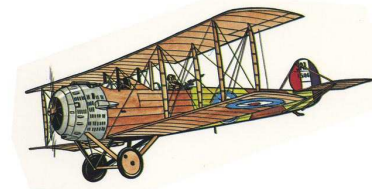


The Kommandeur



Volume 49 Number 6

Publication of AHIKS

December 2014

From the President Kenneth Oates

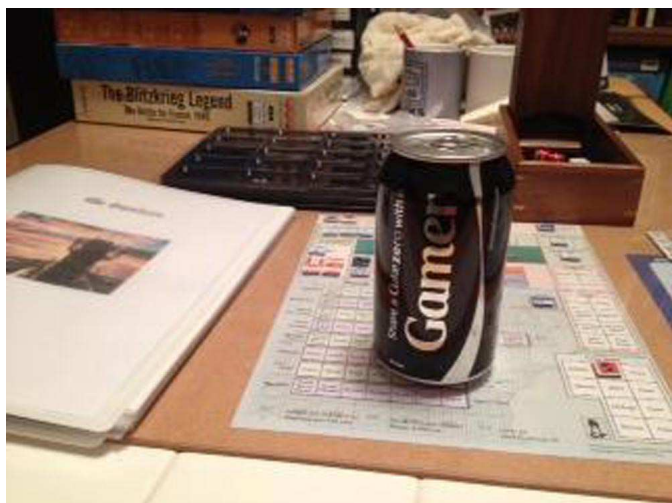
Thanksgiving has just passed, and this will be the last *Kommandeur* until the New Year. 2014 has been an active year with a lot of it planning for the big Birthday celebration coming next year. The Members' Guide has been brought up to date by Bob and posted where it can serve as a draw to new members, although as we have found out in the past twelve months, AHIKS is not for everyone. And it got a new name. If you have not done so, take a look at it on the website (you do not need a password, so that is not an excuse!). Really great job, Bob!

We also have a lot of things coming for AHIKS' 50th. There will be a lot of surprises, so stay tuned.

The Officer Corps also was restructured slightly late last summer, with a new Judge assuming those duties while continuing to run the UCP. While we are on this subject, the judge service is from what I can tell, unique to AHIKS. Our hobby has a lot of written rules, some better executed than others, so over time conventions have arisen as to their interpretation. AHIKS' Judge has these at least from the AHIKS perspective and can potentially save a gaming match from becoming a yelling match. As an impartial ruling, based on past rulings, it is a service that can't be beat. Also, if you have exceptional experience with a game or two, and really know the rules forwards and backwards, I am sure the judge could use your expertise.

Duncan has been running a tournament of **The Hunters** (ConsimPress). This is a good, medium complexity solitaire game that has surprises and frustrations for all aspiring U-Boat captains. The exploits of five boats are chronicled for all to see in the forum. (Yeah, you do need a password to access that!)

Finally, my gaming secret is known in my office, so one of my angels gave me this Coke, containing an appropriate message:



From the Exec and Supporting Officers, have a Happy Holiday season, and roll hot dice!

Kenneth

From the Editor

With this issue we end another year. And we look forward to a new year. 2015 should be a great year for members of AHIKS. Various contests will be offered. Brian Stretcher has already sent me a copy of his trivia quiz. There should be plenty of prizes; I will be moving in another year to smaller quarters, and I need to divest myself of games and books that I have held onto for years. Some of the games are still in shrink-wrap; one might wonder: Omar, if you aren't going to play those games, why do you buy them? The reason, of course, is that they look nice. Bob Best has been doing a stellar job getting all of this going. So, stand by; it should be a great year.

I am sure that no one has noticed my cunning insertion of grammar tips in this column for the last few issues. This month I will mention the confusion between "bring" and "take." If one is going into the next room, he may say, "I will *take* this game with me and beat you without mercy." One may also say to a friend in the next room, "*Bring* that game in here, and I will beat you without mercy." The idea being that one *takes* an object from here to there, and someone *brings* an object from there to here. One should not say "Would you *bring* this game to John in the next room? He will beat you without mercy." "Take" seems rather in control of most people, but "bring" is used too often incorrectly.

Probably I should not mention this, but, AHIKS sent me on what must have been a secret mission to South Africa. I say "secret" because there were no instructions, and, when I got back, no one debriefed me. At any rate, Sue and I enjoyed ourselves, seeing all kinds of wildlife. When I think of Africa, it is usually the Africa of the Tarzan movies of my youth: giant trees, big-leafed bushes, dense underbrush. Actually, it looks like most woods in the U.S.: a few medium-sized trees, some grass, a few bushes. We were at Kruger National Park where there were game drives in the early morning and in the late afternoon. One does not exit the vehicle on a drive, so there was a lot of sitting. I've always been fascinated by how the big cats treat several vans of people staring at them. They ignore us completely. Our driver saw a pride of lions bring down a buffalo, but, since it was about a mile away, we saw very little through the display on his telephoto camera. We did see a lioness grab the hind-quarters of a buffalo, but she gave up quickly. It is about a 14-hour flight from Atlanta to Johannesburg, but, since both directions were flown at night, we were able to sleep.

Om



Waterbuck

Secretary's Notes Bob Best



Today is Friday, November 28, 2014. Well, I hope you all enjoyed your "Turkey Day" dinners. I sure enjoyed mine. In fact I'm still "stuffed" from the Great Feast we had here yesterday. All in all, it was a nice lazy day spent with family and friends. I hope you enjoyed your holiday as much as I did mine!

AHIKS Dues for 2015

For the electronic copy of the newsletter, either an email attachment or member download from the website, dues are **FREE** for 2015! Our few remaining print subscribers will be advised by mail of the 2015 subscription rates.

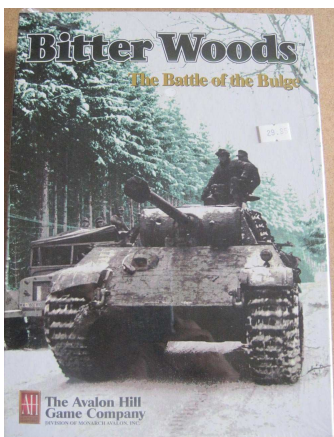
The BIG News

AHIKS' 50th year Celebration Event begins with the next issue of *The K*! The upcoming February 2015 issue will kick off Volume 50, Issue 1 of *The K*. We will be celebrating the 50 Year Anniversary event for the entire 50th year. We have contests with prizes planned and **The Russian Campaign** Tournament is already underway. Robert Granville has been posting updates on the AHIKS website and Facebook pages.

There will also be some AHIKS nostalgia articles published and a look into some of AHIKS' history. The yearlong event will be capped with the celebration of AHIKS' 50th Birthday on March 14, 2016. We plan to award a \$200 gift certificate to a lucky AHIKS member who is participating in AHIKS. We will publish more on this as we get closer to the big day. Your officer corps is working hard to make the 50th Year celebration enjoyable for all our members. We hope you find the events presented interesting and fun!

I've had a number of members ask me how we could be celebrating the 50th year of AHIKS when we were founded on March 14, 1966? The answer to that is simple. If you consider that Volume One of *The K* began publishing right after AHIKS was founded in 1966 and AHIKS did not celebrate its first birthday until *after* Volume One was already published. Then, when AHIKS turned one year old on March 14th 1967, Volume Two was published and so on. If you carry that forward 50 years you will see that the 50th Anniversary year of *The K* precedes AHIKS' 50th Birthday which will be on March 14, 2016.

Our Treasurer, Brian Stretcher, has completed our first contest to kick off the year-long celebration of our 50th Year. Look for it in the next issue.



The prize will be **Bitter Woods**, an Avalon Hill Classic on the Battle of the Ardennes designed by the noted game designer and AHIKS member Randy Heller. A *big thank you* to Dave Bergmann, our Ratings Officer, for his generous donation of this shrink-wrapped copy of **Bitter Woods**.

The Ironman Competition

The Boardgame Players Association (BPA) will hold their annual World Boardgaming Championships (WBC) August 3-9, 2015, at the Lancaster Host Resort in Lancaster, PA. Member Randy Heller has volunteered to organize and run AHIKS' Ironman Competition at WBC next year for AHIKS. Randy will be heading up the Ironman Committee and is asking for input on what game(s) should be the focus of the trophy competition. Randy also proposes to streamline the administrative paperwork to keep it to a minimum, and AHIKS will be offering a \$50 gift certificate prize to the 2015 winner. Thank you, Randy, for picking up the reins on this project. We appreciate your contribution!

AHIKS' Members Guide

The Executive Committee has updated and posted a new "Members Guide" on the home page of the AHIKS website at www.ahiks.com. The "Members Guide" can be found in the tabs at the top of the page. It can be viewed by members and non-members alike and is no longer located in the "Members Only" section of the website. The guide has been extensively updated and contains a FAQ section that covers most things a member needs to know to get started in AHIKS. How to obtain passwords, how to request game matches, and how to play-by-mail and email are just a few of the topics covered. There is a comprehensive history of AHIKS up through 2014 also included. If you have questions about how to do something in AHIKS, check here first, as it may answer your question. We hope you find the Members Guide helpful.

On the AHIKS Forum Gaming Front

Last issue I reported on my first game of **The Hunters** by Consimpress. **The Hunters** is a solitaire game on the tactical level that puts the player in command of a German U-Boat during World War II. Your mission is to sink as much Allied shipping and destroy as many capital ships as possible during your career. As I mentioned last issue my first U-Boat career was short-lived, but since then I have played several games and found **The Hunters** to be an easy game to learn and play, and it gives the player a lot of suspense and drama as you attempt to sink Allied shipping and avoid being sunk by allied surface escorts.

If you are interested in **The Hunters** and have not been able to find a copy (the game was sold out for several months), GMT games is publishing Consimpress's 2nd edition of **The Hunters**. GMT just notified me that they charged my credit card for the second edition so I would expect the game to be shipped in the next week or so. You can find the game at GMT's website at www.gmtgames.com,

If you enjoy a suspenseful, quick paced game then **The Hunters** is for you. If you have an interest in the game or in U-Boat warfare in general, check out **The Hunters** high tonnage tournament that is being run by Duncan Rice, our Match Coordinator. You can find the game in the on-line games section of the AHIKS webpage at www.ahiks.com.

We have five players who started the war in September, 1939. Follow their exploits as they post mission results on the on-line forum. Kpt. Lt. Wulf Kreuger commanding U-33 is the high tonnage leader as we approach the end of 1939. He was just awarded the Knight's Cross for sinking the British battleship Malaya. Come join us and follow the exploits of U-33!

Starship Troopers has moved into the end game. The MI have destroyed all of the mission objectives but at a terrible cost. Cpl. Linda Evans, who went "above and beyond" to spot the last, most critical, "water works" installation for the "mini-NUC" launchers of F Squad, paid the ultimate price for her heroism. As the MI's transport "Roger Young" maneuvers to place the landing beacon close to the assembled squad awaiting recall, Sgt Rico is plotting how he might be able to recover Evan's remains. "No MI Trooper Left Behind" is their goal.

Brian Stretcher, commanding the "Skinny" forces, has been able to keep one of his "Missile Boat" missile launchers intact. The "Missile Boat" is now playing cat and mouse with the MI around the city as the MI try to get Evans and rally at the landing beacon and not leave anyone behind. The suspense is high, and it looks like it might come down to the last turn to see who "wins."

Activity on the game slowed this past month as both Brian and I were overwhelmed with real-life issues that prevented us from spending the extra time needed on the game. Now that Thanksgiving is over and both of us are back, we hope to finish the game soon.

Come take a look and feel free to offer comments, or advice. Your input is welcome. The game can be found on the AHIKS Forum under the on-line games section.

Wooden Ships & Iron Men (by Avalon Hill) is our third game being playing on the forum. We are playing scenario 16—The Battle of Lissa. Brian Stretcher is game-mastering. We have four players, one French and one Venetian on the same side, who are playing against our two British players.

The British battle line is still anchored, and the three Venetian ships have succeeded in putting a heavy group of seaman onto the British frigate *Cerberus*. *Volage*, the next British ship in line has added crew to the melee on *Cerberus*. The melee continues as the Venetian ship *Carolina* is pummeling *Volage* with cannon fire. The situation on *Cerberus* is still in doubt! Meanwhile the French are working on the front end of the British line. Cannon fire can be heard and at least one French frigate is fouled with its British counterpart. The action is tense and far from a certainty. Stop by the forum and view the action!

You can find this game along with **Starship Troopers** and **The Hunters** in the AHIKS Forum's On-Line games section. No log-in ID or password is necessary to view the game's progress but it's more fun if you do have your log-in password as you can feel free to make comments on the action.

If you don't have a forum ID or password, check out the Members Guide tab on the home page at www.ahiks.com and find out how to sign up for one.

On the Home Front

Member Bill Klitzke and I are continuing our snail-mail game of SPI's **Blue & Gray, Antietam**. This is the first game of our two game set. So far the Union (me) has been able to force the Confederates (Bill) from the Sunken Road, but heavy fighting continues to the east of Sharpsburg. I have just received Bill's Confederate response to these attacks but have not had time to process the move. This is quite an interesting game as the Union has a large force but can move only 10 units each turn, making it difficult to both attack and bring up your reserves. Bill is conducting a skillful fighting retreat into Sharpsburg, which the Union has to take and hold by the end of the game to win. It's a great game! Bill is an excellent opponent!

I am also playing Paul Koenig's **The Bulge - 6th Panzer Army** with our esteemed Editor, Omar DeWitt. The game is most interesting and member Paul Koenig has included some interesting rules that add a lot of flavor to the game. Published by Victory Point Games, it is another game that I would add to my "must have" list. It has a low unit density and seems to play well. The rules are pretty much straight forward and Omar and I are enjoying the game.

For those of you interested in Avalon Hill's **B-17 Queen of the Skies** game, let me mention that Steve Dixon's new game design updating this old Avalon Hill classic has had a title change. The former title **Bombs Away!** has been changed to **Target For Today!** The game has also left the design stage, and the draft rules have now been sent out to the playtesters. **Target For Today!** is a solitaire game that will allow the player to fly a B-17 or B-24 bomber with either the 8th Air Force or the 15th Air Force in the daylight strategic bombing campaign against Occupied Europe during World War II. The heart of the game system is the single mission game which is playtesting now. The game will extend the original **B-17 QOTS** game until the end of the war. There are clashes with German Jets, a squadron game module as well as rules for Mission Lead Bombers, Radar Bombing, and more detailed rules to cover wounds to crew members for those who want the extra details. Look for it to appear in Legion Wargaming's COP list soon.

I will write more about my designing experiences in future issues of *The K*.

Meet the Member

We have two Meet-the-Member profiles for publication this month. Our first member profile is from Mike West, #1163. Mike writes that he has been inactive in wargaming for awhile, but he is looking forward to getting back into it.

Hi Bob:

I am a returning (long time inactive) AHIKS member, and I should "reintroduce" myself!

I've been playing both board and PC-based games for 30+ years. Cut my teeth on Avalon Hill's **War at Sea** while I was in my teens. I have a modest collection of board wargames that includes titles such as **Panzerblitz**, **Panzer Leader**, **Submarine**, **Wooden Ships and Iron Men**, and **1776**.

I joined AHIKS several years ago, when combat results were resolved using the newspaper stock quotes, PBsM (play by snail mail) was the rage, and setup board games fell victim to marauding pets or unsympathetic spouses! I also served as AHIKS judge.

Been MIA for a while from AHIKS while I focused on PC-based wargames, career, and family life. I was rummaging around in my attic recently and came across an old AH classic, **1776**. It brought back fond memories of playing the Campaign Game! This in turn prompted me to "reactivate" my AHIKS membership.

I am a gamer in his mid-50s. I live with my wife in Durham, North Carolina.

Mike West #1163

Mike, we are glad to have you back in the active ranks of AHIKS.

Our second member profile is from long-time member Tom Oleson.

Member profile for Tom Oleson—you asked for more of these! (That I did Tom, thank you for sending yours in!)

1. Born 1936 in Iowa, retired businessman, graduated from Cornell U in 1958.
2. Wargaming for 61 years.
3. AHIKS judge for several years.
4. Avalon Hill answer-man for **Anzio** and **Russian Campaign**.
5. Design credits:
 - 590,000 copies of **BAILEN 1808, Napoleon in Spain**, published 6/21/81 in color in the Sunday supplement of what was then, and still is, Spain's foremost newspaper, El Pais.
 - 23,000 copies of **Iran-Irak**, published in color in the 4th edition (1982) of *Numero Uno*, Spain's answer to *Playboy*.
 - A few thousand copies of half-a-dozen traditional wargames on various battles of the 1936-9 Spanish Civil War, also published while I lived there. I retain some very dear friends from the hobby enthusiasts met while living in Madrid. I have copies of all games cited above.
6. Developer credits:
 - Cited as a major contributor to my favorite game, block **EuroFront**
 - Avalon Hill paid me to redesign two games, **The Russian Campaign**, and **Anzio**. For them, **Anzio** went on to 4 editions. AH then ceded rights to me, and at my expense went now to 7th edition.
7. Most influential articles, both in *The General*: **Panzerblitz** Situation 13, and rules for AREA pbm play.
8. AREA qualifier - ZZZ, only one to achieve it while always remaining on top 10 in won/lost %.
9. Toughest opponent - Don Burdick
- 10..Other hobbies: one of four 50-year members of the American Ferrari Owners' Club, 20 years editor-at-large of their publication, *The Prancing Horse*. Favorite Ferrari of dozen owned: class winner and 8th overall, 1951 LeMans.
11. Root for—NFL, Giants, Seahawks; soccer, Atletico Madrid; college football: Notre Dame, Nebraska
12. Favorite activity—attendance at the ballet. Have been hundreds of times all over the world.
13. Countries lived in: Peru (where married Mamuela Wong), Spain, Italy, Sweden, Mexico, and of course, USA.
14. Languages: Spanish, Italian, English.

Tom, thank you for introducing yourself to the membership.

If you would like to introduce yourself to the membership you can send me your member's profile at my email address listed on page 12. I would encourage anyone who has not sent in a profile to please do so. Step up and introduce yourself to the membership. We would all like to get to know you.

New AHIKS Members

We have seven new members since the last issue. I would like to welcome them to AHIKS.

Luis Christiano Souza Mattos Filho	1796 Luque, Paraguay
Brian Nickel	1797 Edmonton, Canada
Barry Levin	1798 Fairfax, VA
Andre Polite	1799 Memphis, TN
Elton Pruitt	1800 Little Rock AR
Lindy Flickinger	1801 Joplin, MO
Bud Nicola	1802 Seattle, WA

Gentleman, *welcome* to AHIKS!

Until next time, Happy Gaming to you all!



Vassal and Game Development By Craig Besinque

(Note from Pete Menconi: Craig Besinque's first game design was **Rommel in the Desert**, designed/developed with Ron Hodwitz circa 1980-81, first [self] published in 1982, then by Columbia in 1984. Given the info we've been seeing on Vassal, we asked Craig for some input. In addition to **Rommel ID**, Craig has designed **Helenes**, **EastFront**, **WestFront**, and **EuroFront**. GMT is putting Craig's latest design, **Triumph and Tragedy**, into production next month.)

Playtesting is absolutely crucial to good game design. The growing popularity of Vassal and the proliferation of gamers capable of Vassal module design/programming has absolutely revolutionized the game development process.

Step one, of course, is finding "outside" playtest volunteers, aside from the gaming group(s) that have been actively involved in FTF playtesting during the early design/development process. This is of course necessary to both "blind test" the rules and presentation and to ensure that groupthink has not led to the overlooking of undesirable tactics and strategies.

Step two is getting the playtest volunteers a playtest copy. Back in the old days, designers had to hand-manufacture playtest kits and mail them out. Not only is this a lot of work, but a large majority of playtest volunteers never produced any feedback, for reasons unknown. This was (to say the least) disappointing and frustrating. More recently, files could be sent via email and playtesters could print playtest components for themselves (though this involved a fair amount of effort on their parts).

With the advent of Vassal (provided you had the invaluable assistance of a Vassal programmer) this step became much easier for the testers. Download Vassal, obtain the module from the development team, and you're ready to playtest, either PBM or FTF via live server.

Step three is receiving feedback from the playtesters and fixing problems that appear. If this involves rule tweaks, revised rules can easily be sent out to testers. But prior to VASSAL, if component changes were needed, reprinting was necessary. The feedback/tweak cycle is typically dozens of iterations, so this involved a non-trivial amount of re-printing.

Now, using Vassal, this is also very easy for testers and not too onerous for the module programmer.

My last 2 designs, **Hellenes** and **Triumph and Tragedy** (both for GMT) have exclusively used Vassal for outside playtesting. Before that, the majority of playtesting for the **EuroFront2/EastFront2/WestFront2** trilogy (Columbia Games) was also done via Vassal. Access to enthusiastic and expert gamers all over the world has meant easier, more plentiful, and better quality playtesting for game development. Much credit is due to the game developers who do the module design and updates.

Pete's Note: We asked Craig how one volunteers to be a playtester. His answer:

Usually there are notices published on BGG, GMT, and/or CSW asking for volunteers, who are directed to a playtest website set up for distribution of info and feedback. I used to have a list of playtesters in the old days.



We Am the Geeks by Pete Menconi

Have you heard/seen BoardGameGeek? It's a website (boardgamegeek.com) devoted to our favorite hobby. Since a picture is worth a thousand words, and a visit to their website worth 10 times that, I won't dwell here overlong. Most of us get *The K* in electronic format, so here's your chance to find the sizing button on your display (something involving "+" (usually).

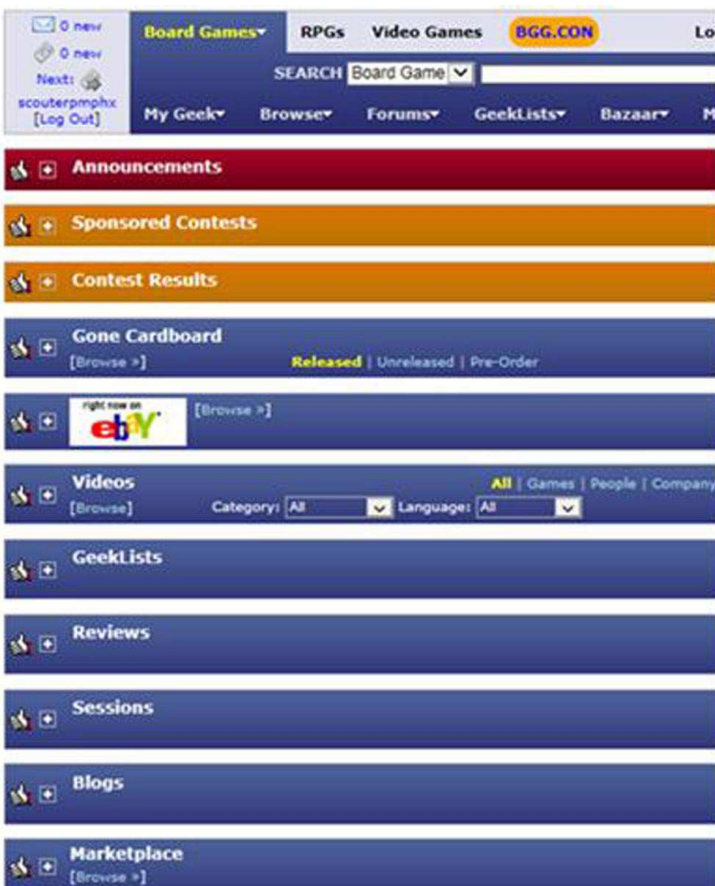
The first two images are from the start page of the site, but when you go there you'll find that each of the white-on-blue categories is expanded to show the most recent activities. I don't use BGG to the fullest extent (ok, maybe I use 2% of the info available), so I won't (can't) tell you what each category does, etc. There's a lot of stuff here.

The primary use I make is to view individual game pages (third image). I think the image below will be large enough for you to see the categories of info available for each game, but the image is showing just the forums. If you're having trouble with a game, rules, etc., the BGG section for that game probably can help. Fans of the games usually post helpful charts, etc., in the "Files" section.

Some of the lists go back many years (a cursory sampling found postings from as far back as 2003). Frankly, the amount of info overwhelms me: I was going to quip that my speed these days is tic-tac-toe, but BGG has an entry for that, too (use the Search window).

Last thing, and something (there's an echo in here) that I don't fully grok, is an "oppo wanted" function where you can find postings for people interested in pbem:
<http://boardgamegeek.com/geeklist/181225/vassalcyberboardskype-request-list-november-2014>

Do you have any ideas on how to use the mass of data on BGG? We would love to hear from you. Write Pete [petemphx@gmail.Com] or Omar [AHIKSOmar@cableone.net].



Game Review by Mark Fassio

Assault on Sevastopol Victory Point Games, \$18.99
<http://www.victorypointgames.com/assault-on-sevastopol.html>

After already finalizing two game reviews, I belatedly decided I'd submit a third one for *The K*, and what better theme to return to than the Eastern Front of WWII?!

Assault on Sevastopol: Von Manstein in the Crimea, 1942 (AoS) simulates, obviously, the German attempt to take Sevastopol as part of their *Fall Blau* (summer '42) offensive in southern Russia. The game was originally designed by Adrian McGrath in 1990, with Alan Emrich and other staffers updating it in 2008. In essence, it's probably the progenitor of the BattleLessons series, given its format and its relatively "older" initial release date.

As with other BattleLessons games in this series, the game is quick (10 turns), has a minimum of pieces (40 counters total) and short, simple rules (more on that later). I've provided two poorly-scanned map halves [© Victory Point Games] to give you a view of "most" of the game and its associated rules, partial combat chart, terrain factors, etc. (I apologize that I have such a crappy scanner.) You can also access rules, game reviews, and a much better map product than mine at the above-listed web page.

The Russians start the game with nearly all their forces reduced to half-strength, plus the usual handful of "cannon fodder" 1-4 and 2-4 proletarian workers and Komsomol counters. They have the advantage of terrain and, of course, the Forts, where they are tripled in defense. They also have an armored unit which adds +1 to any attacking die roll and also an optional "Tenacity" marker which does the same. The Germans have heavier infantry and amazing artillery and air support. Each of the three air chits up the odds one column if attacking the Russians, and can be "saved" to lower the odds if defending. The three artillery units (plus the optional Axis "Ferocity" marker) raise the die rolls +1 for each unit used. So you could invest a fortress at 1:1 odds, bring up three air units and three artillery units, and attack at 4:1, +3 on the die roll. (The combat chart only goes up to an "8" on the die roll, however, so you have to infer that a "9" result [or a roll lower than a "0"] defaults to those values.)

You are allowed to stack up to 7 bars per hex (each counter varying from 1-3 bars). ZOCs are rigid, so you have to stop upon entering. If you wish to enter another ZOC you must first exit and re-enter via a non-ZOC hex. Attacking is voluntary and results in a number of "step losses." The Russians would lose a unit (if at half-strength) and the Germans have a 2-step reduction, where they can flip most of their units (but not the two Rumanian counters) to their reverse side.

The Russians get three paltry reinforcements, whereas the Germans get none. But the Axis can declare a "lull turn" in which any of their reduced units not adjacent to an enemy can rest (i.e., not attack) and automatically flip back to their full-strength side. During their portion of that turn, one Russian infantry unit per fort (if any are in them) is then flipped to its full-strength as well.

The Axis player wins if there are no Soviet units east of the "Red Line" on the western half of the peninsula. If the Russians have any unit(s) east of that line at the end of Turn 10, they win.

I'm not sure the level of "like" I have for this game. I don't "dislike" it at all, mind you, but I'm not sure I like it as much as the other games in this series. On the one hand, it's a favorite theater "theme" of mine, and the game is indeed simple and quick, and reasonably tense. For example, I finally reduced the Russians in their forts on Turn 9, and it was still a near-run thing; one bad die roll, based on how he'd positioned his defenders, and I'd have run out of time to win by Turn 10. When my pal and I switched sides, I tried a non-fort "open" defense, and I was (pardon the pun) "Red" meat by mid-game. It seems in this game – unlike the later BattleLessons products – you are "historically pushed" into sending the Russians back into the forts and hoping that attrition wears the Germans down before the game ends. To try and defend in the open and buy time seems to leave you too weak to make a solid fort defense when finally necessary. Having said that, I've only played two games, which is not enough "data collection" to really say what works and what doesn't.

The only (slightly humorous) observation I have is with a couple of rule (mis)interpretations by us, and the feedback on them. To be honest, 99.9% of the rules are fine and straightforward. However, when I asked for clarification on two questions, I got the following answers:

Q: There is nothing in the rules about the defender advancing after a successful (defensive) combat. So a defender cannot advance after combat?

A: After 8 years I just don't remember; probably not. You might be better posting your questions on *Boardgame Geek*.

Q: Can the Germans use their Luftwaffe chits on defensive air support to "interdict" a Russian attack and lower it, i.e., if the Russians launch a 2:1, can two Germans use defensive support to lower it to 1:2?

A: Wow! Beats me. You're going to have to adjudicate that one on your own, I'm afraid.

Now, I don't have a beef with a designer who can't remember insignificant nuances from a game he redesigned 8 years ago, I really don't. Heck, I'm lucky to remember my own name and what I had for breakfast today! And truthfully, the answer to the second question is actually printed on the map, and we just never made the connection. And the first question is probably intuitive, i.e., if it doesn't say it, then it can't be done. It just got hairy, in the middle of a game with a crucial roll, to get a response back from "HQ" that didn't answer the mail. But we adapted and pressed on and, again, had we read the map, half our issues would've been answered on our own.

Let me also state up-front that, for *any* Victory Point game I've asked questions about (six games at last count), the VPG staff always routes me to the right person with the right answers each time. Their company is truly wonderful and I'm one of their biggest "cheerleaders." So if this is the only "hiccup" in a cascading series of played games, then I'm digging to find an issue.

Should you invest in this game? I would indeed recommend it. It needs playing a few times to discover the best Russian defense, in my opinion, but all games need to be played through a few times to get their proper "feel." The game is a nice addition to any Eastern Front collection; it's inexpensive, quick, fun, and tense, pitting tough defense against heavy weaponry. What's not to like?

Upcoming Events

Jan. 9-11, Austin, TX
 CHUPACABRACON II
<http://wordpress.chupacabracon.com/>

Jan. 15 - 18, Bowie, MD
 WINTER OFFENSIVE 2015
<http://www.multimanpublishing.com/WO2015/tabid/77/Default.aspx>

Jan. 16-18, Augusta, GA
 SIEGE OF AUGUSTA
<http://www.siegeofaugusta.org/>

Jan. 16-19, Columbia, SC
 SCARAB GAMING CONVENTION
<http://s-c-a-r-a-b.com/>

Jan. 16-19, Bryce Canyon City, UT
 BRYCECON
<http://www.brycecon.com/>

Jan. 23-25, San Antonio, TX
 PAX SOUTH
<http://south.paxsite.com/>

January 23-25, Leiria, Portugal
 LEIRIACON 2015
<https://sites.google.com/a/spielportugal.org/leiriacon/>

Jan. 30-Feb. 1, San Antonio, TX
 SOUTHWEST ANIMATION AND GAMING EXPO
<http://www.swagexpo.com/>

Feb. 13-15, Plymouth, MN
 CON OF THE NORTH
<http://www.conofthenorth.org/>

Feb. 13-16, San Ramon, CA
 DUNDRACON
<http://www.dundracon.com/index.php>

Feb. 13-15, Los Angeles, CA
 STRATEGICON: ORC CON
<http://www.strategicon.net>

Feb. 19-22, Mansfield, MA
 TOTAL CONFUSION
<http://www.totalcon.com/>

Feb. 23 - Mar. 1, Charlottesville, VA
 PREZCON
www.prezcon.com

Feb. 27-Mar. 1, Victoria, BC
 GOTTA CON GAMING CONVENTION
<http://www.gottacon.com/>

Good sources for information on all kinds of conventions are the Steve Jackson game site: <http://sjgames.com/con> and the Columbia Game site: <http://columbiagames.com/convention/conventions.shtml>

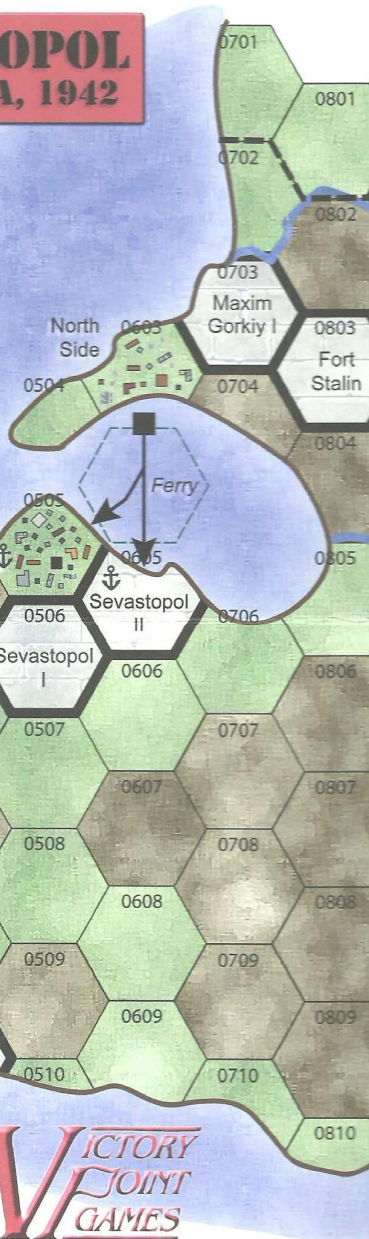


ASSAULT ON SEVASTOPOL VON MANSTEIN IN THE CRIMEA, 1942

Game Turn Record Track

1	2	3	4	5
June 7-10	June 11-13	June 14-16	June 17-19	June 20-22
June 23-25	June 26-28	June 29-30	July 1-2	July 3-4

♣ = Reinforcement unit arrives at any hex with a ♣ symbol that has not yet been entered by the Axis.



Stacking
 Limit is
 7 bars



SEQUENCE OF PLAY

- German Player Turn**
- 1. German Movement Phase.** The German player may move his units.
- 2. German Combat Phase.** The German player may attack adjacent enemy units.
- Soviet Player Turn**
- 3. Soviet Movement Phase.** The Soviet player may move his units.
- 4. Soviet Combat Phase.** The Soviet player may attack adjacent enemy units.
- Housekeeping**
- 5. Game Turn Phase.** Advance the Game Turn marker or, if the last turn was played, stop and determine the winner.

Treasury Notes

Brian Stretcher



Designing the Perfect Strategic WWI Game, Part 3

All right then. We settled on a map scale of 15-20 miles per hex, leaving out unessential areas like central Germany and other places no units would ever go anyway except to transit, with corps-sized units. Rail lines can connect the separate map areas to allow movement between fronts, and there would be some naval movement as well. Still a fairly large game in the physical sense, I think, but manageable: maybe three standard sized maps, and 400 or so combat units. We can keep the number of combat units down by consolidating corps into three to five per army. We can let corps be attached and unattached to the various armies during the game, so armies can vary in size and strength, or allow Army HQs to control any number of corps within command range. It is clear that throughout the war, the various nations created first line, second line, and reserve corps, so each nation can have corps of differing strengths even if each type is the same for each separate nation. I hesitate to assign any sort of combat factors to our units yet, especially using the assumption that some nations should have better factors than others, which almost always seems to be the case. For example, in almost every strategic WWI game I have seen, German units are superior to their Allied counterparts, whether armies or corps, except perhaps the British, and later the Americans. It is not clear to me why that should be the case, but we can leave exact strength determinations for future research and playtesting.

Before we get to the game system, we need to discuss the victory conditions. This is probably my pet peeve with existing WWI games, as most of them base victory on the capture of city, fortress, or resource hexes. In the most abstract terms, I might not have a problem with this, because one could assume that by taking cities from the enemy, the enemy's will to fight would be reduced. Add some special rules to allow for Russia to be knocked out after so many cities are captured, and, presto, there are your victory conditions. There is some truth to that in WWI, of course, but it is a grossly simplified view. Case in point, Germany clearly lost the war, but it had lost no cities. Indeed, it still occupied a good chunk of France, almost all of Belgium, and Russia from the Baltic to the Black Sea. But Germany had lost the will to fight on, its armies reeling after years of increasing hardship and loss, both at the front *and* at home. Russia, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire all collapsed under similar circumstances, just at different times. France came close to folding in 1917, with units at the front refusing to attack, but not because Germany held some French cities and forts. Britain, too, was nearly exhausted by the end of the war. Thus, victory must be tied to reducing your enemy's national will or morale. The capture of cities, etc., should influence that to some extent, but not be the determining factor. Otherwise, the game does not reflect the reality of World War One.

The best and only example that I know of that employs this mechanism is SPI's **First World War**. All countries in **First World War** are assigned a National Morale level at the beginning of the game, from 1 (worst) to 3(best). National Morale can change during the course of the game as a result of various activities that cause an increase in Demoralization Points, including combat losses, ship losses, loss of certain cities and

other objectives. Demoralization only goes up during the game, with rare exception. National Morale is thus tied to demoralization, and the morale levels go down as demoralization increases to certain levels. Good National Morale produces positive modifiers in combat if it is better than the enemy's. Units of countries whose National Morale is reduced to zero pretty quickly melt away, and out-of-supply units have a morale of zero. Victory in the Campaign Game is determined by comparing National Morale totals at the end of the game, fixed at the end of October, 1918, for the Campaign Game.

This is a very significant improvement over the victory conditions in most other World War One games, even though **First World War** was published in 1977. Because there is no way to decrease demoralization (with the exception of France after the mutiny occurs), National Morale is guaranteed to decline over time for all countries, reducing the effectiveness of the troops and therefore ultimately the ability to continue the war. Brilliant! Despite their relatively simple game (in terms of the basic movement, combat and supply rules), the designers understood what made the difference between victory and defeat in the First World War.

Picking an arbitrary end date is reasonable to keep a game of a workable length, but who are we kidding? A corps-level game of the entire war from August 1914 to the end of 1918 is going to be long. I would prefer the game to continue until the last enemy power is forced out of the war because National Morale has reached zero (except the U.S.), or end by mutual agreement, the players as exhausted as were the original combatants. A player who concedes would have, in effect, agreed to unfavorable armistice terms.

Now let's start talking about the general game system. I am thinking of combining the best portions of the movement, combat, and command system of **Reinforce the Right** (S&T 180) with the logistics of **First World War**. Both games use two movement phases per turn. There are four turns per month in **Reinforce the Right**, and three in **First World War**. Before we get too far, we need to think about how turn scale impacts the game length. If we go four turns a month, that's 48 turns a year, or nearly 200 turns to fight a war that runs the historical duration. A long game, to be sure. Three turns per month reduces that to a little more than 150 turns. If only three turns per month, movement allowances would have to be adjusted upwards somewhat. I am thinking movement allowances of 4 for standard infantry, 6 for cavalry as a starting point.

Let's go hex based, standard ZOC rules, i.e. movement into ZOC at no additional cost, but stop when entered. Standard units cannot move directly from enemy ZOC to ZOC, but assault type units might be allowed to do so (stosstruppen or stosstruppen-like units and tanks), either stopping in the first ZOC or paying a significant movement penalty. The usual terrain effects for entering rough or mountain hexes, river crossings, etc.. Defensive benefits for defending in or behind such hexes. Entrenchments present a little more difficult problem: **Reinforce the Right** has units flipping over to double their defense strength in exchange for a zero attack strength, while **First World War** uses entrenchment markers of varying strengths to induce column shifts. Which might be better depends on the combat system we might use.

In comparing the combat systems employed in the two games, I am inclined to favor **Reinforce the Right**. That

game provides three different odds-based CRTs to use depending on the situation. Players may always choose between Probe and Assault, with the Probe CRT being less bloody and therefore less decisive except at very high odds, and the Assault CRT being very, very bloody for both sides, even at high odds. A third table, Maneuver, can be used by the attacker when the defenders are surrounded by attacker ZOC or impassible terrain, and is the best table to use for the attacker. **First World War** has a single odds-based CRT that generates strength-point losses for both sides, with the defender having the option of reducing losses by retreating, or a forced retreat if the number of point lost is greater than National Morale. This works when units are simply combined strength points, but not so much when units of different nations might be of varying strengths or size. Attacking units may advance after combat if the enemy vacates the hex in **First World War**, but there is no advance after combat per se in **Reinforce the Right**.

Let's again start by combining the two systems. Combat will not be mandatory, but initiated at the attacker's option. Use the three different CRTs, but use die roll modifiers instead of column shifts to show differences in National Morale. This will allow the CRTs to be expanded somewhat, allowing for more varied results. Losses will be either unit eliminations or half of all steps, with some retreats, but no advance after combat. Demoralization points will accrue with the number of step losses. I want to use inverted units to show step losses, rather than breakdown units, to keep the number of unit counters needed to reasonable levels. Hexes will have to be taken in the second movement phase. Only units in command, however, will be allowed to move in the second movement phase, and attack in a second combat phase. To be in command, units will have to be within the command range of an Army HQ. Command range will have to be worked out, but somewhere between 1 and 4 hexes, depending on nationality and allowing for the occasional superior army command. Stacking is to be determined, but most likely two corps per hex.

Speaking of Army HQs, one of the more interesting things about **First World War** HQs is that they also serve as supply depots. *Every* attack *requires* the expenditure of resource points to supply the combat, commensurate with the number of strength points involved in the combat. An attacker must supply his combats, but the defender can opt not to supply his units, making his units fight at morale level zero. The amount of resources in an Army HQ is kept secret from the other player, and thus a player may build up supplies for an offensive without the enemy's knowledge. An air reconnaissance rule begs to be included. Those same resources are lost if the HQ is overrun. Again, an effective way to model WWI strategic planning with a relatively simple rule. Resource points will come according to either a schedule, be dependent on production, or perhaps both. We will get more into that when we discuss the political and strategic elements of the game in the final installment.

Speaking of air recon, I want the game to include air units, to show the evolution of air combat through the war. Units would probably be squadron sized and small in terms of absolute combat power, but could be assigned various missions as the war progresses, starting with recon only, and progressing to bombing, interdiction, interception, and perhaps even some zeppelins to attack British morale. Air units would be based on airbase counters that could move as ground units, and be attacked from the air or overrun by combat units. They would

need to be kept near the front, because they would not have a very long range.

So, back to entrenchments. We will use markers placed on top of a unit to show entrenched status. I may want to go with level one and two entrenchments. Level one will double the defender's strength and make the unit's attack strength zero. Thus, in order to attack, units will have to move into an unentrenched status, literally in the game "going over the top" of the entrenchment marker. Level two will either triple the defender's strength, or provide a different defensive die roll modifier. Entrenchment markers will remain on the map even if the unit that constructed them leaves the hex, like a breastwork marker in many Civil War games, thus potentially allowing trench lines to remain on the map after construction and allowing multiple defense lines to be constructed as resource points allow. I am undecided at this point as to whether entrenched units will lose their ZOC, because that would require entrenched corps to stand shoulder to shoulder to prevent infiltration. That depends on unit density, which will have to be discovered during play testing.

Before we get to our last installment, a few other things are worth mentioning. The game will have strategic turns after each quarter. This will allow players to produce new units, send replacements to the front, distribute resources to the Army HQs, initiate naval actions, and other strategic actions. We are going to introduce manpower limits for each country, so that no country can continue to build new units and replace losses forever. Stay tuned!

Wargames as History

I had an interesting epiphany this past month. I actually purchased some new games from Avalanche Press, which is having a Viking Funeral sale on almost all of its third edition **Panzer Grenadier** games (if you like tactical games, you may want to check it out!). Prices are slashed more than 60%, so I bought a couple, having never played them before. I thought they were squad level and single vehicle scale games, like **Squad Leader**, but they are actually platoon level games, like **Panzerblitz/Panzer Leader**. While I may speak more of these titles in a future column, as I was impressed enough to get some more titles while the getting is good (some have sold out already), I got to thinking why I tend to only buy a couple of games a year, and why I seem to search out bargains and/or unusual titles, instead of buying larger quantities of more popular games or the latest edition of my favorite titles. Oddly enough, this fits with my decision to end my subscription to *Strategy & Tactics* some years ago.

For me, it is not just about the actual playing of the games. Don't get me wrong; of course I like playing them, but just as valuable to me, if not more, is what they offer in terms of teaching the history they represent. To use the example of strategic WWI games, I want to face the same problems that the respective leaders of the various powers faced, so I can gain additional insight into those problems, their effect on the outcome of the war, and therefore the course of history. If a game fails to model the proper lessons of history, I will eventually lose interest in the game, regardless of how popular or what a good game it might be, because the lessons learned are flawed. The card play in **Paths of Glory**, for example, conveys limited or distorted history lessons on WWI decision making, even if it might make for a good game. Avalon Hill's old **Third Reich**, despite its atrocious rules, questionable OOB, and play balance issues,

nevertheless puts the players in their proper decision making roles of managing resources and making political and strategic military decisions that have a significant impact on the course of the war (and the game), instead of figuring out which card is the best play. It teaches valuable historical lessons, even with its flaws, although it is a lot of fun as well.

Not all games require play and play again to learn history. The full **Panzer Grenadier** games, in addition to nice components, have a large number of scenarios. A *very* large number of scenarios. I have several Bulge games, most of them of the full battle or larger chunks of the battle at the operational level. Each has its lessons to convey, but there is only so much another operational Bulge title can offer in terms of history. The **Battle of the Bulge Panzer Grenadier** game, however, has 51 scenarios depicting various small actions that none of the operational games could cover other than as a single attack within a single turn. Each scenario has a description of the action and its aftermath, and so imparts a lesson even if you never play the scenario. I like that. **Road to Berlin**, which covers the Soviet approach in 1945, has more than 70 such scenarios, including one with drunken Kriegsmarine sailors, one with female SS units, and one with Hitler Youth units). **Eastern Front**, which is being shipped to me as I write this, covering the first year of Barbarossa, has 112, I believe. That's a lot of learnin', even if all one does is read through the rather thick scenario book. Consider the original **Panzerblitz** came with a whopping 12 scenarios. The **Panzer Grenadier** game supplements actually *are* books, providing background history on the topic and the necessary pieces to play the 15 to 20 scenarios included. **Fronto Russo**, for example, covers the Italian Army in Russia and provides the pieces for the Italian units needed to play the scenarios. I know a fair amount about Barbarossa generally, but not much about the details of Italian involvement on that front, apart from the few puny Italian units that appear in **The Russian Campaign**. Time to find out!

My wargame purchases have declined over the years, despite improving income and, with the empty nest at home, more time to play. Thinking about why that happened, I believe it is because I became disinterested in yet more games on the same old topics, no matter how pretty or good they might be. One or two games on the same subject is usually enough; why continue to buy more of the same, or even worse, to be sucked in and buy edition after edition of the same game, just because it gets prettier pieces or maps. I look at the games currently being published in *Strategy & Tactics*, and I see the same topics for games and articles that were published years ago, some several times before. I don't see myself starting up a subscription again anytime soon.

History books serve a useful purpose, but games can teach things that books can't (like where things are on a map, DUH!). So give me something I can learn from. I don't care much if it is some obscure battle from some forgotten war, so long as it isn't something I've seen, again and again. Another game on the War in Africa in 1941? I'll pass, even if it wins a Charles Roberts Award and everyone says it's a wonderful game. Still looking for that perfect WWI strategic game, though!

Battle of Lissa: *Amphion* Captured by the French!

Turn 6 has just concluded in our little **Wooden Ships and Iron Men** game taking place on the forum. *Cerberus* remains locked in melee with the Venetians at the rear of the British

line, but the elite British crew seem to be gaining the upper hand. Meanwhile, due to mispositioning of the French ships, one French frigate collided with the lead British ship, *Amphion*, and the two became fouled. Following fire combat, the British captain miscalculated and the Defensive Boarding Party was overwhelmed by fire and the ensuing melee. *Amphion* is now in French hands! The closest and largest British ship, *Active*, has cut her anchor cables and prepares to enter the fray. Will she be able to salvage the situation? Will the Venetians carry *Cerberus*, or will the elite British overwhelm their attackers?

You may check out our forum game at your convenience at any time, and should feel free to comment, as you wish!

Treasurer's Report

Here are the recent numbers:

Total balance, 8-31-14:	\$ 9,653.47
Dividend Earned 9-30-14	2.78
Dividend Earned 10-31-14	2.87
Bob Best, judge postage reimb.:	-60.00
Total balance 11-29-14:	\$ 9,599.12

And here's how we did for 2014:

Total balance, 1-1-14	\$ 9,579.85
Dividends earned:	28.10
Print K subs:	90.00
Donations:	180.00
Webhosting:	-218.83
Postage:	-60.00
Total balance 11-29-14:	\$ 9,599.12

As you can see, we made a little less than \$20 this year, ending a multi-year decline. Essentially, that is because we earned enough in dividends over the past year to make up what we have been taking as a small loss each year. So let's hear it for Credit Union interest rates! The donations made and the monies paid allowed us to break even, which is as it should be. Note, however, that this does not show the hidden donations made to the society by various members of the Executive Committee, who graciously eat some of the postage costs and other minor expenses to the betterment of AHKS. We therefore strongly encourage those of you who are able to step forward and continue to support AHKS not only with your membership but with a few bucks as well.

Based on our current financial situation, I am recommending to the Executive Committee that we once again continue to offer membership for free for 2015!

Until next time!



Open Match Requests from Duncan Rice

1776 3ed AH	Bill Scanlan (0275)	Russia Besieged L2	Michael Paul (1578) P
Adv Third Reich AH	Nacho Fernandez (1745) EVS	Russian Front AH	Melvin Yarwood (36) P
Afrika Korps AH	Tom Walsh (1427) P	Saratoga GMT	Chuck Leonard (0711) ETV
Afrika Korps AH	Brian Britton (1582) V	Sorcerer SPI	Tony Arena (1652) C
Albion, Land of Faerie SPI	Tony Arena (1652) C	Squad Leader AH	Melvin Yarwood (36) P
After the Holocaust SPI	Tony Arena (1652) CM	Squad Leader AH	Andre Polite (1799) F
Anzio AH	Melvin Yarwood (36) P	Stalingrad AH	Brian Britton (1582) V
Anzio AH	Greg Dilbeck (1363) EP	Stones River Decision Games	Mel Yarwood (36) P
Armada 2Ed SPI	Tony Arena (1652) C	Tamburlaine the Great SPI	Albert Bowie (299) E
Axis and Allies MB	Andre Polite (1799) F	Third Reich 4ed AH	Michael Mitchell (1086) ETV
Battles for Ardennes SPI	Thomas Ten Eyck (0826) EP	Third World War GDW	Tony Arena (1652) V
Battle of Bulge '81 AH	Roger Pittigliio (0557) PV	To the Green Fields Beyond SPI	John Trosky (1554) CEV
Battle for Midway: Decision in the Pacific 1942 GDW	Melvin Yarwood (36) P	Twilight Struggle GMT	Chris Hancock (565)
Battle Fleet Mars SPI	Tony Arena 1652 C	Up Front AH	Andre Polite (1799) F
Bitter Woods AH	Melvin Yarwood (36) P	A Victory Denied MMP	Ed O'Connor (1243) V
Blitzkrieg '65 AH	William Dahle (1749) E	War of the Ring SPI	Tony Arena (1652) C
Blue and Grey I, II	Melvin Yarwood (36) P	War at Sea AH	Tom Walsh (1427) P
Blue + Gray Quad (Cemetery Ridge) SPI	Roger Eastep (291) AV	War at Sea AH	John Hoffmann (884) E
Borodino SPI	Melvin Yarwood (36) P	Washington's War GMT	Shannon McNamara (1639) V
Caucasus Campaign GMT	Tom Thorsen (470) V	Waterloo AH	Pete Martin (0243)
Chalons DG	Albert Bowie (299) P	Waterloo AH	Brian Britton (1582) V
Chancellorsville '74 AH	Charles Marshal (1573) E	Wooden Ships + Iron Men AH	Mike West (1163) EV
Civil War VG	Shannon McNamara (1639)		
Combat Commander: Pacific GMT	Lee Massey (1382) VE		
Crimean War SPI	John Trosky (1554) CEV		
Crown of Roses GMT	Tony Arena (1652) VM		
DDay 65 AH	Bud Nicola (1802) EV		
DDay 77 AH	Tom Walsh (1427) P		
Dragon Pass AH	Tony Arena (1652) VC		
Dresden SPI	Albert Bowie (299) P		
Elric AH	Tony Arena (1652)		
Eylau SPI	Albert Bowie (299) P		
Federation and Empire ADB	Tony Arena (1652) VM		
Firepower AH	Bud Nicola (1802) EV		
Flight Leader '86 AH	Paul Pearson (1638) EPV		
Frayser's Farm Decision Games	Mel Yarwood (36) P		
Frederick the Great AH	Martin Svensson (1466) V		
Gettysburg '61 AH	Bud Nicola (1802) EV		
Gladiator	Tony Arena (1652) VM		
Golden Horde/Kulikovo 1380 ATO	Albert Bowie (299) E		
Gunslinger AH	Tony Arena (1652) VM		
Hell's Highway VG	Thomas Ten Eyck (0826) EP		
A House Divided GDW	Joel Ramsey (1762) EP		
Imperium Romanum II WEG	Tony Arena (1652) VM		
Kingmaker	Tony Arena (1652) VM		
Leipzig Decision Games	Mel Yarwood (36) P		
Little Round Top AH	John Trosky (1554) CEV		
Midway AH	Scott Saunders (1664)		
Napoleon at War SPI	Melvin Yarwood (36) P		
The Next War SPI	Tony Arena (1652) V		
No Retreat! The Russian Front GMT	Tom Thorsen (470) V		
Panzer GMT	Martin Hogan (1704) V		
Pearl Harbor GDW	Tony Arena (1652) V		
Republic of Rome AH	Tony Arena (1652) VM		
Richthofen's War AH	Scott Saunders (1664)		

Match Codes

A: ADC2	P: Postal Mail
C: Cyberboard	S: Slow Play
E: Email	T: A.C.T.S..
F: Fast Play	V: V.A.S.S.A.L.
G: Will Gamemaster	X: Non-rated Game
L: Learning Game	Z: Zuntzu

Match Coordinator

To accept one of the listed matches or have a new match listed, email to: MC@AHIKS.COM

Unit Counter Pool News

from Brian Laskey

This will be a rather short article to end the year, but I need to acknowledge several individuals. First, I'd like to thank David Bobchin and Randy Heller for their donations to the Unit Counter Pool. Next, I'd like to thank Roger Eastep, Randy Heller, and President Oates for volunteering their services as Specialists to the Judge if needed. I will be compiling a list of Specialists and their respective games so if anyone would like to volunteer to be a Specialist in a particular game(s) please let me know. I'd also like to thank the members who ordered AHIKS T-shirts and showed their support. I trust you will wear your "colors" with pride. That's all for now, so I hope everyone has an enjoyable and safe Holiday Season and Best Wishes for a Happy New Year! Be of Good Cheer.

From the Match Coordinator

Duncan Rice

Gents, take a look at the match request list in this issue. It's way too long. You can help! Please update any of your requests that need it. If you see your name on the list but are no longer interested in the match, please let me know so that it can be removed. This will help keep the match request list functioning smoothly. Of course, the best thing you can do is accept one of these matches. Winter is coming and you'll need something to do in the snowy (rainy around here) evenings.

The Hunters long tonnage tournament is going exceptionally well. You can read the patrol logs in the online game section of the AHKS forums. It's coming up on March 1940 and a couple patrols have been tense but spectacular. Martin Sabais' U-36, a Type VIIA, is in the lead with just over 77,000 tons sunk. Four capital ships have already been sunk. Martin Hogan has stepped up to a Type VIIB boat, and Knights Crosses have been awarded to Martin Hogan, Bob Best, and Ken Oates. There is a lot of war left for positions to change and boats to sink, even if we do run out of capital ships.

The **Diplomacy** game is still moving along. We are coming up on Spring of 1907. See picture on next page. Late starter Charles Marshall's Italian power has been removed from the game by Austria-Hungary and France. John Hren's Germany has just been removed from play. Mike Kettman's Russian power is declining because of an English invasion from the North. Meanwhile, Peter Martin's French power is pressuring my Austria-Hungarian power from the southwest and Jason Young's Turkish power has only just made inroads into the Balkans. There have been a few missed orders, which were to the advantage of Austria-Hungary and likely the reason Austria-Hungary made its strong initial gains. And there was some back stabbing by myself at least, possibly explaining why Russia won't talk to Austria-Hungary. Overall I think this game has been quieter than I expected, or perhaps that's my own perception as probably the least trusted power. I expect Austria-Hungary to be removed or bottled up like Turkey, and France and England will probably slug it out in the end. It is a greatly enjoyable game and I hope we can do it again.

As AHKS strives to keep costs and dues down, there is something you can do to help. Our Perpetual Fund, started by Bruce Monnin and Frederick Kraus, can always use more donations. The interest from the Fund helps the Society. A few dollars from you could help AHKS become totally self sustaining. Give it some thought. Send Brian Stretcher a couple of dollars. Especially since there are no dues this year.

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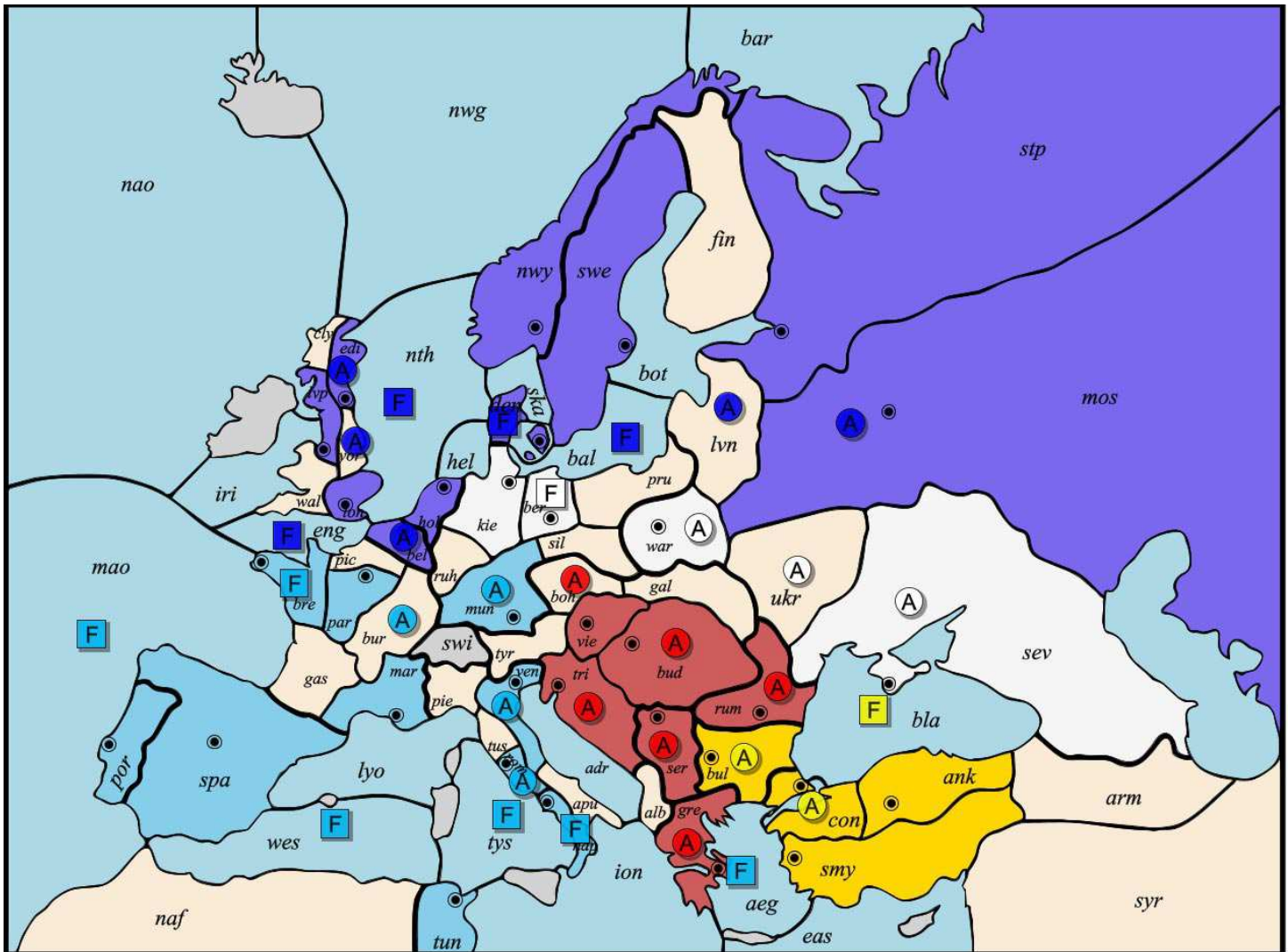
PUBLICATION DEADLINES

Articles will be accepted at any time though submission of an article does not guarantee its publication. News items will be accepted if received in sufficient time to allow production schedules to be met.

Deadline for next issue: January 31, 2015.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Kommandeur (K) is the official newsletter of AHKS, an international society of mature adults who play historical simulation games by email and mail. AHKS is an organization of amateurs, staffed by volunteers, and is not affiliated with any game company or publisher. Society dues are yearly. Additional information about current rates is available from the Treasurer. We do not accept advertising. We do accept "ad trades" on an issue-for-issue basis with other publications and organizations. Direct inquiries to the Editor.



Book Review

Hitler Strikes North—The Nazi Invasion of Norway and Denmark

by Jack Greene, Alessandro Massignani
Frontline Books

Various booksellers have discounted copies.

Reviewed by Tom Oleson

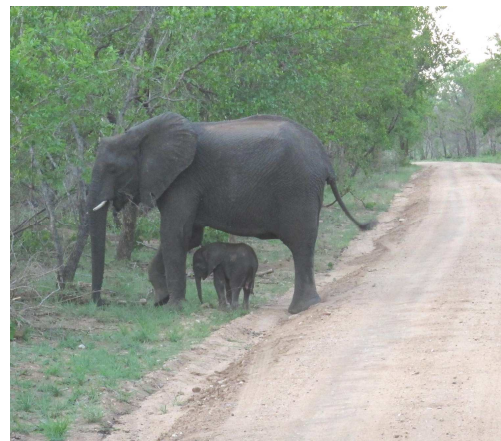
Jack Greene is one of the veterans of the hobby. We have been playing and in contact for 40 years. He has games and other books to his credit.

This is an impressive work of scholarship, must-reading for anybody with a special interest in this chapter of history, or even just a general interest in WWII, and for those without this special interest, the narration of the combat sequences was page-turning reading. The chronology and OOBs at the end were very informative.

I had hoped this book would answer a question I have always had about this campaign, but instead it just made me more puzzled. The book quotes Hitler as saying subs lurking along the Norwegian coast could pose a threat, so why didn't they interdict the German shipments of iron ore?

Jack Greene replied:

The British did not want to offend the neutrals (until they invaded them! You have to *love* Cabinet politics) so they had a policy of definitely *not* entering neutral waters, and, as pointed out in our book, Horton, commander of Allied subs in the area, was told to stay 10 miles off coast and *not* attack neutral merchant ships until the eve of the war.



A just-born calf.

Game News

GAMES

Compass Games

Designer Edition **Bitter Woods** recreates the famous battle that began on December 16th 1944, as Germany launched its last, desperate offensive in the West. The result was The Battle of the Bulge, a brutal struggle in a dismal winter landscape set against an enemy imbued with a fanatic conviction that victory could be snatched from defeat. Still available at preorder price of \$65 plus shipping. A savings of \$20 off retail. <https://compassgames.com>

Europa Simulazioni

Napoleon's Greatest Gamble: The Invasion of Russia (1812) is the first entry in a new series of games covering the Campaigns of the Napoleonic Wars at low to moderate level of complexity. It includes basic and advanced rules, event cards, a two years campaign scenario. Basic unit is the division, each turn represents 15 days. Price: 36 €.

http://italianwars.net/games/the_invasion_of_russia_1812



Game Crafter

Founding Fathers: Offices & Statesmen

1st Expansion of Founding Fathers

Also on offer are variants for solitaire and 2-player play. Now a lack of opponents doesn't have to stop you and the robot opposition can be quite a challenge. \$20

<https://www.thegamecrafter.com/games/founding-fathers:-offices-statesmen1>

GMT

Commands & Colors: Napoleonic Expansion: The Prussian Army is a Coalition expansion for **Commands & Colors Napoleonic**. During the Seven Years' War, small Prussia under Frederick the Great defeated the armies of Austria, Russia, and France to increase the size of its territories two fold and become a major power in Europe. But in spite of Prussia's reputation as a formidable fighting nation, Prussia withdrew from the First Coalition as an active opponent of the French Revolution and remained on the sidelines until the Fourth Coalition in 1806. \$55

<http://www.gmtgames.com/p-368-commands-colors-napoleonic-expansion-the-prussian-army.aspx>

1714: The Case of the Catalans is a strategy and negotiation board game set in the War of the Spanish Succession at the beginning of the 18th Century. The players represent the powers of the Grand Alliance constituted in 1701 to prevent the dynastic unification of France with the crowns of Castile and Aragon by the Bourbons after the death of Charles II. \$59



<http://www.gmtgames.com/p-527-1714-the-case-of-the-catalans.aspx>

Grognard Simulations

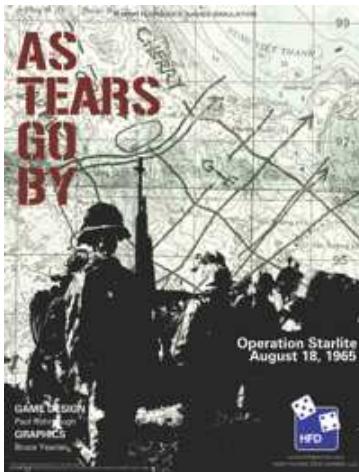
Death Ride Kursk: Leibstandarte is an expansion to **Totenkopf** and requires **Totenkopf** to be played. Prominent game rules feature units at the Platoon (German) and Company (Red Army) levels, Primary and Secondary weapons effects, highly detailed terrain (330 meters per hex), Suppression of units, and an "Open" game turn execution for each side allowing for actions to be performed in any order the player needs to support his plan. The Air, Logistics, and Maintenance Enhancement Counters and supporting charts will be sold separately. This game doubles the battle space for the IInd SS Panzer Korps. This now makes 8 of the planned 24 maps for the entire southern front at Kursk. Price: \$110.

<http://www.grognardsim.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=GSI-0035>



High Flying Dice Games

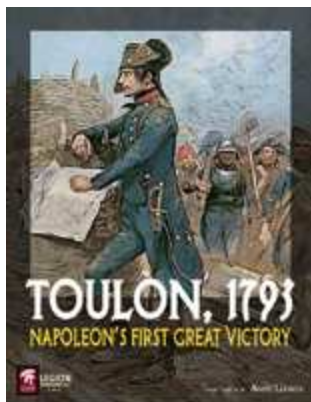
As Tears Go By: Operation Starlite is an introductory level game on the battles of US Marines and the NLF in I Corps of Vietnam in August of 1965. The game uses a card draw design to activate units and resolve combats. The game features Two, 11" x 17" maps, 70 double-sided unit counters, and four page rule book. Price: \$12 (mounted counters \$5 extra). <http://www.hfdgames.com/starlite.html>



Christmas in Hell is a solitaire game on the final days of the battle of Ortona fought from December 22-28, 1943. The battle for this small port city on the Italian Adriatic coast was waged by the remnants of some German Fallschirmjager (Paratrooper) battalions and two regiments of Canadian troops. It was among the most ferocious and insane city-fights on the Italian Front during World War II. The active player takes on the role of the Canadian forces, sent inside a ruined city that is full of snipers, machine gun nests and booby traps. You are trying to do your best to avoid losses and take the city according to the High Command's schedule. Price: \$15 (mounted counters \$5 extra). <http://www.hfdgames.com/ortona.html>

Legion Wargames

Toulon, 1793, Napoleon's First Great Victory game design by Andy Loakes, is an operational level wargame for two to seven players, covering the siege of Toulon, in the South of France, between 25 August and 21 December, 1793. It's area based system covers the entire campaign from the initial landing by Anglo-Spanish forces (at the invitation of the rebel Toulonnaise)



through to their evacuation of the town as their ships came under threat from the batteries of the previously unknown Napoleon Bonaparte. \$70 http://www.legionwargames.com/legion_toulon.html

Matrix Games

Magnifico is a popular region-based board game where the ultimate goal is to dominate 16th century Europe. Now on the PC. Players are faced with tough economic and military decisions as they earn Victory Points and attempt to outbid opponents at the auction and get their hands on Leonardo Da Vinci's most powerful war machines. Every Victory Point has to be earned by careful placement of your troops, construction of fortifications, and invasion of bordering regions. Each new turn brings a chance to acquire Da Vinci's precious projects and get the upper hand over your opponents. \$15



<http://www.matrixgames.com/products/545/details/> Magnifico.PC

Flashpoint Campaigns: Red Storm (for the PC) features an innovative asynchronous turn structure that models the OODA loop, huge maps, hundreds of meticulously researched platforms and weapons, detailed orders of battle, realistic modeling of modern combat including armor, infantry, helicopters, airpower and chemical and nuclear weapons, 2 campaigns and over 20 single scenarios, realistic weather conditions, modding options and much more! \$45 <http://www.matrixgames.com/products/471/details/> Flashpoint.Campaigns: Red.Storm.Player's.Edition



Napoleon Games (formerly Operational Studies Group)

1815: Napoleon's Last Gamble Expansion Kit Contains two 11" x 34" map sections, one four-page booklet. Estimated Publication Date: Summer 2015 \$13 <http://napoleongames.com/drupal2/>



Strategemata Poland

Bloody Steppes of Crimea includes three separate games covering the Crimean War: Alma, Balaclava, and Inkerman 1854. The principle of the game is based on an order system, which is associated with target hexes. The player must carry out the assigned order (of course, he gives them to himself), until the order is changed by the Commander-in-Chief, or the division commander manages to change it by himself. Price: \$52 from Noble Knight Games.

<http://www.strategemata.pl/?bloody-steppes-of-crimea-alma-%E2%80%93-balaclava-%E2%80%93-inkerman-1854,12>



Mokra 1st September 1939 allows you not only to recreate the events of this historic day but also to check different hypothetical scenarios. Players decide about their forces' movement and they organize attacks or defense. Both sides enjoy certain advantages. Germans have large number of motorized units and strong air force. Poles need to make use of wooded terrain and an element of surprise — as Germans haven't expected to encounter such a large cavalry formation in their way. Players use basic rules of "Great Battles of Small Units" system. Few special rules were added to represent specific elements of that battle, like for example—an armored train "Smialy" or German motorized infantry. Price: \$18 from Noble Knight Games. Note: *important*: Game doesn't include a needed deck of cards.



<http://www.strategemata.pl/?mokra-1st-september-1939,13>

Taktykastrategia

Kraśnik 1914 is not new, but it is WWI.



<http://www.taktykastrategia.pl/?topic=wydanegry&content=krasnik1914>

Turning Point Simulations

The latest four games of the Twenty Decisive Battles series has not yet arrived at your editor's door.

Victory Point Games

Villainous Vikings, 2nd Edition is a rousing game of Viking exploration and conquest for 3-5 players. In this Second Edition, everything in the box has been revised for better balance and clarity: the map, the cards, the rules, and even the counters. Price: \$37.



<http://www.victorypointgames.com/villainous-vikings.html>

ARTICLES

Take Me To Your Leaders! Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon and their Counters in Wargaming – A Boardgaming Way Survey By Paul Comben looks interesting. <http://theboardgamingway.com/take-leaders-alexander-caesar-napoleon-counters-wargaming-essay/>

Pickett's Charge

Interesting, illustrated article.

<http://obscurebattles.blogspot.com/>

MAGAZINES

Antcolonygames Magazine is the digital magazine with the game inside. It is about experiencing history, using animated maps and playable simulations. Each issue will focus on a specific historical event or period. This premier issue #1 looks at the encirclement battles that took place in the Russian Baltic region in June of 1941. The app requires iOS 4.3 or higher, and runs on the iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch. Available at the App Store for \$2.99.

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/antcolonygames-magazine-issue/id905373115?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4>

Battles #10 is scheduled for January 2015. However, their schedule has not been very on time.

CounterFact Issue #1 (from One Small Step Games) is a new journal of professional and commercial wargaming. It is published approximately four times per year on an "as ready" basis. Each issue contains articles on professional and commercial wargaming to include game analysis, commentary, polemology, and provocative pieces on conflict and design theory. Also included in each issue is a manual wargame, usually consisting of a tabloid map-sheet, a sheet of playing pieces, and a rules booklet. The insert game for this premier issue is **Mule Shoe Salient** at Spotsylvania Courthouse, part of the Bloody Angle by designer Richard Dengel. This game features 11x17" map, 140 die-cut counters, 12 page rulebook. \$26

http://ossgamescart.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=5&products_id=30

Modern War #15 **Red Tide West** is a wargame that simulates a hypothetical Warsaw Pact invasion of West Germany in the late-1980s. **Red Tide West** also presumes a wider conflict beyond the scope of the game, but postulates West Germany to be the so-called "center of gravity" for the entire war. In other words, regardless of what is happening in, say, Scandinavia, or the Balkans, or the Middle East, etc., the presumption here is that the war will be won or lost in central Europe. To wit, if the Red Army cripples NATO and overruns West Germany, it is assumed that diplomatic negotiations will then suddenly become advantageous to both sides. For the Soviets, they would be satisfied to end the war with their substantial gains, not to mention the distinction of being regarded by the world as having won the war, especially if a nuclear exchange had not yet occurred. NATO, on the other hand (and especially the French) would want to end the war before the Red Army rolled into France proper, and certainly before a full-blown nuclear war erupted (or escalated further, if a limited nuclear exchange had already occurred).

<http://shop.strategyandtacticspress.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=MW15>

Strategy & Tactics #290 **Angola** is a simulation of the 1987-88 campaign which was the culmination of the civil war in that country during the height of the Cold War. This campaign saw major offensives by both sides, with considerable intervention by the armed forces of Cuba and South Africa. Among other

things, Angola saw some of the biggest armored actions of the Cold War. \$30

<http://shop.strategyandtacticspress.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=ST290>



Vae Victis #119 **Art of War**, Amphipolis, Athens vs. Sparta. 7€

<http://vaevictis.histoireetcollections.com/publication/3405/vaevictis-119-novembre-2014.html>

War Diary Fall 2014 features articles on military history, game play and variants, game reviews, commentary, insight from game designers and developers, etc.

<http://wardiarymagazine.com/current-issue.html>

Wargame Design Magazine, Volume III #4 (from Operational Studies Group) is now available as a free download. Contents include Attrition Studies, Articles on OSG's New 5th Edition of Napoleon at Leipzig, rules updates, player aids, and more. <http://napoleongames.com/drupal2/wargame-design-magazine-0>

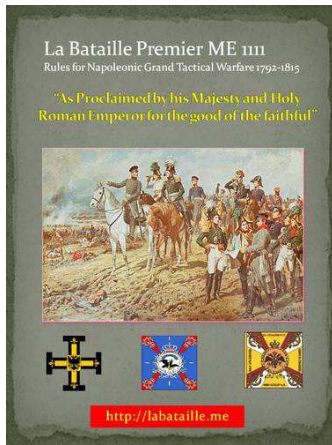
World at War France Fights On. This alternative history wargame examines the strategic and operational possibilities inherent in the campaign that would've occurred within France in June 1940 if that country's government had resolved not to give up, as was the case historically. The assumption is that they instead chose to evacuate as much of the French Army as possible to *France d'Outre Mer* (Algeria). The resultant campaign, then, is one of strategic retreat and pursuit. The German player must try to destroy as much of the evacuating French force as possible, while keeping his own losses to a minimum in doing so.

Both sides' orders of battle are entirely historical. The game length is held to only one month because, had the Germans not triumphed in that amount of time, the delay thereby caused to their plans for the next year would've then amounted to a major defeat in itself in the wider war. \$30



<http://shop.strategyandtacticspress.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=WW39>

BOOKS



http://cf.geekdo-images.com/images/pic1437855_md.jpg

The Quest For Annihilation by Christopher Perello

Civil War came to the United States when the first shot was fired at Fort Sumter on 12 April 1861. Most people, including the military and political leaders of both sides, thought the war would be won or lost quickly in the Napoleonic tradition, with a great battlefield collision. Instead, the war ground on for four increasingly bloody years, inching steadily but slowly into the Southern heartland. Battles were frequent, but rarely decided more than the control of a single town or a few blood-soaked fields.

Each chapter uses the events of a single battle or campaign to describe the component parts of one aspect of the war: how armies were formed, trained, and moved; how commanders decided whether to fight or avoid battle; the men, their weapons and drill; the leaders and the techniques they used to bring it all together at the right place and right time. 320 pages \$35.

<http://shop.strategyandtacticspress.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=B001>



A well-disguised leopard tank.

Vassal Frequency In Listed Match Requests by Pete Menconi

This isn't a terribly scientific study, but a compilation of the "V" listings in the Match Coordinator lists in each *Kommandeur* seems to indicate a recent shift in the popularity (or at least availability) of game matches available via Vassal. Here's the list (format is: K issue – V entries/total -- % V):

49x5	34/76	45%
49x4	23/60	38
49x3	19/57	33
49x2	27/76	36
48x6	17/88	19
48x2	22/85	26
47x6	15/71	21
47x2	24/81	30
46x5	18/78	23
46x1	20/76	26
44x6	6/58	10

This is the first instance (2009) I found of Vassal listed
 42x1 First instance (2007) of CyberBoard being listed

Please note that the "issue interval" between entries is a variable (older entries are taken with a larger time gap between entries). A probable unaccounted variable is the influence of simultaneous entries for several games from one member (either "V" or "non-V") that would "spike" the counts (on either side). Also, the MC deletes requests after a certain time interval, and such deletions might cause some sawtoothing of the data. The entries focus on Vassal requests. Cyberboard isn't included because there are very few of them. Inclusion of the "C" as an analysis of "electronic matches" might add a bit of consistency. (See below)

However, it does appear that there is a real increase in Vassal requests over the past year. I've gotten involved in some game design testing in the last year, and my impression is that the Vassal platform is the "lingua franca" of game design (see Craig Besinque's article on page 4) during the development process. The playtesting Vassal version is modified (map, counters, cards, markers) a number of times before final production is "fixed" for physical component manufacture and assembly. Vassal is to game design what CAD is to building design. Except game design is more accurate!!

Cyberboard: As noted in the table, "C" listings first appeared in 2007, a couple of years prior to the first "V." Over time, V has increased and C declined. I've gone to the site (<http://cyberboard.brainiac.com/>), but I've never used the software. If you follow the links, there are some impressive lists of available "boxes." I found an old fav' of mine, **After the Holocaust**, on CyberB, but it doesn't exist in V. Perhaps some CB habitués would fill us in?

Historical note: in K 44x3 (2009) a membership survey indicated that about a third of members had used C and about a third had used V (separate questions, no indication of the cross-over for using both). In the survey, 61% indicated intention to try out a program such as C or V. It appears we are on that path.

Many thanks to those who created the data base of *Kommandeur* issues that can be found on the AHIKS website. It even has my last issue as Ed. Nice job, Charles and Omar!!

