

TITO

The Anti-Wargame

N. PALMER

(Author of "The Best of Board Wargaming")

Legend has it that a prominent American wargamer prefaces every die-roll with the shout 'Blood must flow!' One may have nightmare visions of playing him in a Tobruk scenario (about 50 die-rolls a turn). Nevertheless, this possibly apocryphal character simply represents an extreme case of a very widespread preference in the hobby: players want action, the more the better. Games on World War I sell badly because they are expected to feature static attrition, and attempts such as World War One Module to interest us in strategic manpower and supply planning meet a frosty reception. We are not interested in stalemates, thank you.

Unfortunately, this not unreasonable view spills over into a suspicion of all games in which any lulls appear, and area movement games suffer in particular. In an area game the constant motion of units on a hexagon grid is replaced by a strategic struggle for control of large chunks of countryside: this produces a game which is apparently more static.

Tito is an area movement game *par excellence*: not only is most of the activity concentrated in 10 Occupation Zones (roughly corresponding to the historical ones) but it is perfectly possible — even usual — to go through an entire game without a single critical battle. Many turns pass with the merest skirmish disturbing the idyllic peace of the dreaming Yugoslav mountains. To a player raised on blood-and-thunder Tito is an anti-wargame.

And yet, I think you should have a look at it. Because Tito gives us something new: it encapsulates a subtle struggle for a country by a war of *strategic manoeuvre*. It doesn't offer pitched battles, but it provides an equally evocative feeling of a long and bitter campaign in which there are no front-lines and every town, village and industrial centre in Yugoslavia is the battleground. Guerilla games are notoriously difficult to design because of the discrepancy of unit scale and the problem of showing just why the superior conventional forces cannot run around swatting the guerilla bases to achieve an easy military victory. Part of the ideal answer is undoubtedly hidden movement, but then we run into the tedium of writing down the positions of umpteen partisan bands. Tito, designed to be a pretty simple game to play, achieves much the same effect by punishing every concentration of occupation forces with uprisings in the neglected areas: thus, it is quite feasible for the Axis to deliver hammer-blows against the early partisan forces but there will usually be a price in the form of new partisan groups springing up elsewhere. The Big Push strategy just won't work and the Axis player is forced to plan and manoeuvre his massive forces as carefully as his apparently puny foe.

The game (enclosed in Strategy and Tactics 81, July/August 1980) is easily summarised. At the start, the Axis stands astride a prostrate Yugoslavia, with Germans all over the north and Italians all over the south. The only visible opposition consists of a few groups of the ambiguous Chetnik guerillas, of whom more later. From turn 2, Tito's Partisans appear and during the game they will try gradually to liberate the country.

Zones and Guerillas

The 10 Zones (to which two more border areas are added on the last three turns of the 17 in the game) are made up of three types of display:

Objectives: An objective is an area with a certain value in Victory Points and potential for recruit-

ment. Objectives may be cities (high VP value and recruitment potential, battle losses multiplied by 3, often intrinsic Axis defence strength), towns (medium VP/recruitment, losses doubled), market towns (similar to towns, but recruitment halved in periods of drought), villages (low recruitment potential, halved in winter) and industrial centres (high VP value). Zones have between 0 and 21 objectives (see Table 1).

Mountains: Every four guerilla points in mountains score one VP and recruit one new guerilla point. Every Zone has a one mountain display, to which guerillas from neighbouring Zones can move directly (prohibited for objectives).

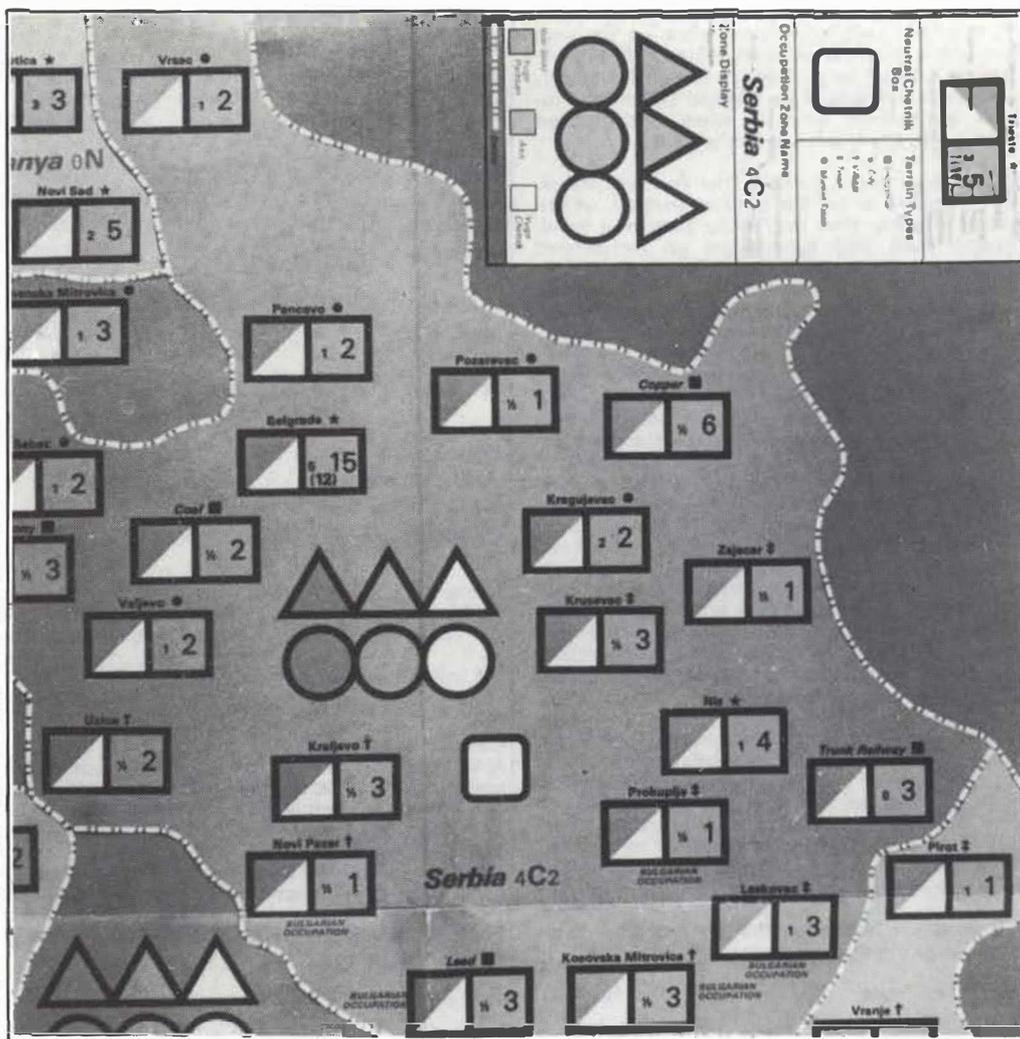
Hideaways: Guerilla hideaways are safe from normal attack but score no points and recruit no new units. Hideaways are normally used to maintain a threat against the Zone's Objectives (which moving out of the Zone would not do) even when the Zone is heavily garrisoned.

Each Turn, the Yugoslav and Axis players can move within the Zones; the Axis player can in addition move up to three Zones away, which effectively means over the whole map for most units. The guerillas can only move one Zone, and then only to Mountains or Hideaways. If you move into an enemy-occupied Objective you are compelled to fight and, since the defence-loaded CRT requires a 6-1 to be sure of winning, you will usually try for unoccupied Objectives. Guerillas score VPs for all objectives taken by them *before* the Axis move, but recruitment occurs afterwards. There are therefore two types of guerilla offensive: the sabotage drive, reaping VPs but accepting a high loss rate as individual groups get squashed in the Axis phase, and the recruitment drive, requiring concentration of guerillas relatively secure from enemy attack. Generally you will use Chetniks for sabotage and Partisans for recruitment drives, for the reasons discussed in the next paragraph.

The guerillas are divided into two rival movements. The main resistance force is Tito's Partisans but the situation is complicated by the existence of the Chetniks. These pro-Monarchist forces were originally preferred by the Western Allies to the Communists but they played an equivocal role between the Axis and the Partisans and on occasion actually collaborated with the former in return for help against the latter. After a series of first-hand inspections by Allied representatives (see Fitzroy Maclean's *Eastern Approaches* for a personal account), it was decided that the Chetniks were ineffective and unreliable and support was switched to the Partisans. In the game, the Chetniks succeed magnificently in performing their historical role of being a beastly nuisance to both sides: in every turn, one rolls for each Chetnik stack to see whether they will spend the Turn being "pro-Yugoslav" (i.e. anti-Axis and controlled by Tito), pro-Axis, or apathetically neutral. To control a large Chetnik force is horribly frustrating since any attempt at recruitment may merely hand a bigger weapon to your opponent. However, as a short-term sabotage force they can be quite useful, especially in the VP-rich wilds of Serbia. I once played a game in which the Axis player deliberately ignored all Chetnik activity, on the grounds that they would be friendly or inactive so often that they posed no threat at all. The Partisans were thoroughly suppressed, but the Chetniks grew into a monstrous army which enveloped Serbia and laid the foundation for a solid Yugoslav victory.

Recruitment and Uprisings

Recruitment in objectives consists of rolling a die for each occupied objective and multiplying it by the recruitment potential of the objective. There are two important limitations: recruitment in the Zones of the opposing guerilla movement is halved, and the number of new groups may never exceed the number of friendly points on the objective. In mountains, by contrast, the recruitment rate is guaranteed (but low) as above and the latter limitation is on the number of friendly *units* present. For the first few turns, all guerilla units are 1-point Groups; in the middle-games (once they have 30 groups) they can have 4-point Brigades and towards the end (when they have 25 Brigades) they can build up into 12-point Divisions. Divisions recruit badly in the mountains, since their 12



points would entitle them to three groups, but as a division is still only one unit they are limited to one: the idea is presumably that a tightly knit divisional force is a poor tool for making appeals in numerous mountain villages.

There are two other forms of recruitment. Firstly, a Tito counter attracts 1-3 groups each turn, the exact number depending on the Zone. Secondly, and more importantly, each Zone has a Garrison strength below which it is dangerous to fall. If the Axis — for instance because of a major drive elsewhere — has fewer divisions than the recommended strength, a die is rolled for an Uprising in that Zone. Some Zones are more prone to rise than others (Croatia is especially rebellious) and each Zone has a modifier subtracted from the die (see Table 1). If the modified roll is 1 or more, one multiplies it by the number of divisions 'missing' from the garrison to get the number of guerilla groups appearing. In Neutral Zones, 50% of the new groups go to each guerilla army, in Zones leaning to one side, there is a 50% chance of their getting the lot. Thus, suppose that Serbia has only 1 division garrisoning it, 3 under par. If the Uprising roll is 4, it will be modified to 2, and $2 \times 3 = 6$ groups will appear. On an even die roll these will all be Chetnik; on an odd die, 3 will be Partisan.

This is much more important early in the game than towards the end when the forces already in existence are too large to make the arrival of a few groups very significant. At the start, the Axis is always a little short of divisions to garrison everywhere, and Uprisings are the main source of recruitment. The Axis *can* delay transfers of units to other fronts in order to boost their garrisons (at a price in VPs). However, the clock is ticking away towards the doom of this strategy: every turn from Turn 6 the Allied player rolls for world events affecting the game; there is a good chance that Italy will surrender around Turn 12 after which event the Axis can forget about complete garrisons.

Special Axis Rules

Various minor rules will be illustrated in the

sample game which follows. There are, however, two important rules governing the play of the Axis. On the one hand, they are allowed to launch between 5 and 11 (secret random chit draw) Anti-Guerilla Operations (AGOs). To undertake an AGO (up to two allowed per turn), you announce that you will do so and which units will participate, and secretly note the target Zone. The Yugoslav player then gets a free move of 1-6 units (determined by die), after which you fling your force against his bastions in the named Zone with doubled losses and a 2-column favourable shift on the CRT. With luck you can inflict a lot of damage in this way at the price of having your units unavailable for objective protection (they count as garrison troops in the relevant Zone, though this may unbalance your forces if you have major AGOs).

Against this, you are handicapped by political movement restrictions until the Yugoslavs have *either* reached 45 VPs *or* accumulated enough groups to start building brigades. It is assumed that these developments will alert your political commanders to the need for greater cooperation; until it happens the Germans are stuck in the north while Tito makes hay in Croatia.

To summarise the impact of these rules:

The partisans must attempt to recruit like mad early on, pacing their VP gains to keep the Axis movement restrictions in place until the guerillas are ready for brigade operation. Combat should be avoided wherever possible unless 6-1 odds can be achieved, but it is permissible to sacrifice units on sabotage raids in order to gain VPs and throw the Axis off-balance as they strip their garrisons to react.

The Axis need to concentrate on keeping the partisans down to manageable forces: once a stack appears which is proof against elimination by the Axis without wrecking the garrison network, the occupying forces will be thrown on the defensive. Chetniks can be tolerated within reason, though some sort of grip must be kept on the hoards of VPs in Serbia. A successful Uprising will cause a lot of trouble so short-term delays in unit transfers are

usually worthwhile, despite the 5 VP cost per unit per turn, but keeping maximal units on the map throughout the game will cost a ruinous 320 points (501 are needed for a Yugoslav Marginal Victory), so these forces should be released when the situation is relatively quiet or when Uprisings are no longer so important late in the game.

In the game which follows, the Partisans follow what I believe to be the optimal strategy: at the earliest possible time they build an almost invulnerable stack and concentrate on recruitment until late in the game. This minimises the usefulness of AGOs, so much so that I use a 'house rule' allowing AGOs against ordinary objectives as well as mountain/hideaway areas, since otherwise the superstack can take up residence in a Croatian objective and laugh at ordinary combat (even AGOs soon become powerless against it). My views on game balance follow from the course of this game - I won't give away just how successful the Axis counter-strategy proves to be! How realistic this strategy may be is another matter: in most guerilla games the answer would be 'not at all', but the Yugoslavian campaign was characterised by a major concentration of resistance forces at quite an early stage. The Axis should, in theory, take the opportunity to stamp on them as soon as they begin to build up, but if they are in a low-garrison Zone like Dalmatia this will lead to unbalanced garrisoning as Dalmatia gains all the AGO units at the expense of other Zones, and Uprisings will replace much of the damage.

Overall, the game is steadily interesting despite the absence of high-spots; total playing time, once you are familiar with the rules, is around 6 hours, and while other games will give you more thrills you may find you remember your Tito games longer and find yourself tempted back to try another strategy sooner than you expected. I wouldn't give it an unqualified recommendation, either for play value, play balance or realism, but it's different; it's subtle; it challenges the parts of your brain that ordinary wargames don't reach.

One final note: the developer, Joe Balkoski,

Table 1: Summary of Zone characteristics

Zone	Objectives	Total VP value	Total recruitment multipliers for Partisans	Total intrinsic defences	Allegiance	Garrison	Uprising reluctance
Serbia	21	61	9.5	12	Chetnik	4	-2
Croatia	14	38	12.5	0	Partisan	8	0
Bosnia	13	32	9	0	Partisan	6	-1
Montenegro	10	24	3.5	0	Chetnik	6	-1
Istria	5	20	7	32	Partisan	2	-2
Dalmatia	4	16	4.5	4	Partisan	2	-3
Slovenia	3	10	2.5	0	Partisan	4	-1
Albania	3	8	2	0	Neutral	3	-3
Islands	0	0	0	0	Partisan	0	-
Special cases							
(a) Macedonia	11	24	6	0	Neutral	3	-3
(b) Carinthia	3	12	2.5	0	Partisan	0	-
(b) Baranya	2	8	5	0	Neutral	0	-

Notes:

(a) Macedonia contains 3 Bulgarian units for Turns 1-14, and is limited to 4 Partisan and 4 Chetniks for Turns 1-13. Most of the time it is therefore secure for the Axis.

(b) Carinthia and Baranya are only in the game for Turns 15-17.

Commentary:

Most provinces average about 3 VPs per objective, with 4 in the industrial areas and down to 2.4 in poverty-stricken Montenegro. The recruitment multiplier, after allowing for the halving of Partisan recruitment in Chetnik Zones, is generally around 1 per objective in non-Chetnik parts and less than 0.5 in Serbia and Montenegro. The small urbanised provinces of Istria and Dalmatia offer the best deals from both viewpoints but Istria is a tough nut due to high intrinsic defences (until the Italian surrender). Croatia is clearly the best area for large-scale recruitment, while the spoils of Serbia are more for the later game when recruitment matters less - especially as 15 VPs and 5 points of recruitment multiplier are in Belgrade with a 12-factor intrinsic defence. On the other hand, Croatia is particularly prone to uprising, so the Axis should always keep it fully garrisoned, thereby also discouraging recruitment and killing two birds with one stone.



deserves praise for the playing aids. Once you have read the rules almost everything you need to know appears in one of the charts on the map: for ease of play Tito is quite exceptional.

ACTION REPLAY

Set-up: The Axis draw a chit allowing up to 10 AGOs. Axis units occupy the more valuable objectives in Serbia and leave only 1 VP available in Montenegro; the other starting positions are irrelevant since the units will be able to regroup before the partisans can operate in other Zones.

Turn 1 : Spring 1941. The 5 Chetnik groups in Serbia notch up 2 VPs each while the Montenegrans lie low in the face of 9 Italian divisions. Germans move out to eliminate 3 groups in Serbia while pro-Axis Serbs take out a fourth. The surviving Chetnik recruits one more group.
Totals: 4 Chetnik (Yugoslav). VPs: 10.

Turn 2 : Summer 1941. Drought sets in, cutting recruitment in market towns. German reinforcements go to Serbia to cover the objectives vacated by the units attacking Chetniks last turn. Partisans appear in Serbia, Slovenia and Montenegro, while the Montenegrans Chetniks, bored by inaction, go neutral. All guerillas lie low except in Serbia where an offensive nets 29 VPs. The best objectives are taken by Chetniks, in the hope that the Axis will leave them alone and leave these objectives undefended again for next turn. The Germans indeed do this, preferring to wipe out 5 Partisan groups.
Totals: 17 Partisans, 4 Chetnik (Yugoslav), 2 Chetnik (neutral). VPs: 39.

Turn 3 : Fall 1941. The Axis accept the transfer out of a 3-strength 125th Regiment since retaining it will award 5 VPs to the Yugoslavs without pushing them over the 45 mark needed to release the Axis from their movement restrictions. In hindsight this is a mistake as the enemy is able to keep under 45 for another two turns, giving more time to build up their main force in Croatia before the Germans move in. The Partisans are careful not to take any VPs this turn, instead concentrating on infiltrating Zones in which the Axis might be tempted to strip the garrison: the high uprising-deduction zones of Istria, Croatia and Albania (see Table 1). Macedonia is infiltrated by the maximum 4 Partisans and by 2 Chetniks; an AGO here is unlikely as it would overgarrison the province already held by 3 Bulgarian units. Tito slips into Croatia with 1 Partisan.

After much thought the Axis decide to empty Albania (even chance of no uprising, and if there is one half will be Chetniks) and Serbia. The gamble pays off in Albania, which remains charmingly peaceful, but 6 groups (3 of each guerilla force) appear in Serbia.
Totals: 23 Partisans, 5 Chetnik (Yugoslav), 2 (Neutral), 2 (pro-Axis). VPs: 39.

Turn 4 : Winter 1942. The Axis get 5 Croatian division-equivalents, and have to decide whether to transfer the 113th division. Belatedly realising their error last turn, they tell High Command to jump in the lake: 113th stays! The VP total goes to a tantalising 44, and the Axis is just one division short of being able to garrison all Zones fully. They declare their first two AGOs, one German and one Italian (with 6 divisions). Tito bites his nails: the German operation must be in Serbia, where 5 Partisan groups and all the patriotic Chetniks are stationed, but where are the Italians going? He rules out Albania, as 6 divisions there would overgarrison it and allow uprisings elsewhere, but it might be the obvious Croatia (with Tito and several partisans) or the currently empty Montenegro (to catch partisans fleeing from Serbia). Rolling a lucky 6, the Yugoslavs solve the problems by evacuating the Serbian partisans into Croatia, where the Italian AGO (which was indeed against Croatia) can now only achieve a 3-1 and inflict a trivial 2-group loss. The Yugoslavs are retreated to Slovenia. In Serbia, however, the Chetniks are wiped out, giving 5 VPs to the Axis for temporarily eliminating all pro-Tito Chetniks.

Tito surges back into the Croatian mountains with 10 partisans; after recruiting 5 more he is too strong to attack without German aid.
Totals: 27 Partisans, 2 Chetnik (neutral), 2 (Axis). VPs: 42.

Turn 5 : Spring 1942. The Axis have had enough of movement restrictions and hang onto both units up for transfer, giving full garrison cover and moving the VP total to 52. Tito assembles his forces in the Croatian mountains from all points of the compass and recruits the remaining groups in the countermix, producing a stack of 27 groups under him (with 3 more in Scutari, Albania). This turns into 9 brigades in Croatia and 1 in Albania, and the dreaded invincible stack has indeed materialised! The Germans, still pinned in the northern provinces, mutter Teutonic oaths impotently.
Totals: 10 Partisan Brigades; Chetnik 2 (Yugoslav), 2 (Axis). VPs: 60.

Turn 6 : Summer 1942. The shadow of the British African campaign starts to lengthen with an Allied victory at Alam Halfa reported. The drought ends. The Axis spend 5 VP to keep one extra division on map, for two reasons:

- to pounce on brigades if the superstack splits up
- to maintain full garrisons.

Tito moves his force into Dalmatia, where a major counterstroke by the Axis is impossible without stripping garrisons all over the map, but the Germans are able to guard the cities and valuable bauxite mines with heavy units.

Totals: Partisans 13 brigades, 2 groups; Chetniks 1 (Yugoslav), 2 (Axis). VPs: 78.

Situation Review: We have now played 6 of 17 turns, and the Yugoslavs are less than a third of the way to the 301 VPs needed to avoid decisive defeat; a marginal Yugoslav victory will require 501. However, the Yugoslavs are moving inexorably towards division status and they continue to refrain from a major offensive to preserve their strength despite the worsening VP situation. The Axis player begins to feel optimistic: the partisans can go for VPs and get squashed, or hide in the superstack and count boulders in the mountains.

Turn 7 : Fall 1942. The Axis lose Egypt, requiring an Italian pullback in Croatia. An AGO is declared but the possible targets (a brigade in Montenegro and 3 Chetniks in Serbia) are able to nip into

Croatia. Foiled by the German show of force in Dalmatia, Tito returns to Croatia with 9 brigades, while 4 brigades go to the Islands.

Totals : Partisans 19 brigades; Chetniks 1 (Yugoslav). VPs: 101.

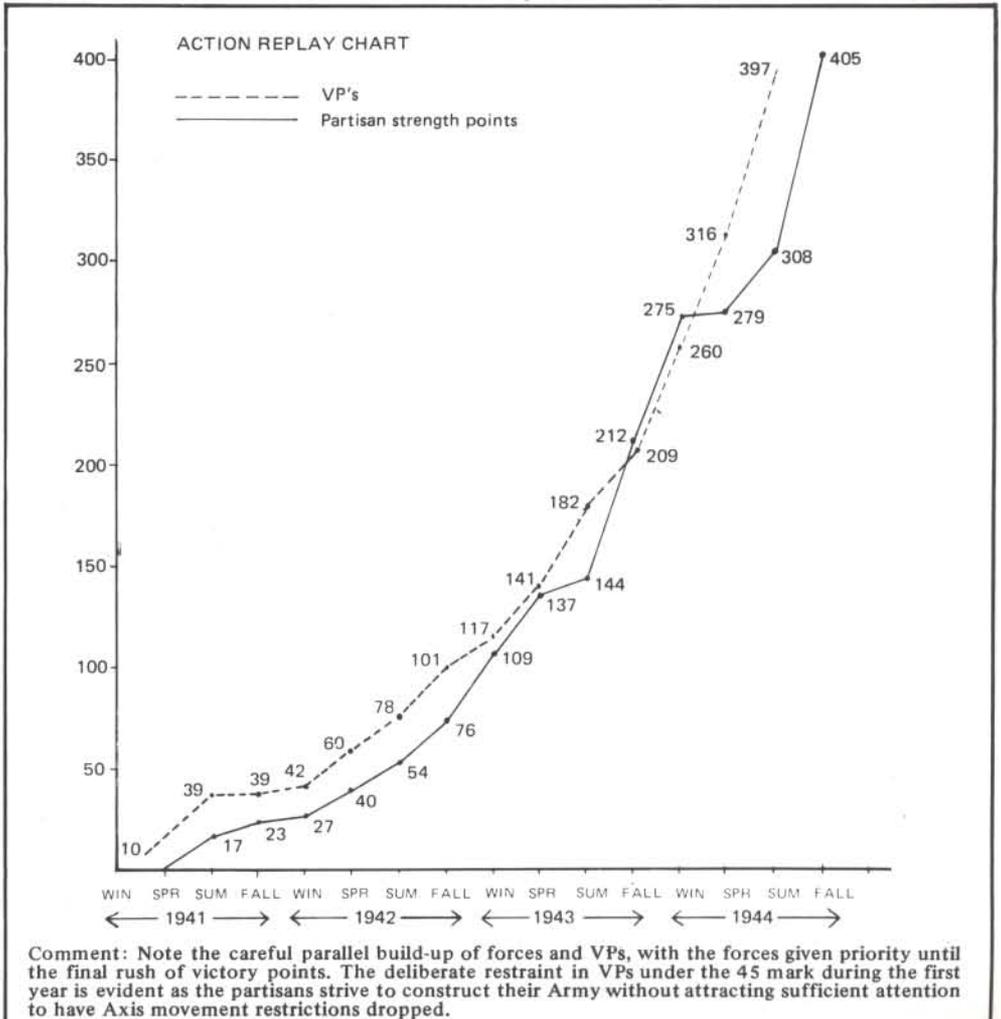
Turn 8 : Winter 1943. Allied landings are reported in Morocco: the Allied campaign is proceeding according to plan. The Axis accept all transfers. The Yugoslavs concentrate in Croatia and Dalmatia, and gain 7 new brigades, reaching division strength! Again the guerilla VP total increases at a snail's pace, with less than a quarter of the 501 needed for victory after 8 turns out of 17.

Totals: Partisans 1 division, 24 brigades, 1 group; Chetniks 1 (Yugoslav). VPs: 117

Turn 9 : Spring 1943. The Axis are driven out of Africa. The Allies review their support for Chetniks and conclude that they are jolly fine chaps: 100% (of 1) are pro-Yugoslav! The Partisans storm onto the long-awaited offensive. 6 brigades sweep into the Dalmatian bauxite mines, while 6 more knock out the intrinsic defence of Zara in the same Zone. In Croatia, all unoccupied objectives are seized. The German Army moves in all units and knocks out two brigades, at the expense of a 4-group rising in Serbia.

Totals: Partisans 7 divisions, 12 brigades, 5 groups; Chetniks 2 (Yugoslav). 1 (neutral). VPs: 141.

Turn 10 : Summer 1943. The Allies have landed in Sicily, and a howl of anguish from Rome produces an Italian withdrawal of (roll the die) ... 1 unit! Chortling merrily, the Germans collect their 5 compensating reinforcements which have been awaiting this event; the Axis cheerfully accept the 2-unit transfer requested by High Command. The Allies continue their support of those splendid fellows, the Chetniks: 66% fighting for the Motherland, can't be bad, eh? Eyeing the scattered brigades in Croatia, the Germans declare a 7-division AGO, but the fortunate Tito rolls a 6 again and is able to regroup into three large stacks. The AGO goes in against Tito in Drvar, with 17 partisan points fighting off 114 German attack points: this — the first major battle of the war in Yugoslavia —



TITO ABBREVIATED SEQUENCE OF PLAY

A. SPECIAL EVENTS STAGE

1. Allied Progress Phase (Game-Turn 6 and after)
2. Weather Phase (Game-Turns 2, 6, 10, and 14)
3. Tito Phase (? - Game-Turn 14)
4. Axis Reinforcement Phase
5. Chetnik Collaboration Phase (Game-Turns 2-17)
6. Italian Surrender Phase (Game-Turn of Italian Surrender only)
7. Axis Anti-Guerrilla Operations Phase (Game-Turns 3-14)
 - a. Planning Segment
 - b. Yugoslav Reaction Segment
 - c. Deployment Segment
 - d. Combat Segment

B. YUGOSLAV PLAYER-TURN

1. Movement Phase
2. Combat Phase

C. VICTORY POINT STAGE

D. AXIS PLAYER-TURN

1. Movement Phase
2. Combat Phase

E. TERMINAL STAGE

1. Guerrilla Reinforcement: Phase
 - a. Recruitment Segment
 - b. Tito Segment
 - c. Uprising Segment (Game-Turn 3 and after)
2. Guerrilla Status Phase
3. Axis Anti-Guerrilla Operations Redeployment Phase
4. Game-Turn Indication Phase

GAME--TURN RECORD TRACK

1 Spring 1941 MR	2 Summer 1941 MR AR, YR	3 Fall 1941 AR	4 Winter 1942 AR	5 Spring 1942 AR	6 Summer 1942 AR	7 Fall 1942
8 Winter 1943 AR	9 Spring 1943 AR ASW	10 Summer 1943 AR ASW	11 Fall 1943 ASW	12 Winter 1944 AR, ASW	13 Spring 1944 AR, ASW	14 Summer 1944 AR
15 Fall 1944 AR, YR, MRL	16 Winter 1945 MRL	17 Spring 1945 MRL				

ALLIED PROGRESS TRACK

1 Battle of Alam Halfa	2 Axis Loses Egypt	3 Morocco Landings Italian Pullback	4 Battle For Tunisia	5 Axis Loses Africa	6 Sicily Landings Italian Withdraw	7 Italian Surrender (see 10.3)
+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1

produces only a modest defender loss but Tito is driven into Slovenia. On the Yugoslav turn, the Partisan juggernaut continues to stampede over Croatia, gathering speed to gain 41 VPs. A Marginal Victory suddenly looks easy, and the players calculate the required haul to reach a Decisive: 75 VPs a turn! Hmm. The loyal Chetniks are wiped out, giving 5 VPs to the Axis.
Totals: Partisans 9 divisions, 9 brigades; Chetniks 1 (neutral). VPs: 182.

Turn 11 : Fall 1943. The Italians surrender! Lots of drama this turn: 5 divisions defect despite an Axis effort to group them under German guard (defection, changing the unit into a Partisan brigade, occurs if the local Partisan forces exceed the Axis German/Croatian forces), and the remainder disband: 4 German units arrive to compensate partially, but it's goodbye to the days of total garrisons. The Allies review the Chetnik stance once more, and this time find 0% (of 1) doing anything useful. Whitehall takes a dim view, and support is cut off: future Chetniks (from uprisings) will immediately disband or turn Partisan. On the other hand, German intelligence identifies Tito as the Yugoslav commander: they now have a 1/6 chance per turn of locating him and putting him out of action, reducing recruitment and VPs.

Partisans envelop Croatia and Slovenia and invade Istria. German attacks knock out 4 brigades, but recruitment immediately puts them back: only the counter limit stops explosive Partisan growth. Montenegro, Albania and Croatia all revolt.
Totals: Partisans 17 divisions, 2 brigades, Chetniks 7 (Yugoslav). VPs: 209.

Turns 12 : Winter 1943-44. German intelligence excels itself: Tito is located. All but 1 Chetnik disband, showing the lack of bite which Chetnik

revolts now have (the survivor turns Partisan). An AGO is declared and Tito's stack is attacked with a special partroop unit looking for the enemy leader. Unluckily, he is only withdrawn from the map for a minimal 1 turn — but then, the Germans were lucky to find him at all. Partisans spread in Istria, Slovenia and Croatia and filter into Montenegro; enormous numbers of Yugoslavs flock to the banners.
Totals: Partisans 20 divisions, 5 brigades, 15 groups; Chetniks 16 (Yugoslav). VPs: 260.

Turn 13 : Spring 1944. The Axis are now 100% on the defensive, with no further AGOs planned: the vital aim must be to protect the objectives from the Red tide. The counter limits again cripple Yugoslav reinforcements, but the Partisan Army rolls up over 50 VPs.
Totals: Partisans 21 divisions, 3 brigades, 15 groups; Chetniks 16 (Yugoslav). VPs 316.

Situation Review: With four turns left, the Yugoslavs need less than 200 points for a Marginal Victory, which should be easy enough, but another 200 will deliver a Decisive Victory. Nearly 100 points per turn — can they do it?

Turn 14 : Summer 1944. The rival armies are approaching effective equality, with both sides unable to take on the main enemy forces but the Partisans capable of swamping the intrinsic defences of most cities. The VP haul booms as the offensive flames across the country: 96 points! The Axis however, are scoring 15 points a turn as each wave of Chetniks disappears for lack of Allied support.
Totals: Partisans 23 divisions, 4 brigades, 16 groups; Chetniks 10 (Yugoslav). VPs: 397.

Turn 15 : Fall 1944. Three turns to go. Bulgaria switches sides, and the Axis Bulgars are replaced by an army of Soviet and pro-Soviet Bulgarian forces in Macedonia and Serbia. The Yugoslav player is offered extra units by Stalin at a cost in VPs (loss of political independence); Tito declines with thanks. The first destruction of a division in the game takes place, as the German II Landwehr is smashed by the Soviet Army at Skopje. Both sides move into Carinthia and Baranya. But the crucial figure is the VP gain: a net 109 points.
Totals: Partisans 30 divisions, 6 brigades, 21 groups; Chetniks 12 (Yugoslav). VPs: 506.

The Axis player resigns. With two turns left and the VP gain topping 100 points a turn, a Decisive Victory cannot be stopped!

The Axis made a serious error in VP manipulation early on, allowing the Yugoslavs to build their superstack before the Germans could intervene. However, it is my belief that the strategy shown here will normally win the game for Tito despite the house rule allowing AGOs in towns, and I suggest the following more drastic rule change to balance matters:

(8.25) (addition) Units that are retreated after combat may not move in their next movement phase out of the province to which they are sent.

This gives a chance of keeping the Partisans off-balance by winning a series of battles in Croatia. This actually happened in this game, but since Tito could always charge back at once it didn't really matter very much, and in fact the Axis only had occasion to use half their AGO allocation. An alternative rule change is simply to adjust the VP levels needed for victory, but I prefer the above suggestion since it gives the Axis more active counterplay in the second half of the game. Yet another possibility is to cut the stacking limit to discourage the superstack from emerging at all; given the size of the area this is not very satisfactory from the point of view of realism, but one can argue that total concentration of forces in one area (as was seen in this game) is really pretty unlikely from a political viewpoint: you are fighting with locally-raised partisans of different ethnic groups, not a standing army ready to follow you to Mongolia if need be. Players should experiment to find the adjustment which suits them best — the game is worth a bit of work, even though we are doing SPI's job for them.

When John Lamshead asked me to do a review of Air Cobra, by Operational Studies Group, I jumped at the chance. I did so for two reasons. Firstly, tactical modern games are my favourites and, secondly, operations involving 'Airborne' forces have always fascinated me. Unfortunately, for reasons which may become apparent hereafter, I couldn't get into the game. This has resulted in a lack of playtesting on my part, which, I regret, only in so far as the credibility of this review, may be affected thereby.

Air Cobra is described by O.S.G. as a game "for two or more players which shows the effects of helicopters and air mobility on the modern battlefield. All aspects of combat are dealt with. Players can choose to command anything from a few units to entire companies and battalions". As far as it goes, that's a fair enough description. It is a squad level game for Infantry, with individual vehicles and helicopters. Each hex represents 100 metres from side to side and each game-turn represents 60 seconds of real time. It is described, on the book-case type box, as a game of Moderate-Complex level.

The physical components are best described as Superb! They comprise 2 maps, representing 'typical' West German terrain; 800 counters, about half of which represent Combat Units (the other half are Markers and aids); a rules folder in two parts, rules 1-25 being in the main folder with rules 26-29 and the Scenarios in a separate folder. The rules contain the necessary tables and charts; Unit Data sheets (UDS's) for the various vehicles and helicopters, listing weapons systems with appropriate combat values, movement rates, observation ranges and other characteristics; Organisation Displays (OD's) for recording unit status, these are essential to the game concept; Sighting and Gunnery Charts for indirect fire and a study folder giving historical background of air-mobile warfare together with some information into the various Armies and their airborne units.

The maps really are a delight to the eye. They are both colourful and easy to understand. There is sufficient variation of terrain for play not to become stereotyped. To a certain extent, the maps are geo-morphic, they can be placed together in a limited number of combinations. OSG haven't gone as far as they could, however, by making the maps completely geo-morphic (a la Panzerblitz). Likewise, the counters are well up to scratch. They are colourful and functional. The Forces represented are USA (green counters) UK (Yellow (?) counters) West Germany (blue-grey counters) and Russia (Red counters — inevitably). The marker counters come in various combinations of red, yellow, blue and white. They are distinguishable at a glance from Combat Units. The combat counters themselves do not have anything printed on them, except Unit identification. One refers exclusively to the UDS's for combat values, movement rates etc. The rules booklets are well printed and spaced. They are in the 'case' form, so familiar to subscribers of S&T. The UDS's, OD's and sighting and gunnery chart suffer from a paucity of useful explanation printed on them. In particular, the UDS's are crammed full of information, which presents a crowded appearance requiring some study. The Study folder is really only a cursory dabble into the subject, with at least one glaring error.

So much then for the game's components. What of the game itself? Perhaps a brief description of the game system is a good place to start. One starts, as in most games, with the "sequence of play" (Rule 4.0). In Air Cobra one has to master a complex sequence; in this respect I ought to mention that a game turn record track is thoughtfully provided. It is an invaluable aid as it puts into understandable form the sequence of play. Each game turn is divided into 4 Phases:-

- (i) An artillery Phase — during this phase targets are allocated for future indirect fire. One also computes the effect of an indirect fire scheduled to arrive this game turn.
- (ii) The Command Phase — one ascertains which units are "in command" and therefore capable of efficiently executing tasks in the combat phases.