EIN'FESTE BURG...

Berlin '85 ; an Operational Analysis

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S&T issue games appear to be on an upswing at present and **Issue 79's "Berlin '85"** seems to me to be one of the "goodies". Its combination of a tried and true system plus a few clever additions to emphasise the peculiar nature of the hypothetical battle which it simulates produces a tense game for both players, with swift Soviet victory or drawn-out Soviet failure – and thus Allied victory – both on the cards. A few thoughts on the playing of this new game may prove of some use to "moderns" and others.

Force Evaluation

Soviet Forces.

First come the four motor rifle divisions, three Soviet and one East German, represented as in the **"Modern Battles"** series by nine motor rifle battalions, i.e. three regiments each of three battalions. The fourth (tank) battalion in each regiment is not shown but as Soviet practice is to break it down into platoon packets in a close-support role its supposed factoring-into the rifle battalion counters is logical. Also factored-in is the divisional howitzer regiment: designer David Ritchie has already explained that this reflects Soviet doctrine of deploying field artillery in a close-support role, firing over open sights, in operations in built-up areas and that it also avoids too great an accumulation of ranged-artillery units on the map. Only the divisional BM-21 rocket-launcher battalion has its own counter. A point of contention is the absence of the divisional tank regiment, either as a regimental counter or as three battalion counters. While tanks are of limited use in fighting in built-up areas (FIBUA) they nevertheless have a role as assault artillery, the more so as several armour-piercing rounds followed by HE are very good at bringing a building down: I cannot imagine that the regiment would be altogether left out of battle. However, there it is.

Secondly, there is the Soviet airborne division, a light-weight force as befits the necessarily light scales of support weapons available to an airborne formation, but having the notable advantage of being able to descend suddenly in the midst of the Allies.

The following breakdown of the five divisions' attack CF may be of interest:

Division	*Attack CF by Bus*	*Average*
6th Gds	6 x 4, 3 x 3	3.66
14th Gds	6 x 5, 3 x 3	4.33
19th	3 x 5, 3 x 4, 3 x 2	3.66
1st E German	3 x 5, 3 x 4, 3 x 3	4.00
103 Gds A/B	3 x 3, 6 x 2	2.33

Finally the nine counters of the 34th Guards Artillery Division tally with the nine battalions of an independent Front artillery division although the two counter-types do not equate exactly with the six 152mm battalions, three 130mm and one 122mm which make up the nine; nonetheless it is accurate enough, the ranges agreeing with those of the 130mm (27000 metres) and the 152mm (17300 metres), with a slight rounding-up in the latter instance.

Western Allied Forces

Taken by national contingents, these can be summed up as follows;

British. Four infantry battalions is one more than the long-standing make-up of British Forces Berlin, nor should they be shown as mechanised battalions although all contain a mechanised element and all are mobile. However don't let that spoil the fun. All have good defence CF and those with a 5-factor are liable to cost the Soviet forces *two* battalions in an Exchange CRT result. The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards squadron is under-rated by being depicted as a recce unit as opposed to the armoured squadron it is but this is off-set by the two good artillery batteries with their FPF of 2.

US. The backbone of the US force is the three battalions of the 6th Infantry Regiment (Berlin is unusual in having the three battalions of a US regiment in one location, but the 6th was already in Berlin in the era of the three-battalion, brigade-equivalent, infantry regiment.) The other units are rather a mixed bag, but note that tough-in-defence Special Forces unit; and the sole artillery battalion, weak as its CF is, is very important for the Allied player, as will be shown later.

France. David Ritchie says that, unable to obtain accurate information on the French contingent, he made it a 1967-type mechanised brigade (one mech infantry battalion, one armoured regiment and one artillery battalion). Certainly the 46th Infantry Regiment and the 11th Chasseurs a Cheval have been in the Berlin garrison for many years; the 46th have been there since 1947. Whether or not the 46th would include two companies of AMX tanks, bearing in mind the limited value of these in FIBUA, is debatable but as I am unable to obtain details of the current actual establishment I cannot be more specific although when I was the guest of the 46th more years ago than I like to think, they had even then a one-off establishment as the Berlin regiment. Note the defence strength of 6, doubtless thanks to those presumed AMXs.

Police. The West Berlin Police is very much a paramilitary force – I well remember in 1953 (There! It's out!) encountering a contingent of German infantry, leather equipment, marching-songs and all, on a route-march in the sequestered depths of the Grunewald, quite an experience in those post-war, pre-Bundeswehr days! At thirty-five units the police outnumber the combined Allied military forces, even if their CF is comparatively low as befits a lightly-armed infantry force.

Comparison of Forces

The Soviets are strong but brittle, thanks to the profusion of 'Ex' and 'Ax' results in the CRT, a CRT intended to reflect the high casualty rate which is a known characteristic of FIBUA. Maximum use of supporting artillery is required to keep the CRT column used in attacks as far to the right as possible; attacks at a modified differential of less than +6 are undesirable but nonetheless some attacks may have to be made on the +4,5 or even +2,3 columns, even given maximum CF; those Urban hexes are stinkers and are even less attractive when reduced to ruins. The Soviet player must be on guard against exchanging away his infantry in an orgy of over-enthusiastic attacks, even bearing in mind the principle of Economy of Effort. His trump card will be his airborne assault, a card which I advise *must* be played. (More of this later.) Nonetheless he must expect to lose four of the nine battalions in each of his divisions – and that's when he is throwing good dice!

The Allies have a tough defensive force in their infantry battalions (UK, 3x5, 1x4, US, 2x6, 1x5: Fr, 1x6): the 6s will, and the 5s are quite likely to, cost the Soviets *two* battalions in an Ex or Ax result. But the total of eight battalions will be quickly used up if committed to battle early and en masse. This brings us to the plentiful and invaluable police, one of whose roles will be to stem and then channel the initial Soviet advance and to inflict the first losses on the enemy. Even a 1-CF unit will take out a battalion in an 'Ex' or 'Ax' result and its placement in hexes which mandate a shift or 2 or 3 on the CRT will increase the likelihood of such a result.

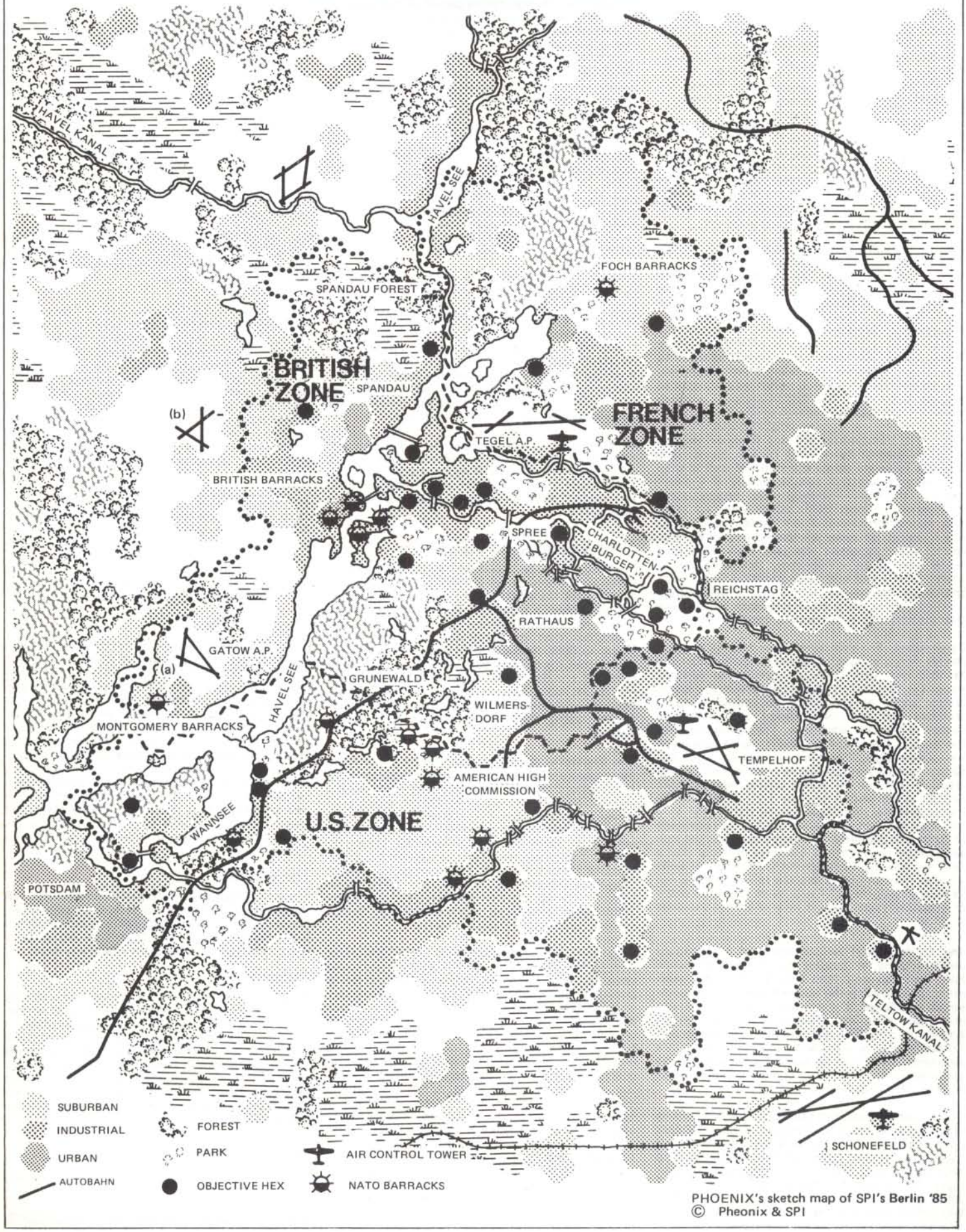
Soviet Objectives and Tactics

The Soviet player's main objective can be defined very briefly – win quickly! To achieve this he must overrun as many Objective hexes as soon as possible with as few casualties as possible in order to amass a total of Surrender Points sufficient to justify offering Honours of War with a good chance of obtaining Allied surrender on the spot. The acquisition of SP through elimination of Allied units (without exchange) will help to increase this total but must be regarded strictly as a bonus – and a pretty marginal bonus at that.

His chief tactic must be to break the crust of the Allied defence either by a hard blow at a weak spot or by infiltration through Urban areas where ZOC will have no effect on his advance, and then to hold open the corridor while his follow-up units pass through to the objective-rich interior. Advances astride roads for maximum speed of advance are advisable and, above all, a slugfest is to be avoided – the defence can probably be beaten into the ground in the end but the attacker is liable to collapse on top of the remains. The set-up positions of the Soviet divisions will dictate areas of offensive operations, which we will examine one by one.

South. This is the only sector where two Warsaw Pact divisions – the 14th Gds and 1st EG – are able to operate as a team; moreover these are the Soviet player's two strongest divisions. Much of the terrain is Suburban, affording quick movement for the attacker and a comparatively small CRT-shift

Berlin'85



PHOENIX's sketch map of SPI's **Berlin '85**

for the defender, and in addition the autobahn can become a Highway to the Reichstag once the defence is breached. Further to the east a concentration of Urban hexes offers the possibility of infiltration, provided that the defence is not too concentrated there. The US defender, although quite well off for units, has something like a 24-hex frontage to cover, which will task both his strength and his ingenuity to cover adequately. Furthermore, the southern or US sector of West Berlin contains a wealth of Objective hexes, including several barracks and Tempelhof Airport. BUT on the Soviet side is the railway line, a possible objective for a raid by US forces; the Soviet player should not dismiss this out of hand.

North. The 6th Division faces the French contingent, the weakest of the three Western Allies and initially located in Suburban hexes although a profusion of Urban and Industrial hexes offers a good fall-back position. Objective hexes are few but Foch Barracks (sometime the home of the Hermann Goering SS Division) should fall quickly and Tegel Airport is a very worthwhile objective.

West. The 19th Division faces a compact British force in good defensive terrain but within easy reach of the perimeter. The upper reaches of the Havel limit the defenders' ability to manoeuvre but there are several withdrawal routes to the eastern shore. On the other hand Gatow Airfield and Montgomery Barracks (sometime home of the author) offer a clutch of VPs to a diversionary attack; but it will take a reinforced regiment to seize them, provided that the Allied player has taken advantage of the two police supply hexes to position a garrison. The British sector is a tough nut and it will take luck as well as skill to crack it.

East. The Volkspolizei are not a major striking force and cannot move until Turn 3. Nonetheless they can infiltrate across the Wall and seek to snap up the odd Objective hex, especially if a deteriorating situation elsewhere has caused some thinning-out of West Berlin police units. At worst their very presence will divert Western police units which could be more profitably employed elsewhere; their aggressive use will learn the Allied player not to be complacent. (NB. The use of 'learn' in it's vile and ungrammatical sense, suggestive of inadequate schooling, is deliberately invoked here as being more suggestive and incisive than the correct but inadequate 'teach'!)

Conclusions. The southern sector affords the best chance for a successful Soviet advance, with the 1st EG and 14th Divisions working in concert. Avoid the temptation to concentrate in the south-eastern sector as experience has shown that the attackers can become crowded and unable to deploy to the best advantage. The obvious axis for the 1st EG Div is the autobahn, but a turning of the Allied right flank by a crossing from the Wansee can be very profitable – it can also be very disconcerting for an Allied player who has not hoisted in the import of Rule 5.26. The 14th Div should commit two regiments (6 battalions) to a thrust on the East Germans' right but it is advisable to keep one regiment in reserve to cover the railway further east until it becomes unlikely that a raid will now be made against it. The use of units of 34th Arty Div to screen the railway should not be discounted; the CRT will make the Allies chary of attacking them, even if he could spare the units to do so.

The north should be the scene of a secondary thrust seeking to by-pass the French left, seize Foch Barracks and then advance to Tegel, with some units holding the corridor open. Penetration across the Spree is a possibility, albeit a remote one. Note that the disadvantages posed to an attacker by the CRT will minimise the danger of a French attack to cut the L of C behind 6 Div's spearhead. Maximum air support points should be allocated to 6 Div until it comes within range of units of 34th Arty Div.

In the west the best that can be advised is a holding attack to keep the British pinned in Spandau and, given luck, to throw the defence sufficiently off balance to require police units to be diverted to help out. Gatow Airfield and Montgomery Barracks offer a total of 5 Surrender Points but if the Allied player has taken the precaution of moving two police units to hexes 3318(a) & 3327(b) it will take one regiment to do it, with the possibility of two losses in the resultant fight. In any event a too-headlong attack on Spandau may end with 19th Div reduced to a rump which can then be held up by a couple of police units while the remnants of the British contingent goes off to assist the French or Americans.

Despite the VPs that can be gained by not committing the airborne division, my advice is to commit it and to do so very early on. Its arrival in the centre of West Berlin will not only snap up some early objectives but will severely offset the Allies' advantage of having interior lines on which to switch units about. Moreover I consider that if the Soviet player has not won by Turn 5, when his VP-multiplier is still 5 for onboard units, then he won't win at all. The best area for a drop is the Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf area and possibly also the rough terrain between the Havelsee and the Grunewald: a secondary drop can be made on either Tegel or Tempelhof Airfields provided that lack of immediate opposition is likely to make such a drop at least 50% successful. Note that the Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf drop will be within reach of the main Soviet advance from the south, catching the Allies between two fires.

Last but not least, the 34th Artillery Division can have a secondary role of securing rear areas, bearing in mind the unkind-to-attackers CRT. Moreover if the division is set up in the southern corner of the map it is possible to place two or three of its battalions across the water from Potsdam, whence they can move north to near Spandau to provide much-needed support for 6th Div in its assaults on the French while the balance of the 34th moves rapidly eastward to support the other divisions from a south-central area.

In a nutshell, crack on, open up a corridor and then move through it to link up with the paras. To mix metaphors, the Soviet attack should open up a 'practicable breach' and not waste time and units in trying to make the walls of Jericho fall down in their entirety.

Allied Objectives and Tactics

Basically, deny the maximum feasible area of West Berlin to the Soviets for as long as possible, but do not attempt the impossible by trying to keep them out altogether: a perimeter within the city boundaries and the consequent concession of some objectives must be accepted. Force the Soviet player to fight, fight and fight again, but not to the extent that the military garrison is used up in short order. If a major Soviet break-in is achieved then try to set up a sort of 'citadel' in the triangle Spandau – American High Commission – Rathaus (1620), using the British barracks as a supply source.

The invaluable police units should be allocated to three tasks and placed accordingly. These tasks are (1) Forward screen to check and channel the various Soviet advances. (2) Direct support of Allied military forces. (3) Internal Security. Units in the last role should be deployed to cover Vopo infiltration from the east (watch the U-bahn!)., occupy Tempelhof and Tegel in sufficient strength to cover these fields with ZOC, and set up another unit-plus-ZOC ('carpet' to welcome Soviet paratroops dropping into that sensitive Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf area (note also that the two British artillery batteries can help in this task).

In general, make the maximum use of Industrial and Urban hexes, not only for their defensive value but also for their high likelihood of being converted into still-tougher Ruin hexes, courtesy of the Soviet artillery. Bear in mind that an Urban hex is at its most useful when it has a good 'apron' of ZOC; a unit deep in an Urban area will simply be bypassed unless a line of adjacent hexes is occupied, a manpower-intensive gambit. Do not overstretch the limited military resources; channel the advance and then meet it head on with a defensive line – and defence in depth will be necessary to bog down the attackers in a series of assaults, for a crust, however strong, will not suffice.

Retreats. First, note Rule 7.75; a unit retreating into an Urban hex can stop there, regardless of the number of hexes called for by the CRT, provided that it does retreat one hex. This is a very useful option and must never be overlooked in the heat of playing.

DO retreat when;
(1) The unit can retreat into a Ruin hex from a less -strong hex.
(2) Retreat can be made into an Urban hex with a ZOC.
(3) When the alternative is useless isolation (e.g. in a clutch of Urban hexes)

Use 'They Shall Not Pass' (TSNP);
(1) When the unit is already in a Ruin hex or in an Urban hex with a ZOC (to stay put pins the attacker).

(2) When there is a good chance of the hex being converted into a Ruin by enemy bombardment in the attack just made.

(3) When a retreat – regardless of other circumstances – would enable the Soviet player to make an advantageous advance and compromise the defence.

(4) When, in addition to one of the above conditions, there is a 2/3 chance, or better, of TSNP being successful (i.e. D2 or D1)

Do not use TSNP when the *only* result will be an Allied unit left in an enemy ZOC and thus required to attack at odds (including shifts) which will make an Ae result almost certain.

Interdiction of the Railway. This is a task ideally suited for the otherwise weak US artillery battery. Deployed to a screened position north of the Teltow Kanal it should be able to bring down fire on the railway for five turns (25 VP!), and possibly for longer, given luck. In an Urban hex it will not be in an enemy ZOC even when enemy units move adjacent to it and it will have to be attacked to silence it, probably at the cost of yet another battalion to the Soviet player. Note (8.31) that an artillery unit is not required to make a 'normal' attack on an adjacent unit *unless it is in that unit's ZOC.*

An actual raid on the railway will bring in even more VP per turn of occupation and may, if the Soviets have advanced too precipitately, force two or three units to withdraw to chase the raider. The best unit to use for the job is the US military police unit; its 12-MF will get it quickly to its objective and its low CF makes it more readily spared for what is likely to be a 'death-ride'.

Honours of War.

The Soviet player is advised not to offer Honours of War unless he has amassed 26 or more SP, and in any case not until he has 21: a present of 20 VP to the Allies may lose him the game and two such presents will almost certainly lose it. Allowing for artillery interdiction, he would have to gain at least 180 VP to gain the excess of 120 necessary for even Marginal Victory: at a multiplier of 5 this require 36 Soviet units to have survived out of a total of 58: at a multiplier of 4, 45 units. This may sound easy enough but, believe me, the butcher's bill is a long one in this game. And perhaps now you will realise how important it is for the Soviet player to win the game by Turn 5 – and for the Allied player to stay in business until at least Turn 6.

The U-bahn

The rules allow *all* units to move underground; this seems rather unrealistic for armoured or mechanised units and I suggest that underground movement is restricted to police units and to 'leg' military units, i.e. those with the plain infantry symbol.

Epilogue

A good game this, as most of you who have already played it will, I hope, agree; despite initial appearances to the contrary, the result is by no means a foregone conclusion. Perhaps this article will add interest to future playings. For those of you who have not yet played **'Berlin '85'** but who mean to get round to it sometime, perhaps it may have heightened your resolve to do so; I hope that I will also have given you a better idea of how to go about what is a tricky game for *both* players.

Text for the Day

Judges, Ch 9, vs 52 and 53 (King James the Good, not NEB the Moron)