

GAME PROFILE:

AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

Guns or Butter in Post-Atomic America

by Scott Renner

Of the five games that I've designed, Holocaust is probably the most eccentric of a fairly eccentric quintet. It was a great deal of work to do and is a great deal of work to play. Those of you fond of multi-player games, however, have been telling me that the work is worth it in terms of play value. If any of you out there happens to be an economist interested in multi-player games, I'd appreciate hearing from you and perhaps getting a theoretical criticism on ATH from you.

—RAS

After the Holocaust, one of the latest releases from SPI, is certainly not a typical wargame. Like the other Power Politics games, *Holocaust* places a heavy emphasis on player interaction. Furthermore, unlike most wargames, it is based on economic rather than military factors. While military action is possible within the scope of the game, most players will be completely occupied with economic problems. In fact, *Holocaust* is one of the few wargames that can be played without any military action at all.

The game is based on the premise that the long-dreaded nuclear war finally breaks out, resulting in the destruction of the United States as a political unit. Over the next fifteen years, four organizations that survived the holocaust manage to put some of the pieces back together creating four nations, or regions, occupying most of the former United States. In the northeast area, the Bell Telephone system starts to restore some semblance of order. In the southwest, a government springs up from the remnants of the National Guard, local police forces, and veteran's organizations. The farwest region is assembled by the Bank of America, while the Church of the Chosen Few does the reconstruction work in the midwest.

Each of these four regions has, in the fifteen years following the war, created some form of an economy from what was once merely subsistence farming. Each region has some industrial capacity, as well as mining and fuel industries. Finally, each region sees itself as the rightful heir to the power held by the pre-war government, and each has the ambition of extending its control over the entire continent—a perfect setting for conflict as well as cooperation.

While *After the Holocaust* is designed as a four-player game, with each player taking control of one of the four regions, other play options do exist. Players may try the two or three player options, or can try their own solitaire system. The game lasts ten turns, each turn representing one year. In this time, each player will, through skillful control of the economy, try to expand the control of his region and improve the economic well-being of his people.

The economies in the game are nicely simulated, leaving in enough detail to make them interesting, and yet abstracting enough so as not to bury the player in a heap of paperwork. Nearly everything in the game is defined in terms of points—labor points, mech points, food points, etc. Here are some of the definitions (taken from the game rules) of some of the more important terms used in the game:



Labor Point: This is an indirect measure of population. It is the number of adult workers per 200,000 people, i.e., roughly 80,000 workers.



Food Point: The amount of grain, meat, fish, fibre, wool, timber, etc., necessary to provide adequate diet, shelter, and clothing to a Labor Point for one year.



Metal Point: An abstract amount of raw material; basically metal ores (copper, iron, tin, lead, etc.)



Fuel Point: A unit of readily used energy; i.e., petroleum, coal, and in some instances, hydroelectric power.



Mechanization Point: Tools and equipment which increase the ability of labor to produce. Mech Points are added to the economic sectors to raise output in these sectors.



Consumer Point: The good things in life: prime steaks, television sets, motorcars, waterbeds, fur coats, second homes, municipal orchestras, good books, etc.

Social State: The general standard of living and level of productivity of a whole region.

The economy is divided into sectors, each of which deals with one aspect of production—the farm sector deals with food production, the metal and fuel sectors control the

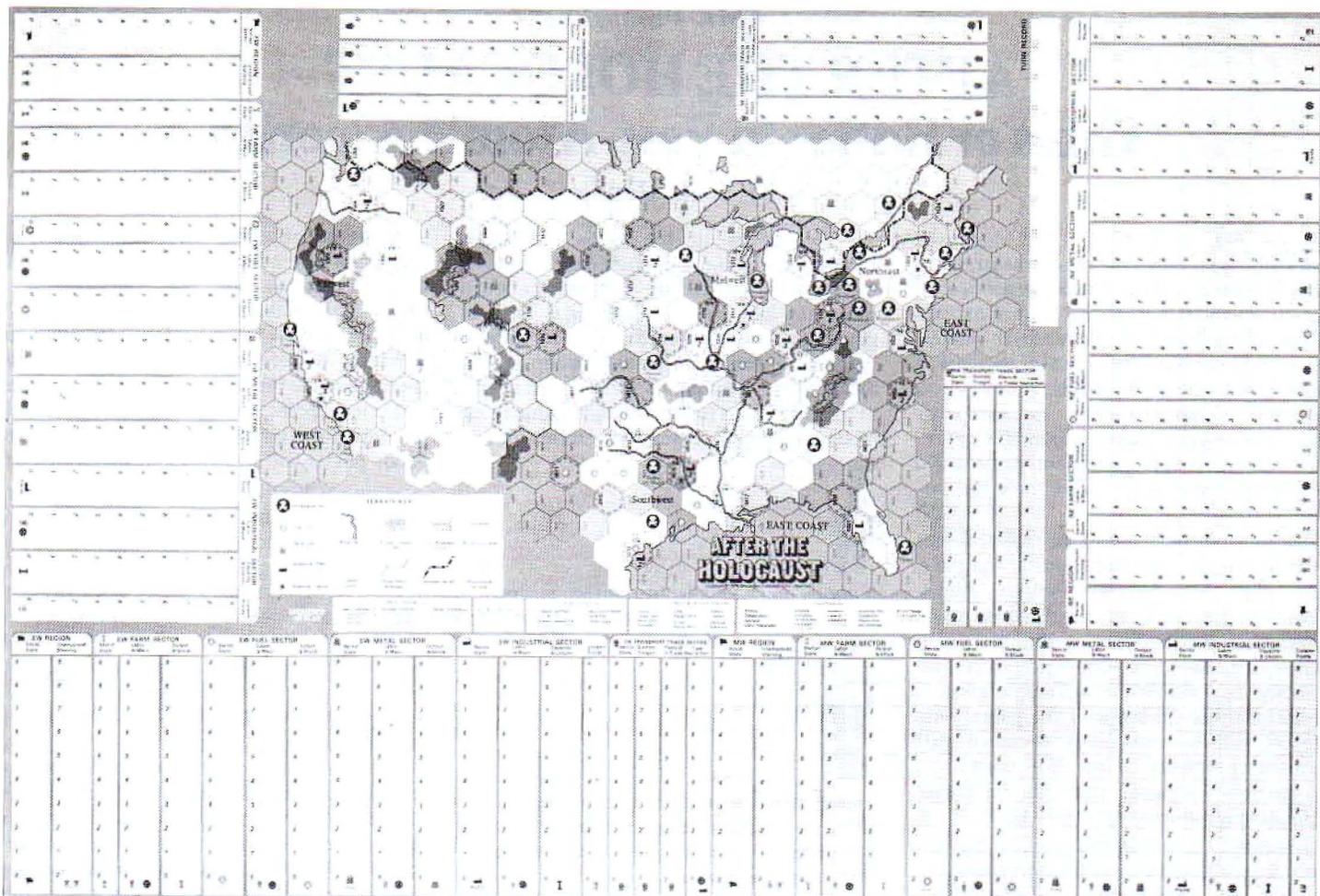
production of these raw materials, the industrial sector deals with the production of finished goods, while the transport/trade sector controls the movement of goods inside a region and between regions. In order to produce, players must allocate labor and mech points to the sectors. One labor point or one mech point will produce one point of product; for example, in the metal sector, two labor points will produce two metal points.

A player is limited in the number of labor points he may have assigned to any given sector. In the farm sector, a player may assign up to five labor points per good area in this region; however, since a player normally has only five labor points per area, this poses no problem. In the metal, fuel, and industrial sectors, a player is limited by the number of sites or plants in his region. The real restrictions are placed on the number of mechanization points allowed. In the farm sector, the number of mech points allowed is a multiple of the labor points in the sector. In the other sectors, a certain number of mech points is allowed for each site or plant in the sector. All of these limits are based on the social level of the workers—the higher the social level, the more mech points allowed.

Advance planning is a must in this game, for both underproduction and overproduction can prove fatal to a player. Running short of raw materials will prevent the industrial sector from producing at full capacity. If the raw material in short supply happens to be food, running short can cause starvation among a player's people. Overproduction leads to unused raw materials, which have to be stockpiled (which costs money). If these raw materials are not stockpiled, the future production of the sector involved will be reduced. Both underproduction and overproduction can lead to unemployment; in the first case, the unemployed labor will come from the industrial sector, while in the second case it will come from the farm, metal, or fuel sector.

Trade with other players is one of the most important features of the game. Through trade, players rid themselves of materials in oversupply, while gaining materials which they need. Trade can also be used as a weapon; the player who has a food surplus when everyone else has a famine is in a very good bargaining position.

Inevitably, some players will find the economic attack not suited to their tastes, and will create an army for a more direct approach to what they want. Three types of military units may be created: mechanized divisions, infantry divisions, and militia. Of the three, only two can be used for purposes of aggression, militia units being used only for



defense. Military units are a large drain on the economy, and players will quickly find that even the limited amount of military action in the game is dominated by economic concerns: in the end, the player who can produce the most will be the winner.

For the player who is inclined to be subtle in his attacks, two types of political attacks have been included in the rules. Players may purchase "corruption chits," which reduce the tax income of other players. However, these chits can be used for defensive purposes, each chit cancelling one played by another player. The second form of political attack is more direct. By spending money, players can try to take over areas belonging to other players, gaining the labor points and the sites and plants contained in the area.

The same system can be applied to areas which are not controlled by any player. Players expend the money (the more money spent, the better the chance of annexing the area), roll a die, and apply the results from the political control table. Either the money will be wasted (no effect), or the area will be acquired in poor control, or the area will be acquired in good control. This is the only allowable method of *annexing* an area; areas may be occupied by military units, but no benefit (other than the occupation itself) will be gained.

Nearly every action in the game requires government financing in one respect or another. Obviously, some method of taxation

is needed to provide the funds for these programs. The revenue produced from taxation is calculated from the base income of the region, the announced tax rate, and the amount of production of all raw materials, plus the number of industrial points utilized, plus the number of consumer points expended. The tax rate, ranging from 10% to 50%, is determined by the player. Corruption is determined on the corruption table and is based on the number of corruption chits played by other players. The tax rate, quite realistically, has an effect on the industrial capacity for the next turn: high taxes tend to lower the industrial capacity, causing unemployment, while low taxes tend to raise the capacity, allowing the player to transfer points *out* of unemployment.

Understanding the *rules* of the game is one thing; understanding how to *play* is quite another. The economies in this game are full of intricate details and require much advance planning from the players. Most players make some mistake, particularly the first time they play the game, and run into all sorts of problems. Starvation and unemployment are common difficulties. Players who avoid these obvious pitfalls usually fall into the trap of expanding too quickly, failing to industrialize, failing to trade with other players, or raising an army too quickly. Players can learn to avoid most of these problems by playing the game a few times in advance (the one-region solitaire version is excellent for this purpose).

The economic growth of each region can be divided into three phases: initial growth, middle consolidation, and final expansion. Each phase is about three turns long, depending on the success of the player. In the initial growth stage, players will concentrate on mechanizing the farm and industrial sectors, expanding into new areas only where absolutely necessary. During the middle consolidation, players will work toward raising the social level of the areas already under their control, still largely ignoring expansion into new areas. Lastly, in the final expansion phase, players will expand into new areas as quickly as possible, while maintaining or upgrading their social level.

INITIAL GROWTH

The player's notes give a very accurate description of the initial situation of the players—very grim. Food production will be the biggest problem for at least the first two turns. The other economic sectors will have to get along with whatever can be spared from the farm. Trying to expand too quickly in the other economic sectors will cause starvation.

However, any player who puts all of his efforts into food production will very quickly lose the game. A few labor points in the fuel and metal sectors will provide all of these materials that will be needed for the first few turns—any remaining labor should go into industry. The industrial sector bears the responsibility for making both consumer points and mech points. Consumer points should be made at

the minimum rate (five per turn), while the rest of the industrial capacity is used to make mech points, which should be assigned to the farm or industrial sector. Remember that each mech point allocated to the farm will free one labor point to be transferred to some other sector.

Expansion is usually unnecessary and sometimes harmful in these early stages of the game. There is little to be gained by adding a new area, unless the region is deficient in some raw material. Each area annexed will require five consumer points, a transport point, and will yield only five labor points. These labor points will do more harm than good at this point in the game. In order to feed these points, they must be assigned to the farm sector, where they will eat every point they produce. More importantly, when the time comes to raise the social level, these points will require consumer points, which could possibly delay the improvement.

MIDDLE CONSOLIDATION

The period of consolidation comes between turns four and seven. The players have, by now, managed to stabilize their economies—starvation is not a major threat, the farm sector is well mechanized, and the industrial sector is able to produce both consumer and mech points in quantity. It is now time for the players to think about raising their social level. Because of the large number of consumer points involved, this task can be very difficult.

Before a player starts to raise his social level, he should have every sector in his economy fully mechanized. Otherwise, the increased social level will be worthless, since the real

purpose of increasing the social level is to increase the number of mech points allowed. Once all sectors are mechanized to the limit, the economy should be able to produce enough consumer points to maintain the increased social level, and still produce mech points to take advantage of the increase. When trying for a social level of three or four, players may find it necessary to raise the social level of the industrial sector before raising the level of the other sectors.

Again, expansion into new areas is not as important at this point as it will be in the final turns. However, if a region is short on some raw material, or if a player tries to box another into a small part of the mapboard, expansion may be required. There are ways to deal with such players, ranging from trade agreements to direct military attacks. The latter should be used with great care and only for short periods of time; players can hurt their own economy more than the other player's economy if they are not careful.

FINAL EXPANSION

The last few turns mark the great expansion of the four regions. All four should by this time have a social level of two or three, with all of the economic sectors producing at capacity. The time is now ripe for expansion, since now the players are able to use the new areas and the new labor points. Providing consumer points for the new labor will be much less of a problem now than in the earlier part of the game.

Raising the social level should still be the main objective, as it is worth more in victory points than adding new areas. There are a few things which will lower the victory point total, and these should be carefully avoided.

Starving labor points (if there still are any) must be fed and put back into the economy, as well as any unemployed points. Any military units must be disposed of by the end of the game, which means that the supply for these units must be cut off on turn nine. Demobilizing the military does not mean that attacks on other players must be stopped; in fact, attacks can be increased if other players are going to win. A combined attack with corruption chits and plebiscite attempts on other players' areas should be able to take at least one area, even more if other players join in the attack.

CONCLUSION

It would be nice to say that there are no flaws in *After the Holocaust*; sadly, this is not so. There aren't many out-and-out mistakes in the rules, but there are many which are vague and/or poorly written. The rules concerning strikes, research and development, and industrial employment/unemployment are the worst offenders in this respect. These rules require the player to make a judgment of what the designer had in mind.

Still, the few flaws in the game do not seriously affect the quality of the game as a whole. As a multi-player game, it is quite a success. Player interaction is an important part of the game, making diplomatic skills as important as military or economic prowess. The topic, background, and setting of the game are certainly interesting, and centering of the game around economic instead of military factors is very different from what wargamers have grown accustomed to. All things considered, *Holocaust* is one of the better games to be published for some time.

THE LIMITS TO GROWTH IN HOLOCAUST

by Gary M. Kodish

Most players of *After the Holocaust* must have wondered how high they could drive their Regional Level, given enough time and freedom from interference of other players. At first glance, it might seem that the only limitation is the number of sites of the most scarce commodity on the board, metal. It might also seem that there is enough metal so that a single player, if he controlled all the sites, and sufficient other resources, might attain a regional level of 10 or higher.

Alas, it is not so. The game system itself imposes a limitation on how high your Regional Level can be, no matter what your population is and no matter what resources or industrial capacity you command. And that limit is surprisingly low. The mathematics of the situation are quite simple: let P = the regional population, N = the Regional Level, S = the number of sites in any resource or industrial sector. Then to reach a Regional Level of N , you need to expend $P(N-1)$

Consumer Points per turn. To produce these, your industrial capacity must be:

$$\#1 \quad \frac{3P(N-1)}{5}$$

Your metal and fuel production must each be:

$$\frac{P(N-1)}{5}$$

This excludes fuel requirements for domestic transportation. With a use of minimum labor in the industrial sector (i.e., one labor point per site) and with your industry fully mechanized, the labor requirements in industry equal the number of sites, which is given by:

$$\#2 \quad S + SN = \frac{3P(N-1)}{5}$$

or,

$$\#3 \quad S = \frac{3P(N-1)}{5(N+1)}$$

Minimum labor required for fuel production, with the sector fully mechanized at level N is given by:

$$\#3a \quad S + SN = \frac{P(N-1)}{5}$$

or,

$$\#4a \quad S = \frac{P(N-1)}{5(N+1)}$$

The same is true for the metal sector, so that the total minimum labor requirement for both is twice (4a) or,

$$\#5 \quad S = \frac{2P(N-1)}{5(N+1)}$$

The total minimum labor requirement for producing the necessary Consumer Points for Regional Level N , excluding food requirements, is the sum of (3a) and (5), which is:

$$\#6 \quad \frac{P(N-1)}{(N+1)}$$

Now, since the minimum use has been made of labor in the other sectors, the remaining population is the maximum number which can be used in food production. Each turn, the player is required to produce P food points to feed his labor force and additional food points required in the production of Consumer Points. The total required to be produced at Regional Level N is:

$$\#7 \quad P + \frac{2P(N-1)}{5}$$

The labor force available to produce this food consists of the entire population minus those

[continued on page 25]