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# HAST THOU FOUND ME O MINE ENEMY?

SPI's 'NATO DIVISION COMMANDER': a Profile  
Designer and Developer — Jim Dunnigan

Long-awaited, oft heralded, this recent addition to SPI's range of NATO/Warsaw Pact games became available at last in mid-1980, not before time. It offers two versions of itself, neither the most playable of games and the second, optional, version much the more interesting of the two.

## Outline

The title is misleading as the only types of division which the NATO player can command are both United States, the 3rd Armoured and the 8th Mechanised; these are currently stationed in Germany and form the main components of V (US) Corps, the HQ of which is located at Frankfurt. The old AFCENT hand will be familiar with these two divisions, which feature in 'Fulda Gap', and yes, that's right — some of the names on the map will be familiar too. The multi-scenario game fields one or both of these formations against two or three Soviet divisions of 1st Guards Tank Army, HQ at Dresden. The majority of combat units are the armoured and mechanised battalions, combat support (artillery, engineers, etc) being represented in abstract form. The game-system turns on moving one unit at a time, combat and other activities being expressed as functions of movement, as in SPI's larger game, 'The Next War'. A new and dominant aspect is the importance of command control within the division, which requires considerable planning and co-ordination in order to have units at the right place in the most suitable mode for their intended role and which underlines the fact that the divisional staff can't be expected to do everything at once, just like that. 'NATO Division Commander' can be played in two very different fashions, one of which is the Competition Game, in other words the usual sort of face-to-face match on a single map with "Eye-balls-in-the-Sky". The other, the Controller Game, is a very different kettle of fish: two identical maps are used, of which only one is visible to the Player and on which he starts by deploying his own units on to an otherwise empty map. With screened-off No 2 map sits the Controller, with both sides deployed, his task is that of both Exercise Control and Chief Umpire. This version of NDC is reminiscent of the majority of large-scale military manoeuvres, with the troops being exercised pitted

against a controlled 'enemy' who will provide them with sundry problems and who will, on Exercise Control's direction, step in to teach a sharp lesson should the 'players' make a blunder or take too many chances. But ... in the game neither force need worry about fences, standing crops or people's front gardens!

## Components

**Map:** The identical map-sheets, at a scale of 1 mile/hex, measure 22"x35", almost all of it playing-surface. Graphics are pleasant and legible, with Clear, Rough-1, Rough-2 and wooded terrain intersected by red main roads and autobahns, blue rivers (large and small) and liberally sprinkled with towns and cities. Among these last are our old haunts, Giessen on the west edge, and Marburg to its north-east; Fritzlar of 'Next War' is in the north-eastern corner and Fulda is just off-map at the south-east corner. An unfamiliar feature of the map is its division into sectors by heavy blue lines super-imposed on the hex-grid, each sector being five hexes square and distinguished by a letter-number system like that used on town plans; A1, A2, A3 ... B1, B2, etc. This sector-grid divides the map up for resolution of intelligence on enemy units, of which more anon.

**Counters:** Unit counters are green for Americans, red for Russians, displaying the standard NATO-type symbol for an armoured or mechanised battalion, together with attack and defence combat factors; movement factor varies with the Mode in which a unit is and is standard for both sides in each mode. Also shown is the designation by battalion, brigade/regiment and division; thus 2/27/7 is 2nd Battalion, 27th Regiment, 7th Division; on the reverse side is the same information together with the legend, 'FO', indicating a unit which, having expended movement points, is a candidate for Fatigue if it moves again without resting.

Exceptions are the HQ counters, which show Mobile state on one side, Deployed on the other.

US divisions consist of eleven battalions, six armoured and five mechanised for armoured divisions and vice versa for mechanised divisions. Each division is organised in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Brigades of different size, with a separate counter for Brigade HQ. Divisional HQ consists of four counters; Divisional Tactical HQ (DivTaa), Divisional Main HQ (DivMain), Divisional Artillery (Div Arty) and Divisional Support Command (Discom), the last named being an abstraction of the division's administrative element and its control system. Finally comes the division's Armoured Cavalry squadron (N.B. 'Squadron' in American parlance is a battalion-sized unit) which can either be deployed as a single counter or broken down into four troops (companies). The US counter-mix also includes the independent 4th Mech Brigade and the 11th Armoured Cavalry Regiment (The Black Horse regiment), which appear in certain scenarios.

I particularly like the Soviet organisation, which Jim Dunnigan has brought bang up to date. A motor rifle division now includes a tank regiment in addition to the three motor rifle regiments and also the still-more-recently-added Reserve Tank Battalion, an independent unit believed to have a breakthrough and exploitation role; a quibble — this battalion's CF is shown as being the same as that of a normal tank battalion although it is a much larger unit, comprising five companies of ten tanks each. Another up-to-date touch is that note is taken of the fact that the MR regiment in the tank division is mounted in the BMP armoured personnel carrier, as is one regiment in each MR division; the appropriate counters bear the legend 'BMP' and have higher CF, reflecting the BMP's 73mm gun and Sagger anti-tank missiles.

A Soviet division is displayed as four regiments each of three battalions and an HQ counter. The simpler divisional command system calls for the Soviet Div HQ to appear as two counters only, DivMain and the Divisional Alternative (or Tactical) HQ (DivAlt). Next comes the divisional recon battalion, capable of breaking down into three companies — all these are identical despite the fact that one should be a commando recon company, with an air-droppable capability. And, of course, MR divisions have a Reserve Tank Battalion counter.

Divisional combat support units on both sides — artillery, engineers, signals and air — are totally abstract, appearing as four different types of Combat Support Points (CSP) counters, some already organic to brigade/regiment and the balance under divisional control, to be allocated at discretion. These counters, which work on a 'change' basis (i.e. 1x3=3x1) are displayed in the appropriate HQ box on the player's CSP display.

Finally comes a mass of informational counters — mode, fatigue level, intelligence level, Table of Organisation (T/O) and more.

Finally? No, I forgot. For *optional* use (thank Heaven) are counters representing the divisional commander; his brigade commanders and some of his staff officers, all used to boost the command control system. I shall be frank. I have not used the optional rules whereby these can be deployed, nor shall I — NDC gives one quite enough to think about as it is and I should like to finish this article *this* year.

**Game Charts and Tables:** There are thirty charts and tables — I have just counted them; they appear in their own pamphlet, of which, unfortunately, only one copy comes with the game. However only about 15 (!) tables will be in regular use and some soon become very well-known. In addition the large card screen provided for the Controller game has most of these charts and tables printed on both sides and makes an excellent reference-sheet in both versions of NDC.

Annoyingly there are certain displays, referred to in the rules, which have not been printed even though, in some instances, the counters to be moved along them have been! There is neither time record track nor phase record track; there is supposed to be a display for current Intelligence level ... but there isn't; there is supposed to be a



display for the number of map sectors in which intelligence is currently being sought ... but there isn't. On the CSP display sheet provided for each player there are supposed to be (I quote from Rule 6.11) "for each HQ unit in a division ... three boxes on the display. These boxes are labelled Transferring, Unused and Used ... As CSPs are transferred they are placed in the Transferring Box of the recipient HQ." Only two boxes for each HQ are provided — Used and Unused: no Transferring box!!! I have the feeling that NDC, having been delayed time and time again, was finally rushed out without as complete a set of graphic playing-aids as had been intended.

**Rules and All That:** The main rule-book has not only the usual series of essential rules followed by optional ones, but also a detachable, four-page section for a special scenario entitled 'Advance on Fritzlar', an introductory version of the game, with streamlined rules. I found this useful but found also that it is not really practicable, despite what is suggested, to play 'Fritzlar' several times over, adding in extras each time until one has utilised all the main features of the game-system in this comparatively short, limited-forces scenario. This is because 'Fritzlar' is a combat between an independent US brigade and two Soviet regiments from different divisions. There is no divisional command structure and without this the use of most of the suggested list of additions is just not practicable. Perhaps Jim Dunnigan intended that the players should make up a divisional structure but he does not say so, let alone give any advice. As a result, I found it better, having played 'Fritzlar' once, to go on to one of the simpler divisional scenarios and to learn from that.

The rules, I am afraid, also bear the indications of a hurried finishing-off. They are generally complete but in some important instances there are very vague explanations and concepts. In particular the rules on Intelligence are actually contradictory in their explanation of procedure. Rule 5.0, the main Intelligence rule, gives what I deem to be the correct procedure and is supported by Rule 4.1 2 A (Sequence) but Rule 8.0 (Combat Support Points) implies that only the *phasing* player may do what 5.0 says that *both* players may do. Stick to 5.0. Likewise one is left to deduce from remarks on HQs in Rule 6.0 that only CSPs which are allotted to Div HQ may be used to obtain intelligence and that brigade/regiment HQs play no part in this process — but there is no specific statement.

There is a useful mode which allows a unit to 'occupy' more than one hex (Double and Triple Zones) and thus act as a screen force. The snag comes when one wishes to move such a unit; just how many MPs are expended, as the unit is now in three separate pieces? Rule 9.16, which covers this, is meaningless to me and the example quoted is an example only of obfuscation.

HQ units in Mobile mode are equivalent to a combat unit in Tactical Movement mode, i.e. they have a MF of 20 and Rule 7.0 is absolutely clear about that. But stay! The two-page spread of March order formations of divisions entering the map, which illustrates Rule 21.1, shows HQs with a MF of 40 assuming, as Rule 21.11 says, "that the units are travelling in Administrative Mode" — but HQ units cannot be in AM mode, can they, as their *sole* Mobile mode is equivalent to the slower TM mode? Or can they??

Last but not least, the rules on Soviet doctrine are a cop-out; after a few general remarks the writer then says, "Beyond that I would rather just leave it up to the players' imagination to develop special Soviet doctrines that might be employed." This lack of precision can have a most odd effect on play, as I hope to demonstrate later.

In general, players will find the rules clear and complete but will come up against several items that will stop play and have both opponents scratching their heads, sucking pencils and contemplating the ceiling in a quest for enlightenment. The trouble is that a player in East Cheam will come up with an interpretation different from that of another in Camberwick Green ... then, when they meet at the next Spukorgy .....

A second pamphlet contains the scenarios and relevant matter, including a run-down on the various divisions' organisations, their states and

status in each scenario, and optional variations thereon. One is encouraged to make up scenarios in addition to those provided and further variations can be obtained by playing the same scenario first on the north half of the map and then on the south — or vice versa. The terrain in each half has its own characteristics and the map folds at the right place. Scenarios include the Victory Conditions, identical in most; the Soviet player is the attacker and he gains VPs by exiting *complete tank regiments* — not any old unit — from, or as close as possible to, a designated sector of the opposite map-edge (selected by himself), the score going down the later the game-turn. This allows the US player to conduct a mobile defence, gradually exiting the map himself if necessary. But not all scenarios have the same theme; one depicts a US counter-attack and another a delaying action by the 11th US Armoured Cavalry Regiment.

Rounding-out the scenario pamphlet are the Designers' Notes and no less than *four* sets of Players' Notes, by four sets of players; the last of these is by a group of US Army officers and takes the form of an operation order for 8th US Mech Div, plus an intelligence estimate — what I would call an Appreciation of the Situation. I must say that even I, who am very familiar with the jargon in which these last Notes are written, found them a little difficult to relate to a game, actual or potential — but they make highly interesting reading.

## The Game-System

I must confess that I'm not at all sure about how to describe the system of 'NATO Division Commander', so very unusual is it. Simply to use the tried formula of movement, combat, 'special effects' and miscellaneous won't fit here, especially as I want to keep it fairly short, while highlighting the main points — I need the space to talk about the Controller Game.

### [4.1] SEQUENCE OUTLINE

#### 1. WEATHER AND INTELLIGENCE INTERPHASE

##### A. Weather Determination Segment

The Players determine the weather conditions for the Game-Turn. Players should alternate who determines the weather conditions each Game-Turn. Determination includes checking whether the Game-Turn is a Night Turn, as well as rolling for Fog or Precipitation.

##### B. Operational Intelligence CSP Allocation Segment

Both Players secretly determine how many air and signal CSP's they will allocate this Game-Turn for operational intelligence. Then both Players reveal this allocation by placing the allocated CSP's on the edge of the Used box to indicate their being unavailable for the remainder of the Turn. **Note:** Air CSP's may never be used during night, fog or rain Game-Turns (see Case 5.11).

#### 2. FIRST PLAYER TURN

##### A. Intelligence Phase.

In the Competition Game, the Phasing Player determines the result of his tactical intelligence, and both Players determine the result of their operational intelligence.

##### B. Asset Transfer Phase

The Phasing Player may transfer assets from one HQ assignment to another HQ of the same division. The assets which can be transferred are: CSP's (Combat Support Points), combat units, subordinate commanders (optional) and ammunition points (optional).

##### C. Mode Change/Forced March Designation Phase

The Phasing Player may now attempt to change the mode of any of the units he controls. All voluntary mode changes must be made in this Phase (some occurrences in the Movement and Combat Phase may cause involuntary mode changes). Units that are to force march in this Game-Turn must be designated.

Weather by the way, is not optional but you can leave it out to begin with. There is no explanation of how a Night Turn is determined; but as every game-turn represents eight hours just make every third turn a night turn and, when you begin, agree on Turn 1 being morning, afternoon or night.

**Unit Capabilities:** The first thing to realise is that unit CF are modified by two unusual factors. As I said, attack and defence CF appear on the unit counter, but these represent only a starting-point. Respective attack and defensive CF establish the basic differential on the differential CRT; but then this may well be shifted, dependant on the *mode* in which each unit is; and another shift may be caused by a difference in the two units' T/O levels (0-6, marker under the counter) — the unit with the higher T/O has the advantage and losses are reflected by a reduction of T/O level, a reduction below zero meaning elimination. Remember — CF plus Mode plus T/O are the three main criteria by which a unit's strength in a particular combat will be judged; then follow other shifts caused by Intelligence, Terrain, Barrage v FPF, Fatigue, Chemicals, and various other factors. This leads us to;

**Mode:** Combat units may be in any of eleven modes which, as well as affecting movement, affect MF also. In fact players will find out that the majority of units in a division will be in one mode and a minority in one or two others; this is just as well because there aren't enough of any one Mode marker in the counter-mix. The mode in which the majority of a division's units are is the "Default Mode"; a single mode marker is put to one side as a reminder and units in the "Default Mode" have no marker in their hex.

Examples of Modes are; (1) Administrative Movement (AM) — MF of 40, considerable disadvantage in combat (2) Tactical Movement (TM) — MF of

#### D. Offensive Counter-Battery Fire Phase

The Player whose Player-Turn is in progress conducts counter-battery fire against units for which he possesses intelligence, and he also conducts any interdiction missions he desires.

#### E. Defensive Counter-Battery Fire Phase

The opposing Player to the Player whose Player-Turn is in progress conducts counter-battery fire against units for which he possesses intelligence, and also conducts any interdiction missions he desires. Only during this Phase is the opposing Player considered the Phasing Player.

#### F. Movement and Combat Phase

The Phasing Player now moves and conducts combat with his units within the restrictions of the movement and combat rules. Only units with a Movement Allowance greater than zero may move. Units take action individually and all actions of one unit must be completed before proceeding to the next. When all units the Player desires have been moved, this Phase ends.

#### G. Housekeeping Phase

During this Phase, a number of informational and unit status markers are removed. All Break-through Zone markers, Interdiction markers, Persistent Gas markers (remove no more than one per hex), and Active markers are removed from the map. All Engaged, Half Engaged, EW2 and EW3 markers are removed from units of the Phasing Player. If a unit has two Engaged or Half Engaged markers on it, remove only one. Unit breakdown and recombination occurs, etc.

#### 3. SECOND PLAYER-TURN

The Second Player now becomes the Phasing Player and repeats the steps of (2) above (remember that during the Defensive Counter-Battery Fire Phase the First Player will be considered the Phasing Player).

#### 4. GAME TURN RECORD INTERPHASE

The Game-Turn Record Marker is advanced one space. If a number of Game-Turns have elapsed equal to the limit set by the scenario, play ceases and victory is assessed by the conditions given in the scenario.



20, fair combat ability; a good general-purpose mode (3) Mobile Defence (MD) — MF of 10, improved defensive capability but still a fair attack capability (4) Deliberate Attack (DA) — MF of 10 only, which will be expended in a single attack, but conveys a hefty punch (5) Relief/Infiltration Mode (R/I) — this is an important mode as it is the only one which permits voluntary disengagement from, and movement through, enemy ZOC. In play the attacking Soviets will enter in AM and will change progressively to TM; some units may shift into DA to deliver a breakthrough punch. The defender is likely to be in TM with some units in MD.

Particularly interesting modes are Double and Triple Zone (DZ and TZ); two special markers 'extend' a unit in these modes by up to two and three hexes from the 'core' unit. This represents a unit acting as a screen and the defending player will find it very useful for first holding up and then channelling a major assault; but, like all screens, it will fall down if pushed hard.

**Headquarters and Staff Points:** Each HQ unit has an allocation of Staff Points, a quantification of its ability to run the battle or a part of the battle. The sole use of SPs is to enable units to change mode; brigade/regiment HQs change the mode of their combat units and can draw on Div HQ — thus if the three brigades each have a SP level of 4 and Div HQ one of 12 then *each* brigade HQ can use up to 16 SP in the mode change phase of each player-turn. As it takes 12 SP to change a single unit from TM to MD and 10 for a change from AM to TM you will realise that you can't say, "Division — change NOW!" It will take forethought and planning to get even part of a division into the correct posture for the intended plan of operations — you *can* seek to order more changes than your SP availability guarantees but there is a chance of failure, increasing the more that figure is exceeded. Thus an advancing Soviet division is likely to change its leading battalions in, say, the two first-echelon regiments from AM to TM first, changing the reserve battalions and then the second-echelon regiments subsequently. As a unit more than five hexes from its HQ requires *double* SPs to change, this imposes a strong inducement not to spread a brigade or regiment too widely. Moreover HQs in Deployed Mode will function more effectively than those in Mobile .... decisions, decisions!

HQs are liable to be knocked out by artillery and air strikes and are horribly vulnerable to ground attack; the latter will destroy the HQ's 'assets' such as artillery and engineers. Destroyed HQs can be reconstituted — at a price — but lost assets are forever lost. Conclusion; don't let an HQ stay so long in one place that the opposition's air and signals can get a fix on it, and don't let bad men run amok in your rear areas! HQs also serve as the base point from which the ranges of their attached assets are measured, another inducement to keeping brigades/regiments in one general location.

**Intelligence:** Crikey, how to explain this concept?? Basically, by expending air and signal points each turn you raise your division's 'intelligence level': this level never decreases, subsequent allocations raising it still further. Then by allocating more air and signal CSPs you determine 'sector coverage' for that turn only, i.e. if you allocate 4 CSPs for sector coverage you may 'search' four map-sectors of your choice (the map is divided into 5-hex-square sectors, remember). Roll a die for each enemy unit in the appropriate sectors and refer to the Intelligence Table; Mode determines the unit's degree of 'protection' and this, subtracted from your division's "Int" level, determines how much you find out about each unit — nothing at all, perhaps, or information at one of four levels, 1 being the poorest. In the Competition Game only enemy units with "Int" markers on them may be targeted for artillery counter-bombardment (but below Int 3 you're wasting your time, quite frankly); in unit-to-unit combat Int level introduces a new dimension because the unit with the lower Int level gains an advantageous shift in that combat! Example; unit with no Int marker attacks one on which Int 4 has been obtained — result, Surprise Shift of 6 in the attacker's favour.

Whenever a unit moves, its Int marker — if any — is removed at the end of that movement phase. Conclusions; try not to stay too long in any one place. As a successful counter-bombardment of an

HQ has a 33% chance of destroying it you can see why real-life HQs must move at frequent intervals — and keep yours rolling!

But it is in the Controller Game that Intelligence enters into its own — more of this later.

**Combat Support Points:** These are, as I said, Artillery, Engineer, Signals and Air. Artillery comes down CRUMP on a target, just like artillery CF in so many modern games, and can be used for CB, Barrage in support of a ground attack, and for FPF. Engineers are a kind of FPF, funnily enough, and very effective they are too, although their 'range' is limited. Signals are essential for Intelligence and can also be used to enhance the effectiveness of artillery and air strikes; moreover, at brigade/regiment HQs they can increase that HQ's Staff Point level. Air is useful for Intelligence and can also be used as 'flying artillery', either in conjunction with field artillery or alone — as air-range is unlimited this can be very useful for sorting out an enemy Div HQ! Allocation of CSP from Division to Brigade/Regiment will require some thought as there are never enough to go round properly, and players will have to consider the role which they expect their subordinate formations to play over the next two or three turns.

**Fatigue:** The game's simple fatigue rules simply reflect the fact that troops kept on the go day in, day out, will become increasingly tired and will reach a point at which they become a liability to themselves and to their own side. When a fresh unit expends MP it is then flipped to its reverse side which displays the 'FO' marking; the unit is still in good shape but if it continues to move it must be thrown for on the Fatigue Table — 66% chance of incurring Fatigue 1 and thereafter 100% chance of further increases. At Fatigue 3 the unit becomes very inefficient and further fatigue means loss of T/O Points; but if rested for a turn it drops two Fatigue levels. As a result an assault regiment must be relieved in due course by a fresh unit and the commander's plans must allow for this; a cycle of movement, rest and then resumed movement will ensure a continuous and co-ordinated battle.

## How Goes The Battle?

Quite frankly the Competition Game doesn't go very well, due in large part to the "Eyeballs-in-the-Sky" factor. 'NATO Division Commander' makes considerable use of Intelligence rules and this aspect combined with the 'perfect intelligence' of EITS makes nonsense of play. Both players will be well advised to jack up their Int level to the maximum QUICKLY and then seek to obtain intelligence in those sectors which they can see contain quantities of units and/or HQs. They will then proceed to start knocking out each other's HQs, turning the game into a silly tit-for-tat romp. Worse, the fact that the Soviet player usually deploys two divisions against one US division and enters in AM (40 MF, able to travel 80 hexes by road in *one* turn!!) can allow him to streak all over the map, sometimes able to exit a complete tank regiment on Turn 1 before the US player can stop him. Even if he doesn't achieve this, he will still be able to infiltrate wherever his opponent isn't, regimental columns serpentine through the opposition to make a speedy exit or to pursue the all-too-visible and all-too-vulnerable HQs. The absence of any doctrinal restrictions, other than the requirement to enter columns in AM, makes itself felt here; the Soviet player can move his regiments in any fashion he pleases and in any direction, attacking on a wide front with all four regiments of the division 'up' if that suits his opportunities and unbedevilled by any need to press on along his regimental axis as is the real-life Soviet regimental commander. All very well to leave Soviet doctrine up to the players, but that takes no account of the Soviet player who lacks the knowledge — or the self-discipline — to apply a simulation of what we know it to be; certain fixed rulings, as in 'Fulda Gap' or 'Fifth Corps' should have been included in this game, as a guide. What can the US player do, faced with this untrammelled onslaught? Why, he can string his combat units across the map in one thin line and then hope for the best just as in *Modern Battles*! Hopelessly unrealistic and quite contrary to the spirit of the game. Modern defensive tactics cannot permit of continuous lines but rather turn on concentrating against the enemy thrusts — but when the thrust

knows *exactly* where every one of your units is and can move like greased lightning, then to 'play the game' will be to lose it.

Moreover, the game, even if one tries to play realistically, is a book-keeping, dice-rolling, counter-stacking, balls-aching ordeal, a turn likely to last for two hours. The Competition Game is, to be honest, one hell of a way to play 'Wurzburg' (also a battalion-level operational game with one-mile hexes); there is a very great deal of die-rolling, consultation of tables, placing, removing and replacing of informational counters stacked with units. Obtaining intelligence can mean twelve or fifteen die-rolls per player-turn, all in one phase, and a unit can frequently have five informational counters stacked with it, of which *all but one* (the T/O level) are, according to the rules, supposed to be the topmost!!! Linked to a movement-and-combat system which distorts a face-to-face game, it's rather a lot of drudgery to fight a version of modern combat of doubtful reality.

Stay your hand! Do not wring the turkey's neck! Do not give up and turn to 'Target of Opportunity' or even to 'Mail Call'! For now we come to .....

## The Controller Game

The Controller Game is presented as an optional version of NDC but my study of the game leads me to surmise that it is the form in which it is really intended to be played and that the design was developed with this in view. Indeed NDC was originally proposed in 'Feedback' in S&T 65 (Dec 77) as a player-v-controller simulation and this is borne out by the game's first full 'Work in Progress' report in No 68 (June 78); only later did the concept of a straight face-to-face version appear in reports. The Controller Game still features a lot of dice-and-info-counter bandobast and it still takes a long time to play through a single turn but the whole feel of a game changes dramatically for the better. The game mechanics mesh together and their significance is enhanced — and crazy manoeuvres and wild hunts for enemy HQs go into the trash-can, their folly made suddenly obvious. The following summary is based on an actual game.

The Player has two Soviet divisions, the 7th Guards Tank and the 27th Motor Rifle; the Non-Player Force (NPF) is the 8th US mechanised Division, operated by the Controller, who has already made the necessary preparations. The scenario is a simple home-made one and requires the Player to break through the 8th Mech and exit tank regiments — complete — from the opposite (West) map-edge in a zone of his choice, unknown to the Controller.

The Player is confronted with an empty map; laid out beside it are the counters of his two divisions. The Controller gives him the Order of Battle of the 8th US and a brief Strategic Intelligence summary. From this he learns that the 8th US appears to have developed a strong screen force, seemingly in brigade strength in a given general area across his area of responsibility; there are indications that recon units are deployed in front of this but there are no indications of any US presence east of a certain line; the disposition of the rest of the division (presumably two brigades) is unknown. He decides to bring on each of his two divisions in two-column march order, with the divisional recon battalions, broken down into their three companies, moving ahead on a wide front; 27 MR Div on the right, 7 Gds Tk on the left.

Opposite him sits the Controller, the duplicate map in front of him and hidden from the Player by the large game-screen (which, you will recall, has most of the charts and tables printed on both sides). The Controller has already allocated CSP to both forces, and the Player finds the necessary counters laid out in the appropriate boxes on his Allocation and Use display — for *his* divisions only, of course, the US CSP level being unknown to him. In addition the Controller has also allocated Staff Points to the divisional and brigade/regiment HQs of both sides; but this time the Player does NOT know what his HQs' levels are — his divisions are not yet tested in battle and the true ability of his staffs to operate under stress and crisis is as yet unknown. He has a general idea of their capabilities and the Controller has informed him that the Chief of Staff of 7 Gds Tank is a particular officer and also that certain regimental commanders seem to be rather



above or below the average for their rank and experience.

On the Controller's map the 8th US Division is already laid out, and to one side are the duplicate counters for the Soviet divisions, ready to be placed and moved as they enter.

Now intelligence really comes into its own!! The Player makes his first allocation of air and signal CSPs, raising the Intelligence level of each of his divisions to a reasonable level — say 6; he also allocates a further three CSP per division for Sector coverage, allowing him to 'search' six sectors, and announces the sectors he has decided on.

Behind the screen the Controller rolls for each US unit (if any) in the designated sectors and places Int markers as called for by the table. Now comes the time for a bit of wit, imagination and verbal fluency; on paper the Int levels obtained produce information as follows:- 1 — Player is told that a unit exists in a given sector; 2 — type of unit is given; 3 — positive identification of unit and hex of location; 4 — as for 3 but T/O level added. However the Controller should not give just the bare facts but a verbal Situation Report (SITREP). This should be fact interwoven with reports of doubtful value, varying from the vague to the plain untruthful; in doing this the Controller should aim to give — in abbreviated form — the sort of report which a divisional commander might receive from the duty intelligence officer, compiled from the previous X hours' air recce, signals intelligence, contact and patrol reports, and also reports of lesser reliability based on what a forward company of 25 MR Regiment heard last night (sounds of vehicles moving?), what a platoon commander in 26 MR Regiment thought he saw, information obtained from a sycophantic civilian in Berghausen. Like a good Intelligence officer he should also offer possible conclusions to be drawn. A good deal depends on a fluent and imaginative Controller — the truth, but not necessarily the whole truth, sometimes a little more truth than the Int marker calls for, a lie or two (but don't cheat outrageously), and, just for the hell of it, a Dreadful Rumour or two.

The Player has sufficient information now to substantiate the Strategic Int reports of a probable screen force and he also knows that enemy activity has been seen near a particular road junction ahead of what seems to be the main screen. His recce units move forward ..... 'Contact! Enemy in Hex XXX...' 'Contact! Enemy in Hex YYY...' 'Contact! Enemy in Hex ZZZ...' Has No 1 Coy of 27 Recce Battalion found a gap? Has it? 'Contact! Enemy in Hex AAA...'.

So the battle develops. The first-echelon regiments of the two Soviet divisions advance to follow up the recce units, sometimes by-passing known enemy hexes, sometimes not being so lucky as they make further contacts in their turn. By Turn 2 a screen of battalions is beginning to take shape on the Player's map — almost certainly a full brigade in this role. Now Tactical Intelligence gained from actual contact with the enemy is being included in the SITREPS; two of the battalions in the screen are identified — both come from the 1st Brigade, and a brigade HQ is now known to be not too far behind the centre of the screen — indications are that the whole of 1st Brigade has been allocated to the 8th Division's First Zone of defence ... battalions are all in Double Zone mode and the Soviet spearheads, still in Administrative Movement mode, can't break through. Indeed one battalion and two recce companies have been counter-attacked and forced to withdraw with loss. The Player starts to shift the two lead battalions of his first-echelon regiments into Tactical Movement mode to boost their attack strength. Behind his game-screen the Controller rolls to determine the success of the changes (the Player is expending more points than his divisions' Staff Point allowances so a die roll, checked against a table, is needed for each change). Four out of the six battalions involved change to TM successfully and the Controller informs the Player accordingly; the Player tries again with the two 'failed' battalions — one changes on this second attempt but the other fails again and is now very fatigued; the Player decides not to try it again as it will start to lose T/O points. Further back, he rests his second-echelon regiments — they can do with it, especially as he may need them to exploit any successful

attacks by the battalions now in TM. Night falls over the battle zone ....

A lot depends on the Controller. As you can see, he does all the die-rolling and table-checking but keeps most of the results from the Player. For example, the Player rarely knows the effects of his attacks on enemy units, only his own casualties; it will take succeeding SITREPS to indicate enemy T/O levels. Likewise he will not know the results of his air and artillery strikes.

For his part, the Controller moves and fights the units of the NPF rather in the same way as does a player in the Competition Game; he sees both sides, obtains Int levels on the Player's units as described in the Competition Game and keeps the appropriate data on the NPF units. It is obvious that he, having perfect intelligence, could win the game hands down if he wanted to, and he must exercise considerable self-discipline and sportsmanship. In fact he is supposed to write an outline plan of operations for the NPF and to stick to it as much as the developing situation will allow. For example, perhaps the screen force is scheduled to attempt to break contact in Turn 3 — then it should. Brigade areas of responsibility should be allotted and adhered to; reserves not supposed to be committed until the Player's forces achieve a breakthrough should be held until then. Advantage should be taken only when the Player has taken too big a risk or has allowed an insecure situation to develop and to remain uncorrected. As an example, if he has left an HQ unit in one place for three turns and the Controller has had an Int level of 4 on it for two, then bring down an artillery strike on it to warn the Player. If the Player insists, like the Syrians on the Golan Heights, on sending a column through a gap in the defence, still in Administrative Movement mode, then it is the Controller's lawful prey, to be taken in flank and its HQ or HQs sorted out good and proper. But the Controller is not the Player's opponent — he is the Chief Umpire and Exercise Control in one, as I have already pointed out. His task is to give the Player a good game and to give him credit for perception, good planning and tactical skill; nor is his job a dull or passive one — it is as interesting being the Controller as it is to be the Player, albeit in a different way.

The effect on play is a revelation compared with the Competition Game. The Player must work and fight to build up a picture — which becomes increasingly accurate — of the NPF. HQ-bashing and 30-hex sprints through the battle area are out, for there is no telling if a seeming gap is truly one, or a delusion, or even a waiting trap. Risks can and should be taken, yes, but they must be *calculated* risks based on known facts plus intelligent guesswork.

'All the business of war ... is to endeavour to find out what you don't know by what you do: that's what I called, "guessing what was at the other side of the hill". Thus spake the Great Duke and thus should the Player conduct his play.

### About It and About

NDC is undoubtedly a fairly complex game, although one soon enough picked up; I myself had an advantage in that I already knew 'Next War', the one-unit-at-a-time system which is similar to that of this game. Whether one plays the Competition or the Controller version one should be prepared for a fairly long session, each player-turn taking upwards of an hour at an optimistic estimate; player-interaction, happily, avoids the situation wherein one player is working like a Trojan while the other sits idle and increasingly bored. It is definitely not for the novice and I would recommend it as a game for the keen 'modern' gamer with an interest in trying something very different from the usual run of map-and-counters conflict — provided that he passes to the Controller version as soon as is practicable. No doubt about it, NDC is intended to be played in this fashion, whatever the current blurb may say.

Is it really like being in the Divisional Commander's saddle. No, not really — how could it be? Even the Player has a bird's-eye view of his own side at least and the Soviet player has to be two Divisional Commanders at once, although this offers opportunities for multi-player games. The feel of the command-post, the radio conversations,

the Duty Officer keeping the log, actual darkness outside, the Order groups, none of these can be simulated without a mock-up command post, a bunch of anxious students acting the parts of the staff and another bunch of villainous Directing Staff off-stage, passing tales of woe and disaster over the simulated radio net. If you're rich enough to have your own Staff College then what are you doing making do with NDC, eh?

Think of the game rather as an operational game with a strong emphasis on Command Control and the need to plan ahead and to handle one's division as a whole. As usual in this sort of game one is really one's own brigade or regimental commanders as well — no Divisional Commander would spend much time deciding what individual battalions must do, as both participants have to do in the game.

The system tends to make the conduct of operations rather ponderous too; for example a Soviet motor rifle regiment can deploy from march column into hasty attack in one hour, according to Soviet teaching, whereas in the game to make it change from AM into TM and deliver an assault will take the whole of one player-turn or the equivalent of eight hours. Screen formations lack the ability to disengage and fall back as a screen, i.e. by several routes, and even light recce screens lack fluidity and mobility. Even the feared and vaunted Soviet multi-echelon blitzkrieg, which comes across so well in the newly-issued 'Fifth Corps' will not get going until Turn 3 here, that is to say about twelve hours after first contact, and even then it will be rather creaky and disjointed. NDC certainly lacks some of the feel of mechanised warfare, strong though it is on planning. Its appeal lies, I consider, in the opportunity it gives the Player to venture on to the hostile emptiness of the map and to endeavour to see what is 'at the other side of the hill'.

Be advised, too, that this is a game requiring a lot of playing-surface: even if the two maps are folded in half (most scenarios use only one half of the sheet) one needs quite a lengthy table to set up both of them, with the screen between, to say nothing of finding room for each player's display sheet and for the many markers to be ready to hand. Many as they are, by the way, there are never enough of certain types when the Controller version with its double display is in use; Intelligence and Fatigue markers will run out and Mode markers will probably do so on one side or the other as changing mode and the 'default' system becomes temporarily inoperative.

I enjoy playing the Controller game — but I realise that it is not one to set up and dash off at any old time. Like full-dress uniform or roast sucking-pig it is for Special Occasions — and is best arranged in advance, even at Spukorgy.

### Tail-Piece

To discuss the 'funnies' in the rules and one or two other aspects would have been to lengthen a profile already quite long enough. Time allowing, I hope to discuss these in a later and shorter piece and to offer some advice on rendering authentic-sounding Int briefings.

