

One unit of the United States Army which must be becoming famous to many wargamers is the 11th United States Armoured Cavalry Regiment – the Black Horse Regiment – stationed at the town of Fulda in West Germany. It made its first appearance in the cardboard world when *Fulda Gap* was published, its 'A' and 'B' Squadrons (but not 'C', for some reason known to God and Jim Dunnigan) appearing in the counter-mix, even though they rarely stay in the game for very long! Since then it has reappeared in *NATO Division Commander* in its screening and delaying role, its squadrons (all three of 'em at last) capable of being broken down into their component troops. Now it makes its third game-appearance, this time in *Fifth Corps*, where its part is often as brief as in *Fulda Gap*, although much more vital.

A regiment that played no part in the Indian Wars of 1866-90, let alone in the Civil War (for the simple reason that it does not appear to have been raised until the 1890s), the Eleventh lacks, from the British point of view – conditioned by cinema, television, and certain literature – the fame of the Seventh, the lesser but nonetheless sound reputation of the Fourth (once, under the command of Ronald Slidell MacKenzie in the 1870s, reckoned to be the best cavalry regiment on the frontier) or the cachet of the Ninth and Tenth, the 'Buffalo Soldiers'. Nonetheless it is the first, the very first, NATO unit mentioned in Sir John Hackett's *Third World War*, which opens with Captain Jack Langtry's Troop L of 3 Squadron deployed just east of Bad Hersfeld, covering the autobahn to the border: and with the troop's initial clash with an invading Soviet column.

And it is with the 11th US Armoured Cavalry Regiment (The Black Horse Regiment) deployed and waiting that *Fifth Corps* opens – often with the first clash taking place around Bad Hersfeld. And with *Fifth Corps* opens the Central Front Series. *Fifth Corps* you will have sighted already: *Hof Gap* has joined it: S&T 88 includes *BAOR*, for which I wait with twitching fingers and eyes out on stalks, much as I waited for *Fifth Corps* to appear once I had heard that a new SPI NATO/Warsaw Pact game was on the stocks.

I call this article a mixed bag as it will start with a brief review of *Hof Gap*, written on the assumption that the system will already be known to most readers likely to be interested, and will then go on to an operational analysis. Furthermore the game-system (under the hands of Charles Kamps and of a new developer, Bruce Maxwell) and *HG* contains not only new rules which can be 'bolted on' to *V Corps*, but also certain important revisions which put the entire system into a different light. Last but not least, a lengthy correspondence with Charles Kamps, designer of *HG* and of the upcoming *BAOR*, has produced further highly illuminating facts on the series. The most important changes will be discussed in the article.

#### 'Hof Gap'

As the map display in the advertisement for the Central Front series shows, the *HG* map covers the area south of and adjacent to the *V Corps* map, with the city of Nuremberg lying almost in its centre. Between Nuremberg and the town of Hof, close against the Iron Curtain, are the obstacles

of the city of Bayreuth and the rough terrain of the Frankenwald. Further south Weiden and Amberg are set in heavily-wooded country which is spotted with swamp and rough hexes. While the Hof-Bayreuth-Nuremberg autobahn provides a major axis running diagonally from northeast to southwest, the southern half of the map has no autobahns and only two east-west roads, creating movement problems for the Czechoslovak divisions whose area of responsibility this will be.

Like *V Corps*, *HG* has three scenarios: No. 1, 'Covering Force', is comparable to 'Battle for Fulda', the second scenario of *V Corps* and, like it, uses only the eastern half of the game-map; No 2, 'VII Corps', is a full-map marathon with cast of thousands; and No 3, 'Seventh Army', is something of a cheat in that it is not a third scenario for *HG* but a two-map 'medium monster' linking both games in one.

'Covering Force', despite its superficial similarity to 'Battle for Fulda', is a bigger scenario. NATO starts with the 2nd US Armoured Cavalry (the old 2nd Dragoons of the Mexican War) deployed as a screen, with two West German brigades at Weiden and Amberg respectively; on Turn 2 a third West German brigade enters the map. A small but important change in the 2nd Cavalry counter-mix is that the regimental artillery appears as three separate batteries, one in direct support of each squadron. With attack-defence CF of 1-1 they are ideal for lending support in the face of a WP overrun. The WP player will still succeed but at the cost of being forced into early use of gas and smoke – or of EW points – instead of getting a free 14-1 walkover.

The Pact opens the ball with two Soviet divisions, one tank and one motor rifle, and two Czech motor rifle divisions; on the following turn another Soviet tank division, a Czech ditto and a Czech motor rifle division all show up. A much greater muster of units, especially WP units, than in 'Fulda', and resulting longer turns, even though this scenario consists of three turns only; the NATO player does have the advantage of having two German brigades on-map, of course, but, BUT, the improved airstrike rules will break one or two of his fingers before he can strike a blow. Like 'Fulda' 'Covering Force' is a tense, balanced scenario which can end with WP units thundering triumphantly off the map during Turn 2 or with the assault hopelessly bogged down and only an inadequate handful managing to exit.

On first sight the Czech divisions look pretty second-rate, compared with the powerful Soviet formations already encountered in *V Corps*. The MR divisions lack an independent tank battalion and all units are lighter in CF; this is presumably because the Czech MR regiments are equipped with the SKOT armoured personnel carrier, which lacks the gun-and-ATGW armament of the BMP, and the tank regiments are still equipped with the T-55, the T-62 never having been widely adopted by non-Soviet WP nations, according to *The Soviet War Machine*. Moreover the Czechs can hardly be accounted one of the more enthusiastic members of the pact, despite their post-1968 'rehabilitation'. Nevertheless the NATO player who regards the Czechs (as I did) as lightweight, good only for diversionary operations, will receive a nasty shock as they start to gnaw their way through the opposition. Regiments working in pairs and using Overrun can get through the NATO line behind which only the artillery provides depth; when this happens the southern sector can be compromised very quickly and the defender forced into frantic scurrings from one point of crisis to another. Further north the combination of Urban and Rough terrain will be giving the Soviet advance some trouble, but the 2nd Cavalry are fighting on their own – no succour until turn 2 as the Germans in the south will have their hands full, and if that turn opens with simultaneous Soviet and Czech breakthroughs ... well then, the newly-arriving German brigade has a choice of shindigs to attend.

Although the situation in the *HG* scenario is similar to that in 'Fulda' the feel of the game is distinctly different, preventing any feeling of *deja vu*. Furthermore the additional and revised rules make themselves very much felt and it is time that we had a look at the more important of them.

## New and Revised Rules

**Soviet Doctrine:** There is no longer any restriction on the direction of movement of WP units, whether on or off roads, nor is there any constraint on the direction in which Overrun attacks may be made. This is intended to apply to all 'Central Front' games, including 'V Corps', as Charles Kamps — who is ever consistent in warning us not to underestimate the capabilities of the potential enemy — considers that the 'westwards' concept in V Corps (Rule 15.1) is a misleading simulation and an unrealistic restriction on the WP player. The only movement now enforced on the WP is that when a NATO unit retreats after combat at least one attacking unit must advance all the way along the path of retreat until blocked either by the retreating unit or by one through which it has retreated. HG Exclusive Rule 15.2 is to be entirely deleted — see below for more of this.

**NATO Surprise Attack Bonus:** However Soviet rigidity is recognised in a new rule, again intended to apply throughout, applicable when a WP unit is surrounded by the ZOC of attacking NATO units. The Attack CF of all attackers is DOUBLED (other than that of non-adjacent artillery); this simpler ruling replaces that of Exclusive Rule 15.2 of V Corps. Note that (1) the doubling applies equally to normal and overrun attacks (2) column shifts for multi-hex attack and for surrounded defender apply over and above the doubling of CF.

**Rough Terrain and Marsh:** This I have from Charles Kamps: it will appear in BAOR and should apply throughout the series:-

"Units may not move, advance, retreat or overrun either into or out of a rough or marsh hex except through autobahn, road or access hexsides. Units may conduct normal attacks and exert ZOC as usual. Airmobile and Airborne Infantry units are exempt from any of these restrictions."

The terrain costs for these hexes will apply as usual to airmobile and airborne infantry units entering them 'cross country' and for any unit passing through occupied Rough/Marsh hexes via Access hexsides (see Rule 5.33).

This is quite a change, making certain hexes virtually off limits to both sides, and frequently channelling advances. Furthermore, a unit which enters a Rough/Marsh hex from 'behind', as it were, and then exerts a ZOC on to an adjacent road can constitute a formidable block, proof against frontal overrun and thus difficult to shift quickly. A good example of what I mean is a NATO unit in Hex 2441 of the V Corps map (due south of Bad Hersfeld); it blocks a swift dash westwards along the autobahn unless it can be winkled out by an overrun from Hex 2341. This new terrain ruling, Charles Kamps avers, is a truer portrayal of the kind of ground represented by rough hexes in this series of games.

**Other Changes, in Outline:** Hof Gap includes improved rules for pre-emptive airstrike and for Electronic Warfare, both of which I recommend and which can be fitted to V Corps. Without going into detail, the airstrike rule allows more variable results and that on EW makes for far less book-keeping on the players' part. Also introduced is a Counter-battery rule whereby artillery can attempt to suppress enemy artillery units prior to the movement and combat segment of each phase — an exception to Rule 8.21 which otherwise forbids attacks conducted solely by artillery.

## The Game-System and its Application

### Force Evaluation — Warsaw Pact

It is chiefly Soviet forces which I will consider as they are the only WP protagonists in V Corps, the game which I assume to have been at least sighted by most readers. The 'correct' divisional composition which has already appeared in NATO Division Commander is repeated: the MR Division includes a tank regiment and an independent tank battalion. My chief reservation is that all three MR regiments have the same CF in spite of the fact that, to the very best of my knowledge and belief, only one of the trio is equipped with the BMP, the other two having the BTR-60, armed only with a 14.5mm KPV machine-gun. Charles tells me that, according to his sources, all MR regiments in Germany are BMP-equipped: but my sources

differ! The three artillery counters represent all the surface-to-surface field artillery and rocket units organic to the division. The 4(5)7 RAG and the DAG are respectively the divisional field artillery regiment and the BM-21 MRL battalion plus the FROG battalion (the FROG's range is neatly highlighted in the Nuclear Weapons Chart introduced into HG); the 'funny' is the 3(4)6 RAG — Charles has extracted the 122mm battalion organic to each MR regiment and has shown them as a separate unit, whereas to have left them factored-in to regimental CF would have made the counter-mix a still more accurate reflection of a division.

The use of regimental counters emphasises the place of the regiment as the unit of command and manoeuvre, its battalions very much sub-units, smaller and more centrally controlled than those of a NATO brigade. With its high CF, its generous allocation of artillery and its low unit-count the Soviet division is an instrument of attack, able to apply great pressure to a selected point, especially when that pressure is in the form of an overrun supported by the use of chemicals and smoke — all consistent with the Soviet doctrine of the vigorous offensive.

### Force Evaluation — NATO

**General:** The NATO force, being represented at battalion level, is more numerous in terms of counters but considerably more lightweight in CF, especially in attack CF; the artillery is an exception, being equal or nearly so — 3(5)3, 4(5)4 — to stronger WP units. This favourable simulation of NATO artillery is intended to reflect more flexible fire-control systems and a greater variety of ammunition, including items such as projectile delivered mines.

A NATO brigade can cover a fairly wide front, or a narrower front in depth and will normally be deployed in one form or the other by a sensible NATO player: early counter-attacking against a still-fresh opponent is *not* advisable. But a brigade can certainly check the advance of a Soviet division; for how long it will prevent a breakthrough will depend on the WP players' skill, his luck with EW and with counter-battery fire — and, not least, on the terrain available to the defence. NATO can — and has been able to — bring the assault to a frustrated halt, but it must never exit, pursuing a bear, to paraphrase that most haunting of stage-directions.

Now a brief word on the national contingents.

**US Cavalry Regiment:** The squadrons are in fact battalion-sized units and the troops company-sized. Each squadron now consists of: 1 x battery of 6 x SP 155mm howitzers; 1 x troop of 17 x M60 A3 MBT; 3 x troops each of 3 platoons (4 x M60A3 and 2 x TOW (APC-mounted) and a mortar section of 3 x 4.2" mortars). Both the Sheridan AFV and the M60A2 (both firing Shillelagh ATGW) have been withdrawn from service, the gun/launcher system having proved to be defect-prone.

The game-system gives a fairly accurate portrayal of the US Armoured Cavalry regiment as a screen force, capable of identifying and delaying the initial enemy assault but able to provide only a temporary screen: a single mortar rifle regiment can overrun a troop and two overrunning in succession will almost certainly destroy it.

**US Brigades:** The variations in US battalion counters reflect the cross attachment of companies between armoured and mechanised battalions; a 4-5 tank battalion is 'pure' whereas a 4-6 has a mech company attached in lieu of one of its own; a 2-8 mech battalion is also 'pure' and a 3-7 has exchanged a company for a tank company.

**West German Brigades:** Charles Kamps reports that the unit-mix and CF are not authoritative: when the 'Central Front' system was being designed the Germans were experimenting with various brigade organisations with a view to the 'Brigade 80' concept, and the organisation finally selected was not that depicted in the present two games. The definitive organisation produces 2-5 Panzer-grenadier battalions and 3-4 Panzer battalions, which will make the brigade more even in CF.

### Some Features of the Game System

I have found that 'bitty' layout of rules regarding artillery and a certain lack of specific information

about multiple assaults has puzzled even experienced and competent players, and that in mid-game. The following precis may be of help to some readers.

## Artillery

### 1. General

a. May not conduct Indirect Fire when in an enemy ZOC — note that a city hex can NEVER be in an enemy ZOC, by the way (Rules 10.2 and 6.15). *Vitally* important exceptions — see (c) below.

b. May not attack 'solo', i.e. bombardment not in support of a ground attack is not allowed (except when Counter-battery fire is being used) (Rules 8.21 and 'Hof Gap 19.0). N.B. this means that isolated artillery pinned in an enemy ZOC cannot attack the pinning unit — but again see e. below.

c. Can fire chemicals plus smoke at the cost of only 1 FP (Rule 10.42); a point not always realised by WP players!

d. Uses a CF of 1 only, when either attacking or defending in an overrun, whether Direct or Indirect fire is employed. This is not clearly specified as regards defence, but becomes clear when Rule 10.2 is read in conjunction with 10.11. Rule 8.71 is misleading in that the phrase "included in an overrun" implies the attacker only.

e. Now for that *Vitally Important Exception* concerning artillery in enemy ZOC: it is in Rule 10.22, "An artillery unit that is in an enemy-controlled hex and is not eligible to conduct indirect fire may conduct indirect fire if all the enemy units controlling the hex are involved in the current combat."

This let-out means that an artillery unit which has been waylaid and caught in an enemy ZOC may use indirect fire in support of a unit or units attacking that enemy unit, even though it is itself in that enemy's ZOC; thus a trapped artillery unit can be 'rescued'. Obviously, in the Warsaw Pact case, the rescuing unit(s) will have to be from the same division, unless the artillery unit in question is a non-divisional one. Remember also that NATO has a nationality rule which inhibits artillery support.

### 2. Warsaw Pact Artillery

a. May fire HE in Indirect Fire *only* when supporting a Prepared Attack (Rule 10.23 (2) in conjunction with 10.41)

b. May not conduct Indirect Fire when stacked with a non-artillery unit (Rule 10.23 (1))

c. Has DOUBLE CF when using Direct Fire, in the attack only (Rule 10.14); this reflects the Soviet doctrine of using field artillery in the close-support role and regularly practising it in that role.

## Helicopters

1. May always support any type of attack (NATO and WP alike) (Rule 10.54).

2. May not deliver chemicals or smoke (Rule 10.54). ("Superfluous advice", you say? I've had to prevent more than one WP player from trying to gas me with his helicopters!)

## Overruns

1. The concept behind the Overrun system is that of the swift assault in strength and in conditions of *poor visibility*, whether natural (fog) or artificial (smoke). The attack seeks to bring pressure upon *part* of the enemy unit and to pass through it before it can react. In addition the lack of visibility is very important, greatly reducing the effectiveness of ATGW and preventing the use of laser sights. Given speed of assault, close range and poor visibility, the attacker cannot make use of an elaborate fire-plan nor can the defender's artillery react to best effect; moreover the use of attack helicopters becomes limited. Hence the reduction of artillery and AH CF to 1. As the objective of the overrun is swift penetration of the enemy position rather than its destruction the actual loss of FP inflicted is always one less than that called for on the CRT; nor does the enemy have the opportunity to withdraw in the face of so swift an onslaught.

2. Not only may a multi-hex Overrun be performed (Rule 8.7) but, against a unit with an Overrun strength of 3 or more it becomes an

absolute necessity if it is to achieve success (I recommend that the Overrun should never be used if the appropriate CRT column would be less than that used for 8-1 attacks in Clear — and that is the *absolute minimum*). There can be confusion about multi-hex Overruns in view of Rule 8.35, which says that "after a multi-hex attack is resolved and any advances after combat have been completed the Operation Point expenditure of all the participating stacks, except for one ... is considered completed." Does this apply to a multi-hex overrun? After all, there is no movement after combat in an overrun attack! What to do?

3. I am advised by Charles Kamps that this ruling does NOT apply to multi-hex overruns, the whole point of the overrun concept being that the attacking units may continue their movement, the state of affairs is as follows:

a. Given that the attack is successful (see Rule 8.74) all attacking units may continue to move up to the limits of their OPs.

b. One attacking unit may enter the defending unit's hex at no cost in OPs providing that it moves on out, i.e. moves through the defending unit. The other unit or units involved in the attack may move round the defending unit (which loses its ZOC for the rest of the attacking units' movement phase; Rule 8.75)

c. *Very Important.* Should a second enemy unit be adjacent to one attacked by overrun its ZOC does not, repeat *not* extend into the hex occupied by the unit which has been overrun. This squelches a rather dubious gambit which I have encountered, namely placing units in pairs and then attempting to disallow overrun on the grounds that to enter and then exit the overrun hex would be to move from one ZOC of the second unit to another. Indeed CK informs me that an attacking unit can enter the enemy hex and, while sitting on top of the first defender, may then overrun the adjacent unit — and serve it right!

4. NB: For those of you who already own HG, CK has told me that Exclusive Rule 15.12 should be deleted. Rule 8.7 is sufficient.

### Getting Away with It

1. Finally a small but very important aspect of the game-system is tucked away in the tail-end of General Rule 8.92, within the section on Advance after Combat. Look it up, mark it and never forget it, because it is all too easy to miss when the rules are studied.

2. It is this; when a defending unit is eliminated by an attack and the FP-loss called for by the result is more than that which the unit actually possesses then, O joy, any adverse combat-result to the attacker is reduced by ONE. As most attack-losses are 1 FP this means that a strong attack can take on a depleted unit with a very good chance of suffering no losses.

3. This favours the WP player as, frequently, opposing NATO units will be depleted as a result of movement to the front or of preliminary air-strike; he will often find that his attacks remove the opposition entirely and escape a loss called for by the CRT. This is indeed eating one's cake and having it.

### Tactical Notes

Now follows a section on tactics for both sides. I am envisaging that the game being played is either the 'Battle for Fulda' scenario of V Corps or 'Covering Force' in HG; in both instances a scenario wherein the Soviet player gains VP for exiting units from the west edge of the playing-area, amassing more the earlier he gets off.

The longer scenarios tend to be very long-drawn-out and I believe that the two which I have named, both tense and balanced, are those more likely to be frequently played. However you may be interested to know that improved Victory Conditions will be appearing in BAOR and will be adaptable to the earlier games: in brief, one can undertake a long scenario with the option of stopping play at the end of any turn and assessing VP as at that stage of the game — WP success is measured by rate of advance, that of NATO by Urban hexes still held and in supply.

## Warsaw Pact Objectives and Methods

### The Objective

This is to exit the western edge of the playing-area in sufficient strength and sufficiently early in the game to gain at least a Tactical victory, preferably an Operational victory. *Note well* that VP thus gained can never be subsequently lost; i.e. the NATO player can do nothing to erode the total (V Corps' Exclusive Rule 20.71, HG ditto 26.61). Because of this a successful WP player can confront his opponent with an irreversible victory by the end of Turn 2 or before the end of Turn 3.

The objective being to exit the map, the destruction of NATO units en route is merely a means to an end. NATO-chasing could lose the game for the WP player.

### Strategy

Therefore the WP player's strategy must be to break through the NATO defence and move West as rapidly as he can. To do this he must 'play Soviet' and so his assault must be Soviet-style; that is to say he must adhere to the following:

1. The assault will bring overwhelming strength to bear at selected points in the defence, preferably the weakest points.
2. Each attacking force will push forward, paying little heed to its flanks and rear.
3. Enemy units in Urban, Rough or Marsh hexes must be by-passed whenever possible. The mounting of prepared, multi-hex attacks to clear these will consume both time and FPs.
4. Where the lead units achieve success, there the second echelon must exploit that success. Failed assaults should not be reinforced: Soviet doctrine does not reinforce failure.

To achieve the necessary overwhelming strength the WP player must begin by avoiding the pitfall of trying to use each separate half-division column as an assault force. While such a column will probably overrun a screen of light units such as recon troops, it will soon be brought to a halt by stronger opposition. This point is made as, more than once, I have, as the NATO player, been able to halt the WP offensive for good, its separate columns worn out and squashed against the NATO front like a handful of mushy peas thrown at a wall: and this not so much because of skilful play on my part as through my opponent's attempts to attack everywhere with something. (Diagram 1).

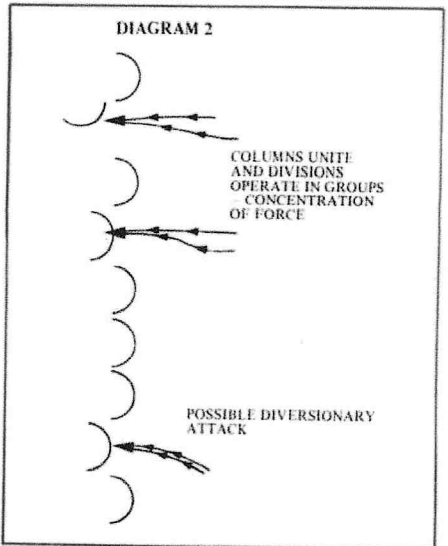
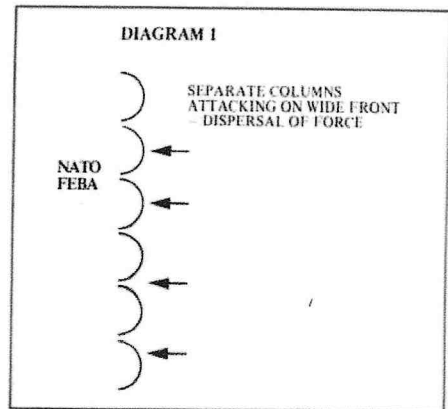
Divisions must concentrate as they reach the end of their initial movement in Phase 1 of their turn of entry and their frontage should be not more than four hexes, usually with pressure on two hexes; two regiments should be in the first echelon and two in the second — this will be discussed later. In addition it is best to have divisions operate in pairs or in groups, on parallel axes close together; this increases the concentration of force on a sector of the NATO front. (Diagram 2).

Divisions entering in Turn 2 represent the second echelon of the Army (= NATO Corps) making the assault. They should normally be used to follow up the first echelon divisions, exploiting their success; however if the first echelon has been brought to a halt by strong opposition the second may well be able to break through on another axis because the NATO player has been forced to shift too many units laterally to check the first-echelon assault. On the other hand the NATO player's concern over this very possibility may prevent him from countering the initial onslaught in sufficient strength to prevent early breakthrough.

It is sometimes worth entering one second-echelon division on a completely separate axis to mount a diversionary attack in a different sector of the NATO line, especially a lightly-held sector. If the scenario allows for three or more divisions entering on Turn 1 such a diversion could well be made on that turn; it will keep NATO stretched and uncertain as to the entry-point of the second echelon.

### Tactics

**Overrun Attacks.** If the WP player is to break through the NATO defence as many as possible of his attacks must be overruns; these allow the attacking unit(s) to move through or round the



defender (providing that the attack is successful — high odds are essential) and move on. Usually a unit with an Overrun defence strength of 1 or 2 can be attacked by a single MR regiment, chemical and smoke support being necessary in the latter instance.

Against a stronger unit a two-regiment multi-hex attack is required; even the tough German 3-7 Panzergrenadier battalions will wilt before that. Consider. 28-3 = 9-1; add one shift for a two-hex attack plus four more for chemicals/smoke and you have a 14-1 assault. Even if the defender is in a town (not Urban) hex and also has limited FPF from one artillery unit the basic odds will still produce an 11-1 attack, a certain winner. Remember that multi-hex attacks must also be Prepared attacks (Rule 8.33.4).

Therefore *never* mount a 'Normal' or set-piece attack against any unit which is not (i) in an Urban hex (against which Overrun is not allowed — Rule 8.7), (ii) across an unbridged river hexside (Rule 8.7 again) or (iii) in a Rough or Marsh hex lacking the entry hexsides to permit a multi-hex Overrun into it (and even so, see the later section on use of independent tank battalions). To batter against a 3-7 battalion at 6-1 basic odds when to declare Overrun confers 9-1 basic is plain daft, especially when the defender against a set-piece attack can benefit from full artillery support and, worse, from those terrible helicopters.

**The Double Whammy:** This not only reflects the Soviet doctrine of the multi-echelon assault but also usually ensures that the overrun unit is destroyed and not simply left behind to fight another day or to block artillery follow-up. One picture is worth a thousand words, see diagram 3.

This represents a simple situation, common in Turn 1 when only US armoured cavalry or other light units are available to meet the Soviet entry. First echelon unit moves adjacent, attacks, passes through; it may then advance as far as possible, or go on to overrun a 'depth' unit (probably artillery) or bring a defending artillery unit within its ZOC if it lacks the support or the FP to overrun

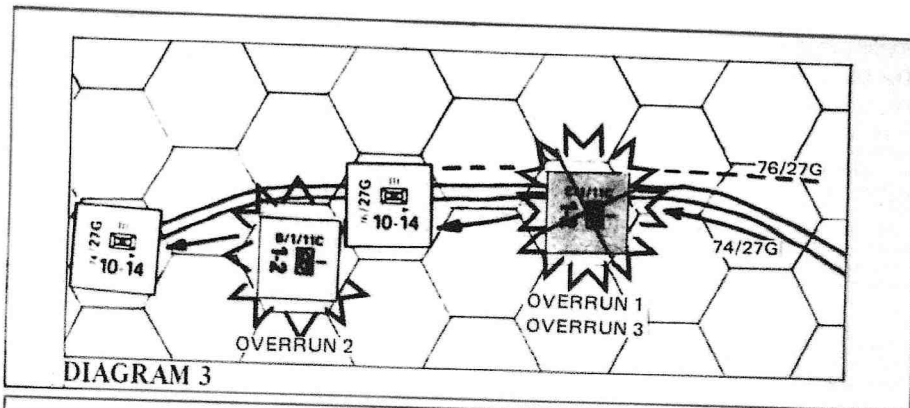


DIAGRAM 3

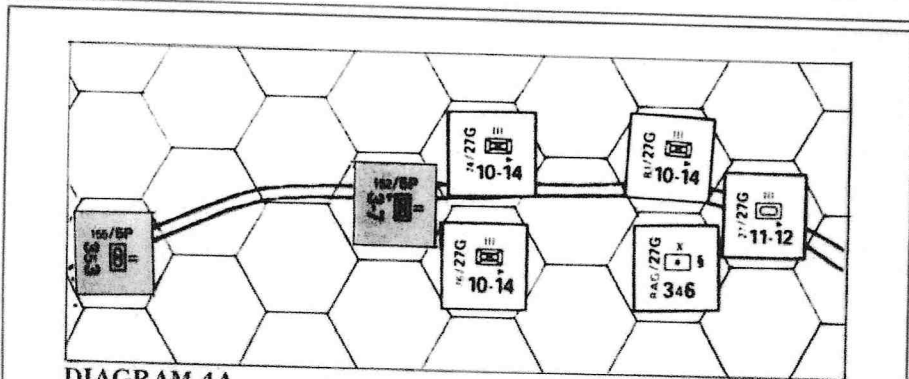


DIAGRAM 4A

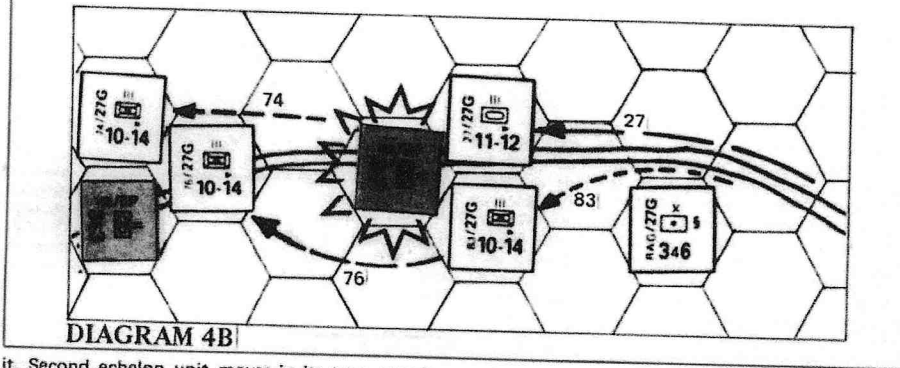


DIAGRAM 4B

it. Second echelon unit moves in its turn, attacks (probably destroying the defender) and moves on; if the first-echelon unit has also overrun an in-depth defender the second-echelon attacker will probably be able to finish off that one too.

Against a strong unit a multi-hex attack will be necessary, making careful and economic deployment of the attacking *division* of very great importance in order to achieve maximum effect for one's expenditure of FP. (Diagram 4A).

Here the first-echelon regiments have moved into place, ready to deliver an overrun in their next movement phase. Slightly behind are the two second-echelon regiments of the division. Now for the succeeding movement phase: (Diagram 4B)

First echelon overruns and passes on, pinning and nullifying the artillery unit in the rear, possibly overrunning as well (but remember that a second multi-hex attack is not now possible — each regiment must attack solo). Second echelon advances and closes with the defender, ready to overrun in the *next* phase.

Remember that the NATO player is unlikely to have very much in depth other than artillery and that, once through, you can start to run for the edge. Whatever the case, the use of the Double Whammy ensures that your divisions, operating in pairs of regiments and in two echelons, are able to move steadily forward, each movement phase culminating in the setting-up of the next multi-hex overrun — maximum return for your roubles.

**Normal Attacks.** The paradox is that the mounting of a so-called normal attack should be an abnormal event. As already stated, they should be made only

against units which cannot be overrun and which must nevertheless be attacked; furthermore they must be made at odds as advantageous as possible.

Adhere to the following precepts:

1. Attack in strength — use tank regiments whenever feasible.
2. Use chemicals to obtain the extra three shifts.
3. Use one or more artillery units in the Direct Fire mode; not only is artillery CF doubled but it can be used to support a second attack even if this has to be hasty.
4. If the defender is in an Urban hex then use an engineer unit in the attack; if this is not possible then attack at the highest odds obtainable on the CRT — head down and *bash!*

The very best way to deal with an intractable unit is to by-pass it, by the way, that's what the Russians do!

**Handling of Artillery:** First, as you should have gathered by now, your artillery should be used to fire chemicals when supporting almost any attack — that 3-shift will almost certainly exceed any advantage you can gain by using HE. Secondly, to use artillery in the Direct Fire role can be costly in FP, especially if it has to move in the same phase as well: but it should be used in that role to help crack a very tough nut, i.e. when overrun cannot be used. Thirdly, there is no point in using artillery to fire HE in either Direct or Indirect support of an overrun *unless* the extra CF or two will be sufficient to shift the basic combat odds up another column.

**Independent Tank Battalions:** These have two separate uses. The first is as a flank guard and/or pin an enemy unit to help keep the main body of

the parent division rolling without danger of interference. The second is to stack with a MR regiment to overrun a unit in a hex which can be overrun from only *one* adjacent hex; this produces a stack with an Overrun CF of 18 — 6-1 basic odds against a 3-7 battalion *before* shifts. The revised terrain rules thus give added importance to these independent battalions, previously rather an accessory to the MR division: divisions operating in terrain characterised by 'limited-overrun' hexes should have a lead regiment reinforced by the tank battalion as soon as possible after entering the map.

**Airborne Units:** Despite their being the cream of the Soviet Army, airborne units and formations are regarded as being expendable if the disruption they cause in the enemy's rear is likely to be worth their sacrifice. Their role is to so disorganise the defence that attacking ground forces have the best possible chance of breaking through swiftly. As **Central Front** individual games are operational-level a good game-use of the airborne units is to simulate Soviet operational missions by inserting regiments, or even single battalions, into NATO rear areas, there to sieze bridges, block reinforcement routes or, at a more tactical level, to harry NATO artillery and prevent it from being able to fire FPF. At this stage it is appropriate to point out that the requirement (V Corps Exclusive Rule 17.21) to place the battalions of each regiment within a certain distance of each other does NOT apply to **Hof Gap** nor will it to **BAOR**. Thus the WP player can choose to place battalions individually if he so desires, a correct reflection of one of the options available to a Soviet Front commander, and this revision should be adopted in V Corps.

My own view is that this placing of single battalions in vital spots can be overdone; a number of units, judiciously placed, can form a screen and isolate a large area of the battlefield, preventing the movement thereto of either reinforcements or of on-board units from a quiet sector and thus giving a Soviet second-echelon army a clear run against limited opposition.

#### WP Tactics — a Summing-Up

The principles of Concentration of Force and Offensive Action should be the mainstay of WP tactics. Handle divisions as compact formations advancing on a comparatively narrow front and keep divisions grouped together on adjacent axes to punch through the NATO front and then keep going. Maximum use of the Overrun attack is a necessity to maintain the speed of advance, and the Double Whammy tactic will ensure the destruction of NATO units which have been overrun by the first-echelon regiments; while the spearhead should crack on without too much thought for its flanks and rear there is no point in leaving still-battleworthy NATO units in its wake if this can be avoided.

Any part of the Soviet assault which goes on to the defensive is unlikely ever to get going again, especially if its units spread out to form a screen. Defence of flanks should be undertaken only by first-echelon divisions which have expended all or most of their FP and are still too far from the map-edge ever to be likely to exit.

#### NATO Objectives and Methods

##### The Objective

Simply this: stop WP units from exiting the map in sufficient quantity to gain a victory. You won't stop them all from exiting but you *can* aim (i) to stop the majority of them and (ii) to keep them on the map until as late a turn as possible, in order to degrade their VP value.

##### Strategy

A great deal will depend on the initial positioning of your on-map units. Your freedom in this will be determined by the scenario rules, but you should try to realise the following:

1. The blocking of all road/autobahn approaches.
2. Defence in depth on the crucial axes — e.g. autobahn.
3. A reserve, however small; even one battalion per brigade will do.
4. A main defensive line fairly far back from the border — let the WP player expend at least 2 FP in order just to close with it. Not so easy in V Corps

but much more so in **Hof Gap**, especially in the case of the two German brigades: set-up of the line in the desired position is not possible but it can be achieved in Turn 1 — and it can be a stinker, as I found out!

### Tactics

**Choice of Ground:** If you can block an axis from the safety of an Urban hex, then do so. If you can block it from a Rough or Marsh hex which cannot be overrun from that axis, do so. When all things are pretty well equal, remember that a Town hex gives you a shift in your favour.

Remember especially that certain Rough and Marsh hexes which are astride a road or autobahn or which have an access side, can be overrun from one hex on the enemy's side. A unit with an Overrun CF of 3 or more placed in such a hex can be a nasty spoke in Ivan's wheel: and even a 2CF unit, given an extra artillery CF, will be nearly as bad for him.

**Withdrawal before Combat:** Yes, 'nice work if you can get it', but well worth a try when the WP player has had to wheel up two regiments — at a cost of one FP each — ready to overrun you right into the deck in his next phase. Simply to withdraw even one hex blows the whole attack and your opponent has to set up the whole thing again, at a cost of one more FP per regiment. Remember that you have a 50% chance of success.

**Harrying the Flanks:** A particularly effectual tactic when applied against artillery, and a useful role for bypassed armoured cavalry troops or HSK battalions. Simply move the unit next to one or more WP artillery units and bingo! they're in your ZOC and thus unable to fire. Without the aid of a manoeuvre unit they are powerless to attack you and the WP player must either bring up a unit to brush you off or move the artillery out of your flexible ZOC — at a cost of 6FP and thus severely inhibiting subsequent movement in that phase.

Now that Soviet doctrine is more realistic, to sit thus on the tail of a tank or MR regiment is a dicey business but if you can do so from an unoverrunnable hex you put your opponent in a nasty fix because even a cavalry troop is a tough nut for a solo attack, even with chemicals in support — 5-1, shifted to 8-1 is quite likely to fail to destroy the harrying unit, especially if it is in good defensive terrain.

This gambit is, I consider, a good reflection of reality and can bring about that unhooking of the components of the WP divisional machine referred to by Sir John Hackett — especially when used to harass artillery emplaced behind the manoeuvre regiments.

**FPF — Artillery and Helicopters.** As you will have gathered, an astute WP player will make maximum use of overrun attacks, thus degrading the contribution of artillery and helicopters to the defence. Even so, that single extra CF added to the defence can at least reduce the defender's FP loss, especially if the unit under attack has an overrun CF of 3 or more. But the use of helicopters to boost an anti-overrun defence is inadvisable for the simple reason that FP losses suffered by the defender must also be borne by any helicopter unit which has taken part in the defence: properly-mounted overruns are virtually certain to inflict such loss and to fly in one's helicopters is to court damaging loss for small return. Save the choppers — especially the 7(30)7 West German AH battalions — to boost defence against 'normal' attacks; here the German AH are so strong as to give the attacker a bloody nose and thus make the WP player very chary of making set-piece assaults.

**Attacks on WP Units:** Mr Punch's advice to those about to be married was — "Don't", an exhortation equally appropriate in this instance. Even with the WP unit surrounded, thus doubling NATO CF, one is likely to obtain no more than 5-1 odds (after shifts) against a tank or MR regiment: such odds may destroy a regiment already at its last gasp, but probably with loss to all the NATO ground units involved. It is better to bring enemy units to a bogged-down halt rather than to seek to destroy them in isolated Pyrrhic encounters: only artillery offers a worthwhile target and the cheaper and more practicable harrying tactic described earlier is my recommended method of depriving the regiments of their essential fire-support.

## NATO Tactics — A Summing-Up

NATO's best bet is not to try to maintain a shield-wall against the assault but rather to absorb it as a sponge absorbs water. The 'sponge' will consist of units posted in depth, making maximum use of overrun-proof terrain and denying the fast routes to enemy probes; in conjunction the harrying tactic will disconcert these assaults by depriving them of the fire support which gives them so much clout. Make the WP force fight so hard to break down the front door, cross the hall and climb the stairs that it drops dead at the boudoir door, leaving Europa shaken but unruined.

### 'Central Front' as Simulation

The keystone of the game-system is its introducing the one-unit-at-a-time, move-and-fight mechanic, already used in *Next War* and *NATO Division Commander* to an operational-level game while dispensing with the multitudinous details and the laborious bookkeeping of these two games. In terms of operational games it is as much a step forward from *Fulda Gap* as was that game from *Wurzburg* and *Bundeswehr*: in particular it brings out the feel of the remorseless assault of powerful mechanised formations, of the determination to break through and of the swift exploitation of any breach created. Liddel Hart described the mechanised assault as an 'expanding torrent' and that is what the NATO player will experience if a thinly-stretched line breaks or a line of advance is overlooked, the more so for the fact that SPI cannot be accused of playing down the strength of the Soviet Army in this series.

But much will depend on the WP player's handling of his powerful compact divisions as the instruments of attack which their originals are, as fighting machines which have forward gears and reasonable steering mechanisms but which are not intended to go into reverse and which should not stop. He must use them ruthlessly but not rashly, getting maximum forward movement out of every expenditure of FPs and coordinating his divisional echelons so that the second can quickly and fully exploit the success of the first.

The system is basically simple and there is little chrome and less 'dirt' — nor do the games suffer from their lack. The artillery rules could, I consider, have been more lucidly expressed and more attention could have been paid to explaining the mechanics of the Overrun (which I trust the 'wrap-up' rules will take care of when these appear): this apart, most of the mechanics are easily retained in the memory and it will be noted that book-keeping consists of no more than chalking up air and EW points as they are expended.

Nonetheless it is no use pretending that the *Central Front* games are short, even the three- or four-move shorter scenarios. Lengthy turns are inherent in the one-at-a-time system and this characteristic is enhanced by the fact that not one single unit can be moved heedlessly by either player. The attacker must attack at exactly the right places and must envisage each unit's next phase of movement as well if he is not to end up in a cul-de-sac. The defender, for his part, must place his units at the vital points and must achieve and maintain a flexible defence with the minimum of movement — to dash about the map, even to shift so much as one hex, is to use up FP that will be badly needed once the hour of battle strikes.

The 'short' scenarios can be longish and the full ones can be very long indeed and can bog down completely — but the revised Victory Conditions of BAOR are a distinct improvement and can be adapted to the two earlier games, making it possible to undertake a longer scenario without committing oneself to ten turns. (Note, though, that the fewer the turns played the more likely the WP player will be to win as his initial progress will be rapid.) I can imagine that many players will find the new line interesting but rather ponderous and that *Fulda Gap* will retain a firm place in their affections, despite the advent of 'AFCENT Operational Game Mk III'. But those who are prepared to devote the necessary time and attention and who are prepared to adapt the innovations of one game to another and to experiment with Turn 1 situations (as they are bidden to do by the designer) will find that they are dealing with an absorbing package which combines ingenuity and depth with a refreshing lack of complexity rare in recent 'modern' games.



With the unlaudable aim of making writers for *Phoenix* just that little bit more self-conscious, I have been having a look at the various titles with which articles in *Phoenix* have been graced over the years. Titles used fall fairly easily into seven categories: the plain unadorned name of the game being written about (e.g. "Cityfight"); the straightforward descriptive title including the name of a game (e.g. "Dreadnought Scenarios"); the straightforward title of a general nature (e.g. "Microcomputers in Wargaming"; the historical title ("Montrose") — this is usually applied to a new scenario, though there has been the odd historical article (remember the fuss over "Tannenburg 1410?"; the quotation title ("Ein' Feste Burg...") — which you might be forgiven for thinking would be the title for a review of "Mighty Fortress"); the humorous, or mock-humorous title ("Gotta Pick a Pocket from Two" must be an example of the influence of the "gotta press"); and the purely fanciful title ("From Wilderness to Western Shore").

Taking the first thirty issues of *Phoenix*, it is interesting to note that the first of these categories is far and away the most dominant, scoring 42% of the total, with the second listed, that is, the longer title including the name of the game under discussion, coming second with 19%. And just to show what a straightforward magazine *Phoenix* is, the straightforward non-game title comes third with 12%.

The pattern has not been constant, though. Consider the quotation title. After one premonitory appearance in issue 4 ("The First Casualty" — a man ahead of his time, Jim Hind) there is virtually nothing until issue thirteen, when three appear in a burst, marking, among other things, the arrival of Major Mack as a regular contributor. Thereafter, there is a regular stream of them (many appearing over Major Mack's articles)

Certainly it seems that it is about this time that *Phoenix* writers started becoming more imaginative, for about this period the first humorous titles start appearing, though the first is perhaps "How not to fight Rommel" in issue 10. There is some overlapping of these categories, as when a quotation with humorous overtones is used ("Exit Pursued by a Bear"). But despite the increase in more imaginative titles, there is a counter-trend towards titles containing only the name of a game, which have a greater relative edge over category two in the last ten issues or so than in early issues.

Finally, some records. The longest title award goes to Charles Vasey for "What Country, Friends, is This? This is Illyria, Lady" "And what should I do in Illyria?" ". The shortest title comes from Michael Stoner with "GEV", one character ahead of S.J.Hackett's "1942" and his own "Ogre". The award for the most mysterious title is won by Andrew McGee with "In my End is my Beginning" which apparently has something to do with "Kriegsmarine" and WWII naval operations in the European area.

To your typewriters, gentlemen, and see what you can produce by issue 60.

(... and a Merry Christmas !)