Find a Tool" is also a worthwhile landing spot if you are short of equipment—especially if numerous tools have already been drawn and the rifle is still unaccounted for. "Find a Path" can be a game winner in the end game if other players are close to winning. Other less obvious or frequent uses also exist.

Assuming you've been keeping track of the remaining unexplored sites once the bulk have been found and you are close to the remaining ones, it can well be worthwhile to spend an Experience to "Climb a Tree" to improve your chances of find-

## ADVENTURE COMPARISONS CHART

ID. Name	Good <sup>1</sup>	Bad <sup>2</sup>	Neutral <sup>3</sup>	Battles <sup>4</sup>	Creatures <sup>5</sup>	Exit <sup>6</sup>	VP <sup>7</sup>	Safety <sup>8</sup>	Experience <sup>9</sup>	Note
A. Apatosaurus Swamp	44	50	6	4	5.75	—	10	.43	2, 5	—
B. Apetown	56	38	6	4	6.5	1	9	.34 (1.12)	2, 4	A
C. Central Lake	44	56	—	4	5.25	1/1	11	.52	1, 2	—
D. Geyser	33	53	14	4	4	2	4	.25	2, 4, 6	E
E. Iguanodon Glade	40	47	13	3	3.33	1	8	.8	3	—
F. Indian Caves	38	50	12	4	4.75	1	8	.42	4, 5	A, E
G. Lava Pit	36	57	7	4	3	2	7	.58	2	—
H. Phorusrhacos Nest	47	40	13	4	3.5	-/1	9	.64	3, 5	—
I. Pinnacle	36	57	7	4	4.5	2	4	.22	4	E
J. Pterodactyl Rookery	47	40	13	2	2	-/3	13	3.25	4, 5	—
K. Rocky Tract	44	44	12	4	4.75	-/1	9	.47	3, 5	—
L. Stegosaurus Meadow	40	40	20	4	4	—	9	.56	1	—
M. Tree Fern Grove	31	44	25	4	4.75	—	11	.57	1	—
N. Triceratops Hatchery	50	44	6	4	5	2	10	.5	2, 4	—
O. Tyrannosaurus Lair	31	50	19	4	8	1	10	.31	3	—

### FOOTNOTES

1. % of frames with good results (including those which complete Adventure without battle unless escape is possible).
  2. % of frames with bad results (including those requiring a specific tool [other than a camera] or ammo expenditure to avoid harmful effects).
  3. % of frames with neutral results (including those requiring a specific tool [other than a camera] or ammo expenditure to gain positive effects).
  4. The number of frames requiring a battle.
  5. The average Base Strength of creatures fought.
  6. The number of frames requiring exit of Adventure prior to probable goal therein excluding those which can be avoided by ammo expenditure or a specific tool which are shown after the slash.
  7. The maximum number of points which can be obtained assuming sufficient tools and no repeated steps.
  8. The ratio of potential points to the Base Strength of the creatures to be battled. The figure in parentheses is the ratio if allied with the host "creature".
  9. The best Experience card frame movement allowance to have at outset.
- A. Chance to gain Allies.  
E. Escape from plateau is possible.

ing the Camp of Maple White or avoid remaining hazards. Then too, if you've already hoarded three Experience cards and your next planned stop is at an Adventure where you're entitled to draw three more—exceeding the five-card limit—you might be more inclined to “waste” one now.

One last thing to keep in mind is the probability of where you'll land if you don't use an Experience card but must roll the dice instead. Each side of the Movement Track has one square with a hex movement allowance of “0” which represents, in effect, a lost turn. If your probability for landing on such a square is high (16.7% for a seven-square move), you might give more weight to burning an Experience card now to ensure some other desirable outcome. This is especially true late in the game where a lost turn can make the difference. You might also want to avoid turning a corner into the next Movement Track side by playing an Experience card to ensure a small advance of your expedition marker.

Before leaving our discussion on Experience cards we must turn to their other uses listed at the bottom of each card. Players frequently forget that these cards have other uses than the predetermined Square, Space or Frame movement listed at the top of the card, and often suffer terrible reverses for situations they could have avoided if only they had checked the bottom line of the cards they hold. The Experience Card Table lists the available options in the order of their relative worth.

#### Experience Card Table

Type	Number	% of Deck
Add to Chase/Battle dice roll	8	30
Escape from Chase	2	8
Discard for another card	6	23
Reroll any die/dice roll	4	15
Move extra hexes	3	12
Reclaim an item	3	12

The additions to the Chase or Battle die roll come in pairs of one, two, three and four denominations with the higher ones obviously carrying correspondingly increased value. However, the fact that these cards can be played *after* the dice rolls they will be applied to rather than having to be pre-designated makes them *all* successful when used.

The “Escape from Chase” card's value goes beyond the obvious inasmuch as it also exempts the player from losing a turn. A player who has this card may well wish to forfeit any creature battle rather than use ammunition fighting it. This is especially true against a powerful creature or if the player can use the lost battle to rapidly move in the direction he wishes to go anyway. Then too, the safe haven of the camp is protection from the ravages of other attacks in the interim, and offers the opportunity to trade with other inhabitants of the camp. “Losing” a battle under these circumstances can be quite a boon, aside from the loss of any possible action on the following turn due to starting in camp.

Players often mistakenly treat the “Discard for Another Card” as a non-bonus when in reality it is one of the better ones. The ability to trade it for another draw gives the player the very real advantage of fishing for whatever he needs at the time. For example, a player who has one of these should never roll the die trusting to fate to give him the number he needs for a point bonanza. The semi-wild card nature of this card allows him a *possible* way out of virtually every tight spot. Before making any tough decision in the game, a player should check to see if he has one of these that he can trade for a possible solution to his problem.

The benefit of the “Reroll Any Dice Roll” cards are more obvious. Among the best usages are rerolling a Movement Track move landing on a 0-hex movement allowance or temporarily nullifying any disappointing result in an Adventure frame or battle when better things are not only possible but probable.

The “Move Extra Hexes” card is nice to have when you've landed on a low hex movement allowance square and can reach a promising Unexplored Site marker by playing the card. It's also handy late in the game when you are racing to reach an Escape site or the last unexplored site.

The value of the “Reclaim an Item” card is subtle. Generally, the Experience card is worth as much or more as any item it can be used to reclaim. The lone exception is when an opposing player steals an Escape item from you. Having this card then can be a game saver; but until the end game when this is more likely to occur, it is easily the least valuable of the Experience cards.

Understanding the dynamics of good Experience card play is essential to playing the game well. The game would be duck soup if you could hoard Experience cards, but you are required to discard all you have whenever you exit an Adventure and these are replaced by only one card and *only* if you complete that adventure. Therefore, how you manage this constant flow of Experience cards through your hand will play a large role in the eventual outcome. Circumstances will overshadow any hard and fast rules but certain situations should be watched for and avoided. To wit:

If circumstance has allowed you to develop a hoard of three or more Experience cards, you don't want to waste them taking an Adventure such as the Lava Pit (which usually doesn't yield big points). Likewise, you should avoid Adventures with a high likelihood of landing on a “premature exit” frame unless you have and use the Experience cards to guarantee avoiding them.

#### Event Cards

The Event cards defy easy categorization—which is as it should be with any mechanism for introducing random events. However, because players sometime have the ability to control when they will draw one, it is important to know the range of possible outcomes. The card deck is composed of 50% favorable, 38% harmful, and 12% cards which can help or hinder depending on the circumstances. A good player must be aware of all the possible outcomes so he can make educated decisions on whether he should chance an Event when it is in his power to avoid it. No less than 35% of the Events can force a player to ultimately quit an Adventure prematurely; so landing on an Event frame in mid-Adventure should by no means be considered a safe haven. On the other hand, a player who finds himself weaponless with no other alternatives could do worse than visit the Watering Hole to draw an Event card, because 23% of them afford some means of protection or attack against enemies.

#### The Adventures

As always, circumstances dictated by the pace of the game will determine which landmarks are the best choices for adventures. However, a little analysis of what each site holds may give pause to the natural impulse to blindly charge into an Adventure in each site encountered. Most players who have the patience to pass up Adventures do so simply because they don't have the required tools to earn a big Experience bonus there. Yet, there are other factors to consider, especially if you believe (as I do) that it is better not to forge into an early lead.

An inspection of the Adventure Comparisons Chart I've constructed will yield some rewarding, and perhaps surprising, information. The most important columns are those labeled “VP” and “Safety”. The former is simply a total of the maximum available points in that Adventure to be won. The latter is the amount of danger per available Victory Point in terms of the Base Strength of the defending creatures. A quick glance shows that the Pterodactyl Rookery is easily the most reward-

ing site in terms of both points and the danger factor. Yet, I've rarely seen players treat this Adventure as any more desirable than the others—and indeed, without a Protective Cage it isn't.

As avoiding combat (and the corresponding ammo usage) is desirable, it is obviously best to visit those sites with the highest safety factor if circumstances such as available tools, proximity, discovery, and nearby creatures permit. Consequently, other things being equal, the Iguanodon Glade, Phorusrhacos Nest, Lava Pit, Tree Fern Grove, Stegosaurus Meadow and Central Lake appear to be the best choices. However, note what happens to the safety factor at Apetown or the Indian Caves if you've picked up Apemen or Indian Allies along the way. Both sites jump to the top of the list. We can also readily see that the Geyser and Pinnacle are easily the least productive places to generate points. Their only real value are as sources of escape. Admittedly, this is oversimplified for purposes of drawing conclusions as there are varying degrees of “bad” and “good” within each Adventure not reflected in the chart, but it is nonetheless useful as a starting point for making decisions.

Now let's assume you are at an Adventure site with a fistful of Experience cards and weighing whether or not to plunge ahead into the Adventure or take another turn instead. If the Adventure contains one or more “premature exit” frames (shown in column 6 of the chart) maybe the answer should be “No”. All adventures threaten possible premature eviction in the form of Event and Battle frames, but at least those give you a fighting chance to stay in and score some points. The thought of landing on an exit frame that will cost you your entire hoard of Experience cards for no gain should give you pause to reflect unless you can use those cards to avoid the exit frame(s).

The information in column 9 also provides an interesting push for those fence-sitters undecided about which way to jump. This column lists the “safe” numbers of an *initial* move into that Adventure. While I do not advocate always using an Experience card to start an Adventure, it is nice to know that your first move into the abyss won't be met with disaster. Owning a card which will at least get you off to a good start can be the deciding factor in whether you give it a try or move off in search of greener pastures. Not having one—nor a chance to draw others—means chancing fate from the outset with a deck stacked against you.

There are other considerations to ponder too. If you've only got five points, do you really want to earn your sixth now and go tripping around the corner of the Movement Track to a chorus of blood-curdling yells of “leader”? Perhaps it would be better to reverse direction and head back towards Start before earning that sixth point? Then too, if your opponents are perched within grazing range of a Tyrannosaurus wouldn't it be a shame to pass up that 40% chance of landing on a “Move a Creature” square which will give you an opportunity to introduce them properly? Or if the Rifle tool or Maple White's camp have not yet been found, perhaps a turn on the Movement Track is better spent than one in an Adventure. Of course, the most obvious factor is whether you possess the right tools for that Adventure. If not, perhaps you should move along. Remember, once you complete an Adventure you can't go back to it to score more points. It might be wiser to skip it until you find the tools that will enable you to do the job right and in comparative safety. The only advantage to completing an Adventure early is that the tools you use will have less (or no) value as a result and can be discarded in a chase with less anguish.

So there you have it—a brief look at one of our most intriguing and clever designs. Now you can go back to your panzers and grenadiers.



# PUTTING SPICE IN SPACE

## The Strange Tale of MERCHANT OF VENUS

By Richard Hamblen

Why do a science fiction game about trading? It all started out innocently: I wanted to create a fast, playable game based on skill, sort of a scotch-and-sandwich game instead of beer-and-pretzels. I even had an interesting historical period in mind, but a strange thing happened. When I focused the game on its objectives, it changed the subject and designed itself! All it left for me to do was the scutwork of figuring out the map, counters and rules to make it work. Except for my original objectives, the final result is not at all what I visualized originally. This article serves as a Cook's tour of this strange design process. It shows how the objectives designed the game, and how the game works to fulfill these objectives.

### The Merchant's War

The history I had in mind was the trading in the Indian Ocean during the 16th and 17th centuries. After Vasco da Gama found the sea route to the East in 1498, adventurous Europeans could buy precious spices at the source, bypassing the middlemen who had been jacking up the prices. The spectacular profits that resulted led to competition between the well-armed merchants, which turned into centuries of intermittent warfare. This was the *Spice Trade*, one of the great adventures in human history, filled with danger, adventurers, villains, fortunes, empires, exotic cultures, sex, violence and the occasional hero.

The period of the Spice Trade contains enough meat for a hundred games, but what caught my eye was the central role of money. Money was the ultimate objective of the competition, and the fuel that ran it. The merchants had to invest money in their trading to make more money, and they had to invest in combat to expand and protect their trading; money was needed to buy better goods, ships, trading posts, and weapons. Each investment increased their money or their power to earn money, so the merchants raced to earn money and to invest it as soon as possible. Moreover, every investment and every action (including war) had to pay off in cash, because everything depended on the money. Economics usually directs diplomacy and it always powers wars; but during the Spice Trade, this relationship was uniquely obvious, simple and fierce.

Each merchant made money by buying goods at one port and selling them at another, so to make the most money he had to deal in the most profitable goods and make the most trips. This sounds simple, but it took skill because there were many ports buying and selling different goods, and prices fluctuated. Since faster trips resulted in more trips and thus more profits, he had to balance the profits for each trip against the total time it took him to get, transport and sell the goods. To avoid wasting time getting goods, it helped if each trip ended at a port that sold the goods he wanted for his next trip, like the notorious triangular trade circuit between colonial America, Africa and the West Indies of rum, slaves and molasses.

This situation seemed perfect for a game. Any number of players could move and trade to make money, and figuring out the most profitable trade routes was certainly challenging enough to reward skillful play. Then the players could make investments, and the player who traded and invested most profitably would deserve to win the game.

Unfortunately, other aspects of the Spice Trade interfered with the simple beauty of this competition. Historically, everyone had to return to Europe to get

the big payoffs and new equipment, so events in Europe affected the merchants arbitrarily (this is what actually ruined the Portuguese). Also, anticipation of European events distorted many decisions made in the East. Even if Europe could be ignored, the merchants were mentally locked into the merchantile policy of closing ports to competition. Finally, the merchants faced unknown geography, markets and events—but in a game, the players would soon know everything that might happen. Players would start each game knowing all of the geography, the exact locations of the best markets, and the possible events for years to come!

These problems were serious. The connection to Europe would complicate the rules and distort the competition with external events. Mercantilism would cripple trading. And the lack of limited knowledge meant that the game could never recreate the historical situation. With the players dealing with every situation as if they had ESP, every game would play like science fiction!

So, if I was stuck with a science fiction game anyway, why not transplant its heart into a science fiction background? I could put the competitive trading into a lawless universe and simplify the surroundings to speed up play and intensify the competition. I could even invent strange natives and marvelous modern goods to recapture the mood of the times when pepper, nutmeg and cotton were rare and glamorous. Best of all, the game could rearrange the universe each time it was played, so the players would always have a new universe to explore!

At this point, I paused to ponder whether enthusiasm was leading me astray. Many gamers snort at science fiction, many sneer at trading games, and some are horrified by wargames. Would anyone, including Avalon Hill, want to buy a game design that mixed these themes? I decided that they would, if the trading game was so interesting that they wouldn't sneer at it, and if they could ignore other elements they disliked. The combat rules would become optional. The science fiction would provide a colorful background and a few simple special effects, but otherwise it would be limited to fantastic descriptions that could be ignored. The key attraction would be the trading game, which now *had* to be fast, fun, playable and challenging, or the whole project would collapse.

### The Basis for Design

The heart of the game is the central role of money, the trading network, and the investments. To make the game a race for money, an arbitrary amount is set as the goal and the first player to reach this amount wins the game. The network consists of trading locations where various goods with different costs and profits can be bought and sold. The exact layout of the network is unknown at the start of each playing, and the profits available at each location fluctuate during play. The investments are for different things that the players can buy to increase their trading profits in different ways. If the players choose to allow combat, they can also buy things to steal or destroy enemy investments and things to protect their own.

To simplify game actions and give the players a merchant's viewpoint, each person plays the part of one merchant, commanding one spaceship. Since the game is a race for money, any number of people can play and enjoy a good race, whether they run the best race or not. However, the number of players is limited to six to shorten the wait between a

player's turns.

The game mechanics are kept simple and obvious in order to allow people to play regardless of their level of skill—skill determines who wins, not who can play. For simplicity, players take turns, and each time a player takes his turn he can move and then trade. Important information such as costs and payoffs are printed on the game pieces for easy reference.

To ensure a fair start, everyone begins in a neutral central location with different opportunities in different directions. Each player starts the game with the same amount of grubstake money and the same type of spaceship. To speed up the investing and shorten the game when there are more players, everyone gets extra grubstake money for each extra player. It is hardly much fun to be knocked out of the game, so the players cannot be eliminated—even by combat. Bankruptcy is prohibited, and the game allows players to catch up when they fall behind if they are both lucky and skilled.

In *MERCHANT OF VENUS*, the "network" is composed of various native cultures located in different solar systems. To create a new network at the start of each game, one marker is randomly put in each solar system to identify the culture that is located there. To hide the cultures, each marker remains secret until it is revealed during the game.

To prevent the center of the map from dominating travel, the systems were positioned in three dimensions and the distances between them were calculated accordingly. The map shows a "top" view of this network. To make three-dimensional movement easy, systems that are near each other are linked by paths of dots, and the players must follow the paths from dot to dot when they move. Each system is linked to at least three other systems. Several uninhabited systems were added to function as junctions.

For consistency, the paths continue through the systems and into the cities where the natives trade. To provide differences for skill to exploit, some dots force you to pay a penalty or stop moving, and some restrict the directions you can move (like trade winds on the ocean). To add mystery and variety, secret "?" markers are put on some dots to define what is there; some of these markers are good, some are bad, and some cut both ways. For example, the *Tele Gate* markers instantly transport you to other *Tele Gates*, whether you want to go or not.

Any good game needs a little probability for the players to cope with, so each player rolls dice to see how many dots he moves each turn. Once he starts moving, inertia limits his choices; he can turn or orbit, but he cannot backtrack along a path.

The trading goods are devised to make long, complex trade routes more profitable than short, obvious routes. For simplicity, each culture sells one type of goods. To prevent adjacent cultures from buying each others' goods back and forth, each type of goods can be sold only to certain cultures. This sharply limits where the players can go without wasting trips and time, so certain cultures also have passengers that can be taken to alternate destinations for a fee.

To simplify buying and selling, each type of goods has a basic cost and payoff, and special *Demand* markers add a bonus when certain cultures buy specific goods. Different goods pay different profits, but the range is limited to make a trade circuit more profitable than shuttling between two cultures. To cause the profits in the network to fluctuate, the

goods, passengers and Demand markers are temporarily removed from play each time they pay off; they come back into play when they are picked at random from a cup.

To keep the play focussed on trading, each investment gives its owner an advantage that he can use in his trading. To provide differences for skill to exploit, different cultures sell different investment items with diverse advantages, and each investment is a trade-off that includes a disadvantage in another area.

The players can buy bigger or faster spaceships. To fashion a trade-off, the fast ships are small and the larger ships are slow. Each player's spaceship defines how many goods he can carry and how far he may go each turn. To minimize playing time, the fastest ships make the shortest trips in one turn. For flexibility, even the smallest of ships can carry two loads of goods.

The players can also purchase special drives to speed up their ships, and shields to reduce penalties. To create a trade-off, shields and drives both reduce the cargo space available to carry goods. However, shields lose importance when travel time goes down and profits go up, so each ship can carry one shield without affecting its cargo space.

The players can buy ports and factories to increase their profits in specific systems. Ports speed up buying of mass quantities of goods (trading at cities is limited). Factories create especially profitable new goods. To prevent diluting their value, only a few ports and factories can be built in each system. To encourage trading, everyone can use these ports and factories, but the owner collects a commission each time anyone trades at his port or buys goods at his factory.

## The Play of the Game

The costs and profits of all this are carefully calculated to provide a smooth transition from exploring to trading to investing. As the players make more money and invest, they move and trade at a quicker pace, making more money, and the action and profits accelerate on a rising curve. This keeps the game lively until the high profits bring a victory.

Exploration must be profitable to make it competitive with trading, so each culture gives a "reward" to the player who discovers it, and the hidden "?" markers include various *Relics* that can be taken for free. The Relics have unique powers that vary in flamboyance and usefulness. The players start poor, but they can get profitable items by exploring, by picking up passengers for free and by buying cheap goods (which earn a high profit ratio, especially when Demand markers add in). Players who go broke can also use these tactics to recover. These tactics are inexpensive in money and ship space, and they pay well enough if they can be done quickly, so they are perfect for players with small, fast ships. After a profitable trip or two, a player can afford a faster ship, a drive, or a shield.

Goods that pay higher profits cost more to buy, so as a player accumulates money he can buy more profitable goods. If he invests all of his profits in more profitable goods each trip, it takes him four trips to build up to the best goods. He can also buy factories to create even better goods. The cost of goods increases faster than the profits, so it is cheaper to increase profits by buying more goods than by buying more profitable goods. Therefore, it pays to buy larger ships and it pays to buy ports to speed up mass trading. A player must sell two or three of the more expensive goods to pay for a port or large ship.

The cost of ports and factories has been inflated to make it difficult to monopolize systems. They rarely repay this cost, so to make them profitable they count towards victory at the end of the game, like money. These facilities cannot be sold or transferred lest they be used to throw the game. To give the players reasons to follow different strategies, each player is a "friend" to a different culture; he gets a discount when he buys ports or factories from the friendly culture.

Ships and equipment are priced to recover their cost plus show a profit, so they do not count towards victory and they cannot be sold for money. They can be traded in to buy other things, for one-half their original cost. They are priced to tie for victory in an average game with everyone buying ports and playing efficiently. Items that pay high returns are

hurt the most by inefficient play and fewer ports, but they gain the most when the game lasts extra turns.

The amount of money a player needs to win is set so that a game should last no longer than three hours. Optional rules suggest alternate amounts for longer and shorter games. When a player falls behind, his best chance is to obtain a high rate of return and then hope that the game will last long enough for him to catch up. A large ship, equipped with drives and choice Relics, can generate enormous profits.

Combat provides the one thing lacking in a good race: a way to slow down the leader(s). To keep the game focussed on money, combat establishes a balance between profit-taking, defensive trading, and attacking. Profit-taking maximizes trading profits; defensive trading makes less money but defends it; and attacks make money by stealing from the profit-takers instead of by trading. No matter what strategy a player uses, the other players can out-perform him, and this affects the leader the most because he is everyone's favorite target.

To create this balance, a player's combat actions interfere with his trading—and attacking interferes more than defending. Combat strength costs money and inconvenience, and each player is limited to attacking with his spaceship during his turn so aggression diverts him from trading. Attacks must steal enough from profit-taking players to surpass it as a strategy; to provide opportunities, a player can attack repeatedly throughout his turn, but his turn ends as soon as an attack fails.

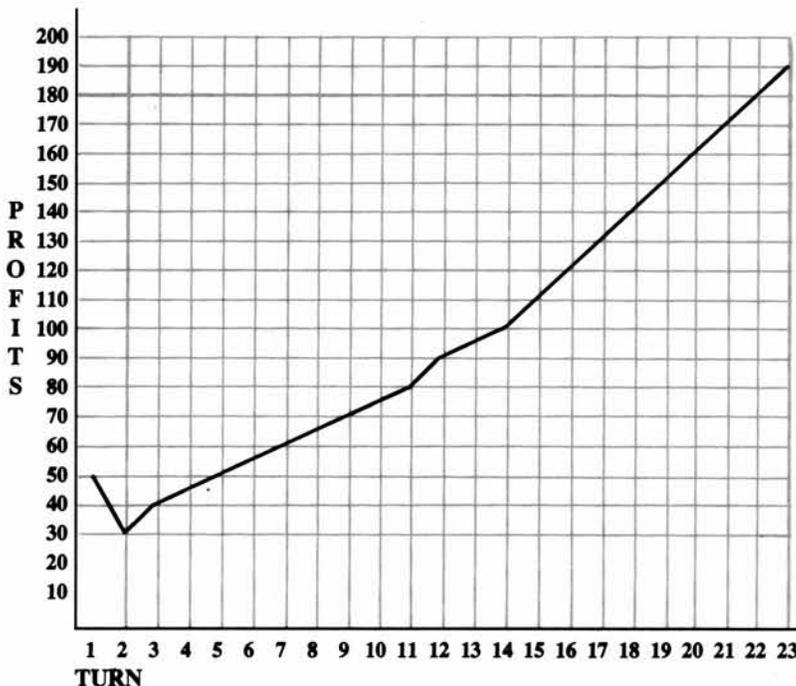
To make players vulnerable to a strategy of attack, ports, factories and ships can all be attacked. To provide mobile defenses for ships, players can buy cheap temporary weapons and expensive permanent weapons. These weapons use up cargo space like shields. To provide static defenses, ports and factories have intrinsic strength (representing political influence). They can support each other during combat, and friendly cultures also add to this strength. The players can buy a limited number of forts to add to this strength; forts also interfere with the movement and trading of other players.

For simplicity, weapons and political influence are also used to attack. Weapons can attack forts, and in space they can attack enemy ships in one-to-one battles where the winner steals goods from the loser. To give weapons added value, they can also attack "?" penalty markers, and destroying a fort or penalty marker earns a small bonus. To prevent frivolous attacks, it costs money to attack with political influence, which can—if successful—steal goods off ships and can conquer enemy ports and factories. In every battle, the attacker and defender each add their strength to a die roll and the higher result wins.

Finally, I must mention the *Rastur*. The *Rastur* are an optional, automatic enemy that can be used to play the game solitaire, or that can be added to a multi-player game. These aliens invade the map in random spurts, occupying critical locations and interfering with movement and trading. Actually, this scourge behaves much like the mercantilistic small powers of the Spice Trade days; the Portuguese, Dutch and English come immediately to mind. The number of *Rastur* markers used depends on the length of the game; and when all of them are on the map at the same time the *Rastur* win! The combat rules must be used to fight the *Rastur*; forts stop them and weapons can blast them off the map temporarily. It is hard to beat the *Rastur* in a solitaire game, and in multi-player games they force the players to cooperate to survive.

## It's Alive; It's Alive!

*MERCHANT OF VENUS* has finally finished its trip from the Indian Ocean in the 16th Century to space in the distant future. Its exterior has changed mightily, but its innards are intact. It is still a trad-



**Profits per turn:** The chart shows the average profits earned by a player in a four-player game. The average was calculated over a number of games, using a variety of investment strategies. The high profits on the first turn are caused by goods and equipment obtained for free by exploring.

ing game based on the verities of commerce, a race for money in a network of trading locations.

Somewhere in its journey, the game picked up some unusual virtues. From one to six players can play it to various lengths, and each variation plays very well but they all play *differently*. Small games emphasize exploring, and large games emphasize competition for ports and factories along with many opportunities for combat. Short games see long trips by fast ships, and long games see large, lavishly equipped ships tour the map. Combat adds piracy early in the game and political struggles for dominance later. The solitaire versions are an unexpected delight—always different, challenging and faster to play than a multi-player game!

As to whether the game is indeed fun, fast, playable and challenging, well . . . I am completely satisfied. But judging it is the customer's job, not mine. You do have to play it to vote, however. This article explains the logical development of the game, not the historical development. As is usually the case, the process of designing the game clarified a lot of the logic, so I did not work out some of the fundamental points until quite late.

As is always the case, playtesters rendered invaluable aid in this process. Brandon Brylawski and his group in Washington were especially helpful in the dark early days of the design; their unsparring but considerate criticisms spotted many problems and helped me work out the logic. The gang around Avalon Hill were extremely helpful late in the design, and Mick Uhl in particular made some excellent suggestions. However, Don Greenwood won the playtester's prize by clarifying the central role of money the first time he saw the game.

To simulate the impact the East had on the European imagination, I wanted the game to portray things that were exotic but that were also pertinent to today's world. For example, strange pets and monster toys are popular now, so the *Pet Monsters* were an obvious product. It quickly dawned on me that combining the exotic with the pertinent was going to be droll whether I wanted it to or not, so I let the drollery roll! I didn't have the space to satisfactorily expound an original science fiction universe, so for the planets and natives I took classic themes from science fiction literature, twisted them into a trading milieu, and carried each idea to a logical conclusion. Fans of science fiction will find themes that have already proven popular. And I couldn't resist putting in a few "in" jokes, including some, ah . . . puns.



## CONVENTION CALENDAR

The *GENERAL* will list any gaming convention in this space free of charge on a space available basis provided that we are notified at least four months in advance of the convention date. Each listing must include the name, date, site, and contact address of the convention. Additional information of interest to our readership such as tournaments or events utilizing The Avalon Hill Game Company's games is solicited and will be printed if made available.

The Avalon Hill Game Company does not necessarily attend or endorse these gatherings, nor do we guarantee that events using The Avalon Hill Game Company's games will be held. Readers are urged to contact the listed sources for further information before making plans to attend.

### MARCH 25-26

UMF-CON, Farmington, Maine

Contact: Table Gaming Club, Student Life Office, 5 South Street, Farmington, ME 04938.

### JULY 28-30

DIP-CON XXII, San Diego, California

Contact: Larry Peery, P.O. Box 8416, San Diego, CA 92102. (619) 295-6248.

Note: The premier *DIPLOMACY* tournament in the States, featuring individual and team and variant competitions.



## STATISTICS AND COMPETITION

By Jim Burnett

*As the survey showed, and at the insistence of a number of people bigger than I, there is enough interest among the readership to warrant us spending some of our increased space on a regular column devoted to Avalon Hill's award-winning line of sports games. For those unfamiliar with these, this column should prove to be a source of information by which to judge them. For those already playing the sports games, this column might prove to be the answer to their appetites—once regularly whetted by ALL-STAR REPLAY. There is no one better qualified than Jim Burnett to pen this column. For many years he has, along with our games of war, been a superior player of the games of sport. Added to that is the fact that, despite what he says, he himself is an accomplished sportsman (long-distance bicycle marathons among others). So he knows whereof he speaks.*

Since the loss of *ALL-STAR REPLAY*, I have searched for a way to present material concerning the large line of Avalon Hill sports games to their adherents. The increase in the number of pages available in *The GENERAL* has provided me with this opportunity. While to some it may seem a bit incongruous to have a sports gaming column in what is essentially a wargaming magazine, I have found through experience at tournaments and conventions that a large number of gamers with a military bent also enjoy the change of pace that comes with competition games about sporting events. If it follows that most of the players are true gamers, then the scenario is not as important as the competition. Perhaps this harkens back to the "playing fields of Eton" or to the modern analogies between sporting contests and war, but it does seem a truism that sports are just a slightly more amicable way of conflict. I will, then, try to cover as much of the Avalon Hill sports line as possible in this column.

The reasons for this are many, not the least the fact that several of the sports games (notably *FOOTBALL STRATEGY*) are definitely among the perennial sales leaders in the Avalon Hill line. This would indicate that many of the sports games sold are being bought by wargamers. The presence of many competitive leagues across the country devoted to the play of one of the sports games in the line indicates a detailed interest in those games. Indeed, this interest, even in "American" games such as football extends across the world in the form of sports gaming.

Your writer's qualifications in the world of sports are meager at best. I am incompetent at the typical adult American games of tennis, golf and bowling. I manage to be poor at softball, touch football and street hockey. My niche seems to be in bicycle racing, where you can sit down and compete. As a spectator, however, I enjoy all types of events (short of professional "rasslin"). As a gamer, I not only play *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER* but

*FOOTBALL STRATEGY*. Hopefully, I will be able to bring a balanced view to the gamut of sports games.

Avalon Hill presents to the gamer a vast line of sports games, grouped in two main categories, which we will designate as "statistical" and "competitive". Note that this does not mean that the statistical games are not competitive and vice versa—far from it. These are merely convenient tags to differentiate the aspects of play.

The statistical games typically offer the chance to match up teams or individuals in their sport as they have performed over a particular historical period of time. Thus, it is possible to play through full seasons of team games, match up teams or individuals of various eras, or even re-create specific events in the world of sports. With the care given to accuracy in these statistics, the gamer can expect the team or individual to act as they did in actual competition, tempered by the fact that the gamer still exercises a certain degree of control of the game and still can influence the outcome by his decisions. These games are enhanced by the publication of new statistical data (usually on cards) on a regular basis, with the more popular team games getting yearly updates from the previous season and the other games having their players updated as often as changes are appropriate. The competitive sports games present the player with two or more balanced teams for the play of an individual game. While the teams perform accurately within their sports, the emphasis is on the competition between the game players themselves. Each particular type of game will have its own fans, and the line is broad enough to satisfy all.

Within these two broad categories, the various sports are well represented. While the emphasis is naturally on the "big" three (football, baseball and basketball), aficionados of most of the "minor" sports should have no gripe at their favorite sport's representation. Let's see just what is offered to the gamer.

Baseball offers the largest number of games in the AH line. These games truly span the limits of simulation of the great American game. *BASEBALL STRATEGY* offers competition between two similar clubs at the player level. Each "manager" must use their players to best advantage within the rules of baseball. While not intended to re-create a season, the game has its greatest interest over a World Series type of contest where the rotation of pitchers and setting of lineups is more important than the play of a single game. *STATIS-PRO* and *CLASSIC STATIS-PRO BASEBALL* offer the opposite. Both of these games give the player the team's and individual's stats as they actually happened over a given season. This gives fairly accurate simulation of one game, but for a season the teams will truly reflect their real-life performance. The *CLASSIC*

game is a bit shorter and less involved in actual game mechanics, but both are true representations of the game of baseball. *SUPERSTAR BASEBALL* is of a similar mold, but in this game the player's stats are a compilation of their careers. This game should appeal to lovers of baseball nostalgia and to competitive players, since the "superstars" over the years are all represented and teams can be built from them as the players wish. This game is again best when played in a series format. *PENNANT RACE* is the game for the impatient. While players are rated, play is at the team level and the emphasis is on a full season. With a game decided by only a few die rolls, league play can easily cover a full year. As a boost to this, the full year's schedule for each team is given. This is a game for those interested in full managerial strategy.

Football is also well represented in the line. *FOOTBALL STRATEGY* is the classic game for the competitive player, traditionally one of the favorites at game conventions across the country. Within the matrix format of offensive plays versus defensive, the gamers must guide their two identical teams as they see fit. The only elements of chance in this game are the kicks and run-backs. Everything else is in the hands of the player. A single game is truly an adventure. In complete contrast is *STATIS-PRO FOOTBALL*. Here each football player is rated per his performance over a year. The players are lined up as in an actual game, and plays are resolved through random "action cards". This game really shines in the re-creation of a season, where match-ups and injuries become crucial to the march of each player's team to the Super Bowl. The two similar games, *BOWL BOUND* for collegiate play and *PAY-DIRT* for professional, are a mixture of the other two. These games feature play-by-play action of statistically rated teams. They may be enjoyed as specific match-ups of teams from different eras, tournaments with different teams bracketed, or seasonal re-creation of professional football.

The basketball fan has two choices. Once again in the "strategy" line is *BASKETBALL STRATEGY*. Two similar teams are matched in a play-by-play format. This game is for the competitor, as fouls and ball movement are the key. In the "Pro" line, *STATIS-PRO BASKETBALL* fills the statistical bill. This game is another in which play over a series of games is important. Given the fact that player ratings will show their team's performance, an NBA type playoff is the best format to follow.

*SLAPSHOT* is an ice hockey game more noted for its humor than for its sports value. This game is a good one to grab the interest of the family, but not for the fan of the sport.

Racing fans of all sorts are not forgotten. The followers of auto racing have two choices. *SPEED CIRCUIT* is a simulation of the Formula 1 circuit, with each player deciding the set-up of their own car. This game is a real favorite at tournaments as it offers very even competition. Additional tracks are now available to cover the entire F1 season. *USAC AUTO RACING* is a statistical game of the famed Indianapolis 500. Each car will perform very close to its counterpart at the Brickyard. The game is more fun if players take full racing teams, as an accident can definitely ruin your day. For lovers of horse flesh, *WIN, PLACE AND SHOW* is a classic treat. This game is another of the tournament favorites as it combines the excitement of racing with the thrill of wagering. You can urge your horse on to the purse even as you place your money on another. This is another sure hit with the family. For the blue bloods, *REGATTA* gives you a chance to compete with the yachting crowd. As the boats are even, seamanship is the key to victory.

Four other games feature the statistical performance of individuals within their chosen sport. *DECATHLON* is a representation of that most grueling of Olympic competitions, featuring the heroes of past Olympiads going head-to-head based

on their real life performances. The key to victory is the balance of skills in different events. *PRO GOLF* gives stat-rated players the challenge of Augusta or Pebble Beach. The gamer controls the shot selection of the golfer. The game is obviously suited for the usual four-round tournament format. *PRO TENNIS* has a similar player format, with shot selection the key for the gamer. Players are rated in both men's and women's divisions. This game is best played in the standard elimination tournament mode. *TITLE BOUT* gives the sports gamer the choice of statistically rated fighters from all eras and weight divisions. This punch-by-punch contest is controlled by action cards. The players may choose different strategies based on the strengths and weaknesses of their chosen boxer. This game is well suited for elimination tournaments.

Two other games which are not on the regular sports list will be covered if interest is shown: the ancient Roman games of racing and "boxing", *CIRCUS MAXIMUS* and *GLADIATOR*. Both of these are tournament favorites and are certainly representative of a past world's view of sport. Both are competitive type games with death in the sands of the Coliseum as a side feature.

The above gives only a thumbnail sketch of the Avalon Hill sports line. I will be presenting features on various games and gambits in succeeding issues—including commentaries, variants and rules updates. The column will try to reflect the tastes of the readership; therefore, your input and suggestions are solicited. You may write to me directly: Jim Burnett, 606 Timbercrest Drive, Clinton, TN 37716.



## EDITOR'S CHOICE AWARDS

This issue marks the beginning of yet another volume year for *GENERAL*. As is our usual practice, we'd like to honor the best of the many hobbyists who submitted material for our pages this past year. It is indeed time for the editors to offer their nominations for the best articles of Volume 24. A poll of the readers will determine one author from the list to be named "Editor's Choice". The winner receives a lifetime subscription to *The GENERAL*, in addition to a \$100.00 bonus. Please vote for only one of the nominees, and vote only if you have read all the articles nominated. Eliminating those articles written by our paid AH staff members from consideration, we offer the following articles from Vol. 24 to select from:

- THE PACT  
by James Werbaneth, No. 1
- FIRST IMPRESSIONS  
by Robert Medrow, No. 2
- FIGHTING THE PANZER LEADER  
by Steven Wheeler, No. 2
- THE VIEW FROM DOWN UNDER  
by Harry Rowland and Greg Pinder, No. 3
- RUNNING THE GAUNTLET  
by Eric Noreen, No. 4
- FROM STURDY STOCK  
by Phil Rennert, No. 5
- THE DANCE OF DEATH  
by John Hylar, No. 5
- BY THE BOOK  
by David Bieksza, No. 6
- AXIS SOUTHERN YEARNINGS  
by Mark Nixon, No. 6

## CONTEST 143

It is the end of the third turn in a four-player game of *KREMLIN*, and you (as the Green player) have just had a second wave from the rostrum with Party Chief Leonid Bungaloff. But he is ill and the wolves are gathering. It is now time for the declaration of additional IP and/or drawing of Intrigue cards. While no course of action is guaranteed to win for you because you don't know the undeclared IP of the other three players (Red, Yellow and Blue), what Intrigue cards they may hold or the outcome of future dice rolls, there is still a "best move" most likely to get poor Leonid through the rough year ahead to a third wave and victory. Your only other Green (undeclared) IP on present Politburo members are: three on Bungaloff, two on Palavrian, four on Manjak and nine on Karrienko. Using only this information, your three Intrigue cards (Assassination Attempt, Cuban Missile Crisis, and Visit Sanatorium), the knowledge that Red and Yellow have already lost their 8IP politicians, and the situation displayed below (code as explained in Mr. Greenwood's article in this issue, "Blood in the Politburo" on page 8), can you outline the best course of action to save Bungaloff and win the game?

1. Bungaloff: 64; 3G, ++, ?
2. Schukrutoff: 81; 8B, 7Y
3. Doberman: 74; 10R, 9Y, +
4. Karrienko: 69; 8B, 6R
5. Palavrian: 78; 2G, 1R
6. Manjak: 61; 10Y, 9R, ++
7. Protzky: 64; 5R, 4Y
8. Zenjarplan: 72; 2B, 1G, +

The answer to this contest must be entered on the official entry form (or a facsimile) found on the insert of this issue. Simply indicate your actions and placement of any IP. Ten winning entries will receive a merchandise credit from The Avalon Hill Game Company. To be valid, an entry must include a numerical rating for this issue as a whole and a listing of the three best articles in the judgment of the contestant. The solution to Contest 143 will appear in Vol. 25, No. 2 and the list of winners in Vol. 25, No. 3 of *The GENERAL*.

### AH Philosophy . . . Cont'd from Page 4

hobby). Articles such as Don Greenwood's accounting of a playing of *KREMLIN* or Richard Berg's look at his love affair with *KINGMAKER* herein are indicative of this attitude, and show our low-key approach to it over these many years. Heaven help us when playing wargames becomes more work than fun; *The GENERAL* is, in part, dedicated to making sure this doesn't happen. If you don't laugh, or at least smile, occasionally when reading through an issue, then we've fallen down on the most important part of our job.

*The GENERAL* is a rather unique thoroughbred in this wargame magazine race. In its own quiet way, it does all that is expected; it even gives the readers that touch of historical information at times, and reviews, news of the hobby, and all else that pertains to our hobby. And it does all this, we hope, in a colorful and entertaining manner. After 25 years (and with the help of an awfully lot of good people), I think we've gotten it right. Now, it is just a matter of keeping it right for the readers and the gamers. With your help and support, I believe we will.



# SECOND FLEET EXPANSION

## Bringing in the French

By Joseph Balkoski

At the start of a project, the first two questions a wargame designer asks himself are: what is the area I wish to portray in the game, and at what scale do I show it? *2nd FLEET*, which is a follow-on game to the successful *6th FLEET*, was irrevocably tied to the scale of its older cousin (roughly 50 miles per hex). The emphasis of the new game is on carrier operations in the Norwegian Sea; the two maps used in the game are centered on the North Atlantic, from Greenland to Norway (on an east-west axis) and from the Kola Peninsula to the northern tip of Ireland (on a south-north axis). Even using two maps, the "southern approaches" to the British Isles (that is, the sea route skirting the southern Irish coast) had to be omitted from the game due to space constraints. Since an important part of the simulation deals with the movement of convoys from the United States and Canada to Europe, the realism of *2nd FLEET* can be enhanced if the NATO player is permitted to use the slower but safer southern approach to Europe for his convoys.

Using the expansion map, counters and rules included in this article, *2nd FLEET* players will have more maneuver room for their surface and submarine units. (But unfortunately will have less maneuver room on their dining room tables!) As a result, both players' strategic options will be increased. Moreover, each side will have more units to play with, since the addition of the southern approaches will also add some naval forces that had been omitted from the original game—most importantly, the powerful French Atlantic squadron.

### THE MAP

The map provided with this article (on the insert) should be attached to the lower right-hand corner of the *2nd FLEET* south map. The new maps overlap the original game map at the hexes listed across the add-on's northeast mapedge. (For example, hex 4038 [Holyhead] of the original map is overlapped by the indicated hex [also Holyhead] on the new map.) The addition of the extra map will hide some *2nd FLEET* charts and displays, so the players will have to either copy the covered features or use their own mock-ups.

The addition of the extra map to the game adds a new zone, labeled "Biscay Zone", to *2nd FLEET*. This zone is adjacent to both the North Atlantic and the British Isles zones.

### NEW COUNTERS

Both the NATO and Soviet players receive additional counters (which the players will have to craft) when playing the expanded version of *2nd FLEET*. All the new counters are provided in the list that follows. Abbreviations used in the list are:

MVT—Movement Allowance  
 DEF—Defense Value  
 SSM(R)—SSM Range  
 SSM(A)—SSM Attack Value  
 ASW—ASW Value  
 CAA—Close Anti-Air Value  
 AAA—Area Anti-Air Value  
 AA—Anti-Air Value (air units)  
 SPC—Special Value (Close SSM for surface units; Torpedo value for submarines)

### RULES

1. Add the Biscay zone to the Zone Table on die roll results "2", "5" and "9". The Biscay zone may be subject to Command Failure (see 25.2) or squalls/storms (see 17.0).

2. If, during the Political Events Phase, a NATO Break-up occurs (see 25.3), all French units leave the game (along with all Dutch units) on a subsequent die roll of "6" through "9".

3. All NATO bases in the Biscay zone may only be invaded by the Soviet player if the current Soviet strategy level is *World War 3*.

4. NATO air units may perform strategic air missions in the Biscay zone normally. However, Soviet land-based air units may never perform a strategic air mission in the Biscay zone.

### NATO DEPLOYMENT

(All hex numbers in the following list apply to the map addition.)

PREPAREDNESS LEVEL: **Low**

**Surface Group 3** (Free set-up): any sea hex within six hexes of Brest (2206)  
 Colbert (CG)  
 Jean Bart (DD)

### France (Controlled by NATO Player)

NAME	TYPE	MVT	DEF	SSM(R)	SSM(A)	ASW	CAA	AAA	SPC
Colbert	CG	4/3(5)	4	1	7/4(2)	N	3/2	4/2(6)	9
Jeanne D'Arc	CG	4/3(6)	4	1	7/4(3)	5/3(7)	3/1	0	8
Jean Bart	DD	4/3(6)	3	2	8/5(4)	2/1(2)	7/4	4/2(5)	14
Jean de Vienne	DD	4/3(5)	3	2	8/5(4)	5/3(3)	4/2	0	12
Primauguet	DD	4/3(5)	3	2	8/5(4)	5/3(3)	4/2	0	12
LaMotte Picquet	DD	4/3(5)	3	2	8/5(2)	5/3(3)	4/2	0	12
De Grasse	DD	4/3(3)	3	1	7/4(3)	6/3(5)	4/2	0	10
Duquesne	DD	4/3(5)	3	1	7/4(2)	2/1(5)	3/2	4/2(6)	9
D'Est' D'Orves	FF	3/2(3)	2	1	7/4(1)	1/1(3)	3/2	0	9
Amyot D'Inville	FF	3/2(3)	2	1	7/4(1)	1/1(3)	3/2	0	9
Comm. Ducuing	FF	3/2(3)	2	1	7/4(1)	1/1(3)	3/2	0	9
Comm. Bouan	FF	3/2(3)	2	1	7/4(1)	1/1(3)	3/2	0	9
Pr Maître L'Her	FF	3/2(3)	2	1	7/4(1)	1/1(3)	3/2	0	9
Saphir	SN	2/1	6	1	16/12(1)	6/3	N	N	18(3)
Casabianca	SN	2/1	6	1	16/12(1)	6/3	N	N	18(2)
La Praya	SS	1/1	6	1	16/12(1)	3/2	N	N	18(3)
Psyche	SS	1/1	6	N	N	3/2	N	N	12(3)
ATL(×3)	RCN	Same as US P3 RCN air unit (except SSM range is 1)							

### United Kingdom (Controlled by NATO Player)

NAME	TYPE	MVT	DEF	SSM(R)	SSM(A)	ASW	CAA	AAA	SPC
Gloucester	DD	same values, logistics boxes as <i>York</i>							
Brave	FF	same values, logistics boxes as <i>Boxer</i>							
Avenger	FF	same values, logistics boxes as <i>Arrow</i>							
Charybdis	FF	same values, logistics boxes as <i>Scyla</i>							
NIM(×2)	RCN	same values as other UK NIM air units							

### Soviet Union (Controlled by Soviet Player)

NAME	TYPE	MVT	DEF	SSM(R)	SSM(A)	ASW	CAA	AAA	SPC
L.A. Govorov	SN	same values, logistics boxes as <i>YGagr</i>							
M.M. Popov	SN	same values, logistics boxes as <i>YGagr</i>							
Livny	SS	same values, logistics boxes as <i>Yrsky</i>							
Nov. Severskiy	SS	same values, logistics boxes as <i>Yrsky</i>							
Ulyanovsk	SS	same values, logistics boxes as <i>SGrch</i>							
Yelets	SS	same values, logistics boxes as <i>SGrch</i>							

Note: When numbers are separated by a slash, the number to the left is the unit's value on its front side and the number on the right is the unit's value on its reverse (damaged) side. If just one number is shown, that is the unit's value on both sides. If a number in parentheses appears next to a value, that is the number of boxes of the appropriate ammunition type possessed by the unit on the Logistics Roster. (A parenthesized number next to the Movement Allowance is the number of Fuel boxes.)

Duquesne (DD)  
 LaMotte Picquet (DD)  
 D'Estienne D'Orves (FF)  
 Amyot D'Inville (FF)

**Submarines** (Free set-up): any hex in Biscay zone  
 Saphir (SN)  
 La Praya (SS)

**Air Units**  
 Lann-Bihoué (2406)  
 ATL (FR/RCN)×2  
 St. Mawgen (2005)  
 NIM (UK/RCN)×2

PREPAREDNESS LEVEL: **Medium**  
 Same as Preparedness Level Low, but also add . . .

**Cherbourg** (2203)  
 Jean de Vienne (DD)  
 De Grasse (DD)  
 Comm. Ducuing (FF)  
 Comm. Bouan (FF)

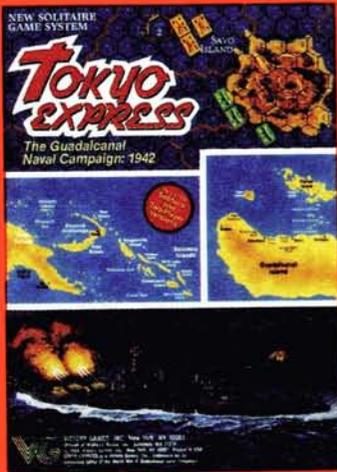
**Brest** (2206)  
 Casabianca (SN)

**Air Units**  
 Lann-Bihoué (2406)  
 ATL (FR/RCN)

PREPAREDNESS LEVEL: **High**  
 Same as Preparedness Levels Low and Medium, but also add . . .

**Cherbourg** (2203)  
 Jean D'Arc (CG)  
 Primauguet (DD)  
 Pr. Maitre L'Her (FF)

Continued on Page 33, Column 1



# TOKYO EXPRESS

The Guadalcanal Naval Campaign: 1942

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SPECIAL FEATURE: The Two-Player Version adapts the solitaire system for face-to-face play.

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**Tokyo Express** is a solitaire and two-player simulation of the naval battles off Guadalcanal, recreating the Imperial Japanese Navy's convoy runs — nicknamed the "Tokyo Express" — to supply and reinforce their troops and to bombard US Marine positions on the island. Major battles resulted when US task forces intercepted the Express.

In the solitaire version, you command the US fleet, awaiting the emergence of the Tokyo Express from the darkness. You group your ships into formations, assign them orders, and select the targets to attack with guns and torpedoes. Simple mechanisms control Japanese maneuvers and target assignment in a realistic manner. The two-player version modifies the solitaire game and pits players against each other in an exciting recreation of WWII naval combat.



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- 1 Battle Movement Display
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- 1 Counter Storage Tray

TIME SCALE: 10 minutes per Game Turn.  
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Both Don and I have been criticized more than once for printing "negative letters" in this forum of the readers' views. I, like Don Greenwood before me, have always felt that criticism, complaints and differing opinions deserved to be aired, and answered to the best of our ability. But, in celebration of the 25th Anniversary of this old lady, we decided to take a page from the operating manuals of other hobby periodicals and run only "happy" letters.

★★★★★

Dear Sirs:

Enclosed is my subscription renewal . . . The GENERAL and TAHGC games themselves have added an extra enjoyment to my life. I look forward to the arrival of the magazine and read the articles whether or not I own the game. The games allow me the "thrill" of competition when I have an opponent or just the opportunity to do something different from my real life, but at the same time something of interest. I always have and probably always will have an interest in military history. The GENERAL has provided me with variants, rule interpretations, strategies and sometimes series replays for my games. (It is nice to see others make a not-so-prefect move.) Thus I feel it has dramatically improved my play. Over these past ten years I have become much more tied down with my job (dairy farming) and my family (one-year-old twin boys). So The GENERAL is time-saving, as when I do get a chance to fit in some solitary gaming, I can simply hunt up a past GENERAL for someone's initial set-up and play from there or adapt it somewhat—saving time setting up, time to be used for actual play.

To sum up—keep up the good work and I wish I could have learned about The GENERAL and TAHGC sooner than I did.

Brian Montgomery  
Carrying Place, Ontario

★★★★★

Dear Mr. Martin:

Over the years I've been very pleased with The GENERAL and have spent many a wonderful hour pouring thru the pages. Tho I prefer only wargames and the articles pertaining to them, I can understand why non-wargaming articles appear in the magazine. But I would like to see The GENERAL become devoted totally to your wargaming line. All my other views are checked off on your survey. One idea in your brainstorming section I highly support is the yearly die-cut variant counters and any supporting material. Also, I would like to encourage you to pursue the production of the 25th Anniversary issue.

Good luck in your endeavours to improve The GENERAL. I'm looking forward to it. And I for one would be willing to pay the extra money for an improved and expanded product. Thank you for your valuable time and consideration.

Timothy L. Gibbs  
Suitland, Maryland

★★★★★

Dear Mr. Martin:

Mr. Devine's article "The Inland Defense" (Vol. 24, No. 4) was a pleasant break from the "traditional" German defense in FORTRESS EUROPA. However, I believe that Mr. Devine set himself up for the attritional slugfest, with the ever precious armor, that his article set out to avoid.

As proposed, the German defense is admittedly weak in the Calais sector. Recalling Mr. Devine Jr.'s article "Operation Fortitude" (Vol. 20, No. 6), the Allies had little problem dealing with the defense and securing a relatively firm beachhead. Especially since the proposed inland defense does not implement the use of German TAC on the first turn. Without much reactionary power in the general vicinity, the German could do little more than hold the line.

The defensive situation can be rectified by bolstering the Calais sector with a few more steps and/or factors. The Dieppe-Le Havre sector could spare one or two coastal divisions; the training division could be brought up from St. Quentin; and the brigade on the dyke is an alternative addition. Also, the HQ in Gand seems to be overly exposed to Allied second impulse attacks. With these proposed adjustments, the Calais sector appears to be "fortified", thus deterring the more cautious Allied players.

Mike Williams  
Ogden, Utah

## Letters to the Editor . . .

Dear Rex:

It was a great pleasure for me to meet many of your AH staff at ORIGINS this year, and it was also most enjoyable to attend your "Meet the Fortunate Few" seminar. Your company came over as a very professional group working for the hobby as a whole and not, as so many appear, disinterested publishers only after a fast buck.

My two colleagues who travelled with me across the Atlantic for ORIGINS were also impressed with the AH presentations and indeed with the new games you had available on your stand (loved ENEMY IN SIGHT). The new format of The GENERAL looks even better than the old and you get no criticism from me for raising the subscription price. Still a darn good bargain.

In a hobby that is still on a very rocky road, your games and your magazine come over as the pinnacle of their genre. With your up-front enthusiasm, Don's rapier-like humor and Craig's obvious love affair with his games, plus the rest of the gang back in Baltimore, I feel that your company can continue to grow and help lead our hobby to much greater things in the future. Keep up the good work.

Chris Geggus  
Romford, Great Britain

★★★★★

Dear Mr. Martin—

This is just a brief note to thank Avalon Hill for the game CIVILIZATION. I play a wide variety of wargames—my current favorites are PANZER LEADER, PANZERBLITZ, DIPLOMACY and CAESAR AT ALESIA. However, I've never been able to interest my spouse in any of them. Until CIVILIZATION, that is.

Now I can hardly get her out of it. At her suggestion, we have acquired the variant trade cards. We play the game by ourselves (each of us playing two countries) or with our teenage sons. By the way, three people playing two countries apiece makes for a very good game.

Anyway, thank you for such a great game. I heartily recommend it for anyone with a spouse who "just isn't interested" in wargames.

Don Treasure  
Golden, Colorado

Thanks. We've had similar comments about TV WARS, RAIL BARON, ENEMY IN SIGHT, DINOSAURS OF THE LOST WORLD and MERCHANT OF VENUS. There's no reason Mom has to be left out of the fun—if you can keep her from being scared off by the ASL rulebook. The multi-player games were designed with families in mind. Just let her skim through this issue.

★★★★★

Dear Mr. Greenwood:

No nautical time. Not even a query on some esoteric rules interpretation! Just a well deserved "At-a-boy" for a great job on a new game, DINOSAURS OF THE LOST WORLD.

I have, or perhaps I should say my boys, have been eagerly awaiting DINOSAURS since your initial write-up in the "AH Philosophy" column a few months ago. Actually, it was your daughter's enthusiasm that you described that really sold me on the game. Incidentally, that was a nice touch including her as a "playtester". Shortly after the ad for the game appeared in the current issue of The GENERAL, our local hobby store received its shipment. We brought one home and were playing the children's version literally within a half-hour of opening the box. A long time devotee of TAHGC wargame and leisure titles, I was not disappointed in the quality of the product. The artwork, the components, the rules and the game system are all superb.

The only tweaking I have done with the rules is to include the Chase Track sequence in the children's version. The boys enjoyed the fun and excitement of the chase in the "Advanced" version and wanted it included in the basic dinosaur hunt. So . . . if you lose to a creature, it's off to the Chase Track. If the beastie catches you, go immediately to camp and lose a turn; if you successfully escape, go immediately to camp but do not lose a turn (the evasion keeps the

adrenalin pumping so you can return immediately to the hunt). The only "complaint" I have with the game is really a pet peeve: I hate plastic pawns! And, yes, I know that to use something better would add to the cost, but . . . On a return trip to our hobby/game store, I picked up a set of 54mm British Boer War guards, complete with Pith helmets, and painted them in appropriate expedition khaki using their bedrolls and canteens as the distinguishing colored items. They look great!

I should mention that my boys are only 5 and 6. Of course, we've made a few adjustments since they can't read and I keep track of the victory points and help with the decisions when we play the advanced version, but the game plays very well, and they enjoy playing it. I recall a particular "Philosophy" column by Rex several issues back in which he was reminiscing about playing boardgames as a youngster, and the inherent value therein. I heartily concur with his thoughts and enjoy the time we spend together huddled over a game board wrapped up in the excitement and fantasy it has to offer. Thank you for giving us DINOSAURS, which is a proud addition to our other favorites.

The only part of the game I haven't attempted is the solitaire version. Whenever I pull DINOSAURS out, it is assumed we're all playing. Oh, would that ASL opponents were so readily available.

Rich Jennings  
St. Ann, Missouri

Actually, speaking of using figures in place of the pawns, have you tried replacing the dinosaurs with plastic figures as well? There are several sets available, all with figures small enough to fit the hex-grid nicely, from various manufacturers at nominal prices. Having a three-dimensional Tyrannosaurus lumbering across the plateau or along the Chase Track is sure to excite your boys.

★★★★★

Mr. Martin,

I was very pleased to see nearly a full issue of The GENERAL dedicated to ancient games (Vol. 24, No. 5), especially since CIVILIZATION and BRITANNIA are among my favorites. I wish to disagree, though, with a point made by Phillip Hanson in his article, "A Civilized Race". Mr. Hanson warns CIV players against playing Asia in order to avoid the threat of "Asian Decapitation" on the first turn. I agree that Asia is a poor choice of nations to play, and Assyria is an obviously better choice; but any player worth his "Salt" can easily avoid losing his head. In fact, I had never heard of the "Asian Decapitation" because it is so easy to avoid.

Mr. Hanson suggests that the Asian player starts in the easternmost area and moves only one of his tokens on the first turn. The remaining token is vulnerable to Assyrian attack if Assyria moves both of his tokens to the space in which the Asian originated. A better move for the Asian player is to move both tokens from the starting area, one going south to populate Asia Minor and the other should move east to the westernmost starting area for the Assyrians. This leaves the Assyrian player with the option to save his own tokens from starvation and move south or to make senseless attacks on the Asian player. Since both of the Asian tokens are on areas that can support only one, any battle will have even losses. Either the attack is one-on-one and both sides lose or the attack is two-on-one and starvation occurs after combat. Hopefully the Assyrian player will realize that any war in the region will only succeed in amusing other players at his own (and Asia's) expense.

I want to commend Mr. Hanson on the rest of his well-written and insightful article.

Jeffery Suchard  
Berkeley, California

★★★★★

Dear Rex,

Please find enclosed the RBG survey form from The GENERAL. I completed the categories for those games that I have as you requested. I would also like to use this as an opportunity to

give you some input on the state of gaming—sort of like a "letter to the editor" if you will.

Simulation gaming (a nice way to say "wargaming") is a very enjoyable hobby; alas, it always seems to suffer from misconceptions to those outside of its environs. When folks learn that I am an avid (addicted) "wargamer", they think of me as a mild sort of flake who dreams of Nazis ruling the world. I have had quite a few folks ask me if I dress up in uniforms and such when I play. I try to explain to them that wargaming is not like the role-playing done by the Society for Creative Anachronism, but they seem prejudiced against me. Hard-core chess players have always had a reputation for being a bit odd, but the way most people view gamers is even more derogatory. Where have folks come up with such a negative viewpoint about "wargamers"?

I have always had trouble finding opponents; even while I was in the Coast Guard it seemed that there was never anyone around who wished to play. For years I kept my affliction to myself, and have only in the past three years come out of the closet to enjoy PBM gaming. If there are so few people who wish to play, why do they have such a negative outlook on our fine hobby?

A better question is what happens to all those games that are sold? In Topeka, the AH outlet sells a rather large number of games, but there are no opponents available. I advertised in The GENERAL for opponents FTF, placed ads on the bulletin board in the game store and other locations—but I received an answer from only one person, and he lived 50 miles away!

I seem to have been rambling a bit in the last couple paragraphs and I apologize; you see, when I get started talking about gaming I just lose all logical train of thought and get excited. I appreciate the fine games that AH produces and couldn't live without The GENERAL and the knowledge that it brings me. Thanks to all involved for the AREA and the other fine services.

Joel Spence  
Topeka, Kansas

It is unfortunate that our hobby does seem to engender negative reactions from certain quarters. Of course, given that these days it is fashionable for the narrow-minded but loud to denigrate even the most innocuous of enjoyment (witness the furor in recent years over such as the annual Halloween celebration), it isn't surprising.

★★★★★

Dear Mr. Martin:

I thought I would take this opportunity to jot down some thoughts and send them in with the RBG survey sheet.

I really applaud AH's move back to simpler, FUN games. I have really enjoyed ENEMY IN SIGHT and have had a great time playing DINOSAURS OF THE LOST WORLD. BRITANNIA is also a super game as is the new version of GETTYSBURG. I have recently sold about 20 of your games from my collection games such as 3rd REICH, DEVIL'S DEN, FORTRESS EUROPA and RUSSIAN FRONT. All of these seemed too much like work rather than fun.

I would also like to add that I wish you would laminate all your mapboards. I recently bought PATTON'S BEST and the folds in the board cracked because they were not laminated. I would prefer to have my maps laminated instead of laminated counters.

Well, I am sure that I've taken enough of your valuable time with my ramblings. Thank you for listening.

Tom Boeche  
Nebraska City, Nebraska

OK, so I couldn't stand all this niceness. Mr. Boeche applauds our recent release of some simpler games, ones less grounded in simulation and more in playability. I too enjoy them, but I also must admit that I like to play DEVIL'S DEN, ASL, RUSSIAN FRONT as well. Much depends on my mood. There are times when I savor the intellectual challenge such games provide. At these times, the "work" is part of the "fun". Avalon Hill is lucky to have a staff of designers now that can produce both simple, easy-play titles such as GETTYSBURG and launch themselves into development of a hard-core simulation such as TAC AIR a week later (as Craig Taylor did) or go from DINOSAURS OF THE LOST WORLD to THUNDER AT CASSINO (as Don Greenwood did) without missing a beat. With such versatility on tap, we should be able to continue to publish games that appeal to the entire spectrum of gaming pleasures.



# ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ The AVALON HILL GENERAL

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25th Anniversary  
SPECIAL SECTION

## THEY'RE FIGHTING IT ALL OVER AGAIN

Baltimore, Maryland. Just about the time you are receiving this first newsletter, thousands of military buffs will be fighting the World War II desert campaign all over again. We're already besieged by letters from Rommels and Montgomerys popping up all over the country. This sudden pre-occupation for Afrika Korps will no doubt be a boon to the Marshalls Baton business.

As most of you loyal subscribers know Afrika Korps is the latest in a continuing series of famous battle games Avalon Hill has been publishing since 1958. But few know the background of Avalon Hill, itself.

Incorporated in 1958 Avalon Hill's first games were Gettysburg, Tactics II and Dispatcher (chronological appearance on the market for each game is indicated by the code number printed on the box; Gettysburg - 501, Tactics II - 502, etc.).

Preceding these, of course, was original Tactics published back in the days prior to incorporation. Tactics II was simply a refinement of the original game.

But it was Gettysburg that really caught on. National magazines and news services spread the word demanding national distribution for the game. Quite naturally, other games followed in order to satisfy the appetite of battle game enthusiasts that seemed to crop up from everywhere.

As a result Avalon Hill has enjoyed overnight success...and in just 6 short years has been forced to seek newer quarters four times since leaving the original Gun Road address.

There is no Mr. Avalon, nor is there a Mr. Hill...the very first games were published in a Baltimore suburb, Avalon, high up on a hill literally overlooking the genteel plantation land of picturesque south Baltimore. It was there that Gettysburg was conceived...labor of love in which the famous civil war battle was rehashed time and time again by admitted Confederate sympathizers (in the "border" state of Maryland southern loyalty ran high.) One of the



very first correspondents was an elderly Alabama gentleman who was having the time of his life "slaughtering those damyankees."

Today, the battle game group numbers 8 titles not including Chancellorsville which is no longer in the line.

Because of the enthusiastic reception to realistic games in the battle area, Avalon Hill embarked on a policy of designing realistic games for subjects of all walks of life. In fact, the original Verdict was quickly followed up by Verdict II, an indication of the tremendously increasing interest in the law profession.

And because of fanatical sports enthusiasm, the Avalon Hill "formula" was carried over into the sports field. As a matter of fact, Football Strategy portrayed realism to such an extent that the leading national illustrated sports magazine said... "the best football game ever invented is Football Strategy," in their December 11, 1961 edition.

Management, which was introduced in 1960, has found considerable favor with professional administrators. We have learned that this game has been used in various management courses around the land as a guide to designing the more complex decision-making games that are machine solved.

Avalon Hill has also applied the authenticity kick to sports car racing. Le Mans which is very, very popular with the sporty set (especially those whose driving licenses have been revoked). As a matter of fact, recently

a sharp upsurge in sales of Le Mans caught us short handed and, much to our embarrassment, some of you had to wait 2 months for your copy.

We hope to continue to publish games based on real life adventures. And if reading this article has interrupted you from finishing your current game of Afrika Korps, then by all means go back to game board...for this very minute, historians are fighting it all over again.

### Can the British Really Win in Afrika Korps?

Our Consumer Panel test members feel that the British have a tough time of it in this game.

We have learned that in the first several games between new opponents unfamiliar with the game, odds are in favor of the British player winning. However, as the German player becomes more familiar with the nuances of strategy open to him, the play-balance leans toward his side. Actually, this tends to be the case for many of our battle games...and I'm sure had Robert E. Lee been able to fight Gettysburg over again, he would no doubt have won all the marbles.

#### Lower the German Supply Capacity

For those of you wishing to balance Afrika Korps once you have played it several times, we suggest that you reduce the German Supply maximum from 3 Supply Wagons to just 2 maximum. So the key to the British strategy becomes even more apparent: hold Tobruk at all costs even if the German player decides to push on toward Alamein without fighting for this Fortress. In effect, the German Supply capacity is reduced 50% which means that he will not be able to attack on every Turn. He will have to pick and choose his battles carefully so as not to run out of supply wagons when he needs them the most. As a matter of fact, this was the case in the real campaign during which Rommel was not able to launch any major attack from early Summer to late Fall of 1941.

# THE EDITORS SPEAK

## In the Beginning

By Thomas N. Shaw

*Tom Shaw is, of course, the founding editor of The GENERAL. Since those days, he has been and is a VP of The Avalon Hill Game Company, game designer, inductee into wargaming's Hall of Fame, and an all-around "swell guy". Here he reflects on those first years when he brought The GENERAL from a fanzine to respectability.*

When I was a kid, there was this hubcap that rolled down the street right into my hands. From that point on, I was known as a "requisitioner" of hubcaps.

I remember going to school *once* wearing one red sock and one gray sock. [Nothing has changed.] Thereafter, I was known as a sloppy dresser all through grade school.

When on the rifle range during Uncle Sam's Basic Training, I fired six rounds without hitting the target; so I'm branded the worst shot in the platoon for the rest of my stay in military service.

But am I known as the very first editor of the very first wargame magazine? Am I known as the originator of the uniquely innovative title, "The GENERAL"? Am I known as the pioneer of the "Attack at 1-to-2" winning STALINGRAD strategy in Vol. 1, No. 6 of that same magazine? "None of the above", you'd say!

Well, here's where I set the record straight.

Isn't this what commemorative issues are for? I've waited 25 years to wax rhetorical about how The GENERAL really got started. Actually, I would have written this at the tenth anniversary, but there were still too many people around with better memories that might dispute what I said. But after 25 years, it is unlikely I'll get challenged for any of what follows—most of which should be pretty close to the truth.

I'm not even sure who actually came up with the magazine's title. It was Charlie Roberts who first broached the idea of doing a magazine. This was back in 1962. But the press of financial survival put the idea on the back burner. Then came reorganization, details of which are outlined in our Silver Jubilee company history. [Published in June 1983, copies of this booklet are still available in limited quantities at \$5.00 each from The Avalon Hill Game Company.]

The first issue—Vol. 1, No. 1—was published on 1 May 1964. It was a mere 12 pages long; a six-issue, one-year subscription cost \$4.98. This modest attempt to create a family togetherness among wargame aficionados got off the ground rather quickly. Articles, good and bad, began pouring in after just one issue had seen print. And it soon became evident to me that there was going to be more to editorship than just screening submissions.

### WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Among my gems of editorial wisdom was the creation of "area editors". By the time the first issue appeared, already in place were "editors" solicited from among those gamers who had been corresponding with Avalon Hill on a variety of matters, giving rise to my personal feeling that these people were pretty much the cream of the game-playing crop at the time. These editors served various functions, from reporting on events in their territory to offering helpful hints on improving play in print, to screening submissions for errors.

This all began 24 years ago. Can anyone tell me where they are today . . . Hillary Smith (our South Atlantic editor); Jon Percica (the Pacific Coast editor); Thomas S. LaFarge (New England); Daniel Hughes (Central—Dakotas, Minnesota, and the MINK states); Walter Guerry III (Naval Affairs editor); Martin D. Leith (Arctic and Canadian); and Phillip Beasley (Northwest). Three other early area editors are still very much involved in the wargaming hobby; Carl F. Knabe, once Midwest editor and currently an Air Force officer; Victor Madeja, Middle Atlantic editor and now a publisher of military books and related items; and Southwest editor Louis Zocchi, today president, owner and manager of GameScience Distributors of Gulfport, Mississippi. Mr. Zocchi is probably the best known of those aficionados, still very active in the distribution of wargame products. Among his most successful designs was Avalon Hill's own LUFTWAFFE (still going strong 17 years after its initial publication).

Gracing the pages of the early issues were a myriad of "perfect plans", each engendering rebuttal critiques from authors who spared no feelings in lambasting the idiocy of such plans. There was, for example, "Plan Red" by Carl Knabe followed by "Plan Red-Face" by Lou Zocchi, so named because it failed, nevertheless having some merit (according to its author). Commenting on his own strategy, Zocchi wrote, "contributing to the Allied war effort was the masterful handling of Zocchi's *Rout*; my flawless execution of Zocchi's *Disaster*; and my peerless indecision during Zocchi's *Blunder*". Knabe followed up his original plan with a subsequent article entitled, "Credits and

Debits of Plan Red". And finally, in the fifth issue, admitted to the folly of perfect plans with his article, "Sure-Fire Plans Can be Disastrous". Ignoring this admonition, my sixth issue featured "Stalingrad Re-Played" in which the perfect German plan is to "tear into the Russians with reckless abandon right from the start . . . attack everybody at 1-to-2". This article was mercifully left unsigned.

In the early years of Avalon Hill, distribution of wargames in retail outlets was few and far between. For those subscribers who lived hundreds of miles from a game store, and in an effort to solicit new subscribers, our third issue featured the first Avalon Hill discount coupon—worth a whopping \$.25 that could be applied toward the purchase of any game bought directly from Avalon Hill. However, the small print required one to accumulate at least four coupons before they were redeemable. Still, it was not a bad idea as it effectively lowered the subscription price by 30% for our "loyal" readers.

### MORE EDITORS

With the advent of Volume 2 in May 1965, additional area editors were announced: Laurence Plumb (covering the East); Marc Nicholson (the Southeast); Stan (West); Tom Bosseler (Southwest); and Myron Brundage (Midwest). Brundage's loyalty to Avalon Hill was such that he would attend shows on our behalf and help us deliver the good gaming message to unknowledgeable wholesalers and retailers. He also was among the first to organize game conventions and tournaments in and around the Chicago area. Also helping us spread the gospel in those early days were gamers the likes of Gary Gygas (of D&D fame), Len Lakofka and Bill Hoyer (*DIPLOMACY* buffs), Mike Carr (designer of *Fight in the Skies*), and S&T's creator Chris Wagner—all manning our booths of their own free will. Early issues of The GENERAL contained a number of gaming articles bearing their bylines.

Another member of the "Chicago Mob" was Bob Olson, an insurance executive. While undergoing temporary banishment to Baltimore, Bob flailed away at me over many a game of *WATERLOO* and *STALINGRAD*. It was Olson who put the bug in my ear that led to the development of the infamous "automatic victory" rule added to some of the early classics.

To say that I gave the future "stars" of the gaming industry their start might be presumptuous on my part. Nevertheless, Dave Arneson's byline appears in Vol. 2, No. 3 well before he co-designed D&D. And Vol. 2, No. 4 boasts the first of many Jim Dunnigan articles before he went on to fame as founder of SPI. And there's that "Terror at Tilly" article by a Don Greenwood gracing Vol. 2, No. 5. It should be noted that that was the same issue we dropped the area editorships. Articles were now coming in so thick and fast that it no longer seemed feasible to maintain this routine.

### EXPANSION TO 16 PAGES

With the first issue of Volume 3 in May 1966, The GENERAL was expanded to 16 pages—with color yet! Issue No. 1 also sported a "cover" featuring Admiral C. Wade McClusky, a hero of Midway, kneeling on the wing of his plane presumably trying to figure out how to get in. And we, with the beginning of our third year, now ran a cover price—\$1.00. Subscriptions remained at the princely \$4.98. The "Infiltrator's Column" so dear to many began in the fourth issue of that year. The next (Vol. 3, No. 5), featuring S&T's founder Chris Wagner on the cover, carried the first "Avalon Hill Philosophy" column, still a mainstay today.

The cover story of Vol. 4, No. 3 trumpeted another first—the "first annual convention of the International Federation of Wargaming (IFW), July 15, 1967." The lead article went on to state, "At last, through the hard working efforts of William Speer and cohorts Scott Duncan, Gary Gygas, George Petronis and Clark Wilson, the General Wayne Junior High School in Malvern, Pennsylvania played host in this first successful attempt at uniting fanatics from distant states to discuss the problems, ecstasies and comradeships of this rapidly growing pastime." Among those pictured in this cover story is Henry Bodenstedt, designer of *Remagen Bridge* and considered the inspiration behind the creation of AHIKS (the "Avalon Hill International Kriegspiel Society"), a gaming organization composed of adults from all over the world which continues strong today.

Meanwhile, amateur and semi-professional magazines and newsletters devoted to our hobby began popping up all over. Just witness this list from Vol. 4, No. 3 of The GENERAL: "Avalon Herald", "Kampf" (by one Jim Dunnigan), "Kommandeur", "The Panzer", "Panzerfaust" (by Don Greenwood), "The Spartan" (Russell Powell), "The Stormtrooper", "Strategy & Tactics" (by Chris Wagner), "The Tank", and the "Wargamer's Newsletter". Imitation was the purest form of flattery. Speaking of Dunnigan, featured in this same issue was the first of a two-part story by him relating the trials and tribulations of his very first wargame design, entitled *JUTLAND*, which he completed for Avalon Hill on a free-lance basis back in 1967.

## FROM DULL TO SHINE

The fourth issue of the fourth year marked the conversion from dull stock to a glossy stock. And while *The GENERAL* didn't exactly pose a threat to *Time* magazine, this upgrading of quality was accomplished without an increase in price.

A cartoon in this same issue posed the question, "When does one stop being a wargame buff and become a wargame nut?" An answer may have lain in the editor's choice of articles appearing in this issue, bearing such deathless headlines as "Blitzkrieg for the Really Depraved", "Speedy *STALINGRAD*", "How to Capture Antwerp Without Really Trying", "PBM Hidden Movement via Cryptogram" and "*GETTYSBURG* Expanded" (in which the author taught us how to play the game after breaking the divisions and brigades down into units representing companies). Perhaps I'd stepped over that line into "nuts"?

With Vol. 5, No. 2 (July-Aug 1968), I began taking notice of the emergence of wargame clubs. This issue gave us a profile of "Boldlands". The next two issues featured Spartan International and the first TSR convention at Lake Geneva. Both issues ran listings of all known wargame clubs, none of which have survived to today. The preoccupation of most clubs with using German vernacular left a bad taste in the mouths of many serious gamers; happily this approach to wargaming disappeared when the hobby grew up and the club concept became more organized.

As the hobby expanded, games and gamers became more sophisticated. In fact, those of us who cut our teeth on the likes of *AFRIKA KORPS*, *WATER-LOO* and *STALINGRAD* were now intimidated by the progressive complexity levels of the newer games. Keeping up with it all was becoming a challenge for me. I needed help. And I got it from a new wave of fine contributors that kept me in the editor's seat—possibly for four years too long. Volumes 6 through 9 featured some greatly innovative material from regular contributors—the likes of Alan Augenbraun, David Bell, Edi Birsan, Tyrone Bomba, James Crawford, Roy Easton, William Gilbert, Robert Harmon, Randy Heller, Albert Nofi, Tom Oleson, J.E. Pournelle, George Phillips, Henry Robinette, William Searight, Bruno Sinigaglio, Richard Thurston, and Lawrence Valencourt.

## COMING SOON—THE GREENWOOD ERA!

Nothing goes on forever! Certainly not my anonymity as editor of *The GENERAL*. Subscribers were beginning to ask questions that were out of my baliwick of gaming knowledge. It was time to bring in a new editor—a "Don Greenwood" type.

Fortunately, a Don Greenwood type existed. Faced with a decision to get a job upon graduation from college in May 1972, he looked like a prime candidate. I spent about three months in a low-key chase to land my man. He may have seen the pursuit in a different light, but from my standpoint Greenwood was the only one I had seriously considered for the job. His broad interest in games of all kinds and his ability to string words together in a neat and informative manner made him the obvious choice. And so, after nine years at the helm of *The GENERAL*, a real editor was hired. Probably my greatest Avalon Hill decision!

## Spirit-Master to Offset-King

By Donald Greenwood

*Don Greenwood, of course, needs no introduction. His name is synonymous with that of Avalon Hill—having been editor of this magazine for ten years, having been a fine game designer and developer for almost as long.*

For most of its 25-year existence, *The GENERAL* has been a major force in my life. First as a source of recreation and later my livelihood. However, beyond that, it's been something much more . . . a pseudo-fountain of youth that has enabled me to relive my boyhood well into middle age. I hope this magazine carpet ride into adventure and competition never ends, although I know it must, but I'll always be grateful for at least 25 years of enjoyment.

25 years . . . God, am I really that old? It seems like only yesterday . . . well, maybe last week . . . that I invested the then enormous sum of \$5 (five weeks' allowance) for that first subscription. I still recall the lead story: "Best Football Game Ever Invented" screamed the headline touting a favorable review by *Sports Illustrated* of that venerable favorite *FOOTBALL STRATEGY*. It sold me. It became my next Avalon Hill game—the fourth in my growing collection. They say first impressions are the strongest and it must be true because 25 years, 19 football leagues, and over 500 games later it's still my favorite gaming experience although not my favorite game. Oh, the game is fine, but there's something about the competition of a league setting that magnifies the significance and excitement of each game. Now that I'm too old and frail to actually participate on the gridiron, it's the only way to experience those pre-game butterflies again. Whatever it is, it's lured me back this year to the Avalon Hill Football Strategy League for yet another season following a dismal 5-11 record the last time. I said I was competitive—not good!

Competition has always been where it's at for me. Oh sure, I'm a history buff (four ill-conceived years of undergraduate study attests to that), but the simulation aspect of wargames was only an interesting panoramic setting for me. The real appeal was the game . . . me against the other guy in a battle of wits with fate picking sides according to prevailing moods. I cut my teeth on the old Milton Bradley "American Heritage" series (*Broadsides*, *Dog-fight*, and the real dog *Battle Cry*), but those weren't really "wargames". One of my schoolmates had this game that he couldn't understand called *TACTICS II*. I read the rules and showed him how to play. We loved it. His love must have been greater than mine because he never won. That tempered his enthusiasm enough for me to trade my baseball cards to him for the game. *BISMARCK* was next. Great fun. My friend had more success—winning the occasional game. Surprisingly, that made it more enjoyable for me too. Challenge . . . the fear of losing . . . proved more exciting than countless wins at *TACTICS II*. The latter was relegated to the shelf. We logged over 150 games of *BISMARCK*. I know, because in those days I kept records of not only my wins and losses but the names of my "victims". The glossy counters were worn thread-bare. Christmas brought *AFRIKA KORPS* and the theatre of our addiction shifted from the North Atlantic to the desert. Again my playmate absorbed one drubbing after another. His enthusiasm was on the wane (or maybe he was discovering girls). In any case, it was time to branch out and find new worlds to conquer.

That first issue of *The GENERAL* opened new vistas. There were others out there like me. You could play these games by mail against good players. "Undeclared *TACTICS II* player" boasted my first "Opponents Wanted" ad. It was not repeated. I discovered I was only a big perch in a little pond. It was a rude awakening when I ran into a barracuda. My unblemished *TACTICS II* record was blitzed into oblivion the first time out of the gate. I didn't know the mailman could bring such misery. There were people out there who knew tricks I'd never even dreamed of. I fared little better with *STALINGRAD* or *AFRIKA KORPS*. I was the rookie in this league. It was humbling . . . but it was challenging. Back to *The GENERAL*. That little 16-page tabloid was read and reread over and over again for any hints of tricks to spring on the next guy. Great journalism it wasn't, but the pages of my copies were well-worn. Perhaps the greatest lesson, though, were those Opponents Wanted ads. Defeat was a good teacher. Like all competitors, I found the best way to hone my skills was to play someone better. And there were a lot of people out there who were better.

Maybe it was that sudden dosage of defeat that explained my new interest in gaming journalism. One of my postal opponents had taken to sending a carbon-copy newsletter of his correspondence with his various game moves so as not to have to repeat the same small talk over and over again. I not only mimicked him, I went him one better by starting my own magazine. Xeroxed at first to about a dozen correspondants, followed by school dittos provided by sympathetic teachers. My opponents were now harangued into contributing articles. Suitably impressed with my new venture, my parents sprang at Christmas for a new A. B. Dick spirit-master machine. If only my mother had known what evil consequences this would have for her son—the "Doctor". Thus was born *PANZERFAUST*—or *PANZERFAUUST* (sic) as it was misspelled in its maiden issue. Wargaming was now only the medium for my new madness—publishing. Correspondance and articles took the place of games and victories. Games became something more to write about than to play. The new challenge was to build a periodical empire out of sweat and spirit-master ink. Each new subscriber became a "victory" on my new Won-Lost record. Circulation eventually rose to approximately 800. (Which is a lot of cranks on a hand-driven spirit-master machine let me tell you! Oh well, it improved my tennis game anyway.)

*The GENERAL* remained my bible, however. A win in one of its contests brought a congratulatory letter from Tom Shaw—VP of Avalon Hill—and a new game! I don't know which I treasured more. What was the contest on? Why, *FOOTBALL STRATEGY* of course. As the circulation of my little fan 'zine grew, so did my contact with the "names" of the hobby. Letters from the likes of Tom Shaw became less of a rarity. I was becoming a "hobby personality". How could I tell? I read about myself in *The GENERAL*. But my gamesmanship suffered from lack of playing time and I became rusty at even the games I thought I had mastered—let alone the new ones which were appearing with ever-increasing frequency.

One incident illustrates this well. In 1969 I was visited at college by one of my subscribers for a weekend of gaming. It was the first time I had met Doug Burke. He proceeded to beat the snot out of me at one wargame after another. To defend my honor I retreated behind the claim that *FOOTBALL STRATEGY* was my real forte. After all, I'd never lost a game by more than seven points. "Oh", he said, finally sensing a challenge and then proceeded to trounce me at that too—to the tune of 37-16. As embarrassments go, it ranked right up there with Custer at the Little Big Horn, or so it seemed at the time. I should have been forewarned. Looking back over that first issue of *The GENERAL* now, I see an Opponents Wanted ad by none other than Doug Burke. As fate would have it, both Doug and I, native Pennsylvanians, would move to Baltimore and play many more *FOOTBALL STRATEGY* games in the Avalon Hill Football Strategy League—a rivalry that lives on today.

It was not to be my only face-to-face humiliation. Two years later I attended

my first gaming convention—aboard the battleship *Massachusetts* in Fall River. I was instantly taken on by the existing hierarchy of recognized players with considerable reputations. One of my longtime postal friends whom I stood in absolute awe of was George Phillis, who through his writings was widely accepted as the grand master of *STALINGRAD*. Aboard the battleship I discovered any number of players who claimed to have beaten him during his playing days at MIT. It seemed the reigning champion was now Dave Roberts who actually had *attacked* with the Russians and taken Warsaw! But there were any number of other fine players who hoped to top him. Common to all of them was the ability to converse intelligently about the game, citing grid-co-ordinates and discussing intricate strategies without need to refer to the map. I came away dazzled.

A year later I met the other side of the spectrum. A traveling companion to a convention at Lake Geneva, invited me to New York. He worked for SPI and offered to use his contacts to purchase printing supplies for me at rates far cheaper than I could get in my hometown. While there, we were told that Jim Dunnigan—the head guru—wanted to see me. I was flabbergasted. This guy was a legend; he had already designed dozens of wargames (on his way to an eventual claim of hundreds) and was widely recognized as THE authority on wargame design. What could he want with me? It turned out that, besides meeting me, he wanted to play a game with me—*Napoleon at Waterloo*—his latest design. My fan 'zine had been dominated by articles on AH games and doubtless he wanted me to give his games more coverage. I felt like the kid who gets invited to be a batboy for the Yankees. I'm the sort who feels uncomfortable playing any game the first time, but against a world-famous designer at his own creation? To say that I felt like a fish out of water was an understatement. Yet, the really lasting impression that I carried away from that meeting was the genuine amazement by the SPI staffers that Jim was actually "playing" a game. It turns out that this was the first of his games that he had ever played—or so they told me. I found this totally incredulous, and to this day can't understand how he designed games without playing them. This is not to denigrate Jim Dunnigan mind you. I believe the man is a genius and one of the best extemporaneous speakers I've ever heard (one of my biggest failings). I also owe him much for his many kindnesses over the years (including an unsolicited free ad in *S&T* which eventually doubled the circulation of my magazine). I later discovered that it was his recommendation to Tom Shaw that got me the AH job. But his philosophy of treating games (simulation games) as historical books was about as far removed from my own preference of games as exciting tests of skill as you could get.

As my collegiate career wound to a close and I looked forward with trepidation to earning a living in the real world, who should come to my rescue but good ol' Tom Shaw of Avalon Hill. Seems Tom was getting tired of editing *THE GENERAL* and looking for an assistant. He liked what I did with my 'zine and would I be interested in a job? Let's see . . . working for a living or playing games . . . which would it be? A sillier rhetorical question was never posed.

And so began my sojourn as editor of *THE GENERAL* (with Vol. 9, No. 1). Little did I know then that "playing games for a living" would consist of averaging 60-hour weeks, and there would be some days when deadlines loomed that I wouldn't even go home. *THE GENERAL* probably showed no immediate marked improvement. I was new to the world of offset printing and my schooling came via trial-and-error. I may have been king of the Spirit Master publishers but I was the rawest rookie in the Offset big leagues. I concentrated on trying to improve the graphics (no small feat for a guy who can't draw a straight line) and coercing articles out of well-known gamers rather than relying on whatever was submitted as had been Tom's want. Actually, my biggest contribution to gaming that first year was probably founding the 26-member Avalon Hill *FOOTBALL STRATEGY* League which I also won that year by beating Tom Shaw 22-21 in the first of three Super Bowl wins. He quit ten years later with the best winning percentage—but having never won the championship of his own game. It is a cruel trick of fate in which I take a perverted pleasure to this day.

Meanwhile, under me, the magazine stayed the course it had set under Shaw—with the emphasis on playing games. About this time it was fashionable among the hobby elite to look down their noses at *THE GENERAL* because it dealt only with Avalon Hill games, and primarily how to win them. The rage of the 70s was *simulation* games. It was the Golden Age of simulation games and the era of *S&T* magazine with a historical article and related game in each issue. A burgeoning wargamer audience used to a steady diet of one or, at most, two new AH games a year hungrily embraced the simulation school. Pundits enjoyed put-downs of the "Perflect Plans" style of article espoused by *THE GENERAL*. Those who had never taken the time to develop skill at a game glorified in the new age. The old masters hated its incursions into their turf—diminishing the significance of their studies of now obsolescent games. Hobby magazines now favored reviews of the steady flood of new games coming out of New York over thoughtful analysis by masters expounding on the tactical tricks gleaned from years of repeated play. More often than not, such reviews were (and still are) written by those who had done little more than read the rules and then condemned it for lack of play balance. Nearly 30 years after its publication, veteran players still argue play balance in such

games as *STALINGRAD* and *AFRIKA KORPS*. How could reviewers make such judgements after a single playing?

Just as the new wave of simulation designers/admirers so prominent in the hobby press looked down upon *THE GENERAL*, I mirrored their disinterest in the simulation camp. For me, the *game* was still the thing and *THE GENERAL* continued to reflect that philosophy. Given the choice of drying ink to glorify the exploits of a tournament winner or a prestigious designer, I always chose the gamer. I still subscribe to the theory that it is the *players* who make our hobby—not the designers. We have too many of the latter and not enough of the former. I've never been an admirer of the old SPI school of simulation games. In fact, I always took offense at the attitude condescendingly displayed by many of the SPI designers of my acquaintance who openly proclaimed that they *never played* their games and were proud of it. To admit to playing these things was to be part of the mob. Playtesters were derisively termed "trolls". By being a designer one could claim to be above it all. This was probably a bit of hero worship being practised here as they mimicked Dunnigan. Frankly, I've never played a good game (by my standards) done by a designer who doesn't play games—although to be fair I haven't knowingly tried many by such folks. Games to me were like fine wines . . . to be studied and savored over repeated playings, not gulped down in a race to be the first to open the next bottle of Ripple. The hobby, in my opinion, could not long endure the steady stream of new wargames. So fast was the torrent of new games that players could barely read the rules, let alone master them before the next was released. The great players with the "unbeatable" reputations were sinking beneath a morass of new games in which no two people were likely to know the same rules—let alone be conversant in the best tactics. The talk now wasn't about the merit of stationing Steinmetz at Quatre Bras, but rather had one seen the sixth rendition of Battle of the Bulge? Playing well was becoming a lost art.

While other publishers gave the ink to the designers, the fair-haired boys of the 70s, I continued to devote *THE GENERAL* to gamesmanship by stressing features like the "Series Replay", illustrated move-by-move analyses of games by good players. The amount of work required for this new feature was incredible. The game had to be played legally, recorded, and replayed for comments and legality checks. Many turned into routs or were too long and had to be abandoned. Then, the real work began. The magazine in those days was a one-man operation. (Actually, it was more of a half-man operation because I also worked fulltime as a developer of the likes of *THIRD REICH* and *SQUAD LEADER*.) Each illustration is made by cutting out "flats" of the counters involved which are pasted down in position on a black and white version of the map to be photographed. Color photography was too expensive. Color is then added by cutting out individual amberlith overlays over each counter or terrain feature on the photo. The time consumption and backaches generated were monumental. It was truly a labor of love, although I did get rather handy with a scalpel. Maybe Mom was right; I should have been a surgeon. Anyway, to this day I can never restrain my indignation when someone tells me that it's harder to write a review of a game than to do a game analysis article. I've written both and I know damn well which is harder.

My desire to emphasize the players took other forms too. I originated the AREA player rating system to give players a gauge to measure their abilities and gave goals to aspire to. Unfortunately, only the PBmers took to it in any numbers and due to the length of play required in postal play, several AREA championship tournaments started years ago still haven't concluded. Long-time postal friend and opponent Tom Oleson and friends are joining with me in this anniversary issue to launch a new revitalized AREA system with hopefully better results.

One of the more successful creations which few present day gamers attribute to me is the ORIGINS convention. Long before GAMA ever existed, my friends in Baltimore wanted to host a local game convention. Given my ties as a "wheel" with AH, I convinced them to call it a national convention and invite all the companies in the business. With AH's support—*THE GENERAL* was the only real publicity for the convention—1500 gamers showed up at Johns Hopkins University for that first ORIGINS. Despite our inexperience at such things, it was a big hit. SPI wanted in on the national convention too, so rather than split the hobby we agreed to make it a traveling show and gave our creation over to a coalition of Game Manufacturers in exchange for SPI's support of ORIGINS II. The rest, as they say, is history. That second convention was much better than the first and the two dozen events all sold out. I remember the AH Classic 500 filled with 144 entries and a second "ghost" tournament started to handle the overflow. It was the peak of recognition for the "classics" with many of the old Grand Masters in attendance. Attendance would slide in subsequent years as the number of events vying for the players' attention ballooned into the hundreds (until *The Classics* tournament could barely draw 20 participants). The *FOOTBALL STRATEGY* tournament was also memorable for me—winner over a full field of 64. I miss those days of filled tournaments and a real sense of a national championship. Today's ORIGINS just don't convey that impression—diluted as they are with the activities of dozens of manufacturers. It has led us to think once again of starting a new Baltimore convention—this time solely for competitions in AH games. It's still under consideration and may be one of the things that we can look forward to in the next 25 years of *THE GENERAL*.

One last remembrance on ORIGINS. I still laugh every year when GAMA annually considers a name change for their national convention. It seems no one knows why it is called ORIGINS. As the person who named it, I can tell you that the label was my creation and inspired by the fact that commercial wargaming (role-playing hadn't yet made a big splash) ORIGINated in Baltimore—the home of Avalon Hill. It's as simple as that.

Editing *The GENERAL* was not without its disappointments. It is always hard to reconcile that not everyone shares your interests. Goodness knows I've had to deal with countless thousands who have written me over the years that their new game was the greatest thing since *Monopoly*. It is one of life's ironies that the game you think of as the ultimate experience may be somebody else's idea of a bad joke. Surely, the simulation camp has reason to gripe with my direction of the magazine. And so it is with magazines and gaming philosophies. The continual bridesmaid status for "Best Magazine" honors in the annual Charles Roberts Awards (sic) is not without its hurt, although I've long since come to grips with the realization that no "house organ" will ever win an award from a voting body dominated by competing publishers. Similarly, every critical letter has cut deep, although I take solace in our record of printing so many of them. It's peculiar that the competition never gets such letters and prints instead only tomes of glowing praise. Are they really that wonderful . . . or have we been too honest for our own good?

Perhaps the best thing I did for *The GENERAL* was to pass the reins to a new editor after ten years. In Rex Martin the magazine finally got the services of a fulltime editor, and his influence is very much in evidence today and growing with each passing issue. If not overly enamored with computer games, he is at least more tolerant of them than I and thus far more qualified to lead the magazine into the 90s. For me, I'll remain the old dinosaur that I am and stick with the more sociable and enjoyable (for me anyway) board games. Rex's talents, coupled with the considerable artistic abilities of Charles Kibler, form a considerable one-two punch with which to continue the magazine's evolution. Your magazine is in good hands—as any comparison of this issue with one of mine or Tom's editorship will attest. I know because Rex and Charley are first and foremost gamers—people who go to conventions not to give seminars and sound like experts but to play games and enjoy their creations. And Good Lord willing I'll stick around to help them out.

Hoping you've enjoyed the last 25 years as much as I have, and that you'll be around with me for the next 25.

## The Not-so-Young Turk

By Rex A. Martin

*I came to Avalon Hill with a couple of degrees in history, a varied employment record, and a great many misconceptions. Now, after seven years at the helm of this magazine, I've found that none of these were relevant—and perhaps that's just as well.*

When the call came on that snowy afternoon, I didn't hesitate. The Avalon Hill Game Company was offering me the editorship of *The GENERAL*! I'd mentioned in past letters to Don, letters concerned with playtesting and my scenarios for the *SQUAD LEADER* system, that I was free-lancing (mostly articles for regional magazines and organizational contracts for the state government) at the time but was always on the look-out for an honest profession. Now Eric Dott wanted to know how soon I could be out there (I lived in Helena, Montana) and at work. So, shortly after New Year's Day 1982, I was on the road, driving my old Fiat overloaded with books and belongings straight into a mid-West blizzard. Despite a few days spent in a motel near Indianapolis, I did arrive in Baltimore . . . ready to take up the challenge of steering wargaming's oldest periodical on its tried and true course.

I had hoped that there would be a smooth transfer of editorship, having been in uncomfortable situations where the exiting head has, especially if he remained with the firm, still had a proprietary interest in "his" baby. It would be understandable; after all, Don Greenwood had almost single-handedly made *The GENERAL* what it was, and had spent ten years doing so. I needn't have been concerned. He spent a day showing me how to paste up things (my first attempts were the ads for *CIVILIZATION* and *STRUGGLE OF NATIONS* and Kirby Davis' article in Vol. 18, No. 5). Then he led me by the hand downstairs, proceeded to show me several great mountains of paper (half-edited articles, submissions, correspondence, and complaints), and informed me—with an evil grin—that I alone was responsible for the next issue and that it was due out in six weeks. He would write the editorial but he had a number of other projects, and I was now in charge ("Don't bother me kid, I'm busy"). This transfer of editorship was going to be rather smoother than I'd wanted!

Actually, it wasn't quite as bad as this makes it sound. I spent several days getting all the paper organized and when finished had a file cabinet nicely organized so I could locate articles by subject and correspondence by date. The lead material on *FLAT TOP* for Vol. 18, No. 6 was already edited and simply awaiting typesetting. Having just sorted through all the articles submitted to and accepted by Don, I pulled some things out that I thought complimented Alan Moon's pieces, and settled in to make them readable.

Greenwood provided guidance and support along the way—usually limited to a grunt of assent but I would take what I could get. I rather quickly, and luckily, found that Charlie Kibler was a marvel; all I had to do was inform him that I needed a piece of header art for a specific article, and he came up with the concept and polished off a masterpiece without pause. And Dale Sheaffer was friendly (although, being an ex-biker, his appearance and method of expressing himself would lead one to think otherwise) and set out to indoctrinate me into the more esoteric elements of layout and paste-up with a cheerful cynicism. Together, we managed to make the deadline. 'Course, I did put in 80-hour weeks then. The magazine was truly now "my baby".

Almost seven years have passed since then. I've written a lot of words, and edited a few million more, and read a few million more than that, during my tenure. I no longer work 80-hour weeks; the magazine runs quite smoothly. Indeed, being a glutton for punishment, I've even managed to convince the powers-that-be that we needed an increase in size since I have been too successful in encouraging submissions. Somewhere along the course of these seven years, I've also somehow slipped into producing a couple of *ASL* modules (*HEDGEROW HELL* and the upcoming *THE LAST HURRAH*), and done a number of special magazine projects. And I've left my sticky fingerprints on most every playtest here. If someone had asked this high-school kid 22 years ago what he'd be doing for a living when he was 37, this would be the last thing mentioned I'm sure. A rather torturous route *did* lead me to this profession (and my mother still isn't quite sure it's an honest living).

The offspring of a doodlebugger and a daughter of Kansas dirt-farmers, I was raised with a restless mind and soul. A "doodlebugger", for those ignorant few who don't know, is one who works on an oil survey crew. For most of my young life, my father headed such a crew and this meant that we moved every three or four months as the crew shifted its search to virgin fields. I saw a lot of the Gulf Coast and lower mid-West, but it wasn't a life conducive to making friends with others of my age since any budding relationship was rather quickly and abruptly terminated with familiar regularity. Therefore, our family had a tendency to be tight-knit. This meant that we entertained ourselves a great deal, and games were always a part of that family time. My earliest memories are of playing cards (my mother came from a family who were all sharks) or checkers or chess or something on the order of *Monopoly*. Along with reading, gaming was the prime entertainment for my sisters and I—and our parents participated and encouraged us in both past-times, something all too few do these days I suspect.

So, gaming in its variety of forms was a fundamental part of my upbringing. Somewhere along the way, I also uncovered early on a love of history. I suspect that it sprang from my choice of pre-school reading material (I reveled in war comic books) and my huge sets of toy soldiers (by high school, I had graduated to the more elaborate plastic models, always of military theme). Whatever the roots, I knew early that history would be my profession. As I've aged, my interest in history has grown to encompass more than just the military, but it has dominated my education and work experience. Even after two degrees in history (from Carroll College in Helena and the University of St. Andrews in Scotland) and several jobs in the field (most notably with the illustrious Montana Historical Society Library and Archives), I still have a great love of the subject.

It was inevitable therefore that I would discover wargaming. In 1964, in a Hammond (Louisiana) bookstore, I saw a copy of *AFRIKA KORPS*. Now you must understand something about my approach to historical study; I am not a specialist. Rather, my tastes are eclectic since I get fascinated by a certain period or aspect of history, and then doggedly pursue it until I feel sated. And almost any simple thing can set me off—a movie or TV show, a passing reference in a book I'm reading, almost anything (my acquaintance with a young Finnish miss whose father had fought the Russians led to my long interest in the modern history of this fascinating country). At the time, in 1964, I was in the midst of a love-affair with Rommel spurred by some novel. Needless-to-say, I bought *AK*. And, needless-to-say, I was hooked. This was the perfect blend of two interests. Over the course of the next few months, I would buy a number of those classic Avalon Hill wargames.

At about this time, my father decided on a change of careers and took on the task of teaching math in a small Louisiana high school. I was lucky enough, by dint of a few notices tacked to bulletin boards, to locate someone who was willing to play these "military simulations" with me. Up to now, my mother (who I am convinced to this day used to regularly sail the *Bismarck* across Ireland) and my father had been my sole opponents for my Avalon Hill collection; my sisters seemed to lack all interest in the hobby despite my, admittedly not too strenuous, offers to play. Now, at last, I could pit myself against a peer. Luckily, Harry and I were evenly matched and neither of us lost interest through getting the hell repeatedly beaten out of a plan of attack. And, since I lost as many games as I won, I had no delusions about my skill at these games and so never developed the will to win at all costs. To me, the prime enjoyment of the game was the challenge and comradery. (This had been reinforced by the fact that, from our earliest days, my parents *never* lost on purpose just to make us kids feel good; they played to win, and when we finally would win a game—and then come to regularly beat them—they were as proud as we.) I make no bones about the fact that this experience set the tone for my love of the hobby, and my approach to it ever since.

But with graduation from high school, and departing for the wilds of New Mexico for college, my hobby had to take second fiddle to other pursuits. For the next four years, first in Santa Fe and then in Helena, my time was taken up with schooling, and working to pay for that privilege. It was not until after I was married and employed by the Montana Historical Society that I again had the time and money to indulge myself. A few notices here and there, and I surprisingly uncovered a hotbed of gaming right in Helena. I was extremely fortunate to fall in with the likes of Randy Strom and Mark Mackin, two gentlemen (in every sense of that word) who had gathered together a band of brother wargamers. My evenings and weekends spent at their apartment playing games, or pushing around 25mm Napoleonic figures in Mark's folks' basement, are some of my best memories. We were all convivial (a steady flow of beer helped) and relatively competent. We even organized ourselves well enough to put on displays of our hobby at various libraries, and demonstrations of our art at local fairs, and give talks to various groups. In those heady days, we were doing all we could to promote wargaming in our "backwater". With the exception of a short stint in Scotland taking my Masters, for some ten years my acquaintance with the Helena Gaming Society defined me more surely than my various jobs. If nothing else, my attitude that wargaming was meant to be good comradeship was more firmly entrenched than ever.

Of course, since who among us isn't a frustrated game designer, inevitably I began dabbling with the creation of these gems. The original *SQUAD LEADER* provided my stepping-stone. With its open-ended structure, and its stress on small-unit actions (which I had always found most fascinating), the appeal to me was enormous. For some months I dabbled with recreating some of the Finnish actions I knew so well (for both degrees, my theses dealt with Finnish involvement in the "Big One"). At last, spurred by Mark and Randy's encouragement and enthusiasm for my efforts, I dispatched these off to Avalon Hill, along with some thoughts on how to simulate winter warfare (skis, camouflage, severe conditions and what-not). Having been a free-lance author of local history articles, I was well familiar with rejection and frankly didn't expect much to come of this. Lo and behold, Don not only encouraged me but then used some of my work in the final release of *CRESCENDO OF DOOM*. Now I was really hooked.

For the next couple of years, while I babysat my children (my wife was sleeping) and did the odd piece on Western history for the likes of *Hoopprints* or *Montana Magazine* or the *Pacific Corral of the Northwesterners*, I indulged myself. I was involved in the playtest for *G.I.*, and submitted a number of articles on the odd game from Avalon Hill that caught my fancy (none of which, I hasten to add, saw print). Many was the happy afternoon that I spent at "Bert & Ernie's", a local bar of some repute, with my books and papers. You see, B&E's was within an easy walk, had good beer at cheap prices, all my friends congregated there after they got off work, and I had a talented wife who made a fair amount of money as a vocalist. Life was good, and I was pretty content with my lot. Then came the call offering me a job. Sandra and I chewed over the decision for awhile (neither of us being enamoured with the East), but I think the decision had been made for me years before.

Now, after 38 issues, I am nicely settled in. I get to write a lot, a task I've always enjoyed. And running this traveling road show called *The GENERAL* has been more fun than most can imagine. I have met more able and gifted people than most folk are ever lucky enough to claim as acquaintances. I have enjoyed producing each and every issue (even though I *can* point out every mistake and oversight therein) since Don cut me loose with an "It's yours; do what you want." I love the challenge of putting it all together in paste-up (much like doing a jigsaw puzzle without any concept of what it is supposed to look like when finished). And I beguile myself with the dream that I am actually helping the hobby in a small way, and Avalon Hill in a large way.

I've written often enough about what I perceive the function of *The GENERAL* to be, and how crucial I believe it to be to our hobby. And others in this issue will surely tell you how critical Avalon Hill has been to the growth and advance of wargaming. So, if I might, I'd like to touch on the hard work that producing a magazine entails—the nitty-gritty, you might say.

First comes the idea of which game we (meaning those of us here at Avalon Hill, designers and management alike) think deserves to be featured. Almost inevitably, this is a new game—virgin territory for authors and those of us here at the Company too busy to do other than get in the first words. (It's a lot easier to lay down the law about a game few others have played and sound like an expert than to take on some classic that has had a few dozen articles appear over the years.) I have, over the past couple of years, however, tried to use one issue each year to feature one of our older games, for I know that quite a few folk still play them and I think these elder games deserve some attention now and then. It is a trend, one popular with the readers I hope, that should continue through future years while I'm around. Now that I've a feature, I can dig through my files of submitted articles and grab a few on older games that I think mesh with the newer title—my proclivity for a "theme". I've a couple of file drawers and a bunch of word-processor disks full of such, so it is really an enjoyable chore as I start to envision how all these words will come together. And, since I usually have a fair idea of what will be featured several issues in advance, I can keep a weather eye peeled for new submissions that may fit. The bottom line is that most of the material

comes from hobbyists, and my contacts with them have usually been cordial in the extreme.

But there are the times when suitable material, often on the featured game, is not in my hands. Then I get to badger the designers, the developers here at the offices, and that core of hard-working gamers whose names you see so often in these pages, to produce something. My memos and letters to them inevitably are warm enough to melt butter, at least to start. But then, as the issue approaches I need the stuff for, the tone hardens. You see, if I don't get them to write, I'll have to do it. And frankly, I don't consider myself an expert on every game we produce (I know that comes as a shock to some of you, but it's true). But when push comes to shove, in one manner or another (even if I write it), the material is in my hands a couple of months before I'm ready to put the issue together.

Concurrently with this, I am editing what I do have. Continuously. Some pieces that have interesting ideas or concepts just aren't that well written. Having read my fair share of articles in other magazines that are an affront to the tenets of English, I wade right in without regard for the sometime tender sensibilities of the authors. (To those who have detected my heavy red ink on your article, I'll apologize—but I wouldn't and won't do any different.) Having been an author of magazine articles, I know what those sensibilities are, and in truth have little truck with them now as an editor. Too, in some cases, I find that an author just hasn't carried his clever idea out as far as he might; with just that extra scenario, or this extra new rule, couldn't this be a better piece? In those cases, I add the material and send it off to the author (if the deadline doesn't press too hard) for his approval. Lastly, I have never had any qualms about cropping extraneous material out, occasionally even after the piece is typeset if it isn't going to fit the space I've allowed it in my grand scheme.

So, a few weeks or so before you see the issue, I have the articles and columns in hand. (I won't bore you with my troubles with all the odd bits—the likes of the Opponents Wanted ads, Infiltrator's Report and such.) Next comes typesetting, and then what seems the endless task of proofreading it all. Do you know that after you have read something a dozen times or so, it is easy to miss the typos? A little known fact of publishing revealed at last. In point of fact, I think that one could compose a universal law that goes something along the lines of "the more you proofread an article, the more errors you will overlook". Martin's First Law of Editorship.

As I finish the proofreading, I proceed to inundate our Art Department—who always seem to have some hot property they have to finish the work on just as I approach a deadline—with demands for illustrations. One of the things I am proudest of is the "look" of *The GENERAL*. I am continually amazed at how much we can do, in comparison with most of the competition. Original header art, lavish map depictions, and colorful ads throughout. For seven years I've demanded ever more from Charlie and Company. Now, with my plans to add a counter-sheet and make more use of variant insert maps (such as the one herein), I may count myself fortunate they don't poison me some dark day. But, knowing our artists, they will simply buckle down and produce neat stuff.

At last the day comes to put it all together. Hot wax and ruler, T-square and razor blade, veloxes and negatives, proofread galleys and amberlith. In a couple of weeks all this esoteric paraphernalia gets used to produce a magazine layout. As I've said above, it is much like a puzzle for which one has no guide. I use hot wax to stick things down, so that they can be readily moved when I find I've painted myself into a corner. Revising and changing, cutting and pasting, each issue of *The GENERAL* comes to life on a rickety, scarred old art table in my office. But I've got that table set just so after all these years, and my chair is at just the right angle, and everything is in just the right spot, that the process must work. For, if I do say so myself, I like the way *The GENERAL* looks.

Next, my "baby" is turned over to the tender mercies of the Camera Department. They produce a "color-key" (a four-color acetate copy laid out in the eight eight-page signatures we now use) and a "blue-line" proof so I can see if everything is as I want it to appear. The Camera Room is staffed by long-suffering experts, who take the mess and bring it to life. We work in a four-color process, and I shudder to think of some of the complex chores we've called on them to complete in the past few years. After any last-minute changes or foul-ups have been corrected, the plates are made. And the presses roll.

I've rambled on quite a bit about how an issue comes into being. And really, after all this, it isn't that important to you readers how it happens. What is important is the result. Selection of articles, artwork, layout and production has but one point and that is to increase your enjoyment of our line of games. Look back over your collection of issues, and you can judge for yourself whether my predecessors and I have succeeded. If we have expanded the scope of your game playing, have made you more proficient, have entertained you a bit, then *The GENERAL* has served its purpose.

Before I go, I'd like to make one last comparison and lavish some praise. I think, although certainly my experience is limited, that the group of fellows who make up the Avalon Hill design staff are some of the most pleasant one could hope to work with. All are talented, involved in the hobby, and enjoy themselves. Having been forged in the fire of the game industry over the past

few years, we get along marvelously well. We can be likened to a battle-tested squad of G.I.s, having been in many firefights. The survivors of these battles—Don (our grizzled and gruff, but loveable, top sergeant) Greenwood, Craig Taylor, Charlie Kibler, Bob McNamara, the new kid Bill Peschel, and myself—have withstood fatal wounds and come back for more. It's us against the world, you see. Some companions have fallen along the way, and we occasionally recall their foibles and fabulous abilities. But those of us left are lean and mean, ready to take on yet another unplayable monster. We enjoy each others' company, friction is non-existent, and we work surprisingly well together (given some of the egos in this game business, I might say "against all odds"). Best of all, we all enjoy playing games, and do so at every opportunity—even on our own time! If nothing else, my tenure here at *The GENERAL* has given me one invaluable treasure: the friendship and comradeship of these fine gamers.

Before the reader plunges into all the other words in this issue, I would like to take a few moments and express my gratitude to those who have labored so hard to make this party possible. Surely you realize that any such undertaking as this magazine is not due to the efforts of one fellow. A host of people have lavished their talents on it, doing the hard work while we editors take the credit. Their pride shows in each issue. To Gertrude Zombro for many years, and now Richard Snider, who struggle against the tides of the Postal Service to insure that you receive your latest issue; to Dale Sheaffer and Charlie

Kibler and Jean Baer, without whose talents this magazine would be less than eye-appealing; to Linda Barker, Georgia Wilson and Elizabeth Turner in typesetting and proofreading, who translate my execrable typing into the printed word; to Elaine Adkins and Lou Velenovsky who take my layout and make the plates; and to Joe Widener and all his boys who print the monster every two months—all my thanks. All of them deserve a place at the head of this anniversary table.

So, *The GENERAL* reaches twenty-five years of age. And with it, the hobby matures a little as well. The mark of any successful venture is the support it receives from the people it was meant to help or entertain. The hobbyists and readers have, over and over again, shown their unqualified support—in subscriptions, in submitted articles, even in their complaints and suggestions. That is the foundation of this magazine, and as steady as bedrock so long as we continue to provide what the majority wants. Hopefully, the expanded size, some new features (such as the annual countersheet which will debut next issue), the increased use of color, and other changes will let us bring you even more of the best on Avalon Hill games. Together, staff and subscribers should see *The GENERAL* through to Volume 50. I can't say what I'll be doing in the future, but I certainly expect *The GENERAL* to only get bigger, better and bolder.



## 2nd Fleet . . . Cont'd from Page 24

### Brest (2206)

Psyche (SS)

### Air Units

Lann-Bihoue (2406)

ATL (FR/RCN)

### Devonport (2004)

Avenger (FF)

Charybdis (FF)

### Portsmouth (2202)

Gloucester (DD)

Brave (FF)

### NATO REINFORCEMENTS

#### Add to Box 3

Lann-Bihoue (2406)

ATL (FR/RCN)

#### Add to Box 6

Brest (2206)

Casabianca (SN)

#### Add to Box 11

Cherbourg (2203)

Jean de Vienne (DD)

De Grasse (DD)

Comm. Ducuing (FF)

Comm. Bouan (FF)

#### Add to Box 19

Lann-Bihoue (2406)

ATL (FR/RCN)

#### Add to Box 24

Brest (2206)

Psyche (SS)

#### Add to Box 27

Portsmouth (2202)

Gloucester (DD)

Brave (FF)

Avenger (FF)

Charybdis (FF)

#### Add to Box 11

Cherbourg (2203)

Jean D'Arc (CG)

Primauguet (DD)

Pr. Maitre L'Her (FF)

### SOVIET DEPLOYMENT

#### PREPAREDNESS LEVEL: Low

**Submarines** (Free set-up): any hex in Biscay, North Atlantic, or British Isles zones

L.A. Govorov (SN)

M.M. Popov (SN)

Livny (SS)

Novgorod Severskiy (SS)

Ulyanovsk (SS)

Yelets (SS)



PORT



AIRFIELD



LANDING  
STRIP



PORT/  
AIRFIELD

### SOUTH-BOUND TRANSIT TRACK

0	1	2	3	4	MA-5 5
	MA-4 6	7	MA-3 8	9	MA-2 10
	11	12	13	14	MA-1 15

### NORTH-BOUND TRANSIT TRACK

0	1	2	3	4	MA-5 5
	MA-4 6	7	MA-3 8	9	MA-2 10
	11	12	13	14	MA-1 15

Units may be placed on the map when they reach the box corresponding to their Movement Allowance (MA). South-bound units may be placed in the northernmost or westernmost (north of hex 1801) hexrow of the Atlantic zone on the 6th Fleet map. North-bound units may be placed in the southernmost hexrow of the British Isles zone on the 2nd Fleet map.



# AN ANNIVERSARY SMORGASBORD

## The First Time

By S. Craig Taylor, Jr.

*Craig Taylor, the old master himself, has a string of credits that would fill this page were I to start listing them. Suffice to say that he has labored for three different game companies, and we were darn lucky when he accepted the offer to come to work for Avalon Hill. He has, over the past couple of years, become our resident expert on modern warfare, although his interest in things military span the ages. And he's a demon at playing his own designs—something unique in this hobby of ours.*

It was a long, long time ago in a place far, far away. To be a tad more specific, it was Christmas vacation in 1958 in a picture-postcard part of New England. Ike was in the White House; JFK had just won re-election to the Senate; and *Gunsmoke* was the #1 television show.

An Air Force brat, I had just returned from four sun-filled years in West Texas and North Africa and was enduring my first year of junior high school in snowy Ludlow, Massachusetts. Remember junior high? Actually, you may not; it seems to have been restyled "Middle School" many years ago. Anyway, it's a strange time in life when a man-child's hormones run amok, transforming him into a hairy beast with acne and a voice that cracks whenever speaking in public. Girls, very easy to ignore in the past, also metamorphose in various interesting ways—but that could provide a whole string of other "first time" stories. In short, it is a very impressionable time, with lots of new beginnings. In my case, one event at that time, indirectly, led to a lifetime hobby and, for the last 15 years, a career.

One of my new buddies, Ted Deckel, and I had been playing a species of miniature wargaming that can best be described as H.G. Wells' rules with dime-store soldiers and BB guns, and our ages, interests and destructive inclinations were very similar. The morning of the day after Christmas, Ted called and excitedly announced that he had gotten a new game, *TACTICS II*, as a gift. "You've got to see this!" he shouted, "It's got tanks, infantry, paratroopers, *written* rules and everything!" Eager to see this modern wonder, I indicated that I would be right over.

"Right over", as the terrain dictated, meant a 20-minute car ride, 45 minutes by bicycle or an hour walking using a shortcut (known only to those under the age of 20) through the woods. The car was out of the question as I was too young to drive and my parents were in their traditional post-Christmas huddle trying to determine how to pay the bills without selling me to the gypsies. The old J.C. Higgins had a flat, so by process of elimination the choice was shank's mare. On the way, I clumsily managed to slip off a fallen tree that bridged a stream and arrived with everything below the knees transformed to solid ice.

While I defrosted, Ted and his brother Kevin showed me THE GAME and explained the rules. As feeling slowly returned to my nether regions, we started to play. My, my, my, so many pieces! Yes, we're using the replacement and prisoner rules. Why do the woods catch fire every autumn? (If you've never seen it, the 1958 version of *TACTICS II* had weather cards that were shuffled every year, and one of the fall cards called for forest fires.) Night fell, there was a grudging break to chow down, and the cruel war went on. A call home netted my mother's permission to stay the night. The desultory conflict raged until bedtime, as armored divisions blitzed forward, paratroopers rained from the sky, amphibious troops hit the beaches, mountain divisions scaled the heights, and infantry divisions marched mutely to their doom.

The sun was not quite back in the sky when the grim slaughter resumed. Sometime after lunch another friend, Bruce Dzura, arrived and sat reading the rules while watching in wonder as we maneuvered inexpertly around the mapboard. Bruce was a fellow who absorbed information like a sponge, and shortly had the bad manners to say that we were interpreting several rules incorrectly. "Kevin read the rules, then explained them to us. No wonder he's winning! It's all Kevin's fault. Kill him!" After a spirited discussion, the war, then in its 20th year, came to an abrupt halt.

We promptly started another game, this one with Bruce as a participant, and this one (which included a second overnight stay) lasted only ten years before Bruce spotted yet another important misinterpreted rule that brought the curtain down on yet another indecisive Red-Blue rhubarb. Too thick to call it quits, we started a third game and finally got our act together. This time, after five years of fearful slaughter, we could actually determine a winner and a loser. (For you nosy types, Ted and I lost.) My father had finally noticed that I was missing when it snowed and the driveway and sidewalk needed shoveling. He picked me up that night, in all probability sparing me another frigid dunking in that babbling brook.

So, that was my initiation into *formal* wargaming. Over the next couple of years, more games were published, and we learned and played *GETTYS-*

*BURG, U-BOAT, D-DAY* and *CHANCELLORSVILLE* in their turn. We added some additional enthusiastic gamers (Mike Carleton, Doug Thompson and Alan Hewitt) to our cadre. We played when we had the time or whenever the weather was bad (quite frequently, in western Massachusetts). We didn't realize it at the time, but in a formless manner, we had a "wargaming club" and were cheerfully participating in a "wargaming hobby". We didn't think about the economics or implications of it at the time, or wonder if there were others like us out there. We just happened to be there, together, and wargaming was a common activity all of us enjoyed.

Believe it or not, there is a point to this whole story. In 1961, I moved to Guam and lost touch with the guys back in Ludlow. It was goodbye wargaming club and to all that, although I did "train" a gamer or two and (barely) kept my hand in. Ditto when I returned stateside in '63, although by then my interest was really starting to wane and I was seriously considering disposing of my game collection. Two or three games a year against novice opponents doth not a hobby make.

Then, shortly after moving on to college in 1964, *IT* happened. I saw my first issue of *THE GENERAL*. Wow, there *were* other people enjoying this stuff besides me! There were even names and addresses so that they could be contacted. I started a number of PBM games, met some other gamers (enough for another informal "wargaming club") and generally got back to enjoying wargaming. I've moved many times since then and, thanks to *THE GENERAL*, have never again had to face the prospect of abandoning *my* hobby due to an inability to meet other gamers. Happy Twenty-Fifth, *GENERAL!*

## Someday I'm Going to Get a Real Job

By Bruce C. Milligan

*Bruce Milligan, former editor of Avalon Hill's quarterly ALL-STAR REPLAY and head of TAHGC's sports game division, currently resides near San Mateo, California, where he is an advertising copywriter. He insists that rumors that ALL-STAR REPLAY was terminated because its readership exceeded that of THE GENERAL are "without foundation . . . I think".*

"That's the art room. This is the art board for making your galleys. This is a pica ruler. This is a blue pencil. Your first issue is slated to appear in three months."

Well, that's one way to be introduced to the wonderful world of magazine editing, and in some ways it might have been the best. Except for the fact that the right angles on my page columns always seemed to be either 94 degrees or 86 degrees I think I figured things out pretty well. And there's something fulfilling about rearranging words on a pasted-up, "camera-ready" page with an X-Acto knife that a guy with a word processor will never understand.

"So what's it really like, working for Avalon Hill?" This was the inevitable question I would always hear, once my gaming buddies found out that I was an Avalon Hill "personality". Of course what they really meant was, "So what's it really like, getting paid to play games all day?" Hey, you mean we were supposed to get paid!?

Actually, as I am sure you already know, game design is very hard work and the only reason that you can enjoy playing things such as *SQUAD LEADER*, *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER*, *Super ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER*, and *Super-Duper REALLY ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER* is because hard-working stalwarts such as Don Greenwood have devoted literally hundreds of hours (in Don's case, this should read "ten years of his life") to helping insure that the two-hour scenario you might play is enjoyable, realistic, challenging and comprehensible.

Rumors that you may have heard about some of the hi-jinks that go on at places such as Avalon Hill are, as is so often the case with rumors anywhere, almost entirely the product of someone's imagination. Thus, the snowball fights that *some* people have alleged used to occur *inside* the AH design offices never happened. And, of course, the same holds true for the summer-long squirt gun war, in which AH staff members supposedly armed themselves with two, three or more squirt guns, water cannon, water balloons, and even (according to these ridiculous rumors) a water-propelled rocket which was instead filled with Dr. Pepper as a propellant. I of all people should know this didn't happen, because some folk claim I was the intended target of the rocket. What rocket?

Was there ever really a girl living in the apartment across the street from Avalon Hill's art room who used to dance in her window, attired in no more than a garter belt and black stockings? What do you think? Did some AH

developers lock themselves in their offices and sleep all day? Did one of them take to practicing his accordion during business hours? Aw, come on.

No; in fact, life at Avalon Hill verged, if anything, on the monastic. Often was the morning I would come in at about nine to discover Randy Reed, famed *enfant terrible* of Avalon Hill, bowed prayerfully over his notes for *THE LONGEST DAY*, having been there since before dawn. Then, in another office, I might find Mick Uhl shuffling and reshuffling decks of ordinary playing cards for hours; and not—as some claimed at the time—because he was slated to perform a magic trick before the assembled membership of Baltimore's Yogi Magic Club in a few weeks time. No, Mick was simply assessing the practical effects of the "law of averages". Downstairs, Tom Shaw and Don Greenwood would be debating the finer points of one of the AH classics, games such as *THE JOURNEYS OF ST. PAUL*, *DISPATCHER* or even the legendary *BLACK MAGIC*. And, arriving at my own desk, I might be greeted by the cheerful representative from the Baltimore Typewriter Museum, come once again to make an offer for my classic, well-polished Smith Corona Bearcat.

The four years or so I spent at Avalon Hill were among the most fulfilling of my life, and now that I have a "real job", one which doesn't pay my way to ORIGINS or allow me to play softball at 6:30 on a Sunday morning after two hours of sleep, I can honestly say that I miss it. It was real work, but it was a real pleasure knowing that our work contributed to the enjoyment of thousands.

And, oh—as a charter subscriber to *The GENERAL* when it first appeared those many years ago, I do have one question for the editor: Could you tell us again how the Germans can win at *STALINGRAD* in just three turns? I still haven't quite figured it out. [Cheat.]

## Spending the Bicentennial with Avalon Hill

By Jack Greene

*Jack Greene has done quite a variety of things in the wargaming hobby over the years—the latest being as the one-man shop known as "Quarterdeck Games". Few know however that in his dark past he spent a couple of years as an employee of The Avalon Hill Game Company. These days Jack resides in California, the new mecca for wargame designers.*

By 1962, when I was thirteen, I was already hooked. *GETTYSBURG* had been bought and played; I was waiting for the next game to appear on the toy store shelves. My ultimate fantasy was actually to work for The Avalon Hill Game Company (then always simply called Avalon Hill). As with so many fantasies of a young man, I thought of it just as a fantasy—a dream that would never be fulfilled.

In 1975 I was working on a slowly dying *Conflict* magazine out in California and writing freelance articles for various magazines. ORIGINS I was going to happen that year and, frankly, that event rivals one of the other great events in wargaming—the founding of *The GENERAL* itself. (For those too young to remember, before *The GENERAL* was founded, you could buy games and maybe even play with some neighbors, but you really knew of no other fanatics about wargaming. Then *The GENERAL* appeared. With its "Opponents Wanted" ads, you suddenly found other hardcore fanatics, and thus sprung into being the ancient wargaming clubs like SPARTA, Confederation of the West, etc.)

But, to return to the subject of ORIGINS I. This would be another "event", sponsored largely by Avalon Hill, that would bring together under one roof 2000 wargamers and representatives of all the companies. In one room you could meet the guys who made the "Hobby" possible. Larry Hoffman, a wargame buddy of mine who started playing in 1958 and currently lives five miles from my home, and I made that pilgrimage to ORIGINS I in the summer of 1975, and in the process met the "movers and shakers" of the Hobby.

While attending that year I met Randy Reed, one of the most brilliant designers in the Hobby, as well as a very emotional man; he and I became good friends. Randy spoke to me about the position of a developer being open at AH, a position that Don Greenwood wanted one Mick Uhl to fill. Frankly, I was quite happy back in California and expressed little interest in the position. Mick was hired, and in retrospect, with his excellent abilities to develop games (including my *BISMARCK* 2nd Edition), I am glad he got that staff position.

But by the fall of 1975, I wanted to leave California; speaking with Randy Reed by phone, he said, "come on back". So off I went. A conference with Eric Dott and bingo, I was working full-time as a "Press Helper" upstairs from Avalon Hill, and a few months later working part-time for Avalon Hill itself after the press shut down.

So what was Avalon Hill like in 1976? Monarch Services, the firm that owns Avalon Hill, had a primary function of doing offset printing. The main plant itself was a fairly modern operation on Harford Road, while Avalon Hill itself was located in an old multi-story structure (the old "Crown Cork" building) literally on the border between downtown Baltimore and the ghetto.

Heating in this old building was limited to wall heaters. I have a classic photograph of Wes Coates, Al Bisasky and myself playtesting *BISMARCK* in the old Crown Cork marbled conference room, in heavy coats in a then unheated room! This work environment was rough on a staff that saw itself as basically white-collar professionals performing an artistic function. (Shortly after I left the company, Eric Dott got a nicer building closer downtown which functioned as the HQ for Avalon Hill until just quite recently.)

The staff in those days consisted primarily of Tom Shaw (who would tell stories of being the *only* AH employee for several years during the "Dark Ages" of wargaming in the late 1960s), Don Greenwood (probably the best developer in the Hobby ever), Randy Reed, Mick Uhl, Christie Shaw in shipping, and a few other longtime helpmates. So the staff and shipping folk were all under the same roof, though everything but the die-cutting of the counters (later even that function was brought under Monarch's umbrella) was performed either at the Crown Cork building or at the famous Harford address. There are two points here that are important. First, the staff at Avalon Hill was always a neat group of people that functioned quite well together, though with some frictions occasionally. Secondly, Tom Shaw's stories of the "Dark Ages" were such that even now, with the decline in classic paper and cardboard wargaming, we can never return to the bad old days of 1964-69 when *one new game a year* was a treat.

Speaking of the Dark Ages of wargaming, Don Greenwood was for years the lone voice calling out in the wilderness. He would talk constantly of his theory, held by no one else at the time, that wargaming was "doomed", that we were producing *too many* games, and that all this mad rush upward (as it was in 1976) would end with a crash. Ironically, it would finally occur in the mid-1980s, though not necessarily for all the reasons Don thought. I remember, one day a few years back, when I suddenly realized that Don had been right all along, he had just been ahead of his time. Yet, this new "Dark Age" is due in part to the new technology: the computer wargame. While that new arm grows, the paper and cardboard wargame will not entirely die out.

Assembly was interesting back then—a real study in efficiency. The print run in those days was 25000 units of a game, but we couldn't assemble all 25000 at once. Usually lots of 5000 would be put together at a time upstairs. A conveyor belt would move slowly along with about a dozen, mostly older, black women putting the parts in. One would put in the CRTs, one the rule-books, one the dice, etc. The finished games would then be immediately shipped or placed in the storeroom for Christy Shaw to handle.

Why, the staff at the time didn't even know how many copies of *The GENERAL* were printed. I remember one day going over to the press operator who printed the magazine and asking him how many copies of it he ran off at a time. Thus ended that mystery!

One of the great scandals at the time was who was telling SPI what games we were working on. The situation fell out like this. SPI was the new kid on the block and Jim Dunnigan talked about everything that was going on there. Avalon Hill was not run that way. The lid was kept on any new game in the works until it appeared. But Jim loved to publish gossip about Avalon Hill and regularly was getting fed news about us from "his spies". Mr. Dott would be unhappy (to put it nicely) to read about his current projects in *S&T* and thought it might all be from one source. It got to the point where employees, including yours truly, were asked point blank if they were part of "Army Group South", the code name for the source of gossip. The upshot of it was that Randy Reed set up a simple "sting" operation, and while no one individual supplied *all* the gossip to Jim, the main man was uncovered. But, of course, the problem was that playtesters and designers would come through the offices all the time and there was no way that some information could not get back to SPI from those varied sources.

One of the classic items at Avalon Hill I remember was the soft drink machine. It seems that one enterprising designer had written instructions for getting a canned drink: "1) Insert correct coin. 2) Place hand on door. 3) Open door. 4) Place hand on . . ." going on to rule number 15! Now you see where we first learned the style of rules writing.

The oddest rap about Avalon Hill in those days was that we did little historical reserach and, thus, SPI was producing "superior games". In retrospect, and having been there, I have come to a different conclusion. Because SPI produced simulations, games that were less playable and more skewed to produce certain historical results, some people were sucked in with this line. The reality, in my opinion, was that SPI did produce games that gave historical results, but the process of making these produce the proper result might have little to do with reality. Avalon Hill, instead, produced games that were fun to play but were tightly based on history in terms of what one *started* with.

To give one example of this, I remember the work done on Vance Von Borries first professional publication—*AIR ASSAULT ON CRETE/MALTA*. Randy Reed did the development for it, while I contacted some sources in Italy. We ended up with the "Italian Official History" of the planned assault on Malta, and then researched many arcane sources so as to produce a reasonably accurate order-of-battle for the game. Further, *AIR ASSAULT* is a game still played and enjoyed today, and is one of my personal favorites. SPI heard of the project and tried to steal some of Avalon Hill's thunder (a common practice by SPI) by coming out with their game on the same topic—always

aiming for a release two months before an AH game project. SPI's game was never well received and, while reflecting fair research, it played extremely poorly. Yet, if you read the press on the two games in *S&T* or *Moves* at the time, you might conclude differently.

Finally, I recall the day Randy Reed came over to me to tell of how he was going to become an "Associate Editor" to a new magazine and he thought I should sign on too. I asked, "What new magazine?" Randy replied that it was from some guy named Rodger McGowan and the magazine was going to be called *Fire & Movement*. My immediate reaction was one of, "well, I hope this is not some fly-by-night ratty looking little magazine that will fold in three issues."

So, I had the opportunity to live out a fantasy; and while I would be at Avalon Hill only for 1975-1976, it was a period that had produced many fond memories—especially of the staff at Avalon Hill. It was all good fun, good learning, and the opportunity to work on games and get paid for it! Many thanks.

## What Good Is The GENERAL?

By Richard Hamblen

*Richard Hamblen is one of the most respected game designers and developers in the hobby, polishing his skills when he was employed for over a decade by Avalon Hill. Today, he continues to design innovative games free-lance—his most recent being MERCHANT OF VENUS. Second only to Don Greenwood, Richard helped make this magazine the leader in the field by drafting dozens of articles for its pages and setting standards that many contributors still fall short of. He resides with his wife Carol, once a secretary for TAHGC, in Baltimore.*

What good is The *GENERAL*, anyway? This question has been asked by designers and customers who would rather play games than read or write about them. They would rather discover their own strategies than read replays or strategy articles, and if they want to learn about a game's subject they would prefer a book than a history article. They seem to think that The *GENERAL*'s usefulness is limited to answering questions, issuing news releases, and providing an interesting variant now and then.

This attitude is understandable, but it misses a crucial point: The *GENERAL* is a special forum where the game can be used to explain its subject matter, and the subject matter can be used to explain the game. A competent game design is a uniquely coherent summary of its subject, based on thorough research with inconsistencies and trivialities removed, and with all important features organized into a system of relationships. Such a game sheds light on its subject and the subject sheds light on the game, but the connections between design and subject are hidden in the framework of the game. Since The *GENERAL* discusses both the game and its subject, it can expose these hidden connections to provide insights into the subject and into the play of the game. This is what makes The *GENERAL* uniquely valuable.

These hidden connections are valuable for a variety of reasons. Discussing why some aspects of a subject were included in a design while others were not clarifies the importance of each aspect. For example, the map of *VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC* is limited to the areas the Japanese could supply during the period when they had an effective air force, because of the fundamental importance of logistics and air power. Usually, the meaning of the values in a game is incomprehensible until they are explained to the players: the fire-power values in *ARAB-ISRAELI WARS* are a combination of weapons capability, crew proficiency (which helps the Israelis), and ammunition stowage (which hurts the Arabs).

Discussing how the interactions in a game model its subject matter provides insights into the subject, such as the article that explained how the POC values in *VITP* reflect the importance of each area to each nation. Similarly, game strategies can provide insight into the historic strategies described in the subject matter; articles about *BULL RUN* can compare the different avenues of attack that McDowell and Beauregard considered, because the game includes all of these avenues. Conversely, the interactions and strategies in the subject matter can suggest tactics for the game. A discussion of combat and leadership in the age of linear tactics could suggest effective ways to deploy leaders, brigade markers and artillery in *BULL RUN*, because the game is designed to model those tactics.

Game research is unusually detailed, so it often uncovers information that is missed by traditional studies of the subject. This information should be explained lest it be mistaken for some kind of error. For example, gunfire in *GUNSLINGER* tends to miss because it is based on a study of actual western gunfights, which contradict the expectations raised by modern weapons and western fiction. Similarly, shell weight, accuracy and rate of fire make the *USS Iowa* deadlier than the *IJN Yamato* in *VITP*, despite the impressive size of the *Yamato*'s guns. Finally, careful study of eyewitness reports for *BULL RUN* revealed several fords and units (Heaton's battery and the 1st Virginia Cavalry) that are overlooked even by respectable histories.

Game research is also comprehensive, so it turns up interesting information that cannot be used in the game but that can be explained in The *GENERAL*. The *GENERAL* has discussed the British and Allied ships that were left out of *VITP* and the nearby units that didn't quite make it to *GETTYSBURG*. It has compared the battles of *CHANCELLORSVILLE* and Fredericksburg, to spotlight the differences that occurred in the few months between the battles. It has looked at the planning behind the historic *RAID ON ST. NAZAIRE* and the many options considered then.

An article in The *GENERAL* can have any or all of the above benefits, regardless of who writes the article. The designer can write about what he was trying to do, and other writers can write about what the game actually does. The *GENERAL* offers these benefits even if the game is flawed, because it provides a forum for pointing out the flaws. In fact, it provides these benefits even if the articles themselves contain occasional errors, because later articles can then correct the errors.

This brings us to the last, and best, benefit that The *GENERAL* offers. In The *GENERAL* we gamers can exchange our views of the games and their subjects. By sharing our knowledge, we can learn from each other and improve both our understanding and our enjoyment of our common hobby (in case you didn't know, we designers are hooked on playing games, too). The games provide us with the hobby, but The *GENERAL* is the place where we can share our hobby with each other.

So, what good is The *GENERAL*? Well, it is where the connections between a game and its subject matter are explained, increasing both our knowledge and our enjoyment. It is the forum where we can talk to each other and share our insights. And it is the focus that magnifies our hobby from something we can share with a few people to something we can share with thousands. And that's without even mentioning the history articles, strategy articles, replays, questions and answers, opponent's wanted ads, news releases, and—now and then—an interesting variant.

## Retired GENERALS

By Bruno Sinigaglio

*Bruno Sinigaglio is one of the premier players in our wargaming hobby, having long been near the top of the AREA Top 50 and having claimed victory in more tournaments than anyone I can think of. His association with Avalon Hill and The GENERAL goes all the way back to Volume 6, when his byline first appeared in these pages. He was also the moving force behind the revision that became known as BULGE '81. Bruno today labors as an advisor to the U.S. military, but still finds time to remain active in the hobby despite frequent moves (even to such "ends of the earth" as Panama and Alaska).*

Unfortunately, time flies. I can remember well my introduction to wargaming as a college freshman in 1963. I was soundly defeated by the Germans in *D-DAY*, and then I was crushed by the Allies in the next game. How do you play this here game!?! Well, The *GENERAL* has answered that question, and many more, for me. As I look back 25 years, I can see only one publication that has weathered the storms of time and economics in the wargaming world. This bulwark is, of course, The *GENERAL*.

Things have changed a bit since 1963. With this in mind, I thought it might be interesting to recapture the flavor of issues long past. Let's take a quick tour of the first few volumes of The *GENERAL*. For my contemporaries, I hope a bit of shared nostalgia is in order. For the "Young Guard", I hope this trip will give you a glimpse of wargaming in its infancy. Of course, The *GENERAL* is the only medium through which we can make such a trip.

### Volume 1 (May 1964—March 1965)

The first issue of The *GENERAL* was eagerly awaited by the wargaming public. Most of the articles were about *AFRIKA KORPS* and *D-DAY*. About six hundred subscribers were listed in that first issue, and the first editor made his appearance—Tom Shaw (however, nowhere in the issue did this fact appear in print). The first contest was a problematical German offensive in *AFRIKA KORPS*; the winner was one William Sayre of Rosedale, NY.

The early *GENERALs* featured "regional editors" from across the USA and Canada. Lou Zocchi ("Sage Sarge") and Victor Madeja are but two whose names are well recognized even 25 years later. [Editor's Note: See Messers. Zocchi and Madeja's pieces elsewhere in this issue.] Perhaps the most astute comment to appear in Volume 1 was penned by the "Sage Sarge" in #6 with his observation on *MIDWAY* that, "The only time I open my mouth is when I'm changing feet."

During the period of Volume 1, the games *MIDWAY* and *BATTLE OF THE BULGE* were first introduced to the readership, along with the American heroes C. Wade McClusky and Anthony ("Nuts") McAulliffe. These names contributed much to gaining respectability and pride for Avalon Hill, and for wargaming overall. However, some things were not well received, especially the Supply Roll Table variant for *AFRIKA KORPS* in #2. Wargaming was still in its infancy.

# The GENERAL as Literature

By Bruce J. Degi

The first Series Replay appeared in #5, with the Germans trouncing the Allies in *AFRIKA KORPS*. A *STALINGRAD* replay followed in #6. The first mention of official PBM kits is found in #6, and suddenly new vistas opened for wargamers. The names of many well-known wargaming personalities first saw light in this beginning. The admittedly incomplete list includes such luminaries as Al Nofi, Bob Beyma, Jim Dunnigan, Jack Greene, Don Greenwood, George Phillies, Larry Pinski and Dale Garbutt. Many of the current traditions can be traced back to the first volume year of *The GENERAL*.

Above, I made mention of some of the leading hobby lights whose names appeared in these early issues. But they weren't drafting articles, they were looking for players. For instance, in #5 this ad appeared in the "Opponents Wanted" columns:

"Undeclared *TACTICS II* player needs worthwhile opponent. Contact Donald Greenwood." Obviously, Don's glory years have long passed, although he did make a strong comeback in the *AH FOOTBALL STRATEGY* league in the 1970s.

And this one made print in issue #6:

"Will not guarantee victory or defeat, but will assure a hard fought, well-planned game of *DD*, *STAL*, *AK*, etc. Call or write Jim Dunnigan."

In the same issue, this rather unusual ad appeared in the "Opponents Wanted" section:

"San Franciscanians and Peninsularians Rally!!! The dread wretches of the East Bay HQ, lead by the Purple Clod, are about to attempt the destruction of the Peninsularian Empire. Resist!! Learn how you can destroy the heathen mobs of the east, communistic led, by writing to our benevolent majesty, KING Jack Greene the First. The Great Cause Calls."

Last, I can't resist mentioning some of the weird article titles from Volume 1: "Plan Red Phooey" (by Vic Phillips); "Sage Sarge Sez" (Lou Zocchi); "Long Romps" (Al Nofi); and "Operation Stretch" (Ed Birsan).

## Volume 2 (May 1965—March 1966)

During the second year of publishing for *The GENERAL*, *GUADALCANAL* and its "step reduction CRT" was introduced to the hungry wargaming world. The regional editor concept died a quick death. Medical research was conducted at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds using *D-DAY* and drugs. *DIPLOMACY* and *Nuclear War* were touted in these pages, even though published by rival companies. Numerous wargaming clubs were founded, and announced in *The GENERAL*. For some reason, *BATTLE OF THE BULGE* articles abounded; and Jim Dunnigan penned his first wargame article (on *BULGE* of course).

And look at some of the other names that first appeared in Volume 2: Randy Reed, Richard Gutenkunst, Henry Bodenstadt and H.M. Levy. The "Avalon Hill Intercontinental Kriegsspiel Society" (AHKS) was conceived in issue #1, and details delivered in #6; Henry Bodenstadt was at the time the prime mover in this successful organization—which functions to this day. Speaking of famous folk, Pete Rose finished tenth in Contest #10; was this Pete's rookie year?

In the second issue of the year, the 2nd Edition *D-DAY* rules were introduced with the ill-conceived Strategic Bombing rules. The chance for a German win became near impossible. Meanwhile, TAHGC promoted Warner Brothers' *Bulge* movie, which must rank as one of the most ahistorical masterpieces of all time. Richard Gutenkunst's was the very first published complaint about the fictitious OB for *BULGE*.

Remember *DUSK*, *SPECTRE*, *SPARTA* and *AGGRESSOR HOMELAND* and all the hype! Those were the days—I guess. And of course long-time readers must remember some classic articles: "How to Lose at Bulge" (Myron Brundage); "Home-Brewed Games" (Tom Shaw); "Operation Gulp" (Lou Zocchi); "Terror at Tilly" (Don Greenwood); and "Beat Your Chest" (Barry Branch).

## Volume 3 (May 1966—March 1967)

During the third year (who would have thought it would survive so long), *The GENERAL* increased its size from 12 to 16 pages, and colored covers were introduced. The last war hero to plug Avalon Hill games, Colonel Donald Dickson, endorsed *GUADALCANAL*. The "Avalon Hill Philosophy, Part 1" appeared. Some new names popped up for the first time: Dave Williams, Joe Angiolillo, Dave Balkulski, Gary Gygax, Gary Charbonneau, Russell Powell and Fred Schater. And a new competitor, *Strategy & Tactics*, was introduced to the readership and given a five-star rating.

Among the best titles: "Helpful Hints for Hopeless Oafs" (Tom Shaw); "Operation Ungawa" (Eric Shimer); "St. Peter Wins PBM Tournament" (Don Greenwood); and "Alas, Realism" (Lou Zocchi). Oh yeah—an amazing *STALINGRAD* tactic made its first showing. He may not have been the first to do it, but he was the first to describe it. Richard Shagrin explained how to retreat behind enemy lines in *STALINGRAD* by blocking a rearward retreat with stacks of your own units. The "Rules Lawyer" had been born.

Well, those are my memories. Things were different in the beginning. The polish was not to be applied for quite awhile, but to us hard-core gamers, *The GENERAL* was what we wanted and waited for. It still is.

*Bruce Degi's subscription to The GENERAL begins with Volume 4 and his authorship of articles for The GENERAL with Volume 17. He originated the popular "Squad Leader Clinic" series in Vol. 17, No. 6. He may be best recognized as the prime author/compiler of The GENERAL Index, published in 1980, which covered the first 16 years of the magazine.*

I was delighted to be asked by Rex Martin to write a short piece for the 25th anniversary of *The GENERAL*. Over the years I have subscribed to many, many different magazines in our hobby, but I have complete collections of only two—*F&M* and *The GENERAL*. The latter has not just complimented wargaming over the years, it has, in many respects, made the hobby what it is.

Let me explain. A five-year-old child playing with his (or her) toy soldiers in the backyard sandbox is not the same as the 35-year-old parent playing *SQUAD LEADER* on the kitchen table. But why? Most answers you could come up with would not satisfy the most ardent critic—cost, motivation, etc. The only legitimate explanation for wargaming not being a childish playing at toy soldiers is that wargaming has a "literature". Intelligent (for the most part) participants in the hobby have written intelligent (for the most part) articles that have been published in a formal medium for others to read, ponder, disagree or agree with, and generally keep as reference material. That creates a common bond, a community of gamers, and that is what makes the hobby legitimate. Absence of such a literature would render even *SQUAD LEADER* as nothing more than mere play.

Didn't realize *The GENERAL* played such a critical role, huh? It does. And, in fact, it is the reference facet of this cornerstone of the hobby that I'd like to say just a few more words about. Obviously, timely articles on games I like to play right now are useful. But there's more. An early feature of *The GENERAL* was the rules questions and answers column—a feature that I still most often turn to first upon receiving a new issue. The folks at Avalon Hill not only publish games but, unlike publishers of mass-market games, they actually play them—and so keep everyone current on changes or corrections.

Less obvious, but equally important, is the value of the articles on games I'm not currently playing. My collection of board games has grown over the past twenty-five years to almost one thousand! Of those, I probably play twenty or thirty on a regular basis. Every now and then, however, I discover (or more often, re-discover) a game I haven't played in years. A good case in point happened after the release of *THUNDER AT CASSINO*. That game awoke long dormant memories of *STORM OVER ARNHEM*. A quick glance at the rules, and a quick flip through the articles and Q&A on *SOA* from past issues of *The GENERAL* and I was back into the system like I'd been playing it all along.

That's what I celebrate in this *GENERAL*. The philosophical musings, the advertisements for new products, the contests, and what-not all make *The GENERAL* an exciting and enjoyable publication. But it's the accumulation of twenty-five years worth of articles and errata that makes possible a tangible and, for the gamer, a most useful history of wargaming that simply has not been equalled by anything else—nor will it ever be. My *GENERALs* occupy as prominent a spot on the reference shelf of my home library as does anything else.

After such lofty words of praise, however, I can't resist the impulse to offer two mild criticisms as *The GENERAL* starts its next quarter-century. First, I was able to find quickly all the articles and such on *SOA* because I maintain a complete index to *The GENERAL* on note cards. To be useful as a reference work, you must be able to find the information you're looking for, thus the publication of *The GENERAL Index* many years ago. I have since offered to update that index but was told by your illustrious editor (yes, Rex, you did) not to bother because he was going to do it. He did in 1984, but we now have four years worth of material not indexed since that publication. If you too agree that the primary value of *The GENERAL* is in this establishment of a useful history, please write Rex. Perhaps the management will listen if the cries are loud enough.

I preface this final criticism with the admission that, as some of you have already suspected, I am an aged curmudgeon. I do not like the recent inclusions of such as the "G.I. Jane" pictures. They seem to me greatly out of place, though again I realize that money—not philosophy—is driving this decision. Some of you may remember the problems *The GENERAL* had with the so-called "Nazi glorification" clubs in early issues. That was an indication of benign but very real pre-pubescent fantasies that the hobby had to grow out of. And it did. Now a different pubescent fantasy seems to have generated excitement for a different generation (the move from death to sex is significant, I think). I guess I'll just have to wait for the hobby to out-grow this one also.

I think it's a requirement in a retrospective publication to also muse on the future. I have no doubts that twenty-five years from now there will still be an Avalon Hill *GENERAL*, and that I will still be reading it. Let's see, 2013 will probably be the year of publication for the Pacific Theater module for *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER*. Yes, I'd better keep that subscription going.

# First Impressions for 25 Years

By Robert Medrow

*The fall of 1988 marks the end of Bob's 30th year in this hobby, stretching back to his purchase of TACTICS II at a photo shop in Champaign in 1958—just as he was starting his senior year in college. Today, he's an associate professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Missouri-Rolla, married and father of two fine sons. During the past 12 years, he has been involved with the playtesting of some 15 games; as a result of his work on the second of these, the original SQUAD LEADER, he began writing for The GENERAL. Since then, his ten articles have totaled some 100000 words and he has been honored with the Editor's Choice Award three times. Quite frankly, I can't imagine what we would have done without him.*

Ever since I began writing for The GENERAL, I've longed for the opportunity to sound off on things in general, and envied the way editors get to express themselves. Well, this is my opportunity. Rex Martin, your kindly editor, said that I could write what I wished—so long as it dealt with The GENERAL, the Avalon Hill Game Company, or the hobby. However, I've found this to be a lot harder than I thought it would be.

But part of it is easy. I'm convinced that, without The GENERAL, there'd be no TAHGC, and nothing like the diverse adventure gaming hobby that now exists. If you haven't been around wargaming for as long as I have, that might sound like an extreme statement. If, as some historians do, you believe in historical inevitability, you probably won't agree. But I hold to the idea that people, and the institutions they create, do have an impact. To show you how I've come to this view, let me share some of what's happened to me during my relationship with this magazine.

My first issue was Volume 2, Number 6—although I didn't become a regular subscriber until Volume 6, Number 3. That first issue is one I'll always treasure since it supplied the order of battle information for each of the five neutral BLITZKRIEG countries. Among my few recreational activities during the long days of working on my Ph.D. dissertation were many solitary games of BLITZKRIEG, including those additional units that I'd manufactured with such care. But, more importantly, in that first issue there's a letter from Don Greenwood and an article by Jim Dunnigan.

In order for a hobby to exist there must be a means of linking like-minded people together. In the beginning, in the boardgaming area, there was the GENERAL. Greenwood and Dunnigan were there because that's where the action was. In what was then a much smaller hobby, there was no other forum connecting so many of the faithful. Oh, there soon were other publications, but in those early days none of them had The GENERAL's circulation—and all but one of them have vanished.

The first magazine I subscribed to besides The GENERAL was Don Greenwood's *Panzerfaust*. That was the fault of The GENERAL. In the old days, the "Infiltrator's Report" column was filled with mention of various gaming groups and amateur publications. Spartan International and the International Federation of Wargaming (IFW) had their publications and various individuals produced others such as *D-Elim*, *Der Lage*, *Gamer's Guide*, and *Strategy & Tactics*. What tipped the scales in Don's favor was my purchase of a copy of *Panzerfaust* at the IFW-sponsored convention in Lake Geneva, an event I had learned about in the pages of The GENERAL. In addition to helping me start down a path which has caused me to support many magazines, that IFW convention gave me my first chance to appear in The GENERAL. In Volume 7, Number 4 there's a picture of part of the crowd. That's me, right there in the smoke cloud!

Being a "house magazine" (and we'll get to that topic later), The GENERAL has never carried paid advertising. However, and of enormously more value, it has supported those fledgling endeavors by making their existence known. Of those publications I mentioned, only *S&T* grew up to become a major force in the hobby, under the direction of that same Jim Dunnigan who once wrote for The GENERAL. I know that I subscribed to *S&T* because I read about it in The GENERAL, and so did most of the early subscribers whom I've met.

My own, vastly more modest, involvement with the creative side of the hobby came about because of The GENERAL. In 1976 I saw an ad for *RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN* in what was then Avalon Hill's "mail-order only line". I ordered it, played it, loved it, but found enough problems with the rules that I was moved to write a letter with several pages of questions. By then, Don Greenwood was working for TAHGC, and he answered the questions and offered me the opportunity to become involved with playtesting games. Like they say, the rest is history.

I don't imagine that anyone else's story is close to mine, but there are a lot of us for whom The GENERAL provided the first clue that there really was a community of like-minded individuals to whom these were more than just another kind of game.

As I mentioned earlier, I've subscribed to (and even written for) a number of other magazines. In terms of both its commitment to quality and the quality of the result, The GENERAL is unparalleled. As a professional journal it lacks many pretty "pictures". But its article illustrations surpass those of any other magazine. It is, from time to time, derided as a "house magazine"; however,

without this limitation, it would have been unable to sustain the level of its articles and quality. Knowledgeable articles are a hallmark of this magazine, and the scope of TAHGC's current line is such as to make it difficult to insure that what appears is of value.

For some pretty obvious reasons, the stated policy of The GENERAL is that it does not contain reviews of either TAHGC games nor anyone else's. Having written a number of game reviews for other magazines, I know that this is true in regard to the traditional type of review. However, if you want to know what a game is really like, a "Series Replay" does the job best. Such articles are surely sought by other magazines, but are rarely submitted and even more rarely published. For author, editor and artist they represent an enormous amount of work. But, clearly, they're worth it. If, for example, you have never heard of *DIPLOMACY* before reading Rex Martin's recent article, when you were done you'd know whether or not that game was for you.

I have worked with both Don Greenwood and Rex Martin. For those of you who have not had this pleasure, it is your loss. This magazine reflects a concern for one's work that money alone cannot buy. "Dedication" is one of those words we seem to be uncomfortable with, but it is their dedication that has produced a magazine without equal. Thanks, guys, for lots of things—but especially for changing my lifetime subscription label so that it no longer says that I have just 47 issues left. I hope to be around for a lot more than that.

## Wargame Bonding

By Alan Emrich

*Alan Emrich began gaming at the age of thirteen in 1972. Two years later he was an established writer for various wargame magazines, and would go on to help found the OrcCon game convention in January 1977. Through these conventions, he has remained an important figure in the hobby. Although Alan was an "SPI brat" of the 1970s, in 1984 he founded Diverse Talents, Inc. and he has served as publisher of F&M and Battleplan. He was convention manager for ORIGINS '86 in Los Angeles—acknowledged one of the best run in the series. Premier convention organizer, he is still, when he finds the time, an avid player of THIRD REICH, RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN and EMPIRES IN ARMS.*

I've only been in the hobby about half as long as The GENERAL, but I remember the earliest wargaming joke from my teens being, "If you want to take 'the Hill', call The GENERAL!" (This joke was, of course, much funnier to neophyte wargamers in junior high school and does not translate well to grognards.) Even in my early days of wargaming, when virtually every game I bought was through the mail (like most of us from my generation of wargaming, the mailman was quite annoyed with me because each Saturday—and every day in the summer—I sat with intense anticipation on the porch at 10:30 AM waiting for my new games to arrive), Avalon Hill games meant "quality" while the other companies only offered quantities of diverse titles. To give you some idea about the mystique of wargaming for myself and my "little friends", when we found a bunch of back issues of *Playboy* and a 1958 edition of *TACTICS II* hidden among the junk in a neighbor's garage, we ignored the magazines and promptly borrowed the game. (Well, we might have taken a quick peek at the magazines, but the rest of the weekend we spent playing *TACTICS II*.) One must imagine these junior wargamers turned rules lawyers, fervently debating the vague supply rules to the first edition of *AFRIKA KORPS*.

In high school, when other lads were off in pursuit of a rousing game of softball (and a good opportunity to show off to the girls), we gaming buddies would head over to one of our houses and try the latest variants and scenarios found in The GENERAL. Misunderstood from the beginning, our non-wargaming friends would (only sometimes) jokingly refer to us as "wargamers" after hearing us discuss campaigns during lunch or seeing us draw up perfect plans in the library. In fact, as humor among ourselves (which today might be called "wargamer bonding"), when we played wargames we were "mongering" and all-night sessions were dubbed "mongerthons". (Sophomoric, to be sure, but that's exactly what we were—sophomores in high school.) We would even execute disloyal dice for rolling cowardly numbers in the face of the enemy; this was usually conducted by a large hammer smashing the die to pieces at dawn. We were a fraternity of fun-loving gamers, and every new issue of The GENERAL was an instant topic for discussion.

Regardless of how much you might feel that youth is wasted on the young, wargaming certainly is not. When I was fifteen I wrote my first wargaming article for Don Greenwood's old magazine, *Campaign*, then edited by Don Lowry (one Jack Greene wrote the other feature piece that issue). Naturally, it was my doctoral thesis on *THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN*, which began by asking the insightful question, "Is This Game Really Necessary?" The article won two awards, which was nice, and really encouraged me to do more for my hobby and not just with it. ("Ask not what your hobby can do for you, but what you can do for your hobby . . .")

If getting a first article published was a milestone, no less important would be attending a first wargame convention. For me, this was GLASC I—the

Greater Los Angeles Simulations Convention held at Cal State Northridge, where two game clubs still meet regularly to this day. An organizer from that convention told a gaming buddy of mine, John Myers (whom I met through an "Opponents Wanted" ad which I placed in *The GENERAL*) that he should run a similar wargaming convention down in Orange County. John enlisted my help, and *OrcCon* was born. Since then I have assisted with or run over thirty game conventions (we currently run four per year in the LA/Orange County area which average around 2000 attendance each). It seems that I was a born salesman and a natural auctioneer, so my talents were found to be well suited to the task of running game conventions. I've even written a book on the subject for GAMA (the Game Manufacturers' Association).

Naturally, at game conventions, many Avalon Hill games get played. Someone early suggested that our big tournament should be "The Avalon Hill 500", which later evolved into our longest continuous regular event—*The Avalon Hill Classics Tournament*. Our convention listings in *The GENERAL* helped put us on the map, and Avalon Hill games have kept the gamers coming back to each and every show. It should be noted that Avalon Hill has what we at DTI consider to be the best "track record" for supporting new game conventions with prizes that we have ever seen. We the hobbyists owe much to Avalon Hill, not only for their support of local wargaming conventions everywhere, but for their founding of ORIGINS, the *National Game Convention*. By unifying our hobby around a national convention, we have moved from a "silly pastime" to a serious hobby and industry.

While I've tried to quell the fears of my seniors in the Adventure Gaming industry that this "upstart kid from California" was, in fact, a representative of the "next generation" of gamers who would one day be running this industry, it has not always been easy. While most of the industry leadership today is in the "over 40s" age group, I am a brat from the "under 30s" generation of gaming. Thus, I had to begin all my relationships with them a victim, to varying degrees, of a generation gap. The positive side to all this was the mass of almost "parental" advice I have received from many of the persons writing columns for this very issue of *The GENERAL*. To all of these great people who helped me to get where I am in the game industry today, I would like to say "thanks". (My parents, however, would like to tell you that you've ruined their plans for their son's life as a doctor or lawyer.) So while I have enough of my colleagues' (gamers and co-workers in the industry) respect to keep my conventions well attended, magazines bought, articles read and to serve as Vice President of GAMA, the thread that has run through it all has been my association with *The GENERAL* magazine.

The biggest noise I ever made in *The GENERAL* was my article "Total War" (Vol. 21, No. 3), which consisted of well-thought out revisions and major changes to *THIRD REICH*. At the time, the fourth edition had been out for a while, and some of the concepts were instantly taken as nigh sacrilege. To the true 3R devotee, however, the points I raised were seen as valid, and my solutions good. It was on the basis of that article that the 3R *Workshop* was formed (its members consisting of the hardest core *THIRD REICH*ers to ever appear in the pages of *The GENERAL*). This group has ever since been working on what we call the "5th Edition" *THIRD REICH*, with years of constant playtesting and development going into the project. We anticipate that in these very pages of *The GENERAL* (see the insert survey in Vol. 24, No. 4), Avalon Hill will feedback the idea among you, brother readers, as to the worth of producing this next generation of their classic game. This shows, yet again, that my gaming destiny always finds *The GENERAL* at every nexus.

In closing, just so everyone doesn't go around thinking that life in the gaming industry is a bed of roses, I'll leave this note from a long-time reader of *The GENERAL* to its Managing Editor:

Dear Rex,

I like wargame variants and new scenarios. The strategies I can figure out for myself, but new ideas for my old games are always welcome. See what you can do. Your buddy,

Alan Emrich

## Lounge Lizards at War

By Craig F. Posey

*Craig Posey came to our hobby when he discovered the original GETTYSBURG game in 1960, and has been "with" Avalon Hill ever since. He has been primarily involved in the PBM scene, and has lately discovered the joys of gamemastered multi-player games. For some years now, he has also found the time to be one of our most prolific authors.*

We happy few will never know the thrill of pacing the quarterdeck of a '74 as she clears for action. It would be safe to say that we never served with Caesar at Alesia, let alone with the Tenth Legion. Perhaps some of us can trace our ancestry back to the forces that fought with or against Napoleon, many to the Civil War period, and almost all of us to the Second World War. Yet, few of us can lay claim to ever having participated in any but the Vietnam

conflict. Still, we readers have managed, vicariously, to—on one level or another—participate in all of these conflicts, as well as many others. Some folk do so through the reading of diaries, histories or fiction; but our select group has chosen to approach the problem primarily through historical simulations . . . wargames. With the advent of the commercially viable and mass-produced wargame, a new hobby was born, from which we were spawned.

What catalyst creates a wargamer from out the general public, setting him apart from society—and to some extent condemning him in the eyes of that society? First and foremost seems to be an interest in military history; and unless things have changed quite a bit, an interest in the Second World War seems paramount (though I came into the hobby when the Civil War centennial had just begun to fester). From this starting point comes the reading of books on the period and, if he is lucky, the prospective wargamer receives a game as a present or meets someone looking for an opponent. We must remember that this is still an elitist hobby—and that distributors of wargames, as well as well-advertised clubs and gamers groups, are still rare.

Once the gamer becomes properly introduced (addicted?), we generally can discern their abilities in the hobby fairly rapidly. Why? It seems to take an above average intelligence level to stay with the hobby and to stay abreast of the changing tide of technology and complexity that has crept into wargame design over the past thirty years. Those who have been with the hobby from the beginning realize that these changes have, themselves, been a type of "programmed instruction" for those of us who grew with it.

Remembering that the '50s and '60s were the heyday of *Monopoly* and *canasta*, it would be difficult to imagine *ASL* as a full-blown game system succeeding in that time frame; yet *TACTICS II* and *GETTYSBURG* melded well with the society and its level of sophistication. While the society of gamers was less sophisticated in those halcyon days, we were no less receptive to innovation—and that is what these games were! As we grew with Avalon Hill, we both suffered growing pains. From the standpoint of the players, the biggest problem was always the lack of selection. This scarcity of titles was, in itself, not such a bad thing as we became "experts" at every offering. For the company, the major problem was a change in the production and distribution system upon which they had relied heretofore—one they overcame in sterling fashion. The result was to be an improved company, and eventually an improved product mix.

While the '60s were the days of the "Classics", this was also an explosive period of innovation. We have only to look back at some of the now defunct titles to see where we have been. Perhaps two of the more interesting offerings were *1914* and *GUADALCANAL*, both of which met early ends—but not without leaving their marks upon the industry and us. Both of these systems contained early attempts to address the issue of partial elimination through the usage of step-reduction. *1914* solved the problem by the use of replacement counters, while *GUADALCANAL* approached the same problem by requiring the maintenance of side records. The concept of step-reduction did not die with these games; it has remained, though never to achieve popular status. Currently it still manifests itself in *BLITZKRIEG* and, in a modified form, *RUSSIAN FRONT*.

Still, we did not seem to be willing to accept all the changes Avalon Hill brought us, and these and others dropped by the board. One such was the second edition of *GETTYSBURG* which contained a more complete OB and the use of hexagons, in keeping with the new trend. It soon ceased to exist, being replaced by a slightly modified version of the original, which lasted until being replaced by *GETTYSBURG '77*. Now I hear they are releasing yet a new *GETTYSBURG* to take its place in the pantheon.

Possibly the most important and lasting contribution to come out of the '60s was this periodical, a magazine noted more for its irregular schedule than for its periodicity. Still, it allowed our small elitist group to gain strength through mutual communication. Prior to its advent, only the appearance of new offerings in stores and the annual receipt of advertising literature straight from the company alerted us that a larger public existed who were playing these games. We had access to only a limited cache of opponents. With *The GENERAL* came the realization as to our numbers . . . we were not alone! There were actually others across the nation, as weird as we! It also became the proving ground for others, and by giving a forum for *players*, it spawned new companies and proved that the hobby of wargaming was viable and capable of growth.

While those of us in our late thirties and early forties (yes, some of us are that old) will continue for some years to come to support the hobby, only the influx of "fresh meat" that *The GENERAL* brings will enable it to continue to thrive. As in the Old Guard, it is up to those with the years of experience behind them to help find and foster the youth that will eventually replace us. *The GENERAL* gives us the vehicle to do this—as authors, as players, as readers.



# Fueling the Future

By Jim Burnett

*Jim Burnett has been a gamer for 30 years or so, and a wargamer since news of our hobby penetrated the hinterlands twenty years ago. He enjoys all types of gaming, and specializes in World War II tactical simulations (ASL, UP FRONT, AIR FORCE, SUBMARINE, etc.). He also enjoys sports and multi-player political games. When not playing games, he trains for ultra-marathon bicycling races and the "Race Across America". In his spare time he earns a living as an electronic/software design engineer and takes care of a wife, a house, and two cats.*

Happy 25th Birthday to The *GENERAL*. Considering the state of the wargaming hobby over the past 25 years, this is indeed an enviable record of outstanding service to the Avalon Hill customer. We readers can but hope that there will be many more.

Reflections on a hobby can be equivalent to the musings of the senile on the "Good Ol' Days". But, as with anything we care about, we must be able to look both backward . . . and ahead. Just as for anything that reaches 25, the years have added a certain maturity to the hobby in general, and with it to this magazine. I first became a subscriber in its ninth year, and the intervening years have seen it grow from a 16-page issue with a few line drawings and black-and-white photos to a full-blown 64-page magazine with inserts and full-color illustrations. The articles have progressed from the one-page "perfect plans" to detailed historical and analytical articles on an Avalon Hill line of 200 games. Our hobby, too, has grown.

There have been, over the past couple of years, a tendency to decry the glut of games on the wargaming market, to criticize the increasing complexity, and to endlessly debate the merits of playability versus simulation in what are, after all, games. In a certain sense, all these accusations are true. But, let me point out, that doesn't mean these trends are bad.

Product lines have grown to an extent that the person who can boast of owning every title has become almost non-existent. We must remember, however, that the sales of each game are what fuels the research and development necessary to produce the next one. Certainly, the consumers voting with their dollars are what drives the market, and the popular titles will increase in numbers to the detriment of those less favored, but the bottom line is that every purchase of a game (which may be used only for study or collection) is still an assistance to the production of a future product (which may turn out to number among the most played). This is especially true of the more complex, and therefore more costly-to-produce, games.

Complexity, then, is the second major issue to confront the industry today. We "old-timers" remember the days of *AFRIKA KORPS*, *MIDWAY* and *STALINGRAD* when all games had about the same degree of difficulty involved (and none too tough at that). The current list of games available runs the complexity gamut from *NAVAL WAR* to *EMPIRES IN ARMS*. I cannot but help think that this alone is of great benefit to all players. The list of games currently available from Avalon Hill that are suitable for beginning players is at least twenty titles long by my last count. This should be noted by those who claim there is no way to introduce new players into our hobby. At the same time, there must be the *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER* challenge for the experienced buffs, as well as a full spectrum of titles for the consumer who wishes to have a choice of period, scale and theater—as well as the ability to play board-games, miniatures, computer games, role-playing, sports or family games.

The game market has also been driven by quality in graphics, presentation and rules. There is a world of difference in the quality of a *STALINGRAD* of yesterday and an *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER* of today. *ASL* is surely worth its price in graphics and rules commentary systems alone. The *GENERAL* also has been a force in the progress of quality in the market. Even though it is a common pastime to criticize imperfections and shortcomings in games, the pages of this magazine are replete with errata, new scenarios, and variants to double the usefulness and enjoyment of all the Avalon Hill titles. To examine the value of this, consider where and how newspapers and television display their mistakes. And newer editions of rulebooks for popular games allow the buyer to obtain an updated game at little or no cost. Some of the favorite older topics such as *BULGE* and *THIRD REICH* have been recently updated and improved. At Avalon Hill, they don't "publish and forget" and The *GENERAL* plays a key role.

The game "system" concept pioneered by Avalon Hill has been of great benefit to the consumer. The *SL/ASL* system alone has given us ten games with over 100 scenarios to play, with only an incremental learning process with each new gamette. This allows we gamers to spend more time playing and less time learning new rules sets. We always should remember that the "Classics" were themselves essentially a game system, with only a very small number of differences between *AFRIKA KORPS*, *STALINGRAD*, *WATER-LOO* and *D-DAY*. This fact alone contributed much to their early popularity, and later caused problems with the advent of "simulation consciousness." The difference in today's games lies in the fact that systems are used where there is commonality and integrity in the material, rather than an attitude that this is the way all games are played. It also allows us to judge the effective-

ness of simulations, since it may be contended that within its period and scale, any system must be universal in application or it possesses a serious design flaw.

This naturally leads us to the confrontation between playability and simulation quality. This can be, but need not, a problem. Too often, the perceived differentiation is read as "simple" versus "complex". A look at some of the current games in the Avalon Hill line will serve as my counter-illustration. There is little doubt that *ASL* and *EIA* must rate high in both complexity and simulation value. Both are also very playable, though not to be taken lightly. The *UP FRONT/BANZAI* pair are certainly among the most playable games ever published, but they also present a very fine simulation of their subject. *FLAT TOP* is another game of this type which, to my mind, has been given too high a level of complexity in catalogues but presents a very playable game with excellent simulation qualities. The "Classics", however, were all both simple in play and low on simulation value. (That is, they were *games*!) The point is, again, that now there is a choice in all levels of presentation, with ever more types of games for specialized interests such as tournaments, solitaire and multi-player options.

What we have then is a maturing industry with increasing emphasis on the consumer, providing the vast differentiation in products that are demanded in today's market, with greater quality, better attention to detail, and at a cost which has but kept pace with inflation. We have, as a result of our own experiences in gaming, a greater appreciation for the history behind the subjects of our games. Today's player has grown in sophistication and education along with the industry, resulting in more and better games for all. This, then, is what we have from our hobby. What can we give it in return?

Within our economic means, support for favorite games and product lines, subscriptions to magazines and newsletters, and attendance at conventions. These all benefit us, as well as the hobby industry. On a different level, we can write articles, playtest new games, and voice our opinions to aid the manufacturers and publishers. On a more personal level still, we can support our local gaming organizations, and introduce new players into our hobby. These are all necessary if our hobby (and ourselves with it) are to grow. What, then, can it become?

As I see it, wargames will continue to be produced in about the same numbers as now, but with ever better quality. Economics dictates that the one-game-a-year days are gone forever. The differentiation of the market will continue and games will continue to be specialized within their interest areas. In attempts to capture greater sales, however, I think publishers will issue some "cross-over" types of games to combine markets. Even though they cannot approach printed games for graphic quality and opponent interaction, the continued proliferation of home systems with better displays will gain computer games an increasing portion of the market. The attractiveness of solitaire play as well as the ease of storage of a partially finished game adds to their attractiveness. In addition to this, we should see more game aid programs for board, role-playing, sports and miniatures games. Whether public domain or published, these programs will speed play, decrease the "workload", and increase the enjoyment of many of our favorites. *Computer DIPLOMACY* is an excellent example of an initial entry into this field. Other innovations and changes in our hobby can only be imagined . . . but they will only come about with the help of us all.

In summary, our efforts in the promotion and development of this hobby is very important to its success. With such efforts, The *GENERAL* will celebrate the next 25 years as an even better representative of what we all enjoy.

## The Past as Future

By James F. Dunnigan

*Jim Dunnigan is, of course, one of the most famous names in the hobby of wargaming. He is best known for his long association with SPI; indeed, he eventually came to be so closely identified with that company that folk still utter "Dunnigan/SPI" in one breath with reverence. He also, it should be noted, designed some of the best games in the early Avalon Hill line and left his imprint on design techniques here. Now he has turned his mind to writing, having seen several books into print on an intriguing variety of subjects. He was kind enough—after some badgering I admit—to turn his attention to a drafting a few words on the hobby for our anniversary.*

Twenty-five years ago, commercial wargames didn't have much of a past. The future loomed larger and that's what most of us gamers looked at. I came across wargames in 1961, while doing my military service. I stumbled across two GIs playing *TACTICS II*. Always a history buff, I quickly got into the early AH classics. And classics they were, an exhilarating insight into history that far surpassed books or films. Like many other history oriented gamers, I was irritated by the lapses in accuracy found in many of those early efforts. I was one of those who wrote letters to AH demanding improvements. Tom Shaw, reading most of this mail, finally got me off his back in 1966 by asking me to design the first of the seven games I eventually did for Avalon Hill. *JUTLAND* was a bit of a grind for a first effort. It was also hard on the knees.

But historicity and innovation seemed to be what the customers wanted. In 1969 I teamed up with Redmond Simonsen and founded SPI. We published 300 games under that imprint. Yet, in 1972, over half of Avalon Hill's new titles were my designs. Never forget who helped you get started.

Of the three hundred games we published, I designed over a third myself. Most of those were "you have no choice designs", where there was no one else willing to do it. For many years most gamers stood in awe of anyone that could design a game. I intended to dispel that myth, and did so. Many gamers *could* design, and this was the basis of the designer/developer system that I created in 1968-69. I derived a great deal of satisfaction from the success of the designers who got their start in our SPI pressure cooker. Having made my point, I went off in 1980 to do what I had always wanted to do—write books. While writing is a bit of indulgence, I had also developed other interests in financial modeling and computers.

This brings me back to the current future of wargames, and the disappointing way in which computers have been used. Those of you who attended the ORIGINS conventions up through 1980 probably had an opportunity to hear me prattle on in a talk called "Napoleon at IBM". I gave this pitch about half a dozen times to a combined audience of several thousand gamers. What amazes me is that few of the future computer game designers among them picked up on the ideas presented. For example, a computer is an excellent means of keeping track of detail. Record keeping is the dark side of wargaming. No matter how elegant the design, more accuracy and realism brings with it more drudgery for the player. So what happens? The first computerized wargames, and most of the current ones, still have players emulating manual wargames. Some even display a hex grid on the screen. Gimme a break!

OK, so we have gamers slaving over keyboards instead of pushing cardboard. What's the solution? It's what I was saying ten years ago. A computer allows you to present the battle to the player much as it would appear to the historical commander. This means the player can quickly view the situation, but is never absolutely sure what's going on, either with his own troops or those of the enemy. Oh, you can still have a situation map, which the computer updates. But a real-life commander does not have to push units around the map. Decisions in combat are simple, but require some stressful thinking. Despite Napoleon's habit of moving colored pins around maps of central Europe, he did the deed by issuing orders to Berthier and then hoping his corps commanders would not trip over their egos in carrying them out. In those ten-year-old lectures, I would describe a *WATERLOO* game where the player had his eyes to look over the battlefield presented on the computer screen, plus couriers and aides to send and bring information.

So why hasn't it been done yet? I know it can be done. I did a similar game two years ago. OK, so I used a LISP work station. But that was because I only had three months, a Symbolics machine was available, and the budget wouldn't allow for me birdogging one or two programmers for a year to get an equally powerful assembler version running on a PC. But you get the idea. Ten years ago I was thinking in terms of a 64K Z80 or 6502 platform. Hell, I could have knocked out the prototype in BASIC and then let a better programmer recast it in assembler with all the bells and whistles. Today the minimum hardware configuration is 256K+. There are over 15 million IBM PC type computers out there now, and I can vouch for the fact that most of those in a business setting are available for gaming. Demographically, over 50% of the households containing potential wargamers have a computer of some sort. Big market out there folks; let's get cracking. Keep in mind that wargaming didn't really take off until we started producing products that potential customers wanted.

This type of computer game, basically quite simple but potentially complex and unpredictable each move, is nothing new. Back in 1970, Tom Shaw ran some of my feedback questions in *The GENERAL*. We asked about what type of game players wanted. The most popular type was similar to the then-new *PANZERBLITZ*, and to the electronic version of *WATERLOO* I just described. I called this type the "dense model", which contains a small number of playing pieces, not a lot of playing surface, but with rules of escalating complexity. *PANZERBLITZ* has sold over 300,000 copies and is still going. John Hill's *SQUAD LEADER* system took up from there and continued the tradition of the popular "dense model" approach.

There's room in the market for dense models as well as straight simple games and the ever popular monsters. I'm fond of dense models myself, although I've designed and played games of every imaginable level of size and complexity. I believe the computer could keep players from being overwhelmed by hefty games that promise much and often deliver it all to the point of numbness. Some work along these lines is being done. Chris Crawford has made some moves in this direction as have a few others. One point most of these attempts are missing is that combat operations are more often like an adventure game than most current designers suspect. And a lot of very good programming still manages to needlessly butcher historical accuracy. Some things never change.

But it always bothered me why progress didn't come more quickly. My attitude always was, "I want the future and I want it now!" This may not seem a reasonable attitude, but I have always found it useful when trying to advance the state of the art. There *are* many excellent computer games out there. I do keep up on the field, even though most of them get a 15-minute

workout and then get put on the shelf or given away. There's hope, but progress has been excruciatingly slow in coming.

For example, ease of use never gets as high a priority in computer wargames as it should. Computer users *expect* computer games to be easy to use. I don't mean easier to use than their manual versions. That isn't enough, because millions of potential wargamers have been put off by the impossible trade-offs between realism and complexity in manual games. While I don't have access to the old SPI feedback system anymore, I do continually ask questions. I always did that in the past and developed a good sense of the relative position of the face-to-face responses and mailed-in responses. Believe me, more people would get into industrial-strength wargames if they were available on computers in a truly user friendly form.

Oh, I was asked to comment on the current state of wargaming. Well, it looks pretty good. Could be better, but then that's an attitude I've never been able to shake. It's also nice, after all these years of listening to those "why don't you" comments, to be on the other side for a change.

## Confessions of a Rules Junkie

By Mark C. Nixon

*Mark Nixon is one of those multi-talented fellows that our hobby seems to attract—luckily for us. His first article for The GENERAL appeared in Vol. 5, No. 2 and he has written thousands of words for us since. He is certainly one of the best 3R and ASL players around, and has been involved in numerous playtests. It is a wonder that he has found time to also be husband, father of three, earn a BA from BSGU (1975) and make a living in industrial equipment sales in Ohio.*

Awareness of *The GENERAL* came to me on a flyer in my first wargame purchase, *MIDWAY*, in about 1965. I had been reading some grade-school level accounts of the battle, and while walking through a department store was amazed to see a game on the subject. At that tender age of twelve it was tough to part with the five odd dollars the game cost—dollars earned over long hours of delivering papers and (child labor laws begone) working in my father's construction business. But I knew I would buy the game the instant I saw it. It was as though it appeared there on the shelf at the end of a long, misty tunnel. How could it be true? How could something so totally unexpected appear before my eyes? I had no previous knowledge of such games. If there was ever a waking moment of my life when I was afraid I'd awake from a dream, that was it. That, at least, is how I remember that moment now.

Of course, there was no one to play the game against in Lebanon, Ohio; and once my brother had declared the thing a waste of his time after only one game, I was left with a lot of solitaire play. Curiosity finally got the better of me, and I began a progression of by-mail purchases of the entire Avalon Hill line from *STALINGRAD* and *AFRIKA KORPS* to *BISMARCK* and *BLITZ-KRIEG*. I finally took out a subscription to *The GENERAL* in 1968, and was soon advertising in it, picking up by-mail games and even buying used games through the "Opponents Wanted" column.

Of that first volume year of my subscription I remember only two things without going back to search. I remember Bruno Sinigaglio's article in which he described how he was playing over 100 games a year by-mail, in my eyes making him either a Wargaming God or at least my first vision of what would eventually become known as the true Wild Man of wargaming. The second outstanding event was an Opponents Wanted notice from a club called "The Strategists". Their ad claimed they would take on all comers in *STALINGRAD* and, more or less in these words, "Mop up the entire earth, sun, moon and the stars" (and so on) with the lot of us. For some reason clear only to a fifteen-year-old, I figured I should challenge them as one club to another, and so my imaginary club, "The Rohirrim", took them on. Well, the Strategists must have been a group of similar fourteen-year-olds; they didn't last long. But I was elated, thinking I had bettered a den of professionals (or at least college students) who no doubt gathered to consult over each move for hours upon hours, subjecting each of my carefully selected maneuvers to every inch of scrutiny accumulated by their many years' experience. Computer analysis was likely part of their repertoire.

I totally dropped out of wargaming for several years during college; I missed the entire *PANZERBLITZ* era. But while there I met Bruce Downing, who introduced me to a game called *THIRD REICH*, first in a new generation of wargames for me. We started playing and soon were in danger of devoting our lives to it. It was fantastic and it was terrible. It seemed to me like every time we played, Bruce was pulling out a new version of the rules. Of course, there were only two, but he was using second edition rules whereas I had initially read only his old first edition copy, and *The GENERAL* kept supplying more changes. We learned the lessons of the game the hard way in this manner. My wife actually bought the game for me on our first Christmas together, much to her chagrin and, I might add, the *last* game she ever bought me. We found a third player, Dougbo, who said he could play Russia. It wasn't long before Bruce, who usually played the Axis, was steamrolling Dougbo

on a regular basis, and the two of us had to go back to playing against each other without him. I had never gamed face-to-face much, and had certainly never played anyone who could manhandle a game like Bruce. If there are two ways to interpret a rule, Bruce will see it one way while I see it the other. Working together, we identified so many problems with *THIRD REICH* rules that a few years later, after Bruce had moved to Massachusetts and we were relegated to *THIRD REICH* by mail in dreadfully fitful bouts to match my lifestyle, Don Greenwood and Larry Bucher selected me MVP of the *THIRD REICH* playtest. Much of the credit actually belonged to Bruce, as it was the strength of our mutual rules busting which generated most of my playtest input. (But I kept the lifetime subscription to *The GENERAL* for myself all the same!)

I will never forget the final proofread of the 3rd Edition rules for the *THIRD REICH* playtest. This was sent out very near "press time"; I had only two days or so to complete this final read. The day I received it, my wife gave birth to our first child. I had a flat tire on I-75 while driving home from work to take her to the hospital. The delivery was exciting, and I returned home at 3:30 AM to start reading those rules. Somehow I completed all my urgent jobs and sent off my edited version of the proof. But it proved a great embarrassment for me, for when I mailed it back to Don I mistakenly sent it to Monarch Printing, the address on the envelope it had come in. Don never received it, which I didn't know until much later, after the game had been printed. A xerox copy of my final proofread still sits useless in my files, a haunting reminder of my ineptitude.

As for playing *THIRD REICH*, I remember one MichiCon tournament in which my Germans invaded England, built themselves up for several turns, and finally delivered a devastating 2-1 attack on London. But I rolled the dread "6" and lost 110 BRPs and a whole year's worth of effort. Also high on my list of memorable occasions were the three consecutive games against Bill and Dave Sisler in which my Germans drew the Spain variant. (In light of my current *THIRD REICH* series in *The GENERAL*, Bill threatens to write a letter to the editor to inform the readers, "That the punk can't win unless he draws the Spain Variant!") But the worst manifestation of luck occurred when I attacked Gibraltar only to find, to my horror, at the moment of combat that my carefully placed paratrooper was not so carefully placed, and the attack would be a 1-2! But I rolled a "3" and the British garrison died on their counter-attack. My motto is, "I'd rather be lucky than good" now.

In the meantime I had finally located a Toledo group to game with on a regular basis. My wife made the mistake of taking a vacation in Toronto with friends in the summer of 1978. I was facing a lot of free time. It was Ken Stein's ad in *The GENERAL* which led me to his regular Wednesday night gaming sessions that week, and it was Ken who got us started on *SQUAD LEADER*. We were off and running, playing a variety of games: *VITP*, *SOA*, *WS&IM*, *DIP* and so on, but mostly whipping right through *COI*, *COD*, and every Series 100, 200 and *GENERAL* scenario available—only to land ourselves smack in the middle of the *GI* playtest. That must have been quite a playtest, for we put forth what I thought to be a tremendous effort, and were still outdone by several groups. Just to give an idea how much work playtesting is, for *GI* we played 49 games and I sent in 102 typed pages of analysis, questions, game reports and what-not, and we were still not the top group! Imagine what a load of work those groups ranked above us must have submitted. It's no wonder Avalon Hill hired the MVP of that playtest, Bob McNamara. I don't even want to think how much work he must have contributed to *GI*!

But the most amazing thing for me was the fact that *GI* was printed without a Nixon leader! "Hey, where's my personal ETC—Ego Trip Counter?" The other members of the group (Hall, Stein, Nicely, Fuchs, and McEwen) were all Heroes, but nothing for poor Nixon. We were due another Nixon to kick around; it had been years since the last one reared his head. Well, of course it was merely an oversight and I shouldn't have complained because now there is a "Sgt. Nixon" and he manages to get totally gunned-up on a regular basis. My younger brother, the real Sgt. Nixon, plays in an army band, so any of you gung-ho types who expect outstanding feats of heroics from Nixon should not be too concerned if he fails on the battlefield. Back at base camp, give him a trumpet and he's dynamite.

My second hiatus from wargaming came after the *GI* playtest when I moved to Cleveland. New job, new house, and no chance to game for quite some time. My *GI* article languished midway; Rex and Don probably figured I'd never complete it, and I was in danger of never returning to wargaming. It had been tough to leave the Toledo group, but I couldn't resist the playtest lure and eventually went in search of *SL* pros in the Cleveland area to work on the upcoming *ASL*. I'm afraid I got everybody worked up about it, and when the playtest didn't materialize for quite some time, interest flagged. But two gamers I had met, Bill and Dave Sisler (read "Sisler" in *BV* counter lingo) kept ringing my phone asking whether the materials had arrived, had I heard from Don, when would the thing start, and so on. All I can say is that perseverance pays off. When the *ASL* playtest finally did begin, I didn't even look for anyone else. Bill and Dave had already proved their sincerity. We have completed five playtests together and haven't stopped since we started, although we did take a breather during *HEDGEROW HELL* and *PARTISAN*! By the way, I find it interesting to note that those two modules are favorites

of mine, which might say a great deal about the virtues of playtesting. I find the *HEDGEROW* boards beautiful. Their colors actually match that of the summer countryside. However, the new *WEST OF ALAMEIN* has to be my current favorite, and we tested it extensively, so maybe I just tend to favor whatever is hot off the presses.

That final thought leads to what may be a new concept for wargaming. "Rules Lawyer" is common language, and the idea of "Rules Nut" is not difficult to fathom. But I think *Rules Junkie* also has a meaning of its own. I'm not in the habit of putting labels on people, but I know that I am a Rules Junkie because I worry about the time when all rules for *ASL* will be completed. (Is that maniacal laughter I hear from Bob?) But what will it be like when there are no more new rules to anticipate to enliven our play, to toss us back anew into the ranks of the novice, to grant us once again the joy of revising and relearning new tactics to handle the changing battlefield milieu? Will the system grow stale? Will we drift from *ASL* to something else? I can only wonder, but am confident that any future game possessing the where-withal to supplant *ASL* in my personal arsenal will bear the logo of Avalon Hill.

Not that the Rules Junkie drives on without hesitation. Oh no, far from it. During the *YANKS* playtest we became so burned out that our production dwindled to a pittance and we immediately took a break from *HEDGEROW HELL* and *PARTISAN*! But guess what? There were no new rules in either of those two modules. We didn't miss a single rules debate. And don't think that the Rules Junkie can play the game without referring to the rules. If anything, I have to look up more rules during a game than a beginner. ("Let's see now, was that just a playtest rule; did it make the final game; and in what form did it see print???" The more I try to do, the less I find I know. I tend to forget a lot. (Child of the 60's.) I forget how to FPF! You say two Heroes can do what in a captured AFV? Do vehicle crews get PF? Do I get Multiple Hits on a non-CH Improbable Hit? AAAAaaaaarrggghh!!!!

Back in Volume 19 of *The GENERAL* I predicted we would be rolling a die for dust modifiers in desert play, and everybody laughed. With *WEST OF ALAMEIN*, that prediction has come true. Nostradamus beware, can umbrella rules be far away?

## The Games I Played

By Friedrich G. Helfferich

*Fred Helfferich is a bright, spry gentleman in his 70's now. And in his life, more adventurous than most, games have played a large role—from the simple games of his childhood in Germany to his editorship of F&M for some six years. Too, he is one of the few who truly understand the reality that our games only simulate, for he was drafted into the German Army in 1941, and served in Russia and Italy while rising to the rank of lieutenant. Perhaps it is this understanding that has made him such an effective spokesman for our hobby for so long.*

My wife used to say it was on our honeymoon—but then you know wives' memories tend to be true more to the spirit than to the letter of events. It really was on our first anniversary, in Carmel-by-the-Sea, that I saw in a toy store window a game that intrigued me: *MIDWAY*. I had always been a great naval history buff and had found *Midway* one of the most fascinating and miraculous naval battles (remember, that was well before we got to hear about *ULTRA*), so I just *had* to see whether a few cardboard pieces could in any way recreate a carrier battle, would reward proper tactics. My poor wife had to serve as my first opponent. She did so grudgingly, and only provided *she* could play the Japanese and get *Yamato* right from the start. It was much harder, later, to get her interested in *ANZIO*, a game that was to become one of my all-time favorites, in part thanks to its special appeal for one who himself fought in that campaign. She has never ceased to thank *The Avalon Hill GENERAL* for eventually helping me to get in touch with more congenial opponents. This is how it all got started . . .

No, come to think of it, this is not quite true. I really have been playing historical wargames on and off for over sixty years. Yes, there were such games before Charles Roberts, although few of us may have heard of them. I am not counting *Seeschlacht*, a forerunner of Milton-Bradley's hit with the kiddies. Much more along the lines of our current games was *Schlachtenspiel*, demanding but with rules of beautiful simplicity. The playing piece, wooden and of only one kind, were moved on the square-grid board as in Chinese checkers, and enemy pieces jumped over were taken off. Wooden houses and trees and blue-paper rivers occupied some squares and made them less accessible. The rules, just about a page of them, were universal, but there were books with set-ups for scores of historical battles, from Napoleon's and Bismarck's wars to World War I, and a few even from the Roman conquests, all with excellent historical commentary.

Do I hear you ask about realism? The battles were "symmetrical", in that each side fielded sixty playing pieces regardless of historical strengths, and were "bloody" in that victory required elimination of all but four or six of the enemy pieces. But other than that, realism was better than you might expect

# How Avalon Hill Changed My Life

By Lou Zocchi

of a game with so simple rules; towns, forests and rivers provided terrain good for defense and were bitterly fought over. Surprised? But then, who would have thought the cardboard pieces of *MIDWAY* could catch the flavor of a carrier battle? Sometimes I wonder whether a new *Schlachtenspiel* is not what this hobby needs to become attractive again to the pre-teen crowd.

Later, in high school, my friends and I graduated to "The Game", a monster entirely of our own making. We had taken the globe and cut out the Mediterranean and Near East territories, replacing them with a fantasy land that could have evolved instead. We drew maps, carefully researching climate, vegetation and nature's riches. Each of us was assigned a piece of land, a small population, and appropriate industrial base. The rest of the globe was presumed uninhabited. In this world of ours we created our various societies and political parties, drafted constitutions, conducted diplomacy, explored, colonized, traded, launched revolutions, spied, carried out war. We even invented our own languages, composed national anthems, staged car races (with models), conducted Olympic Games. We had an international patent office in which to register our inventions! We had arms production quotas in accordance with our industrial base, with "extras" allowed for self-built small-scale tank and ship models whose reliability in combat was judged by their workmanship and faithfulness. We had no rules books or victory conditions; events were decided by consensus and common sense, or a knowledgeable elder was prevailed upon to act as umpire. Battles were fought with miniatures. For torpedo attacks, for example, we rolled steel ball bearings over a long, smooth table at a tiny model of the target ship placed at proper distance and angle. Effects of gunfire were judged by marksmanship with an air-powered rifle (I'll never forget my being accorded victory in a crucial battle against all odds for neatly decapitating the half-inch enemy tin general at a hundred and twenty feet). We covered about two hundred years of time, events evolving much as when in *DIPLOMACY* the players gang up on whoever threatens to become too strong, or resign themselves to a role of faithful minor ally to a mighty neighbor as the only remaining chance of survival. The final show-down between the two giant coalitions was imminent but never took place, for a real war started that was to teach me more about battle than I cared to learn, and that only two of our band of players were to survive . . .

Playing soldier in a war is no game, yet it has its aspects of gamesmanship you can learn. For instance, there is a good bit of psychology to small-unit tactics, of physics to marksmanship with an automatic weapon. But they don't give you the rule book; rather they largely let you find things out for yourself. Well, even our great institutions of higher learning, the universities, have their share of indifferent teachers, so what can you expect from the Armed Forces, whose instructors are selected for qualities other than their didactic skills? The stakes are high, and to be good at catching on will certainly increase your chances of getting through in one piece. I got nipped a couple of times but, thanks more to luck than the Irish, I made it.

My next game—in a POW camp—was "poker". None of us had played before, but we had got hold of a deck of cards and the authentic rules for five-card stud. Here, my practice in inventing strategies stood me in good stead. And with some ingenuity, I managed to take about half my winnings out with me when I released myself, enough to live on for a year or so in relative comfort.

There are games to be played in sports and professional life, too. I was never any good at them, though, when I picked up competitive track-and-field, skiing, sailing, and an academic and industrial career. Yes, I relished formulating strategies—such as the optimum one for a manager being to surround himself with underlings that are marginally inferior to him (with disastrous consequences for the enterprise once an intellectual underachiever parlays his inferior mind into a position of authority)—but could never get myself actually to use any of them. My only success in this respect was when in dinghy racing at MIT I devised a ploy to use the free end of the main sheet in lieu of the outlawed tiller extension, winning me a couple of hard-wind races before the competition caught on and copied me.

When suddenly arthritis put a stop to most of my sports, there was a void to be filled. So, that toy store window in Carmel-by-the-Sea came my way just at a strategic moment in my life, bringing me back full circle to games much like those I had enjoyed playing when barely out of kindergarten. *MIDWAY* and *ANZIO* were followed by many, many others, beginning with *AFRIKA KORPS* and progressing through *STALINGRAD*, *GUADALCANAL*, *1914*, *JUTLAND* and many more. In the over 25 years since, wargames never have lost their fascination for me. And I like to think my involvement with them has not been entirely passive, that in my six years as editor of *F&M* I helped a little to shape the developing hobby. I have not counted my wargame collection recently, but surely it must contain more than 1500 games—and I have played most of them.

So, for you youngsters, from one of the world's oldest living wargamers, does it surprise you then to hear he got hooked on *MIDWAY* in mid-life?

*Louis Zocchi hails from the Chicago suburb of Maywood, and makes Mississippi his home these days, as owner of one of the prestigious game distribution companies (Gamescience and Zocchi Distributors) in the country. His roots in our hobby are deep. His design credits include such classics as LUFTWAFFE and Battle of Britain; in addition to being one of the first GENERAL regional editors, he wrote for most all of the other early magazines. In 1987, Lou Zocchi was named to the Charles Roberts Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame—an honor to top all the many other awards he has won for his efforts in our industry over the many years.*

I never suspected that the *GETTYSBURG* game I had ordered from the Sears catalogue, back in 1959, was going to change my life forever. While waiting for its delivery, I wondered how anyone could make a game about any famous battle—and who would want to play the South, since obviously it should lose every game. When it arrived, I was delighted to discover that it was *not* your typical "roll-the-dice and go the indicated number of spaces" format. Instead, it was a game which featured simulated, scaled-down forces which marched at realistic rates over a scaled-down battlefield to re-fight a historical battle—one the South could win if properly commanded. I was absolutely thrilled with the innovative design breakthrough and its many features. To my continued delight, I also discovered that there were four other titles in the line, and all carried forward the premise that good tactics and solid strategy are more important than good dice rolls. When I wrote for rules clarifications for the advanced versions of these games, the humorous replies I received from Tom Shaw made me wish I could work for Avalon Hill.

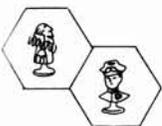
I discovered that the *LEMANS* game had been "consumer panel tested and approved"; I asked to become a panel member and was delighted to find that *BISMARCK* was to be my first playtesting assignment. The playtest version of this game, as I remember, was far more interesting than the version which went into print in 1962. I went on to playtest others—*STALINGRAD*, *AFRIKA KORPS*, a large-hex version of *GETTYSBURG* and several other titles that were never published. By now, I was truly hooked; I was witnessing wargame history in the making. In fact, Tom Shaw challenged me to playtest his new play-by-mail system with a game of *D-DAY* so I had a hand in that bit of innovation as well. (Yes, as we tested his system, he methodically destroyed my German army.)

Then, when Tom asked me if I'd like a chance to write for the new gaming magazine, *The GENERAL*, I jumped at that chance. I wrote articles during the next 11 years on many topics, and through my association with Avalon Hill I contacted many others who shared my enthusiasm for the new hobby. (One of those new friends was a Carl Knabe, one of the original regional editors who lived in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. While transferring to Keesler AFB in Mississippi, I stopped off in Ft. Wayne to meet Carl—and we gamed non-stop for three days.)

While vacationing in Baltimore the following summer, Carl himself visited the Avalon Hill offices and noticed that the rivers and cities on the new *BLITZ-KRIEG* mapboard had grid coordinates rather than names. He pointed out that names are easier to remember than coordinates—and so the River Knabe and River Zocchi came into being. Eventually each terrain feature on the map was named for someone associated with the company—except for the desert (since this was the year Sandy Koufax pitched a no-hitter in the World Series, Tom named it for that baseball legend . . . because it was so "sandy").

While stationed at Keesler, I continued to write for *The GENERAL* and to playtest: *JUTLAND*, *1914*, *B&O/C&O*, *STOCK MARKET* and others. But the itch that all gamers face had come upon me. I had been gathering data on the Battle of Britain for several years, all the while hoping that Avalon Hill would bring out a game on the subject. In 1965, I decided to design the game myself; by 1968 I had several working prototypes. When SSgt. Chris Wagner started publishing *S&T*, I first read about it in *The GENERAL* and contacted Chris. He playtested my game, imaginatively entitled "Battle of Britain", and liked it so much that he told Phil Orbanes, a bright young college student who was publishing his own game designs under the GameScience label. Phil liked my prototype and arranged to publish the game. I joined the ranks of "professionals". Although Avalon Hill had shown no interest in my design, the editor generously published a favorable story about it in *The GENERAL* and greatly boosted its sales.

Shortly afterwards, Tom Shaw asked me if I'd be willing to design a game on the Luftwaffe for Avalon Hill. After about a year of work, I felt that the game needed more development, but its publication deadline had arrived. When Tom learned about my views, he told me that he would wait until the game was ready. I was very pleased that they chose to publish finished games, instead of shoving something out the door simply because a deadline had arrived. This hallmark of quality and concern has always been the feature which made Avalon Hill games worth waiting for. Those who have ranted and raved because, say, *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER* failed to appear on schedule, always eventually discover that instead of some half-baked rush job, they get a very sleek, sophisticated gaming simulation which functions properly. You



simply can't rush into premature production with a game that needs more development; companies which once published unfinished games in order to adhere to a schedule are no longer with us.

I used the royalties from *LUFTWAFFE* to privately publish my other game designs and market them. I quickly uncovered other independent designer-publishers who wanted me to sell their games for them. I knew Gary Gygax, having read many of his articles and thought that his *Dungeons & Dragons* game was of the unique type of title I was selling. So I became the first distributor to stock *D&D* (but at that time, I didn't realize just how unique it really was).

When I couldn't get dice fast enough to match the sales of these games, my supplier told me to make my own dice and stop bothering him. Because I couldn't match the cheap price of the imported dice from the Orient, I decided to produce the best dice possible from the strongest plastic obtainable. In effect, I gambled that players would willingly pay more for a higher quality item; most gamers knew that the cheaper dice quickly lost their edges and so frequently rolled some numbers far too often. Players realized that these lopsided import dice were cheating them out of saving throws and impartial battle results. My dice production boomed—one of the contributions to the hobby of which I am most proud. [Mr. Zocchi's latest contribution is the "zocchihedron", a hundred-sided die.]

And I was there when Avalon Hill took the giant step of creating the first national wargaming convention—ORIGINS I. Many independent publishers, myself included, discovered that this exposure increased sales all year round. When Avalon Hill hosted ORIGINS II, everyone knew that this dynamic event had sparked phenomenal hobby growth and should be continued. ORIGINS III was hosted by SPI in New York, and so began the move to different cities each year since so that gamers from all over the U.S. might have the chance to attend one. The convention has become the most important annual show for us, and is the place to release new titles and products and to meet the customers.

Another convention was also in the works—GENCON, which Gary Gygax had been hosting for several years. After the 1978 GENCON, some 20 of us small publishers gathered at a small restaurant and the conversation turned to forming a permanent organization of manufacturers, which we would name GAMA. Rick Loomis served as the first President (and for many years thereafter as Treasurer); I served as Vice-President for the next five years. Avalon Hill quickly joined the new organization, and Tom Shaw aggressively recruited new members for our fledgling association. Avalon Hill's generosity was boundless; they agreed to give the name ORIGINS to GAMA for the annual show we would administer. John Mansfield began giving out awards annually for the best game, best graphics, etc. (which he paid for with his own funds at first). After GAMA was better organized, we realized how important John's awards had become for us. It was decided to name those awards for the best in board gaming for the founder of Avalon Hill—Charlie Roberts. Today, the "Charlie" awards are one of the major events at ORIGINS each year. In fact, in 1987, I received the ultimate honor when Charles Roberts himself presented me with the Hall of Fame award.

But I have not been the only one helped by Avalon Hill. Anyone who reads the early back issues of this magazine will see that *The GENERAL* was quick to recognize others in the industry and to give them a helping hand. When Jim Dunnigan took control of SPI and began marketing boxed games, it put them into direct competition with Avalon Hill for a very limited market. Despite the competition, Avalon Hill repeatedly helped the fledgling company by buying and publishing several of SPI's better game titles. By helping others grow, creating the first national boardgaming convention, publishing the first gaming magazine and supporting GAMA, Avalon Hill generated powerful forces which made it possible for the more than 155 companies to publish and prosper in today's hobby. When Avalon Hill started this business, they produced one game a year; today this industry publishes one game per day. Before Avalon Hill printed *GETTYSBURG* and *TACTICS*, there was no adventure gaming industry. If Charles Roberts had not begun Avalon Hill, if Tom Shaw had not published *The GENERAL*, if Eric Dott had failed to rescue Avalon Hill from its financial peril, I have no doubt that today there would be no great and vigorous wargame hobby.

The articles I wrote for *The GENERAL* paved the way for acceptance of my game design, *LUFTWAFFE*. The royalties from *LUFTWAFFE* paid for the GameScience name and its unsold stocks of games. The sales of those games financed the publication of my other designs, and selling them led me in game distribution. I am very grateful to Tom Shaw and The Avalon Hill Game Company for helping all of us in the game industry to prosper, and for changing my entire life. We should all salute your historic achievement and hope that there are many more milestones of progress and success for Avalon Hill.

*Both Mr. Zocchi, who penned the piece above, and Mr. Madej, whose words follow, were early "regional editors" that first year of publication of The GENERAL. Unfortunately, in preparing this issue, we found that we'd lost track of most of these fellows—Hilary Smith, Jon Perica, Carl Knabe II, Thomas LaFarge, Daniel Hughes, Walter Green III.*

## The Wargame as Sociology

By Witold Victor Madej

*For that first year, Victor Madej's writings on topics as diverse as AFRIKA KORPS and MIDWAY helped draw people to this struggling little periodical. Since that time, he has retained his interest in our hobby, even as he has built his own book publishing firm in Allentown, Pennsylvania—Valor Publishing.*

When I started writing for *The GENERAL*, my interest in wargaming was fueled by the study of history. The first book I ever bought (with money saved from a paper route) was *War Through the Ages* (by Lynn Montross) in an effort to get a true view of warfare. In particular, I sought to reconcile the historical story with what had been witnessed by my own family.

In a way, I am a product of war. The Nazis seized my parents as slave labor during World War 2. My late father was taken from Warsaw. My mother, at age 14, was taken from East Poland to the Dachau concentration camp. They married in devastated Munich after the war and came to the United States after I was born in 1948. Communism held their native Poland captive. My interest in wargaming stemmed from a desire to learn about my refugee roots and the unique version of history that was presented at school. The classroom story, that our excellent armed forces had won the war, did not seem to match the reality of an enslaved central Europe. After all, the West had gotten involved in war because Hitler had invaded Poland . . . joined by his ally Stalin the same month.

Avalon Hill games portrayed history in several dimensions. They provided a great way to learn about the geography and relative strengths of different countries. I was attracted by how the games provided a "walk through" a historical event. My articles aimed at improving realism at a time when it was still subjugated to playability.

In the battle against sacrificing realism in wargames, I had the good fortune of meeting one James Dunnigan, who was writing letters to Avalon Hill also complaining about the accuracy. At the time, Jim lived in Brooklyn and was working towards a business degree at PACE college. He was also involved in game design. I spent hundreds of hours working with him. Some of this involved testing game ideas; but most of it was on a publication project—the creation of *Kampf* magazine (a name Jim did not like), which led to publication of a monogram on the Ardennes Offensive (Dec 1944). It wasn't much of a product to look at, but the information was solid.

This was probably Jim's first publishing endeavour. My contribution was mainly limited to illustration, especially a frustrating effort to reduce large, complex, four-color maps to two 8.5x11 inch sheets of line art. The project was an outgrowth of correcting the gross lack of realism in Avalon Hill's original *BATTLE OF THE BULGE* game. It was certainly a learning experience for both of us. Without question, knowing Jim changed my life. He went on to write several issues of *Kampf*, design *JUTLAND* and *1914* for Avalon Hill, and starting in 1967 became involved in Mr. Wagner's *S&T*.

I believe SPI grew because of a similar emphasis on realism, thus raising gaming to the level of simulation. Their exposition of historical myths, through dozens of titles each year, was central to the educational attraction of their products. From 1975 to 1978, SPI sold over seven million dollars worth of games. (Avalon Hill apparently followed a similar, but safer trend while remaining diversified and holding down costs.) In 1978, SPI tried to shift from marketing by direct mail to retail distribution, while at the same time increasing its product line into the fantasy and science-fiction areas. It had grabbed too many cats by the tail and this unbalanced the business. Increased costs failed to generate adequate profit, and Jim Dunnigan failed to retrench. In 1980 a frustrated Dunnigan gave up and returned to writing books. Two years later, after venture capital firms rejected "art" without substance, SPI collapsed. Meanwhile, the saturated market was changing.

As the computer becomes more pervasive, there is no question that the better games will move to a software mode. Those companies who want to stay in this market will do well to reinforce past success and provide solid material to support the relatively cheap software components. This is still a time of transition because appropriate computers have not permeated the market in sufficient quantity. Simulation players, as opposed to fun-seeking gamers, are intelligent and know quality and will wait for the right product. It would be wise to get their feedback. Meanwhile the "gamers" can gorge themselves on a variety of "junk food" products in a fragmenting industry.

As mentioned above, a search for historical accuracy drew me to wargames. This in turn developed into an appreciation of sociology, which takes the understanding of past events a step further and attempts to make predictions on control of the present. Publishers have sold tens of thousands of books on military sociology, so there appears to be substantial interest in the subject.

From a sociological perspective, there is a break between the "mass" versus the "class" markets. The latter has substantially narrowed as malevolent institutions (ways of doing things) work to undermine simulation gaming. Explaining why simulations never really caught on in the government or the military would require a book; but suffice it to say that bureaucracy has little reason to adapt easy and inexpensive solutions to operating their systems. The recent military procurement scandal (involving over two trillion dollars in

contracts) may only be the tip of a vast iceberg extending to the depths of World War 2, and reflected in President Eisenhower's warning about the misplaced power of the military-industrial complex.

Simulations expose such hidden issues and cut through political language. The stupid interpretation of history becomes obvious, even to the one who tries to spread it. For example, you could look at a map and see that even the eastern tip of Estonia was west of the central European meridian; was it just a coincidence that the *National Geographic* map of Europe in 1983 had changed from the 1977 edition to reflect this fact—or was it embarrassment resulting from the WWII wargames? Other simulations reveal that Poland was larger in population than Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland combined. In realistic games, we can see how weak Germany was in 1942. Early war simulations demonstrate how competent military forces conducted blitzkrieg warfare, conquering over a dozen countries in just weeks of combat.

Examples like this raise embarrassing questions for our official historians. Our leaders, having survived the war, had no interest in explaining gross failures. It was politically unwise and economically unprofitable. Moreover, since modern simulations can measure decision making, they might expose how inept the unmentioned bureaucrats really are. The Navy does not want the public to see how vulnerable its \$600,000-a-day carriers may be. The Air Force does not want you to know how easy it is to knock-out a multi-million dollar plane and pilot. The Army does not want you to ask why our high-tech, mobile forces, were defeated in Korea and Vietnam. Is it any surprise that wargames are the object of ridicule, and that realistic simulations (with some token exceptions) are shunned?

The military has adopted excellent training methods at the tactical level (skill qualification tests and unit testing), but strategic and office testing still leaves much to be desired. This is probably because the services (Army, Air Force, Navy) have been allowed to test themselves, and have thus resisted control by the Department of Defense and the Joint Staff. As opposed to free enterprise, the military organization is not driven by strategy. Instead, the sub-organizations and political considerations typically dominate strategy and weapon design. Until this changes, the stark realism of simulations will not be allowed to permeate military evaluation. If the simulation makers keep pushing at realism however—instead of sacrificing it to playability—there may be a chance to break this barrier and move into the next quarter-century of "wargaming" with a new agenda.

Wargames and simulations have affected my life by providing insights not otherwise available. I have not played more than twenty games in the past twenty years, but the thought processes of examining assumptions and presenting information concisely has never left me. From the point of view of education and decision evaluation, good simulations offer invaluable benefits. It is cheaper to make mistakes on a paper or computer playing field than to pay the price of actual conflict. I feel this is a concept worth selling.

## Confessions of an ASL Fanatic

By Jim Stahler

*Jim Stahler has been involved in the hobby for quite a few years, and has certainly participated in his share of playtests and competitions. But, it seems, he has at last found a game to capture his heart. When asked for a few words for this special issue, he responded with a question—"Can I write about ASL?" One would think, after having penned some few scenarios and Chapter K, he would have exhausted all his words. But, lucky for us, that seems to be far from true.*

I have been totally swallowed up by *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER* recently, but it wasn't always that way. I remember other times and other games, with "zones of control", "supply" and "isolation", and divisions, corps, armies. I remember back in 1961, when *Life* magazine had a series of articles on the centennial of the Civil War. The final article in the series included a game, *1863* (since published by Parker Brothers for a brief span), that captured my imagination. Could that have been the very first wargame published in a magazine? I played it constantly, with my little brother and anyone else who would sit still long enough. I had played with toy soldiers as long as I can remember, but this was so much better.

My mother introduced me to the son of a friend of hers who played "wargames". We got together one afternoon and played *GETTYSBURG*, 1958 edition, tournament rules. I don't remember that game too well, but it was enough to hook me on Avalon Hill. My mother then introduced me to a couple more wargamers, and I spent the rest of my junior high school and high school years playing with them. We spent hours and hours getting together to play some "Avalon Hill". We played *D-DAY*, *GETTYSBURG*, *TACTICS II* and *CHANCELLORSVILLE*. I remember being excited when *STALINGRAD* first came out, and then *WATERLOO* and *BISMARCK*, *MIDWAY*, *AFRIKA KORPS*, *BATTLE OF THE BULGE*, *GUADALCANAL* and *BLITZKRIEG*. I consider that the Classic Age, the Golden Age of wargaming. It was hard to find another

wargamer, but once you did it was not too difficult to find a game you had in common since there were so few. Today there are many more wargamers—but no two play the same game it seems.

I have a very soft spot in my heart for those old classics. They may not be "realistic" compared to today's games, and I have not played any of them in at least a decade; but they were excellent games, very good competition, and much faster to learn and play than most current games. Looking back, my favorites were *GETTYSBURG '58* (the basic game), *D-DAY '61*, *WATERLOO*, *BISMARCK*, *STALINGRAD*, *BULGE '65* and *BLITZKRIEG*. I can still remember my excitement when I bought *BLITZKRIEG* and first opened it.

I ended high school in 1966 and went on to college at MIT. About that time, wargaming entered a second phase—which I consider its "Dark Age". Avalon Hill came out with a lot of games that I didn't care for. I won't say they were bad games, but most of them are no longer published and I don't know many people who played them. The one shining exception was *PANZER-BLITZ*. That was the first true innovation in wargaming since *TACTICS* was created. It opened the door for a host of World War II and modern tactical games, including *PANZER LEADER*, *ARAB-ISRAELI WARS*, and of course *SQUAD LEADER*.

During this period I did most of my gaming at the MIT Strategic Game Society on Saturday afternoons, sessions often stretching into Sunday morning with a short break for a movie and dinner. We played a lot of the classics, *PANZERBLITZ*, and a lot of home-grown efforts. Our favorite was *Tactics Pi*, which had a giant board (bigger than *TLD*) with *BLITZKRIEG*-style fictional terrain plus swamps and railroads. I remember the board designer put an islet inside a pond inside an island in a lake on the continent. [*We all know wargamers are weird.*] We would have up to five players on a side, simple rules that were mostly tradition, and use counters from all the classic AH games. It was great fun. I also remember a simultaneous game of *BLITZKRIEG*, in which orders for movement, attacks and information were written on cards, and the umpire alternated orders from each side. It was the ultimate in realism: you not only were in the dark as to enemy forces, you often had no idea where your own troops were. The high point was when one player landed the bulk of his air force in Lake Pinsky. I wonder if he has lived that down yet?

I consider the next phase of wargaming to have started in the early 1970s. By this time, lots of other wargame companies had sprung up, led by SPI and their magazine. Avalon Hill no longer had a monopoly, and had to invest in excellence to compete. They did. The quality of Avalon Hill games took a giant leap. This is the period when Avalon Hill produced such great games as *1776*, *PANZER LEADER*, *THIRD REICH*, *WOODEN SHIPS & IRON MEN*, *WAR AT SEA* and *RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN*. This renaissance began when AH hired Don Greenwood and Randy Reed and started Interest Group Baltimore. Since I lived in Maryland, right outside Washington and not too far from Baltimore, I was invited to join. I went up there on Saturdays and became a "regular". It was a thrill to meet the creators of the games that I had been playing for so long, and to see future products being developed. There was fellowship and lots of gaming.

It was at this time that I began my subscription to *The GENERAL*. Being at Avalon Hill often gave me the confidence to try to write an article myself. How good was my senior English teacher? My first article was "A Question of Balance" (Vol. 13, No. 3) in the Sept-Oct 1976 issue. As payment, I received a copy of *STARSHIP TROOPERS*. I wasn't interested in the topic at first, but after getting into the game I fell in love with it. That led to a string of articles on *SST*. Several years later I would spend quite a long time, spread over several years, working with Chester Hendrix updating the rules to *STARSHIP TROOPERS*, correcting some of its problems (similar to my updating of *D-DAY*). Unfortunately, Avalon Hill decided to drop the game from their line before we finished; it would have been wonderful.

In the spring of 1976, I volunteered to be an assistant judge for the "Avalon Hill 500 Tournament" (which awarded the princely sum of \$500 in prizes, had 128 entrants, and was based on the classics). The tournament was being run by Richard Hamblen, not yet with Avalon Hill. We played a number of the classics to "train" for the tournament, because we would have to answer a lot of questions and adjudicate games not yet complete. We got along very well, and we have been good friends ever since—something else I have Avalon Hill to thank for. (I was even an usher at his wedding.)

My first playtesting experience was for *ARAB-ISRAELI WARS*, which Richard was developing. My ideas for updating *D-DAY* found their first audience in Richard, and Richard and I worked closely to develop and playtest them. I have had a hand in playtesting all of Richard's games, to a greater or lesser extent. Perhaps the strangest experience was with *MAGIC REALM*. I playtested the game a number of times at Avalon Hill, and every time it was radically different from the time before, and only Richard knew the rules! I couldn't wait to get my playtest copy of the finished product, so I could find out what the rules were.

1977 was an important year for me, and for wargaming. That was the year my *D-DAY* rules were published. Also, my first playtest game (*AIW*) was published, along with *VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC*, Richard Hamblen's first original design.

Of course, 1977 was the year that *SQUAD LEADER* appeared. I had play-

tested *SL* (I had a German 9-2 leader named after me; quite an honor, but what is a nice Jewish boy doing in the Wehrmacht in World War II?) for Don Greenwood. My first impressions after reading the rules for the first scenario was that it was much too complex for most wargamers, and that it would never catch on. How wrong can you be? It has become a phenomena, one of Avalon Hill's most successful products. Over the years I have playtested all the *SL* gamettes, *CROSS OF IRON* to *ANVIL OF VICTORY*. Of course, I was heavily involved in the *ASL* rules. I wrote Don Greenwood over 150 pages of comments on the rules, not to mention the playtesting of the modules. For this I was "promoted" to a 10-3 leader! I have since then spent the majority of my gaming time playtesting *BEYOND VALOR*, *STREETS OF FIRE*, *PARATROOPER*, *YANKS*, *HEDGEROW HELL*, *PARTISAN!* and now *WEST OF ALAMEIN*. One of my prime concerns about *ASL* was that it was hard to learn. That led me to the "Squad Leader Training Manual", which I wrote for inclusion within *PARATROOPER*.

The irony is that when there were only a few games available, I played them all. Now that there are thousands of games available, I have settled down to mainly playing one. I guess that the reason for this is that *SQUAD LEADER*, and now *ASL*, has just the right tactical feel to it. It has beautiful components, interesting and unusual things happen every game, and it has such enormous depth in at least four dimensions. The rules are massive, but many of them only apply to certain terrain, units or situations. There are always new rules to master. The second dimension is the boards. There are now 30 mapboards (with more to come soon), plus eight deluxe boards, with vast possibilities when put together in various ways. No matter how often you play *ASL*, you are always running into new terrain, or old terrain approached from a new direction. The third dimension is the counters, the Order of Battle. *ASL* includes a vast array of infantry, ordnance and vehicles. It is not too hard to find a scenario that includes units you have not seen before. The fourth dimension is the scenarios. Counting the modules and the scenarios published in *The GENERAL*, there are now 70 *ASL* scenarios. If you play once a week, as I do, and play each scenario twice as each side, this will keep you going nearly six years! By that time, there will plenty more published. *ASL* cannot be "played out", and if you do run out of scenarios you can always design your own. By the way, besides the playtesting, I have actually only played two or three published scenarios.

But, perhaps the appeal of *ASL* is that it takes us back to those earlier days of wargaming. Once again, we are a select few, who speak the same language. It's not always easy to find opponents, but when we do we can play. We have a common interest. And the game will never grow stale. When we get together there is fellowship and lots of gaming. And each time a new module comes out, I experience the thrill of discovery. We have truly come full circle.

## The Sunne in Splendour

By Richard Berg

*Richard Berg is famous, of course, for his regular reviews of new games that have appeared in a number of the hobby's professional periodicals. He has an uncanny way of getting to the heart of the game in a hurry. Perhaps that's why he has for years been enamoured with KINGMAKER. He was instrumental in promoting it, and the too-limited writing he has done for The GENERAL here now has been on KM. That tradition continues.*

Twelve years ago . . .

On the way to my office the mailman, early for once, hands me the envelope. Walking and reading . . . from England!? Who do I know in England? More to the point, who knows me? Ah! My fledgling review column for the two-year-old *Moves* magazine has finally brought something of interest.

Some fellow, with whom I apparently had some previous correspondence, would like to know if I could manage to provide him, *gratis*, a copy of *War in the East*? In return, he would send me this rather esoteric British game that was all the rage in Jolly Old. Seemed reasonable to me, considering that I probably had about ten copies of *War in the East* lying around (waiting for the next decade's auctions, most likely). So off the beast went.

And, four weeks later, in return arrived *KINGMAKER*.

I don't know how many of you ever saw the original edition. Although virtually all of the artwork and graphics are identical to the later Avalon Hill version, the map was about 50% bigger, as was the box (which was flat, *Monopoly*-style). Then, of course, there were the rules. They were about as sparing with words as *The Grenadier* is with issues. They weren't actually rules; they were sort of subtle hints at what you were supposed to do. As I sat in court ignoring the miscreant who had had the temerity to hire me to save him from his well-earned fate, my attention was taken up with what the *KINGMAKER* designer had wrought . . . or attempted to wrought.

Having quickly dispatched my client to a well-deserved—and hopefully lengthy—upstate rest, I hurried to the offices of that center of the maelstrom that was the wargaming "industry": Castle Dunnigan, the offices of SPI.

Now, you have to understand something about SPI in the early 70s; while

they had some amazing and gifted designers, very few of these super-novas ever seemed to know what was going on outside SPI (which was how I got to do the review column; I was the only one who ever took time to look at other games). So, my arrival with this rather large, British oddity created, if not a stir, at least a brief draft of interest. Fearless Leader, Jim Dunnigan, as usual, had the last say: "Hmmm. Looks interesting. Let's play it tonight."

Having first survived one of 23rd Street's less dangerous Ptomaine Palaces, six of us, amidst the giant trashbasket called the playtesting room, now huddled around the *KINGMAKER* board. It was like a Corragio painting of wargaming Valhalla: Dunnigan, Simonsen, Hardy, Barasch, et. al., all trying to figure out what we were supposed to be doing. After some moments of derision and confusion, Dunnigan cut through the tape with a ". . . what the hell, let's just start playing and see what happens."

The miracle of *KINGMAKER* is not in its rules (which are now, at least, understandable) nor its graphics (which, even 12 years later, are state of the art), but in its incredible ability to pull the player right into not only the game but into 15th-Century England as well. Right from the start, it was obvious that death was the name of the game. Taking the clue of Clifford with Edmund of Rutland, it wasn't long before heirs to the throne lay scattered like an Indian ambush. And it was "downhill" for the nobility from there. But it wasn't until Dunnigan, who had gathered a huge army under Edward of York and his brilliant cousin Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, and set the Yorkist *Sunne in Splendour* banner in York for his thrust south, drew the "Plague in York" card—thereby drawing at least a half-an-hour's worth of hooting and guffawing—that we realized what a brilliant game we had on our hands. Dunnigan was enough impressed to order a whole slew of the games for sale the very next day.

A few weeks later the game made its West Coast debut in another all-star event, this time with such hobby luminaries as Jack Greene, Tom Oleson, Larry Hoffman, Pete Menconi all falling (as did the SPI bunch) to the wiles of my Duke of Gloucester. ("Take that, Tudor dog!")

By the time of the first *ORIGINS*, later that year, the game had attracted some popularity. It won a Charles Roberts Award for best game, along with an even greater reward for its designer, Andrew McNeil: a contract from Avalon Hill. The Boys from Baltimore came up with yet a third edition of the rules (the edition SPI had offered for sale had a second, much expanded but still opaque version of the original), maintained the splendid graphics, and shrunk the whole thing down like a K-Mart Lily Tomlin. It had little effect however, for, despite the dozen or so years since its appearance, *KINGMAKER* is still the finest simulation game ever designed.

Why? The topic is esoteric, the combat and movement simplistic, the armies minimal. No matter, for the game works on almost any level you can imagine.

As a "game", except for the fact that it is very tough to play with just two players, *KINGMAKER* is a marvel. No player is ever out of the game, and every player is in constant danger of getting smashed at any time. The rules are simple (at least they are now), and there are no charts, lists, sequences, or the dreaded "if-A-does-this-then-B-does-this-but-if-C . . ." The player simply plays, and all of the game's complexities are in its situations. It is truly elegant.

As history? No game—on any subject—has so intimately and succinctly captured its subject. For those of you who are familiar with the wild and woolly York versus Lancaster conflict, The War of the Roses, you are aware of how accurately it portrays the high/low lights of that extended family squabble. To point out just a few: The nobility changed allegiances during the wars like sides in a sandlot stickball game. Warwick fought for everybody (but mostly himself), while his own brother John (sometime Earl of Northumberland when the Percys were in disfavor but often Marquis of Montagu) fought both with and against him. The Beaufort Dukes of Somerset, while nominally being loyal Lancastrians (it was Somerset's intriguing but disastrous plan of battle that led to ultimate Lancastrian defeat at Tewkesbury), still managed to find time to spend at the side of the Yorkist Edward IV. And the game captures all of this, with earls and dukes popping up everywhere, but without extended rules and off-the-wall systems. They simply circulate, so to speak.

And what of the fact that each of the king's nobles was out for himself, more or less? Simple. Random Events manage to spread these dukes and earls and their forces—all over the map handling "personal" problems. You may have a huge army gathered (not usually a recommended practice over a long period of time) only to find half your nobility scrambling north over a possible peasant revolt.

The system of using Random Events to flesh out bare-bones rules is the heart of *KINGMAKER*, and *KINGMAKER*, if not the actual Ur-game for this system (although I cannot think of any earlier design to so use Random Events), is certainly the seminal game for such an idea.

As a designer somewhat familiar with the period, I cannot but marvel at how McNeil managed to meld in one pot virtually every wild improbability together with each nuance of the War of the Roses. Granted it is not the last word on the subject (the inter-relations between all of the parties [they were all related by marriage and blood] is never touched on, and a few peripheral items are ignored). But if you want to see how really "on" *KINGMAKER* is, play a few games and then read one of the standard histories. Uncanny.

As a game player, I love it. It's fast, it's brutal, it's involving and, at times, it's almost all-consuming. Then again, how can I complain about a game I have never lost! Maybe I should change my last name to Neville.

## Getting Off My Duff

By Terry Alan Baney

*Terry Alan Baney is a professor of history in real life, and has for some years been an interested observer of our hobby. He has, if the term has not become passe in this world of ours, a true love for the hobby. And he is ever seeking to better it. Having written for The GENERAL in the past, as well as for quite a few other hobby periodicals, I asked him to put some of his suggestions on how the gamers themselves can expand our common pasttime down on paper.*

For the past several years it has hardly been possible to page through a boardgaming periodical or attend a hobby convention without encountering topics of concern. As boardgaming evolved from an amateur pastime to the status of a hobby industry, the range of concerns has oddly narrowed. Where once we debated whether our games should emphasize realism of playability, historical or fantasy themes, paper versus mounted mapboards, today's discussion has shifted to survivability.

If one can measure board wargaming's longevity from the days of TAHGC's *TACTICS II* during the late 1950s, some thirty years have transpired, giving the hobby a considerable past as well as an uncharted future. The track record of *The GENERAL* has been all the more remarkable in comparison to other, less stable enterprises within the hobby. The *GENERAL* has marched along this sometimes bumpy hobby terrain, keeping the faithful informed and entertained. Given its central position in the hobby's developmental process, it is perhaps not surprising to note that *The GENERAL*'s staff have been seeking ways to foster growth. In fact, it is this question of "growth" which dominates the concern voiced by today's hobbyists throughout the industry.

The question of growth has centered upon the changing nature of the hobby's demographics. Despite an increase in the number of publishers, the range of game topics, and the level of public awareness, the hobby is concerned about the "graying" of the membership. The youthful audience of the 1960s and early 1970s has become gamers in their thirties, forties and older. While many such veterans have continued to pursue their pastime, and could be said arguably to have more disposable income, these gamers are also inclined to have other distractions (e.g., families, jobs, even other hobbies). Although the hobby was never as vastly populated as participants sometimes imagined, the declining youth population of our society further reduces the prospects for entry-level youngsters. The citizenry's average age now hovers between 30 and 31 and, while it may indeed be possible to teach older dogs newer tricks, it is a matter for concern in a hobby which has traditionally emphasized youthful enjoyment.

Like many gamers who have been with the hobby for years—and plan to continue for the duration—I cringe at such unpleasant realities. I much prefer to read articles about the games, the history upon which many are based, and advertisements for terrific coming attractions. I do not wish to learn that my hobby senses itself to be in some jeopardy, and I take such information to be detrimental to the enjoyment I am seeking. If I wanted prospects of doom, I would read the latest figures on the national debt or my own bank balance.

Still, as a devoted gamer who wants to see his hobby endure, I am inclined to look inward for answers as well as to the game and magazine publishers. While certain hobby products and personalities have broken through to the mass market, much of what we enjoy is provided by individuals and firms with limited resources, serving a limited clientele. These producers can be expected to do whatever is within the reach of their abilities to serve the hobby's best interests as well as their own desire to earn a reasonable living. Yet little has been done by the hobby's rank-and-file members to assist in this process. There are those, of course, who write for the magazines on a frequent basis, submit potential game designs for publishers' consideration, and attend the annual conventions. In addition, one should note that the funds which hobbyists dispense for games, magazines and related incidentals are contributions of fundamental value. However, the typical hobbyist remains relatively content to play his or her games, read the magazine and otherwise expect the pleasures of the hobby to come to them.

Perhaps the time has come for the hobby's members to give something back. Such a viewpoint is based on the assumption that, in the final analysis, the hobby belongs to its devotees more than it does to those individuals and firms who view its marketing opportunities. This is not to suggest that the producers and writers of the hobby are not themselves avid hobbyists. Rather, it is an invitation to gamers to discover ways in which the hobby might be served as well as enjoyed.

I have my own thoughts on how this might be done, although my hope is that other hobby comrades will contribute their ideas.

One suggestion is that gamers make a concerted effort to interest others

in their communities. Local schools and public libraries can be surprisingly accommodating in this regard, offering space and bulletin boards for meetings and demonstrations of the hobby. Many communities also have local newsletters which accept free ads for area gatherings. Once a location is established, the initial meeting ought to emphasize a demonstration of what the games are like. Bring a number of games on a variety of topics, as well as magazines and catalog brochures. Include also a listing of the publishers' names and addresses, suggesting places where interested newcomers can write for additional information. I never met a person who did not like to receive mail. Phone numbers and personal addresses might also be exchanged as the contacts become more enduring. Having done something similar in my own community, I found that the project attracted the attention of the local newspaper. Before I knew it, I was being interviewed by an area free-lance journalist, resulting in a full-page article in the paper's Sunday edition. The entire experience was thoroughly enjoyable and I do not recall it having cost me a cent.

Another suggestion could "cost you a cent" or two, depending on how one views it. For some time now I have been submitting my own articles for possible publication in the gaming magazines. Like others who make this effort, I have been thrilled when an article is accepted and less so when rejections occur. Somewhat untypically perhaps, my articles are submitted with a disclaimer renouncing any desire to receive compensation should the piece be published. My intent is not, as some might claim, to make my submissions more attractive to editors. In the end, the magazine staffs will use what they feel has merit and will reject what does not. Instead, I believe that the hobby's periodicals represent an untapped vehicle for dialogue between the membership and, perhaps, an even wider audience. With few exceptions, the magazines which publishers produce for gamers are not profit-making ventures. They are largely a service to the hobby and a means for advertising products, shops, want ads and news. As such, I do not believe that gamers who contribute articles to the magazines should profit from that endeavour beyond the enjoyment being provided. For those with more mercenary inclinations, it could be pointed out that, in any event, the level of compensation is relatively minor. The loss of these small remunerations to contributors would be negligible, while the economic benefits for the magazines' continuation could be significant.

In terms of suggestions which might assist the hobby, the ideas presented here are certainly moderate. More importantly, they scratch only the surface of possibilities. Frankly, I would like to see the hobby magazines provide a continuing forum for useful ideas, allowing gamers to propose and respond to one another's suggestions. Again, I have yet to meet a hobbyist who did not find the "letters column" to be one of the most enjoyable sections of any magazine.

Perhaps the annual awards ceremonies which now inundate the hobby could also recognize individuals or groups who have done the most during the past year to serve the hobby in an unprofessional capacity. The awards acknowledge achievement in multiple areas, yet aside from the "Hall of Fame" styled honors, which focus on lifetime achievement, individual instances of service to the hobby go unrecognized. I always imagined this to be what Napoleon had in mind with the French *Legion of Honor*.

In any event, all hobbyists are eager to see their pastime endure and prosper. There are ways in which this can be fostered both by the publishers and by the membership. The annual conventions convey the extent to which this hobby is indeed a joint venture. Why not consider ways in which you might contribute to the hobby beyond the confines of your gaming table? Now, where did I put my dice?

## A Wargame Book of Lists

By Robert Beyma

*Mr. Beyma is best known in wargame circles as the designer of GUNS OF AUGUST, the best grand strategic simulation of the First World War on the market, and author of many an article for our pages on that and other games. Now 38, he labors for NASA in Virginia and resides in Maryland. Besides wargaming, he finds the time to enjoy chess and bridge and softball as well.*

I always liked to play games. I learned to play chess when I was seven, and later spent many hours playing *Monopoly* and *Risk*. My Mom and Dad gave me my first wargame, *U-BOAT*, for my tenth birthday. At the time, I thought of it as just another game. After all, it had metal replicas of submarines and destroyers and it had dice. When I was eleven, some of my older friends (they were 12 or so) were playing *TACTICS* and *GETTYSBURG*. I got to watch (because I was only 11 and the boxes specified that these were games for "adults 12 years and up"). When one of these friends went away to camp that summer, he let me borrow his *Civil War* game. HEAVEN! I played it every day by myself. It was a simple game, insofar as wargames go, but it was interesting and challenging at the time. (Wargamers' Rule #1: the hobby needs some games that will appeal to the kids just starting out.) Later that summer, I turned 12 and got promoted to *D-DAY*.

I ushered in my "Classics Era" in the Spring of 1963 when *STALINGRAD* arrived by mail. I began my set up by placing a 7-10-4 in Brest-Litovsk; it didn't help much since the Germans took Stalingrad on the fourth turn. *AFRIKA KORPS* continued the tradition when it arrived in the Spring of 1964; my box top still bears the knife scar of my eagerness to get to the game. *AFRIKA KORPS* played a lot like *D-DAY* and *STALINGRAD* except that it introduced an "automatic victory" rule and a simple supply rule. (Wargamers' Rule #2: wargamers like games with similar game systems; they get variety without having to learn a whole new game, prime examples in the 1980s being *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER* and *Europa*.) The arrival of *BATTLE OF THE BULGE* in 1965 marked the end of the classics era. While playing like a classic, *BULGE* introduced a NEW Combat Results Table which attempted to model the nature of the Ardennes fighting rather than force the standard classics CRT on the game system. Also, by this time, wargamers were becoming less tolerant of errors on the Order of Battle of the games. *BULGE* was the first to address this concern.

No issue like this would be complete without a few lists. Over the years, several games stand out—to me—as significant in the evolution of our hobby:

1. *TACTICS II* (1958)
2. *PANZERBLITZ* (1970)
3. *Drang Nach Osten* (1973)
4. *Dungeons & Dragons* (1974)
5. *Eastern Front* (1983)

*TACTICS II* introduced many of the basic wargame concepts such as terrain, zones of control, movement and combat resolution, and replacements. *PANZERBLITZ* was the first "tactical" game and the forerunner of the justly famous *SQUAD LEADER* series. It departed from the classic approach with such features as ranged fire, no ZOCs, and an entirely different sequence of play. *DNO* ushered in a new era, emphasizing functional differences among unit types, such as armor and engineer units, and introduced a fairly detailed air system. It was also the first, large, multi-player wargame—later to be called "monster-games". *D&D* began the entire branch of our hobby known as "role-playing". While I personally do not care for them very much, they are undeniably popular with many. Finally, *Eastern Front*—though dated now—was the first quality computer wargame; the number of computer wargames is increasing daily as more and more folk acquire home computers.

Besides those listed above, I must note three other major milestones in the growth of our hobby:

1. The publication of *The GENERAL* in 1964.
2. The rise (and subsequent fall) of SPI in the late 1960s.
3. *ORIGINS I* in 1975, sponsored by Avalon Hill.

I remember receiving my first issue of *The GENERAL* in the Spring of 1964, and thinking to myself that there really *were* other people all over the country playing these games! The "Opponents Wanted" column enabled players in different regions of the country to get to know each other and match their skills in play-by-mail games. These PBM games, and the articles in *The GENERAL* improved the overall level of play and made wargamers more knowledgeable about the games and military history. Since 1964, the hobby has seen a proliferation of magazines and newsletters featuring articles on military history, game strategy and hobby news. Readers should do well to remember that *The GENERAL* was the first (and arguably still the best) and pioneered all these features.

The late 1960s found me in college studying to be an engineer. A good friend of mine for the past 20 years, Lee Tenney, first introduced me to SPI games. They weren't very pretty, nor even very good games, but they had some fresh ideas. I remember *Kursk* where the armor got to move again (exploit) after combat. Whatever else you might say about the Company, they published a lot of games on many different subjects. I still have difficulty contemplating just how many games James Dunnigan, their premier designer, created. (I finally got to meet Jim Dunnigan at a "Modeling, Simulation and Gaming Warfare" course at Georgia Tech in the Summer of 1983.) The brief success of SPI led to a proliferation of game companies and many innovations in game design; up until that time, Avalon Hill had enjoyed a virtual monopoly on the industry. Avalon Hill, under this impetus, revitalized itself in the early 1970s with the arrival of Don Greenwood and Randy Reed. Quality games such as *THIRD REICH*, *1776* and *PANZER LEADER* would be the result, establishing them as once again the leader in the industry. By the 1980s, there were several major companies and a host of minor ones serving the market Avalon Hill established and SPI expanded.

I was really excited when I pulled into Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore in the summer of 1975 for *ORIGINS I*. It was my first wargame convention, and I was entered in the "Classics", *FOOTBALL STRATEGY* and *PANZER LEADER* tournaments. Matching skills against the best players from around the country in tournaments has always been my favorite part of conventions. I also enjoy going through the exhibit hall and taking a look at such things as miniatures demonstrations. I always look forward to meeting old friends, such as Bruno Sinigaglio, and making new ones. In deference to my advancing years, I don't stay up all night playing games anymore; I try to get at least three hours sleep each night now.

Some of my fondest wargame memories are from games I have played at conventions. My most memorable game was my first tournament win at *ORIGINS 1980* in *RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN*. Since we ran out of time Sunday afternoon at the convention, the championship game was actually played in Rich Hamblen's office at Avalon Hill! A close second was a *WATERLOO* game I played a few years back against a young kid. He won the die roll for sides and immediately picked the PAA (for those readers unfamiliar with the game, the Prussian/Anglo-Allied player has a decided edge in the game—if played well). The kid began explaining to his buddies that he had gotten the PAA side and that he was all but assured of advancing to the next round. I employed a patient French strategy whereby I maneuvered and picked off his delay units. The kid apparently had never seen the French played in this manner; after about ten turns he panicked and made a bunch of 1-1 attacks. He didn't win any of them. And then there was the 13-hour *BULGE* game that I played against Bill Salvatore and the . . . At the risk of overlooking someone, here is a list of my toughest opponents:

1. Phil Evans
2. Bruno Sinigaglio
3. Dale Garbutt
4. Lee Tenney

I have had the pleasure of playing against Phil in the finals of *THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN* tournament three times in this decade. Bruno, also known as "Santa Claus" for his generosity at the gaming table, is always a worthy opponent regardless of the game.

Most wargamers at some time in their lives fancy themselves as a "designer". Who hasn't thought he could improve a game or design a better one on some subject? I started a strategic-level European Theater WWII game my senior year in high school; I'm still working on it ("thou shall complete no game before its time"). But I was always interested in the strategy employed in World War I. Since there was a void of games in that particular area, I designed *GUNS OF AUGUST* which, to date, is my only published game. Being from Virginia, the Civil War has always been of special interest to me as well. I decided to design a strategic-level Civil War game that not only had a lot of historical flavor but that would also be fun and playable. Jon Southard and his playtesters did an excellent job on it. (Wargamers' Rule #3: playtesting is a lot of work but is very rewarding for both the wargamer and in the long run for the publisher.) Unfortunately, most of the major wargame companies either already have a strategic-level Civil War game or for some strange reason seem to think that Civil War games are unmarketable—so it remains unpublished.

The hobby has come a long way in the past 30 years. I have had the pleasure of growing up with the hobby. I am in my late 30's now and have two young future wargamers (my boys). I still enjoy wargames immensely and expect to be involved in the hobby for many years to come. I am lucky to have a very understanding wife. There are quite a few companies and many, many games these days. However, I find my available wargaming time more limited and, therefore, I find myself more discriminating in what I buy and play. This puts more pressure on designers and publishers to produce quality games, as I suspect that I am the "norm". What do I look for in a game? (And you thought the lists were over!)

1. An interesting military historical topic.
2. A well-researched game with an accurate OB/OA and terrain for the level of the game.
3. A playable game (I buy games to play them, not to worship their infinite detail).
4. Clear, concise rules.
5. Attractive components (if you're going to do something, you might as well do it right).

A good designer can build realism and historical flavor into a wargame without sacrificing playability or quality. I simply don't buy games that lack these. (Wargamers' Rule #4: the hobby needs playable and enjoyable games that can be played in 3-5 hours.)

What does the future hold for the hobby? I certainly see computer games getting more sophisticated with ever more detail and better graphical representation. However, I don't see them replacing board wargaming. People like to move counters around on a nice mapboard. They like being able to see what all is going on, and to study the game charts and tables. For most people, wargaming is a social event where they interact with and enjoy the company of other gamers. One of the great limitations of computer games is that usually only one person can interact with it at a time.

I see a slowly-growing hobby over the next decade. I believe interest will remain in each of the various branches of our hobby: board wargames, miniatures, role-playing, and computer games. I see a gradual consolidation of the wargame companies into four or five major ones. With so many other activities competing for their time and money, wargamers will become more selective about what they buy and play. They will insist on quality and *playable* games and that will put the pressure on designers, developers and publishers to do ever better.

My number one hope for the future is that all wars are fought with cardboard or computers. When will they ever learn . . .

# Infomaniac

By Jon Mishcon

*Jon, for those who may have spent the past seven years in the wilds of Borneo and not know, is the pre-eminent ASL player. A doctor in New England, he spices up an already busy life by drafting the regular "SL Clinic" and updating the original SL scenarios. Too, you'll find him at most all of the East Coast conventions hosting an ASL tournament. Despite this, however, he gives a different view of what the future of our hobby may hold.*

I am NOT an adventure gamer. I'm a WARGamer. How can you tell the difference? No, it's not spelunking in dwarven dungeons. Wargamers wield elven blades as well as the next. No, it's not visions of being nosehigh behind the open turret of a Panther. Adventure gamers can be found pushing cardboard across ersatz steppes. WARGamers are, to a man (yes, yes, I know there are women WARGamers too), "infomaniacs".

Infomaniacs. Those odd dudes who *enjoy* looking at vast arrays of data and trying to make sense of it all. Think about the amount of information you have to assess in your first turn of the average wargame. Tens of units, each with varying capacity, dozens of terrain types, thousands of potential moves—and then project forward all this for at least ten turns. Did someone mention rules? Most of the good *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER* players know 50+ pages of rules intimately.

"Now hold on," someone at the back shouts, "that's not enough. There are lots of weird guys with glasses and multicolored pens who revel in stacks of trivia and never heard of Avalon Hill."

True enough; what I'm talking about here is the difference between a WARGamer and other types of gamers. Many gamers have an interest in history and technology. Many gamers are competitive and have enough "Walter Mitty" in the blood to see themselves as "being there." But this can apply equally to chess players. Scratch one of our anachronists and you'll likely get a discourse on shield use in the Middle Ages. WARGamers are a breed apart.

"OK," that same guy in the back calls out, "but so what? Wargamers are dinosaurs. A blip in history. Starting with H.G. Wells and ending with Jon Mishcon in some nursing home fifty years from now. Isn't the hobby imploding? Aging, balding men in business suits too busy to spend an evening a week romping from Berlin to Stalingrad and back."

Precisely wrong. There are more infomaniacs out there than ever before. Kids raised with clever games. More *potential* wargamers than ever before. Wargamers aren't gone. They're just hard to find. Why?

Well, what attracts players to wargames? Challenge and beauty. Look at the high-schooler who analyzes *Monopoly* and starts to win regularly. Then he sees some game with a map of Europe layered with aircraft or castle festooned with gleaming knights. He gets a real visceral pleasure in laying out the board and pieces. He reads the rules, tries to make a move, tries again. Even if he can't find an opponent, he's got the itch. Something he knows will really be interesting.

Why isn't our high-schooler playing a wargame today? Four reasons. First, computer games are waylaid the novices. Computers won't let you screw up play; and computers are always ready to play against you. Second, graphics of most novice-level wargames frankly can't compare with what young players are used to from video arcades. Instead of delighting, the wargame visual presentation can be appalling. Third, those players who try advanced *computer* wargames find that days of play are required to finish a game, and that computer opponents are all pushovers. Finally, if players do try advanced *board* wargames, they end up spending more time arguing over the rules than playing. Back to the search for challenge and beauty.

What to do to revive the hobby? First, entry level games have got to become challenging and beautiful and simple. *PLATOON* is a good example. A challenge yet simple, you can play without Talmudic scholarship. Good graphics. Not as good as actual models of tanks and ships and men, but still good. I would favor even stronger graphics for maps. Boards allow for three-dimensional play—use this. Helicopters on stands. 3-D hollow buildings. No computer screen can rival a 36-inch wide detailed map covered with strong images.

Second, all advanced wargames are going to have to become computer games. Computers were made to store, sort and compare the huge piles of data that make a wargame "advanced". Advanced wargames don't have to be as visually enticing as entry level games, but they still have to avoid nausea. The ideal computer advanced wargame should have: quick-play instructions with an appendix that gives complete details on all aspects of play (just as if you were writing the rules to a board game); good graphics at the detail level with ability to switch back and forth to an overview map; rapid ability to display unit type, readiness, mode and any other essential characteristic of play; ability to be saved at any time, and to save more than one game; the computer must be able to play either side, or both, and to switch sides; the computer opponent must have the ability to give you a run for your money (if the algorithm isn't good enough to beat you fair and square, then give the machine a progressive handicap); *simultaneous* movement and combat for both

sides; hidden units; automatic handling of the scut work of unit rebuilding/repair and supply; and onscreen help for commands.

"Impossible," the gentleman way in back shouts. "You'll never live to see it." Precisely wrong again, my friend. There is already on the market a computer game that does everything I've just described. (Well, almost everything—the game documentation stinks and the computer opponent is still too easy to beat.) Is the future coming? NO—the first generation of the future is here now. WARGaming is just going through a transition. Transition is mostly new information. Infomaniacs love new information.

## Spanning the Ages

By Kevin Barrett

*Kevin Barrett began earlier than most, and has done more than most, in this hobby. Now he makes his way with Iron Crown Enterprises, pushing the frontiers of the industry into new realms. But, as for so many, our magazine brought him one incalculable bonus—a close friend. In summation, his short article speaks for all of us who love The GENERAL.*

In 1971, I was eight years old, in grade three, and living on 12th Street in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. In that year, comfortably stranded out on the Canadian prairies, I first got my hands on a copy of *PANZERBLITZ*. At first, all that I was interested in were those black silhouettes on the horizon. They looked cool (I think I would have said "groovy" at that time), but what waited inside? Certainly more than I ever could have imagined—at any age. I remember that the introduction to the fold-out rules read something like, "... go through all these rules carefully because *PANZERBLITZ* is unlike any other wargame you have played before ..." Ha! No preconceptions here; I didn't even know that other wargames existed.

Though it took me five years of weekends and evenings to learn that one game, several others were to follow: *RICHTHOFEN'S WAR*, *LUFTWAFFE*, *TOBRUK* and others. Remembering this makes me now think back to my public school days, to Mathew Watkins and the Sopwith Dolphin he preferred, to Dean Coldham and the Fokker Triplane. Good times I will never forget.

By 1979 I had supplemented my growing interest in the wargame and adventure gaming industries with a *GENERAL* subscription. Struck by the magazine's physical quality, debate and insight, I was catapulted ever deeper into this strange and wonderful world (and "strange" it is; just hang out for awhile at your local convention).

Now what has *The GENERAL* magazine meant to me ... Well, to put it simply: a lot. It was through *The GENERAL*'s Opponents Wanted column that I would eventually meet one of my greatest and fastest friends. I cannot remember now exactly how his ad went. Was it, "... new opponents needed to be trampled ...", or "... friendly gamers meeting every other weekend ..." (Really, only two types of Opponents Wanted ads ever appeared in *The GENERAL*.) Regardless, I drummed up my courage and made a phone call to "Art". That Saturday I showed up at his house in central Etobicoke, not half an hour away from my own. There, five guys all much older than me (they must have been at least 25!) were wrestling out a strategy over a *Terrible Swift Sword* display. Art turned out to be a second year university student, while I was just in my second year of high school. Only five years difference, but at that age, half a lifetime of experience separated us. I guess I was intimidated. However, after some surprisingly friendly introductions (these guys even shook my hand), we broke out the *SQUAD LEADER* game. Before the day was done, they designated me the group's *SQUAD LEADER* "rules lawyer" and I became one of them.

How this could have happened, I wonder. Under any other set of circumstances, Art and I would never have had occasion to talk with one another as equals, let alone meet in the first place. *The GENERAL* and Avalon Hill games had the strength to break down age barriers and social stigmas while building an everlasting bond between two people who would have otherwise passed on the street and been totally oblivious to one another. To think, it all came to us through the simple power of play.

Almost ten years have passed since that first great day. Art has married and I have moved far away. However, we know that walls could never be built high enough to make us forget those lazy afternoons and long evenings spent over *THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN* or *THIRD REICH*. But that is the way of good friends sharing our hobby.

So, what have Avalon Hill games, and their magazine, brought to all of us? Competition, non-destructive (indeed, constructive) conflict, comradery, great memories and friendship. If you were to ask me, I'd say that the price of years of subscribing to *The GENERAL* stands infinitesimally small when measured against the value I'm sure that we have all derived from it, and the games it supports.



# THE TOP TURRET GUNNER DOESN'T ANSWER

## The Long Goodbye

By Paul A. Rivas

*Amidst this celebration, it is wise to remember that The GENERAL isn't for everyone . . .*

It's a sad fact of life that almost all of us face, at one time or another, the loss of a close friend. Someone with whom we've shared many happy and entertaining hours. Sometimes the loss is due to death. Sometimes to an unexpected cross-country move. Or, sometimes, as in my case, there comes the realization that there is no longer the shared interest that once was there. I guess that's what happened to *The GENERAL* and me.

To begin with, I'm a 53-year-old, semi-retired, one-man ad agency who has been writer/photographer/designer for the past three decades. Sometime during the early 1960s I was introduced to Avalon Hill's *TACTICS*, *GETTYSBURG* and *U-BOAT*. It was a new concept to me, and one that greatly appealed to my historical curiosity. I had grown up during World War II in one of the Arsenal of Democracy's most important cities—Detroit. The war had made a lasting impression on me. There was one incident just after the war that I will never forget . . . but more on that later.

From these first few simulations, my library grew with the addition of *LUFTWAFFE*, *PANZERBLITZ*, *RICHTHOFEN'S WAR*, *PANZER LEADER* and other great games. Along the way I began subscribing to *The GENERAL* because of the in-depth articles on the simulations I was interested in and, more importantly, for the additional scenarios, counters and variants that were offered within its pages. I probably read about 20-25% per issue back in those good old days. I can still remember the excitement of the past when I first read "Pieces of PanzerBlitz" and some of the other great articles, or when I discovered a new set of scenarios and counters for *PANZER LEADER*.

In spite of the fact that many of the articles in *The GENERAL* were becoming statistical dissertations worthy of an advanced math class, I continued to subscribe to the old "Commander", mostly out of habit and because I didn't know there was anything better out there. Sometime in the spring of 1977, I discovered S&T and began to realize what a difference there was between *The GENERAL* and a publication devoted to *historical simulation*. I had found a magazine that I could actually read almost cover to cover. Here was history, photographs, orders-of-battle, interesting sidelights to well-known events—plus a game and all the history behind what it depicted.

As the percentage of Avalon Hill titles in my collection began to shrink dramatically in favor of others, I began to have a better understanding of the real difference between S&T and *The GENERAL*. One publication was devoted to enabling the history buff (such as myself) to step back in time and relive the event simulated with much of the tension and excitement that surrounded the real event. The other publication, while presenting history in the concept of a "game", went to great lengths in exploring all of the mechanical and statistical possibilities available in order to help the reader beat his opponent through strategy based heavily on probability and gamesmanship.

Like high-priced lawyers, *The General* articles probe every numerical nuance, every minute probability no matter how remote in order to present the most probable winning solution for each game.

Probabilities are often carried out to hundreds of a percentage point. Volume 21, Number 4 has a good example of what I mean:

". . . a full-strength panzer division over-running a single Soviet unit on clear terrain has a 23% chance of 4-1 or better odds, 35.9% of 2-1 and 41.03% of 1-1. With an unreduced motorized division, they show a 23.8% chance of 3-1 or better odds, 16.67% of 2-1 odds, 44.87% for 1-1 odds and 15.39% for 1-2 odds."

Please, give me a break! After spending a few (and I mean a *very few*) minutes skimming an article such as this, I always felt a strong twinge of pity between the waves of "reader nausea" for the poor opponent who had not read—or properly grasped—the significance of these probabilities (expertly projected to the hundreds of a percentage point) of achieving a certain odds advantage when playing an Avalon Hill game against his well-read, number-crunching opponent mentally armored by numerical odds projections and complex probability tables. I often wondered what type of individual could find satisfaction in such a hollow victory?

Having spent more than two decades in conflict simulation—I didn't say I played wargames—I find it difficult to imagine what type of person would dedicate such a large portion of his life to memorizing probability tables and preparing statistical analyses for all his favorite games. The answer became apparent—the typical reader of *The GENERAL*. Now don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that it's bad; it just seems like a waste of time unless you're an ardent "gamer" whose main interest is in the "win/loss" column rather than the experiencing of the excitement of the unexpected in the simulation. Let's face it. The purpose of most of *The GENERAL*'s coverage is to eliminate the unexpected through careful analysis of all the variables that might impinge on a certain hoped-for outcome.

*The GENERAL* attempts to smooth out the variables in the Avalon Hill games through mathematical dissection, thereby increasing the avid reader's odds of winning what is now nothing more than a game much like blackjack or Monopoly. History and strategy—and the unexpected—are relegated to footnotes as the proper mathematical equations are presented to the number-hungry readership. A famous advertising man once said that you sell the "sizzle" and not the steak; but *The GENERAL*'s readership seems to disprove that creative theory with demands for more and more beef and forget the "sizzle".

Before I purchase a conflict simulation, I want to know if it's accurate in its portrayal of what actually happened—or could have happened. And when I play it, whether in a solitaire format or against a friend, I want to experience the pressures of command and the unexpected. I want to learn what happened at that particular time and place. Could I have changed history had I been on the "cutting edge"? What must it have been like for the Russian commander in the shrinking Stalingrad pocket, or the pilot of a badly shot-up B-17 limping home on two engines with half the crew dead or wounded. *STREETS OF FIRE* and *B-17, QUEEN OF THE SKIES* give a small taste of what it must have been like. But I want more, and a magazine should provide it.

At the beginning of this farewell article, I mentioned an event that happened to me just after the end of World War II when I was about ten years old. My parents and I were taking a pleasant summer's drive in the country heading away from the hot, crowded streets of Detroit. For some reason my dad had pointed the old DeSoto toward the city of Ypsilanti not far from where Henry Ford had built his famous B-24 bomber plant at Willow Run—the one that cranked out a bomber an hour (one every 63 minutes, actually) by 1944.

As we turned a corner, we came face to face with a huge grassy plain that seemed to stretch as far as my eyes could see, from one end of the horizon to the other. And on this sun-baked field squatted hundreds of huge four-engined bombers—B17s and B-24s. These were not just-completed, impotent ungunned planes no longer needed in a war that had just ended. No, these were honored warbirds that sat proudly wearing their battle colors and unit markings that had recently dominated the skies over Europe, or maybe even the Pacific. From every gun port and turret bristled the long, black snouts of 50-caliber machineguns. And there were the holes and patched holes in many.

For some reason, the field was open to the public as was access to all the planes. Men and women walked among the close-parked bombers as young children (by now this group included me) climbed over, around and inside the patient warriors. I remember to this day the smell of the plane's interior, the scorching heat acting as a catalyst for the smells of the plexiglass enclosed turrets, the oiled machineguns, the rubber and plastic hoses, and the painted aluminum. All combined to create that special scent found only in a warbird.

The bomber I chose to explore was much too hot for my dad to crawl around in, but for a 10-year-old boy who grew up during the war years, it was paradise. I made my way up to the top turret and squeezed into the gunner's position. Overhead, the sun beat down from a cloudless blue sky, and the huge guns and belt feeds seemed to fill the small hot turret as I tried to squint through the gunsight. I quickly found the manual turret traverse and soon the guns and I revolved crazily as we swept the skies clean of imaginary fighters. I never forgot that day, and I probably never will until I take my last breath here on earth.

Although it had been many decades since I experienced that rather memorable Sunday afternoon in 1945, it was suddenly and vividly brought back to mind when I sat down and played my first simulation of *B-17*. Like it was only yesterday I could smell the paint, plastic and oil of the Willow Run bomber; and as the FW-190s and Me-109s made their firing passes as they swept pass my limping bomber, I could see that 10-year-old boy of my distant past manning the twin 50s in the top turret swinging the guns to meet each challenge. To me, that's what historical simulations, or wargaming if you choose, is all about.

It's history relived in less painful form. A way to discover the past, and what it must have felt like to the frightened, teen-aged Marine wading from the reef toward's Betio's shore, ablaze in a fiery hell, 500 yards away; or to the battle-weary Confederate soldier running across the open field into the smoking mouths of Union cannons and rifles on Cemetery Ridge; or to be that tense fellow up

top in the turret on whom the lives of his comrades depend as he faces a diving FockeWulf somewhere over the Channel a long way from home. To make nothing more than a mathematical exercise of chance of all the pain, suffering, heroism and death that went into making a particular human conflict is a "game" I would rather not "play".

I awaited the issue devoted to B-17 with anticipation; I was served with yet another series of tables and charts and probabilities. I guess that was the last blow. For all you statisticians and number-crunching gamers who make up the readership of *The GENERAL*, please make no blazing passes with your FW-190s against my smoking, Willow Run bomber trying to limp home. You've finally won your game and that young top turret gunner has finally been stopped—gunned down by your formulae, charts and tables. He no longer answers the intercom, and I have left the readership.

I'm sure that *The GENERAL* will continue to serve your needs as the mathematics of each Avalon Hill game is carefully examined out to the second and third decimal place. Rather than ask the editors to change the content to meet what is apparently a minority expectation, I've surrendered. After all, it's just a "game" isn't it?

Sure, I'll miss the interesting variants and extra counters, and I'll miss the new scenarios for my old classics; but honestly, the magazine's about as interesting to read as my old college math books. *The GENERAL* has become tedious, and there is no more excitement in its pages for us old wargamers. The number-crunchers will continue to support the editorial policy and loudly demand that it remain unchanged in its textbook presentations; and I'm sure that there are enough of them to keep *The GENERAL* in gold braid for years to come. Readers like me will hardly be missed.

"A badly shot-up B-17 was seen to go down in the English Channel. No parachutes were observed."

*One of the nicest things about being editor of a magazine is that you can always have the last word. Despite Mr. Rivas' claim, every reader is missed when their subscription lapses. They have so much to contribute to our pastime. Their potential views, input and contributions are simply too vital to the well-being of a healthy wargaming hobby for their concerns to be ignored.*

*Perhaps Mr. Rivas will approve of our expanded format, one that will give us more chance to "sell the sizzle". I certainly enjoy the history our games simulate, and enjoy learning more about it. (After a couple of degrees in history and a couple decades playing wargames, I'd be in poor shape if I didn't). The historical background is what first drew me, and I suspect many others, to this hobby. I have injected small doses of "history" into these pages occasionally in the past, and recent experiments with more concentrated infusions (lead articles by the designers of RAID ON ST. NAZAIRE and THUNDER AT CASSINO have drawn praise. It's my hope that we will be able to do more in this vein in the future, but always, as with these two examples, with the game very much in the forefront of the presentation—using the game to present the history and not the reverse. After 24 years, it is hard to "teach an old dog new tricks" (most old dogs are dead after 24 years). But, with the help of some gifted gamers and writers in coming issues, *The GENERAL* might still have something to offer the historian-gamer (see Mr. Owen's piece on page 53 of this issue). It would be our hope that, if he likes what he sees in the new *GENERAL*, Mr. Rivas will return.*

*"Upon receiving reports of a B-17 down in the Channel, British MTBs of the Air-Sea Rescue Service were dispatched from Portsmouth."*



# Coming Attractions

## THE LAST HURRAH

*Following the overwhelmingly favorable response that came with publication of a preview in Vol. 24, No. 5 of Don Greenwood's re-working of SIEGE OF JERUSALEM, and in recognition of the large majority on our survey who indicated that they wanted news on works in progress, the editors decided that a new regular column might be in order. Even with the small design staff these days—every one a demon at creating games though—Avalon Hill still releases some dozen titles a year. And publication of something new is always just around the corner. This short column is intended to give readers a short peek at one of these in each issue.*

When Bob McNamara got sand in his eyes and turned his attention to the ASL desert, I decided that I'd stay home. Figuratively speaking of course. Bob is breaking new ground with the system, having spent half a year to see the British and combat in North Africa brought to the fanatics with the release of *WEST OF ALAMEIN*. Now he labors on the Italians; and soon he will be sweating with the Japanese. I, on the other hand, felt that finishing the update of nationalities that appeared in the original *SL* system was equally important. At my strident insistence, the Axis Minors infantry OB and a couple of scenarios featuring them were included with *PARTISAN!* Realizing that Bob wasn't going to be able to devote time to continuing this trend of bringing out the "lesser powers" in small modules, I brazenly volunteered. The first result of my labors will be *THE LAST HURRAH*, an ASL module that should see print before the end of 1988.

*THE LAST HURRAH* will be the sixth ASL module, and much similar to *PARTISAN!* in content. The single counter sheet will carry the Allied Minors infantry OB, some 260 half-inch counters. As before, these encompass a host of nations quickly overrun by the invaders—the Poles, Norwegians, Dutch, Belgians, Yugoslavs and Greeks. All the infantry weapons are included, including the various models of MGs and ATRs with which they struggled to stop the onslaught. The two mapboards include the revised #11, featuring a couple of small hills broken by extensive hedges, and the new #33, open terrain dominated by an extensive (85-hex) grainfield. Together with the original four *SL* mapboards, they can give a fair approximation of the terrain over which the early blitzkriegs rolled.

But the heart of the new module will be, as always, the new scenarios. These eight focus on historical situations involving the early German blitzkriegs of World War II and the many nationalities that fought desperately against the invaders. Paratroopers, armor, air power, audacity and courage were the tools with which Germany planned to overrun the neutral states of Europe. And in less than two years, in actions as far apart as Norway and Crete, the German military accomplished all they set out to do. For the most part, the invaded neutrals were defended by hastily-mobilized reservists stiffened by a few elite units. The actions depicted in *THE LAST HURRAH* will hopefully challenge veteran ASL players to match the tenacity, audacity and victories on both sides in these scenarios re-creating in a small way the German march of

conquest. Whether commanding German armor, Polish cavalry, Greek infantry, Belgian Chasseurs, Norwegian reservists or Luftwaffe paratroopers, if you're an ASL grognard you're bound to find something of interest in the wide spectrum of scenarios included.

The playtest of *THE LAST HURRAH* began in mid-summer with eight scenarios I'd drawn from various sources. With a bit of effort, I managed to locate at least one covering an action by each of the Allied Minor powers. For instance, the Greek scenario simulates a small portion of the fighting around Kastelli in Crete, where a poorly-armed Greek regiment—survivor of the flight from the mainland and their homeland—plunged into the hills to hunt down German paratroopers during the airborne invasion; my research for this one included such esoteric studies as the Australian Official History, a book written in 1943 by an American lady who survived the fall of Greece to flee to Crete and then North Africa, a German pamphlet, and some war crimes testimony about alleged German atrocities on the island presented during the trials in Athens after the war. In fact, I had to do a great deal more digging for these scenarios than I'd had to for the previous ASL module I'd overseen (*HEDGEROW HELL*). And I rediscovered my enjoyment of shifting through dusty old tomes in dank libraries and tracking down elusive bits of information needed to bring a scenario to life.

The playtesters have often felt like orphans I'm sure, since due to the press of other projects (notably this magazine) long periods occasionally pass between contact. But all of them—lead by Russ Hall, John Anderson, Kurt Nordquest, Dan Huberman, Jim Stahler, Mitchell Balicki and Chris Gammon—have contributed mightily. In final form, the playability and challenge of these scenarios will be due more to their efforts than mine. Why, Brian Martuzas even devised a scenario pitting the Poles against the Russians in 1939 that I thought so clever it will bump one of the others in the module. (Never fear, the "ninth" scenario dealing with the Allied Minors will appear in *The GENERAL* at some point).

These scenarios, numbered 43 through 50 (a landmark of sorts for the system) with one to appear later, encompass quite a range of actions. I had originally hoped to concentrate on cavalry actions (as Mac had on partisan ones in the previous small module), but soon found that was impossible. Even with the best of intentions, I couldn't cram horses into every scenario. After that, my self-set task became simpler—locating little-known actions and tracking down as much information on each as I could. Along the way, I was pleased to discover that most of the elements that marked the startling German method of making war came into play in one or more of the scenarios: Stuka support, fast armored drives against disorganized defenders, attack from unexpected quarters, and all the rest. The playtesters then plunged in with a will to refine the raw scenarios, and even though there are disagreements on a host of small points, all seem to have had fun with it. We've together done our best

# BEST FANTASY BOARDGAME EVER!



That's what people are saying about **Magic Realm**, now that it has the Second Edition Rulebook. Why? Judge for yourself:

**Magic Realm** is a game of fantasy adventuring where the players explore a vast forest that contains the remnants of a lost magical civilization. Hidden in this forest and its caves are ruins that hold treasures with wonderful powers; but monsters guard these ruins and prowl the forest, searching for intruders. The only safe havens are a few scattered dwellings where native humans can offer a little help—for a price. The players start at these dwellings and venture into the wilderness in hope of finding fame and riches.

## Unpredictable Game Full of Surprises

**Magic Realm** creates a complete fantasy world that changes each time the game is played.

The players actually start each game by constructing a new **Magic Realm**: they assemble twenty oversized hexagonal tiles to create a new map; they place markers to secretly define where the treasure sites, human dwellings and monster spoor are located; and they pick cards to secretly define exactly which treasures are at each treasure site and dwelling. This creates a realm so large that the players cannot explore it all in the course of the game, so they cannot predict exactly what monsters, natives and treasures will come into play in any game. And, finally, most of the monsters and natives roam the map; they can emerge from the forest in a variety of locations; once they have appeared they can move around the map; they can even vanish back into the forest and reappear later, and it is impossible to predict exactly when and where they will appear. The result is an extremely unpredictable game full of surprises, that plays differently each time it is played.

Each player takes on the role of one of the sixteen major characters who are represented in detail in the game. Each character has a full range of strengths and weaknesses: he has his own starting equipment, his own special abilities, his own list of natives who are friendly or unfriendly to him, and his own set of "action chits" that define his strength, speed, endurance and magic. In the course of the game he can acquire additional weapons, armor, horses and other equipment. His objective is to accumulate fame, notoriety, wealth, magic and/or legendary treasures during the game; he secretly chooses what he is after before the game begins.

The game includes moving, searching, hiding, caves, mountains, different types of horses, trading with natives, hiring natives, fatigue, resting and combat. The combat rules cover a variety of weapons, armor, horses and spells, and it allows individual combat and mass melees between characters, monsters, natives and hired natives. Combat is treated in detail: the characters choose the speed, strength and direction of each blow and maneuver, and each monster and native changes its blows and maneuvers randomly whenever it fights. The results of combat include wounds, damaged armor and fatigue.

If you can't find **Magic Realm** at your local store, don't despair...cast an **AT&T** spell by calling **1-800-638-9292** to order your copy by direct mail with any major credit card. **Magic Realm** costs \$20. Add 10% for postage and handling (20% to Canada/Mexico, 30% overseas). MD residents, please add 5% states sales tax.

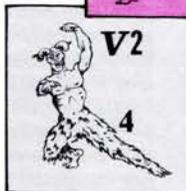
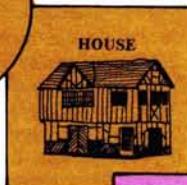
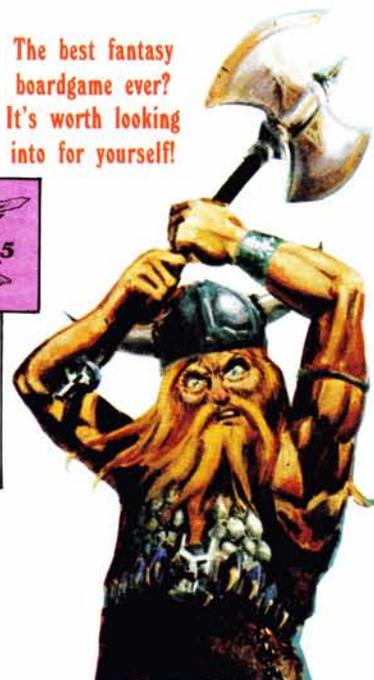
Magic includes five types of magical forces that can be controlled by eight types of spells. Certain characters start with a few spells, and the treasures hidden on the map include spell books, artifacts and ruins that display magical inscriptions or that emanate magical force, and a variety of special devices with special properties. There are spells for flying, seeing into the future, controlling monsters, healing wounds, attacking in battle and much more. Not to mention the monsters and treasure sites that cast spells on the players.

## NEW, 2nd Edition Rules... Features Solitaire Play

The Second Edition Rulebook explains the rules in detail, with many examples, diagrams and charts that summarize play. In addition, the rules have been divided into four sections to allow the players to learn one section at a time and play a simplified game each time they finish a section: the first section explains hunting for treasure, the second explains how to fight monsters, the third explains combat between characters and the last explains magic. The old rules are completely rewritten and many new optional rules have been added, including optional rules for **playing the game solitaire.**

What other boardgame gives you this richness of detail in a game that is new each time you play it? What other boardgame gives you such a complete fantasy world that you can play alone *without a gamesmaster?*

The best fantasy boardgame ever? It's worth looking into for yourself!



## The Avalon Hill Game Company

DIVISION OF MONARCH AVALON, INC.  
4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214

# A HISTORIAN'S GUIDE TO AVALON HILL WARGAMES—PART II

## More of One Man's Views

By Seth Owen

Back in Vol. 19, No. 6 of *THE GENERAL* I rated the Avalon Hill wargame line from the point of view of the amateur historian. Since my original essay, some new games have come and some old ones have gone. Some have even come *and* gone! I haven't caught all of them. As I stated last time, the days are past when a single gamer could hope to play all the games on the market. Undaunted, let me share my views and update "The Historian's Guide."

My inspiration for the original article was Jon Freeman's *The Complete Book of Wargames* (now out of print). In it, he labeled and described the motivations of seven distinct types of wargame players. For those of you who haven't seen it, I'll summarize his typology, because it's still the best I've seen:

**The Historian** considers realism and fidelity to historical fact the most critical elements in a wargame design. He is likely to most prefer the term "simulation."

**The Military Enthusiast** finds tactics, technology and regalia fascinating. Contemporary and near futuristic wars of particular interest. He too likes the term "simulation."

For **The Assassin** winning is the *only* thing.

A challenging contest is the prime attribute of a "good" game for **The Competitor**. Play balance is a must in all of his favorite games.

**The Hobbyist** is the collector and philosopher of the hobby. He likes to write for wargame magazines.

**The Gamer** . . . "just likes games." For him, playability and social interaction are the most sought after qualities in a game.

For **The Specialist** games are just a facet of his interest in some particular historical subject.

My rating scheme (explained below) is biased to the perspective of **The Historian**. These ratings don't address how good a *game* a particular title may be, only how well it suits the special tastes of the player looking for a history book in game form. And, of course, these are my views only.

Only wargames are rated. Fantasy and sci-fi games are obviously of no interest to our "Historians". Also excluded are several games that deal with wars that never were (*BLITZKRIEG*) or haven't happened yet (*TAC AIR*), unless they happen to have at least one historical scenario (*FLIGHT LEADER*). Also not included are historical games of a non-military nature (*GUNSLINGER* or *1830*). Unlike the last time, I have included some out of print game titles; they're all still available in the back pages of the Avalon Hill catalogue, so if the Historian wants them he can still get them.

### The Rating Scheme

**ORDER OF BATTLE:** This rates the accuracy of the OB, taking into consideration the level of abstraction in the design. This category includes such things as correct unit identifications, correct unit types, accurate unit strengths and capabilities. If machines are present (ships, aircraft, AFVs), the realistic portrayal of their abilities and limitations is reflected here.

1—A rating of "1" indicates that the OB borders on fantasy. A serious student of military history will gain no information—only misinformation—from this game.

2—The player gets a rough feel for the forces involved, but there are serious errors or omissions.

3—The OB is not completely inaccurate, but only adequate for game purposes. It's not so bad that it detracts from good ratings elsewhere for the game.

4—Good solid OB that provides satisfactory data for the amateur with an interest in the period and subject.

5—Professional quality OB work, equal to or better than that found in most books on the subject.

**MAP:** This category rates the accuracy of the map, both in physical dimensions and terrain effects. The realism of the effect of weather on play are also taken into account within this rating category.

1—A useless map. It may include fictitious terrain features, mislocated cities and other horrors. The result is that the historical situation is not even approximated.

2—There are some serious errors that tend to direct play down ahistorical paths.

3—Decent work is indicated by this rating; no errors are present that distort history, though one doesn't get much insight into how the terrain really affected events.

4—This map gives you insight into how the terrain affected or limited military operations. A blank hex-sheet for a naval or aerial game gets an arbitrary rating of "4".

5—One could motor around the battlefield using this map.

**TACTICS:** This category rates the *how* of fighting the battle. How well does the game recreate the mechanics of battlefield events. The forte of tactical games of course, but a strategic game can also be informative in this area.

1—Any resemblance to the actual event is purely coincidental.

2—You get the historical results, but for the wrong reasons.

3—An adequate treatment for a game.

4—A good study which gives some insight into how the event unfolded.

5—Accurate enough for military instructional purposes. This game recreates how the battle (war, campaign, firefight) was fought and illustrates the tactics of the period.

**STRATEGY:** The final category, this one covers the *why* of the historical event. Does the game present the player with the same problems as history did the actual commander? Are the historical solutions or reasonable alternatives available? Do events happen because the rules force them to, or is strategy guided down historically possible paths?

1—The best advice is to avoid reading anything about the event. It will only mess up your chances of winning. Ahistorical or impossible strategies are

the norm and provide the best chances of victory.

2—You get the historical outcomes, but for the wrong reasons or because the rules require it explicitly.

3—You get a feeling for why things happened as they did, but little insight into possible alternatives.

4—This will give you the alternatives as well.

5—If you can do well in this game, feel free to criticize the historical commanders. This game is as close to being in command as you can get without dodging bullets.

The final rating for each game is a report-card-like letter grade. This is derived by simply adding the four ratings, multiplying the raw score by five, and assigning the letter grade to the percentile found:

90-100=A; Excellent military history.

80-89=B; Good historical treatment.

70-79=C; Fair history.

60-69=D; Passable history, better be a *good* game.

50-59=E; Poor treatment of the subject.

Less than 50=F; Forget it.

A grade below "C" will indicate to the Historian that there's little to interest him here. Even if there happens to be a good score in a particular category, the entire effect is wrong. A "C" rated game might interest the historically minded gamer if he has a special interest in the subject; look at the specific ratings. A game that achieves a "B" will probably interest the Historian. There might be a flaw or two, but you probably know enough to compensate; look to the specific ratings to see where the weakness lies. An "A" game will definitely interest the Historian . . . and it may even be fun to play.

In each game, all historically based advanced, optional and experimental rules are assumed to be in play. The true "Historian" won't let playability stand in the way of history.

Continuing the format I established last time, the games appear in rough order of publication. A final caveat. The ratings do *not* rate the game as a whole. No attempt is made to consider how much fun it is, only whether it can be called "History".

### The Ratings

#### STRUGGLE OF NATIONS

OB—5 Map—5 Tactics—5 Strategy—5 Grade—A  
Last time I noted a void in Avalon Hill's wargame line; there was no good historical treatment of a Napoleonic campaign. The void was briefly filled by this game, but with its appearance on the discontinued parts list the void comes again. Historians would be well advised to pick up a copy before they become too scarce or costly.

#### LITTLE ROUND TOP

OB—5 Map—5 Tactics—4 Strategy—4 Grade—A  
Another bargain. The system for ordering units around is a little too restrictive. Telling two companies that are in line together to advance 40 yards does not take four times the command effort of telling a single company to advance 20 yards. See *DEVIL'S DEN* for an improvement and refinement on this system. All in all, this is a good little study of the 20th Maine's famous fight. (The original OSG title better describes the focus of the game.) For the

Historian interested in the whole fight for the height, *DEVIL'S DEN* is a better choice.

#### BATTLE FOR ITALY

OB—4 Map—4 Tactics—4 Strategy—4 Grade—B Using a simple version of the *STRUGGLE OF NATIONS* system, this game loses quite a bit as far as the Historian is concerned. Not a bad system at all, a "B" is certainly a good rating. It's just that the Napoleonic fan who's already tried *SON* will miss all the fine details.

#### HUNDRED DAYS BATTLE

OB—5 Map—4 Tactics—4 Strategy—4 Grade—A The OB here is more informative than *BATTLE FOR ITALY*'s, though otherwise the game shares the same system with all its good and bad points. Another game that Historians should grab before it disappears into the collections maintained by Hobbyists. The price is so low that any wargamer can hardly go wrong on this one.

#### BULL RUN

OB—5 Map—5 Tactics—3 Strategy—3 Grade—B The good terrain analysis and OB are hurt by the simplistic combat system. The "classic" CRT has a lot of good points (simplicity, PBM usage and speed come to mind), but it's only a passable representation of Civil War combat. The worst sin of this game is, however, the lack of morale rules. It is impossible to have the historical rout take place. That may be fine, perhaps even necessary, for the Gamer or Competitor, but no good for the Historian.

#### UP FRONT

OB—5 Map—3 Tactics—1 Strategy—3 Grade—D This was a tough one! No map; playing card system; great "fog of war"—all this makes this a game hard to fit into neat pigeonholes. The OB stuff is fine. In a "generic" type of tactical game such as this, the OB score represents how well the weapons, men and vehicles interact. This game does very well with all of them. The "Map", on the other hand, is a little too chaotic. The game works best if you don't think about what's happening too hard. If you try to imagine it as a realism, you will be confused and disappointed. Consider it the gaming equivalent of impressionistic painting. The card play bears no resemblance to the kind of decision making made at the squad level. That building the SL spotted doesn't just disappear because his "hand is full". A leader at that level always has his hands full staying alive, but the terrain is fairly constant. *UP FRONT* reminds me of another company's fantasy game where the ground you sit on can literally change under your feet. The Historian is going to find the whole experience quite bizarre. It's a fun game, though.

#### HITLER'S WAR

OB—2 Map—3 Tactics—3 Strategy—3 Grade—E The game is full of compromises that distort history but improve balance and play value. The interplay of production decisions, research and combat will quickly make the OB close to fanciful. The map is not detailed enough to differentiate between plausible strategies and implausible ones. It's just as easy to invade the rocky coasts of Spain or Greece as the beaches of France. It is meant to be enjoyed as a good game. The Historians among us will much prefer *THIRD REICH*.

#### ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER

OB—5 Map—5 Tactics—5 Strategy—4 Grade—A What, even *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER* doesn't rate a perfect score!?! Well, no it doesn't. I made my bias clear the last time, but I doubt that many readers have the previous article in front of them right now. So, I'll restate why I didn't give *SL*, the gamettes or *ASL* a perfect 100. It is a very good

system, but warfare at the level of a battalion or company commander is very foggy in the extreme. The only place it gets worse is at the level of platoon or squad leader. *SL*, and *ASL*, just don't have much fog of war or command control problems reflected. Because the system fails to really address these things, it can't be considered the "perfect" tactical game system. Sorry.

#### FIREPOWER

OB—5 Map—5 Tactics—5 Strategy—4 Grade—A If you can get an umpire, the game gets a "5" across the rating system. Lots of detail, lots of data, and lots of historical scenarios.

#### DEVIL'S DEN

OB—5 Map—5 Tactics—5 Strategy—5 Grade—A The only aspect of the battle missing is the "blundering into" nature of the fighting in the woods. This game covers the struggle at both Devil's Den and Little Round Top in detail.

#### EMPIRES IN ARMS

OB—5 Map—4 Tactics—5 Strategy—5 Grade—A This is the game that Historians wanted *WAR & PEACE* to be. They had to wait a few more years to get it, but it was worth the wait. The naval system is too bloody; but I've read that this was a conscious design decision to improve the flow of play. Historians bothered by this may want to try some tinkering. The naval action is, however, clearly secondary to the land game, so this minor anomaly doesn't drive down my rating.

#### FLIGHT LEADER

OB—5 Map—5 Tactics—5 Strategy—5 Grade—A The original, Air Force, version of the game would have been of marginal interest to the Historian (though perfect for the Military Enthusiast). The addition of all those 1950s and 60s jets turned this into a fantastic game for the Historian. Almost every scenario is either historical or taken from a historical "what-if". This is one of my personal favorites because it can appeal to just about every type of wargamer equally well. Even the Assassin can have his fun. The Historian will try gaming the historical version of the Sidra incident with him: the Historian flies the SU-22s and the Assassin can fly the F-14s! Common ground. We need more games that give us such common ground. Both this game (and the next) get a "5" for the map because both are so much better looking than blank hex sheets; and they even have a small effect on play.

#### KNIGHTS OF THE AIR

OB—5 Map—5 Tactics—5 Strategy—5 Grade—A In Vol. 19, No. 6 I asked if there was a "Tom Oleson" out there who could do for *RICHTHOFEN'S WAR* what Tom has done for *ANZIO*. I guess *KOTA* can be considered the answer to my query. I suggested a "complete rules rewrite, some simultaneous movement and the maneuver cards included as a standard." While the movement system is not exactly simultaneous, it accomplishes the same thing. Otherwise, the rules have been rewritten and a type of maneuver card included as standard play. Am I satisfied? As a Historian, I'd have to say YES. The planes perform more accurately, I've got Zeppelins to shoot down, and spotting does take its rightful place as an important factor. For the Historian, the only disappointing aspect is the limited number of different aircraft. *RW* gave you the counters for 34 different planes, with stats for another 32 in the "Battle Manual". In *KOTA*, you have to settle for 20. Historians will play *KOTA*; just about everyone else will keep playing *RICHTHOFEN'S WAR*.

#### PATTON'S BEST

OB—5 Map—4 Tactics—5 Strategy—5 Grade—A Battle is a very personal thing for a tank commander.

This game captures it very well. The tank commander makes decisions appropriate to his ground-level viewpoint. Only the Historian may appreciate the subtle differences between models, but they are there. Some cards are identical in terms of the game. The Historian, on the other hand, cares that he's riding in an M4A3, not an M2—even if no one else does. I think my favorite touch is that every unidentified enemy tank is a Tiger and every ATG an '88. In a strict sense it wasn't true; but to the individual tanker, it had to be "truer than true".

#### B-17, QUEEN OF THE SKIES

OB—5 Map—4 Tactics—5 Strategy—5 Grade—A Another solitaire game that captures that peculiar feeling of being a target. Fate plays a large role in war, but for bomber crews it loomed especially large. There were very few decisions you could make (even as the pilot), though these few often meant life and death. Most stuff (fighter attacks, flak, equipment failure) just happened to you, and you simply had to deal with the results.

#### RAID ON ST. NAZAIRE

OB—5 Map—5 Tactics—4 Strategy—4 Grade—A While also a solitaire game, *RSN* doesn't focus on the player as "target" but rather on the player as "octopus wrestler". The *Campbeltown*'s commandos were facing heavy odds and slim chances. Against a thinking defensive player, they would have no chance at all. Here the British player can coordinate his units better than was historically possible, whereas the actual boat commanders and commando teams were really on their own once the action started. It's hard to overcome being the omniscient player, and hence the lower ratings for Tactics and Strategy.

#### THUNDER AT CASSINO

OB—4 Map—5 Tactics—3 Strategy—4 Grade—B The Historian will find the abstracted nature of the *STORM OVER ARNHEM*-style combat system easier to tolerate with platoon-sized units found in this game. This is a good compromise title for the "Gamers" and "Historians" to meet on common ground. Altogether, it is an improvement in the *SOA* system for the history buff.

#### BRITANNIA

OB—2 Map—3 Tactics—1 Strategy—3 Grade—F This is another game that was certainly not aimed at the Historian.

#### PLATOON

OB—5 Map—4 Tactics—5 Strategy—5 Grade—A (OB—4 Map—3 Tactics—4 Strategy—4 Grade—C) This was another tough game to judge. A lot depends on whether you think this is a game about Viet-Nam combat, or about a war movie. I feel it's a game about the movie, so I rated it "A" as far as reflecting the "history" of the movie script. As a game about Viet-Nam, it gets the ratings in parentheses. Take your pick.

#### GETTYSBURG

OB—4 Map—4 Tactics—3 Strategy—3 Grade—C A giant step backward for the Historians, but a great leap forward for game players and the hobby.

#### ENEMY IN SIGHT

OB—1 Map—4 Tactics—1 Strategy—1 Grade—F It really isn't fair to the game to compare it to the other wargames on these pages. It really isn't a "war" game at all, just a neat card game with the nomenclature of naval warfare used to add flavor and an excuse to have some unusual game mechanics. The only reason to include it is to warn the unwary Historian that, despite the warlike title and cover art, this game was never meant for you. Like *UP FRONT/BANZAI*, *ENEMY IN SIGHT* revolves

around the proper play of cards, not the principles of military art. The map gets a "4" only because I promised that naval games would at least get that. There is no map, of course, nor anything that resembles the concept in the game. (Even *UP FRONT* has terrain cards!) No matter, it is still rated an "F" for the guy/gal who likes simulation detail. It is great fun to play though.

## Conclusion

I gave a quick biographical sketch in my last article, so I won't repeat it here—except to say that I'm up to 19+ years of active gaming now. I've been around longer than most, I guess, though certainly not than all. I consider myself, on the "Freeman Scale", a Gamer first, followed by Military Enthusiast, Historian and Hobbyist (in that order). I've got a little bit of the Competitor in me too. I'm only an Assassin on bad days. The categories overlap. Most of us are all of them to some degree.

Five years ago, I gave the line an average score of 13.7. The games I've examined this time average some 16.5 points. As a group, I see the newer games as much closer to what historically inclined gamers want. All the games rated below a "B" in this group of games were expressly designed to appeal to gamers for whom history takes a back seat to the game play. This is in contrast to the earlier list, where many games ended up with a "C" and below due to design flaws rather than by intent. The designers at Avalon Hill have never done their jobs better.

## Recapitulation

Letter Grade	Raw Score	Game Title
A	20	DEV, FL, SON, KOTA
	19	ASL, EIA, FP, PAT, B17, PLA
	18	LRT, RSN
B	17	HDB
	16	BR, BFI, CASS
C	15	(PLATOON)
	14	GE88
D	12	UF
E	11	HW
F	9	BRIT
	7	EIS



## Last Hurrah . . . Cont'd from Page 51

to balance the scenarios, and make them a challenge for any true *ASL* devotee. I think you'll find that, once again, you will learn a bit once you've mastered these, for they certainly play different from those rather "regular" ones found in *BEYOND VALOR*, *PARATROOPER* and *YANKS*.

I've mentioned only a couple of the scenarios thus far. Everyone involved has their favorite, of course. Every *ASL*-er I've ever known will regale you with tales of what he considers the best of the published scenarios; I'm no different. For my money, the very first in this module is the very best, wherein the Polish "Pomorska" Cavalry Brigade clashes with German armor. But your favorite might well be different, and you've quite a range of situations to choose from: the above-mentioned Greek scenario; an attempt by German paratroopers to crash through a Norwegian roadblock; German SS playing hide-and-seek in the Ardennes with elite Belgian troops; a desperate battle between mobilizing Yugoslavian reservists and the lead elements of a hard-driving panzer division; Dutch defense of their fortified line against a German assault from the rear; a Belgian attempt to retake a bridge near Eban-Emael in which Stukas play a role; and a Polish charge to break through Russian lines to freedom in the last days of the fighting there (the scenario contributed by Brian Martuzas). Together, I think these actions give an excellent cross-section of the heroism and frustration of those early days of World War II. ☆

# BACK ISSUES

Only the following back issues of *The GENERAL* remain in stock; price is \$4.00 per issue (plus the usual shipping and handling charges). Due to the low quantities of some back issues, if ordering, please specify alternative selections. Below is a listing of each in-stock back issue by subject matter; game abbreviations are italicized and standard (a partial listing may be found on the "Opponent's Wanted" form on the insert of this issue). Type of article is indicated by the following abbreviations: H—Historical, DN—Designer's Notes, V—Variant, SR—Series Replay, S—Strategy, Q—Questions, P—PBM (postal), Sc—Scenarios, A—Analytical. The featured game for each issue is always the first one listed. Those printed in red indicate one-color reprints of previously out-of-stock issues.



- 14-3: *AIW*—H, DN, S, Q; *TRC*—S; *3R*—S; *STAL*—SR; *WAS*—V; *PB*—Sc  
 14-5: *SL*—H, A, DN, Q; *WS&IM*—A; *TRC*—S; *MD*—S; *SST*—S; *3R*—S  
 15-2: *PL*—V, Sc; *STAL*—V; *3R*—V; *DD*—DN; *RB*—S; *VITP*—S  
 16-1: *AZ*—Sc, S, DN; *3R*—S; *NP*—S; *PB*—SR; *1776*—S; *DIP*—S  
 16-4: *MR*—A, V, DN, Q; *COI*—S; *3R*—S; *TRC*—SR  
 17-4: *FE*—S, P, DN, V; *MD*—V, Q; *COI*—SR; *VITP*—S; *1776*—Sc; *WO*—A; *SST*—V; *NAP*—S  
 17-5: *CM*—S, V, Q; *RW*—V; *SL*—V; *STAL*—V; *PL*—S; *3R*—S, SR; *CAE*—V; *KM*—S; *MR*—S  
 18-1: *FITW*—A, Q; *BIS*—S; *SL*—S; *DUNE*—V; *DIP*—S; *AK*—A; *PB*—SR; *AL*—S; *W&P*—S  
 18-2: *AF*—A, Sc, Q; *AK*—V; *3R*—DN; *TB*—V; *SL*—S, Sc; *AIW*—V; *VITP*—S; *DIP*—S; *DD*—S  
 18-3: *GOA*—S, DN, V, Q; *AOC*—V, Sc; *AK*—S; *VITP*—V; *SL*—S, Sc; *WS&IM*—SR, P; *DIP*—S  
 18-4: *GL*—H, V, A, Q; *SL*—Sc, A; *LW*—V; *W&P*—SR; *AOC*—S, P; *FE*—V; *WAS*—S; *AK*—S  
 18-5: *3R*—S, A, V, DN, Q; *SL*—S, A, Sc; *TRC*—V; *TB*—V; *RW*—V; *CL*—A; *DUNE*—V  
 18-6: *FT*—A, Sc, V, DN; *VITP*—V, Q; *MD*—S, Q; *SOTN*—A, Q; *SUB*—Sc; *BL*—V  
 19-1: *SOA*—A, V, DN, SR, Q; *TLD*—A, Q; *3R*—S, Q; *DWTK*—DN; *TB*—A  
 19-2: *BB*—H, Sc, S, DN; *TLD*—A, Q; *SL*—V; *3R*—S; *SOA*—SR  
 19-3: *GSL*—A, Sc, V, SR, Q; *DIP*—A; *RW*—Sc; *GE*—V; *1776*—Sc; *LRT*—V, Q; *SL*—A  
 19-4: *CIV*—A, V, DN; *CM*—V; *DIP*—A; *GL*—V; *AL*—V; *TR*—Sc; *WO*—Sc; *SLA*; *3R*—S, Q  
 19-5: *SON*—A, S, H, Q; *W&P*—S, Q; *DIP*—A; *WAT*—V; *WS&IM*—Sc; *SL*—A  
 19-6: *VITP*—PBM, SR; *3R*—V, Q; *DIP*—A; *FT*—V; *BIS*—V; *NW*—A; *SL*—A, Sc; *SUB*—V, Sc  
 20-1: *GI*—S, A, DN, V, Q; *VITP*—SR  
 20-2: *TT*—A, DN, S, Q; *MR*—V; *LRH*—A; *SL*—Sc; *W&P*—V; *GOA*—S, Q; *DIP*—A; *PL*—V  
 20-3: *FRED*—S, V, Sc, Q; *PB*—A; *1776*—Sc; *DWTK*—S, V, Q; *DIP*—A; *CON*—V, S  
 20-4: *FITG*—S, A, Q; *SST*—PBM, V; *AW*—A; *DUNE*—PBM; *DIP*—A; *SL*—DN, A, Q; *BL*—S; *KM*—V  
 20-5: *BR*—SR, S, H, Q; *LRT*—S; *DIP*—A; *GSL*—Sc; *GE*—A; *WS&IM*—Sc; *SON*—Q  
 20-6: *B-17*—A, V, SR, Q; *AF*—V; *LW*—S; *DL*—S; *FE*—S; *DIP*—A; *MD*—S; *BR*—SR; *GOA*—Sc; *SL*—A; *PL*—Q  
 21-1: *UF*—S, A, SR, DN, Q; *SOA*—S; *GI*—H, S; *TRC*—S; *DD*—S  
 21-2: *NAB*—S, DN; *W&P*—S, A, Q; *NAP*—S, Q; *DIP*—A; *FR*—S; *FE*—S; *3R*—S; *BFI*—S; *1776*—S; *SL*—A  
 21-3: *BB*—S, SR, Q; *3R*—S; *SL*—A, H; *SOTN*—V; *DIP*—A; *FRED*—S; *FE*—S; *Q*; *SST*—S; *TLD*—S; *PL*—Sc; *1776*—Q; *SOA*—Q  
 21-4: *PGG*—S, SR; *PB*—A; *3R*—S; *TRC*—S, V, Q; *DIP*—A; *STAL*—V, S; *SL*—Sc; *PK*—Q  
 21-5: *HW*—S, V, A; *MR*—S, Q; *OR*—A; *DIP*—A; *3R*—A; *RB*—S; *CON*—V; *CIV*—S; *SL*—A  
 21-6: *FP*—H, V, SR; *AIW*—S, Sc; *BL*—V; *TAC*—V, Q; *SL*—A; *PK*—Q  
 22-1: *PA*—A, S, Q; *TB*—A, V; *DWTK*—DN; *TR*—V; *GSL*—PBM; *DIP*—A; *AOC*—S; *WAS*—S, Q; *AK*—V; *CIV*—S; *3R*—S, Q  
 22-2: *BANZ*—A, SR, Q; *FT*—A, S; *SUB*—Sc; *VITP*—S, Q; *AK*—Q  
 22-3: *PB*—SR; *PL*—Sc, V, Q; *SOA*—S; *3R*—V; *DIP*—A; *CIV*—A; *UF*—Sc, Q; *AIW*—S; *GOA*—A, Q; *TLD*—A  
 22-4: *RF*—A, V, S; *TRC*—V; *PK*—S, Q; *DIP*—A; *3R*—V; *SUB*—V; *PPG*—S  
 22-5: *DEV*—S, A, Q; *GSL*—Sc; *BR*—S; *DIP*—PBM, A; *SC*—V; *FITG*—A; *ASL*—Sc, Q  
 22-6: *ASL*—A, Sc, DN, Q; *FP*—Sc; *FE*—S, Q; *WAS*—A; *DIP*—A; *SL*—S; *TLD*—S  
 23-1: *FL*—A, V; *DL*—V; *B-17*—V, DN; *HW*—S, Q; *VITP*—V; *3R*—S; *TT*—V; *LW*—V; *SST*—V; *RW*—V  
 23-2: *ASL*—A, S, Sc, Q; *BV*—SR; *UF*—S; *DIP*—A; *PL*—A  
 23-3: *SUB*—V, Sc; *ASL*—S, Sc; *BV*—SR; *HW*—V; *BL*—V, Q; *BB*—A  
 23-4: *EIA*—S, DN; *W&P*—V, S; *WS&IM*—Sc; *SC*—V; *NAP*—S; *YS*—S; *3R*—S, Q  
 23-5: *KOTA*—DN, Sc, Q; *WAT*—V; *B-17*—V, Q; *3R*—S; *RW*—V; *ASL*—S, Sc; *VITP*—S  
 23-6: *1830*—DN, S, V, Q; *FP*—Sc; *RB*—S; *DEV*—PBM; *CIV*—S; *MR*—S  
 24-1: *ASL*—V, S, Sc, Q; *SOF*—SR; *TRC*—S; *FP*—Sc; *RF*—S, DN; *PGG*—S  
 24-2: *ASL*—A, S, Sc, Q; *SOF*—SR; *PL*—S; *3R*—S; *DD*—S; *FE*—S  
 24-3: *DIP*—S, A, H; *HW*—V, S; *EIA*—S; *DE*—S; *TV*—Q; *KOTA*—Q  
 24-4: *RSN*—H, D, A, SR, V, Q; *ASL*—V, S, Sc; *FE*—S; *3R*—S  
 24-5: *BRIT*—A, DN, S; *CAE*—S; *CL*—S; *GL*—V; *CIV*—S; *SOJ*—DN; *KM*—V, S; *MR*—S, Q  
 24-6: *CASS*—H, S, SR, Q; *B-17*—V; *ASL*—S, Sc, Q; *AZ*—S; *PGG*—S; *3R*—S, Q

## WHITEYE THE BANDIT STRIKES AGAIN!

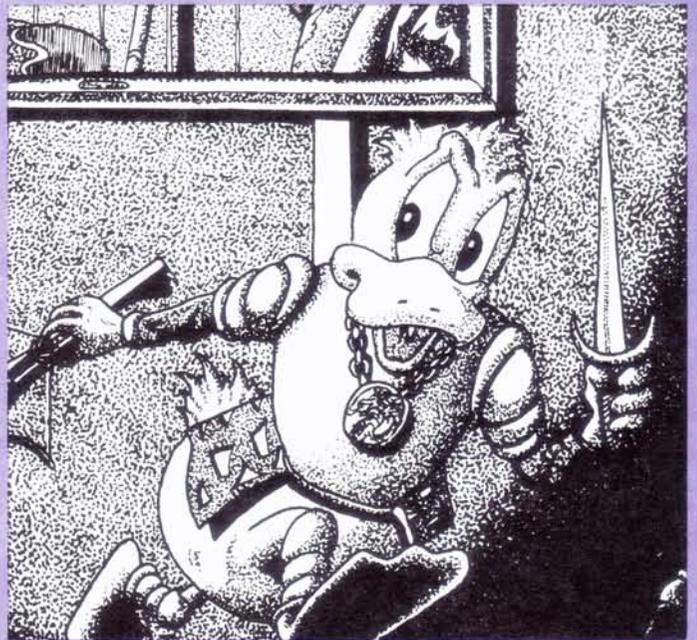
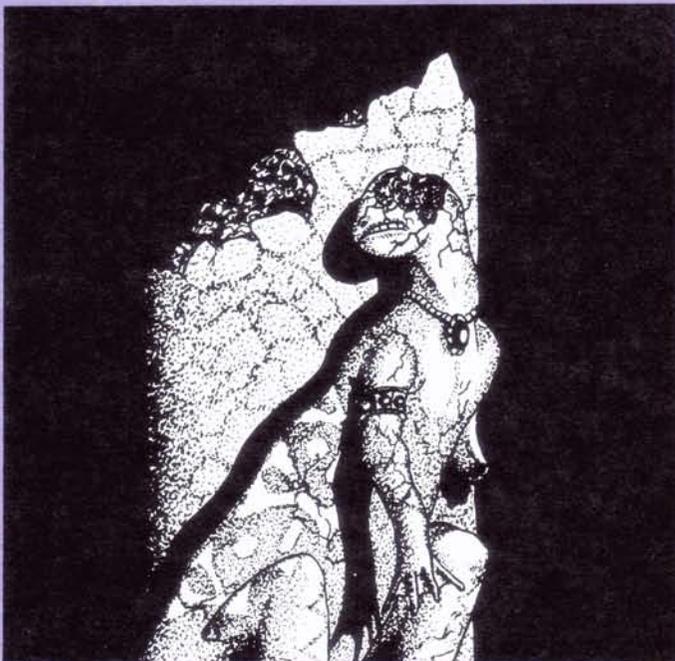
APPLE LANE, SARTAR — In a particularly vicious pre-dawn attack, the notorious bandit Whiteye and his trollkin gang raided several farms in the Apple Lane region — without warning or apparent cause.

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AREA rated at 1200. Provisional seeking pbm or ftf of SL, (have pbm system), BB'65, BB'81, VITP. Will answer all letters. Play all games to. David Lanphear, 8428 Burns Place, Stockton, CA 95209, (209) 957-4135.

Need 2 to 4 more players for pbm KM game. Plus GM for pbm KM—game of 5 to 7 players. Marcel Carbonneau, 240 Iron Dr., Apt. 17, Vista, CA 92083.

Pbm or ftf 3R, W&P, PB, PL, DIP, CIV, HW, KM, DD and more. Will answer all letters or return calls. Jeff Spurlock, 987 Postal Way, Apt. 4, Vista, CA 92083, (619) 726-3495.

Anyone ftf! 1400+ AREA pbm. AZ, A&A/MD, BB'65, DD, SL-GL, STAL, WAT; switching sides for two rated games. Random tables. David R. Mattson, 1300 Magnolia, Denver, CO 80220, (303) 355-5554.

FTf opponents wanted for AK, AZ, CIV, PGG, PL, TRC or any strategic game. AREA rated and fairly good. Any clubs in CT? Nick Sebrrell, P.O. Box 2625, Darien, CT 06820, (203) 966-3232. Looking for mature adult(s) to play ftf any AH game especially FT, FP, SL, BR. Social, friendly, comp. only. Want to learn EIA, CIV and BRIT. Larry McIntire, 1241-9 Washington St., Middletown, CT 06457, (203) 347-9151.

Adult seeks central Florida group for CIV, DIP, 1830. Will ftf local (50mi.) or pbm BL, WSIM, Post-WWII wargames. Rated/unrated. New to wargames. John K. Thacker, 1881 Sandbar Drive, Merritt Island, FL 32953, (407) 452-4768.

To Arms! SL, ASL Berserkers needed for ftf combat in the Naples, Fort Meyers area. All letters will be answered. Dean Leferink, 3584-B Mercantile Ave., Naples, FL 33942, (813) 774-2453.

Going Berserk! Looking for SL, ASL fanatics for ftf combat in Naples, Ft. Meyers area. All letters will be answered. Dean Leferink, 3584-B Mercantile Ave., Naples, FL 33942, (813) 774-2453.

Adult player seeks same for Vietnam, 3R, PB. Ftf in Tamps preferred, but will pbm. Want to learn ASL and others. Good player. Dan Engbreton, 3212 Cavalier Dr., Tampa, FL 33614, (813) 935-2480.

Adult opponents wanted in Atlanta area for AK, BS, BL, DD, etc. and especially for 3R. Also would like info on clubs in area. Mike Scott, 440

## OPPONENTS WANTED

Taberwood Way, Roswell, GA 30076, (404) 993-8892.

Ftf opponents wanted for CAE, PGG, RF, WSIM and others. Any north side Chicago clubs out there? Michael Neubauer, 2541 W. Eastwood, Chicago, IL 60625, (312) 478-0773.

Adult gamer (Prov. 1200) wants pbm PB, PL other pbm games. Also Victory's Civil War and computer Civil War. Bill Detmers, 201 Airwood Dr., East, East Alton, IL 62024, (618) 259-0186.

22-year old gamer looking for ftf play of RF, PGG, GOA (multi-player) TRC, SST, VITP. No miniatures or role-playing please. Jim Falling, 709 W. Green St., #B14, Urbana, IL 61801, (217) 328-3832.

Hey! I want to play RF, SST, TRC, VITP and some multi-player games of GOA and W&P. No miniatures or role-playing. Jim Falling, 809 W. Green St., #B14, Urbana, IL 61801, (217) 328-3832.

Desire ftf in Ft. Wayne area. Play most historical games. Will travel for Rated opponents. My specialties are: CAE, 1776, AK, BB'81, AZ, FT, TRC and 3R. John F. Ade, 534 Meyer Ave., Ft. Wayne, IN 46807, (219) 456-2045.

Desire ftf in Lafayette area. Most historical games. Carl Schwamberger, 3824 S. Co. Rd., 25 E, Lafayette, IN 47905, (317) 474-6718.

New kid on block wishes player who will challenge me. Will play GOA, STAL, FitW. All letters answered. Try me if you dare. Jesse Severe, 105 Lincoln Street, Sheffield, IA 50475, (515) 892-4639.

GE, 1988 ed. Pbm—have system. Include side preference and turn; I move if Union. Andrew Maly, P.O. Box 798, Ft. Polk, LA 71459, (318) 238-3417.

New Orleans AREA Gamers Club seeks players for all game types and skill levels. Greg Schloesser, 3800 Briant Drive, Marrero, LA 70072, (504) 347-7145.

Wanted opponents for ftf or pbm 3R, W&P, MD, AK, PKK, MD. Will travel to play a game in Louisiana. Ricci Moran, P.O. Box 1065, Ruston, LA 71273, (318) 251-9038.

AREA 1500+ ftf CIV, 1776, 1830, 1914, JUT, FR, 3R, PAA, AOC, TRC, BB'81 (2nd ed.), Malta. Howard Newby, 2700 Pulaski Hwy, Apt. C, Chase Manor Motel, Edgewood, MD 21040, (301) 676-5200, ext. 20.

The Maryland Football League wants you! Own a MFL franchise, be a head coach. Ftf Statis-Pro Football in Anne Arundel county. Contact: Brian Youse, 8061 Long Branch Terr. #34, Glen Burnie, MD 21061, (301) 969-2733.

George McHugh—Call me! Looking for ftf opponents. I play large number of wargames. Two player or multi-player games. Kevin Combs, 15121 Kalmia Dr., Laurel, MD 20707, (301) 725-1106.

Looking for pbm DIP game? Over 70 GMs listed, plus other info on pbm, DIP in the "Zine Register"—Available for 75c. Ken Peel, 8707 1st Ave., #T-2, Silver Spring, MD 20910, (301) 495-2799.

North Shore Game Club—meetings both north and south of Boston. All games played. Novices and experienced players welcome. Must be 18-years old. Alan R. Moon, 11 Broadway, Apt. 1, Beverly, MA 01915, (508) 922-7488.

DIP players—play DIP by mail with the 'zine Protocol or by computer and modem with its electronic counterpart, Electronic Protocol. Eric Klien, 1 Sinai Circle, B10, Chelmsford, MA 01824, (617) 663-5480.

Adult looking for ftf in metro Boston area. All AH, VG games especially ASL, SL and 3R. I'm not Rated, but 16-year veteran. Call Eric M. Berggren, 28 Elmpace St., #2, Dorchester, MA 02122, (617) 265-4061.

Anyone for GOA? Ftf anywhere by "T" in Boston area. Arnold Leles, 69 St. Rose, #2, J.P., MA 02130, 524-8665.

Seeking pbm 3R, AF, TRC, GI, GUAD. Also twelve players for pbm FT large scenario to begin December 1st. Kurt Romig, 1314-B University Village, East Lansing, MI 48823, (517) 355-6193.

Adult male looking for adult to play ftf Monroe-Toledo-Detroit area. Willing to play most any boardgame. Mike Yentzer, 8809 Hazelwood Dr., Newport, MI 48166, (313) 586-8460.

AREA 1702 wants 16+ for Rated pbm; FE, AOC, TRC, VITP, BR. Also Unrated BB, HW, PAA. Ftf all the above in central MO. Randy Schilb, 2508 Brookside Ct., Columbia, MO 65201, (314) 449-5034.

29-year old wishes to make long term commitment to new or ongoing pbm; EIA, KM, PAX BRIT. Will play any nation. Tom Scarborough, 7517 Oxford, #3H, St. Louis, MO 63105, (314) 727-9829.

Pbm hobby needs new blood! Pbm Gamemaster since 1976 offers DIP, CIV Variants. Players info on games, 'zines, and services—send \$1.00. W.E.J. Hinton, Jr., 20 Almost St., Nashua, NH 03060.

Hey northern NJ! A wargamers club has finally arrived. Join the Elite Gamers' Society. For more info, contact: Brian Sielski, 379 Edmund Ave., Paterson, NJ 07502, (201) 942-2408.

Returning to U.S. in Dec. 88 to Burlington County, NJ. I have over 35 Avalon Hill Games, Victory and West End only. Serious wargamers please. Larry Behrns, 261st P.S.C., APO, NY 09176.

Opponents wanted for pbm USAREUR via MPS: BB, CAE, FT, GOA, RW, TRC, SOA, WSIM, GE. Schweinfurt. David Brady, HHC 2/30 Inf., APO, NY 90033, 097218-3325.

To play Statis-Pro Football in the NY City area; ftf or by pbm. I have a system for pbm. Any sports players? Bert Portier, 2935 Gillmore St., E. Elm Hurst, NY 11369, (718) 803-1642.

Ftf opponents wanted: Rockland, Westpoint area. BB, BR, DEV, GE, PK, SL, some ASL experience. 5-years gaming experience. Robert Courtney, 8 Gurnee Ave., Haverstraw, NY 10927, (914) 429-3127.

Pbm or ftf play SL, ASL, BL, CIV, KM, SC. Have applied for AREA rating. Frank Stolte, 35 Lakeside Crescent, Lancaster, NY 14086, (716) 684-4303.

AREA 1200 (Prov.) seeks pbm BL, ASL; ftf ASL, KM, SC. Moderate "blind" pbm ASL, send \$1.00, SASE for info. Frank Stolte, 35 Lakeside Crescent, Lancaster, NY 14086, (716) 684-4303.

ASL, BRIT, CIV, FT, FITG, PGG, RW, TRC, VITP, seek opponents: David H. Hiller, 359 Berryman Dr., Gayfer, NY 14226, (716) 837-0016.

I'm new to board wargaming, but have to start somewhere. Need opponent for SL and variants and any other tactical simulations. Flexible schedule. SI only. Brian Hughes, 21 Waterside Pkwy., Staten Island, NY 10308, (718) 967-4166.

Reliable, non-fanatic adult seeks friendly non-rated pbm for PB with adult gamers. Prefer honor system. All letters answered. Mike West, 34 Stonewall Way, Durham, NC 27704, (919) 471-6825.

New to the TRIAD? Looking for ftf competition versus seasoned pros? New gamer? Contact: Raymond Woloszyn, 7162 Mantlewood Lane, Kernersville, NC 27284, (919) 996-5677.

Open your horizons! Gamers, novice to veterans, needed in central North Carolina area to create index of competitors and mentors for players to draw upon. Byron Stingley, 2404-D Landmark Dr., Raleigh, NC 27607, (919) 782-1547.

Rated pbm wanted: GOA campaign game, RF short or long. I have systems. You pick side, reverse for 2nd game. AREA 1200+ Prov. Don Tetmeyer, 4140 Leafback Place, Dayton, OH 45424, (513) 236-1568.

Adult opponent for ASL in greater Cleveland area wanted. Rick Troha, 4485 Oak Circle, North Olmsted, OH 44070, (216) 734-4530.

Veteran gamer just moved. Wants new ftf opponents. Just about any game. Also want pbm opponents for 3R, TRC, DIP, and W&P. Russell Rowe, 411 Wells Mill Dr., #84, Oxford, OH 45056, (513) 523-0092.

AREA 1600 (untested) wants to play 3R ftf or pbm. Also CM, BS, BL, CIV, DIP, GE, GSL, HW, KM, NW, RB, SUB, TAC, VITP and W&P. Preferably with other players for rating. Tristen Bankins, 3735 S.E. Cora, Portland, OR 97202, (503) 775-0361.

Looking for ftf DIP, 1830, TV Wars, other strategy games. Lee A. Kendler, Jr., 264 Spruce Court, Bensalem, PA 19020, (215) 245-1679.

Ftf opponents for DEV, GE and willing to learn other Civil War games and start a club. Frank J. Kelly, Jr., 1302 Holland St., Crumlyne, PA 19022, 833-2735.

Derry-Latrobe-GBG AREA Gamers Club forming, all games, no role-playing, meets twice a month. Contact: Dennis Johns, 214 West 3rd Ave., Derry, PA 15627, (412) 694-9237.

Ftf wanted for SL or ASL. Will consider others. Any guts! North Phil. or Trenton, NJ area. Louis D. Alessandro, 26 Balsom Court, Holland, PA 18966, (215) 968-5579.

Interested in pbm DIP? Masters of Deceit contains 24 introductory articles on all aspects of game and provides info on how to get involved—\$1.00. Steve Arnaewoodian, 602 Hemlock Cir., Lansdale, PA 19446, (215) 699-7659.

Lebanon area ASL gamers meet 5:00 every Wed. night. Stop by and check out the action. Rules taught. Spellbound Hobbies, 831 Cumberland, Lebanon, PA 17042, 273-0567.

Any gamers near York? I play TT, UF, GSL, CIV, and DIP. Would like to learn ASL, EIA and HW. Will play most anything. J. Kevin Hombach, P.O. Box 1922, York, PA 17405, (717) 792-2303.

EIA campaign or scenarios, pbm or ftf, Rated or non-rated. Will consider GMing. Roger D. Hyman, 2713 Windemere Lane, Powell, TN 37849, (615) 947-5577.

EIA campaign game (ftf) desire opponents in central Texas area, especially Austin. Bruce Jean, P.O. Box 10998-552, Austin, TX 78766, (512) 258-3167.

Pbm opponents wanted for BL, DD, TRC. Experienced SL, COI, COD, GI, looking for ftf in Fort Worth area. I play many games not listed. Tim Stark, 605 W. Dayle, Granbury, TX 76048, (817) 573-8626.

I live at SW corner of loop. I play many games including ASL, BRIT, 1830 and computer games. Chris Kolenda, 10122 Oboe, Houston, TX 77025, 666-8871.

Beginning wargamer needs club or opponent in Tyler area. I play AIW, GE, PL, SL and 3R. All letters answered. Matthew Scheffrahn, 226 Molly Lane, Mineola, TX 75773, (214) 569-3672.

19-year old looking for ASL, UF and other AH/VG game opponents. Would like to learn 3R. Mature, reliable players only. Any clubs in area? David Harrison, 217 South High St., Harrisonburg, VA 22801, 434-5448.

Need reliable players and GM for pbm PAX BRIT. I have a good system. Boris Sanders, 1329 Old Clubhouse Rd., Virginia Beach, VA 23456, (804) 427-2314.

Wanted: Group Gamers in Olympia-Seattle area: CIV, KM, DIP, RB, 1830 and BRIT. Wally Waldau, 9220 Clover Dr., D.E., Olympia, WA 98503, (206) 491-3692.

Interest group Milwaukee wants you! 12-year old group looking for new blood. Regular meetings, many games including most multi-player. No dues! Contact: Jayson Gralewicz, 1413 240th Ave., Kansasville, WI 53139, (414) 878-0618.

Pbm or ftf of GOA, 3R, and TRC. Also seeking for wargamers in PR. All letters answered. Rated 1500 in AREA. Juan Jose Nolla, P.O. Box 872, Arecibo, PR 00613, (809) 879-4906.

Local or pbm opponent wanted for PB, AOC. Also local opponent for axis and allies. Am AREA member. Mark Romanow, 17912-78 Ave., Edmonton, AB, Canada T5T-3R7, (403) 481-1702.

Exp. 3R, long time SL system player, looking for mature ftf opponents. New to ASL, BU, YANKS, but anxious to play. Also W&P, FT, FL, Steve Foren, St. Markins, ST. John Co., N.B., Canada EOG 2Z0, (506) 833-4363.

Student seeks gaming opponents, AF, SL, GI, AIW, UF, FP, GSL, 3R; amongst those owned, will learn others. TF preferred, but will pbm your system. Andrew Henton, Rose Cottage, Horton-Com-Studley, Oxon, England, UK OX9 1BN, (086735) 8854.

North Yorkshire, new SL/ASL player wants ftf opponents. Also TRC, RF, HW and almost any of TAHC's wargames. Especially keen to learn 3R and FT. Fergus Bastock, 61 Lamphugh Crescent, Bishopstorp, York, North Yorkshire, Great Britain YO2 1SK, 0904 705185.

Campaign SL-ASL pbm game starting. Send \$1.00 for information, specify if AREA rated. All inquiries welcome. Kelly Speelman, L.S.A.L., P.O. Box 7949, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 21472, 691-0000, ext. 276.

# THE QUESTION BOX

## KREMLIN

**Q.** When does the game end if no one waves three times?

**A.** If no player has won at the end of 10 years, the player controlling the Party Chief at the end of the fifth phase of Turn 11 wins.

**Q.** Is there a particular time when you can draw Intrigue Cards?

**A.** Yes, See F—Card Option. The *only* time you can draw cards after setup is during the Increasing Influence Phase, and the number you draw is limited to the number of additional fire declared IP that you are entitled to but do not use.

**Q.** May control of a Politician who is the target of an Assassination attempt (regardless of the success or failure of that attempt) change *before* he denounces someone as the assassin?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Suppose the FM is at the Sanatorium during the Funeral Commission Phase and the Ideology Chief does the nominating. The first two nominations fail. Is the new Party Chief the inactive Foreign Minister or the Ideology Chief who was the temporary Foreign Minister?

**A.** The latter.

**Q.** If the Ideology Chief is serving to nominate the new Party Chief while the FM is at the Sanatorium, may he nominate the Foreign Minister for the post?

**A.** Yes.

## ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER

**B3.4** If a MMC enters a shellhole hex through a road hexside, can it retain the extra MF for crossing only road hexsides if it enters the shellhole hex by expending 2MF (in order to gain the shellhole's terrain benefits)? By expending only 1MF?

**A.** No. Yes. Note too that the extra MF is also negated if the unit enters SMOKE or Deep Snow as it moves on the road.

**B6.33 & B6.45** Is an underwater pontoon bridge's +2 TEM (for purposes of bridge destruction) in addition to its having a +1 TEM for being a pontoon bridge—a cumulative +3 TEM?

**A.** No, +2 cumulative.

**B6.44** Can a bicycle be ridden onto/across a foot bridge?

**A.** No.

**B.88** If a unit in a sewer Location attacks an enemy unit in ADJACENT sewer Location, is the PBF also halved for Area Fire?

**A.** Only during AFPH—not Final Fire.

**B18.43** The rule says that ordnance in the form of a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " counter can enter a graveyard only via a graveyard road hexside. If such ordnance wishes to leave a graveyard hex, must it do so through a graveyard road hexside?

**A.** No—unless of course it is also entering another graveyard hex.

**B20.92** Does a unit in Crest status receive entrenchment benefits from fire that enters its hex through the vertex of a protected Crest hexside and a non-Crest hexside?

**A.** Yes.

**B23.742** The rule states that a fully-tracked AFV within a non-stairwell Factory Location may exit the building at normal building entrance costs. Are the MPs considered to be expended in the Factory Location it is attempting to exit? Must it also expend MPs to pay for the cost of the hex being entered? Must it also pass a Bog check to exit the hex?

**A.** Yes. Yes, as per B23.41. Yes.

**B24.2** If Rubble is in a hex with a wall or hedge hexside, is the wall/hedge movement costs still applicable?

**A.** Yes.

**B24.72** The rule states that Flames can be extinguished in the MPH/DFPH. The Advanced Sequence of Play Chart states that Flames can be extinguished in Phase 2.26A of the PFPH. Can Flames be extinguished during a unit's Movement Phase? Prep Fire Phase?

**A.** Yes. No, this listing is in error.

**B24.74** If a unit begins its MPH in a known minefield Location, must it expend MFs (making it vulnerable to Residual FP/Defensive First Fire) in order to declare a minefield Clearance attempt in that Location?

**A.** No.

**B25.12** Does the EC DRM modify the DR used to determine if a FT attack has caused a Flame in a building hex? In a Rubble hex?

**A.** No. Yes.

**B28.41 & B28.52** When resolving a minefield attack, is a partially armored vehicle treated the same as an AFV whose lowest hull AF is zero?

**A.** Only if the vehicle has a "0" hull AF, or if both its sides and rear are unarmored.

## Scenario Errata:

**Scenario C:** The date, of course, should read "1942".

**Scenario J:** In SSR 4, the 80+mm OBA should have *normal* ammunition.

**Scenario G4:** In SSR 3, delete "all".

## READERS BUYER'S GUIDE

The following games are ranked by their reader-generated overall Value rating. Further aspects of reader response to our titles are indicated by the ratings in other categories. By breaking down a game's ratings into these individual categories, the gamer is able to discern for himself where the title's strengths and weaknesses lie in the qualities he values highly. Readers are reminded that ratings take the form of a numerical value ranging from 1 to 9 (with "1" equalling "excellent" and "9" equalling "terrible"). However, the Game Length category is measured in multiples of ten minutes (thus, a rating of "18" equates to three hours). A "+" following the Year of release indicates that the game is continued or complemented by additional modules in successive years (for instance, the ratings for SL reflect the entire system—original game plus add-on modules). Game Type is broken down into three broad categories: SO=Solitaire; MP=Multi-Player; 2P=Two Player. Finally, it should be noted that a minimum requirement of 50 responses (see the "Sample Base") was judged necessary for a valid representation; additional titles that garner such will be added to the RBG in the future.

Title	Overall Value	Components	Complexity	Completeness	Playability	Authenticity	Game Length	Year	Type	Sample Base
ADVANCED SL	1.80	1.77	9.25	2.11	3.44	2.04	33.02	1985+	2P	172
1830	1.85	2.00	3.88	2.72	2.04	3.20	24.52	1986	MP	50
CIVILIZATION	1.97	2.60	3.20	2.03	1.72	4.09	32.08	1982	MP	152
FLATTOP	2.00	2.47	3.81	3.12	3.56	1.76	43.96	1981	2P	95
EMPIRES IN ARMS	2.08	2.45	8.08	2.94	3.84	2.11	156.86	1986	MP	71
UP FRONT	2.11	2.24	4.36	2.83	2.38	3.56	10.16	1983+	2P	126
RUSSIAN FRONT	2.12	2.33	5.32	2.88	2.67	2.40	40.16	1985	2P	113
BRITANNIA	2.31	3.08	2.93	2.89	2.07	3.52	23.72	1987	MP	77
VITP	2.55	3.12	2.56	3.32	1.91	5.56	21.09	1977	2P	183
RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN	2.60	3.35	3.85	3.10	2.28	4.22	35.44	1976	2P	220
CASSINO	2.68	2.71	4.43	2.75	2.32	2.63	23.67	1988	2P	52
DIPLOMACY	2.71	3.36	3.00	2.69	2.92	5.16	33.26	1976	MP	169
ST. NAZAIRE	2.72	2.56	4.01	3.12	2.80	2.52	18.92	1987	SO	98
FIREPOWER	2.76	3.03	6.42	3.63	3.76	2.88	15.48	1985	2P	94
STORM OVER ARNHEM	2.78	2.68	3.84	2.84	2.32	3.49	24.35	1981	2P	87
FLIGHT LEADER	2.79	2.20	4.62	3.00	2.77	3.20	10.18	1986	2P	76
BULL RUN	2.80	2.67	3.80	2.95	2.96	2.93	23.76	1983	2P	62
DEVIL'S DEN	2.81	2.85	5.04	2.99	3.52	2.61	24.58	1985	2P	60
B-17	2.83	2.87	2.93	2.83	2.00	3.33	8.82	1983	SO	192
SQUAD LEADER	2.84	2.11	8.05	3.68	4.27	3.00	21.37	1977+	2P	231
2nd Fleet	2.89	3.35	5.27	3.44	3.28	3.55	32.23	1986	2P	55
WS&M	2.92	3.24	5.64	3.00	3.04	2.60	20.07	1975	2P	172
THIRD REICH	2.95	3.56	8.83	3.70	4.00	3.51	45.83	1981	MP	227
BULGE '81	2.96	3.11	4.21	3.24	2.92	3.19	28.02	1981	2P	155
PANZER LEADER	3.12	2.79	5.63	3.72	3.32	3.82	19.47	1974	2P	210
WAR & PEACE	3.13	3.44	4.55	3.68	2.95	3.15	36.80	1980	2P	138
TITAN	3.16	2.68	3.48	2.66	2.47	4.48	29.08	1982	MP	65
Civil War	3.20	3.69	6.95	3.92	4.17	3.58	46.96	1983	2P	112
DUNE	3.21	2.48	3.29	2.93	2.88	4.28	15.84	1979+	MP	87
MAGIC REALM	3.29	2.44	8.41	4.08	4.20	3.79	20.76	1979	MP	75
Battle Hymn	3.32	3.33	5.24	4.32	3.48	3.89	21.26	1986+	SO	51
NAVAL WAR	3.35	4.20	1.12	3.40	1.60	6.72	6.00	1983	MP	81
STARSHIP TROPPERS	3.36	3.12	4.84	3.32	3.20	3.12	16.37	1976	2P	110
KINGMAKER	3.39	3.21	5.65	4.48	3.49	4.63	27.98	1976	MP	141
PG GUDERIAN	3.40	3.24	5.44	3.20	3.28	3.32	22.87	1984	2P	90
PATTON'S BEST	3.43	3.22	4.16	4.23	3.25	3.87	14.13	1987	SO	109
GLADIATOR	3.44	3.36	3.89	3.32	2.56	3.20	8.69	1981	2P	56
CIRCUS MAXIMUS	3.47	3.60	3.28	3.39	2.64	3.36	11.70	1980	2P	91
6th Fleet	3.48	3.04	5.64	3.73	3.88	3.64	47.67	1985	2P	59
AIR FORCE	3.48	4.27	5.36	3.64	3.61	3.12	12.90	1980+	2P	76
ARAB-ISRAELI WARS	3.49	3.25	6.93	3.72	3.52	3.72	16.37	1977	2P	123
PANZERBLITZ	3.56	3.55	4.92	4.16	3.26	4.50	18.25	1970	2P	215
PA AFRICA	3.63	3.68	4.23	3.36	3.19	3.88	25.14	1981	2P	80
Pacific War	3.64	3.57	7.88	4.32	5.28	3.19	120.63	1986	2P	66
Pax Britannia	3.64	3.60	4.85	3.91	4.25	4.61	52.14	1985	MP	50
MIDWAY	3.65	4.48	2.80	3.16	2.43	4.52	21.10	1964	2P	130
DWTK	3.68	3.56	4.88	4.28	3.85	3.89	22.82	1981	MP	52
Ambush	3.68	4.08	4.94	4.40	3.91	4.61	19.69	1983+	SO	121
FORTRESS EUROPA	3.73	3.23	5.36	3.78	3.88	3.57	42.44	1980	2P	157
AFRIKA KORPS	3.77	4.43	2.20	2.84	1.88	5.40	21.44	1964	2P	167
HITLER'S WAR	3.80	3.89	4.20	4.25	3.44	4.68	34.79	1984	2P	78
WIZARD'S QUEST	3.82	3.07	2.11	2.94	2.15	4.92	20.92	1979	MP	85
Vietnam	3.89	3.35	8.60	3.83	5.26	3.75	90.86	1984	2P	80
WAR AT SEA	4.04	3.94	1.40	3.40	1.87	6.72	12.80	1976	2P	155
BLITZKRIEG	4.19	4.36	5.84	3.87	3.60	5.57	33.76	1985	2P	136
1776	4.25	3.64	5.28	3.88	3.24	4.40	26.30	1974	2P	154
D-DAY	4.32	4.73	3.56	3.45	2.91	5.08	27.16	1977	2P	125
RICHTHOFEN'S WAR	4.33	3.78	3.99	3.60	3.24	4.87	8.23	1983	2P	53
PANZERKRIEG	4.35	4.02	5.11	3.84	3.83	3.28	24.49	1973	2P	137
GUNS OF AUGUST	4.41	4.00	5.32	4.56	4.51	3.83	44.72	1981	2P	139
WATERLOO	4.44	4.48	2.24	3.08	2.21	5.55	17.99	1962	2P	104
Mosby's Raid	4.53	4.55	4.63	4.36	4.42	5.13	20.85	1985	SO	60
LUFTWAFFE	4.80	4.27	4.16	4.08	3.91	5.33	20.08	1971	2P	170
Neto	4.96	4.16	6.28	5.24	4.76	4.63	33.70	1983	2P	73
TACTICS II	5.88	6.22	1.52	3.89	2.96	6.80	14.87	1961	2P	108

## BRITANNIA

\$25.00

### The Multi-Player Game of the Birth of Britain

Although the RBG chart to the right now reflects the "new", updated ratings gleaned from the Vol. 24, No. 5 survey, we thought it might be of interest to compare the ratings for this game under both systems. This is notable not so much for what it tells us about the game *BRITANNIA*, but what it reveals about the new RBG chart.

In both systems, old and new, the game placed near the top. But, as with the Overall Value entry, all the newer ratings were noticeably higher (meaning harsher) than the old. Overall, it would appear that the readership which generated the new RBG ratings were much more discerning and critical in their view of the games, and less swept along by sheer enthusiasm for a new title. Thus, it may well be that the new RBG ratings give a more valid collective view of these games than heretofore.

While in some cases the numerical difference between the old and new values was insignificant (only natural in objective matters such as "Complexity"), in others the results varied by as much as half a point. Of interest too was that the "Short" and "Long" game length values showed a marked difference. Under the newest version, the "Shortest" game is 34 minutes longer than before, while the "Longest" is 61 minutes shorter. In other words, with

familiarity, the gap between the extremes of playing time has narrowed.

However, both systems seem to indicate that *BRITANNIA* is an enjoyable, highly playable game. As pointed out above, the Overall Value ratings—regardless of which you look to—place it high among recent favorites.

**Overall Value:** 2.09

**Components:** 2.81

**Map:** 2.75

**Counters:** 2.87

**Player's Aids:** 3.12

**Complexity:** 2.78

**Completeness of Rules:** 2.63

**Playability:** 1.81

**Excitement Level:** 2.06

**Play Balance:** 2.57

**Authenticity:** 3.15

**Game Length**

**Shortest:** 2 hrs., 44 mins.

**Longest:** 5 hrs., 39 mins.

**Year:** 1987

**Sample Base:** 63

Our long-overdue look at some of the "ancients" games brought a gratifying surge in mail to our offices. Many complimented us for at last granting them some coverage again, while others complained about the "waste of space". Still, enough seem pleased for Vol. 24, No. 5 to gain it a respectable Overall Rating (3.09). Of course, Mr. Rennert's article on the featured game of *BRITANNIA* dominated the polling on the various articles, a fine introduction to a fine game. Based on a random sampling of some 200 responses from readers, the ratings for all the articles are as follows:

FROM STURDY STOCK . . . . .	369
THE ROMAN INVASION OF BRITANNIA . . . . .	231
A CIVILIZED RACE . . . . .	112
BREAKING THE RING . . . . .	88
WARRING AND WINNING . . . . .	78
THE COMING SIEGE . . . . .	59
AH PHILOSOPHY . . . . .	53
LOST IN THE WOODS . . . . .	44
SWORDS OF THE REPUBLIC . . . . .	37
THE DANCE OF DEATH . . . . .	34
THE KING'S CASTLE . . . . .	32
THE BLOODY KING . . . . .	25
DESIGN ANALYSIS . . . . .	22
MONSTER MASH . . . . .	16

The *STALINGRAD* AREA PBM championships have finally staggered to a close with Frank Preissle's concession to David Kopp making David the winner by virtue of overall rating points over Frank and Greg Smith. The three battled to a three-way tie in the final round, with identical records of 3-1. Mr. Kopp won by virtue of his better overall rating: 1887 to Mr. Preissle's 1850 and Mr. Smith's 1826. Challengers for the *STALINGRAD* crown should send their gauntlets c/o Don Greenwood at TAHGC. Eligible challengers for the title will be decided by virtue of their AREA ranking.

Along with all the other changes in store for *The GENERAL*, a new binder has been designed for those who may wish to preserve their collections. Larger than the older model, it no longer uses metal rods (which could deface the center of an issue) but instead has a patented "Max-Text" post lock mechanism. Too, with the expanded format of the magazine, the binder has been designed to hold only six issues of *The GENERAL*. The new binders are available from Avalon Hill for \$7.00 each.

Still another overseas amateur periodical makes its debut. For those who may read Norwegian, *Jagdpanzer!* is devoted to all types of wargames and historical simulations. For example, the first issue carries "official" errata for *BISMARCK* and a variant for that popular game. A mix of reviews and new scenarios and hobby news gives it a broad appeal. Price for an issue is 15 kroner; for subscrip-

## Infiltrator's Report

tion information, contact the editor, Stein Surland (Postboks 2499, Stromso, 3003 Drammen, Norway).

It is with sadness that we hear that Glyn Roberts, editor of the British amateur magazine *Cut & Thrust*, died suddenly after a brief hospital stay. Derek Wilson, his friend and co-editor, dedicated the recent issue to his memory and gave us a look at the gamer and the good man that Glyn was. For some years I had maintained a lively correspondence with Glyn, keeping him informed of the many new products from Avalon Hill and Victory Games in exchange for his reports of hobby events across the water. He was invariably courteous, gracious, and witty. His dedication to furthering our hobby in the United Kingdom was impressive. Our condolences to his friends and family; he will be missed. Derek Wilson now assumes the editorial chores of *Cut & Thrust* and we assume that it will continue to maintain its normal quality content and policy as an independent forum for game reviews. Issue #66 certainly appears to be cut from the same cloth; among others, Victory Games' *Open Fire* is given a long look. For more information on the 'zine, contact Mr. Wilson (6 Caldbeck Drive, Woodley, Reading RG5 4LA, UK).

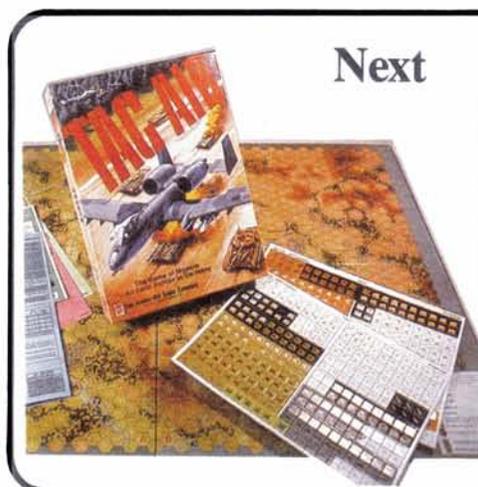
Fans of *KREMLIN*, our satiric look at the Politburo, may be interested in the first world championship for the game to be held at the Essen Toy Fair in Essen, West Germany on 29 October. Using the original Swiss version (it is hosted by the designer, Urs Hostettler), it should bring the best European players together to face each other. For the first prize is a one-way ticket to Moscow from wherever the winner may live. (Actually, according to M. Hostettler, they had some troubles with the Soviets in ordering a one-way ticket, so they will pay one-half the price of a round-trip ticket.) For those who may not be enamored of visiting Moscow in the winter, an alternate first prize is a weekend for two in the Swiss Alps instead. If you think you've mastered this game yet, you may want to catch a quick flight to Essen. If not, you can start practicing for next year's championships.

Contest 141 proved tougher than we'd expected for *BRITANNIA* players, with the trick of throwing William on an Angle sword overlooked by every respondent but one. To Mark Pasquini of Edmonds, Washington, our congratulations. Many folk had moved the Angles with exacting precision, matching perfectly our preferred positions. And some had

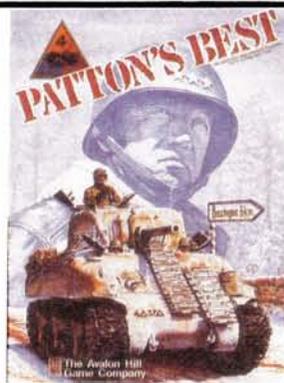
even had the Normans grasp the Saxons in mutual death. But everyone else seemed loathe to see the "Conqueror" eliminated simply to insure a tawdry victory; only Mr. Pasquini displayed no such weakness.

The Allies could not guarantee a win in Contest 142, but they could be assured of at least a draw and had a 57% chance of scoring an outright victory—69% were it not for the German's possession of the Tactical Advantage (which gives him a reroll of any unfavorable die or dice roll). Although there are many ways to approach the problem, any that drops the Allied guarantee of at least a draw is not worthy of consideration. For the Allied player in this playing of *THUNDER AT CASSINO* is assured of gaining at least one Victory Point by simply leaving the tank in Area 19 and reinforcing that area with one other unit, which will insure elimination of the German unit during Close Combat. With control of Area 19 thus assured, it would be wasteful to fire at the doomed German unit therein, so the tank will open the Allied move with a 5:3 attack on Area 31 in hopes of drawing the .0976 chance of a +5 or better DR superiority that would empty Area 31 (and thereby possibly convince the German to use his Tactical Advantage). Even if this attack did vacate Area 31, the Allies could not reach it unless the Germans in Area 19 or 27 were also eliminated—a poor percentage alternative. Similarly, an attack against 27 could do more harm than good if it resulted in a retreat into Area 29. Clearly, the tank's best usage is this attempt to draw the Tactical Advantage chit from a foolish German player.

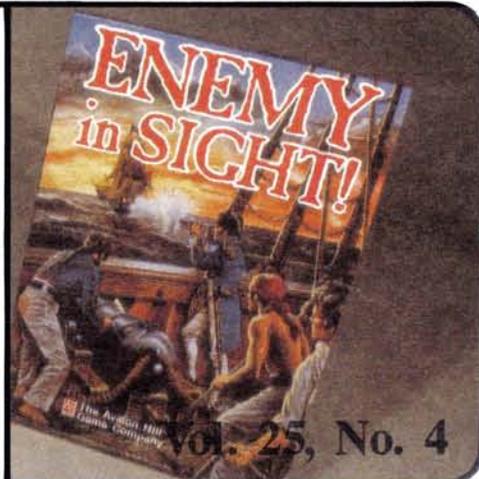
The next step, and the last one for which the order of resolution has any significance, is to place Smoke in Area 27 with the Observer unit—requiring a DR of "5" or more (83%). If the artillery was used to attack Area 27 instead at 9:2, it would require at least a "-2" or better DR (a 76% chance) to eliminate the two German units. Merely retreating the German MG into Area 29 would further decrease your chances of gaining control of 29. By smoking Area 29, the Gurkha unit can now move around the MG unit in Area 27 through areas 26 and 28, and into 29—where, with the MG unit from 28, it will have an 83% chance of eliminating the enemy unit in Close Combat and taking control of this area. The 3-3-5 MG must enter 29 not only to increase the Allied Close Combat attack by 16%, but also to insure that a German "6" CC dr doesn't eliminate the only Allied unit in the area. In summation, this move guarantees at least an Allied draw and will result in an Allied win if the Allied player can avoid both of two DR/dr failure possibilities—each a 16.6% likelihood, or a 69% probability. The German Tactical Advantage chit could force one reroll, thus lowering the odds to 57% unless the tank attack can draw an unwary German's advantage.



Next



Vol. 25, No. 3



Vol. 25, No. 4

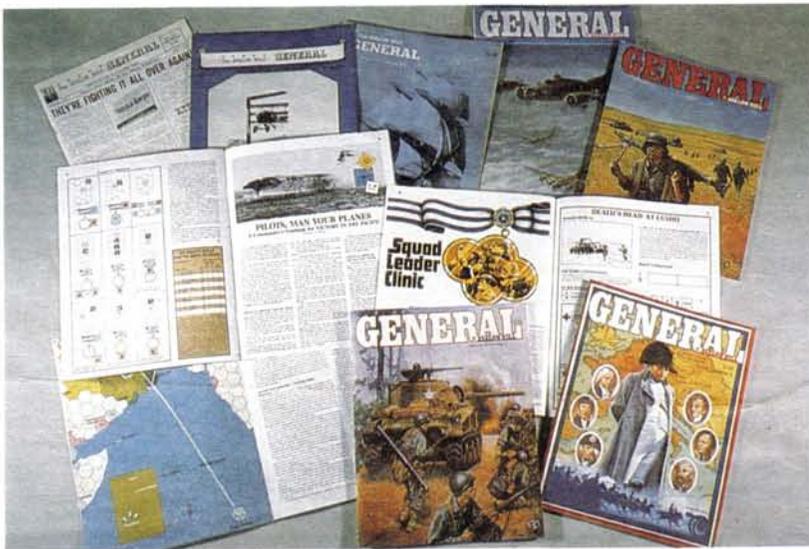
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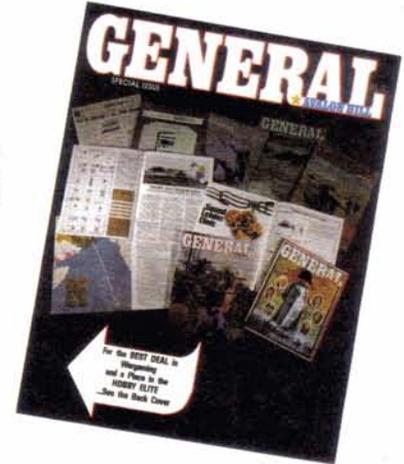
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It should be called the "*Best of The General*." Because it is 64 pages of the very best articles ever to appear in **The General** magazine over the past 24 years. This special "*Best of The General*" issue is a celebration of the 25th anniversary of wargaming's oldest professional magazine (the first 6-issue set now commands over \$100 at game convention auctions).



Many articles have been reprinted from past issues that have long since gone out of stock and simply are not available anywhere. Not even on dog house floors!



Among the many fine pieces that have graced our pages over the past 24 years range from Craig Taylor's original article on *Wooden Ships & Iron Men* (Vol.13-No.2) to a recent *Squad Leader Clinic* (Vol.24-No.1); from a *Midway Series Replay* (Vol.11-No.3) to *Titan Design Notes* (Vol.20-No.2); by a famous author (Jerry Pournelle) to infamous (Richard Berg). These "*best of the best*" are intended to show the great scope and range found in the pages of regular issues of **The General**, as well as being fun and informative reading for any dedicated wargamer. Subscribers to **The General** have found the magazine to be invaluable to their improvement as game players. Move-by-move illustrated replays of many games tell you what not to do before you do it. In-depth analyses give you hints on strategy you must employ to beat your opponents. Convention tournament winners who have accumulated cash prizes and trophies over the past years swear by **The General**. That's why we say the information in this special issue is worth thousands of dollars to all gamers, beginner and aficionado alike. It's not just another purchase—it's an investment! It's available wherever wargames are sold. If your local dealer doesn't carry it, you may order directly from us. Use the coupon here or call our TOLL FREE number (1-800-638-9292)!

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**KREMLIN** \$20.00  
The Satiric Game of Soviet Political Intrigue

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Rate each category by placing a number ranging from 1 through 9 in the appropriate space to the right ("1" equating to excellent; "5", average; "9", terrible). EXCEPTION: Rate items 7a and 7b in terms of minutes necessary to play the game, in ten-minute increments. (Example: If you've found it takes two and a half hours to play the basic scenario of *HITLER'S WAR*, enter "15" for category 7a.) For an explanation of the categories, refer to the AH Philosophy of Vol. 24, No. 5. Enter ratings only for those categories relevant to the game in question. Note that AH's ratings for Complexity, Year of Publication and Type (2P=two player; MP=multi-player; SO=solitaire) have been provided for your information.

- 1. Overall Value \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Components \_\_\_\_\_
- 2a. Mapboard \_\_\_\_\_
- 2b. Counters \_\_\_\_\_
- 2c. Rulebook \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Complexity \_\_\_\_\_
- 3a. Avalon Hill Complexity 5
- 4. Completeness \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Playability \_\_\_\_\_
- 5a. Excitement Level \_\_\_\_\_
- 5b. Play Balance \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Authenticity \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Game Length \_\_\_\_\_
- 7a. Shortest \_\_\_\_\_
- 7b. Longest \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Year of Publication 1988
- 9. Type MP

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This coupon is valid only for mail order purchases of complete games direct from The Avalon Hill Game Company. Each postage coupon entitles the sender to deduct up to \$1.00 from the postage charges of any order for a complete game provided the amount deducted does not exceed the total postage charge for that order. Coupons are not usable for parts, magazines, or pbm kit orders. Shipping charges are 10% of the dollar amount of your order if sent to a USA address. Shipping costs to Canada and Mexico are 20% of the order; overseas orders must add 30%. Any past GENERAL postage coupons previously offering different values may be used as the equal of this coupon. Example: Customer A lives in the USA and orders a \$15 game. His postage charge is \$1.50 which he may pay by sending in 2 postage coupons and \$15, or 1 postage coupon and \$15.50. Customer B lives in Canada and orders the same game. He must pay \$15 in USA funds plus 3 postage coupons or \$15 plus \$1 for each postage coupon less than 3 which he sends. **\$1.00**

**WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN PLAYING?**

Top ten lists are always in vogue—be the subject books, television, shows, movies or even games. The public seems never to tire of seeing how its favorite way of spending their leisure time stacks up against the competition. So, to cater further to your whims (and to satisfy our own curiosity), this is The GENERAL's version of the gamer's top ten. From the responses to this form the editors produce the regular column "So That's What You've Been Playing" found elsewhere in this issue.

We aren't asking you to subjectively rate any game. That sort of thing is already done in these pages and elsewhere. Instead, we ask that you merely list the three (or fewer) games which you've spent the most time playing since you received your last issue of The GENERAL. With the collation of these responses, we can generate a consensus list of what's being played by our readership. This list can serve both as a guide for us (for coverage in these pages) and others (convention organizers spring instantly to mind). The degree of correlation between this listing, the Best Sellers Lists, and the RBG should prove extremely interesting.

Feel free to list any game of any sort regardless of manufacturer. There will be, of course, a built-in bias to the survey since the readers all play Avalon Hill games to some extent; but it should be no more prevalent than similar projects undertaken by other periodicals with special-interest based circulation. The amount to which this bias affects the final outcome will be left to the individual's own discretion.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Opponent Wanted** 50¢

- 1. Want-ads will be accepted only when printed on this form or a facsimile and must be accompanied by a 50¢ token fee. No refunds. Payment may be made in uncanceled U.S. postage stamps.
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- 3. Insert copy on lines provided (25 words maximum) and print name, address, and phone number on the appropriate lines.
- 4. Please PRINT. If your ad is illegible, it will not be printed.
- 5. So that as many ads as possible can be printed within our limited space, we request that you use official state and game abbreviations. Don't list your entire collection, list only those you are most interested in locating opponents for.

Advanced Squad Leader—ASL, Afrika Korps—AK, Air Force—AF, Arab-Israeli Wars—AIW, Blitzkrieg—BL, Britannia—BRIT, Battle Of The Bulge—BB, Bull Run—BR, Circus Maximus—CM, Civilization—CIV, D-Day—DD, Devil's Den—DEV, Diplomacy—DIP, Empires in Arms—EIA, Enemy in Sight—EIA, Firepower—FP, Flat Top—FT, Flight Leader, FL, Fortress Europa—FE, France 40—FR, Gettysburg—GE, Gladiator—GL, Guns of August—GOA, Hitler's War—HW, Kremlin—KREM, Kingmaker—KM, Knights of the Air—KOTA, Luftwaffe—LW, Magic Realm—MR, Merchant of Venus—MOV, Midway—MD, Naval War—NW, Panzerarmee Afrika—PAA, Panzerblitz—PB, Panzergruppe Guderian—PGG, Panzerkrieg—PK, Panzer Leader—PL, Patton's Best—PAT, Platoon—PLA, Raid on St. Nazaire—RSN, Rail Baron—RB, Richthofen's War—RW, The Russian Campaign—TRC, Russian Front—RF, Stellar Conquest—SC, Squad Leader—SL, Storm Over Arnhem—SOA, Tac Air—TA, Tactics II—TAC, Third Reich—3R, Thunder at Cassino—CASS, Titan—TT, Up Front—UF, Victory In The Pacific—VITP, War and Peace—W&P, War At Sea—WAS, Waterloo—WAT, Wooden Ships & Iron Men—WSIM.

\_\_\_\_\_  
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CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

**CONTEST 143**

Indicate your actions in the hypothetical situation in the *KREMLIN* game, in order of action:

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_

Issue as a whole \_\_\_\_\_ (Rate from 1 to 10, with "1" equating excellent and "10" terrible). To be valid for consideration, your contest entry must also include the three best articles, in your view:

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_



