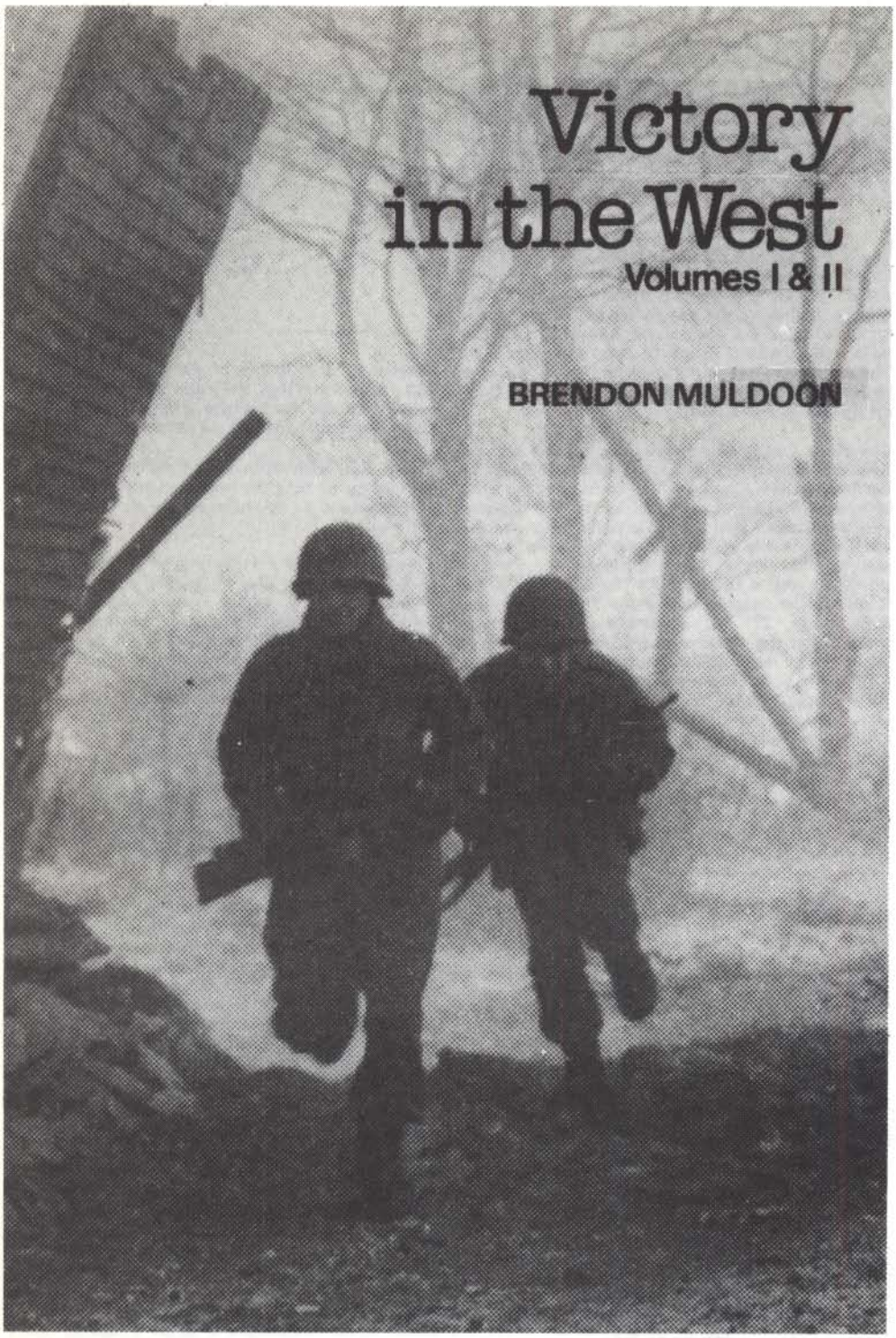


Patton's 3rd Army and **Operation Grenade** are two recently issued **S&T** subscription games, both covering regimental/battalion operations between American and German forces, as World War II neared its conclusion. **Patton's 3rd Army** concerns itself with the investment of Metz and the liberation of Lorraine during November 1944 whilst **Operation Grenade** occurs much further North, in an area West of the Rhine near Duisburg and Dusseldorf, some two and a half months later. In between these two campaigns the Battle of the Bulge took place. This is reflected somewhat subtly in the quality of German troops available in "Grenade".

Both games are designed and developed by **Joe Balkoski**, a gentleman well known in the hobby and highly experienced in producing quality games. Each game, in this case, must surely have caused the designer a number of problems in order to come up with an end result acceptable to both sides. In both "3rd Army" and "Grenade", the German defends grimly throughout most game turns with little expectancy of even a modicum of light relief – a situation not to everyone's taste in entertainment and enjoyment, given that one's opponent is aware of what's what.

As usual the standard of map and counters is what we expect and take for granted with SPI – a professional job produced by professionals. The rules contain very little in the way of faults – an omission, which can very easily be remedied, and Victory conditions, particularly in "Grenade", that cause unrealistic conditions but more of that later.

The standard rules are, in effect, a continuation of basic Quad games, a touch of the 'Guderian's' for good measure and a topping off with a serious attempt to solve a long standing problem common to numbers of board war games – the overabundance of information. Restrictions are also placed on both size and number of units allowed to take part in combat in any given hex. Whilst any system can usually be criticised and there are faults in the "Limited Intelligence" system – for example, to obtain accuracy a certain amount of bookkeeping is desirable – nevertheless, the results obtained are much superior to the old "I've got this, what have you got?".The CRT employs two dice. You work out the ratio (fractions to defender) with column shifts assisting in both attack and defense; factors such as Divisional Integrity, Aircraft, Artillery, Combined Arms, Surprise, Mud and Hill Top give Shift Bonuses.

The whole essence of **Victory in the West** is to be found in a combination of the rules relating to "Limited Intelligence" with those of combat. Whenever a unit of Regimental/Brigade strength has combat for the first time one first determines the number of column shifts for attacker and defender to give a net result. A strength chit is drawn at random from the morale pool that equals the unit's morale rating. The number shown after the combat class letter of the unit in question is that unit's initial strength. The combat result will require either attacker (A) or defender (D) to retreat a number of hexes and may also require a mandatory number of step losses. Step losses must be made before any retreats, but players have the option to take a step loss in place of a retreat. Retreating units are allowed to retreat through enemy ZOCs but in doing so must take a step loss for each hex in an enemy ZOC. When a unit with a strength chit is required to take a step loss, the strength chit is reversed. Should a second step loss be incurred, the chit is removed and the unit reversed onto its Cadre size. Some strength chits may show a reverse strength of Nil – in this case remove the chit and put the unit on its Cadre side. Obviously that unit has only two step losses before it is eliminated. When combat occurs involving units of Regimental/Brigade size, only one unit may take part in the combat in any single hex, although up to three units of this size may be stacked together. Those units not involved in the fighting nevertheless are affected by the combat results. This is a vital rule in **Victory in the West**, particularly in the early turns where the US player is concerned.

When you look into the "Limited Intelligence" system a little further one or two questions start to appear.

1) Limited Intelligence, as far as the enemy is concerned, is perfectly acceptable but at this stage of WWII it is somewhat peculiar that the friendly Commander has only a Limited Intelligence of his own troops. For example, US troops with Morale level 2 class A can, depending on selection of strength chit, vary from 5 to 13. The Germans can be even more unlucky as Morale 1 class C runs from 1 – 5. Naturally, all these strengths can be averaged but surely that isn't the point. One would naturally pick one's better troops for the more difficult tasks.

2) As only one Regimental/Brigade size unit may attack/defend in a hex, obtaining the maximum column shifts is important. To receive a shift for Divisional Integrity may require a 3 stack of the units in the particular division. If the division is having combat for the first time, it doesn't matter which unit receives the strength chit – but should it be the second or third combat then decisions have to be made, it is just like playing Pontoon – do I stick or twist?

3) If, through the result of combat, a player is required to take step losses which involve more than one Regimental/Brigade unit in a stack, but only one unit in the stack has a strength chit, are further strength chits drawn and put on their reverse side; or is the unit automatically put onto its Cadre side. The rules do not explain this entirely satisfactorily – but it is probably intended that a strength chit be drawn should this be necessary.

If the standard rules provide the basic ingredients for these two cakes, then the exclusive rules coat the mixture with a lush layer of icing, particularly in **Operation Grenade**. Before the game starts the German player has to blow up the Roer Dams. This is done to cause either a Gradual or Flash (tidal wave) flood in the Roer Valley. There are pros and cons whichever flood is chosen but the opportunity arises for both players to practice psychology should Gradual flood be chosen. Because of the possibility of a torrent descending along the Valley, the US player may put off the start of the game, trading modifiers to the die roll to determine the strength of the flood. A cautious American player could surrender half the game turns for an easy crossing. Alternatively, the US player, by guessing the German intentions, can completely wreck the ploy by starting on day 1 and gambling on a low die roll. This type of rule occurs very infrequently but the pleasure afforded is well worth the wait.

Patton's 3rd Army

At best this could be described as a challenge, but it is more likely to qualify for colourful exclamations of wrath as the US player struggles to make headway in the early turns. Like it or not, initially the game will probably reflect what happened historically. That said, the game can easily delude players, giving the impression that failure was more due to bad luck than anything else. Keep playing as the Americans and eventually the penny will drop. The German 1st Army, what there is of it, is well dug in, either in entrenchments or improved positions and, in most cases, behind the Rivers Moselle and Seille. The defensive front covers 37 hexes of which only 21 are occupied – but, on turn 1, there are only 7 hexes where, forgetting other problems such as supply, movement, etc., the US can attack from two adjacent hexes in safety.

The rules relating to weather are, to say the least, irritating but if you wish to go to war around Metz in November it is unlikely you will suffer casualties from sunstroke. The lousy climate causes mud which lasts for at least 4 turns and this not only slows everybody to a snail's pace but gives the defender a column shift in his favour.

Because of Patton's breakneck advances in the preceding weeks, supply had become quite difficult – all units of 20th Corps are out of supply (OOS) on turn 1 and the units of 83rd Infantry Division, 20 Corps, are OOS throughout the entire game. This small matter is a pinprick when considered against the major supply restrictions. On turn 1 the US player is given 75 support points to be shared at the player's whim between 20 and 12 Corps. Each time an American attack is resolved, 1 Supply Point (SP) is deducted from the SP tally of the Corps concerned – except if an attack obtains a breakthrough result, when no deduction is required. Should the US player allow the SP's total to reach zero, terrible penalties are imposed – as well as being reduced to half strength for future attacks, the column shifts for Divisional Integrity and artillery support are lost. Finally, to rub the US player's nose in the Metz mud for being so careless as to go into debt, the SPs become a minus figure requiring repayment to get out of the mud – sorry, the red.

There is a system for replenishing SPs – any Division which has seen at least one action may be pulled out of the fighting zone (10 hexes from nearest German unit) and, after standing inactive for a full turn, the die roll result gives the number of SPs to be added to the Division's parent Corps. The difficulty here is that exactly when you need replenishment SPs, the spare divisions to get them are usually at a premium.

Obviously, from the restrictions placed on the American units, any proposed offensive must be highly selective. Consequently some thought must be applied initially to the division of SPs between the two Corps. That 20th Corps is OOS on turn one and unlikely to be successful if used, should naturally be taken into consideration. Perhaps the safest way is to give 12th Corps 48 SPs, as the brunt of the attacks will come from them, and 20th Corps, 27. But a gamble on the German reaction, as the German player can see the split, might be to reduce 20th Corps SPs to as little as 8-10 SPs to tempt him to reduce his forces opposite 20th Corps. The set up for the Germans is obligatory but for the US it differs slightly. The regimental size units are given designated hexes but the tank and anti-tank battalions and artillery brigades may be stacked with or adjacent to regimental units of the parent corps – but must not be in a German ZOC. Obviously, the set up of the support units will vary to a slight extent depending upon the individual's choice of initial targets.

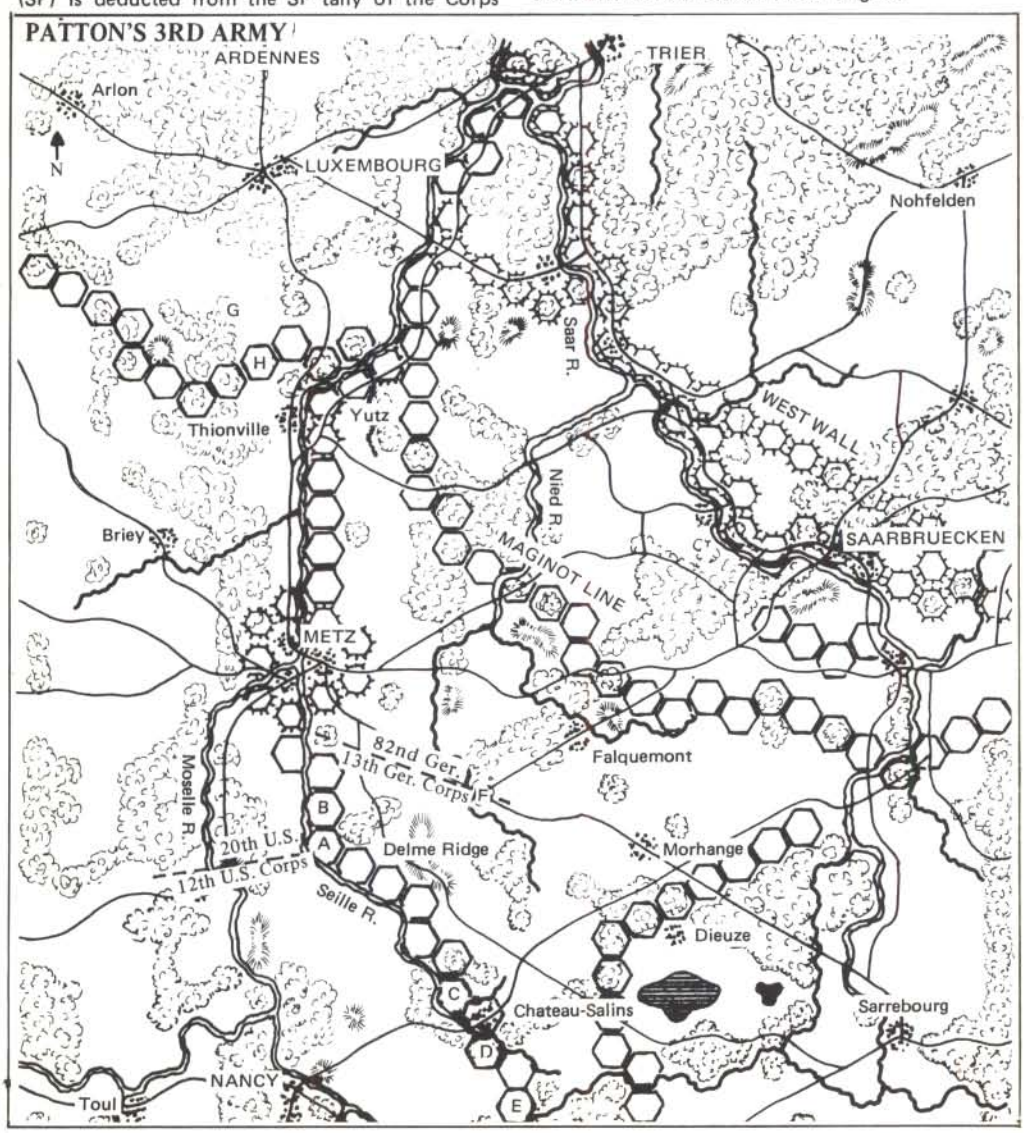


TABLE 1

Morale Level	Class	Average Strength	Maximum	Minimum
1	A	6	10	2
	B	4	8	1
	C	2+	5	1
2	A	9	13	5
	B	6	10	2
	C	4	8	1
3	A	12	16	9
	B	8	12	5
	C	7	11	3

Because of the variety of morale counters which will certainly affect the final attack ratios, it is simpler to use an average strength on the three types of morale counters, as shown in Table 1.

Given that both 20th and 12th Corps receive a sufficiency of Support Points to enable them both to contribute – the offensive, such as it is, may commence.

Though there are several tempting targets in 20th Corps sector, the 'Out of Supply' rule existing on turn 1 makes it highly speculative to risk any attacks and, consequently, the only activity is to advance some units into an attacking position for turn 2. The German 82nd Corps which defends Metz and North (see map) may not move unless any unit in the Corps is attacked. The entrenched hex 1010 (Yutz) has only the 485 anti-tank battalion to defend it with a strength of 2 (tripled behind river = 6). On turn 2 this hex may be attacked from two hexes in strength. A premature attack at half strength on turn 1 would almost certainly allow the Germans to get other units to assist in defence. In 12th Corps sector things look much brighter and a minimum of three attacks should be effected.

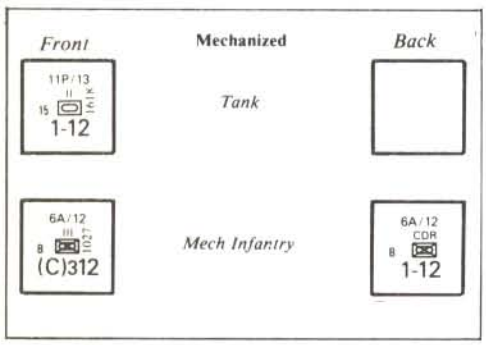
Hex 1022 (A) is a prime target. The River Seille bends eastwards here and consequently the American 12th Corps can attack from either one, two or even three hexes. A three hex attack, however, will require a soak-off attack on hex 1021 (B) and will involve units of 20th Corps. If units of both Corps combine, a support point payment from both Corps will be required. Hex 1022 has an improved position and is defended by the 128 Regiment 48th Division a C1 class unit, average strength 2 and the 1431 Battalion also strength 2. Double up for being attacked solely across the river and +2 for the improved position.

If the attack is from two hexes then the three regiments of US 80th Division will be used, two regiments and a tank battalion in one hex, the other regiment and another tank battalion in the second hex. This division is an A2 class with an average of 9, and the tank battalions have a strength of 1, giving a total strength of 20. The column shift bonuses are for US Divisional Integrity (1), Combined Arms (maximum 1 when attacking solely across rivers) and (2) Artillery Support. Germans have the weather (mud) bonus. This gives a final attack at 5-1 in clear terrain and should give the US player a good start. There are only two chances (18%) of the attack failing. Rolling a 2 or 3 (on two dice) brings trouble but a roll of 6,7,8 or 9 will give a result of either a D1 or D1(1). In either case, the German player will not vacate the hex, preferring to take one or two step losses. Any other result will allow the Americans to capture the hex and obtain the first toehold on the enemy side of the river. Should the remaining attacks also prove successful, then the German will have immediate problems on how best to deploy his available units.

The second and third attacks depend on players' selection but should occur from six to ten hexes south east of hex 1021. Three hexes 1426 (C), 1528 (D) and 1629 (E) are the targets and the US player should select either 1426/1528 or 1528/1629 depending upon where priority is put highest. 1528/1629 appears slightly easier (a fallacy) to attack but the rewards of capturing 1426 (C) and 1527 (one north of D) on turn 1 are greatest since one gains control of the only road bridge in the immediate area, so allowing the armour to be used at the earliest opportunity.

If the first choice is 1528/1629 (D/E) – then 1528 should be attacked first. If 1629 is attacked first, despite what looks like both a numerical superiority as well as higher morale units, the meandering of the Sielle River constricts the US attacks as much as the restrictions imposed by the rules. Using US 26th Infantry Division in both attacks, if a bad die roll is thrown calling for a retreat, this would then lose a Divisional Integrity bonus which is essential in the attack on 1528. The attack with maximum shifts on 1528 will probably be at 2-1 in woods and on 1629 at 3-1 in clear. Neither attack is guaranteed to do more than weaken German unit strength but this will certainly increase the chance of success with a repeat attack on turn 2.

Should selection be 1426/1528 (C/D) a wider choice of attacking units is possible. The choice of unit is best calculated by remembering that a bad result may require step losses. So wherever possible include a tank battalion. It will frequently carry a Combined Arms bonus – but if a step loss is called for, then using a tank battalion will be the most economical. With maximum artillery support both attacks can be made at 3-1, one in woods and the other in clear. The attack on 1426 has six chances of capturing the hex.



The attacks described are by no means the only ones which may be made. They are probably the attacks which afford the best opportunity, given a successful combat result, of exploiting the situation. German reaction on turn 1 is totally dependent upon the results obtained, or not, as the case may be, by the US player. But that said, there are three rules which the German should observe at all times when defending in entrenched/improved positions. They are:

1) Take step losses rather than retreat – provided at least a Cadre remains;
2) On the German player turn either reinforce weakened hexes with, wherever possible, units of the same division, or retreat out the weak units and replace with fresh units if available;
3) Do not attack, except for an essential reason.

If an improved/entrenched position has to be ceded, then try to get units into all adjacent improved positions forcing the US to attack into as many strong points as possible.

On turn 1, unless attacked, units of 82nd Corps may not move and the 11th Panzer of 13th Corps is also restricted. The two artillery units on hex 1521 (F) should use strategic movement (x3 on roads).

If, because of adverse die rolls, units have been compelled to retreat out of their original hexes, then every attempt should be made to get them firstly into other strong points and, if possible, next to a unit of the same division. Attacks should be avoided because at this stage it will be virtually impossible to win and a retreat will just throw away valuable defensive positions.

Before turn 2 commences, the US player rolls for weather. Because of the heavy overcast conditions with rain on turn 1, one is added to the die result. Rain brings mud and mud lasts for 4 turns irrespective of other weather results. Clear weather allows the US to use maximum Air points and light overcast reduces Air point availability by half.

The supply restrictions affecting 20th Corps are lifted, 83rd Infantry Division excepted. However, the movement restrictions to the German 82nd Corps and 11th Panzer Division are similarly negated. In view of this and because the 20th Corps is covering a greater area than 12th Corps, care must once again be used in selecting where to attack.

If the hex 1010 is not attacked on turn 2 it will certainly be reinforced in the German movement phase. The attack must be considered in conjunction with an attack on hex 1011 (one south of Yutz). This hex is also entrenched with the Fort being called Illange. Unfortunately, Illange is occupied by a B2 class regiment plus an artillery brigade to give defensive support within three hexes.

The attack on Fort Yutz should use 3rd Cavalry Regiment (A3) and a tank battalion in 1009 (one north of Yutz) and an infantry regiment of 95th Division (A1) plus a tank battalion in 0910 (NW of Yutz). The infantry must be involved in order to advance across the river after combat. 2 Artillery Support Points and a Combined Arms Bonus minus the German mud bonus bring the final attack ratio to 5-1 in clear – any roll but 2 or 3 and the Fort is captured. Fort Illange is far more difficult. The attack is conducted by 90th Division – moved from 0708 (G) to 0809 (H) on turn 1 – in hexes 0911 (Thionville) and 0912, two of the regiments and a tank battalion on one hex and the other regiment and another tank battalion on the other hex. Support bonuses are 2 Artillery, Divisional Integrity, 1 Combined Arms and possibly, 1 Aircraft for the US (5 or 4) and mud plus 1 Artillery for the Germans. The average morale strength will make the attack a 1:1 so the final figure will be either 3 or 4-1 in the clear. Four chances of capturing the hex at 3-1 and five at 4-1 but also three and two chances respectively of an attacker retreat.

Dependent upon the result in turn 1 on hex 1022 (A) – 20th Corps may consider a support attack on the SS Mechanised Regiment in 1021 (North of A). If 1022 was captured in turn 1 then the occupying unit(s) would be required to attack defenders in both 1021 and 1123 (SE of A).

12th Corps is again committed to attacking the hexes which it tried first and it is likely turn 2 will see some of these now being attacked at greater ratios. It will now be possible to use the 4th and 6th Armoured Divisions. These two divisions should not be used just to make up strength as they cannot advance across rivers after combat and, whilst mud prevails, their movement off roads is very slow.

As in turn 1, German movement is a defensive reaction to the success or otherwise of US attacks. If by any chance it has become necessary to retreat out of the improved positions in any of the areas where the US have attacked and, as a consequence, the defence appears to be open – do not be tempted into a full scale retreat. Surrendering hexes unnecessarily can make all the difference between a hard fought game and a relatively easy US victory.

From turn 3, assuming some degree of success in the initial storming of the German positions – the US player should now keep four objectives in mind. (1) Some attempt can be made to capture Victory hexes (towns). In 12th Corps' eastward advance the towns of Dieuze (2125), Morhange (2022) and Falquemont (1819) are sited in areas not particularly abundant in defensive terrain. (2) Advancing east north east will probably cause the German player to re-evaluate his defensive line. Any retreat north east subtly shifts the Metz defences away from the centre and regular reinforcements (if desirable) will become progressively more difficult to get into Metz. (3) Seriously consider the merits of resting some divisions in order to stock up Supply points. (4) Consider whether an attack on Metz is desirable or, indeed, practical.

To assist the US player in making up his mind regarding Metz, during any clear or light overcast game turn before turn 8, the US is allowed two heavy bombing attacks. These attacks must both be made on the same turn against either Metz hexes (3) or entrenchment hexes – not improved hexes. The raids are made before US movement and thus, to exploit any success, the targets selected should be within movement range of American units available to follow up. Metz and its ring of Forts was a tough nut to crack and this is certainly reflected in the game. In clear weather the bombing has a two thirds chance of success, in light overcast, a half chance. Should the die roll come up trumps, the German player must either eliminate one unit or reduce a full strength regiment to Cadre level. Because of the obvious way in which the effects of successful bombing can be negated, the threat of bombing is surely greater than the action unless Metz is cut off.

Victory in **Patton's 3rd Army** is obtained by capturing certain towns and /or putting units in Metz out of supply or taking the city. Cutting the supply route to Metz only applies in the US Marginal Victory but, in passing, it does create a peculiar situation. The three city hexes are surrounded by nine hexes all of which are entrenched positions (Forts). Rule 11.53 in the Standard Rules states clearly that German units in entrenched positions are always in supply. If a city, town, etc. is cut off for supply purposes, it is reasonable to assume that the defences are also out of supply.

The short game lasts 12 turns whilst the extended game is exactly double that number of turns. Given average dice rolling, the short game in "3rd Army" is a difficult proposition for any US player. But a hard game though it may be, it seldom fails to create interesting situations. Conversely, the game tends to be somewhat boring for the German player. When the opportunity of a limited counter attack does occur, the feeling of "Why bother – the US will probably beat themselves" is difficult to throw off.

Operation Grenade

A maximum sixteen turn game, each turn representing one day, "Grenade" may start on 17th February 1945. By this time, the uncompromising struggle to take Metz is but a memory and the Battle of the Bulge, so beloved by game designers, has ended eight weeks earlier. "Grenade" is situated in Germany and the remnants of the Army of the Thousand Year Reich, selected to defend the Roer Valley, are a pretty poor lot.

What a build up to describe one of the best subscription games to appear in many a long year. **Operation Grenade** is a delight to play and, apart from a couple of somewhat unrealistic situations likely to appear which, unfortunately, can affect the result, the game is near perfect. As in "3rd Army", "Grenade" is won or lost by capturing towns. However, in addition to VPs for towns, there are ten bridges which cross the Rhine. Should the German fail to blow up any of these bridges and US unit(s) which may have crossed over remain on the eastern side of the river, then extra VPs will be gained.

After setting up, the German player must first announce how he has flooded the Roer Valley, either by a Flash flood, which is a once and for all saturation, or by a Gradual flood which may cause a nasty torrent unappreciated by GIs or anyone else in the near vicinity.

If Flash flood is selected the game must start on 17th February and the river is considered normal in all respects. The remainder of the valley becomes a swamp, passable only to non-mechanised units, except on roads. Hexes in the valley which were swamp before the flood use the Hill Top CRT in defence. Should Gradual flood be picked, the US player states when D-Day (Game Start) will occur and rolls a die to resolve the force of the river current. If D-Day is either 17th, 18th or 19th February = add 1 to the die result; 20th February = no modification to die roll, 21st February = -1, 22nd February = -2, 23rd February = -3 and 24th February = -4 from the roll. If the modified die result is either 5 or 6, then the Roer becomes a torrent and gives a unit attacked exclusively across the water the highly attractive defence bonus of having its combat strength multiplied 4 or 5 times, dependent upon which hex is being attacked. A modified roll of 2,3,4 and the river is now only Rapid. Rapids give a lesser bonus of increasing combat defence either 3 or 4 times. A result of 1 and the river is normal – this merely gives a 2 or 3 multiplication of combat defence strength.

To offset this defensive bonus, which is essential to the German the US can take a Surprise Combat Bonus (1 shift) provided the game starts no later than 23rd February.

The options available to the Germans to act and the Americans to react make for wonderful gamesmanship. There are arguments both for and against either type of flood but when flood and D-Day have both been settled it would be a very cautious player who would sacrifice half the game turns to avoid having a cold bath. The player's notes claim that in playtesting, D-Day was usually declared on either 22nd or 23rd February – but it is certainly worth starting a few days earlier and having faith in the die result.

The Support Point system of rationing supply used in "3rd Army" is discarded in "Grenade". There are, however, supply restrictions in the early game turns (not days). US 12th Corps is OOS for the first six game turns and US 16th Corps, for the first two turns. In addition, for the first three game turns, US mechanised units are unable to move. This rule must be carefully considered at the set-up – US self-propelled artillery may fire though not move, so they must be deployed within three hexes of a German target.

At this late period of the war one may have assumed that soldiers, knowing the war was lost, might totally disregard the steam of idiotic edicts from Berlin. This is not the case and German units of 2nd Corps may not move, unless they have either been attacked or a strategic withdrawal has been obtained. From turn 3, the German rolls once before movement and, if one is thrown, then strategic withdrawal may take place. If he has not obtained strategic withdrawal by turn 8, or the US have not attacked any 2nd Corps units, the die results are reduced by one. Rolling ones is rather important for the German player. The magic number is also required to procure reinforcements. Until the reinforcements have all entered the map the German is required to roll three times each turn, for South, East and North map edge reinforcements. A one releases South and East and a one or two for the North.

Some German towns have a number in brackets. This number is the Local secret weapon. Whenever a US unit moves into an adjacent hex, either as a result of normal movement or advance after combat, then the US units movement is temporarily suspended. The German player rolls a die and again, on this occasion as in earlier die rolls, the magic number is one. If the number rolled is less than the town number, then the difference equals the number of units of local "Dad's Army" available to the German. The Volksturm are picked at random, some units are twice as weak as others, and are placed in any hex of the town, subject to stacking. As the units are of battalion strength, they do not have a ZOC which allows the US to disregard them if they so wish and carry on movement. Obviously, Volksturm units will have little effect on the course of the game and as such may be described as gloss. However, situations can arise, given a moment's lack of concentration by the US, whereby a Volksturm unit(s) can be a damn nuisance!

As in **Patton's 3rd Army**, the initial German defence line is behind a river with units well dug in. In "Grenade", the operational front is approximately three quarters the length of "3rd Army" and covers only 29 hexes, of which 20 are occupied.

Despite the turbulent 'Water Margin' and the fact that there are considerably more entrenched hexes behind the River Roer than behind the Moselle and Sielle Rivers in "3rd Army", it is considerably easier to breach the main German defences even though it is always possible that bad CRT results will hold up progress. Once a toehold has been attained, the ability of the Germans to reinforce defence points held by Cadres, using switch tactics, will be quickly exhausted.

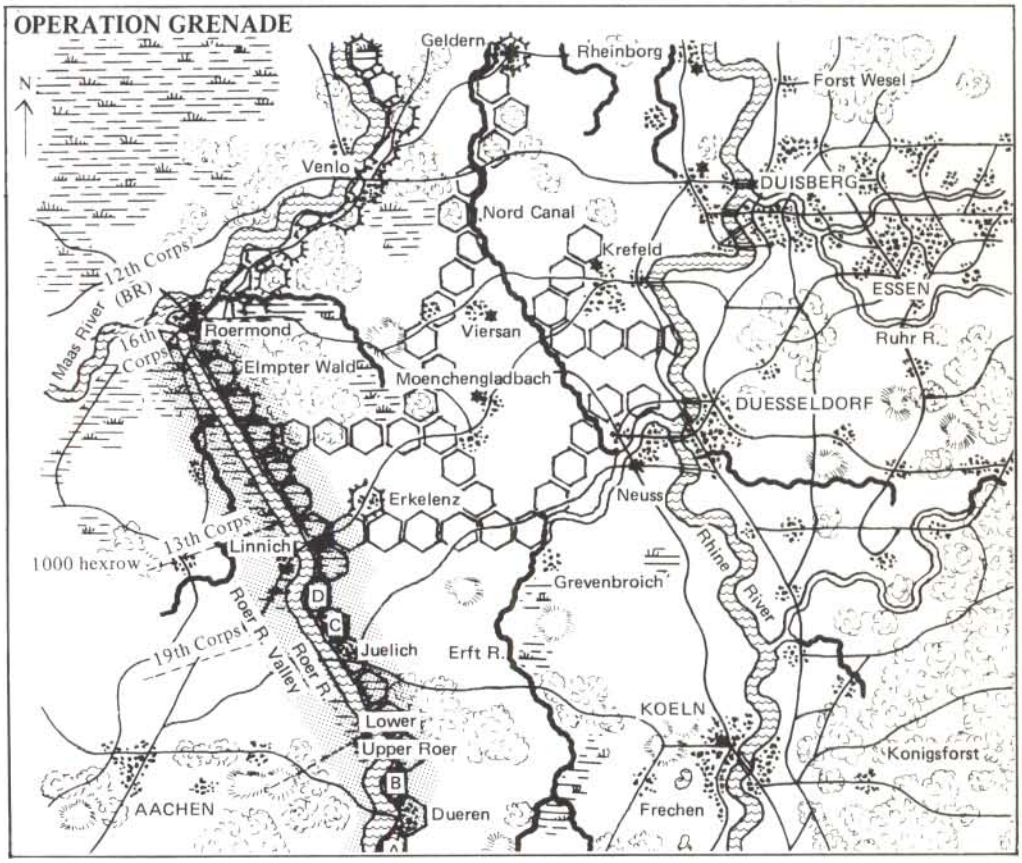
Whichever day turn 1 starts (Gradual flood), the weather role for that turn has one deducted – the only bad result being a 1 minus 1 = 0 which gives clear weather (6 air points) and a thaw, resulting in mud.

If the weather has not brought mud, the US player can start turn 1 by considering six attacks. Hex numbers 0110(A), 0310(B), 0709(Juelich), 0808(C), 0908(D) and 1008(opposite Linnich) are prime targets, particularly the last two hex numbers. By capturing these two hexes, the German line will be fragmented in a vital spot.

German units deployed in hexes 0808(C) and South of it will be compelled to take a longer retreat route to reach the secondary defences which run east/west on hex row 1100 (Geilenkirchen to Solingen). That neither hex contains a road and bridge is of little consequence as US armour may not move until turn 4.

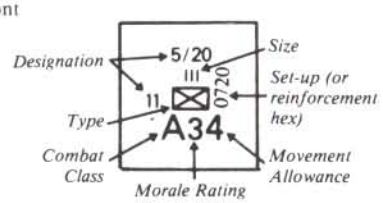
Unfortunately, mud has a chance of appearing and if it does then the attack on 1008 cannot take place due to movement restrictions. Also, the unit deployment to attack hexes 0110(A) or 0310(B) will require a slight change. By using the maximum combat shifts and, irrespective of which type of flood, the attacks can be carried out at no less than 4-1 and at best 6-1. Though not one of the attacks carries a guarantee of success, it is reasonable to anticipate a one third success to capture two hexes.

Faced with so many American units, initial German objectives, whilst unchanged in principle, must be achieved in a different manner. The important areas of the map abound in improved positions but, such is the strength that the US can throw in to eject the Germans, that any attempt at rigid defence will merely create a situation of Cadre units attempting to hold up divisions in later moves.



INFANTRY REGIMENT (US)

Front



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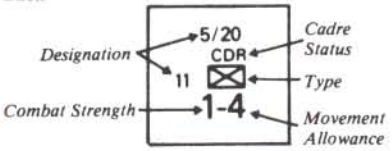
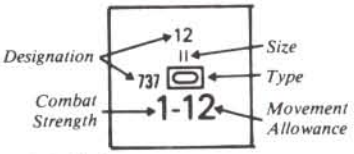


TANK BATTALION (US)

Front (only)



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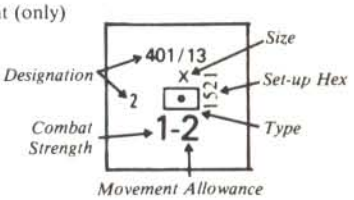
ARTILLERY BRIGADE (GERMAN)

Front (only)



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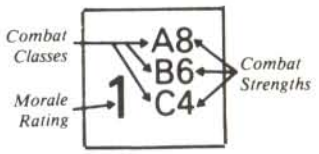
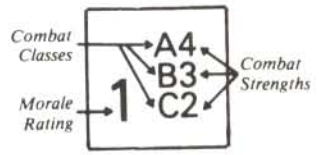
STRENGTH CHIT

Front



Back



Rather than stand and reduce, stand until attacked then retreat if casualties are called for to the next improved position. Very easy to suggest but what do you do if the US keeps rolling a D1(1) or worse result. You heave a sigh, take a deep breath and remember this is February 1945, then run like mad, hoping that the American won't be breathing down your neck immediately.

The area of the map south of hex row 1000 is completely devoid of man made defences, other than the improved position on the east bank of the Roer. Consequently, it would appear that German units organised to defend in this area will be in for a real hammering. Fortunately, rule 19.32 goes a long way to solving the problem. The rule states that units of US 7th Corps may not move north of hex row 0900. As 7th Corps' initial deployment is in the first four hex rows on the southern edge of the map and this area contains no road system allowing exploitation of any break through — the absence of a linked defence may not be too disastrous. Certainly the US will try to take the city of Koeln and the towns of Grevenbroich and Frechen. Koeln carries 3 VPs and both towns might just produce a Volksturm unit.

Rule 19.32, with its movement restrictions on 7th Corps, may also give indirect assistance to the Germans if the Americans take insufficient care in the deployment of 13th, 19th and 7th Corps once the river defences have been pierced. It is not difficult, when trying to find enough strength to clear out an enemy strong point, to mix up divisions from the three separate Corps. Once mixed up, and one or two game turns have passed by, the US may find that the only available units to attack a particular improved hex are barred from moving into the area. Whether this occurs or not, it must be accepted that the area bounded from 0908 — 0919 — 0119 to 0110 — 0908 (southern area between Roer and Rhine rivers) cannot be held for very long and one can only try to ensure that the US are not given the area too quickly and/or too cheaply.

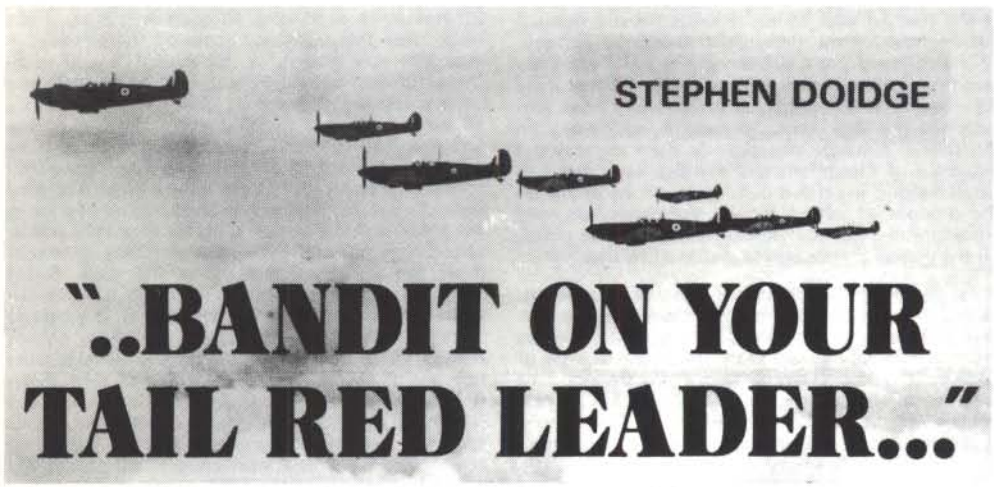
The area immediately north of this contains plenty of improved hexes, a stream which becomes a river during the mud turns, swamps, woods and a sufficiency of entrenchments on the east bank of the Maas River. The area also contains eight single hex towns which will lose the German player 16 VPs if lost. This is an area of prime importance to be defended. The task looks awesome but it can be achieved in a manner that is certainly interesting and may even be exciting. Even if the limited reinforcements are obtained early, and the reinforcements are generally stronger than the initial forces, the total German forces are too weak to have a stand up fight. Every scrap of defensive cover must be used and, in particular, improved positions should be utilised in order to get adjacent to US forces, but not to attack, and also as escape routes for the inevitable retreat.

If the US player shows little or no aggression in the sector defended by the German 2nd Corps, hold out as long as possible even if the strategic retreat has been obtained — as well as denying occupation of towns with VPs, it ensures that the US may only advance in a North and North West direction. This may well create an unrealistic situation, having units in supply in entrenchments by the Rivers Maas and Roer, whilst the US are trying to get across the Rhine well to the rear.

The Rhine River restrictions will likely create another unrealistic situation. German units may move and attack across the Rhine as though it were just any old stretch of water, paying 2 extra MPs to cross. US units may not move across the river except at unblown bridges. Standard Rule 5.25 allows a non-mechanised unit to move at least one hex even if it does not have the MPs to pay, providing the move is not from one enemy ZOC to another enemy ZOC. As artillery, other than self propelled, are non-mechanised with a movement of two, Rule 5.25 allows the German to bring artillery units across the Rhine — somewhat unusual.

Operation Grenade gives the early impression of a highly unbalanced game — if you like to attack and your opponent is playing the US role, you may feel disappointed. But the Victory objectives for the Germans have to be attained in a different way and, as the game is played, this is quickly realised.

The limited intelligence system is more than a step in the right direction and is to be encouraged and I would hope it will be used and developed further by **SPI** and others. Any method which stops an opponent, or yourself, from picking up a stack of enemy units and then saying "Right, I'm attacking that at ...." must have virtues. Whether or not **SPI** are tempted to use the system again remains to be seen but there must, surely, be any number of occasions available to allow development of a quad game on these lines.



STEPHEN DOIDGE

"..BANDIT ON YOUR TAIL RED LEADER..."

"The ME109 is 450 metres from the Spitfire's tail, he opens fire. The Spit' goes into a steep dive, whilst banking to the right; the ME109 is close behind, still on his tail, his guns chattering the rattle of death. The bullets rip into the Spit', smoke appears and flames begin to lick the fuselage. Another burst into the dying Spit' and it explodes in a firey flash. The ME109 climbs away and heads for home."

If the Luftwaffe pilot could replay his role in Airforce (AH/Battleline) he would be interested to learn how hard it is to make a 'kill' after manoeuvring into the prime tactical position. How many times have you dived after your enemy, whilst he climbs away? How many times have you turned left after your enemy, whilst he turns right? How many times have you done both?!?

Airforce is undoubtedly the best game of its type, but it does suffer from a total lack of incentive for players to gain the best tactical position in a dogfight, viz: on the tail of your enemy!

I use a simple method of 'tailing', which does not alter the Airforce system but does allow players who work their aircraft into a 'tailing' position, some benefits.

Conditions of Tailing

The following three conditions must be met for an aircraft to be classed as tailing.

1. The distance between the aircraft must not exceed 6 hexes. (Including the hex of the tailed aircraft.) The height difference must be 400ft or less.

2. The tailed aircraft must have the tailing aircraft completely within his 6 o'clock sector.

3. The tailing aircraft must have the tailed aircraft completely within his 12 o'clock sector.

Effects of Tailing

The benefits of tailing is dependent upon the class of the pilots involved. In cases 1 & 2 which follow, the tailed player writes out his movement plot first, gives the tailing player the required information and the tailing player writes out his movement plot in the light of the information received.

1. The tailed and tailing pilots can be of any combination, except as noted in cases 2 & 3. Benefits: A. The tailed player must state if he is climbing or diving on that turn. B. The tailed player must state the 'expenditure' of the first 33% (Rounding up) of his speed/movement. e.g. the tailed aircraft has a current speed of 9 and his plot reads: N2L3L1PP. He would reveal N2L to the tailing player.

2. The tailed pilot is 'Green' and the tailing pilot is an 'Ace'. Benefits: The tailed player must state if he is climbing or diving on that turn. In addition, he must state in which half of the aircraft's capabilities he is climbing/diving. e.g. Ju87B at 7 000ft is being tailed, his maximum dive capability is 900ft, which divides into 1-500ft & 5-900ft. If he is diving 300ft, he would reveal the former half. If he is diving 500ft, he can reveal either half. (N.B. if the aircraft's maximum capability had been an even figure., it would have been divided normally. e.g. 800ft becomes 1-400ft & 5-800ft.) B. The tailed player must state the 'expenditure' of the first 50% (Rounding up) of his speed/movement. e.g. the tailed aircraft has a current speed of 7 and his movement plot reads: N2L3LPP. He would reveal N2L3 to the tailing player.

3. The tailed pilot is an 'Ace' and the tailing pilot is 'Green'. Benefits: None!

Special Case

If the tailing aircraft's speed is 51%+ faster than the tailed aircraft, the benefits are reduced or lost. Viz: benefits of case 2 are reduced to those of case 1 and the benefits of case 1 are lost. e.g. a tailed aircraft has a speed of 6; if the tailing aircraft has a speed of 10, the benefits will be reduced or lost.

You may wish to use these suggestions as a basis for your own ideas, perhaps to the extent of having tailing differences for all types of pilots, but I found that these were the easiest to implement and had the best overall effect. Anyway, each to his own! What do you think Red Leader?

"...Red Leader, Red Leader, come in Red Leader, over? ....."