(The following scenario rundown for Centurion would not fit in the S&T article. This is from S&T Supplement #9)

The Scenarios for Tac 13 (Centurion) ③

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In constructing the scenarios for Tactical Game 13, there were two basic limitations which immediately restricted the frame of reference. First, the era covered by the game was to be between approximately 100 BC and 565 AD. This eliminated the more famous battles of the Punic Wars as well as the battles which occurred when the Roman Empire had been transformed into a Greek-speaking Empire. Second, there was a limited number and type of pieces. This meant that there could not be a one-to-one recreation even within the context of one piece representing 300-350 men. Moreover, certain types of pieces would actually have to represent forces of a different variety. The best example of this was the use of Byzantine Cataphracts as Gothic Cavalry in Hadrianopolis.

In selecting the battles which would be presented, certain battles immediately suggested themselves as being most likely to be known by potential players (Gaul, Pharsalus, Phillippi). Secondly, battles of some historical significance were obvious

(Below – original advertisement for S&T 25 from Moves Issue 1)

choices, even though not as well known (Servile War, Carrhae, Teutoburgerwald, Hadrianopolis, Campus Mauriacus, Busta Gallorum). Finally, certain battles were selected merely because it gave an opportunity to show various types of enemies (Numidia, Vercellae, Lycus Valley, Boudicca, Mons Graupius, Ctesiphon, Daras). Obviously, some of these battles were not, of themselves, of great historical impact but they did involve enemies with whom the Romans fought notable campaigns, such as the Parthians, Sassanids (Neo-Persians), Germans and the rest. Moreover, some of the other scenarios also fall into the category of providing an example of a unique style of fighting.

As far as problems in making up the scenarios are concerned, the most obvious, for anyone reading about warfare much before the Renaissance, is that of numbers. For one, history in those days was not always concerned with accuracy. History could well be a political tool. Thus, it was often suitable to overstate the size of the enemy army, thereby magnifying victories and providing reasons for defeats. Those battles where the numbers were available are indicated below. A further complication was presented by the number of pieces available. It was determined early on that a type legion would consist of 10 swordsmen, 4 light cavalry and 4 auxiliaries, the true numbers being about 3,000, 1,200 and 1,200, respectively. This means that the game can muster three full legions for each side on a straight proportion basis. Most major battles involved more than three Roman legions, particularly those in the Civil Wars. In addition, with the number of barbarian swordsmen limited at 40, it was still impossible to recreate the battle odds represented by Boudicca (about 10:1 in favor of the Britons) without giving the Romans virtually no troops. Roughly a 4:1 proportion had to be settled for.

Finally, there was the real problem of what to do about the battles where we either have no real idea as to the numbers or where the numbers of troops are available but the exact proportion is not. For example, Campus Mauriacus involved a mixed Roman-Barbarian force opposing the Huns without any real idea as to how many of what type the Barbarians brought (not to mention the mix in the Roman forces, by that time rather debased in composition). In the end, rather than omit totally these battles, an attempt was made to give some balance, at least apparent balance, for both sides so that a straight rout was not the immediate result.

In considering victory conditions, an interesting question arose: whether to base the victory conditions on those likely to be obtained, as a practical matter, in the game, or whether some effort should be made to consider the victory conditions which were actually acceptable at the time. A victory on the battlefield in terms of pure numbers may not be an acceptable victory, witness the term pyrrhic victory. This latter choice was selected. This produces the obvious result that it is very difficult for a given side to win certain scenarios without a great deal of luck. This is only right because certain battles require major victories in order to avoid unfavorable political repercussions. Recognizing the Clausewitzian maxim that war is an extension of politics, the victory conditions were an attempt to impose upon the player the problem faced by his historical counterpart - he cannot merely slug it out until he has one man and his enemy has none.

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Numidia (106 BC). This was the first major operation using the Marian legion. The exact size of the units involved is not actually clear so here the option was for some balance since Jugurtha managed to lead Marius a merry chase. The margins of victory are based on the idea that the Numidians need only win a tactical victory to deal a major blow to the Romans whereas Marius needed a clear-cut victory in order to continue his political pursuits.

Vercellae (101 BC). Here, with the numbers of each side being known, the attempt was made to scale the forces within the limits of the pieces available. Here the margin of victory considerations were reversed from the Numidian situation: Marius need only stop the previously invincible Cimbri and Teutons whereas they had to crush the Romans to continue.

Servile War (71 BC). Again, there are some number problems here. The exact size of Spartacus' forces was never really set out, partly because, if large, it would show how wide-spread support was for Spartacus and if small, it would be humiliating to Roman military prestige. So, balance was opted for. The scenario actually needs some tinkering. It was meant to depict an enemy which was the equal to, if not the superior of the Romans in swordsmanship but which lacked Roman discipline (though not to the extent of a barbarian army). They should be able to attack three deep but not use the Roman relief rule. The commander rules for the barbarians should be applied here as Spartacus and his key lieutenants were the revolt and their presence in the front ranks was crucial to victory.

Lycus Valley (67 BC). This was a major battle with Mithradates, the Pontian King who gave Rome fits in the First Century BC. The victory won by Pompey established him as a military equal of Caesar and Crassus. Again, numbers are not known and some balance is attempted. Both sides needed to win a major victory. Mithdradates needed it in order to keep fighting, Pompey needed it for political reasons. Neither could accept a victory leaving the enemy with a viable army in the field.

Gaul (57 BC). This is one of the better documented battles in Caesar's writing; the campaign against the Nervii. Since the numbers are known, an attempt was made to achieve reasonable proportions. Since Caesar was out to crush the Nervii, one of the more warlike Gallic tribes and a constant thorne in his side, the Nervii had to destroy the Roman forces sent against them in order to be left alone. As far as Caesar was concerned, he could take some losses since he determined what news would get back to Rome and by the time any bad news got back, hopefully, he would have returned to win his victory.

Carrhae (53 BC). This is a classic battle between skilled mounted soldiers and an ill-led legion. This might also be called Crassus' last stand since he was killed in the disorder that followed the battle. Again, the numbers are known so an attempt atproportion has been made. Once more political considerations are paramount. Roman victory meant potential subjugation for the Parthians while a Parthian victory would have cost Crassus much of his political power, already badly in decline.

Pharsalus (48 BC). Pompey had the bigger army; Caesar had the trained veterans from Gaul. Pompey was cautious and lacked nerve; Caesar was in full command of his troops. In fact, the

victory conditions are somewhat unreal. There had been prior battles between Pompey and Caesar and there was no reason why Pharsalus needed to be the final and decisive one. They chose to make it so, hence the victory conditions which were imposed. Players can reenact their own Civil War by making the required victory conditions lower, fighting several battles, and working out some point system to represent the over-all decline or advance of the fortunes of the respective sides in response to the results of these battles. The end result should be the same: one battle when one side, badly behind on points, will have to risk all in a fight to the finish.

Phillippi (42 BC). Antony and Octavian vs. Cassius and Brutus. The Republicans might have won had they better communications. Antony was Caesar's right hand man and learned his warfare with a professional. Octavian also proved a quick learner. In this instance, a fight to the death was the more likely result since Cassius and Brutus were rapidly losing support due to the Caesarians holding the reigns of power. If they didn't achieve a big victory in short order, their army would have been without much support.

Teutoburgerwald (9 AD). The defeat of Varus' two legions by Arminius (Hermann), a German who had been serving with the Romans and decided to change sides, stopped Roman expansion into Germany. The Germans here were better trained and led than the typical tribe, though the scenario cannot handily reflect this difference, as they apparently were troops who had had some formal training with the Romans. A problem exists in actually playing the scenario since the hills mentioned in the Remarks column, were deleted between the time the scenarios were made and the final map created. The best substitute is to have the Romans enter in the southwest corner, requiring that they march northward until they clear the woods on the left of the map, about mid way up. This was an ambush and the Romans found it difficult to deploy. Since intelligence is perfect in the play of the game, the Roman forces have to be forced to undergo an attack while not well deployed if any attempt at realism is to be successful. Victory conditions are based a little on hindsight. Considering that Augustus didn't avenge the defeat immediately, one can assume that Varus could not have accpeted many losses without at least getting relieved of his command. The Germans could take losses since their sole objective was to drive the Romans back over the Rhine.

Boudicca (61 AD). This battle would have made the Chinese Army proud. Probably one of the earliest human-wave battles, the Britons may have outnumbered the Romans by as much as 10-1 (figures vary) but to get that proportion with the number of units available would have cut the Romans down to four pieces. This scenario requires an ad hoc rules modification. The Romans only won against such odds by backing themselves into a narrow defile, impassable from the sides and rear, which forced the Britons to come forward in a narrow front, reducing the odds in the actual front lines to more manageable proportions. This can only be achieved in the game by assuming that the slopes where the Romans lodge themselves are impassable. Get two sets of pieces and double the force of the Britons. Using that modification with regard to traversing slopes, plus all of the advantageous rules for the Romans should produce a good result. As for victory conditions, the Romans had to stop the rebellion

which fed, for the most part, on success. Any victory here, particularly at those odds, would (as it did) take the fire out of the revolt. The Britons, on the other hand, had to eliminate each Roman force they faced as the Romans could bring up new legions for reinforcement.

Mons Graupius (79 AD). This battle was the last in Roman expansion into modern Scotland. It was selected more for the literary readers than its pure historical significance for it is the Pictish leader, Calgacus (Galgaich) whom Tacitus has utter the immortal condemnation of Roman imperialism: "For robbery, massacre and rapine they abuse the name of empire; and where they have made a desert they call it peace." Another political battle in its impact, the Romans probably could not afford to lose while the Picts were fighting for their homeland. One element present in this battle,and omitted from the scenario in the interest of keeping the pieces at a moderate level,was the chariot, of which the Picts had a good number. Those who can figure out how to fit chariot warfare into this scenario should try it - and let us know how it works out.

Ctesiphon (363 AD). The Sassanid (Neo-Persian) Empire gave the Romans fits in the later years of the early Empire and continued to do so until their defeat by Heraclius in the first part of the Seventh Century AD. This was a major battle of the period and allows the employment of a legion in the format after Constantine. Again, numbers are not clear here so proportions have been selected for some balance. Victory conditions are hard to justify here as it is unclear how hard-pressed the Persians felt themselves to be. If they felt they had their backs to the wall, obviously they would accept greater losses in trying to win. Probably neither side could afford an indecisive battle, politically.

Hadrianopolis (378 AD). Called the battle that ended infantry, by all accounts a better led Roman force could have won and subsequent infantry type victories showed that the infantry was never totally eclipsed if well led. However, the victory conditions here make it very hard to achieve the necessary Roman victory. The reason is more clear from a look at the map. Hadrianopolis (Adrianople) is modern Ederne, a good day's ride from Constantinople which did not, at that time, have its famous walls. If the Roman army, which was, presumably, all that could be scraped up at the time, could not destroy the Goths, there is every reason to assume that they would have pressed on to sack Constantinople. Thus, a victory which would have been satisfactory along the Danube would simply not do so close to the capital. The Ostrogoths, on the other hand, could take their losses and try again another day, as was a fairly common practice among the barbarians. One change in the scenario might make a better, and more realistic, balance. The use of byzantine cataphracts by the Goths is, of course, unrealistic. The Gothic cavalry was not noted for its mounted archers. Try limiting the Gothic heavy cavalry to melee capabilities, only.

Campus Mauriacus (451 AD). Incorrectly called the battle of Chalons, this was the great victory of Aetius and his mixed Roman-Gothic force over the Huns. The exact proportions are, again, unknown but the scenario reflects an example of the legion "mix" during the last century of the western Empire.

Here the Romans were fighting Atilla, a personality. His force depended upon him, personally. His death would cause disintegration of his forces. For the Romans, any victory other than a bloodbath would suffice.

Daras (530 AD). One of Belisarius' first great victories, it featured the Roman cataphracts in a dismounted as well as mounted mode. Although outnumbered, the Romans used the trenches in front of the city, hence the earthwork option. The fact that the Romans were infinitely better led does not affect the losses each side was willing to accept. Thus, who ever wins has to win big as, in fact, the Romans did.

Busta Gallorum (552 AD). Though Bellisarius ran most of the Italian Campaign, this was the victory of the eunuch, Narses. It did two things: dealt the first defeat to the Gothic cavalry and showed that Hadrianople was not indicative of anything. The infantry, when well led, could still stop cavalry. Narses dismounted his cataphracts in the center and used them as pure infantry. Here Totilla could afford to take losses as long as he won whereas Narses could not afford to lose too many lest the Goths muster a new army. This ended the wars in Italy but an indecisive victory by the Romans might not have had that effect.

Fantasy. To pit the two types of legions against each other is a natural but poses some sticky problems. Unquestionably the Bellisarian forces were less well disciplined than those of Marius. That was crucial to the form of the Marian legion: it could not win if not well trained and well disciplined. It is tempting, therefore, to allow the Romans legions of Marius a lower margin of victory than the cataphracts. Even an equal margin of victory requirement might seem sensible in the context of a fantasy. Nonetheless, the option was just the reverse for the practical reason that, while the Marians might in fact do well against the Bellisarians, due to the latter being mounted, they could not follow up a less than decisive victory with a pursuit. The reverse, however, was not true: the Bellisarians could pursue and history showed that the Marian legion, once broken, was quite vulnerable to mounted pursuit, as Crassus found out. One change should be made in the make up of the Bellisarian legion. Through oversight, the heavy infantry forces were omitted. Cut the Oriental Cavalry to 12 and add 12 swordsmen. To compensate for the superior training and discipline of the Marians, try giving them the Fortune Factor.

There are, obviously, a number of scenarios which could have been given but weren't. The many civil wars throughout the Empire provide fertile fields for pitting essentially similar forces against each other, making use of the restric tions that are suggested to reflect the decline in the legion.For example, the Milvian Bridge, between Constantine and Licinius is an ideal battle for this purpose. The Social Wars of the early First Century BC also provide an opportunity for pitting the legion against a slightly lesser, but perhaps more spirited, enemy. The vast majority of the Roman wars of expansion under Trajan or Marcus Aurelius are not too well recorded for the purpose of reconstructing a specific battle. We know Marcus Aurelius whipped Dacians in his spare time but little more. Still, there, too, is some room to try your hand at scenarios. The field is wide open - try your hand.