

Having a few men far back in Time helps swing the arrows round for operatives nearer the present to make a useful shift, but if everyone does this they may well pull in opposite directions and get nowhere. Occasionally a player will recall his Time changers and send out new ones with instructions to shift the arrows in an entirely different direction. It is a positive pleasure to watch an opponent's face as he makes shifts towards his "home" line only for you to help a bit more in the same direction so that the whole lot swings past him on to your own line, and so it goes on.

The optional rules introduce two new ideas, both related to each other, research and funds. In some scenarios a player may have a low grade computer or projector, so by hiring a different level of researcher, technician and spending cash, he may improve his equipment. This of course involves another table and more die rolls. Once successful a piece of equipment may be bought and put into operation. A training programme can also be tried out to accelerate the production of new operatives, increase intake or even allow re-training with a bonus in combat. Add to this rules for the cost of sending people back and forth in time related to operative type and it all sounds very intriguing. Also card sheeting is supplied with which to cover up your Bureau and you can never tell what an opponent has, or what he will do next.

Naturally, no game is without its problems, but in the case of **Time War** they are little quibbles more than anything else. The collection of ten charts on the separate cards are self explanatory and well set out; however, in the combat value table a Warrior is mentioned — presumably a slip of the pen as it should be a Warden. On the Log Sheets the Agents are not lettered correctly, there is no Agent G or H, but there are Agents I and J who are not mentioned — as I said, a quibble. A more serious fault is that on the Projection, Transfer and Recovery Accuracy Table there is an X result at the top and bottom of the die scale with no explanation. I assume this means no move, not death (being the only other alternative) as attrition is high enough without vapourising a poor guy before or after a mission! The rules book is well set out, but combat in relation to missions needs some chewing over before digesting. As for the optional rules on funding, they do provide more detail but can be little more than book-keeping. With an original fund of 750 units and 600 every four turns you have to be pushing it to go bankrupt; but they are optional so you take them or leave them.

All in all **Time War** is a fun game and the playing time of one or two hours is not too far out once you are used to the mechanics. Trying to out-do your opponents is mind bending at times and just to keep it that way the Historical Narrative at the end of the rules tells us that the designer of the Time Machine went back in time to be the father of a child, who in turn has a son who is the designer! He then helps this grandson develop the Time Machine but dies, of course as his younger self he is witness to this — the old Time Paradox of meeting yourself is certainly played here — and then goes back in time to be the father of a child, who has a son and so it goes on.

If you like the idea behind the game, there are various SF books which cover it. "The End of Eternity", by Isaac Asimov, has a Time Bureau similar to the game and follows an Agent in various goings on including the training of a youngster who will go back in Time to build the first Time Machine (gets repetitive doesn't it), but a future period wants it all stopped — as for what happens, read the book, but it involves that old, deadly timeless thing called Love. Harry Harrison's novel, "The Stainless Steel Rat Saves the World," is one of a series about a loveable rogue. In this book, his agency sends him back in Time to stop someone tampering with Time and wiping out the good guy's agency. A cat and mouse chase occurs even to the time of Napoleon — who was a manipulated puppet no less — now there is a thought. Of course, any reading list must include **The Time Machine** by H.G. Wells, a man who even wrote a wargames book. The question is, was H.G. Wells really a Sentinel of Yaquinto Publications, Inc. sent out to write a book so that one day a game called **Time War** could be published?

FROM THE NEVA TO THE MEUSE

R.M.W. Musson

Just in case you wonder what expansive campaign my title describes, I should put you out of misery straight away: the title is just a convenient way of bringing together two recent SPI releases in one article. These are **Bulge** and **Leningrad**, two of SPI's latest idea — **Capsule Games**. Now, while I welcome the size and playability of these little things, I do wish they could have found a better name for the series; wargames have a sober enough image without the need to make them sound like medicine into the bargain. Or are they going to exploit the idea for advertising, with the slogan "keep taking the capsules"?

Of the two games on the prescription today, **Bulge** is a divisional level treatment of guess what, and **Leningrad** is a simulation at a similar scale of the German attack on guess where in 1941. I shall start out with the similarities between the two games, and then treat their differences.

Physical examination first. Both the maps are exactly half the size of your standard folio-type map. Although that may sound small, remember that in many folio games (**Quatre Bras** and **Ligny** spring to mind) pretty well all the action is confined to half the map anyway. In both these games, especially **Leningrad**, the whole map gets a good going over. The **Bulge** map runs from the Westwall fortresses and Echternach in the east to across the Meuse at Namur in the west. The Germans start in the Westwall region and push west across the map until they can push no more, and similarly, in the **Leningrad** map, three hexes of E. Prussia are just squeezed into the bottom west corner, and **Leningrad** is over on the extreme eastern map edge; the Germans start in E. Prussia and have to push their way to Leningrad (and they do). Both maps are the usual quality one expects from SPI.

The counters: 100 for each game. Again, usual SPI produce, though I got a shock when I opened **Leningrad**. The U.S. Army? In Russia? No, they are Soviets, they're just dressed in U.S. green uniforms. Incidentally, I know the Red Army didn't wear red uniforms, but I *liked* the counters for **Panzergruppe Guderian**.

Each game has eight pages of rules, and these are presented in the manner of **Dresden/Eylau** and **Paratroop**, with contrasting light and bold typefaces. I might add that the rules are both clear and complete. **Bulge** also has a separate sheet with the game-turn record and victory point record track. Both are packed in 1" boxes.

There is one other thing both games have in common. They are both excellent fun.

Bulge is a Jim Dunnigan product, and (almost predictably) far and away the most innovative of the two. The character of the game is best illustrated by the sequence of play, which is basically combat-movement-combat. The first combat phase is a voluntary affair, in which you can disengage units locked in enemy zones of control, either by getting rid of the opposition, or trying to arrange an attacker retreat. The second combat phase, though, is compulsory, and every unit in an enemy zone of control must attack some unit. However, there are two combat results tables, one with the usual sort of Ar, Dr, Ex and so on; the other is mostly con-

tact results (i.e. no effect — very useful when you have to attack at low odds. The rules for exchange results are the reverse of usual practice — the attacker loses at most as many strength points as the defender. Therefore, if you attack a '4' with two '6's, an exchange result counts as defender eliminated. This is very useful for the German, who has, by and large, the bigger units. He is well advised not to throw in the smaller units he has at his disposal if he can avoid it — they are best used for cutting off retreats.

Victory points go to destroying enemy units, and, for the Germans, exiting units. For each game turn, two numbers are given. If, at any time, the number of victory points (German minus Allied) exceeds the first total, the Germans have won, but if it is ever less than the second figure, the Allies win. The game can therefore last any number of turns up to eighteen.

The players' notes suggest that those new to the game will probably start off by suffering a rash of German victories, but I found the opposite the case, curiously enough. The Allies' biggest advantage is their ability to interdict any bridge three hexes from an Allied unit, making it unusable by German units. Considering the heavy terrain, this slows the Germans down a lot, and especially hinders rapid out-flanking movements. Also, the towns that dot the map are very easily defended; not only do they contribute to a unit's defensive strength (combat differentials are used), but a unit in a town can ignore Dr and Ar results, a considerable advantage. The Allied player can therefore shift back from one line of strongpoints to another, until he has built up sufficient strength through reinforcements to counterattack. Once the counter-attack comes, the German has pretty well had it. The German must act quickly from the very beginning; punch hard and fast, and get as far west as possible as soon as possible; allow the Allies no chance to rally. A handful of bad die rolls at the start of the game can cripple the German's chance later on.

Of the game system for **Leningrad** I need say little; it is PGG writ small. The only major difference is the lack of a mechanised movement phase; everything else is there, untried units, over-run and all. This is an excellent game for those who like killing units. For the Germans not to eliminate anything they attack, at least for the greater part of the game, is relatively unusual. Of course, they don't get any victory points for it, but it's fun. **Leningrad** itself comprises four hexes, two of which are north of the Neva, and can only be reached from the other two. To win, the Germans must capture at least one of these hexes, two to get a strategic victory, and without losing too many panzers in the process. There are twelve game turns altogether, so if the German hasn't reached the gates of the city by game turn nine, he can give in. It is fatal for the German to get carried away with the slaughter; pressing on is vital. But of course, if the German sends the speedy panzers on ahead of the infantry, they may arrive at the suburbs of a fortified and well-defended city, reduced and out of supply, and quite unable to take the vital hexes. It is not enough for the German to do well, he must do brilliantly.

Finally, a word about solitaire. **Leningrad** suits the solo player admirably, since the German player calls the tune most of the time. **Bulge** is not quite so well suited, since there are air rules in which players select air missions secretly (assuming that both sides have air points available), with the option of picking "Combat Air Patrol" which nullifies an enemy ground support mission. However, when there is a choice, it is usually fairly obvious which option is most worthwhile for each player.

The diagnosis: two games which well deserve to be popular. Both are, shall we say, quick-acting, and playable in around two hours or so. An excellent antidote to Monster indigestion!

Postscript

And today's quiz question: the music for **Leningrad** was written by Shostakovich (his seventh symphony). Who wrote the music for the forth-coming **Stalingrad**?

Answer to quiz question: Khachaturian (of sabre-dance fame), who has a suite to his credit entitled "The Battle of Stalingrad".