

ARNHEM GAME NOTES

by J.A. Nelson

In many ways, Operation Market Garden represents the culmination of airborne tactics and doctrine. Dropped up to sixty miles behind German lines to capture bridges and subdue enemy resistance, the paratroopers of the Allied Airborne Army formed the point of the rapier designed to be a thrust into Germany's heart. Market-Garden failed. The reasons for this failure are multi-fold; the most decisive probably being the serendipitous placement of German armored reserves. But weather, faulty intelligence, poor initiative, and quick German response were among the other reasons for the operation's failure. The plan itself was the brain child of the late Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery and it represented, as he called it, "a full blooded thrust," that would win the war before Christmas of 1944.

THE SCALE OF THE GAME: Each hex on the *Arnhem* map represents 2000 meters of real terrain; the largest hex in the *Westwall Quad*. This scale was chosen so that the entirety of the operation might be portrayed. The interest here lay not in the actions of single divisions, but in the overall conduct of the operation, thus giving the players a much clearer picture of Market-Garden, as well as considerably more strategic and tactical options.

THE MAP: The land over which the operation took place is all lightly wooded, mostly marshy, and virtually flat. The forests on the map represent only the heaviest concentration of trees; the broken terrain is marsh, polder and dunes; and the rough is wooded terrain which is also either sandy or rolling. Only the major water obstacles are shown. There are two rivers (streams, actually) that are not shown and are considered part of the canal system on the map. The road net shows primary and secondary roads. There is one terrain feature unique to *Arnhem*; cities. They were included because of the decisive effect they had on the conduct of the operation. It simply took a long time to dislodge a determined defender from a hard urban environment. The ruins at the north end of the Arnhem bridge testify to this. More minor urban areas are shown as the standard town terrain effect of the *Westwall* system.

BRIDGE DEMOLITION RULES: No information is available on exactly which bridges were wired for demolition, so a probability was assigned to destruction of Canal and Rail Bridges and we let it go at that. It works. Basically we assumed that the Germans could have destroyed any bridge on the map if they wanted to. Players are not given the option of destroying non-RR bridges over rivers. The decision not to destroy these

bridges was made on a higher command level than is represented by the Player.

ALLIED ENGINEER UNIT: This unit represents not a discreet unit, but the Engineer assets available to the XXX Corps, thus its multi-fold function. The engineers performed efficiently when available, but they were simply not available where they were needed all the time, thus the inclusion of only one unit. The rather complicated rules which allow assault across otherwise impassable rivers simulates this aspect of the real-life very well. Assault is a chancy thing, but with sufficient air and artillery support it will succeed.

RESTRICTIONS ON ARTILLERY AND GROUND SUPPORT: Restrictions are imposed on artillery use because the conduct of the battle relegated artillery to a supporting, rather than an overwhelming role. Allied tactical air support was limited because the high command did not make allowances for coordination with any of the airborne troops. One "tac air" control car provided coordination for the forces of the XXX Corps. As an alternative: *Ground Support may be used freely anywhere on the map when it is available.*

AIRBORNE REINFORCEMENTS: The Allied airborne units used in "Market" were all experienced, and the planners of the airborne operation had good ideas about the limits of their troops; thus, all drops were virtually perfect. Some of the drops were not made in ideal areas, but all of the units arrived pretty much on target, and 970/0 intact. All drops were daylight operations made in the afternoon and, counting assembly time, this effectively reduced the operational radius of a unit on the day it dropped.

DZ Counters represent the heart of the airborne division: its supply drop and command. Without this rule in play testing, a division would drop and then run all over the map in attempts to destroy German units. In actuality, the units of a division were assigned specific objectives and once those objectives were attained, the division entered a defensive (active or passive) role. Subsequent to publication many questions as to the validity of tying the units to the DZ arose. What if the division linked up with ground forces?

It then should be able to draw supply up the road, right? Well, yes and no. The ground forces have enough problems of their own, plus the fact that a reassignment of the objectives of an entire division while that division is engaged in the field requires more administrative resources and advance planning time than the airborne units have

available. Thus, for our purposes, once a division is committed, it remains committed to a specific area. The rules dealing with optional placement of DZ Counters accurately reflect the concerns of the Allied planners in avoiding flak and allowing the troops to concentrate before moving to objectives.

EXITING THE MAP: This rule is the German Player's ace in the hole. It allows the German Player a double-edged advantage. First, the flexibility it gives him in committing troops and then withdrawing them will keep the Allied Player guessing as to the main direction of the German thrust. Secondly, because the Allied Player is kept guessing, and the German Player has perfect intelligence, if the Allied Player guesses wrong (or even almost right) the German Player can turn a small advantage into a major *coup*. This is particularly useful in the late stages of the game when the Allied Player will never know where the German will come from. Incidentally, withheld German reinforcements may enter anywhere in the range of hexes listed for the map edge on which it is a reinforcement.

WEATHER: Weather had a definite effect on the outcome of "Market" by delaying reinforcements and negating Allied air superiority. The rules are both simple and effective.

VICTORY: Given the position of the *IJSS* Panzer Corps, an Allied Strategic Victory becomes pie in the sky; virtually impossible to achieve. Barring a Strategic Victory, the entire operation is compromised, but for purposes of the game, if the Allied Player does only slightly better than his historical counterpart, he will win.

RESEARCH: In doing subsequent research for our *Highway to the Reich* game, we have found that the OB in the Folio is not entirely accurate, but there are no major errors.

There are a plethora of excellent sources on *Market* and *Garden*. Following is a listing of particularly valuable ones:

Cornelius Ryan; *A Bridge Too Far*. Excellent general source, lack of specific OB information and curious omissions in the maps do not mar the excellent narrative.

Rapport and Northwood; *Rendezvous with Destiny*. Excellent history of the 101st; good accounts of small unit actions and complete OB.

Cornelius Bauer; *The Battle of Arnhem*. Deals specifically with operations of the British 1st. Careful attention to German OB makes it invaluable.

C.B. Macdonald; *Siegfried Line Campaign*. Best short (less than 100 pages) account of the operation; good OB.