



NARVIK

WESERÜBUNG, "exercise on the Weser river"

9 APRIL-6 JUNE 1940

by Friedrich G. Helfferich

NARVIK

Game Designers' Workshop

Designed by Frank A. Chadwick and

Paul Richard Banner

Graphics & Physical Systems:

Paul Richard Banner

WESERÜBUNG: THE CAMPAIGN

WESERÜBUNG, 'exercise on the Weser river' was the innocuous sounding code name of one of the most amazing feats in military history — the German invasion of Denmark and Norway on April 9, 1940. The target of this daring venture was famous for having some of the world's roughest shoreline and foulest weather, and lay over an ocean fully controlled by an enemy fleet which could muster a superiority of better than 8:1.

WESERÜBUNG was not at all like what we have come to imagine an amphibious invasion to be: there were no training exercises, no preparatory shore bombardments, no landing craft, no marines — just a few battalions of troops crammed

onto cruisers, destroyers, minelayers, merchantmen, and whatever other shipping was available, ignorant of their mission until at sea, and desperately seasick. True, there were also the vaunted **Luftwaffe** paratroops — three whole companies of them; so few that the main burden of airborne assault fell to troops carried in converted airliners destined to land on unconquered runways. General von Falkenhorst, Commander-in-Chief of the operation, was given his assignment a mere seven weeks before 'D-Day', and his initial source of information on the country he was to conquer was a travel guidebook. Considering the **Wehrmacht's** reputation for thorough, meticulous planning, WESERÜBUNG was an almost unbelievable gamble.

There were two principle reasons why the Germans attempted this high-risk venture. First, their Navy desired Norway as a base of operations to outflank the British blockade of the North Sea. More important, however, was the significance of Norway to Germany's armament industry. Germany received almost all her iron ore from Sweden. When Sweden's Baltic ports were closed by ice, the ore was shipped to Germany from Narvik, on Norway's Atlantic coast, along a route within Norway's territorial waters. Although Norway had strenuously sought to

maintain strict neutrality and had opposed all British moves against German shipping in her waters, she would obviously have been powerless against a determined British incursion. Indeed, the British had planned such an incursion — originally under the transparent pretext of aiding the Finns, soon to be in the Axis camp, against the Russians, a future ally. The British Navy had mined territorial waters on April 8, and, although their departure was delayed, British troops had embarked for Norway two days before. The Germans had no time to lose.

With a mixture of surprise, ruthlessness, and precision (to paraphrase Churchill) the German invasion succeeded everywhere. The objectives — Oslo, Kristiansand, Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim, and Narvik — were seized within 48 hours. The German Navy, expected to lose half her ships, suffered only three cruisers sunk — the BLÜCHER, KONIGSBERG, and KARLSRUHE. There was a snag at Oslo when the landing force led by BLÜCHER failed to force the narrows, but the city was nevertheless secured by a daring bluff: the token force of German airborne troops which had landed at Fornebu airfield staged a parade march through the city, giving the illusion that all was over and resistance futile.

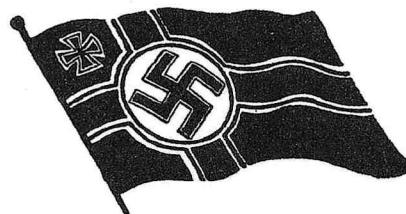
Spurning German overtures, the Norwegians rallied valiantly around king and flag, but were no match for the *Wehrmacht*. The main German thrust from Oslo quickly pushed toward Trondheim, key to central Norway, to relieve the small, beleaguered force landed there. British and French troops had landed at Namsos and Andalsnes, on April 14 and 17, and sought to take Trondheim from both flanks before it was relieved, but gave up when a German detachment from Trondheim landed at Steinkjer in the French rear. After evacuating Andalsnes and Namsos early in May, the British tried repeatedly to block the German advance up the coast — first at Mosjøen, then at Mo, then at Bodö. Each time they were beaten to their objectives by German mountain troops who somehow managed to cross the 'impassable' terrain.

The most dramatic story unfolded at Narvik, the farthest target, 1200 miles from Germany. Ten destroyers carried a contingent of German mountain troops unmolested into the Ofot Fjord. Off Narvik, the ancient Norwegian vessel EIDSVOLD challenged the destroyers and was sunk with much loss of life. In the harbor, her sistership NORGE shared her fate. But German luck had run out. The whaling factory ship JAN WELLEM, moved previously from Murmansk to Narvik in collusion with the Russians, had been wrecked in the fight, and lost with her was the fuel for the destroyers' return voyage. The next day a British flotilla penetrated into the harbor and sank two German destroyers at the loss of two of their own. On their retreat through the fjord the British boats intercepted and sank the freighter carrying the mountain troops' heavy weapons. On April 13, the British returned in force, backed by the mighty battleship WARSPITE, and finished off the German squadron.

Churchill and his naval commander, Lord Cork, pressed for an immediate, direct assault on Narvik, but General Machesy of the expeditionary force judged this too risky in view of 'strong enemy machine-gun posts'. Instead, on April 14, he landed British troops at Harstad, some 60 miles of extremely rugged and trackless terrain from Narvik. When a storm brought five feet of snow, Machesy resolved to wait for the spring thaw. Lord Cork was eventually given overall command and, on May 13, landed troops by night at Bjerkvik at the tip of Herjangs Fjord. On May 27, over 20,000 British, French, and Polish troops attacked Narvik across Rombaks Fjord. General Dietl's defending force of 2000 Gebirgsjäger and an about equal number of destroyer crews, desperately short of ammunition and supplies, were pushed out of Narvik the following day. The eventual Allied capture of Narvik, however, was a hollow victory. The Norwegian campaign had, by then, been overshadowed by a far graver event — the impending collapse of France. Even before Narvik fell, the Allied command had decided to withdraw their forces from Norway. The last troops were evacuated on June 8, leaving Narvik to Dietl's exhausted but elated men.

June 8 proved a black day for the British Navy as well. Although the evacuation convoys escaped unscathed, a tanker and an empty troopship were caught and sunk by the German cruiser ADMIRAL HIPPER. That afternoon, the battlecruisers SCHARNHORST and GNEISENAU pounced upon more valuable prey and sank the aircraft carrier GLORIOUS and her two destroyer escorts.

Thus ended a campaign the likes of which will hardly be seen again. Radar, satellites, and other means of electronic surveillance will no longer permit a small fleet to slip past a mighty opponent and strike at a distant target. To mix our metaphors, what was a needle in the haystack in 1940 would stick out today like a sore thumb. WESERÜBUNG will remain unique in military history, and were it not for the brutal and ruthless power struggle behind it and for all the tragic suffering and loss of life in its course, we could cherish its story as one of the most fascinating of military operations.



NARVIK: THE GAME

Ever attracted to intriguing episodes from the backwaters of history, GAME DESIGNERS WORKSHOP has been the first and only wargame publisher of note to bring out a simulation of the campaign in Norway. Their game NARVIK is part of their grand EUROPA Series covering that continent in World War II and has matching components, but a style of its very own.

With three mapsheets and about 600 counters, NARVIK is a game of intermediate size, an unusual and truly fascinating design that rather faithfully reflects many of the characteristic traits of that memorable campaign. Many — but not all. NARVIK is a land-and-air game, with but a few summary abstractions of the war at sea. It is not, as one might have expected, a simulation of the task which the German Navy faced; the challenge of how to seize virtually every significant port on Norway's thousand-mile coast under the very eyes of the British Fleet — almost as though this facet had been left to a companion game. On the other hand, NARVIK succeeds well in capturing the 'feel' of the ensuing campaign on land and in the air and in guiding play subtly along lines that resemble historical events. This is done unobtrusively, through the geography of the mapboard, and ingenious combat system, and the incentives of the victory conditions, in a way that accords both players ample room for experimenting with unorthodox strategies of their own design.

The game does very well in reflecting Norwegian unpreparedness, the chaotic, unpredictable, and piece-meal mobilization of Norwegian units and the occasional, if almost haphazard acts of heroism that these units performed. It simulates equally well the difficulties which the Allies faced in establishing and maintaining bases under the Luftwaffe's bombs and the impotence of the Allied troops once confronted by the full might of the Wehrmacht. It introduces staggering difficulties in organization and forward planning for the German player, difficulties of the right degree, although of a somewhat different kind from what confronted the Germans in the actual campaign. It recreates all the frustrations of war against an elusive opponent on his home ground and in difficult terrain. At the same time, it manages to simulate the hardships and at times desperate situations of isolated, outnumbered German contingents far in the north. It recreates, if in an abstract manner and only for the German side, the hazards of troop transport across a hostile sea. Lastly, it gives a true picture of the fight in the skies, of the harassment and occasional serious

damage inflicted by the RAF and of the vital role of the **Luftwaffe** in disrupting the enemy, destroying his bases, attacking his fleet, and sustaining remote and often hard-pressed **Wehrmacht** task forces.

The design is masterful in that play will automatically follow history in focusing on three key objectives: Oslo, Trondheim, and Narvik. Most games, at least between competent and methodical players averse to taking foolish risks, will see the Germans quickly secure the Oslo basin, desperately hold onto Trondheim until relieved, and be pushed out of Narvik and forced to race up the coast to recapture it. In essence, of course, this is what happened in reality. But the design is flexible enough to provide both players with room for other strategies, one of the criteria that distinguishes a true, exciting game from a mere reenactment of history.

It is only in the last phase of the game — more often than not a final race for Narvik — that the simulation becomes unrealistic and predictable. By then, both sides have built up to maximum strength and can cram inordinate amounts of combat factors into any single hex, and the numerically superior Germans will plow ahead with brute force at the entirely predictable rate of one hex per turn. Moreover, this final, enormous concentration of strength will usually occur in an area which, in reality, was almost inaccessible and saw but a few mountain troops contend with adverse terrain and hostile nature as much as with the enemy. The 'railway' leading north from Namsos is apt to become crowded like a freeway at rush hour, a rail line that did not exist, and in terrain that defied all but a few hardy Austrian **Gebirgsjäger**.

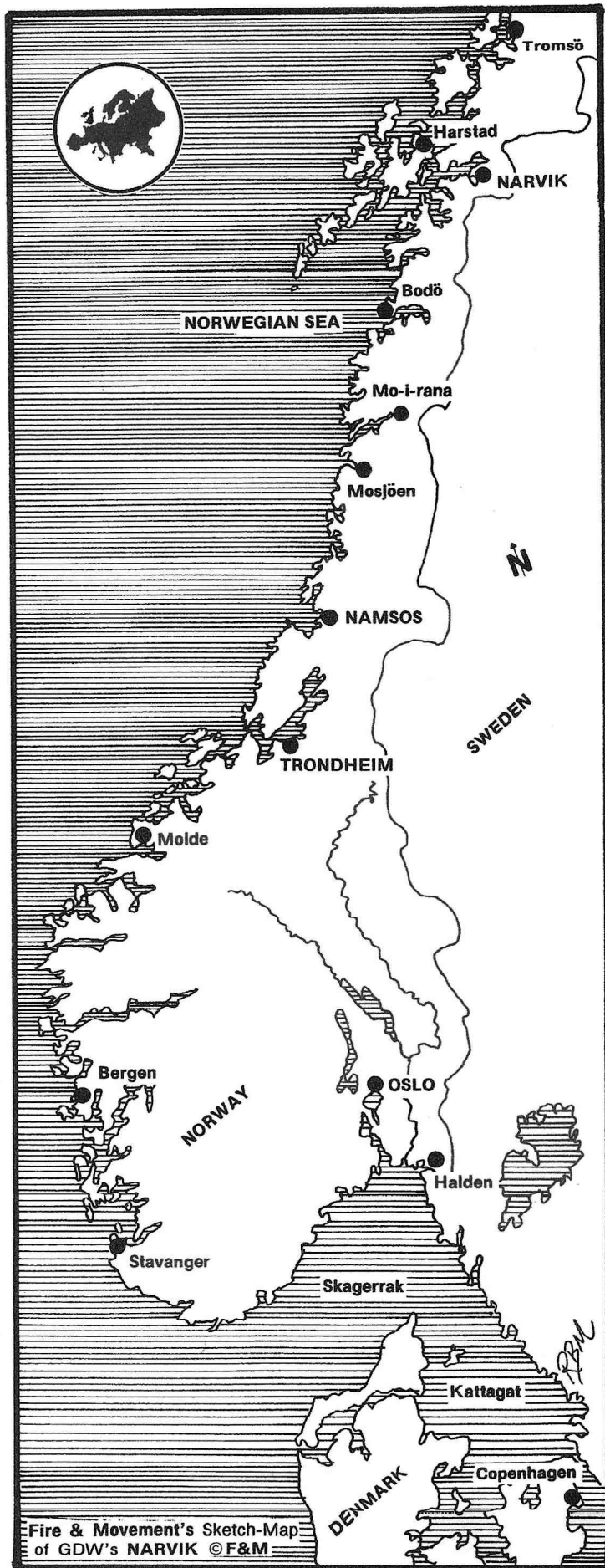
Some of this criticism also applies to the fighting bound to develop earlier in the game at Narvik, a position with almost no access except from Sweden. Thus, ironically, the weakest point of the game as a historical simulation is the fight from which it takes its name. But we should not judge the designers with undue harshness on this count. The struggle for Narvik was an event separate from the rest of the campaign and on a scale that makes it very difficult to simulate, given the hex size dictated by the **EUROPA** Series. Perhaps a truly satisfactory solution could not have been found without presenting that fight in a separate simulation on the tactical level. As it stands, the abstraction and lack of realism at Narvik itself, like the abstraction of the war at sea, is a small price to pay for cohesion and unity of design in a game simulating so varied and multi-faceted a campaign.

NARVIK is one of the most 'asymmetrical' wargames ever produced, a feature that makes it also one of the most interesting. The initiative and overwhelming superiority in numbers is in German hands, but to bring this superiority effectively to bear is quite another matter. In **NARVIK**, the classical attacker/defender disparity we have come to expect since **MIDWAY**, **STALINGRAD**, and **BULGE** goes hand in hand with an even greater disparity in demands on players' organizational and planning skills — so much so that the game lends itself excellently to solitaire play. Between unequally matched opponents, the more experienced player should always take the German side. As may be inferred, **NARVIK** is not ideally balanced. Unless he is lucky, the German player will be hard pressed to prevent an Allied 'Marginal Victory'. The balance can be adjusted, however, by slight changes in victory conditions.

NARVIK is a fairly complex game, with rules that will leave even experienced players more on their own than they might like. It is therefore not a game for the novice or the victory-minded trophy hunter, and will appeal primarily to those who play for enjoyment of a historical simulation.

I. Components

Like earlier GDW games, **NARVIK** comes in a soft-cover folder containing maps, counter sheets, loose-leaf rules, and charts. The package includes the single scenario **NARVIK** games and



various additional components for its eventual incorporation into the grand EUROPA simulation of that entire continent in World War II.

The three maps of different sizes form an odd-shaped playing surface — an almost inevitable consequence of the theater's geography. They are well executed, in black and blue on heavy buff stock, and faithfully depict Norway's ragged shoreline. As a EUROPA building block they include portions of Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and the USSR. Only about half the map area comes into play. But because of Norway's long and narrow shape, an omission of these added territories would have saved little space, and it is aesthetically much more pleasing to see them properly mapped than left blank. The maps are, in general, quite clear, except in a few instances where there may be doubt as to whether a hex contains land, or if there is a direct land connection between hexes. The maps show rough terrain, forests, mountains, glaciers, rivers, lakes, fjords, major and minor cities, ports, railways, roads, swamps — even some 'clear' terrain. All features except the minor cities affect play. The distinction between forests, mountains, and rough terrain calls for a close look, but that is easily remedied with a little green and brown hand-coloring.

Players who have come to expect the ultimate in counters from GDW will not be disappointed. NARVIK's come in twelve different color combinations, representing German, Norwegian, British, French, Polish, and Swedish army, navy, and air force units and play-aid markers. They are clear, easily identified, and a visual delight. The three-colored, miniature *Reichskriegsflagge* indicating German control, if not fulfilling a vital function, is perhaps the prettiest and most striking counter ever produced. If I have one regret, it is only that GDW does not use silhouettes on aircraft counters.

NARVIK comes with 10 pages of rules, an errata sheet, fifteen charts, and Designers' Notes. The rules are written and organized in a manner typical of GDW games. They are in general clear, but not as comprehensive as one might wish, and even the errata leave important questions open. In GDW tradition, the mapsheets are kept free of tables and playing aids. These are provided as separate charts and greatly contribute to the smoothness of play.

All in all, NARVIK's components are of highest quality, except the maps are not as outstanding as those of GDW's more recent games.

II. Game System

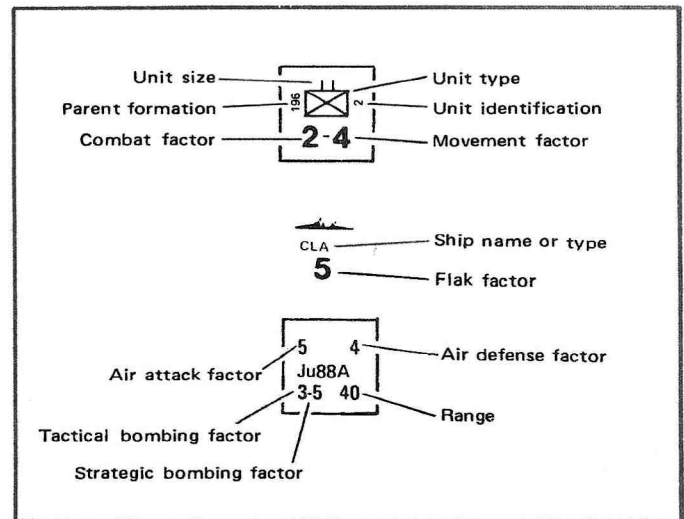
NARVIK covers the period from April 9 to June 6, 1940, in fifteen four-day turns, on the regiment/battalion level, and on a scale of 16 miles per hex. A game turn consists of two player phases, each with ground and sea movement, air actions, ground combat, and exploitation. Units are classified as German, Norwegian, and 'Allied' (that is, British, French, and Polish). Norwegians and Allies are handled by the same players, of course, but are subject to slightly different rules. On the German side, counters are provided for regiments, some of which may be broken down into battalions. Most of the Norwegian and Allied counters represent battalions, and there is a scattering of independent units of smaller sizes.

A key element of the design is unit integrity. The stacking rules permit two ground combat units of any type, plus one artillery battalion and smaller independent units to be placed in a single hex. The combining of battalions into regiments allows the German player to achieve a greater concentration of force. Moreover, German and Allied division and brigade headquarters may 'absorb' any and all subordinate formations while still counting as a single unit for stacking purposes. For instance, by concentrating his two strongest divisions and all permitted extra units, the German player can crowd an equivalent of over 30 battalions into one hex! Neither Norwegians nor Allies can match such concentrations.

Specialization of ground units is essentially confined to greater mobility and combat effectiveness of mountain units in Mountains, the privilege which artillery enjoys in stacking, and

exploitation movement for motorized units. That there is not greater distinction between infantry and artillery is surprising and tends to produce an unrealistic result: the German player will find it advantageous to fight many of his early battles in southern Norway with lone artillery!

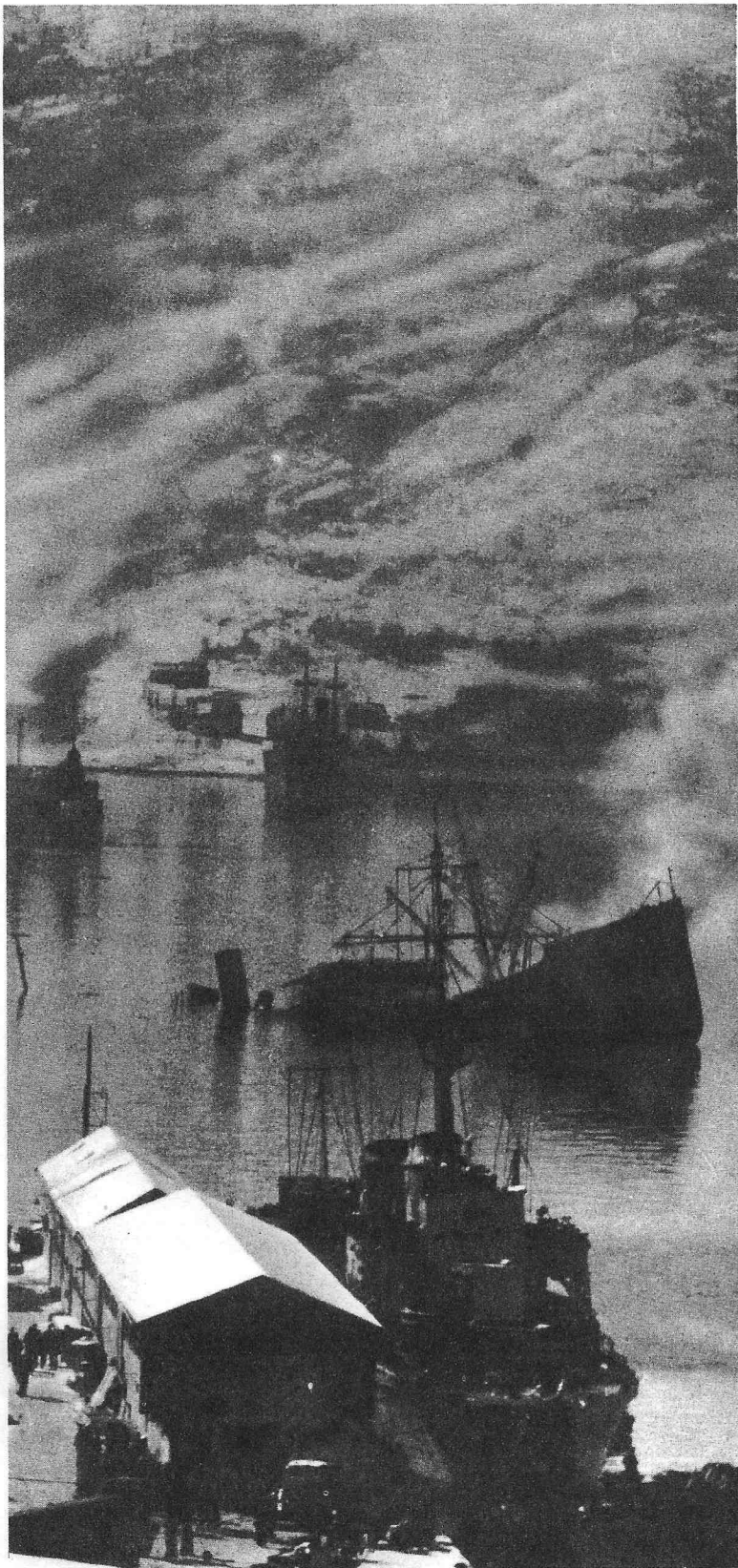
Ground movement rules are standard. Movement allowances range from 3-8 MP. Railways provide for accelerated movement, roads negate effects or adverse terrain. Movement penalties are more stringent north of the 'Weather Line' which bisects Norway north of Namsos. Non-motorized units may be motorized with trucks. Motorized units, however, rarely get to enjoy their privilege of exploitation movement, because they remain confined to the few valleys, coastal plains, and roads, usually blocked by the enemy. In NARVIK, quite appropriately, the mountain unit is king, not the Panzer.



With respect to transfer by sea, the Germans, Allies, and Norwegians are accorded different capabilities. German shipping capacity is limited, and units shipped to northern ports take up double shipping space. Also, for sea transfer, German units must be 'staged' (loaded) one turn ahead of time. Moreover, German transports are at the mercy of the die roll in that they may be sunk in transit, a probability that increases with distance to their destination. On the other hand, only Germans may conduct opposed landings (except for minor Allied operations with landing craft late in the game). In contrast, the Allies may transfer an unlimited number of units at a moment's notice and without risk between any ports, except only those of the Oslofjord — perhaps an unduly supercilious assessment of German capabilities at sea. The Norwegians may transfer only one unit per turn, between neighboring ports.

NARVIK's supply rules are simple only for the Norwegians, who never need any. The Allies trace their supply lines to immobile depots in ports, which may be destroyed by air attack but are not exhausted by consumption. German supply depots can be transported or even air-lifted and are immune to air attack, but are consumed when providing supply or attacks. Unsupplied units suffer various combat and movement penalties and may not attack. The system, while almost gratuitously complex, serves its purpose.

NARVIK's combat system is unusual for a game of this scale. Combat takes place between units in the same hex. Attacking units may 'interdict' hex sides through which they entered (but never more than four), to prevent enemy units from leaving the combat hex in that direction. The Combat Results Table is based on strength ratios, with 6:1 as the highest odds. Adverse terrain produces a -1 or -2 die roll modification. The sensitivity to odds is not great, and there is an abundance of no-loss results, including 'disruption' which prevents attack, cuts defense strength in half, and lasts for one turn. Moreover,



Smoke and flame form the background in this scene of the wreck-filled Narvik harbor. In two sea battles (April 10 and 13) British naval forces sank the destroyers that ferried German troops.

Norwegian units may attempt to evade combat by prior retreat. The consequences are interesting. The Germans must round up the Norwegians to eliminate them, as mere attacks are apt to prove unproductive regardless of numerical superiority. The Allies do not have much clout. German losses tend to be low, largely confined to troops lost in sea transfer, in defense of northern ports, and to an occasional 'half exchange'. In a very ingenious way, the combat system succeeds in reflecting key facets of the campaign.

NARVIK's air system is a slightly embellished version of that in **DRANG NACH OSTEN**. Basic aircraft types are fighters, bombers, and transports. Aircraft are based on airfields or aircraft carriers, and have an action radius of 9 to 40 hexes. Bombers may attack ground units, railways, airfields, aircraft on the ground, Allied depots, and naval vessels; damage in the first three categories is only temporary. Fighters may escort or intercept. The Germans alone have transports, the only aircraft which may carry troops and supplies. Special rules cover German paratroop drops, seizure of Norwegian airfields from the air, float planes, fighter bombers, night attacks, flights at extended range, etc. Air-to-air combat is conducted round-robin style between waves of up to five squadrons (counters). Bombers and transports are subject to anti-aircraft fire from ships and AA units. Overall, the air system works well. It constitutes a quite large part of the game, but such emphasis is not entirely out of proportion in this particular case.

The war at sea is short-changed in **NARVIK**, confined to elements so directly interacting with land and air combat that they could hardly have been left out. The only ship counters are British 'Interdiction Squadrons', aircraft carriers, anti-aircraft cruisers, and, late in the game, a landing craft for coastal amphibious operations. The omission of so important a facet of the campaign is regrettable.

NARVIK contains a host of imaginative and well-designed auxiliary rules, covering such diverse subjects as German first assault waves, Norwegian artillery stores, German naval crews in land combat, etc., but surprisingly none for weather. While their effect on the game is mostly minor, these rules help to add color, and they are well handled in that they have been kept appropriately simple. The most important of these rules relates to the random generation of Norwegian units at scattered 'Mobilization Centers'. The unpredictability of such Norwegian reinforcements and the consequent incentive for the Germans to seize the Mobilization Centers as quickly as possible contribute to the realism and right 'feel' of the game.

NARVIK's victory conditions reflect the territorial objectives of the campaign and the importance for both Germans and Allies to avoid disproportionate losses in this secondary theater of war. Points are accorded for possession of ports and inflicted casualties. (Norwegian losses do not count: callously but realistically, the Norwegians are considered expendable.) Victory may be marginal or decisive, but there is no draw. In view of the usually light losses on both sides, the territorial objectives are what matter — and conquest on time is quite difficult for the Germans to achieve.

Beyond the question of balance, the victory conditions are open to criticism for being neither really true to history nor quite appropriate to the game. All that really matters for the Germans is to be at the point-yielding ports by end of the game; there is no premium for securing them earlier or making them safer, no penalty for being way off the historical pace. This makes the end game unresilient. From the historical point of view, the emphasis on Narvik and the other ports is not unjustified, but it mattered little whether Narvik was recaptured a few days earlier or later. Narvik was without value for the Allies, if they could deny the port to the Germans; and the Germans did not need Narvik until winter when the Baltic would freeze over. Moreover, the Germans could not have recaptured Narvik before summer, had the Allies not evacuated it voluntarily for reasons beyond the scope of the game. With respect to Narvik, at least, victory points geared to the distance the Germans are from the port at game's end, and, perhaps, a premium for its never falling into Allied hands, would seem more appropriate. Such a change is easily implemented.

HISTORICAL ACCURACY

If we think back to the olden times of **BULGE** and **STALINGRAD**, times in which historical accuracy of units and terrain seemed almost unfair to expect of a game, we can only marvel at how much the hobby has matured. To be sure, there are gems with painstakingly crafted detail among older games, and some of the modern assembly-line products reflect hurried or shoddy research. But historical accuracy, yesterday admired, is today demanded by most as one of the essential elements of a 'good' game. You Have Come a Long Way, Baby!

GAME DESIGNERS WORKSHOP has acquired a reputation for excellence of research. Their modeling of historical subjects shows every sign of tender, loving care, a care that addresses itself even to details that have no relevance in play, but will be appreciated by the history buff, a species that has become increasingly prominent among gamers as the hobby has grown from child's play to serious science.

NARVIK bears the GDW mark of attention to detail. The history buff will be delighted to find correct unit designations on the counters, even those of non-divisional troops. There are only a few units whose designations and historical justification I have not been able to confirm (**Luftwaffe** companies, flak battalions, independent Allied companies and platoons). More likely than not, this only serves to show that GDW's sources are more complete than mine. Very few games have so carefully compiled an Order of Battle.

While GDW's sources on Orders of Battle appear to be the ultimate in accuracy, their sources on the actual campaign seem less complete. The game confines itself to simulating the campaign in Norway, but the German Order of Battle is that of the entire **WESERÜBUNG** operation. Two infantry divisions (the 170th and 198th), the motorized brigade, the **Panzer** battalion, one of the non-divisional artillery regiments (729), and the three machine-gun battalions were used for the occupation of Denmark. I can find no indication that any of these were later shipped to Norway. The effect on the game, however, is less than one might think. For lack of shipping capacity, the Denmark units (or an equivalent amount of other troops) do not make their appearance in Norway until late in the game, when the German player usually has more strength than he really needs.

The stickler for accuracy can find a few other, quite minor points of contention in the German Order of Battle. It seems the 214th Division was without a heavy artillery battalion (4-4 unit). Also, that division was in reserve as a 'Third Wave' of the invasion and should not be available at the start. Similarly, the 2nd Mountain Division did not appear until May 5 (Turn 7 instead of Turn 4).

Players may wonder why the game makes the German 69th and 214th stronger than the other infantry divisions. These two, of the Second and Third Wave of German mobilization, were better trained and led by more experienced officers than the others, all of the Seventh Wave. The omission of the heavy artillery battalion in the latter divisions is correct. Actually, their light artillery battalions were also weaker, having only two instead of three batteries. A little more puzzling is the omission of the third battalion in two infantry regiments (359 and 401), for which I can find no justification. No matter, these differences in strength of battalions, and in numbers of battalions in regiments, lend themselves to nuances in tactics in the game and should be welcomed rather than pedantically criticized. Much the same can be said with respect to the differing strengths of the Allied battalions.

The Norwegian units are a different matter, of necessity being largely fictitious. It is one of the key elements of the game that most of the Norwegian units are generated by random 'mobilization'. The only point open to question is the exact placement of the Mobilization Centers. I do not know whether there is a historical basis, but the locations are well chosen for play in that they provide additional objectives for the German player and subtly help to guide his efforts in historically appropriate directions. Regarding the initial Norwegian set-up,

GDW's sources are obviously better than mine, and I have no basis for criticism. It merely seems to me that the Norwegians might be too strong at Bardufoss, near Narvik. With the forces accorded to them in the game, the Norwegians should have been able to crush the few destroyer-loads of German troops in Narvik, a force which, in reality, was not seriously pressed until the Allies landed in the immediate vicinity.

The aircraft units in **NARVIK** are those of GDW's well-researched **EUROPA** System, except for representing smaller formations, and need no further comment.

The abstract treatment of the war at sea leaves little to be said about naval units. The Allied capabilities of blockading selected ports, of giving some protection to bases with naval anti-aircraft fire, and of conducting coastal amphibious landings on a modest scale are well modeled. Only two minor points regarding landing craft may be raised. Weather during the campaign was so foul (most of the time) that landing craft were essentially confined to the shelter of fjords, and the game should bar them from the open coast or make their use in unprotected waters dependent on a weather die roll. Also, one wonders why the Germans are denied landing craft, although in reality they defeated the eastern pincer of the Allied operation against Trondheim by an amphibious landing in the enemy's rear.

The historical accuracy of mapboards has not always been GDW's strength. One gains the impression that there is a lack of interest and that the graphic's department works from modern instead of contemporary maps. **NARVIK** is no exception. Its maps show the railway extending north to the Salt Fjord, just south of Bodö, and provide roads from there to Bodö, Narvik, Harstad, and along the north coast to Hammerfest, Kirkenes, and Petsamo. In April 1940, the situation was quite different. The railway and highway ended at Grong, just east of Namsos. The 'road' from Grong to Bodö was judged impassable at that time of year even by the crack French **Chasseurs Alpins** — although it was then mastered by a few German **Gebirgsjäger**, a feat that has been compared to a Himalaya expedition. There was neither road nor trail through the forbidding terrain from Bodö and Harstad to Narvik. Indeed, the fact that the Germans in Narvik were quite safe from the tremendously superior Allied forces at Harstad except for amphibious landings, was one of the key elements of the fighting in the north. And the 'Eismeerstrasse', 812 kilometers from Narvik to Kirkenes, was built by the Germans after the campaign was over. It will be obvious to anyone who has played **NARVIK** that the game would be completely altered if Narvik and its immediate vicinity were embedded into impassable terrain, except for access from Sweden, and if the coastal 'freeway' to the Salt Fjord were eliminated. Experimenting with such a change is apt to unbalance the game, but will offer intriguing insight into Sweden's position in the fight for Narvik, and make it easier to imagine the political pressures to which that neutral country was subjected in consequence.

As in **NARVIK**'s famous predecessor **DRANG NACH OSTEN**, the designers have been stingy in adorning the maps with towns. Two moderately important ports, Ålesund and Kristiansund (not to be confused with Kristiansand) have been omitted, and so have a number of fair-sized cities, while still others have remained nameless. It seems a pity that a design which goes to such length in recreating participating units in minute historical detail should not devote commensurate attention to the theater's geography.

Terrain effects appropriately channel the German advance, but are in general a little underplayed. They enter into combat merely through a die roll modification, and while there are lots of mountains, they can be traversed by mountain units at clear-terrain rate. What is lacking is 'grain' in the mountain areas. In consequence, there is little opportunity to form strongholds, and Norway's formidable terrain appears too bland: **NARVIK** is not comparable to **ANZIO**, where a single terrain feature may dominate play for turns in succession. This criticism applies especially to the terrain around Narvik, where

the mapboard does not do justice to Norway's magnificent and forbidding landscape.

However, despite such minor shortcomings, **NARVIK** stands up better than most other wargames under so critical an analysis.

NARVIK: OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS

I. German Strategy

German strategy is largely dictated by the victory conditions: Narvik and all ports in southern and central Norway must be seized by the end of the game with a minimum of losses. Overwhelming superiority on the ground and in the air and good air bases within range make the conquest of the southern and central ports an easy proposition, except possibly for Namsos. But Narvik poses a problem. Not much can be brought that far north in the first turn, and attempts to reinforce the position later in the game entail a high risk of loss at sea, are wasteful of shipping capacity, and may be frustrated by British Interdiction Squadrons. More often than not, Narvik will be lost, but it is of vital importance to delay its fall as long as possible, to gain time for a relief force to fight their way through from the south.

A key element in German planning thus is the selection of initial landing sites and the allocation of forces to them. In fact, the game can be lost, if not won, by the Germans in the first turn. Obviously, the *Gebirgsjäger* (who don't count double against shipping capacity) should be sent north. Here, the German player has two options. He can cram as much strength as possible into Narvik and hope to hold out for a while in the port or the adjacent mountains, or he can use much of the assault and follow-up waves to seize every port from Trondheim to Tromsø, denying them to the Allies. The weakness of the first strategy is that at least some northern ports — Tromsø, Harstad, Bodö, Mo — are left uncovered, enabling the Allies to marshal overwhelming strength against Narvik and, no less important, getting a few units ashore between Narvik and Trondheim to delay German relief efforts. In the alternative strategy, the Germans must spread themselves thin and will be vulnerable to Norwegian counterattack, even at Narvik, but they may succeed in preserving that position long enough to ensure eventual victory.

Whatever he does in the north, the German player cannot afford to neglect Trondheim and the south. Trondheim is the gateway to northern Norway, and of strategic importance second only to Narvik. Immediately beyond Trondheim, Norway narrows into a long, narrow, easily defended corridor ideal for delaying actions. If the Allies get ashore at Trondheim, they can seal the corridor entrance and then, at their leisure, subdue or starve out any German contingents in Namsos, Mo, and possibly Bodö. If Narvik then falls, the Germans have no chance whatever to recapture it. A German landing at Trondheim is not without risk because the port, in contrast to all other principal first-turn objectives, holds a Norwegian garrison. The landing force must be strong enough to attack at reasonably high odds, should luck of the die allow the garrison to stand and fight; also, too weak a force would be vulnerable to counterattack. Fortunately, Trondheim is just within range of Ju 88's in Germany, so that the landing can have air support. Varnes airfield, adjacent to Trondheim, is also a key objective. Trondheim can be reinforced through the airfield by air, and it can serve as a base for bombing attacks against ports in the Narvik area. The attempt to capture this field from the air is worth the risk of a He 111 squadron.

The third focal point of German strategy should be the Oslo Basin, with its abundance of ports and mobilization centers. The ports of the Oslo area are the only ones that provide a better than two-thirds chance of avoiding the dreaded 'sunk in transit' (except for the first assault wave), and which are safe from Allied landings even if left ungarrisoned. Two of the mobilization centers there hold artillery stores, which the

Germans should seize and deny to the Norwegians. A still more important objective is Fornebu airfield (Oslo West), by far the best debarkation point for air lifts because it is the only field both within ordinary range of Ju 52 transports from Germany and near the Oslo-Trondheim axis which will have first call on German reinforcements. Another incentive for a strong assault in the Oslo area is that the Norwegians here are weak at the start, but can be quickly reinforced; the opportunity of catching them off balance should not be lost by default. A landing at Oslo itself is inadvisable, however, because the King's Guards in the city are out of reach of the assault wave, and either or



both should be taken from the air and immediately reinforced by air lift.

The allocation of sufficient forces to the north, Trondheim, and Oslo in the first turn will leave little, if anything, for use against additional objectives such as Kristiansand, Stavanger, Bergen, and Andalsnes. This is no great problem, as the attack against these ports can be launched later overland with troops ferried to Oslo. The German player may disregard these objectives entirely for the time being, or divert a small force against one or two of them.

Once the first objectives have been secured, what should German strategy be? Aside from holding on in the north and at Trondheim as best they can, and preventing the Allies from establishing themselves in the 'corridor', unquestionably the most urgent task is to plow through to Trondheim at the greatest possible speed. Every turn, every hex counts, lest the forces from the south be too late to retrieve the situation in the north before the game ends. Another advantage of holding Trondheim now becomes apparent. The Norwegians must contain Trondheim in addition to delaying the onslaught from Oslo, and will break sooner under a double burden.

As long as the 'corridor' is safe, only an Allied landing at Andalsnes poses a serious threat to the advance from the south, and should be dealt with promptly by destruction of the port and bombing of the railway leading south. Allied landings at Kristiansand, Stavanger, or Bergen are comparatively innocuous and readily contained. An all-out drive against these ports, whether they hold Allied bases or not, need not be mounted until after Turn 4, when German shipping capacity doubles and permits more troops to be ferried to Oslo than can be effectively employed in the great thrust toward and beyond Trondheim. In fact, a ploy that may work against an inexperienced Allied player is to feign weakness opposite Stavanger or Bergen, so as to invite an Allied attempt to hold that port to the end of the game. Such an attempt will divert

Allied forces from the north, where the German position is precarious, and will ultimately prove costly and futile, provided the German player does not delay his attack for too long.

The **Luftwaffe** will play a key role during this phase. Its planes will destroy any Allied bases in the south, disrupt defenders interrupt rail lines, lift troops to Oslo, contend with the RAF, and do their part in reinforcing the task forces at Trondheim and in the north. The icefield, which can be built at practically any spot of importance, will prove invaluable if a vital position is to be quickly reinforced. If the Allies ever set foot ashore between Trondheim and Narvik, their base must be obliterated immediately, for only then will the weak German forces in the vicinity be able to contain the beachhead. The **Luftwaffe** should also destroy all ports in the Narvik area, whether or not they are in Allied hands, and before increased Allied anti-aircraft and interception capabilities make such attacks too costly: the best support for the **Gebirgsjäger** at Narvik is to deprive the Allies of attack supply by destruction of all potential bases.

In this phase, the German player must take care to concentrate all elements of at least two strong divisions, including their headquarters, in or near the van of the forces pushing north through Trondheim. Those units should not be diverted, even if efficiency of utilization of combat factors temporarily suffers. The end game will see a slugfest, usually far in the north, in which the greatest concentration of strength in a single hex is what counts. Such concentration can only be achieved with integrity of divisions.

As the game approaches its end, the German player must see to it that he will reach all remaining objectives on time. More often than not, the last such objective will be Narvik, and he must race north with his strong divisions to recapture it. The importance of keeping the Trondheim-Mo 'corridor' clear now becomes apparent: if the enemy has established himself here with more than a battalion or two, the Germans will not get through in time.

The key to an optimum end game is simple. With adequate strength and proper tactics on both sides, the rate of advance will be one hex per turn, no more and no less, provided only that the Allies have enough troops to man a continuous line each turn and back it up to prevent German exploitation movement into the rear. In the corridor and on the approach to Narvik, the front is so narrow that this condition is easily met.



Therefore, the German player finds himself on a tight timetable. From midgame on he must count hexes to remaining objectives and do everything he can to have these numbers not be, or become, more than the number of remaining game turns.

Between first-rate, experienced players, the outcome of the game may well be predictable by Turn 10 or even earlier, give or take a few points for unit losses.

In such predictions, however, there is no margin for error. For example, if the Allied player is careless, a surprise seaborne raid late in the game may succeed with luck in taking Narvik or whatever seemingly unattainable port, or in breaking a watertight defense. Similarly, an Allied landing craft operation may spring a nasty surprise on the German player and cost him the game, perhaps by denying him attack supply for a single turn. To the end, the German player must be awake to enemy weaknesses and to his own, and must plan far enough ahead.

II. Allied Strategy

Much less can be said about Allied strategy, which will consist largely of making the most of opportunities presented by German play. Obviously, the Allies should exploit German weaknesses. This rule naturally focusses attention on the north, especially on Narvik, where the Germans will not be strong nor easily reinforced. If the Germans concentrate on Narvik, leaving the other ports open, the Allies should seize them and mount an attack on Narvik as soon as enough troops are ashore — and before the **Luftwaffe** has had a chance of destroying the bases. If the Germans have managed to take all ports Trondheim and Tromsø, they will usually be so weak at Narvik that they can be attacked by Norwegians. If and when Narvik has been taken, the advance on Bodø and Mo should be pressed; not that these ports are important, but every hex gained in this direction is likely to inflict one more turn delay on the German relief force that is bound to come up that way later. Needless to say, the Allied player must also seek to protect his bases in the north as well as he can against air attack and landing attempts.

The British naval Interdiction Squadrons are valuable not only for preventing German reinforcements from reaching a port by sea, but also as floating anti-aircraft batteries. The Allied player can use them to block Narvik, Harstad, or other northern ports in the first Allied player phase and harvest a bonus of five extra victory points, but that might turn out to be a mixed blessing: the destroyer crews which the German player then receives, at a port that would have been difficult to reinforce, may be too high a price to pay.

If the Germans should fail to take Trondheim, that port and its airfield should be secured by all means, and will serve as an excellent base from which the German northward advance can be delayed. Once they are entrenched at Trondheim, the Allies will also have a priceless opportunity to secure the 'corridor' and its ports, an area which they will probably be able to hold to the end of the game.

In the south, the most important task is to delay the main German advance from Oslo toward Trondheim. It is in the north that the game can be won, and the Germans must be prevented from getting there in strength before the game ends. At least initially, the burden must be shouldered along by the few Norwegian units in the Oslo area. These must be handled with care. Even if a local, momentary German weakness should invite an attack at good odds, the wiser course of action is to resist temptation and concentrate instead on delaying tactics, surrendering ground as slowly as possible and with a minimum expenditure of units. Later, Allied troops may be able to lend a hand. Consider this defense successful if it keeps the Germans from reaching Trondheim until Turn 6. The use of Allied units in delaying actions calls for caution. Their loss costs victory points, whereas Norwegian losses do not. Also, Allied units are more vulnerable in that they may not, like the Norwegians, attempt to retreat before combat. Moreover, if they lose their supply base, their movement allowance will be halved, and they may then be difficult to extricate. A wise Allied player will therefore always have one watchful eye on retreat routes to safe evacuation ports.

Allied units enjoy a great advantage in that they can be shifted at will from one port to another, regardless of distance and

RULE CLARIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS

NARVIK's rules leave a number of points open which are of critical importance for play and balance. The Errata of January 14, 1976 is a 'Must', but even this information fails to answer some important questions. Additional clarifications, kindly provided by the designers, are listed here.

Mapboard. Although Rule 17.A defines a Port as any Norwegian city in a partial sea hex, only those cities with a Port Indicator (black wedge) function as ports and may be used for Allied landings and bases. (This ruling is extremely important. The Germans have virtually no chance of winning the game if Elvegardsmoen, adjacent to Narvik, is considered a port.)

Movement. In exploitation, units may not enter hexes containing enemy units. (This rule is also very important. Without this restriction, the attacker's progress in the end game would double to two hexes per turn.)

Sea, fjords, and lakes may never be crossed by ground units except at ferries. This applies even to 'split hexes containing portions of both shores. (This makes all islands inaccessible, except if connected to the mainland by a ferry.)

Combat. If combat between opponents of the same printed strength yields HX, defender moves all and attacker removes at least half his factors.

Supply. Where applicable, road and rail movement rates may be used in tracing supply lines.

Allied ships do not block German supply lines. The 'captured' German depot from Sweden may move in every game turn as though it were a 0-4 infantry unit.

Air Units. A mission is subject to interception and anti-aircraft fire at the target hex only. (For example, a transport mission from A to B and continuing to C may be fired at over B, but not at A or C. This allows air lifts to be brought in 'through the back door'.)

If a railway receives a bombing hit, the road through the hex remains unaffected.

Reinforcements. Norwegian reinforcements accrued through OA are placed in the deadpile if their point of appearance is in German control.

Contrary to Rule 15, Allied reinforcements may not land in Kattagatt ports. (Rule 18, last paragraph, takes precedence.)

Naval Transport. The Allied landing craft is available for amphibious operation in the turn in which it enters the game.

Allied or Norwegian units may land in any unoccupied Norwegian port, even if unfriendly.

Allied or Norwegian units may not land in a port occupied by a German unit (except with landing craft), even if the German unit has zero defense strength.

When using the Sunk-in-Transit Table, The German player rolls the die once for each unit, regardless of size.

Naval Units. Allied vessels and German ground units may occupy the same hex indefinitely, and do not affect one another.

Norwegian Artillery Stores. If their hex is occupied by German and Norwegian units at the start of Turn 2, the stores remain in place until one side becomes the sole occupant. At that time, the occupant receives the artillery.

without risk of loss at sea. Allied strategy will do well to exploit this mobility. To the extent that his main effort in the north is not compromised, the Allied player may land a strong contingent in a southern port to force his opponent to divert troops from their northward thrust, only to evacuate again when the situation turns unpleasant.

Toward the end of the game, the Allied player, like the German, will start to count hexes and remaining game turns. Where he is clearly unable to hold a point-yielding port to the end, he should cut his losses and evacuate. Where he can hold, he should arrange his defense so as to take the least casualties, without risking the loss of the port. Rarely, the Allied player will have an opportunity to try a tour-de-force that might delay the inexorable German onslaught by the single turn that may make the difference between victory and defeat.

III. Tactics

NARVIK's unusual game system offers a wealth of opportunities for tactical finesse. The reader should not be deprived of the fun of discovering them for himself. We shall therefore examine the basic properties of the combat system and cite a few examples to wet his appetite.

Even at first glance, **NARVIK's** Combat Results Table is seen to be remarkably 'unbloody', with no better than a 50 percent chance of DE at the highest odds. In practice, the chance of a kill is much less, as quickly becomes apparent if one looks at some typical combat situations, say, that of a strong German attack on a Norwegian delaying unit blocking a road through a forest. The Norwegians have a one-third chance of evasion by retreat before combat, and there is a -1 die roll modification for combat in the forest. As a result, the overall chance of a DE turns out to be only 22 percent (plus another 11 percent for an HX, which at least eliminates the bothersome Norwegian unit at some loss to the attacker). To the inexperienced German player, it must seem as though the Norwegians have nine charmed lives!

Obviously, tactics must be sought that are more effective. Disruption by air attack will help: it reduces the Norwegians' chance of retreat before combat by half and so increases the probability of DE to 28 percent, that of HX to 14 percent.

A more effective tactic, where applicable, is to block the defender's retreat. Up to four hex sides may be 'interdicted' by attacking units that move in across them. Retreat through the

GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Unnamed Towns

Map 5A C-16 Kistrand
E-19 Tana
F-18 Lakselv
J-23 Kautokeino
Map 10 II-39 Elverun
00-48 Horten

Additional Cities

Map 10 0-16 Mosjøen
U-24 Grong
W-39 Ålesund
BB-38 Dombås
U-36 Kristiansund (on island not on map,
with ferry)
V-27 Steinkjer (railway goes through this hex)
II-42 Eidsvoll
MM-47 Drammen
Map 11 MM-35 Egersund

Corrections

Spelling: Map 10 PP-48 Fredrikstad K-9 Bodø —
Replace all ø by ö.
Position: Map 10 II-40 Hamar (no railway to II-41)

remaining sides may be blocked by additional units in the adjacent hexes, or may be impossible because of terrain (lakes, sea shore, Swedish border, etc.). Now, DR and DD results also effectively eliminate the defender in the present or subsequent phase, and even an NE usually does so by forcing him to counterattack at quite unfavorable odds. The defender's destruction thus is practically assured, provided the attack was made at high enough odds. The German player should attempt to maneuver his opponent's units into positions where he can apply these tactics, and the Allied player will do his best to avoid such traps.

With encircling tactics, there is no pressing need for highest odds, at least against a single defending unit (DH result equivalent to DE), and provided the attacker wisely has an expendable unit at hand to absorb any loss. 3:1 odds in clear or rough terrain, and 4:1 in forest, suffice to ensure the defender's doom. Even if encirclement cannot be achieved, an attack at highest odds often turns out to be a waste of strength. For instance, against a single defending unit, 4:1 odds in forest afford as good a chance of a kill as do 6:1 or higher odds — and a better chance than 5:1! In open or rough terrain, the chances of eliminating the defender are the same for 3:1, 4:1, and 5:1 odds and only marginally higher at 6:1 or better odds. As these examples show, the German player is well advised to pay close attention to economy of force: he will often find it more profitable to make more attacks at less than maximum odds.

It is obvious that the German player should make most or all of his attacks at 3:1 or better odds, in order to make his expended supplies count and to avoid delays through AR or, heaven forbid, losses through AH or AE results. It is not so obvious that the situation of the Norwegians and, to a lesser degree, of the Allies in the north or opposite a vital German position such as Trondheim or Namsos is quite different. For example, in an attack on Narvik, any NE, AD, and usually even an AH result is quite acceptable as it leaves the attackers in the hex and thereby forces the Germans to counterattack or retreat. Often, such a counterattack is impossible for lack of attack supply, or proves futile because it fails to dislodge the enemy from the hex. A glance at the Combat Results Table shows that odds as low as 1:1 (without die roll modification) are more than adequate for the purpose at hand: five results out of six leave the attacker in the hex, one even eliminating the defender, and with the sixth, an AR, nothing more than an opportunity has been lost. Even a 1:2 attack may well be a risk worth taking, three out of six results bringing success (NE or AD) and only one ending in disaster (AE). Many opportunities for decisive victory have been squandered by an inexperienced Allied player for needless fear of risking low-odds attacks with Norwegians in the north. And the danger of such attacks is one of the German player's greatest headaches. It is truly remarkable how a single Combat Results Table manages to present both opponents with so very different tactical opportunities.

Looking beyond actual combat, one immediately recognizes the defender's need to guard against envelopment, both to protect his units from encircling attack and to keep the attacker's progress at its slowest pace. This is true for any defense, be it by Norwegians and Allies in southern and central Norway or by Germans in the north. **NARVIK**'s system makes such a defense simple, perhaps a little too simple. There is no 'overrun', and a cordon even of weakest units can therefore prevent a breakthrough in combat. To prevent motorized units from moving into the rear in exploitation, all the defender has to do is to place back-up units behind his front line. Since most of **NARVIK**'s axes of advance are narrow corridors between terrain impassable for motorized troops, only very few back-up units will be needed. As long as the defender has enough units to man a continuous line and back-up positions, he can hold the attacker's progress to one hex per turn. In southern and central Norway, much will depend on the attacker's skill with mountain troops, the only units capable of outflanking road blocks in the valleys. But even mountain troops are of no help in the northern corridors, hemmed in between Sweden and the sea. Of course, once a defender finds himself unable to maintain the integrity of his line, he must cut and run or face certain disaster.

The German players organizational problems are immense. He will have to see to it that his forces are able to concentrate enough strength in a single hex to squash any resistance. Early in the game, the Germans will need a good share of intact regiments, which are three or four battalions strong and yet count only as a single unit in stacking. For the end game, the Germans will need divisions that are largely intact and under their headquarters, packing great strength and still counting as only a single unit. The German player should, therefore, ship his reinforcements in as regiments, not as battalions: better to lose a regiment in transit than its equivalent in battalions all from different regiments (and an advantage in victory points at that). He should also earmark some strong division for concentration in the end game; bring their units in early and protect them from losses. The loss of a battalion or two will not matter too much, but the loss of its headquarters will make the desired concentration impossible. The headquarters must therefore be especially protected, and should be brought in by air under cover of complete air superiority.

The air war offers a variety of tactical opportunities, of which only two will be cited as examples. The Allied player is given a unique opportunity with his aircraft carriers. On the turn of their mandatory withdrawal, an event that recurs as they enter and leave the game several times in succession, the carriers can strike with complete impunity from any sea or partial sea hex on the board, for they are withdrawn in the immediately following exploitation phase, before the Germans have any chance of hitting back. Such a carrier strike can deal quite a blow to the *Luftwaffe*, particularly if combined with a daylight attack by land-based bombers and if the German fighter force had been weakened by attrition.

One of the vexing problems of the *Luftwaffe* is how to get reinforcements and supplies through to isolated *Wehrmacht* contingents in the face of enemy ships' flak and interceptors. To expose loaded transports to fighters or flak is inadvisable and can usually be avoided. The rules allow transports to sneak in 'through the back door': transports flying from A to B and continuing on to C in the same air phase are subject to interception and flak at B only, not at A or C. Thus, if the transports can stop over at a secure half-way base, say, at Trondheim on the flight to Narvik, they are guaranteed a safe arrival with payload intact. Of course, they must then sit out the Allied player phase at their exposed, final destination and may be attacked on the ground — a risk that must be accepted.

These few examples may suffice. Indeed, if **NARVIK** does not lend itself to the excitement of sweeping action, it makes up for it by providing exceptional tactical opportunities.



OVERVIEW

At a time when we are inundated by new games, we should judge each critically by what it contributes to our hobby. **NARVIK** passes this test with flying colors. **NARVIK** has great historical appeal in that it brings a most interesting episode from World War II out from undeserved obscurity: it leads us to a new pasture in otherwise well-trodden territory. Moreover, it does this skillfully and authoritatively, providing historical insight and a wealth of, on the whole, well-researched detail.

The difficult problem of simulating a quite unusual and heterogeneous campaign and generating the right 'feel' has been solved admirably. The only disappointments in this category, none of them decisive, are an understatement of the terrain difficulties in the north, the inclusion of a few German units too many, and a cavalier treatment of the war at sea.

NARVIK has also broken new ground, contributing new ideas to wargame design. For example, the unit integrity concept, gaining ever increasing acceptance in new games, owes much to **NARVIK**. Especially well handled, if less applicable to other games, is the combat system which manages so expertly to reflect the differing tactical problems of the campaign; from elusive Norwegian resistance to Allied impotence to the desperate struggle of isolated German groups, and contributes more than any other facet to making **NARVIK** a valid simulation.

NARVIK's game system and mechanics are quite successful, except only for a lack of resilience in the end game. The game has cohesion and unity, is well integrated, is more than the sum of its parts — the mark of a good design!

NARVIK thus far seems to be a game that is admired rather than played. Perhaps this should not surprise us for a game as demanding as **NARVIK**, covering a period of history of which few of this country's present generation have more than a vague awareness. This is a pity, for **NARVIK** is an outstanding game for the experienced, skillful player, and deserves a better fate. May our analysis here help it to gain wider acceptance.

NARVIK DESIGNER'S NOTES by Frank Chadwick

The Maps:

Fred expresses a generalized feeling of uneasiness about the effects of terrain in the game. This deserves some comment. In tackling terrain evaluation, we had to provide a good simulation of the historical campaign and do it in a context that could be eventually integrated into the **EUROPA** system. This meant using a map scale and terrain evaluation system identical to that used in the other games in the series. Ultimately, this was not completely possible, and three new terrain features had to be added (glacier hexes, mountain and fjord hexsides). Much of the burden of terrain is taken up in the Combat Results Table as Fred correctly notes elsewhere. Admittedly, mountains may not seem very tough by comparison in the game, but this is largely because none of Norway is any prize. Fred's comments on transportation lines are correct in strict fact, but incorrect in interpretation, I believe. The transportation lines on the map appear as they existed throughout the bulk of the German wartime occupation, obviating the need to change the maps later. In all cases, however, the new lines followed previously existing travel routes. For instance, while the Germans built the 'Eismeerstrasse' (rather euphemistically labeled 'Reichstrasse 50' on some maps) after the campaign, the Norwegians did shift a battalion from Kirkenes to Narvik overland during the campaign. The essential elements, it seems to me, are two-fold: 1) **Are the lines of travel shown capable of supporting military movements and operations?** My answer would be yes, based on several things. First, the Germans launched an attack by the 2nd Mountain Division, along the route Namsos to Narvik with the intention of breaking through and relieving the Narvik garrison. This relief force made steady progress up to the conclusion of the campaign. It seems unreasonable to me to expect that the Germans would have initiated such an action if its success was demonstrably physically impossible. Second, the Allies closed off the southern approaches to Narvik with

units supplied overland from Bodö. This is possible in game terms if the road from Bodö to Narvik is present. Without the road, it is not. Third, Fred's statement that 'the Germans in Narvik were quite safe from the tremendously superior Allied forces at Harstad, except for amphibious landings...' I believe to be in error. The town of Narvik itself was taken by an amphibious landing. However, all of the landward assaults on the German defenses (in game terms in the Narvik hex) were supplied overland from Harstad, and amounted to considerable forces. This is possible given the present road network, but would be physically impossible in the game without the Narvik-Harstad road. 2) **Do the lines of travel shown give either side unreasonable capabilities?** I don't believe so. As Fred points out elsewhere, the nature of the terrain and the combat system are such that very minor blocking forces are sufficient to slow the German advance up the Namsos-Narvik corridor to the historic (painful) pace. The Allies are able to support attacks on Narvik and its environs from Harstad, but Tromsö cannot be used for this purpose, and while Bodö can supply an attack on Narvik itself, it cannot supply an attack on the non-road hex adjacent to Narvik. I believe these to be accurate descriptions of the operational capabilities of the combatants in the area at that time.

The Naval Game That Isn't There:

At several points in his review, Fred touches on what he describes as our 'cavalier treatment of the war at sea'. Having lived through the design process of **NARVIK**, I think a better work to describe the game's treatment of the naval end of the affair would be 'ruthless'.

When design work started on the game, Rich and I both took it for granted that the naval war would be a major part of the game. Probably the first two months of research and development work went almost exclusively into the naval system. At the end of that time we had a jolly little system for surface combat and rating ship capabilities, a complete naval OB, complete information on how the naval system ought to work, and a naval movement system that we couldn't make work to save our souls.

The problem was mostly due to the time frame. The game really doesn't cover much territory for naval operations, especially in terms of four-day turns. In four days the Germans could steam up to Narvik, unload any troops on board, cruise around in the North Sea for awhile, and then head back to Germany! Obviously, some sort of simultaneous movement was necessary, but not by hex. Areas seemed to be the answer. They didn't work. Shorter Turns? Then game length became much longer than the subject justified. Several naval turns to each land turn? Coordination became a problem, and the land game suffered while everyone was busy with their naval moves. The fundamental problem was level of detail. It just proved impossible to give the naval end of the campaign the same level of detailed treatment that the air/land game received without seriously adding to the overall complexity and playing time. No to be blunt, we canned the whole thing and started from scratch.

When we started again, we had to decide what the absolute bare essentials were. We identified three: 1) Control of the Seas; 2) German Shipping Limitations; and 3) Germany's Air Effort. Having reduced the naval system to the barest of bare bones, we added back in a few items we found interesting enough to warrant inclusion. This then became the origin and basis of the present **NARVIK** naval system. Interestingly enough, the work done on the original **NARVIK** naval system was not wasted. The system for rating ships and naval surface and submarine combat was used intact in **CORAL SEA**, **MIDWAY**, and the Sea Lion Portion of **THEIR FINEST HOUR**.

The Order of Battle:

I have always had a strong interest in orders of battle information (some uncharitable individuals around the Workshop use the work 'mania') and so Fred's module on historical

accuracy prompts comment. The OB's in NARVIK are drawn from a variety of sources both of the hard data sort (such as H.F. Joslen's ORDERS OF BATTLE: United Kingdom and Colonial Formations and Units in the Second World War and Georg Tessin's VERBÄNDE UND TRUPPEN DER DEUTSCHEN WEHRMACHT UND WAFFEN-SS IM ZWEITEN WELTKRIEG) and operational accounts (Earl F. Ziemke's THE GERMAN NORTHERN THEATRE OF OPERATION: 1940-1945, T. K. Derry's THE CAMPAIGN IN NORWAY, etc.). The operational accounts were especially valuable in pinning down units below brigade/regiment size and determining availability dates for many of the units. Fred comments on the four **Luftwaffe** companies, the number of flak battalions and the independent allied units. The **Luftwaffe** companies and flak battalions are drawn mostly from the Department of the Army study of the Operation (Ziemke). I am not exactly sure of the precise number of flak battalions myself, as the DOA study concentrates on ground forces to a great extent. Based on references to flak strengths at various places at various times, what was shipped when, etc., the German flak strength was estimated. I emphasize that it is an estimate, and the battalions are abstractions of the hodge-podge of small flak units flown in. The **Luftwaffe** motorized companies of the General Goering Regiment are mentioned also in several operational accounts and were included on that basis. Since publication of the game, Bender and Peterson's HERMANN GOERING: FROM REGIMENT TO FALSCHIRMPANZERKORPS has appeared which goes into a little more detail, identifying the unit as 'detachment Kluge' with a motorized rifle company, a flak company, and a motorcycle company. The independent allied units are drawn almost exclusively from the excellent British Official History of the campaign (Derry).

organizational change for the campaign. To better enable the 170th division to carry out its mission of rapid occupation of Denmark, it was decided to motorize one regiment of the division (the 401st). To conserve motor transport, the regiment was reorganized as a two-battalion battle group. This also accounts for the inclusion of the two truck units with 170th division.

In the area of allied unit strengths, perhaps I can satisfy part of Fred's curiosity. Strengths were not calculated so much by formula as by instinct based on what the units contained and the nature of the troops therein.

British: Three types of infantry battalions appeared in Norway: territorials, regulars and guards. The territorials were rated as 2-3-4's, the regulars as 3-4's and guards as 3-4-4's. Antiaircraft batteries were rated as 1-4's if light (40mm) and 1-2-4's if heavy (3.7-in.) with battalions being multiples of these strengths based on component batteries. Thus the 51st battalion, with three heavy batteries, is a 3-6-4. The 56th battalion is rated as only a 2-4 because only two of the unit's batteries were present. Infantry brigade headquarters were given a combat factor to represent the brigade anti-tank company. The 146th brigade did not have an anti-tank company at this time and thus does not have a factor. The independent companies (1st through 5th) were rated 0-1-4's to capture the essence of their use in the campaign — expendable delaying forces. The five independent companies were raised in mid-April as attempts at creating guerrilla units. The attempt was unsuccessful.

French: Two types of French infantry appear in the game: the **Chasseurs Alpin** and the Foreign Legion. The **Chasseurs** were trained mountain troops and, although sources disagree as to their state of equipment and preparedness for the campaign, we rated them as being comparable to German mountain troops. The Foreign Legion unit (13th Demi brigade) posed something of a problem. The unit was raised ostensibly as a mountain unit for employment in Norway and all volunteers were to be qualified skiers. The call was answered by a flood of volunteers most of whom, it soon became apparent, were not qualified skiers. Most of them, in fact, had never even seen skis. The call inadvertently by its hint of early employment had attracted the most aggressive elements of a corps of professional volunteers. The unit in the game is not a mountain unit, but certainly rates the extra combat factor per battalion.

Norway: The Norwegians are a different, and I think more interesting, story. Fred's belief that they are largely fictitious is not correct. The Norwegian OB was painstakingly assembled from several operational accounts. Every Norwegian unit in the game corresponds to an actual unit in the Norwegian Army, and the scheduled order of appearance and initial dispositions are as accurate as we could make them. At the time of the invasion, the sixteen infantry regiments of the Army and the miscellaneous supporting units were organized into six territorial divisions. The army was of a ready reserve type, with a few battalions mobilized on neutrality watch. From the operational accounts we were able to identify the units on watch at the time of the invasion and their location. The Germans landed at a most inopportune time (for them) in that the Norwegians were on the verge of rotating the standing watch battalions. Thus a larger number of units than normal were active. For example, the second battalion of the 13th infantry had just completed mobilizing to replace the regiment's first battalion guarding the Narvik area. This phenomenon is also partly responsible for the unusual strength in the Bardufoss area which Fred comments on. (The other explanation is that the 6th Division was on an especially high state of readiness to guard against an Allied intervention in the North during the recent Russo-Finnish War.) The mobilization procedure after the German landings was adopted for two reasons. First, complete information on when exact units were mobilized generally was not available. The mobilization in the midst of an invasion was necessarily a very confused affair. Second, we did not wish to impose a sense of order and certainty on a process which was, to both sides, a matter of uncertainty and anxiety.

As to the German OB containing the entire line-up of Weserübung troops, Fred is mostly correct. While these troops are earmarked for Denmark, it is for this reason that they were not available initially. However, as Denmark was occupied, these units became available and some were committed. In particular, all of the machine gun battalions and elements of **Panzer** battalion 40 were sent to Norway to add some punch (and some badly needed motorized units) to the drive up the passes between Oslo and Trondheim. The comments on the 214th Division and 2nd Mountain Division result, I believe, from some confusion between availability and commitment. While the 214th Division was scheduled for the third wave, that was only because someone had to be in the third wave. The division could as easily have been in the first wave, and so that option is left open to the German. The 2nd Mountain division was likewise available before it was actually committed (the decision to commit it was made as early as April 21, and one battalion was flown into Trondheim by the first of May, not the fifth.) Fred correctly identifies why the 69th and 214th divisions are stronger than the rest of the German units. I must say that it's a genuine pleasure to put something like this in and have someone recognize it. The 359th and 401st regiments had only two battalions at this time. I am uncertain why this was true of the 359th, but in the case of the 401st it was a special