



# AN ALTERNATE ARNHEM

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The game of *Arnhem* was published early in 1976 as part of the *Westwall* Quadrigame, and was quickly seen to be the gem of the *Westwall* set. It quickly gained popularity and has maintained its position over the last 3 years despite the mass of games produced. The reasons for this are not difficult to find. It is small, simple and quick yet the tactical position is interesting: also airborne operations have a mystique similar to that credited to the panzers.

As a game *Arnhem* has little competition. Suppose you want a game for a relaxing evening's play after a hard day's work. A glance at a current SPI list shows how little choice there is; if you eliminate long games (ones which cannot easily be played in an evening) and ones with a lot of counters to set up, one is left with a variety of quads most of which are so simple as to be boring. *Arnhem* also uses a game system which is reasonably appropriate to the situation (in the waterlogged Netherlands blitz tactics, mech movement phases and so on are non-starters). It is interesting to note that S&T survey data (carefully picking my statistics) shows that of all SPI non-issue 20th century games only *Wurzburg* and *Sinai* have been played by more people.

Now for all its popularity, very little has been written about the game — in fact only a single article, relating the game to how the actual battle developed (in *Moves*). I hope this article will stir some interest in the game. I feel it is pointless tampering with an established game and my comments are to solo players, since it works well solo but could do a lot more.

For a game that is so popular it is perhaps surprising just how much the game ignores. However before making any specific points I'll consider the flow of the game.

The standard game is the historical scenario. This scenario starts with the German garrisons scattered all over the map, and the Allied commander is presented with a fait accompli as his army touches down along the Eindhoven-Arnhem road. With his troops already down the Allied commander is forced into the historical strategy and must push on as best he can. 101 Abn. division easily dominates the area from Uden to Eindhoven, whilst 82nd Abn. division secures the area from the Maas to the Waal. The British 1st. Abn. division's attempts to form a perimeter around Arnhem are frustrated by two SS units and form a cramped enclave from the woods at 3616(A) to Oosterbeek. It is almost traditional that a unit is slipped to 3423(B), the hex controlling Arnhem bridge since it restricts the ability of the Germans to concentrate against the 1st's pocket. Personally I consider that the adjacent Arnhem hex 3523(C) is better in that it hinders the German attack on the pocket with its zones of control and it rarely survives anyway (its life expectancy statistically is 4 turns). The roadblock in Arnhem is made doubly effective by the *Westwall* rule which stops mechanised units entering difficult terrain and so stops them bypassing Arnhem. After this the 1st's main activity is to pray they can hold out until XXX Corps arrives.

The responsibility to link up these airheads belongs to the British XXX corps which enters piecemeal near Eindhoven starting on game-turn 2. Its progress is rapid, hindered only by the need to repair any of the 3 important bridges which the Germans may have blown, but even so are in action at Nijmegen by turn 4 or 5. The battlefield at Nijmegen is very restricted and only 1 or 2 ground units of XXX corps can be deployed, making the use of massed artillery vital to success. It is therefore usual for the point force to be for example an infantry battalion, an armoured regiment, the engineers and as much artillery as can be brought up. If an infantry brigade can be brought up its extra strength can make a difference.

This leaves a reasonable force to hold the flanks of the advance between Uden and Grave, the area which gives the Germans their best opportunity to hinder XXX corps progress. In this area the German has two strategies; they can use their units which arrive slowly to distract the Allies at the risk of them being overwhelmed to no purpose or they may hold them back as a force in being until strong enough for a conventional attack. This has the problem that it allows the Allies to establish a reasonable defence line. Whichever course is selected the attacks from the north and south must be co-ordinated to prevent the Allies concentrating on one force.

By turn 5 (D+4 of the operation) the salient is secured as far as Nijmegen and the Allies are about to cross the Waal. This major operation is hindered by the German garrison, "Brdf", which should fight to the end since having to kill it will delay the Allies at least 1 valuable day, which cannot be done if it withdraws behind the Waal.

A tactic which may disconcert the Allies is that if they fail to enter Nijmegen then the Germans must consider moving the 9SS Reconnaissance battalion to 2620(D). This means the Allies have to clear 2 units from the city and also it covers the western flank, by preventing the paratroops crossing the Waal to 2721(E) or 2820(F) either of which negate the defensive value of the city. Other reinforcements can later be stationed near 2923(G) and 2919(H) stopping the para's getting too ambitious and giving the Allies a real headache.

To break the line of the Waal the Allies must concentrate their air and artillery resources and use the engineers to push as many paratroops across the river as possible, since with the artillery they can swamp the defence, although obviously the line of communication across the bridge must be opened quickly to bring the powerful forces of XXX corps into action.

When the Germans have been cleared from the area west of the Rhine in game terms there is little to be done, depending on how 1st Abn. division is faring. All this division can do is hold as large a perimeter as possible and preserve its strength by counter-attacking sparingly. Even so it is unlikely that the enclave will be large enough to be reinforced and expanded. In the game this doesn't matter since the most profitable source of the wargamer's gold — 'victory points' — is getting XXX corps across the Waal.

This illustrates the main criticism of *Arnhem* as a simulation: to balance the game not only are the players stripped of any major strategic control but are set objectives which are irrelevant to the historical aim of the battle. I consider that the value and interest of a game stems from the ability to handle forces at a level higher than the game-system. Perhaps I had better explain this rash statement: when considering the interaction of units in adjacent hexes, a game system can inflict a limited number of effects (i.e. advance, retreat, stay put or eliminate units — and now take step losses) and so a combat result is a meld of many possible actions by the unit leaders; but the result must be approximated to the nearest allowed combat result. Even allowing for modern wonders like *Airwar\**, in terms of an individual unit the results are abstract and have as much claim to being 'realistic' as chess! Hence the simulation must be considered at a level higher — in the case of *Arnhem*, corps level — as, strategically, the units the player has to give objectives to are the divisions.

This shows my objection to *Arnhem* and other games with similar fixed starts (obviously in some situations this can't be avoided). A free set-up scenario is provided but this is limited in value because with hindsight the Allies know the problems they will face, but they also know what they will *not* have to face. Let me review the operation from the viewpoint of what the Allies *thought* would happen.

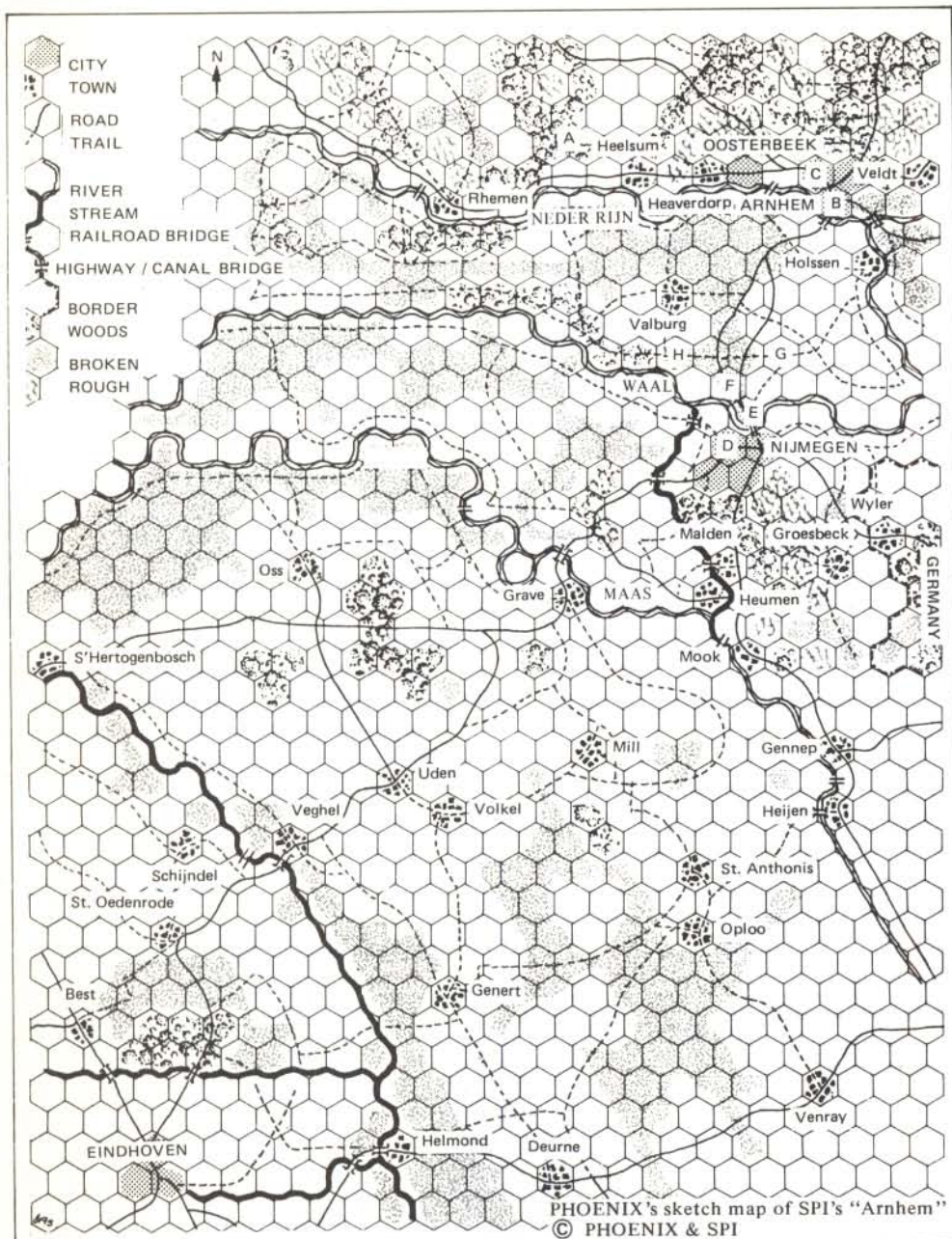
First let us consider the objective of Operation Market-Garden. An airborne operation is a very expensive operation in terms of resources used and once launched it can leave the army without an airborne capability for some time, for after an operation many of the personnel are injured (even if not incapacitated) and will have to recover, many aircraft will be damaged and strained by heavy use and be unusable, most of the parachutes will need replacing as will the gliders which carry the heavy equipment needed to survive in action (British glider production was only just sufficient to mount the 3 operations mounted — D-day, *Arnhem* and the Rhine — particularly as glider production started in 1942). It is a fallacy which started with "Anzio" and was perpetuated by "War in Europe" that paratroops can be scattered all over the map without planning and immediately scattered somewhere else. The Germans took 4 weeks to organise the Crete invasion (although *Arnhem* only took a single week), however after Crete the Germans could only muster under 1/3 of their original strength and after *Arnhem* the Allies do not appear to have considered using them again in an airborne role (other units were available) but the 82nd and 101st Abn. divisions were in good enough shape to take part in the "Battle of the Bulge" three months later.

This means that airborne forces will only be committed to attack a really vital objective. The Allies had been looking for a suitable opportunity since the breakout from Normandy in July, but the selected targets were all overrun by ground units before an air assault could be launched. Now to secure a bridgehead across the Rhine was a worthwhile target, but a more limited objective of getting across the Waal would not be as the resulting position could not be exploited (the Germans would be defending a limited front behind major obstacles) until the Reichswald was cleared and major reinforcements brought up. It is debatable if the *Arnhem* salient was a major benefit in the subsequent Reichswald offensive. This means that any game where the objective is other than crossing the Rhine is ahistorical, even if necessary for play balance (as I am interested in *Arnhem* as a solo simulation play balance is unimportant). An unusual scenario (explained later) is "was *Arnhem* really necessary" to see just how far the land forces can get on their own.

Now consider the threats expected by the Allies. Three major groupings of Germans existed in reserve: elements of 15th Army withdrawing from the Scheldt, units resting in the Reichswald and the II SS Panzer Corps near *Arnhem*. Much has been written on just what the Allies knew, but I personally feel they were not quite as ignorant as

\* As an example consider the passions aroused by the problem of the 8 point stacking limit in TSS and its effect on the ability of a force to melee.





has been suggested. Certainly 101st. Abn. was quite adequate to fend off 15th Army, and 82nd Abn.'s first objective was to protect the flank from the Reichswald by capturing the Groesbeek Ridge. As far as the presence of II SS Panzer Corps was known, the comment of a contemporary historian is illuminating for Chester Wilmot in the 'Struggle for Europe' (1952) says: 'Dutch Resistance source reported that there were a half a dozen (6) low-grade battalions in the Nijmegen area and some battered panzer units from France were refitting north of Arnhem. It was suspected by British Intelligence that these might be the survivors of the 9th and 10th SS Panzer Divisions, which had not been identified by contact since the start of the month. Even if this were so, it appeared unlikely that the two divisions together would amount to more than one motor brigade and one armoured brigade.'

This is the level of forces which appear in the game, 9th and 10th SS having between them: 2 Recce. battalions, 4 Infantry battalions, 2 Armoured battalions and 3 Artillery regiments.

When the plan for Market-Garden was constructed it had to meet 4 threats, viz:- an attack from the north (15th Army), from the Reichswald, from the east of Arnhem and from troops already in position. None of these threats could be assessed with accuracy either in terms of the size of the threat or how long before the Germans could counter-attack.

It has been suggested that the allies had discounted an attack by 15th Army but even if it had not expected 15th Army it did expect some activity

from the Germans and so 101st Abn. division was correctly placed to meet it and although it was involved in hard fighting, it was never in major difficulty.

Now any strategic simulation of the Arnhem operation must present the Allied player with the problem of resolving this 'fog of war'. This is where the free set-up scenario fails in that the German reaction is known (in so far as the Allies know what the Germans cannot do). In such a simulation the Allied player will have to balance the need for a strong force to be landed as near Arnhem as possible with the need to handle possible German counter-attacks on D-day to D+4 when XXX corps can take much of the responsibility. This I submit is the real question about Arnhem: not whether it should have happened at all, but was the deployment of the airborne corps at fault, for the operation was certainly a 'near run thing' and the stakes optimistically high. Success was expected to allow the Allies to march into Germany in late 1944 (although it would have probably led to a bitter fight for the bridgehead at the expense of operations such as the "Battle of the Bulge").

I intend to conclude with the scenarios illustrating the points I have discussed, but first I must comment on three small points which the game ignores but are a vital element in the situation.

(a) The defence of Eindhoven. The capture of this city and its subsequent defence was the job of 101st Abn. division and this placed a strain on that

unit's resources and occupied units which were needed elsewhere.

(b) The demolition of bridges. One of the points of the Arnhem plan was that the airborne landings would surprise the defence and enable the vital bridges to be captured intact. The game ignores this and it does not matter when the bridges are approached. However when considering the operation strategically the need to capture the bridges will affect the whole plan.

(c) German infiltration tactics. Much of the effect of the German counterattacks was due to minor operations by company sized units which, by attacking along the thinly stretched Allied lines, threatened the vital road at many points and prevented the defence from concentrating to inflict major defeats on the relatively petty forces the Germans can bring to bear. Again this is a significant strategic handicap for the Allies.

## Rules and Scenarios.

The following rules form a small extension for players interested in using Arnhem for solo play.

(12.18) If a paratroop unit lands adjacent to a bridge a die roll of "1" is required to demolish the bridge.

(12.2) After any German combat phase the German player may attempt to demolish any bridges which have not been captured by the Allies. A die roll of 1-4 is needed for success.

(12.21) A bridge is captured by the Allies if the last unit to move adjacent or be next to a bridge is Allied. If both players have units adjacent to a bridge it may not be blown.

(12.22) An attempt may be made during any or every combat phase to blow a bridge which has not been captured.

## (19) Special Rules

(19.1) Defence of Eindhoven. The road hex at 0105 can not be used to trace a line of communication unless a force of a parachute or glider regiment, or three ground infantry units are in the area SW of the Wilhelmina Canal (0111-5410-0501).

(19.2) Interdiction of road hexes. A road hex may not be used to trace a line of communication if a German unit could reach that hex using two turns normal movement. Note, the unit does not have to move but be capable of doing so.

(19.21) An off-map unit may interdict counting as if it enters the map normally from any legitimate entry hex.

(19.3) Airborne reinforcements may not land in Woods hexes.

## (20) Alternate victory conditions.

The Allies get 1 victory point for each hex North of the Neder Rijn occupied by an Allied unit or in an uncontested zone of control. They also get 1 point for each bridge or ferry across the Neder Rijn captured.

The Germans get 1 victory point for each Allied unit eliminated. The Germans obtain a strategic victory if the Allies fail to have a ground unit in communication adjacent to the Neder Rijn at the end of the game. Compare the result with table 20.1 to find the degree of victory.

Table 20.1

Allied V.P.	German V.P.	Result
Under 10	Over 10	German strategic
Under 8	Over 8	German tactical
Under 10	Over 6	German marginal
Any other		Draw
Over 10	Under 12	Allied marginal
Over 12	Under 10	Allied tactical
Over 15	Under 8	Allied strategic

(20.2) As a corollary the effects of being out of communication needs a more realistic/less artificial definition.

Rule: Any attack involving at least one unit which is out of communication is resolved on the ROUGH line of the combat results table.



(21) German random deployment table.  
When using the free deployment scenario use the following procedure,

- 1) Place Allied units on their drop hexes.
- 2) For each German unit roll a die and deploy it according to the random deployment table.
- 3) Start the Allied movement phase.

(21.1) German random deployment table.

Unit/ Die roll	2	3	4	5	6	
Grsn	0702	1004	1305	1106	0903	0805
Kraft	3721	3722	3723	3518	3822	3720
2/9S	3725	3724	3823	3625	3824	3526
9S	3322	3222	3223	3221	2820	2921
Brdf	2621	2621	2621	2621	2621	3423
1/406*	2325	1925	2225	2424	2522	2323 )
2/406*	2525	2025	2525	2525	2322	2123 )

\* These units use the same die roll

(22) Alternate scenarios

(22.1) Ground Assault Only.

(22.11) This scenario is as for the Historical Scenario (18.1) except where noted below.

(22.12) Allied Airborne Reinforcements. There are none.

(22.13) Allied Ground Reinforcements. In addition to those stated, the Allies receive on each turn, starting on turn 5, an infantry brigade (use 3x2-2-7 and 1x2-1-4/1-7 from the airborne units). These units would have been made available if a non-airborne operation was contemplated.

(22.14) German Reinforcements. All reinforcements arrive ONE turn later than scheduled.

(22.15) Special Rules.

(22.151) German units may not enter the O1xx and O2xx hexrows.

(22.152) The Brdf unit may not move until an Allied unit moves within 12 hexes of it.

(22.16) Victory conditions.

Schedule of Victory Points:

Each German unit eliminated	+1
Each Allied unit eliminated	-5
Each Allied unit out of communication	-3 per turn
Each town captured by the Allies	+1 per turn
Allies capture Grave at any time	+5
An Allied unit crosses the Maas	+20

Result:

Under 20	German Strategic Victory
Under 25	German Operational Victory
Under 30	German Marginal Victory
Exactly 30	Draw
Over 30	Allied Marginal Victory
Over 40	Allied Operational Victory
Over 50	Allied Strategic Victory

- 9SS - units marked /9S
- 10SS - units marked /10S
- North - units (other than 9SS or 10SS) arriving on the North map edge.
- West - units arriving on the West map edge.
- East - units (other than 10SS) arriving on the East map edge.

Group/Die	1	2	3	4	5	6
9SS	4	4	6	6	6	6
10SS	2	4	6	6	6	6
North	—	6	3	4	5	5
West	—	6	5	3	5	5
East	6	6	5	4	3	6

Results:

— Units arrive as scheduled.

For all other results the number is score which must be attained or passed with one die for the units to arrive.

Procedure:

A 'group' is all the units of one of the above classes to arrive in a particular player turn. A die is rolled for each group the turn before they are scheduled to arrive. If the die score is greater or equal to the number on the above chart the group arrives immediately (one turn early). If this fails they shake each subsequent turn but add 3 to the die.

## Conclusion

I hope these ideas will give some new life to what is in many ways a classic game and in particular encourage players to study the battle in a more strategic setting. Both scenarios are worth considering, the former was very possible if Market-Garden was turned-down the latter gives both players a lot more realistic headaches!

1/9S 4-3-10	1/9S 5-5-10	2/1PT 2-2-7	9S 2-2-12	2-2-7 Hour 2-7
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1/8.1 2-2-7	2/9S 4-3-10	2/1PT 2-1-4 1-7	2-1-4 3-10	2/231 3-3-7
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(22.2) Unknown opposition Scenario.

(22.21) This scenario is played as for the Free Deployment Scenario (18.2) using the extra rules described earlier. The German reaction is allowed to vary by use of the Variable Reaction Chart.

(22.22) German Variable Reaction. At the start of the game after the Allies have landed a die is rolled and cross-indexed on the chart below. The German units are split into 5 groups.



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