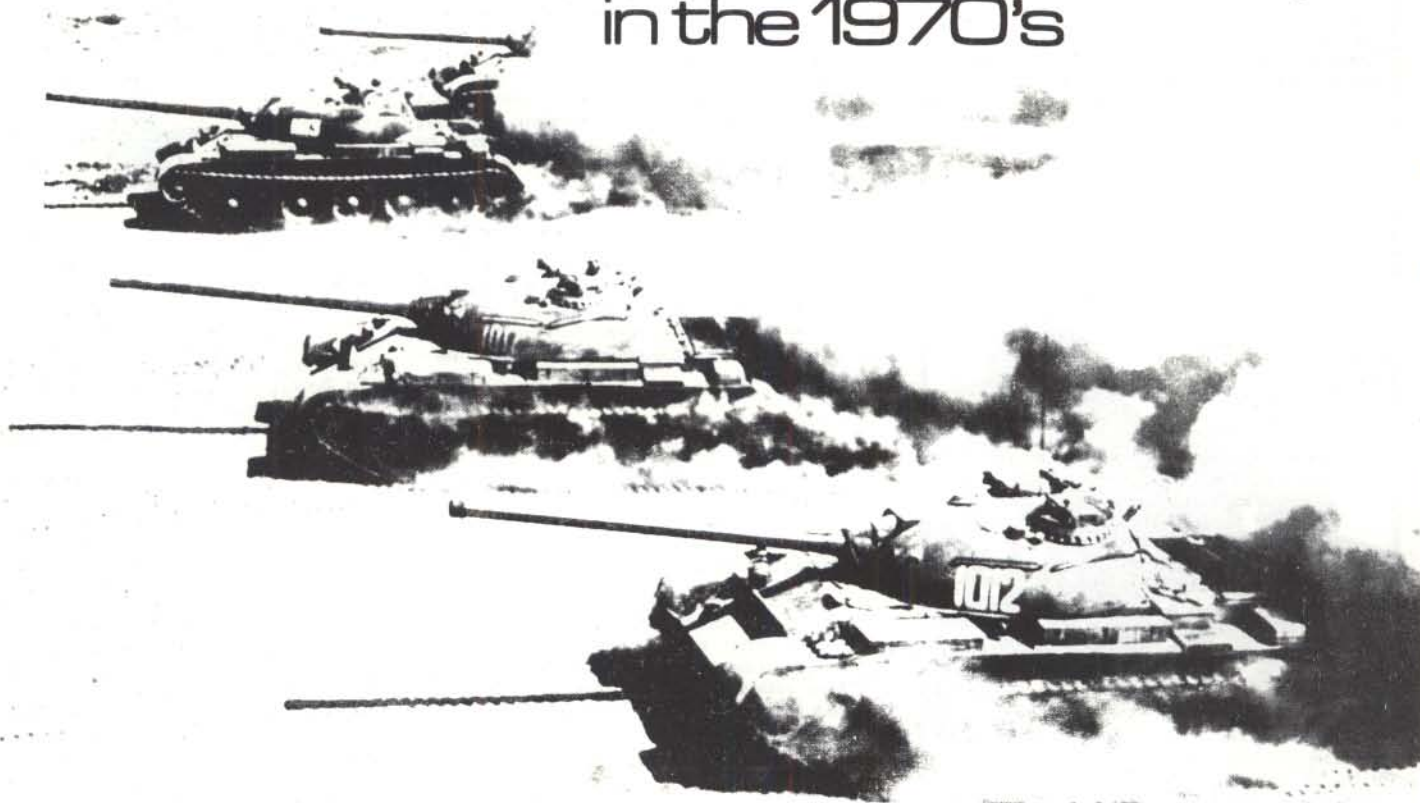


Ralph is no stranger to these pages - or the pages of S&T, Fire and Movement, etc. etc. He has the happy benefit of being both an author by profession and board gamer by inclination - lucky man! NATO is by no means a new game yet Ralph's article breathes life and interest into it; it is too easy to forget that some of the older games are also goodies with all the new games that are around. Editor)

REVIEWED BY RALPH VICKERS

NATO

Operational Combat in Europe in the 1970's



There are not many good wargames of manageable size that offer a long battleline. An "authentic" long line allows a variety of strategies. A flank attack can't be absorbed by a quick shift of enemy reserves from the opposite flank. Even a combined centre and flank attack is far enough spaced that the two battles, while interdependent, are also independent. A game with a long battleline offers more challenge because it requires better "management" - every sector of the line must be carefully balanced and organized.

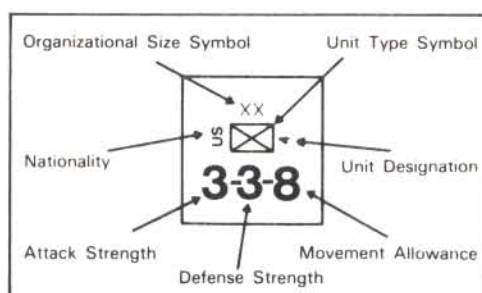
But just a long battleline isn't enough to make the line "authentic". The battleline in NATO at its widest is 52 hexes, while most average games offer a front of some 45 hexes. Apparently an insignificant difference, except that NATO fulfills two more essential requirements:

1. While in most games the action is concentrated in one area of the board, NATO has important objectives from one extreme to the other. In the south there is Munich, in the center are Frankfurt and the Ruhr cities, and in the north Hamburg and Denmark. In other words, almost anywhere along the line is a potential area for a meaningful offensive.

2. Even games with a "potential" long battleline more often than not fail to provide the wherewithal of troops and supplies to stage two or more independent offensives. But in NATO, when both sides are fully mobilized, there are enough units to fuel any reasonable combination of strategies.

These attributes not only allow the players to draw on the full arsenal of subterfuge and surprise but also the many ways NATO can be played strategically makes a game of long-lasting interest that can be played and played without repeating itself.

NATO was published by SPI in 1973. Its subject is a Hypothetical invasion of West Germany by the Warsaw Pact (WP) nations "sometime in the 1970's". It's on operation level - units are brigades and divisions. On the WP side are Russians, Poles, East Germans, Hungarians and Czechoslovakians. Typical WP units are 5-2-6 Russian armoured divisions and 4-3-6 or 3-3-6 infantry. The Russians and Poles also have a few 2-2-2 paratroop divisions which can be dropped almost anywhere if they are in supply.



NATO forces are composed of West Germans, Americans, Dutch, French, Belgians, Italians and even Canadians. NATO divisions are 6-6-8s and 5-5-8s which when "destroyed" are converted into 1-2-8 brigade battlegroups. NATO forces also have brigades varying from 1-2-8s to 3-3-8s, and there are quite a few 1-1-2 paratroop brigades. While NATO forces can only stack one division or three brigades, WP forces can stack two divisions. The most interesting NATO units, and the most troublesome to the Russians and their allies, are the U.S. Airmobile and Tricap divisions which can force their way through enemy Zones of Control (ZOCs). When moving, these units may ignore the first

enemy ZOC they encounter and force their way on one more hex; if they begin movement in an enemy ZOC they may move into another adjacent controlled hex. These infiltrator units add much tension to the game.

Play sequence for both sides is Movement-Combat-Movement, and both sides must contend with restrictive supply rules. NATO forces can only mount full-strength attacks when they are drawing supply from their own national supply sources, which is all too true. WP supply rules are simpler, but WP supply units are expended for all but minimum-strength (halved) attacks, and it's always a problem for the WP player to keep his fast-advancing troops within range of his slow-moving supply units, which may or may not be true.

Thus this game is based on the assumption that the WP nations have a 2-1 numerical advantage over NATO, but are weak on logistics; while NATO suffers somewhat from its failure to standardize its weaponry, but man-for-man are better equipped than the other side - brute force aggressors vs. sophisticated and agile defenders.

By today's standards the Combat Results Table (CRT) is unsophisticated. Most results are Defender Retreats of one to three hexes, and there is usually at least one Exchange result per odds column. In most games with this type of CRT the basic battle tactic is to cut the enemy's path of retreat before attacking. For experienced players this is so familiar that it has become rather dull. However in NATO there is a twist that really perks up interest. Units may retreat through enemy ZOCs so long as the retreat path is occupied by friendly forces, even if this brings about temporary over-stacking. It's a rule that demands much more

cunning in battle tactics than is ordinarily the case. This rule makes a much more realistic game. It also makes it harder to destroy enemy units. Most losses are inflicted by the Exchange results, which the WP side can better afford than NATO. There is also a rare rule where there is no advance after combat.

All this is admittedly a bit "old-fashioned", but it suits NATO admirably. Both sides are required to adopt different tactics. WP forces usually present a solid line (although other tactical deployments are possible) while NATO forces inevitably have gaps in their lines, a deficiency offset somewhat by slightly higher mobility. Thus on the attack, because there is no advance after combat, WP forces must mass on a local front to bludgeon a big enough hole to be free of ZOCs; whereas NATO forces rely on the rapier thrusts of their Tricap and Airmobile divisions. Once either side has achieved a breakthrough, havoc can be raised behind the enemy's lines, cutting retreat and supply, by para-troop drops. All this has a ring of authenticity.

There are four scenarios. The M plus 1 Scenario supposes a Russian decision to launch a surprise attack while both sides are more or less in a state of peacetime mobilization. The M plus 31 Scenario supposes that actual hostilities don't flare up until both sides are at peak readiness. A very interesting feature about the M plus 1 Scenario is that both sides can continue their build-up without initiating hostilities. The game can begin with a tense period of manoeuvre and counter-manoeuve, sabre-rattling and inexorable build-up of strength until one side or the other cracks under the strain and throws the first punch.

These scenarios are conventional warfare. The other two scenarios are identical, except for the addition of tactical nuclear elements.

To win, the WP forces must amass points by capturing NATO cities. Both sides gain points by destroying enemy units. There is also a considerable lode of Victory Points to be gained in Denmark.

The Special Denmark Rules in this game are a curiosity. There is not only paydirt here but rule dirt as well. It is difficult to imagine why these cumbersome, hairy, creaking rules were included in this otherwise lean, clean game. Either it was to patch up some play balance problem (it's pretty tough for the WP side to win unless they score heavily in Denmark) or to oblige the players to grapple with

the northern extremity of the battleline which otherwise they would likely, by mutual unspoken consent, ignore.

For instance, why should a Homeless Danish Unit score a hefty 10 Victory Points for the WP player while a homeless U.S., French, etc. unit isn't worth a fig? Other rules make feeble Denmark a powder-keg of complexity for the WP player. If Denmark is merely isolated from the West, the WP must provide at least six divisions to garrison that nation instantly. Otherwise WP units in the Hamburg region may be "frozen" and the WP player can be engulfed in a landslide of lost Victory Points. Beware those Danes!

Admittedly the handling of Denmark is an interesting game problem. It requires a separate campaign, and it's a sort of cat-and-mouse situation. First the Danish units (two divisions) must be lured from their homeland. This isn't too difficult because initially the NATO player needs those Danes to flesh out his front line, and the natural place for them to establish their defenses is along the Kiel Canal. Then, at the appropriate moment, the WP player must make a lightning strike across the canal. It isn't enough to drive the Danes back - in that event all Victory Points would be lost. The Danes must be shunted aside - delicately - and cut off from their Homeland, and in the same instant the WP must have at least six divisions ready to garrison Denmark. The Danes must be cut off but not destroyed. It's a mighty difficult feat to pull off without hitches.

The motive for all this is that those Danish units, homeless, provide the WP with 20 Victory Points. Add this to the 35 points for nearby Hamburg - a relatively easy objective to attain - and the WP player is just 10 Points short of a Marginal Victory.

But if those Danes have the bad luck to get wiped out in Exchanges, or manage to wriggle out of the trap and retreat home and off the board, it's bye bye to 20 Victory Points and probably - for all practical purposes - bye bye to some eight WP divisions, or - take your choice - around eight Victory Points every Turn. It's a situation that requires exquisite planning and adroit timing. It's a real satisfaction to the WP player if he succeeds, but all the while he's mentally screaming Why? Why?

One thing is sure. The WP player should not tangle with Denmark until well into the game. This may be the real reason for the Denmark Rules. To leave Denmark untouched means that Hamburg - usually swiftly captured - must be left open to NATO counter-attacks. This does not sound like astute policy, yet early in the game the WP simply cannot afford to assign divisions to garrison Denmark. It's a rather lopsided situation, but if the WP player wishes he can turn it to his advantage. (See later.)

Along the rest of the front the game is more realistic. There are no other special case rules to befuddle the issue, and right at the start (in the M plus 1 Scenario) the WP player has an interesting problem.

Initially the NATO forces are badly deployed. Not only are they in poor defensive positions and many are miles from the front, they are also scattered about so seemingly haphazardly that their supply problems are a nightmarish tangle. It usually takes the NATO player about two turns to sort himself out. (If the real NATO forces are deployed like this, then the high command in Brussels would be well advised to consult a few wargamers for suggested improvements.) Not only that, to start with there are only 28 NATO divisions on the board.

On the other side of the Iron Curtain, initially deployed on the board, are 35 WP divisions, most of which the WP player can position at his convenience.

A Turn 1 WP surprise attack will not only pretty well guarantee the seizure of Hamburg, but also at least three powerful West German divisions can be cut off and subsequently possibly destroyed. All this adds up to a strong inducement to the WP to attack immediately.

However, it isn't quite that simple. Although NATO is numerically out-numbered and off balance, it still has teeth. Overall on Turn 1 the WP can attack at only an insignificant percentage

BREAKING DOWN

Initial Unit	Resulting Unit
66-8	1-2-8 3-3-8
5-5-8	1-2-8 1-2-8 1-2-8
3-3-8	1-2-8 1-2-8

better than 1-1, whereas if all the NATO forces attacked all the WP, NATO would have a ratio in its favour of 1.55 to 1. There's another consideration: The WP isn't really ready to take on NATO. An early rapid advance by WP troops will soon carry them beyond the range of the cumbersome supply system, and there will be, in some areas, crucial supply shortages. In this event - if the NATO forces react rapidly and take the offensive - WP forces reduced to half strength out-of-supply will be confronted by NATO forces enjoying an overall superiority that could reach 3 to 1. In this regard Turns 3 and 4 are vital. The NATO player is still not fully deployed, but if he is willing to run the risks of taking the offensive with, as it were, his pants still down, with good generalship he can smash the WP attack then and there. There is no doubt that at this stage the game is finely balanced.

So this is a game that starts off well. If you want instant action but with a high risk factor, go ahead; but you also have the option to plot and scheme while you build up your strength.

A cautious, calculating WP player will wait until about Turn 5. By then he will be far better supplied. His supply status is a strong inducement to postpone the initial attack (more on this later). But also the WP forces by Turn 5 will have added 23 divisions to their strength while NATO has added only 10. The attack-defense ratios will now have adjusted themselves to roughly even - a considerable descent for NATO.

Beyond Turn 5 the situation grows really tense if the WP player is still biding his time. Now each Turn the NATO player rolls an initiative die. If he rolls a 1 he has the option to start the war.

The longer both sides wait, the stronger - relatively - the WP forces become. By Turn 15 when full mobilization is reached by both sides, NATO will have 56 divisions and the WP 128. The WP attack-defense superiority will have soared to 1.84 while NATO will have dwindled to .74. Once hostilities have begun the game lasts a further 20 Turns - just the right amount of time to develop most strategies to an ultimate decision.

These invaluable figures on the turn-by-turn development of both sides are contained in a NATO Profile by Steve List published in MOVES No. 13. They should have been contained in the rules.

Wargame rules never give these sort of facts, yet they are essential. Granted, a quick look at the Reinforcement Chart tells players roughly that the WP will get a lot more troops than NATO. But any player who really wants to play this game well - and it's a game worth study in depth - will need more facts than he can garner by a glance. It really isn't possible to see whether there is a WP advantage worth waiting for until you have the figures. Sure, any player with a pencil and calculator can dig out these figures for himself, but why should he? They should have come with the game.

Undoubtedly there are two sides to this question. In this regard the reigning philosophy of wargame-dom is that the rules cover the bare essentials and from there on the players are on their own. No facts, figures nor hints on play. The advantages of this philosophy to game designers and publishers is obvious. Even among players there has never

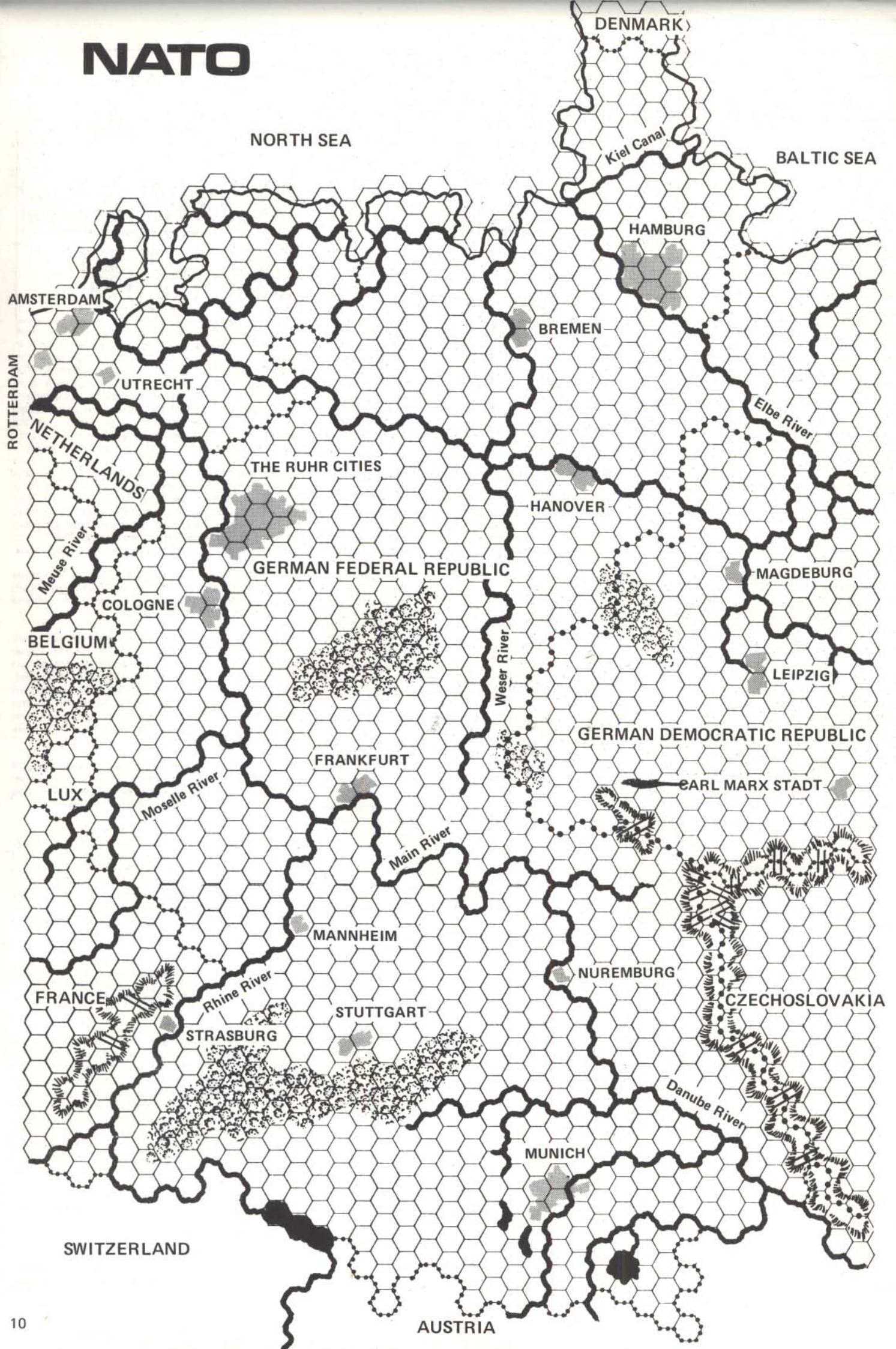
SUMMARY OF UNIT TYPES

1-2-4	Infantry	3-3-8
3-3-8	Motorized Infantry	1-2-8
3-3-8	Armored Infantry	2-2-8
1-1-2	Air-transportable Infantry	2-2-8
5-5-8	Armor	4-3-8
1-2-8	Armored Reconnaissance	0-1-3

ORGANIZATIONAL SIZE SYMBOLS

X - Brigade
XX - Division

NATO



been a serious discussion on this point. One possible attraction of this point of view could be that it gives very experienced players an initial advantage over less experienced opponents. For instance, players who are familiar with other games having a Movement-Combat-Movement sequence like NATO will know right away that a basic tactic for this type of game is to mass for attacks by denuding other parts of your battleline. You can withdraw all units from sectors A and C, mass them in Sector B for an attack; after the attack return the units to their respective defensive positions in Sectors A and C. This is obvious - if you've seen this type of game before.

This is not a criticism of wargame players. After all, all's fair in love and war. Yet on the other hand everyone will agree that it's a pity that these "bare bones" rules cause inexperienced players to miss a lot of the flavour and fun in their games. Even experienced players can miss finer points - and some nice designing touches - because of this austere philosophy. A good example of this is in *PanzerGruppe Guderian*. In this game the Russians are plagued by Untried Units which, when they are turned over at the moment of combat, sometimes turn out to be non-existent 0-0-6s. There are 0-0 units skulking among both the Russian infantry and armoured ranks. But the Russian player also has some mechanized infantry units among which there are no 0-0s. Here is one group of reliable troops. Obviously these mech units are worth gold to the Russian player who will husband them for use in a tight situation. The only trouble is there is no mention of this fact in the rules. So even the most experienced wargamer will only discover the reliability of these troops by pure accident.

Other useful information that should have been included in the NATO rules:

(Admittedly this particular data is easy to extract, but the implications are not so obvious to beginners and inexperienced players. We should remember that beginners are the future of this hobby. Surely the more participants there are the more we will all benefit. Wargaming has a reputation for being "difficult" and thus it attracts relatively few neophytes. The main reason for this reputation of being difficult is the bare bones approach to rule writing. No facts, no figures, nor hints on play.)

At the beginning of the M plus 1 Scenario the WP player begins with 10 Supply Units. These units not only fuel all attacks, but also beyond their borders WP forces must start within six Movement Points of a Supply Unit to be able to move their full Movement Allowance. Even for defense WP units must be in Supply or they are halved. Thus Supply Units are essential. If some sector of the WP battleline is not in supply, here is where a lightning NATO attack is bound to strike.

Therefore for good management the WP player should consider his Supply Units as being of two types: work-a-day units to provide for full Movement Allowances all along the front and defensive counter-attacks; and offensive Supply Units to fuel the main attacks.

Assume for the sake of this example that a neophyte WP player will assign his initial 10 Supply Units to work-a-day roles. This isn't as lavish as it seems. True enough, theoretically, if a Supply Unit can span 13 hexes, then five units should be close enough to cover a 65-hex front and maybe more than enough to cover a shorter front. But the range of a Supply Unit is six Movement Points, not hexes. It costs two MPs to cross a river or enter a wooded hex, and six MPs to move into a mountain hex. (Thus a unit dug into a mountain position is not in supply unless there is a Supply Unit adjacent.) Maybe the WP can adequately cover their front with eight Supply Units, but let's stick to 10. Later in the game the WP player will be grateful that he kept a couple of aces up his sleeve. Not only do emergencies occur, but also a small excess of work-a-day units is vital to conjure up an element of surprise from time to time. In the middle - and end-game it takes quite a few Turns to move up offensive Supply Units to the front, and the NATO player can see them coming. So to keep the NATO player guessing, from time to time the WP should transform a work-a-day unit into an offensive role and stage an unexpected attack. Ideally 10 work-a-day units is minimum.

Except for this case the WP's stock of offensive Supply Units will be provided exclusively from those units received as reinforcements each Turn. A quick glance at the Reinforcement Chart will reveal that for the first five Turns the WP receives two Supply Units each Turn, and from then on only one each Turn. If the WP player holds off his initial attack for four of five Turns he can build up a little reserve stock, but not much for a 20-Turn campaign.

"Hmph," the inexperienced player will likely think, jumping to the obvious conclusion, "so much for my grandiose plans for a sustained three-pronged offensive."

This is where the rules could have given our inexperienced friend a helping hand. The rules should have suggested that the correct procedure in this game is to attack in stages. Open an offensive on, for instance, your left flank for two or three Turns. Then consolidate these positions. Here the NATO forces will likely counter-attack. But even though your offensive here has temporarily paused, the WP troops are still working for the overall plan. On average every sixth NATO attack will result in an Exchange. The WP can afford this, but NATO can't.



Meanwhile the WP has launched a two-Turn attack on the right flank. Then the action switches to the center. The line is long enough that NATO can't easily shift reinforcements to these active areas, remember? By now new offensive Supply Units will have arrived on the left flank, so the sequence can begin again.

The rules should have also advised the new WP player how to utilize his Minimum Attack capacity. When WP forces bypass a NATO position, such as Hanover where a West German division is often trapped, or when a thin wedge of Airmobile troops intrudes through WP lines, these enemy positions are usually exposed to attack from a least three or four sides. Here is where the WP player should employ the massing tactic of Sectors ABC described earlier, then use Minimum Attack. There is no need to expend precious Supply Units for mopping up operations.

These play techniques are obvious - once they're pointed out. But apparently some of them have been missed by even experienced players. There is such criticism of this game for being "weighted in favour of NATO". Weighted in favour of NATO with a better than 2-1 numerical superiority and attack ratio of 1.84?

Certainly this game will look like a NATO breeze if the WP player merely attempts to sustain a continuous one-front war. This strategy enables NATO to mass the bulk of its forces in one sector. Give the NATO player the opportunity to play the game this way and with his man-to-man superiority he will certainly stop the WP in its tracks. The NATO forces can hold one front, but they are hard-pressed to hold two.

If the WP side plays a two-front campaign well, this game is a finely-balanced contest.

The contention of all this is that in today's milieu of wargaming, a lot of "obvious" play techniques are being missed. We are swamped in a torrent of new games. We barely sit down to try one game and we're fidgeting with a rash of impatience to try the next game. There isn't time to always dis-

cover what some players call the "truths" buried in our new games. We need a little help from the rules.

Planning the initial overall WP strategy is pretty much an exercise in straight addition. To eke out a Marginal Victory in the M plus 1 Conventional Scenario the WP player needs 65 Victory Points. He can't really count on gaining points by destroying enemy units because most losses occur in Exchanges, and these more or less cancel out. To win, the WP has to occupy NATO cities.

Hamburg and Hanover are pretty sure scores. At five points per city hex that gives the WP 45 points to start. They need 20 more. Denmark? Too chancey to count on. Denmark is useful to convert a solid Marginal into a Substantive, or to make up for unfavorable losses in Exchanges. To play safe the WP player will go after real estate. In the far south there's Munich - 25 points, more than enough to win. And on the way he can probably pick up Nuremberg for an extra five points. Northwest of Munich there are Stuttgart, Mannheim and Frankfurt, also 25 points. Even Frankfurt and Bremen would eke out a theoretical victory. In other words, there are a lot of possible combinations to win. The juiciest prize is the Ruhr Cities - 50 gorgeous Victory Points all in one basket. But as the old war song says, It's A Long Way to Tipperhury.

Any of these combinations is theoretically feasible, which is why NATO is blessed with long play interest.

A very engrossing strategy is to use a strongly fortified Hamburg as a pivot for an attack on Bremen. The NATO player is always obliged to concentrate a large portion of his troops on the Denmark-Hamburg-Bremen front. Once the WP forces have occupied Bremen it's just a short dash to the sea - and Denmark and all the NATO troops in the "Bremen pocket" are cut off. Of course, in the same instant Denmark must be dealt with. This is not a strategy for beginners.

Obviously the combination of cities the WP player selects for a Minimum Victory will be only his primary objectives. While he's working on these he'll wait for his chance, for the NATO line to break or get off balance allowing him a massive breakthrough and encirclement. He must remember that the only sure way to break the NATO line is to stretch it taut and thin.

The game is engineered to give the WP player help in this regard. Initially the main action usually takes place in the Hamburg area, with perhaps a diversionary attack by NATO somewhere around the center of the board. In which case the southern end of the line - Czechoslovakia - is usually pretty peaceful. Czech troops can't advance beyond their border, so the NATO player invariably contents himself by manning this sector of the front with a picketline of paratroops or reconnaissance brigades.

By around Turn 5 (if the game started on Turn 1) the WP advance in the Hamburg sector has run out of steam, has been contained and stabilized. And if the NATO counter-attack in the center board has been successful, the WP is scrambling for reinforcements to plug those holes. This is the point where the game often begins to look "weighted in favour of NATO".

But meanwhile Russian reinforcements have been arriving regularly in Czechoslovakia. If the WP player hasn't steadily siphoned off these reinforcements to plug his holes, he now has a respectable force in Czechoslovakia with which to shift the action to the south. Once these fresh troops swarm out of the Czech mountains, the strain begins to tell on NATO. The NATO picketline reels back and clamours for reinforcement. NATO is then obliged to man a line the entire length of the board. The NATO line is now stretched taut and thin. At this point it's anybody's game.

To put it another way and express it as a rough rule of thumb, if the WP forces concentrate their offensive in one half or less of the board, NATO

C. Search Phase

In this phase all air, surface or submarine units can search using their various radar, sonar, hydrophone equipment to find the enemy.

Features such as rough water, previous depth charge attacks causing disturbed water, pillenwerfer (dummy subs) are all there to cause problems aplenty for both sides. It is not easy once a submarine is contacted to hold it with one escort, as it must proceed slowly to try and keep contact; to speed up risks loss of contact. Obviously when going in for a depth charge run one has to speed up and contact is usually lost a few hexes away from the possible submarine: one must then hope to put down the charges or hedgehogs accurately to cause damage.

After the search phase there is a terminal phase where markers are removed, reinforcements brought into play and victory conditions determined.

That, briefly, is the phase sequence and within this there is a lot to absorb. As stated earlier, this is a very thorough game on submarine warfare and little, if anything, is left out.

Summary

You may feel from all my comments that this game is not for you. Like Air War it will become very popular, I'm sure, with the naval war gamer but for the casual naval gamer it may seem a bit heavy and quite long in playing time until one is fully familiar with the rules - not an easy task. Try it first if you are not sure, it certainly will not fail to entertain the player who digests the content and I doubt if anyone will come up with a more comprehensive submarine game. I take my hat off to the designer/developer, it must have been a labour of love - but why, folks, did you throw the modern era in as well in the same rule book?

Up Scope will no doubt make its niche in the history of wargaming - for me anyway it will provide hours of fun.



NATO CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

has the wherewithal to contain this. Then a quick thrust by Airmobile units at a weak point cutting a small crack in the line enabling paratroops to drop behind the WP line, and the war is as good as over. It is quite possible for a fast-reacting NATO, willing to run risks, and under these circumstances, to virtually win the game by Turn 5 or 6.

But if the WP player manoeuvres from the outset to play the entire board, sacrificing some gains in his initial surge to ensure sufficient defensive strength where it will be needed, then the game will be very much a tough contest. A word of caution, though. To play the whole board does not mean to advance pell mell along the entire front all at once. WP advances must be made in sectors by stages. Where no active offensive is immediately contemplated, WP forces must deploy in the strongest possible defensive positions, taking full advantage of terrain.

Taking advantage of terrain sometimes also means denying the enemy good terrain, especially in regards to rivers. A bridgehead across a river is not a good defensive position, but it denies the enemy the safety of a river defense. A bridgehead upsets the enemy and draws his fire. It's a good diversionary tactic if you can afford it.

When the Soviet army swarms out of Czechoslovakia it is usually a mistake to drive head-on for Munich. Once WP troops have crossed the Danube east of Munich they can too easily be bottled up there.

Here the principle of the Strategy of the Indirect Approach has a textbook application. If the WP makes its river crossing at Nuremberg it will have gained a major strategic advantage. From a Nuremberg bridgehead WP forces can either swing south, thus bottling up the NATO forces in Munich; or they can strike west for Stuttgart and Mannheim, or northwest for Mannheim and Frankfurt. The devil of a situation like this is that whatever the

NATO player does will be wrong - if he reinforces Munich then the WP will strike at Stuttgart; if he reinforces Stuttgart the WP goes for Munich; and if he spreads his reinforcements evenly then he's weak everywhere and bestows on his enemy the crowning advantage of being able to make the choice that suits his overall plan best. Just as in real war, in wargames when an army can manoeuvre itself into a position from where it has a choice of alternative objectives, it is in a position that is hard to beat.

One of the best features of NATO is that both sides can simultaneously play the offensive. While NATO offensive power is limited to local sectors, the Airmobile units give this power interest and effectiveness. Of course, the NATO player must always maintain his paratroopers in reserve ready at an instant's notice to exploit Airmobile breakthroughs.

All in all, NATO properly played is a fascinating game - in almost every regard it's a classic.



GAME SUMMARY - MEDITERRANEAN 1942

British Forces:

U Class Submarines

Utmost, Unbroken

Convoy:

3 Supply Ships (one a Tanker)

5 Destroyer Escorts -

Italian - two with sonar

The object of this scenario was for the British to sink the three ships of the convoy prior to them crossing the board.

The Italians win by getting one ship off only, as the object was to get vital supplies to Rommel in time for Alamein.

Turns 1 - 4

During the opening moves in a calm sea, 'Utmost' picks up the sound of the convoy on the hydrophones and on putting up her periscope she sights the convoy heading towards her on a straight course.

'Unbroken', a submarine with a crack crew, closes in on the port bow area and, though at a depth level three, gradually rises to attack depth of 60'. She prepares a full salvo of 4 bow tubes, to fire the Mk VIII contact torpedoes carried. Hopefully she can close to a range of about 1,500 yards max. undetected so as to dive under the convoy after firing to confuse the searching escorts.

The Italian destroyers drop a few random charges in the hope of a lucky strike but apart from confusing the ASDIC (sonar) destroyers, achieve nothing but do improve morale.

Turns 5 - 8

A zig away by the convoy puts 'Unbroken' at a longer range than was wanted - over 2,500 yards but she fires anyway as with her slow underwater speed she has little chance in getting a closer shot. After firing she drops down to depth level three, about 250', and turns away to try a reload for a long shot at the convoy later.

The zig, however, puts 'Utmost' into a good position and she closes on the convoy.

Still no contact by the escorts despite frantic searching.

Turns 9 - 12

On Turn 10 one of 'Unbroken's' torpedoes hits the destroyer Soldati which runs into one of those fired and is sunk. Two of the other torpedoes miss astern of one of the convoy ships. The Italian escorts pick up on the torpedo detector apparatus the track of the torpedoes and run towards the submarine picking up contact. However, the expert crew of 'Unbroken' fire a dummy contact marker causing confusion on the escort's bridge, to the extent that one of the other destroyers unloads two 4 pattern depth charges to no effect.

On Turn 12 'Utmost' fires 4 torpedoes and dives under one of the escorts - not sonar equipped - but is picked up by the other sonar destroyer.

Turns 12 - 20

'Unbroken' scores no more hits and though she fires one more torpedo she breaches the surface - tut tut! - she is heavily attacked and severely damaged by the escorts but escapes by dropping oil slick markers which helps pinpoint her position but with a lot of luck she survives over 60 depth charges. She at one time goes down to two depth levels less than safety level but gets away with it as she runs a huge risk of sinking with this manoeuvre. 'Utmost' hits and sinks a 5,000 ton freighter and, apart from nearly being rammed when she also breaches on firing her salvo, she gets under some of the convoy ships and escapes. The survivors from the sunken ship are left paddling to no avail as the convoy rushes away from the scene!

Result was a win for the Italians who, in fact, played a very good game and the British subs with only a small salvo to fire in these craft could not make up for poor accuracy with their torpedo setups.