THE RETURN OF THE $2.95 QUICKIE

Metagaming's MicroGames are small, fast-playing, and inexpensive. But not trivial. A MicroGame is a classic war-game...that you can put in your pocket and play over lunch. Each MicroGame includes a rulebook, an 8½" by 14" (or larger) game map, and 42 to 112 counters. More play for less money? Play a MicroGame and see.

MicroGame 2...

CHITIN: I
THE HARVEST WARS

Call it summer. There are seven seasons on this world...but now is the time of harvest. The dun-colored workers leave the hive, moving into the valleys to gather the crops.

But other hives want those crops, too. A horde of gleaming fighters — spiked travesties of the busy workers — tears into their midst. Then the counterattack comes, and warriors rend warriors. The small, spidery commanders are as careless of their own lives as they are of their soldiers'. Losing a few units doesn't matter. Nothing matters except victory, and the food victory brings.

No quarter will be asked, and none can be given. It is the time of the Harvest Wars.

Game design by Howard Thompson; illustrated by Paul Jaquays

Chitin is a tactical version of Metagaming's upcoming Hymenoptera. Intelligent insects war for space and food, breeding ever-more-fearsome warriors. The objective is to bring back Harvest Chits — or enemy bodies. The Hive must eat...

MicroGame 4...

WARPWARS

WarpWar is a game of interstellar maneuver and tactical combat. The players design their own ships, giving each its own offensive, defensive, and movement capability. Ships move through space — or jump along the warplines that connect certain stars — to gain control of enemy base stars.

WarpWar uses a unique diceless combat system. When ships clash, each player selects movement and combat power allocations for each of his units. Cross-reference determines what damage is done to each ship. No chance is involved...you must outguess your enemy. Advanced rules introduce "system ships" which cannot move from star to star unless carried by a warp ship — but are cheaper to build — and a "technology" factor which gives newer ships an advantage in combat.

Game design by Howard Thompson; illustrated by Winchell Chung

METAGAMING CONCEPTS

$2.95 each
$2.50 for subscribers to The Space Gamer.

Coming up: Rivets, Wizard, and Erewhon.

Box 15346
Austin, Texas 78761
Where We're Going

Well, I know I said WWG would be gone last issue. As it turns out we've got more to say than ever. This issue starts Steve's game designer's column which will be devoted to games in various stages of design. WWG will cover other matters and looks like it will continue. I won't get out of writing it, or putting thoughts in order. First order of business is our decision to discontinue sale of other publishers' products. We may stock selected games that are real standouts for TSG subscribers only. But, our standard service of selling SF&F games by others will be discontinued. This has been in the works almost from the time we started the practice. Our 'cover-all' approach in sales with the discounts for TSG subscribers has been popular and we know some will miss it. Our reasons for dropping other publishers' games are good ones.

1. Quality of other games we've carried has been sporadic. We can't screen everything adequately and readers gripe just as much no matter who publishes it. Selling marginal games by others hurts OUR reputation.

2. Delivery from others has been erratic and non-existent. Those waiting for Star Emperors or who got caught in the White Bear & Red Noon out-of-print bind will agree. Our small servicing staff finds work multiplied when other publishers pass on their availability problems to us.

3. Price changes and adjustments by other publishers cause more poor service and wasted time. When we tell readers prices have changed it slows up everything. We have to know prices well in advance since ads have to go out well in advance of appearance. We aren't accepting ANY more orders for Star Emperors delivery and price increase problems have caused us to quit on SE completely. This is only one example.

TSG will continue full coverage of all SF&F gaming. In fact, you'll start seeing more improvements in service items like news and plugs. There will also be a continuing large number of reviews. The best TSG news is that we keep our increased page count and a color cover while dropping back to the $1 per issue cost. This has been made possible by an increase in circulation and a decision to put a bit more budget into each issue. TSG doesn't make a profit but we do keep it near break even. As circulation rises, improvements become possible.

I guess the main reason for dropping other publishers wasn't even mentioned above. We're going to put all our time into our own activities. We'll watch what others do and report it. But, we will spend our full effort on Metagaming, doing our own thing. I think we'll all be happier for it.

As this is written, MELEE is being shipped out, and WARPWAR is rapidly coming to completion. We have an ad for WARPWAR elsewhere and it probably won't be early for you to order. September 1 is the projected date and it will probably be a bit ahead of that.

The computer? It's waiting on a move so there's some place to put it. The cash to cover that project is pretty much in hand in our savings. It looks like our Patron Subscribers will have made the difference in the computer. Our Patron Subscribers will also get first crack at playtesting computer games by mail. After the computer has 'paid back' savings we'll use our patron funds for other special projects. The way it's working out, our Patrons will provide a special fund that will let us do about one neat thing a year, we otherwise wouldn't get to do. Our Patrons will also get first crack at some things, which is only fair.
DESIGNER'S NOTEBOOK

The big news this month is MELEE. As advertised in TSI 11, it's a fantasy MicroGame for archaic weapons - a new concept in board games. It's standardized on a hex grid, with each counter representing one man, animal, or monster. What you didn't read in the review was that MELEE is the first component of an entire fantasy-role-playing system. The overall name for the system is THE FANTASY TRIP. We think it'll be the next evolutionary step in fantasy gaming... bring it to Order Chaos, one might say. It's our most ambitious project yet.

The FANTASY TRIP started as an attempt to design a more playable RPG game system. But we wanted well-organized rules, streamlined action, and all the bugs out. THE FANTASY TRIP has evolved into much more. The first large segment - LABYRINTH - will give you subterranean adventure, monsters, magic, and the rest of the 'standard fantasy-game' package. The main innovations here are play-aids, clean rules, and an integrated hex movement/combat system that works. Both playing out of LABYRINTH are the other components.

WIZARD is the magic equivalent of MELEE, where MELEE gives you a preview of the hack-it-out combat, WIZARD will be a stand-alone game of sorcerous battle. Both are entirely compatible with THE FANTASY TRIP's overall system... they're PART of it.

In other words, you'll have nothing to unlearn when the big game is out. These two segments give you the meleescale combat you'll need when things get sticky in the big game. The MELEE/WIZARD system will eliminate arguments over the validity of character arrangements of characters and "who can do what and when.

A "stand-alone" version of the FANTASY TRIP is also in the works. It, too, will be fully compatible with the role-playing system. You'll get a map of part of the TFT world, Cidri, plus the counters to play campaign games - and leader counters to represent your role-playing characters. Included will be "straight" set-up-and-play scenarios... and rules to let you take your role-playing characters' wealth to build forts, castles, and armies.

The Monster Book will come out as a supplement to THE FANTASY TRIP. It will contain some advanced rules - plus the largest monster/creature/vorin list yet assembled for any game anywhere. It won't be "just another supplement", it'll be largely compiled from material you've seen right here. We plan to include (with suitable editing) the best of the nasties sent in by gamers. And you'll be credited - by name - right there with your contribution. We know we don't have a monopoly on ideas, so we plan to pick as many off as we can, from right from the start. We'll cheerfully grab anything good that you send in - but we'll put YOUR name on it.

We're also working up some solitaire labyrinth scenarios. These will come out in Micro Format, you'll need MELEE and WIZARDS to play them. Each one will be a programmed adventure... several players can go through, but only person can do it, by reading the instructions for each corridor and room. The first one (tentative title: FINAL EXAM) is now being tested.

And there's one other FANTASY TRIP project in the works, so wild, I'm not going to write about it yet. Look for it about the middle of next year. Of course, if things go well, you might be reading about it here next month. (Steve, that's blatant teasing - HT) (Yep - ED.)

At any rate, we're working hard on THE FANTASY TRIP - and enjoying it tremendously. The LABYRINTH section ought to be ready by late this fall. No promises, though. This has to be PERFECT before it goes to the printer. We think it'll set a new standard for fantasy games, and we want to live up to our own expectations.

Anyway, back to MELEE. It, the companion and WIZARD are complementary parts of TFT's combat system. When we worked them out, we realized they made perfect stand-alone Micros.

(Originally, we thought about putting both into one microgame, but we would have had to cut too much out to make them fit.) So when I talk about MELEE, I'm also, in a way, talking about WIZARD.

In MELEE, each fighter has two attributes: strength and dexterity. (WIZARD adds a third one - IQ.) Players don't roll for these. Instead, each character starts with 8 in each attribute, and the player gets another 8 to split between them as he likes. You can have an average fighter, a dextrous wizard, or a powerful clod. But you NEVER start with a superman or a total oaf; all beginning fighters are equivalent.

Having set up your TP and DX, you pick armor and weapons. The stronger you are, the bigger a weapon you carry. But more damage you'll do if you hit. The more armor you wear, the better-protected you are, but the worse your DX gets. For more protection, you'll abandon one of your weapons (everybody gets two) and carry a shield instead.

Movement takes place on a hex system. It seems so obvious, you wonder why it wasn't done years ago. But they missed it and it works. The less armor you wear, the more you can move. Each fighter has a tag telling anyone coming into one of his 3 fronts becomes "engage" and has to stop and, maybe fight. If you strike at one of your own, your DX is effectively increased.

Engaged figures can move freely as long as they're not engaged. Engaged figures may only move one hex at a time (unless they get a chance to disengage and run); figures in hand-to-hand combat hang in there, cleaving each other to shreds.

Combat is handled by a two-roll system. Your first roll determines if you hit (without a giggle and a giggle at that); the second determines damage.

Figures can be human, elf, dwarf, hobbit or, gobelin, or, hobglobin.

You can also have a giant or a gar-goyle (these are more than a match for two men). Animal counters are provided for dogs, pigs, and snakes.

Beginning players should fight one-on-one until they get the feel of it, but the game is much more interesting when four fighters on a side. It moves more slowly when you have a real mob, but the tactical possibilities are endless. A force B to reach next to C, thus engaging him there, so A can disengage, throw his hammer at B, and unslings his crossbow to shoot D - except E is challenging with pole weapon... better hope he trips when he jumps over the late, lamented F.

We did most of the playtesting on this with miniature figures - I cannot describe how NEAT it is to actually see the battle being played out, especially when you have a good opponent and the figures are well-painted. Nevertheless, the counters supplied with the game (thanks to Liz Danforth) very good. Each counter is 3/4" square (giants are bigger, of course), and shows a fighter and an identifying initial. But when you learn the rules, get yourself an enemy, a big hexsheet, and thirty figures, and play out a MOD scene, you will learn some interesting tactics.

The other thing about this one, of course, is that it does not have to be a two-player game. We did some three-cornered playtesting, which worked; and in the FANTASY TRIP tests, each of a half dozen players manipulated two or three characters on a big map. Or, going the other way, you could play solitaire, trying out different weapon, armor, and tactical combinations.

I'm really please with MELEE.

There's a lot more I'd have liked to get in; some of that will be in the Space Gamer, of course. But on the whole, it's a good game. I'm pleased to have finally got it out of my hair, so I can work on other things.
GAME INTENT

by Lynn Willis

Every fantasy and science fiction simulation I know is worth playing--if not as a steady date, at least as an acquaintance. A handful are memorable apart from specific games and opponents. This intrinsic appeal of the games should not be confused with brilliance, aptness, or ease of game system mechanics, though mechanics are the game's bones. It seems to me that F&SF games, uniquely, are honored to the extent that they bring to life the universe they depict, and that this is not totally related to the success of the game as a game. Alliveness is chiefly a matter of game intent.

Consider Sorcerer and White Bear and Red Moon (1st ed.)

Sorcerer finely renders an unusual combat system and stops at that, apparently because its premise became a joke as the game evolved. Why include irony and cynicism in the scenario rationales unless you want to discourage belief in the "reality" of the game? A satirical game would not make game mechanics and tactics so serious and impose a new and instructively different from the steadiness and commitment evident in StarForce, Sorcerer's formulaic predecessor. Commentary and rationales indicate that StarForce was felt to be realistic--evocative--deep, while that Sorcerer is not. WB&RM, on the other hand, became a way of life for its designer, and while there are jokes, they are not such as to make the game itself inconsequential.

After presenting a combat system and scenarios, Sorcerer concludes. The manual, in its still-expanding cloud of special units, expressing by a participatory fecundity the essence of magic. In comparison, Sorcerer's system; though not as socially astute as in Darwinist selective and radiation adaption), but in the main we get a close sketch of MI (Mobile Infantry) training and small unit tactics (See Phil Kosmet's fine article in Moves-'32 for more information; better, read Heinlein's book.)

Starship Troopers and its two-page rationale (Sorcerer had a half-page) introduces an increasingly compassionate growth of many races. Sorcerer's scenarios stack meaningless names and dates. It underwrites no moral system; no moral problem unifies it. No good or evil exists, and the needs are characterless. StarForce's map is a service in itself, because it portrays nearby stellar relationships in an easily comprehended format, information not otherwise quickly available. Sorcerer's map has no meaning beyond the game.

In terms of scale and system, StarForce and WB&RM are as unlike as can be, but they respect themselves, and the people who buy them. Sorcerer's combat system is better than either, but (like Outreach) it is not so much incomplete as it is under-complete. There is so much more in the game universe than occurs in the game that nitpickers like myself feel obscurely cheated. (See Imperium-I for some very interesting and instructive scenarios; for Outreach as well as the above.)

Starship Troopers, Rift Trooper, StarSoldier, Starguard, and Ogre are round tactical games set in the future. All dealing with armored infantry, they owe a debt of peren- tage to Heinlein's novel, Starship Troopers (1959), one of a handful of SF novels to take war as a subject (as opposed to the effects of war). Heinlein can be a stimulating writer of social philosophy. It is regrettable that, once in the Campbell mold, he rarely escaped its oblig- ations; always in its still-expanding cloud of special units, expressing by a participatory fecundity the essence of magic. In comparison, Sorcerer's system; though not as socially astute as in Darwinist selective and radiation adaption), but in the main we get a close sketch of MI (Mobile Infantry) training and small unit tactics (See Phil Kosmet's fine article in Moves-'32 for more information; better, read Heinlein's book.)

Starship Troopers and its two-page rationale (Sorcerer had a half-page) introduces an increasingly compassionate growth of many races. Sorcerer's scenarios stack meaningless names and dates. It underwrites no moral system; no moral problem unifies it. No good or evil exists, and the needs are characterless. StarForce's map is a service in itself, because it portrays nearby stellar relationships in an easily comprehended format, information not otherwise quickly available. Sorcerer's map has no meaning beyond the game.

In terms of scale and system, StarForce and WB&RM are as unlike as can be, but they respect themselves, and the people who buy them. Sorcerer's combat system is better than either, but (like Outreach) it is not so much incomplete as it is under-complete. There is so much more in the game universe than occurs in the game that nitpickers like myself feel obscurely cheated. (See Imperium-I for some very interesting and instructive scenarios; for Outreach as well as the above.)

Starship Troopers, Rift Trooper, StarSoldier, Starguard, and Ogre are round tactical games set in the future. All dealing with armored infantry, they owe a debt of peren- tage to Heinlein's novel, Starship Troopers (1959), one of a handful of SF novels to take war as a subject (as opposed to the effects of war). Heinlein can be a stimulating writer of social philosophy. It is regrettable that, once in the Campbell mold, he rarely escaped its oblig- ations; always in its still-expanding cloud of special units, expressing by a participatory fecundity the essence of magic. In comparison, Sorcerer's system; though not as socially astute as in Darwinist selective and radiation adaption), but in the main we get a close sketch of MI (Mobile Infantry) training and small unit tactics (See Phil Kosmet's fine article in Moves-'32 for more information; better, read Heinlein's book.)
novel. ST in every conceptual, developmental, or physical way, is superior. I do admire the ST "kid" rule which has the MI's ploughing furrows for hundreds of meters when they change direction (like Wily Coyote). ST reproduces the book so exactly that game feels curiously old-fashioned and safe. Weaponry has advanced since Heinlein wrote the novel, and in re-reading it I wondered how well the MI would fare on today's battlefield--advances in PGM's would certainly doom them by A.D. 2000. For my taste, the game is also handicapped by amateurish artwork and a smearable map apparently mastered from cooked antipasto.

The game plays immaculately, however, and the programmed rules reflect the care of its design. The last pages of the rules are montages of printed "evidence" mostly drawn from situations in the novel. Like the artwork, this good idea is not well-executed, but as a whole Starship Troopers wants to evoke its game universe, and the rules never lapse in tone. It is not as conceptually beautiful as StarForce, and not as sophisticated, but it wants to be. That is respectable.

StarSoldier descends immediately from StarForce. Like Starship Troopers, I suspect that SS's potential was blunted by the need to conform to a game-world already in print. Steve List's article, also in Hooves-32, provides SPG rules and suggests some of the impossibilities mandated by the linked rationale with StarForce. The game combines Sniper's si-moves with StarForce's split-phase task allocation system, so counter density remains very low, and interest accumulates on individual counters in a way that Starship Troopers used to be. Both sides are mobile, also not true of the Avalon-Hill game, though SS's low TPA's sometimes work for SS's Nova situation in a game-world of nearly omnipotent movement and fire capacity. Weaponry is unsurprisingly analogous to today's: support platforms (tanks), energy beams (rifles), launched weapons guided (PGM's) and unguided (LAW's), opacity grenades (smoke), orbital bombardment (off-map artillery). Homing missiles do add a new feeling. In concept, jargon, and play-process, StarSoldier is much more "science fictional" than Starship Trooper.

They are quite similar in gross elements of play, however, and since the weaponry is the thing in a tactical game, both games could be profitably up-gunned by weaponry new in what it does, not in what it is called. Lacking that decisive advantage, most players grant for the game easier to play--Starship Troopers. It is entirely reasonable that TSG rates Troopers .6 higher than StarSoldier.

StarGuard will provide some interesting weapons for either of the games above--though for conversion beams and toxix explosives are suggestive--and any player would do well to examine this miniatures game rulebook, for it is a locker of good ideas. As soon as you encounter StarGuard's variety of descriptions and capacities, it becomes apparent that part of the problem with StarSoldier is that the units are simply so strong and that nothing can affect them except enemy units. This is chess-like highly abstract, and prevents that interaction with the subtleties of map and rules which reinforce the illusory reality in the mind of the player.

Conceptually, Ogre is the most successful tactical SF game. Its tiny design is bent completely to the task of evoking the terror provoked by the unstoppable cybernetic tanks--ogres, as they are called. Using a simplified CA system the long, narrow map funnels the impenetrable Ogre toward your deservedly ponderous HQ, and that bit of card-board takes on the power of the hand of doom. I find the multi-Ogre battles more convincing, because the units dilute the Ogre's nightmarish singularity.

Ogre is quite limited in what it tries to do, and this may be a hint to Troopers and StarSoldier that the time spent developing all those scenarios might be better spent in creating more depth to one or two version of a game-world. On the other hand, after a number of games of Ogre players will legitimately ask where the heavy nuclei bombs are kept, and where their delivery systems are, and why there are no provisions for splitting Ogres with magnetic dust, spray paint, etc etc. The disadvantage of small game systems is that you ram your head against a wall once in a while, the nice thing about Ogre is that you don't care.

Consequently, although basic furniture must remain the same, much remains to be accomplished in the ground tactical game, both a la Heinlein and in general (i.e., single combat with greatly expanded monitoring, fox and hounds situations, alien life forms and motives (Chitin I starts on hexagonal fields, alien environments a la Hal Clement, and you will be able to add more). A simulation game by definition is the interaction of a game system with a game environment; in FAS gaming we have the rare opportunity to explore both sides of that definition. If I see any basic problem with the tactical games discussed, it is that they stop within the bounds of safety--let's have some that are wild.

In large measure the quality of game stems from the designer's resolve to use the freedom available; I do not see any way to create FAS games which are both safe and worthy of remembering.
PLAYING WITH FIRE
by Edward C. Cooper

The summoning of Godsfire would be an event of unprecedented catastrophic consequences. Imagine it: a million lives, living, breathing, human beings - an entire heart of civilization - fleets, machines, industries, swept away with the instantaneous flick of a switch... the all encompassing, blindly, boldly, government expanding outward, erasing years, decades, centuries worth of knowledge in a few brief moments of thermonuclearihilation. The path back up the face of time will be long and uncertain.

The calculated, wholesale destruction of life in the NARIM cluster by the deliberate triggering of Godsfire may then seem even more inconceivable. On the surface, there appears nothing to gain through such a wanton act of racial homicide. Yet underneath, the threat is real; constant and lurking. The Cluster Buster Rule presents an interesting paradox for military consideration: Winning too handily can be just as deadly as losing. The rule, being optional, can be thrown out of the campaign scenario, and play would indeed be very different - and very dull. The illusion of life and all its intricacies would not be present.

The vanquished NG, beaten back to one system, is still a formidable foe. The ultimate weapon of Godsfire is technical knowledge to all. Within the present framework of the period, this is reality. By the same reality, an ill-fated NG will not use the only means of possible survival, taking as much of the opponent along with it as possible.

What is there for the dying to lose? Nothing - but this is no revelation. Surprisingly, there is all to gain if planned correctly. The monosystem government has learned the manipulation of the fire and is about to re-emerge. Rebirth through death... Godsfire! An entire squadron moves outward into the depths of deep space; the ultimate weapon of a doomed government. Ten ships of the line transit and form, combined, the strength of nineteen. Waiting... Planetside, preparations for the holocaust are well underway. NG are shifted back from the present attention to land and dispersal in maximum strength to insure some will survive. Above, the enemy ships do not seem like other planets, lights to the people below. PD's dig in. They too, are waiting... On the other edge of the cluster, self-declared vector valiant in celebration, openly parodying his vast fleet, unaware of the disaster about to befall them...

Through the triggering of Godsfire, a monosystem NG can turn disadvantages into advantages. Logically, the monosystem does not have as many systems to administer. Just as good strategic manipulation through the social interface can increase wealth and power, the social interface can also be used to create rapid social deterioration and disorder in times of war. Production and Equal Purchasing can become an overwhelming handicap to the multisystem government whose saved Gross National Product is cut in half with two regions of every allied planet devastated. Surviving regions of the multi-system or COMBINE government can also be expected to be of a higher economic level than those of the monosystem. Prosperity comes with the accumulation of power. Thus, gaps between industry and agricultural balances, when found, will be wider. A drop in economic levels of surviving regions will be greater for the Comine in these cases.

The monosystem will not escape its own creation; levels will drop here too. But the point remains; the Combine must administer and balance an array of regions with natural selection, the situation on some is going to be worse than others. Under normal conditions, resources and capital can readily transferred to a devastated region on a more troubled planet. With the occurance of Godsfire, planetary parties may not as readily recognize the needs of the NG, attempting instead to hoard supplies for themselves. Tottering allegiance levels and war problems associated with cash deficiencies and present loan defaults may handcraft the NGs efforts to affect a cure through forced taxation or loans.

The capital and resources necessary to stabilize a stellar community can closely resemble a geometric progression one system to one, two systems to four, three systems to eight. Note, as the system number increases arithmetically, capital outlay is required doubles. This directly relates to several areas: counter subversion costs, raising economic level costs, and (among them) and to production and equal purchasing inefficiencies - such as having to "throw away" money to equalize spending on a planet during production to keep allegiance levels high. The NG can ill-afford revolts breaking out in the first few turns after the epochal disaster of Godsfire.

The biggest handicap the Combine government faces is "overextension and underdevelopment." Production is now too small to maintain present size. Economic stimulaion are not adequate to meet rising social needs. The monosystem has less size to spend, half the budget to balance. Though weak, its production is adequate to maintain its small size. Forces are concentrated on one area, augmenting what combat strength is left. Greater security is possible. It presents no outward threat to the other surviving national governments in the NARIM.

And what of raising economic levels after the trauma of Godsfire has passed? Economic stimulation will be necessary on the road to reconstruction. Only moderate controlled regions may have their economies soon restored.

The glaring factor now in favor of the monosystem becomes apparent: the monosystem player will have an advantage in realignment during social interface to be predominately moderates. Moderates produce AGs and AGs will be the main weapon system in fighting a primarily ground-based defensive war. The AG gives strong defense and some punch offensively. It can exploit any weakness found, and thus prolongs survival. A majority of extremist parties will be found within the Combine as people rise to the war spirit; the smell of victory. Power within the Combine will center around the NG as the war is carried to the defender. There will also be a need to protect the widely spread allied systems from other neutrals who may decide on hostile intervention.

As a result of these trends, quick development is possible for the monosystem-should Godsfire appear. The Combine will run the risk of revolt when trying to change parties, and survival may be widespread social problems already present.

If the monosystem shares the risk, it can exercise its greater flexibility in changing production emphasis through party realignment. The moderate party can go either extremist or reactionary. Extremist can only go to reactionary after it has become moderate. There is no direct route. The Combine takes more chances of revolution and more reaction time to achieve change.

True, the Combine, having more planetary regions, will probably have a proportion of moderate
governments equal to the monosystem. Once again however, on a per capita basis, the amount of AGs produced by the Combine relative to that produced by the monosystem, will not be enough to fulfill the NEED felt within the reaches of the Combine. And supply on demand is essential in GODSFIRE.

A shift in production emphasis will be further delayed by the Combine NG as maximum production will again be placed on the SQD only this time to replace losses and protect a now vulnerable empire. (Neutral NGs may find this period of chaos an excellent opportunity to reintroduce expansions of their own.) Unlike the isolated monosystem, the Combine will have to carry on heavy commerce (and quickly) between planets after Godsfire, in order to "re-establish" Alliance. AGs will not provide the secure protection for such a shift of cash and resources.

Diplomacy should not be passed up either. There will be much of it both before and after the appearance of Godsfire. It would be very distressing to a neutral NG if the threat to evoke Godsfire occurred while it was in the depths of space. Even with "grounded" NGs, everything they have built up is at stake and they are not even involved. The threat forces them to become involved. (This makes the galactic situation very tense and dangerous, especially when among the neutral NGs there are those whose "neutrality" may be a cloak of disguise for their own schemes.)

Somehow, it is naturally assumed the perpetrator of Godsfire will be the one to lose esteem with the neutral governments. This is a common illusion. There is nothing the neutral government can do to prevent the monosystem from a conscious triggering of Godsfire. Sympathy, if fact, is probably on the side of the monosystem, as the other NGs in the Narym are probably small in size also. Only the monosystem chose to fight—maybe because it controlled two systems instead of one at the outset of hostilities.

Yet, because it does not want to see Godsfire appear, there are many steps which can be taken against the Combine to force it into a more reasonable position concerning the existing boundaries or disagreements, subversion attempts, alliances by the neutrals, active support of the monosystem, even threats of retaliation after Godsfire erupts.

There are many degrees of persuasive diplomacy that can be employed. The basic point is, without proper restraint by the Combine, the major strength of the Combine can be used as its functional weakness as relates to the appearance of Godsfire.

In a society where each government holds the key to total destruction of all, violent force may not be, in the strict sense of the words, a proper response or solution to solving problems (winning). Change must come gradually in a complex society such as the Narym, in order for the many factions leading civilization to adjust accordingly. Rapid change can lead to disaster: there is no time for the "decision structure" of the Narym to work.

Military force may be a partial solution to problems, used correctly, but when one side starts losing too much, to a point where they FEEL they have nothing else to lose, military force can blossom in Godsfire!

The victor of GODSFIRE will have to overcome the alienation of the smaller governments. Active diplomacy and a delegation of power in the decision making process is a revolutionary but effective answer. This gives time for decision making processes to work efficiently. Military force—violent, military force should be used only in the extreme. Don't make a diplomatic policy out of it! The "winning" player must take steps to "tone down" his strength—not using it often might not be such a bad idea! Overplaying superiority by using a hammer to crack a vase will only nail shut a player's own casket.

To be successful, a player must insure the smaller NGs always have more to lose through the appearance of Godsfire, than they do to gain. The difficulty is real and threatening. A solution is still in the balance.

Society CAN endure, and might (or might not) learn—HOW to play with fire.
STAR TYPES IN STARFORCE

by Norman S. Howe

In TSG #11, Robert C. Kirk wrote an article allowing gamers to play STELLAR CONQUEST using the STARFORCE 3-D map recommended assigning star classes at players' discretion, maintaining the same balance of star classes as in SC, for the ease of the players. As STARFORCE uses real star systems, arbitrary spectral classification is somewhat unrealistic. The true classes are discoverable; and this article is an attempt to depict the actual state of affairs in SC's immediate neighborhood.

First, SC occurs in a very unique star cluster. It is young, and contains a high proportion of the class G stars similar to our own. There are no white dwarfs, which result from stellar collapse at old age. The cluster is an ideal one in which to search for habitable worlds.

In contrast, the local stars are much older. Several stars have reached the White Dwarf stage; the intermediate supergiant phase would probably obliterate any habitable planets on such stars, and lower the value of planets of companion stars in multiple systems. As well, under present technology, the chances of finding habitable planets are probably lower than is suggested in SC. Stephen H. Dole and Isaac Asimov have published an excellent book on this subject.1

If we assume that technology permits us to use more marginal environments (technology developed from control pollution, perhaps?), the situation more closely resembles SC. Finally, the percent stellar composition by spectral class is different from SC. Class G stars are less than half as common; class K stars occur twice as frequently, and there is a dearth of B and F class stars (there are 2 "A" stars and 1 "F" star; some of the White Dwarfs are secondarily A and F, but their dwarfish states render them dubious choices for habitation.)

A partial list of useful stellar data has been assembled in tabular form. Each entry lists the star name as it appears on the STARFORCE map, and the spectral classification of the star(s) in the system. The grid co-ordinates are also given for some of the stars, where similar numbers may cause confusion, and for the new star systems within 17 light-years of Sol which have been discovered since the publication of SF.

The letter-number designations are the spectral classes of the stars, A (or B), F, G, K, and M from bright to dimmest. Within each spectral class, O is the brightest large star type, and 9 the dimmest small. "wd" indicates a White Dwarf star. Several class listings separate by slashes indicate multiple star systems. A "c" indicates that the star has an unseen companion (either a very dim star or a super-Jovian planet). "?" indicates either that information was not available for a star system, or that astronomers haven't confirmed the spectral class of a particular star.

My RASC Handbook2 allegedly lists all stars of class G, G, but I can find no listings which remotely correspond to SC-21 (3325/-5) or Innes' Star (1520/0), at least 14 ly. on the SF display. As well, some of the names on the SF display disagree with my Handbook listings, although the positions correspond. The differences are as follows: (StarForce name/Handbook name):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BD?</th>
<th>1216/10</th>
<th>Sigma 2398</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CD-36</td>
<td>2992/-7/Lacaille 9352</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luyten's Star (1608/1)</td>
<td>BD 5 1668</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC-39</td>
<td>2772/-3/Lacaille 8760</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GC-12</td>
<td>1216/11/Groomebridge 1818</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GB 68</td>
<td>1926/14/A Oe 17415-6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lalande 21258/BD 44 2051</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EV Lacertae/BD 43 4305</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table of Stellar Information

| Alpha Centauri G2/K5/K5 |
| Beta Hydri G1 |
| CD (0732/-7) |
| 61 Cygni K7/K7 |
| Delta Pavonis G7 |
| 82 Erirdai K2 |
| Eta Cassiopeiae G0/K6 |
| HR 7703 K2/M5 |
| HR8832 K3 |
| 36 Ophiuchi K2/K1/K6 |
| 70 Ophiuchi K1/K6 |
| Rho (p)Erirdai |
| Sigma Draconis G9 |

Contrary to Mr. Kirk's article, the stars on the SF display are already differentiated by habitability class. Note that the primary systems and secondary systems identified in the list all contain G and K class stars, the likeliest candidates for habitable worlds. The only listed tertiary systems containing a class K star are 40 Erirdani (Vulcan's sun), which also contains a white dwarf, lowering the system's desirability somewhat.

Information is available (somewhere!) to complete the list of the "?" stars. In the "?" stars can be rolled for using two dice and the following table:

Die Roll Meaning
7 "wd" spectral class star
8 "wd" white dwarf (Class B card plus special rules or "c" (next star rolled has an unseen companion)
5 or 6 Multiple star: roll 2 or 8 stars for this system
7 or 8 "M" spectral class star
9 "K" spectral class star
10 "G" spectral class star
11 Triple star: roll 3 stars for this system
12 "B" spectral class star

Probably the best K and G class stars should be assigned to CD-20 (0732/-7) and p Erirdani before any others.

In order to use the "wd" and "c" data, we will need: White Dwarf stars are the remnants of stellar disasters: they have detrimental effects on habitable planets. Treat "wd" and "wdA" stars as an F, but lower all habitability classes by one level and halve the population limits. (i.e. an ST-40 becomes an MT-20, etc.) BR remains BR, and NN status is unaffected. In multiple stars containing white dwarfs, population limits of companion stars are halved, but habitability class is unaffected.

Some of the gas supergiants which may cause tidal effects on nearby planets. As such, giants occur further from a sun than the zone in which planets are likely to occur; their influence can be simulated by halving the population limit of the outermost TR or ST planets in such a system. MT and BR planets suffer no effects.

Except for the White Dwarf rule, multiple star systems are sufficiently independent that they do not influence each others' habitable worlds. Draw one star card for each
Tom McDermott's article, _Ship Effectiveness in Stellar Conquest_, has provided readers with a means of judging the relative strengths of both players in certain STELLAR CONQUEST battles. In the process, he introduced the reader to some very practical mathematical techniques for computing probabilities.

With some extensions of McDermott's techniques I have computed the probability of victory for all combat situations in which 5 or less ships of one type attack a force of 5 or less ships of another type, i.e., I have found the probability of victory in such situations as 3 ESC vs. 3 ATK or 4 ATK vs. 2 DN, but not for "mixed" situations such as 1 ESC and 2 ATK vs. 2 ATK. It was assumed that both sides wished to fight to the bitter end (neither force was allowed to withdraw) and all combinations of having or not having ISM (Improved Ship Weapons) were considered. Victory was judged on the basis of which player had at least one surviving ship after annihilation of the other player's force rather than on the basis of ship unit costs. Of course one may question whether the player with 5 DN who attacking a player having only 1 ATK and loses 4 DN before destroying the ATK has really obtained a victory; but when a major colony is involved, the survivor of a battle reaps enormous benefits regardless of the relative IU point losses in ships.

The values clearly indicate the ATK is the least effective ship in terms of fire power per unit cost. The ability of an ATk force to attack a DN force is much less than the ability of an ESC force to attack and ATK force--and this in spite of the fact that an ATK costs 1/3 as much as a DN while an ESC costs only 2/5 as much as an ATK. And conversely, the ability of an ATK force to attack an ESC force is much less than the ability of a DN force to attack an ATK force although a DN costs 2.0 times as much as an ATK, while an ATK costs 2.5 times as much as and ESC.

I, for one, have relegated the ATK to a very minor role in my game. I prefer to pay the higher research cost of 90IU for the DN before developing the ATK, thus postponing the entry (if any) of the ATK until late in the game where I often use colonies of less than 40 million and more than 20 million to build ATks. At that stage of the game, it seems pointless to build any more ESCs since hostile DN's are so numerous.

Is the relative ineffectiveness of the ATK really fair? I don't think so. In his article, McDermott made some suggestions with regard to this. Among these was a proposal to make the ESC less effective by changing the roll needed for an ESC to destroy an ATK from 10 to 11. I do not favor this suggestion as it still leaves the DN very superior to the ATK. I think McDermott's other suggestion, that of increasing the fire power of the ATK, is more desirable. Perhaps the ATK should be allowed to destroy an DN with a roll of 10 or 12, and to destroy an ESC with a roll of 8 or more. With these changes, I think a more reasonable balance of ship fire power with ship cost would be attained.

DESIGNER'S NOTE:
The value of the Attack based on destructive power and cost is an elusive concept. Strong cases can be made for both the cost effectiveness of ESCs and DN's.

As STELLAR CONQUEST'S designer, it may interest readers to know my favorite ship is the maligned ATTCK. It's my workhorse because of play style and strategy, not cost effectiveness. The preferred style may be to build ATks with high movement allowance. It's a matter of getting there firstest with the mostest in my book.

Rather than sit back and build a 200-300 IU output industrial base the fast ATks allow conquists with smaller colonies far earlier. Many times a fleet of 10-20 ATks catches a defense with only a handful of ESCs and new DN's. A loss of 50% of the more easily replaced ATks is acceptable to wipe out the defender's embryonic Dreadnaught fleet.

It is a matter of style and preference. A relatively large number of SMA or SMA Attacks striking early suits me. But, it should be noted I'm only a strong B+ player, not the best.

Howard Thompson
IRON MOUNTAIN

an OGRE scenario

by J. Richard Jarvinen

graphics by sigoonda

"Well, sir, what do you think?"

Captain Emory R. Hanson, USA, slowly lowered his field glasses from the small plume of dust rapidly approaching his transport column.

"Yeah, lieutenant, it looks like one of ours. Probably Jacobs, judging from the direction."

"But he's not supposed to report for another half-hour. And besides, wouldn't he call if there were trouble?"

"Yes, he would. If he could." Captain Hanson had reason to worry. He was solely responsible for delivering ten truckloads of sodium nitrate to launch site B, high on Iron Mountain. Four armored vehicles, three GEs, and five platoons of infantry should be adequate protection, but...

"Lieutenant!" snapped Captain Hanson. "I want you to inform all drivers that they are to proceed at maximum possible speed. Now!"

The corporal hesitated, as if to say something, but apparently thought better of his impulse. "Yes, sir," he said, and ran quickly down the corridor to issue the order. Hanson raised his glasses again and peered over the windshield of his jeep, studying the unexpected, an unidentified vehicle. The roar of the giant diesels starting up reverberated through the air as the 4-ton trucks began their arduous climb up the mountain road.

Five minutes later, Hanson was still standing in his jeep when an American GEV drew up close and shut down its power, failing to earth with the cry of tearing metal, rather than settling slowly as air-cushioned vehicles normally do. The door literally flew open and Corporal Jeffrey R. Jacobs stumbled out, his left arm hanging bloody and useless at his side.

"Sir," he panted, "an OGRE! It almost got us! Blew our radio out on the first shot. It was all we could do to get away. Simpson's dead, Meyer's hurt, but not badly."

"Easy, son," the captain interrupted. "Just tell me what I want to know. How far back is it and what direction is it headed?"

The corporal paused to catch his breath. When he did speak, it was in gasping stages. "We spotted it about forty klicks back, just before it saw us. We exchanged a couple of quick shots and then we took off. It must still be following us, but radar went out along with our radio. Jacobs eyed the remains of the tank that used to fly proudly along the top of his vehicle. He turned back, half-smiling, "I think we got a hit on its treads."

"Good work, corporal. Did you recognize the model?"

"No sir, not exactly, but from the size, it must have been a Mark III. It was kinda hard to judge at our distance and we ran pretty fast."

"All right, corporal, you're dismissed. Catch up with the van, the last wagon should have some medical equipment to take care of that arm."

"Yes, sir," said Jacobs and went running back into his GEV, which started almost immediately. Lifting clumsily from the ground, it slowly accelerated up the road in pursuit of the convoy.

Hanson sat down, wiping his hand over his mouth, a habit most people recognized in him as a sign of extreme anxiety. His driver. Sergeant Wiles, looked at him rather speculatively.

"Well, do you think we can outrun it?"

Hanson paused before responding. "I don't know. I hope to hell we can. Catch up with the trucks. I've got some figuring to do." As the jeep started off, Hanson reached into a compartment and grabbed a map and pocket cal-

culator. He began to figure.

When they reached the rear of the convoy, Lieutenant Bourcher was waiting in his jeep.

"Did you find out what it was?"

Hanson frowned at his question. "It's an OGRE, lieutenant, and it's coming straight at us."

The lieutenant paled, while Hanson continued. "Here's what I want you to do. Up ahead there's a large turnout. I want all the lead tanks and GEVs to pull over and let the main convoy pass. Then they are to pull in after the last truck and be ready for action from the rear. And Lieutenant, I want this information radioed. Now!"

"Sergeant, let's go. I want to be at the front of this convoy ASAP."

Sergeant Wiles put the jeep into gear, jammed down on the pedal and they raced off, gravel and rubber scattering behind them. Captain Hanson looked at his watch and then went back to work on his calculator.

The lieutenant had now joined Captain Hanson in his jeep as it raced along in front of the convoy. Anxiously he looked up.

"Do you think we can outrun it?" he asked.

"No, lieutenant, I do not. The lieutenant bit his lip. "Then, I guess we'll..." his voice cracked slightly as he spoke. "We'll have to fight it."

"Yes, we will. But I'll tell you what we're going to do, just in case we suddenly have a new commander." Hanson looked hard at the lieutenant, who returned his gaze with determination, if not with confidence, fully aware of who was second in command. "Now here's a little map of the roads leading up Iron Mountain." Hanson sketched briefly on a small pad.

"The numbers are the distances in kilometers from one intersection to the next. We're at point X and are trying to reach B, the secondary launch site. The small, curvy line is the old Post road, unused for several years. Going up, you'll see we have two possible destinations. Regardless of our destination, the OGRE, with its superior speed, will be able to catch us. Our only advantage, and I emphasize only, is the OGRE doesn't know to which site we're headed. It turns out that if we're going to A, we should take the old road, and if we're going to B, we should take the new one. At least, that's what we should do if we want to prevent the OGRE from getting in front of us, which it could do if it took the route opposite from us. Which is exactly why we're going to take the old road.

"But, I thought you just said that if we take the old road to get to site B, the OGRE could head us off by taking the new one. Wouldn't that be stupid? Ah... excuse me, sir."

---

**MAX SPEED (km/hr)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROAD</th>
<th>TRUCKS</th>
<th>OGRE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>normal</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rough</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

![Map of Iron Mountain](image)
"That's all right, lieutenant. Yes, that would be stupid. And the OGRE knows we're not stupid. I hope. Therefore it will assume we're headed to site A, and thus, follow us up the Post Road. It would lose more time by taking the new one if that's where we're headed."

"Just what does this buy, Captain?" the lieutenant asked, with more than a trace of disapproval.

"About ten minutes, lieutenant. About ten minutes."

"And if the OGRE guesses right?"

"We've lost."

The convoy had successfully negotiated the old Post Road without mishap and were now on the section connecting the old road with the new. Captain Hanson and the lieutenant were in the lead jeep, anxiously looking ahead. The captain broke the strain of silence.

"The moment of truth arrives. But with luck..."

The lieutenant remained silent.

At the intersection, Hanson had the jeep pull over and he stood up, waving the trucks on.

"By God, I think we did it. The OGRE should have been here three minutes ago if it had tried to head us off."

The lieutenant looked up skeptically. "You're sure?" he asked.

"Unless my computations were wrong. Okay, let's go!"

The last truck had just disappeared around the corner, its tires squealing loudly in protest against the violent abuses it was forced to suffer. "I want one heavy tank, one GEV and one platoon to wait on either side of the intersection, just out of sight. They should be able to wheel around and get in a couple of good shots just as the OGRE comes around the last corner. Come on, let's move!"

Ten minutes later, Captain Hanson and the lieutenant, trailing the convoy once more, looked up suddenly as the sound of muffled explosions filled the air.

"First blood. Hand the radio. Baldini, can you read me? What's happening?"

Baldini's voice came back over the speaker, weak but clear. "Yes sir, we read you. Just like you said, Captain. The OGRE came tearing around the corner, not suspecting a thing. We got in a couple good shots, but it's still coming strong. We're going in for a second attack. Over."

"Good work, Baldini."

"My God!" Baldini's voice broke in. "It's got four missiles! But it's only the size of a Mark III."

Baldini's voice was suddenly cut off, and a few seconds later, another loud, muffled explosion reached their ears. Hanson looked grim.

"Come on, lieutenant. Time to set another ambush. Is that possible, sir?"

A Mark III has four missiles. And what else was he trying to say?"

"Could be a later version of the same mode. And I'm afraid he was telling us that it has two main batteries. It's going to be rougher than I thought. Get all the drivers on the radio. Tell them to pull behind and fire their temperature and pressure gauges. There should be a small howitzer up ahead. Get someone to check on it and make sure its manned and supplied. And try to keep raising Baldini."

Hanson's jeep raced around the corner when Sergeant Wiles suddenly slammed on the brakes. The wheels screeched as the jeep inched to a slow spin but approaching the guard rail dangerously fast. As the jeep finally stopped, its front fender nudged against the rail with a gentle bump. The lieutenant let out a deep breath, but Hanson's reaction was somewhat more dramatic.

"What the hell's going ON?" he yelled, as he looked at one of the trucks, stopped solidly in the middle of the road.

The driver around the corner of the truck got out and pointed down the road to the entire convoy, all stopped behind the lead truck. Its booted feet and thick green overcoat were frantically trying to repair it.

"Damn it! Don't waste time trying to fix that beast! Shove it over to the middle of the road and pound the truck."

"What... what did you say, sir?"

"You heard me! Get on the radio--no, never mind, I'll do it. Coggins, is that you over there? Get your platoon and shove that damn truck over the side. And I mean now!"

Almost instantly a group of troopers surrounded the trouble vehicle and blocked it toward the edge. The truck balanced for a few seconds, and then sluggishly slipped down the steep cliff. Halfway down, it struck a ledge with a sickening crunch, and suddenly blossomed into flames as its cargo ignited. The sound of the explosion died away, and heat from the blast could be felt across the revine.

"O.K., move move!" Hanson jumped back into his jeep and they charged off. Hanson picked up the radio again. "How's that howitzer, O.K.? Good, tell them to get ready. It will be only a few minutes."

As Hanson reached the howitzer one of the men pointed back behind him, for a contorting his features.

"Oh, Jesus, there it is," he cried.

Hanson turned, and for the first time in his life felt real fear. A tank, yet more than a tank, howler around the far corner. Tactical nuclear missiles, primary and secondary batteries, anti-personnel weapons, practically impossible to conventional attacks, and all controlled by a computer, unfailing, unfearing and able to make lightning fast calculations. This, was the most feared weapon of its time. Even as Hanson was turning to look, a bright flame appeared from the side, the sign of a missile being launched. Accelerating quickly, it arced high over the crevice and, locking on its target, plunged down toward the howitzer.

Men scattered in all directions at the screaming approach. Suddenly, one of the tanks exploded in a white flash, followed by a crimson ball of flame. Almost immediately following the first, a second explosion occurred. The following truck's cargo had been ignited by the intense heat of the nuclear blast. Hanson stood and could hear the cries of men behind the howitzer.

Stunned, the men stood appalled at the horror so quickly wreaked. Hanson was the first to move.

He was one of those missile tanks to lock in with us! We've already lost too much time! The barrel of the howitzer lowered as the moving OGRE. A GEW went up in flames as the OGRE rolled over it. Simultaneously, from the howitzer and the OGRE's main battery, a stream of flames indicated the passage of more harbingers of death. Suddenly, the howitzer and one of the OGRE's main batteries were destroyed, the victims of the other's vengeance. The lieutenant ran over to the battered remains of the howitzer, looking for Hanson. The captain's body lay on a rock, nearly torn in two by the explosion, one hand still desperately gripping his radio. Slowly backing from the gruesome scene, the lieutenant stared in horror. Then turning quickly, ran back to the jeep.

"Let's go, sergeant. We may still get one more chance. It's (he refused to say the word OGRE) still got two more missiles, but if we can knock out both, some of the trucks may get through."

Sergeant Wiles, seemingly unperturbed by the absence of Captain Hanson, gunned the jeep forward.

In the end, five trucks did make it through safely. They were
the only survivors of what is now known as the Battle of Iron Mountain. Little is known of how the lieutenant and his remaining force managed to destroy the OGRE's remaining missiles, but by the time the OGRE broke through the pass, it lacked the firepower to accomplish its mission and was too far behind to overrun the trucks. Almost despondently, the OGRE turned and made its way back down the mountain, subject only to the sporadic and ineffective shelling of the two howitzers guarding the entrance to launch site B.

Thus a heavy tank virtually blocks the road.

2. When entering a hex containing any non-infantry unit, there is a cost of one additional Movement Point (not applicable to OGRE or infantry).

3. All units (except OGRE or infantry) may attempt "accelerated" movement. On a die roll of 1, 2 or 3, the indicated unit may move 3 hexes instead of 2. On a die roll of 4 or 5, the unit moves normally. On a die roll of 6, the unit moves normally but then "stalls." A stalled vehicle may fire (if it has weapons) but may not move unless it rolls a 6 just prior to its movement phase. It may attempt to "unstall" once per turn.

4. Any non-truck unit may "shove" a stalled or disrupted unit one hex in any direction (except into a mountain hex) at the cost of one movement point of the shoving unit. Thus, you may shove units into turnouts or off the cliff (in which case they are immediately destroyed). Shoving units off cliffs is only applicable to the only case when a unit may leave the road.

5. Mountain hexes (and hexsides!) block the line-of-sight for all units. This is the only case when the line of sight is blocked.

6. You will need to make some new units:

The Battle of Iron Mountain

If OGRE is any indication of the type of games we can expect in MicroGames, we have a lot to look forward to. Fast, clean, and most of all fun, make for a very enjoyable game. This prompted the story you just read, and also the scenario which is to follow. With only a few rules modifications and some new counters, you can recreate Captain Hanson's desperate attempt to delay or damage the OGRE (which, by the way, is a Mark III-B). Try this scenario with an ordinary Mark III and see what happens. Or try it with a Mark V! Ouch!

Rules Modifications

1. Units may stack. Maximum stacking limit (for movement, also!) is three defensive factors.

The trucks start on the hexes indicated by a small "t" in the corner and the howitzer starts in the hex marked "4/5." Note that two normal 6/8 howitzers start on hexes marked "6/8."

7. Other starting units for the American are:

   - Two Heavy Tanks
   - Two Missile Tanks
   - Three GEV's
   - Five Infantry Platoons

These units may be placed on any road hex, subject to stacking limitations.
8. When a truck is destroyed ("X" result), any units in the same hex are immediately attacked with an attack strength of three, and any units in adjacent hexes are attacked with an attack strength of two. Note that a chain reaction of explosions may occur in a densely packed truck convoy.
9. An Ogre manning a truck automatically destroys it, but the Ogre’s treads are attacked at 1-1 with an attack strength of two.
10. Trucks may be attacked with anti-personnel weapons.

Because the narrow winding mountain road is not conducive to armored combat, only one-half (rounded up) of one type of the Ogre’s armament may be used against one target. Different types may be combined, however. For example, the Ogre could use half of its main batteries against one target, while using the remainder against another target.

11. When more than one unit is stacked in a hex, the Ogre player must specify which unit he is attacking. Other units are not affected (except in the case of truck explosions).

12. When more than one unit is stacked in a hex, the Ogre player must specify which unit he is attacking. Other units are not affected (except in the case of truck explosions).

13. Ogre III-B Specifications:
- **4 Missiles (6/5;D3)**
- **2 Main Battery (4/3;D4)**
- **4 Secondary Battery (3/2;D3)**
- **8 Antipersonnel (1/1 inf or trucks; D1)**
- **45 Movement**

Note that four Movement Points are already lost due to Corporal Jacob’s hits.

14. The convoy player moves first. The Ogre arrives on Hex X, spending one Movement Factor to do so. If the convoy player exits five or more trucks from Hex B, he wins. If he exits 4 trucks, he draws. If less than 4, he loses.

Alternate scenarios are plentiful. For instance, start the convoy on Hex Y and the Ogre on hex X. (Captain Hanson guessed wrong and the Ogre guessed right. Not much of a scenario, but it shows what could have happened.) Or start the convoy five hexes closer to hex Y. (Captain Hanson didn't gain his ten minutes. Makes quite a difference!)

Have fun!

In the September, 1976 Avalon Hill GENERAL, Richard Hamblen resurrected a useful concept from the mists of wargaming antiquity.

**OGRES & THE “FUZZY WUZZY FALLACY”**

by Lawrence Duffield

In the September, 1976 Avalon Hill GENERAL, Richard Hamblen resurrected a useful concept from the mists of wargaming antiquity. Since then, I have applied the concept to everything in sight, and it has become an important tool in my wargaming analysis.

Briefly, the Fuzzy Wuzzy Fallacy states that a man with a firepower of X is not worth twice the value of a man with a firepower of JX, but rather roughly √X as much, after taking into account that one hit on either man kills just as dead. (See the Fuzzy Wuzzys were these African tribes, and they beat a British square.)

The Fuzzy Wuzzy problem has already surfaced in METAGAMING, in STELLAR CONQUEST. Remember the GREAT STELLAR CONQUEST ATTACK vs ESCORT CALCULATION? (Yes, Virginia 2.5 Escorts CAN successfully tackle an ATTACK.) In OGRE, the problem is magnified. You see, there is only ONE Ogre. So, all you defenders out there, quivering in your Command Posts, take heart. Me and the 220Sth GEV Battalion are going to show you how to save your bacon.

The mechanism of a Fuzzy Wuzzy attack is simple. Attack the enemy over a long enough time with a great number of targets and he will be destroyed by sheer weight of numbers. Note the two critical criteria: TIME and NUMBERS of attackers.

NUMBERS are obtained by selecting Ground Effects Vehicles for the Ogre Armed force. In the Basic Game, this means 16 GEV, 1 Missile Tank. In the Advanced Game, 22 GEV, 7 MSL. (The Missile Tanks are the next cheapest Armor.)

GEV's have two important advantages besides numbers. They are the fastest vehicles in the game and so can choose their ground in relation to an Ogre. And, due to the second Movement Phase, GEV's can avoid all casualties from Secondary Batteries, once the Ogre's speed is 2.

TIME is the second criterion. Ogres can reach missile firing range on a Command Post in seven turns, and on the initial turn, if left fully mobile. The Defender MUST reduce the Ogre's mobility by turn 3 at the latest, or at least force the Ogre to dodge and give up ground. This dictates the opening strategy.

Deploy your GEV Battalion in a loose line across the board. In the basic game, there will be gaps. Leave them near the center, so that on the initial turn, SOME firepower can be directed at the Ogre no matter where it enters. The line should be at a range of 7 hexes. MSL Tanks deploy at about 12 to 14 hexes from the front edge of the board, and toward the center. Infantry and anybody else required to set up in the rear are deployed as far forward as possible. There is no reason for the CP to set up anywhere but the rear edge of the board.

When the Ogre enters, converge as many GEV's as can reach on the beastie. Fire individual attacks against the treads. Your only mission at this time is to cut down the Ogre's speed to 2, regardless of casualties. In the Advanced Game, an alternate strategy is to knock out one Main Battery by 1-2 attacks (48% chance if 4 GEV attack) so as to reduce casualties. But the main consideration is to cut down the Ogre's speed QUICKLY. On the second movement phase, move everybody away from the Ogre and out of range of the enemy Secondary Battery. Most everyone will make it.

This process is repeated until the speed of the Ogre is 2. At this point, the fast moving GEV's are immune to enemy Secondary batteries entirely. Casualties should fall off drastically. Now is the time to close with the MSL Tanks, firing at long range and from widely separated positions. Pick off more treads, or silence the main
battery, depending on the situation
At some point, you must make a
centered effort to reduce Ogre
speed to one. This will allow
decent attacks by infantry and
lengthen the game satisfactorily.
The Fuzzy Wuzzy technique is
so effective that I believe there
is no good Ogre reply. The Ogre
can prolong matters by entering
along the edge of the playing area
(using the "Edge of the World"
tactic familiar to most board-
gamers), or by entering nearer the
center, then lunging toward the
board edge to trap any unwary
defenders. In the end, however,
the Ogre will fall. I haven’t
tested the Scenario with two
Mark III Ogres against an Advanced
force. Theoretically it should be
more balanced.

To remedy this lack of bal-
ance, one or more of the following
variants should be adopted:

A. Reduce the Defender’s numbers.
   In Scenario 1.03, the defender gets
   24 Armor points and 20 Infantry
   points. In Scenario 1104, 45 Armor;
   30 Infantry.
   B. Change the GEV cost. (3.013)
      (CHANGE) GEV’s are purchased at
      a cost of 3 Attack Points each.
   C. Reduce GEV speed. (8.06)
      (Addition) GEV’s have a speed of
      3 per phase.
   D. Increase Ogre speed. (8.07)
      (Addition) Ogre Mark IV: Speed 4;
      Movement Points 60, MSL’s: 4, 1
      Main Battery, 6 Secondaries, 8 Anti-
      personnel.
   E. Increase Movement Points: (6.05)
      (CHANGE) Ogre Mark III: 60 M;
      Mark V: 90 M.

   While we are talking variants,
why not Mobile Artillery? Why
should gun artillerty be less mobile
that it is today? The U.S. Army
currently plans to change gun
position after EVERY FIRE MISSION
to avoid counterbattery fire. I
don’t see this trend changing much.
So, allow each Howitzer a speed of
2, but require it to remain station-
ary in order to fire.
Ogre is a FUN game. These
variants should keep it from being
just one bunch of Fuzzy Wuzzys
against an Ogre, and, just maybe,
give the poor mechanical beastie
a chance at the goodies in the ol’
CP.

There are two reasons for that
title. The first is that, to the
best of my knowledge, there are 3
other OGRE pieces in this TSG.
The second is that I’m trying to
cover four different subjects. So
I gave up looking for an appropri-
ate title and just started writing.
The one subjective I’m going to
cover are: (1) Responses to OGRE...some
of the better mail we got. (2) The
GEV problem: a lesson in game de-
sign. (3) An upcomming game in the
"OGRE universe," and notes on the
Mark I, II, IV, and VI Ogres. (4)
Possible rule revisions for the
original OGRE game.

THE MAILBOX
One of the most pleasing things
about OGRE, to me, was the volume
and quality of the mail it generat-
ed. Letters, questions, and variants,
and stories for TSG...it’s been
interesting to see what others have
done with the OGRE concepts. “Iron
Mountain,” in this issue, is a
good example. I’ve played it
repeatedly, and enjoyed it. Nice
work. About the only thing that
hasn’t come in is new art. Winch
Chung’s stuff is great...but it
would be interesting to see other
artists’ interpretations.
All in all, the mail is great.
Some of it makes me wonder: “Dear
Metagaming: Is the Howitzer con-
sidered to be infantry?” No, it
isn’t. But most of the mail shows
a good deal of thought. I plan to
steal the best comments and sug-
gestions for future OGRE games...
crediting the originators. Fair is
fair. A sampling of the better
mail to date:
Mark Ratner (who designed SPACE
MARINES, and says he’ll be judging
a large OGRE tournament at GENCON)
sent in 3 pages of economic cal-
culations on Ogres (he doubts they’d
be cost effective) and some excel-
ent, if complicated, advanced
movement rules. He also suggests
(as have several others) that there
should be provisions for mobile
howitzers. (Wait for the new game.)

Tracy B. Harms sent in a sug-
gestion for a Mark IV with a
starting MA of 4. We’d been play-
testing something similar...but his
way was more logical, and when you
see the proposed Mark IV specs
later in this article, the move-
ment’s done the way he suggested.
Greg Costikyan reviewed OGRE
in his zine URF DURPAL...called it
"the ideal game to play whilst
stoned." Okay Greg. He made one
good point, and I quote: “It is
not clear whether Ogres expend
movement points when they move...”
Well, this is true. It had never
occurred to me that anyone could
think they DID - and, in fact, it
seems to have bothered no one else
- but, in fact, I DID FAIL TO MAKE
THAT CLEAR. Mee maxima culpa. Rules
should be perfect; that will be
corrected in the 2d edition. And
Ogres do NOT lose movement points
when they move. (Greg’s Ogre Magi,
in the last TSG, DO expend move-
ment points when they move...but
that’s another story. His, I doubt
any aircraft at all would be viable
in the Ogre world...but the CSAs
are fun, as a game, which is all
you can ask.)
Several people have sent in
"perfect" defenses relying heavily
on Howitzers. I hate to say this,
but my own Ogres go through those
like a knife through butter. What
strategy do you use to make six
or seven Howitzers work?
And a LOT of people...too many
to list...have pointed out that a
defense composed of all GEVs wins
the Basic Scenario most of the time
and the Advanced Scenario too often.
They’re right. Which leads to...

THE GEV PROBLEM
In a nutshell: If a GEV fires on
an Ogre and moves 4 away, the Ogre
cannot kill it next turn, no matter
what, if it has lost its missiles and
EITHER its MB OR its 3 movement.
Therefore, a mob of GEVs can harry
an Ogre to death, unless the GEV
player gets overconfident and lets
the Ogre cat-and-mouse his force to
death. This is not good.

This had two causes. The first was the counter mix. We originally planned to provide 56 counters, in three distinct colors. Light, dark gray, and white. But, at the last minute, we found we could afford to put in two additional colors. And the printer... on the counter sets. Light and dark gray look the same once cut out. So, instead of generally available, a defense commander has 22... making some new strategies possible.

People still seem to enjoy Ogre. I like it much better than the current mix, but I can't rate it better than fair as a wargame. But it seems to be pretty good science fiction. It gets people to exercise their imagination and (blood lust), and the mechanics are adequate to support that fiction.

But we still have the Super GEV - and, worse, the Useless Heavy. IN SPITE OF THE counter mix glitch, the GEV is still the best unit, and the heavy tank the worst. Under certain circumstances a couple of heavies can chew up an Ogre... but you're still better. You don't really notice how good a GEV really is, though, until you take it in against a force of regular units. If six GEVs attack six heavies on clear ground, they kill the heavies and take no losses in the process. The fact that units weren't balanced against each other doesn't distress me much; they were originally intended only to balance against an Ogre (But see below) They are almost balanced, except for the Heavy. What happened? I made a mistake. (Jackson just admitted to a mistake. Hell will freeze over any second.) I'm owning up to it, not because I like looking dumb, but because I see a LOT of game designs with similar errors. I doubt I'll ever do it again... and, if I point it out here, maybe you won't, either.

It's a question of COST and BALANCE. Each of the armor units was given a base cost of defense, and firepower, roughly analogous to those of present-day units (except for the GEV, and we'll have those code). The reason for having carefully balanced the units on a one-for-one basis, what did I do? I turned around and wrote the rules so that a Heavy (was) twice as much as a GEV. Therefore, it's about half as cost-effective.

Why didn't I show it in play-testing? (1) The game is, as I said, good science fiction. We were all having so much fun that, if the Ogre won about half the time, we were happy. (2) Through one of those annoying glitches, all of the playtesters LIKED heavy tanks. Seldom, if ever, was a defense tried without some heavies. So they do work very well to clobber a weakened Ogre.

So why didn't the over-strength of the GEV show up in playtesting? We played a couple of hundred games - and we didn't always limit ourselves to the counter mix we planned to use. For instance, we didn't show up in the case using all GEVs "seemed" like a dumb strategy. "Everybody knows" that a balanced force is more flexible. I remember trying an all-GEV defense just once, just as we tried an all-howitzer defense just once. It didn't work - at the time.

The moral here is: if you want to get all the bugs out of a game, PLAYTEST THE DUMB STRATEGIES. If you are smart enough, and your rules give the battle to the side that charges uphill against entrenched positions, you don't have much of a chance. But if you playtest with Civil War experts, you'll never find out about it, because they'll never have enough to try. PLAYTEST THE DUMB STRATEGIES. That was the second lesson I got from Ogre. Make sure that the things you don't want to work don't work. Or you've got some redesign to do.

Okay. Enough preaching. Suffice it to say that the new Ogre game will have these bugs debugged. Yes, you heard me right. A new Ogre game.

GEV

The working title for the second game in the OGRE series is "GEV." (I will cheerfully accept suggestions for a better name.) It'll be a MicroGame simulating combat at long range, with many infantry and small armor units of circa 2085.

This will introduce a number of new rules, including terrain effects and stacking. It will also introduce at least one more "regulize" those rules. The rules give specifications (if there's room) for the OGRE MK IV.

The way we will fit all this in is by NOT repeating the "Ogre" rules from OGRE... just the armor and infantry rules. In other words, if you have OGRE and buy GEV, you combat between the powers of the GEV map... and we will supply terrain rules and scenarios for Ogres. But if you don't have OGRE, you can buy GEV and get a couple of OGRE maps, and a few Ogre MK IV counters.

This way, we can take and eat it too. GEV will stand by itself, and play well. (Incidentally - it will be bigger than the OGRE map.) GEV will also mix in 100% with Ogre. And each game will have stuff that the other lacks. In all, it will total amount of material is greater.

There's a possible third OGRE microgame in the works, as well as a full-fledged Ogre Strategic game, including the rules together and supplying a LARGE tactical map. But those are quite a ways in the future. GEV is only a month or two months away.

In order to make the armor game for the GEV game face one another on a fair basis, there will be new balance to their abilities. And when we put out a second edition of OGRE, we may change them again. In the next section, I'll want your comments.

REVISIONS FOR THE "ORIGINAL" OGRE

OGRE is selling fast. We'll reprint it in a few months. We will DEFINITELY be making improvements. At the least, the quality of the game; we may revise a few of the rules to conform with GEV and improve balance among the armor units.

Physical changes will be as follows:

(1) The map will have larger hexes, and will have 3 fewer hexrows on the "bottom." In other words, the Ogre starts 3 hexes closer.

(2) We may change the map graphics to a "realistic" portrayal of crater and rubble. Comments? Do you prefer the present "abstract" map? The counters will be unchanged, unless the unit abilities are changed - see below.

(3) THE RULEBOOK will have a full-color cover. It all depends. Is that something you'd like to see, or do you even care?

Rule changes under consideration

(NOTE. Before I go any farther, two things: (1) all rule revisions below are taken from a DRAFT. We're inviting you to test them. They are NOT final. SECOND: ANY rule changes made in the second edition of OGRE will be printed in full in TSG. If you WANT to buy the 2d edition (like because you wore your first one out), play it, 's what. But nobody should feel they have to get a new copy.)

(a) GEVs can move 4 hexes on their FIRST movement phase, but only 3 after combat.

(b) The GEV has a MA of 3.

(c) Infantry can cross "rubble" hexsides. (This was Robert Schultz's suggestion.)

(d) Any guidelines or movement points whenever it rams or is rammed by an enemy armored unit. Exception: When an Ogre rams a GEV, it does nothing. (A GEV ramming an Ogre costs the Ogre two movement points.)

And remember the shorter map. If these changes are made, the setup rule will also be changed, as follows:

BASIC SCENARIO. The defense gets any 14 armor units (howitzers count as 2 units) and 20 2d White counters. A total of 20 attack strength points of this force must set up ON or BEHIND the line between the counters at the map edges.

ADVANCED SCENARIOS. The defense gets any 22 armor units (again, howitzers count as 2 units) and 35 points of infantry, and 35 attack strength points of this force must set up on or behind the line.

Victory conditions remain the same.

Your comments on these rule changes are solicited. If you want to playtest them, write and let me know what you think. Your comments will weigh heavily in (1) whether we revise the 2d edition rules at all, and (2) what the revisions are. I'll read every letter, and read as many of the good ones as I can get to. We're going to do our own play-testing - plenty, but we don't mind help. Good playtesters are hard to come by, and we're always interested in finding more.

THE OTHER OGREs, ETC.

We're also playtesting other cyberknife for Cisco future games. Therefore, below are our present "models" for five other computer-guided monsters. Again, we invite you to playtest these, and see what you think - suggestions, art, new scenarios, ways to balance these with existing scenarios, etc.
OGRE MARK I

The Combine's first cyber tank experiment. Simply a beefed-up heavy tank with computer guidance.

1MB 4/3 D4
4AP 1/1 against INF (etc.) only
15 movement 00000 drops to 2
00000 drops to 1
00000 drops to 0

OGRE MARK II

The Mark I worked, but it was too expensive considering that it was no meaner than a standard heavy - just harder to kill. So the Mark II was designed with more guns and armor.

1 MB 4/3 D4
2 2B 3/2 D3
3 MSL RACKS D4
15 MSL 00000 00000 00000
8 AP 1/1 D1 against INF, etc. only

60 MVMT starting at 4 MA.
00000 00000 00000 00000 drops to 3
00000 00000 00000 00000 drops to 2
00000 00000 00000 00000 drops to 1
00000 00000 00000 00000 drops to 0

OGRE MARK VI

The biggest Ogre ever built - although later cybertanks of other designs massed more.

3 MB 4/3 D4
6 2B 3/2 D3
2 MSL RACKS D4
20 MSL 00000 00000 00000 00000
16 AP 1/1 D1 vs inf., etc. only
75 MVMT starting at 3 MA.
00000 00000 00000 00000 00000 (2)
00000 00000 00000 00000 00000 (1)
00000 00000 00000 00000 00000 (0)

For ramming, assume that MK IV and Fencer are same size, and that each succeeding marque of Ogre is "bigger" that the preceding ones. A MK IV or Fencer does 4 dice damage when it rams. A MK VI does 6 dice damage. MK I Ogres are treated just like ordinary heavy tanks for ramming.

Have fun with these - let us know how they perform for you. A MK IV and a Fencer should be about equal - Fencer a little better in slugging matches. Either one should kill a MK III. A MK V should be able to take either an IV or a Fencer - but it gets badly hurt. A VI can smash anything.

If you find good ways of putting these into scenarios, let us know.

Have fun, and may a Mark V not walk through your house.

The Fencer has no main batteries, and only four secondaries. Its main weapons are the missile racks. Each missile rack has a defensive strength of 4 and can fire one regular missile (6/5) per turn. That is, an unamaged Fencer can fire four missiles per turn. The Fencer carries 20 missiles; check each one off as fired. When all missile racks are dead or all 20 missiles are fired or dead, the Fencer cannot use missiles. Destruction of a missile rack destroys one missile. This is the ONLY way to kill a Fencer missile; they are stored INSIDE.
**Conventions**

"The Return of ORCCON" will be held at California State University Fullerton, on January 13-15, 1978. Events will include boardgames, D & D, miniatures, and a STELLAR CONQUEST tournament. Cost is $2.00 to pre-register or $3.00 at the door. For more information, contact James John Myers; 13718 Norbeck Drive; La Mirada, CA 90638.

SunCon, the thirty-fifth world science fiction convention, will be held over Labor Day weekend, September 2-5, 1977, at the Hotel Fountainbleau, Miami Beach, Florida. This is the major SF event of the year with SF fans from all over the world attending. Inquiries should be directed to Michael J. Walsh; 946 Montpelier Street; Baltimore, MD 21218; phone (301) 467-3106.

**Great Lakes Convention** presented by the Western New York Wargamers Association will be held September 16-18, 1977, at the Sheraton Lockport Inn; 515 South Transit Road; Lockport, NY 14094. Events will include tournaments, seminars, modeling contest, and miniature competition.

GenCon West sponsored by T.S.R. and Outpost Hobbies, Inc. will be held at Villa Motel; San Mateo, CA; September 3, 4, and 5, 1977. If interested, write P.O. Box 4042; Foster City, CA 94404 or call Thomas and Mary Jean Vaughan at (415) 573-6747. Events include 24 boardgame tournaments, free movies, manufacturers representatives, authors, demonstrations, prizes, medieval combat exhibitions, and many surprises.

WARCON IV will be held January 27-29, 1978, at Texas A & M University. The METAGAMING staff will attend for the third year. More information next issue on the oldest Texas wargame convention.

TEXCON will be held March 24-26, 1978, at the Stephen F. Austin Hotel in Austin, Texas. This will be the largest, best organized and planned game con yet in the Southwest. METAGAMING will be in attendance in a major way. TEXCON will be distinguished by a number of unique gaming events. A huge D & D tournament layout for miniatures play is already near completion. "Aftermath" is a running multi-player scenario in a bomb-ed-out city, using SNIPER rules with a slaver post and supply columns. When the METAGAMING staff isn't manning its room, look for them in "Aftermath." This will be a STELLAR CONQUEST tourney among other events. More details will be given in later issues of TSG. METAGAMING will introduce the first gamemaster's package of THE FANTASY TRIP at TEXCON. It is THE FANTASY TRIP IN THE LABYRINTH and there will be a METAGAMING-sponsored tourney for it. METAGAMING also plans to have space for one or two boards of GODSFIRE that can run for several days. At least open play for all MicroGames will be available.

THE CONQUEST OF SPACE is a new game release from the publisher of SWORDPLAY. Available from Ursine Engineering; 6805A Carolyn Road; Louisville, KY 40214. Game seems simple with basic rules running about 500-600 words. Full-color plasticized checkerboard style map, plastic chips, brief rules booklet, warp chips, and plastic baggie. A review will appear in TSG.

FIRE AND MOVEMENT is a relatively new bi-monthly publication. Single issues are $1.50 and a six-issue subscription is $8.00. Non-U.S. subscribers add $2.00 all in U.S. funds. This is the best written, most interesting general wargaming publication currently available, in the opinion of the TSG staff. Write Baron Publishing Company, Box 820; La Puente, CA 91747.

The Outpost is back! Outpost Hobbies, Inc., northern California's wargames specialists, has opened a new store after their big fire. Write for a catalogue at Box 3042; Santa Clara, CA 95051.

News from Origins on the Charles Roberts Award: Best Tactical Game—TERRIBLE SWIFT SWORD (SPI); Best Strategic Game—RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN (AH); Best Graphics and Physical Systems—AVALANCHE (GDW); Best Professional Magazine—STRATEGY AND TACTICS; Best Semi-Professional Magazine—BATTLEFIELD/JAGDPANTHER.

**Clubs**

In response to many requests for aid in contacting local gamers, THE SPACE GAMER will give brief mention to clubs that do some science fiction and fantasy gaming. Send the name of the club, address, and other pertinent information to METAGAMING; Box 15348; Austin, TX 78761.
THE BATTLE BEFORE THE PUBLIC SANITATION FACILITY AT GURIK: 2043 A.S.

by Rich Bartucci

In an obscure corner of Tekumel, generally ignored by its more popular historians, the few impoverished kingdoms struggling for control over the niggardly but precious iron ore deposits on Klaektu Island fought a series of vicious wars during the period 1997-2003 A.S. Involved were the kingdoms of Yul'hhar and Yull'krunk on one side and the P'twee League on the other—a coalition consisting of the Grand Duchy of Jos'twik, the Bafonise of Burko-La and Granducha, and the B'goshtha Republic.

The armies, tactics and resources on each side were an evenly matched that, in the face of only insignificant outside interference, the struggle continued over sixty-six years, until the debilitating Klaektu Island and reducing the combatant nations to abject poverty.

Perhaps the best way to give the student of Tekumel some idea of the nature of these wars, is to describe one of the four hundred and thirty-six battles between the kingdoms and the League. I have taken the liberty of selecting one of the more noteworthy contests, the Battle Before the Public Sanitation Facility at Gurik, a small mining town not more than eighteen kilometers from the vital iron ore deposits. Why Gurik, putatively a mining town, should be situated eighteen kilometers from the mines is a mystery that continues to puzzle scholars to this day.

In the interest of preserving authenticity, I have abstracted the story of the battle from the diaries of Chumbot-Kwuk, a senior subaltern in the 113rd Legion of the Fifth Palace of the Second Kingdom of Yull'krunk, "Gangine Spearpoints" who later went on to betray his native land and rise to a high rank in the armies of the P'twee League before his assassination in a prestigious peg-houses in 2004 A.S.

Keeping in mind that the Public Sanitation Facility at Gurik controlled the entrance of the Uch'wuhuk Valley—the primary route of access to the ore deposits—let us attend upon the story of Chumbot-Kwuk as the day of battle dawned:

—On that morning, our troops began rising from their sleeping mats and there was much groaning and clapping of hand to brow as the winefumes of the previous night's debauch wrought havoc among the ranks. Many were heard blaspheming, each according to his own deity, at the dampness of the grass and the foul taste of the k'pukk fat and the v'nya-gruel served out by the kitchens. Captain Huoch-mul, my squadron commander, was returning to headquarters from an early-morning trip to the latrines when he intercepted him to ask what would be our dispositions for the coming battle. I could see the camps and cookfires of the League's army across the Gungk-hro River, not two kicks away.

"Well, Kwuk, if you must know, we'll be opening with 'The Whore's Invitation' (a deployment wherein the flanks are advanced while the center falls back with the troopers appearing reluctant to close with the enemy). We'll come out of that into 'The Prong of Gorbuna' (in which the center advances at the trot to smash into the enemy, thereupon sending out small parties of shock troops at five-second intervals to further disrupt the opposing force and then 'The Wall of Jul'vucka', (where the Legion forms a single line and hurls insults at the enemy). If we're flanked or they get the better of us, we switch to 'The Rabbits of Noseh-P'tooowee'(in which the troopers of the Legion turn tail and depart from the field of battle with all possible haste). Have you got that firmly fixed in your tiny mind, boy?"

"Yes sir," I replied, "and what corps will be to either flank?"

My captain looked a bit irked, but said, "On our left we'll have the 14th Legion of the Temple of Prugg-Fyr, 'The Puce Fanatics'. On the right'll be the Vulch'har Legion IX, 'The Mincing Marauders'. You've heard of them, perhaps?"

"Of course, sir," quoth I, "everyone has heard of King Ul'dur's fierce force of nancies. Indeed, their rose-and-aqua banner has been honorably blood-splattered in many a battle."

"Yeah, I know. Old Ul'dur pressed the most militant of Vulch'har's homosexuals into that Legion. He wanted to give 'em a chance to prove their loyalty and, incidentally, get killed off in great numbers." He glanced at our allies, fixing their makeup in preparation for battle, and shrugged. "At least it should end his homosexual-rights problems in a few years. Those babies take the heaviest
casualties of any Legion I've ever seen.

"And what is that rabble arrayed before us, sir?"

"It's the IId Provisional Nob, Local Peasantry. The provost companies went out a couple of days ago and gathered up every bumpkin they could get their truncheons on. With those cahk's and hollows and rags they should last about three minutes. Hear 'em moaning?"

I could detect the low-keyed wailing of perhaps two thousand wretches, the remnants of the once-thriving populace of Klaekut Island. They would have handed their evolutions not be the most elegant on the battlefield, but cutting through their shrieking ranks might tire the infidel soldiers of the League before they could get to us. I nodded contentedly.

Captain Huich-mulg led himself off to 'Whore's last-minute briefing from Tribune Wuxtrachicha, our Legion commander. I bussed myself, with the aid of my Underofficers, in bashing the two hundred men of my company into formation. Before long, we and the other units of the two divisions 'points' stood with our faces to the enemy, ranked in 'The Whore's Invitation'. I stole a glance to the left, where the Fanatics were gathered around their priests. These gaudily-crowned fellows were performing many unusual and obscene acts with a shrug and remember the works of the great philosopher and pedrast, Trundukkan: 'Man's religion is another man's bull'.

Across the river, I could see the troops of the League preparing for battle. Their battle-flags the blue and black of the Duchy of Ios'twik

The IId Provisional Nob crossed the shallow Gungh-hro and into the fray. With many cries and appeals to the gods, the peasants, our implication pikes prodding their arses, threw themselves upon the well-mounted, bloodied and many cursing from the troops in our front ranks as we picked many a reluctant soldier of the Ios'twik to make our charge along. The Legionnaires were behind us in a deep, seething mass of Elemental Man, their heavy battle-axes and halberds, pushing them gradually back and away from the bloodstained wall. 'The Whore's Invitations' were the handled, our fire within us.

To our left we could hear the sound of slaughter as the Puce Fanatics slammed themselves against the Ios'twik reserves and crushed them beneath their war-hammers and halberds. The League's reserves, about two thousand heavy pikemen, in the charge and charge of Ios'twik, were thundering toward the rampant devores of Prugg-Fyr'd, who were now shrieking in religious ecstasy, piecing the river and splinters of their foemen fallen.

Beyond the Puce Fanatics, the Vulch'hari Legion VIII, 'Persistent Flash误解ers', were the smaller force of Ios'twik halberdiers, pushing them gradually back and away from the bloodstained wall. To our right, the 'Mincing Marauders' were in heated combat with a large body of the Legionnaires. The Legionnaires were favored by the subtle Black Magic, which we heard from runners that our brother Legion, 'The Merciless Makers', was being assailed by Grunduchan human and Ios'twik. It was a heavy victory for our side. The Ios'twik were cornered and could not have been saved by the League.

Our portion of the battlefield the Provisionals were locked in combat with the Ios'twik pikemen, the B'goshtan barbarians having dissolved into fleeing terror and had reinforcements to rescue them. It was at that moment that our General unleashed 'The Unwashed', our Provisionals had charged us in with the devotees of Prugg-Fyr'd in thrusting back the Ios'twik and turning the flank of the Ios'twik avenue to our own front.

The Grunduchan archers, rend-
Senas Tavishoat T'ma, a renowned scholar and famous general, author of "The Seven Joys of Sodom"

I believe that by the time the force of Buelek-Wach's attack was spent, only three or four bod-
ies of the troops were left on the League's side, all of them hard-pressed by our unrelenting
assaults. Our artillery wreaked terrible damage among them, fleeing the field of battle.

With the swiftness and forcefulness of their attack, the Puce Panaties had seized the tall
stand of the Lord Thur'kh'a, killing most of his guard and all of his infidel priests. The League's
general was barely able to escape with his

All around me, my exhausted
tripod, the eyes of the ground,
their breaths torn from them is
sobbing gasps. We had been engaged
since the very first, and had been in action of...
BATTLEFLEET MARS
a review
by Howard Thompson

BATTLEFLEET MARS is SPI's latest science fiction effort. It simulates the revolt of Martian colonists against the Earth corporation. The game is big in that the rules, 40,000+ words of them, are the size of a small novel. The future history, background notes and essential rules are often worked in together: this can make for a lot of reading.

Be warned that this is a review of how it felt to play BFM, not a detailed description of the game. How I felt about the game before and after playtesting dominated all other impressions. Examples of the game components before play whetted my imagination and appetite. It looked neat, with lots of neat bits and BFM didn't live up to the high expectations its initial impression had created.

After Ben and I had play-tested BFM in the strategic version, the first thing that came to mind was a recent interview with Jim Dunning in Panzerfaust/Campaign. Jim discussed long and convincingly game development budgets and production schedules. How designers were expected to produce well, and on time, was explained. SPI's goal, based on that interview, seems to be to get games finished and out the door on schedule and under budget—albeit all else being deemed a failure. BFM looks like the kind of 40,000 word game you'd get on average under those design constraints. Another $1,000 and another month might have gotten the rough edges off and produced a great game. As the ingredients of greatness were there.

Don't take this as a negative review of BFM. Mostly I've been left with a sense of disappointment. The Solar Display map, for example, has orbital tracks for the inner planets and Jupiter. You move the planets along their track each turn. Neat, I've always wanted to do a game like that. In play, it just isn't so neat. You use card strips to keep track of how many months it will take to arrive at a destination, then move the ships/fleets to an appropriate box for the destination. If you measure, it takes three months to get to Vesta from Mars. You then move the ships to the three box on the Vesta arrival chart. So far so good. However, if you change your mind after month one, you have to move cards and the far the ships would have gone in a month, measure how many months it'll take to get to the new destination from the estimate point on the Solar Display, and set up the new arrival. Not neat. In a game that mixes concepts of approximation with approximation, this may hurt play most of all. When and where ships arrive counts more than anything else. Kilometer approximations do determine those arrivals hurt. The detailed record sheets for fleets don't have a spot for marking start and end points of trips. Annoying when they have so much other information. The problem of approximation is even worse when ships change several times. The way the game plays, changing course ought to be one of the best tactical tricks (arrive neat, with lots of neat bits and BFM didn't live up to the high expectations its initial impression had created. With a little more time it looks like this could have been cleaned up.

The components are the usual SPI quality. The Solar Display looks good despite the usual plethora of tables and charts over one third of it. The tactical combat map, not play-tested, is plain yellow on black but probably very serviceable for its purpose. The ship counters are neatly done and they are even individual names for Miner ships, Catapults, and Transports, a nice touch.

There are detailed record sheets for fleets and for individual ships. The rules are long and detailed, if poorly organized, and there are even more charts and tables that can be detached for play use. The total BFM package is impressive. Your imagination runs ahead to what the game could be if you're an s-f fan.

The political interaction is there, complete with assassins. However, there is no real politics. It's all done with die rolls. You roll dice to see if your assassins can attempt to kill another assassin. You roll for both starting and ending negotiations. You roll dice to end the war when
either Earth or Mars' Morale index gets low enough. Politics that consist of only rolling dice in relation to a series of interrelated charts that control all options and actions, isn't politics. It's a bunch of random events not under the control of players. It would have been just as well to have a big random events chart with die rolls related to morale levels. A series of charts makes it needlessly complicated. What looked neat in a cursory examination, turns out to be a bore in play. It does nothing for me to win a game, as I did, by rolling a one on a die and consulting a chart that says 'marxist victory'! The tactical combat segment was not played but looked as if it might be better organized than the strategic level game. SPI seems to do much better on average with their tactical games, and this is probably no exception. You might get your money's worth in the game just from the tactical segment, if that's your bag. The strategic combat was clumsy in that you had to reference two charts. The first tells the percentage of each fleet destroyed, the second tells how many ships it was, and the relative fleet size. It is possible to use the charts to let a smaller fleet do more damage than it can receive, particularly if you use single ships. It seems unrealistic for a single ship to be better in some combats than two ships. I suppose most players are expected to use the detailed tactical module where this wouldn't occur. A glaring example of incomplete development is in the arrival schedule charts. There are spaces for four months arrival on all charts. It isn't possible to have more than a three month trip. This isn't even allowed for on the measurer. Yet, there it is on the map. You suspect that late one night at SPI, someone came in and said, "That's as far as we go on BFM, print it," and away it went. In summary, the game disappointed me because it seemed to promise so much. It isn't a great game, just an average game that may have started out to be great. I'd give it a 6.3-6.5 rating. B.E. Hessel and Redmond Simonsen have design credit for BFM. I suspect they'd have appreciated another month on it. Too much was attempted in one game, given the design/development constraints SPI apparently has. If a less ambitious design had been attempted, the game might have had a completed feel. TSG readers will probably like the game if they like tactical play and don't expect too much, as I did. Anyone willing to fiddle some will find all the basics to work with.

**BATTLEFLEET MARS** is available from Simulation Publications Inc., 44 E. 23rd St., N.Y. 10010. Books rules, Solar Display map, Tactical Display map, two distance measures, record sheets, and 450 play counters. (P.S. to Redmond: Get Jim to go flexible on those design constraints for ambitious projects like BFM, then charge more to cover it necessary. Science fiction fans and gamers would rather have a $12 great game than a $9 near miss. At least that's what TSG readers tell us in no uncertain terms about our near misses.)

Don't think Prax is uninhabitable, though. You, as a player, are one of the five major nomadic tribes. Your objective is to gain wealth by obtaining ancient magical properties called Medicine Bundles and by capturing herds from other tribes. You will send emissaries to any of the twenty Altars to ask the help of ancient spirits or even deposed gods. The founder of your tribe and the holy ancestors will manifest themselves at your call. The Shaman will cause the Death Wind to destroy the enemy. Gain the alliance of any of the ten independent tribes and they will lend their own unusual strength to your efforts.

Combat is frequent and brutal. It can take the form of a no-holds-barred melee or a rain of arrows and spears from passing skirmishers. Both are handled on one of the two Combat Results Tables by comparing the relative strengths of the opposing forces. To the roll of a die there are special rules for magical combat, but it is handled similarly. The rules build through a very basic game with just the tribes, to an advanced game in which the tribal deities can be summoned, the complete game in which all the deities of Prax are available to the tribes who can benefit them and magical combat is allowed. In this game, however, not all of the spirits are benign. Plague can come, as can creatures of chaos, and even a particularly strong and obnoxious tribe of humans.

The game has some cute touches, too. There is the Eternal Battle, for instance, frozen forever in time, but not in space. Randomly drifting across the Plains of Prax, entire clans can be absorbed into the battle. Brave emissaries can be sent to gamble their lives to obtain the aid of a few of the immortal warriors of the Eternal Battle. You may encounter Ryena, who is well known for sitting about and telling lewd jokes all day and will therefore disrupt any staking he is sent after.

The game is easy to learn. The rules are eminently readable. You will, however, have to make a few arbitrary decisions regarding their interpretation--some words seem to be missing at a couple of points. Most of the game is clear, at any rate. Staking is allowed with certain restrictions. This can become clumsy in a few of the scenarios, but is at worst a minor annoyance and there doesn't seem to be any way around it.

**NOMAD GODS** was designed by Greg Stafford. It is available from The Chaosium, P.O. Box 94706, for $9.95. Two to five players can play a balanced game.

---

**NOMAD GODS**

*a review*

by Robert C. Kirk

This is the second game in the Dragon Pass series, continuing the trend established in **WHITE BEAR AND RED MOON**. It is a fantasy board-game, played with 252 unit counters on a colorful 22"x 27" box-grid mapboard of heavy paper stock. The 72 page rulebook is profusely illustrated by Gene Day with what must be the best artwork of any fantasy game.

The saga portrayed by **NOMAD GODS** unfolds on the Plains of Prax, located south west of Dragon Pass. Prax was largely blasted in prehistory during the Gods' War. To this day, it is a mostly barren chapparal wasteland, where all the mana of the once fertile ground was exhausted, is found here. Near the Dead Place is the Sacred Ground, wherein the Earth deities reside in eternal peace. Prax is also where the Block landed--an omen cube of immortal stone, burling across the world when the Mountain of Law exploded during the War of the Gods, to crush the Devil beneath it as it struck.

Don't think Prax is uninhabitable, though. You, as a player, are one of the five major nomadic tribes. Your objective is to gain wealth by obtaining ancient magical properties called Medicine Bundles and by capturing herds from other tribes. You will send emissaries to any of the twenty Altars to ask the help of ancient spirits or even deposed gods. The founder of your tribe and the holy ancestors will manifest themselves at your call. The Shaman will cause the Death Wind to destroy the enemy. Gain the alliance of any of the ten independent tribes and they will lend their own unusual strength to your efforts.

Combat is frequent and brutal. It can take the form of a no-holds-barred melee or a rain of arrows and spears from passing skirmishers. Both are handled on one of the two Combat Results Tables by comparing the relative strengths of the opposing forces. To the roll of a die there are special rules for magical combat, but it is handled similarly. The rules build through a very basic game with just the tribes, to an advanced game in which the tribal deities can be summoned, to the complete game in which all the deities of Prax are available to the tribes who can benefit them and magical combat is allowed. In this game, however, not all of the spirits are benign. Plague can come, as can creatures of chaos, and even a particularly strong and obnoxious tribe of humans.

The game has some cute touches, too. There is the Eternal Battle, for instance, frozen forever in time, but not in space. Randomly drifting across the Plains of Prax, entire clans can be absorbed into the battle. Brave emissaries can be sent to gamble their lives to obtain the aid of a few of the immortal warriors of the Eternal Battle. You may encounter Ryena, who is well known for sitting about and telling lewd jokes all day and will therefore disrupt any staking he is sent after.

The game is easy to learn. The rules are eminently readable. You will, however, have to make a few arbitrary decisions regarding their interpretation--some words seem to be missing at a couple of points. Most of the game is clear, at any rate. Staking is allowed with certain restrictions. This can become clumsy in a few of the scenarios, but is at worst a minor annoyance and there doesn't seem to be any way around it.

**NOMAD GODS** was designed by Greg Stafford. It is available from The Chaosium, P.O. Box 94706, for $9.95. Two to five players can play a balanced game.
OGRE
a review
by William A. Peterson

Fidelity of Simulation ("Realism") 1
Game Mechanics (Playability) 7
Physical Quality 1
Graphics (Artwork) 3
Player's Aids (Bookkeeping) 0
Rules Clarity 9
Game Speed 8
Game Balance 8
Game as a Whole 7

It has often been said, of many different things, that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts". This, as can be seen from the ratings above, is certainly true of OGRE!. Going by the average of the other scores, OGRE! should only rate about 4.5 (on a scale of 0 to 10), yet the game gives the impression of being much better than a $2.95 game should. This is probably because I, along with most gamers, am more interested in a good game than a pretty box. Be this as it may, OGRE! is still far from perfect, and I think that an explanation of my ratings will show why.

Fidelity of Simulation: "Realism" is a ridiculous term to use when describing a Fantasy or Science Fiction game, but a game must still have a background, a basic framework governing what takes place during the game. In fact, it was Steve Jackson's "Notes on the Ogre" in TSG #9 that convinced me to buy OGRE!. The preface on pages 2 & 3 of the rules booklet further added to this background. It's only after you start reading the rules that problems develop: Powered Armor Infantry, presumably equipped with jet belts, are incapable of crossing any type of terrain except clear; Heavy tanks aren't very heavy (even in relation to conventional units); OGRES can overrun enemy units with devastating effect (especially platoons of infantry with jet belts and 40 mm of armor tougher than steel), but can't climb into a noisy little 500m wide crater; yet, this same kind of crater affords absolutely nothing in the way of cover, concealment and/or protection; and, although everyone in the game is armed with high-power nuclear weapons, there are no additional cranets formed, nor can any one attack effect more than one weapon system on the OGRE! (but the OGRE can easily wipe out three platoons of armored infantry). Also, with each hex representing 500m, you'd think the stacking limitations might be greater. All this might be nitpicking, but minor details like this detract seriously from the flavor of the game.

Playability: This is one of OGRE!'s strongpoints. The game mechanics are smooth, if unoriginal (powerblitz fans should really like this game). As with most games, all the negative aspects listed under realism become positive aspects here. The dice are diabolical, though, especially when shooting at the OGRE's movement points (roll one dice per attacker, 5 or 6 kills one point per attack factor). All in all, however, it is a 'clean' game.

Physical Quality: What do you get for your $2? The cardboard on which the game is printed is of no more quality than a 5"x7", 20-page rules booklet, (including an extra set of counters, a 2-color cover illustration, two ads, the preface, the credits, and an example of play amounting to 12 pages of actual rules and charts) 112 unit counters, (black on gray or white; 1/4" square; semi-die-cut, but much means to them out); and including no less than 15 OGRES, somewhat excessive since 2 are a match for all the other units combined! (in which to try and store it in (open top, not ziploc-ed). Don't try to play OGRE outdoors on a windy day. The components quality is, however, slightly better than that of Gar-Garouk, produced by Eagle Ganes (in which yououghta drop their line).

Graphics: Only the interior illustrations can save OGRE's rating here. The color illustration is in red & black-on white, and looks awful; the solid black hexes (craters) and solid black hexides (rubble) which might as well not be there; and on page 9 are three platoons of armored infantry. Also, with each hex representing 500m, you'd think the stacking limitations might be greater. All the negative aspects listed under realism become positive aspects here. The dice are diabolical, though, especially when shooting at the OGRE's movement points (roll one dice per attacker, 5 or 6 kills one point per attack factor). All in all, however, it is a 'clean' game.

Physical Quality: What do you get for your $2? The cardboard on which the game is printed is of no more quality than a 5"x7", 20-page rules booklet, (including an extra set of counters, a 2-color cover illustration, two ads, the preface, the credits, and an example of play amounting to 12 pages of actual rules and charts) 112 unit counters, (black on gray or white; 1/4" square; semi-die-cut, but much means to them out); and including no less than 15 OGRES, somewhat excessive since 2 are a match for all the other units combined! (in which to try and store it in (open top, not ziploc-ed). Don't try to play OGRE outdoors on a windy day. The components quality is, however, slightly better than that of Gar-Garouk, produced by Eagle Ganes (in which you oughta drop their line).

Game Balance: Here I have a somewhat unusual complaint. The balance between the two sides is basically very good, (at least in the two regular scenarios) so that it is never certain until the last moment who is going to win, (unless one side has made a BIG mistake). The situation, depending on the defender selects his forces, according to a certain total of attacker factors, i.e.: 1 Mk. III OGRE v.s. 20 inf. factors and 35 "armor" (Non-inf.) factors. Consider: All units move 2 hexes/turns, except OGRE! (3MA) and GEVs (4MA another 4MA after combat) and, these GEVs have the same range as a heavy tank, 2/3 the defense factor, and half the attack factor, (with the ability to combine attacks means that the GEVs are incredibly superior to all other non-OGRE units on a per-unit-factor basis). Actually, as it is the only unit which can regularly get a shot off at the OGRE! and have a chance of not being rammed next turn, (in which a Mk. II trades 1/45th of it's movement capability for a 50% disabled, 50% destroyed result) the GEV is probably the best on a per-unit basis. This is the only hint of imbalance in the game, but an important one, (the counter mix doesn't have enough GEVs for a pure GEV force in the Mk.v scenario). Perhaps a remedy is forthcoming. (See elsewhere in this issue—Ed.)

Game as a Whole: Basically, I like OGRE! It is fast, simple, and fun. It's bad points, while annoying, can be ignored. Personally, I would rather pay $5.00 for a game and have it done with some attention to quality (especially fully die-cut counters, and maybe some imagination used when drawing the map) then pay a paltry sum for a paltry game, (besides OGRE and Gar-Garouk, Atlantic's 500 B.C. by Excalibure also springs to mind). But, OGRE as a game, is well worth $2.95 and a bit of aggravation.
WAR OF THE RING
a review
by Tony Watson

The Lord of the Rings trilogy has fostered a sizable number of gamers and rules for miniatures, all of which have been eagerly snapped up by the fantasy wargame market. Mr. Tolkien's world, and the events transpired within, sparked the imagination of many a gamer who sought to recreate the epic battles of the books. Some of the more unique attempts to bring Tolkien's masterpiece to life in game form have been those that have wedded the strategic military situation of the books to the tried and proven game system of the favorite, DIPLOMACY. The no luck, simplistic system has been modified to depict (in the designer's eye) the situation of T.A. 3018 as the hosts of Sauron mustered to battle against the forces of good, then regain the Ring held by the hobbit, Frodo.

None of these efforts have gained much attention beyond the environs of the postal DIPLOMACY hobby; their publication and play being restricted in large part to amateur play-by-mail 'zines.

But Fantasy Games Unlimited has tried to change all that with their latest offering, WAR OF THE RING. WOTR is meant to be a strong commercial effort. It comes in a nice box, the cover art by Tim Kirk, depicts a group of Orcs about to charge an army of good guys. The 22"x21" mapboard is mounted and full color. The basic beige is augmented by blue for bodies of water, burn-orange for mountains and green for woods. Only mountains and rivers have any bearing on play. As in regular DIPLOMACY, provinces are irregularly shaped, each bordering on a number of others. As far as I can ascertain, the map is faithful to the geography of the trilogy. There are, however, some glaring ambiguities. In one case, borders and a river seem to form an un-named province.

The die cut counters come in two colors; black on jade green for the forces of good (collectively known as Gondor) and black on red for the armies of evil, referred to as Mordor. The counters each bear a number; one, two, or three corresponding to the strength of that army. Certain of these will bear the name of the army they belong to. This is a nice touch which allows the players to keep track of the various contingents of the game. Other counters represent the important personages in the novel.

The rules are contained in a sixteen page rule book that is rather self-compromising to the point of the game. The rules are laid out fairly well but the game suffers grievously from having no examples of the more confusing rules.

The game pits two players, one as Gondor and the other as Mordor, in a battle for control of the One Ring. The mechanics of play should be familiar to DIPLOMACY fans. Dice are not used to resolve combat; pure strategy and strategic decisions determine the outcome. Each turn the players must write an order for each of their armies. This can be to either move, to support another unit or hold, all standard functions from DIPLOMACY. In addition the player who is the winner (a variant of moving) termed attacking which draws strength away from the attacked unit, equal to the value of the province for the attackers. The unit which can bring the greatest force (its strength plus that of any supporting units) will gain the province if the forces of equal strength will stand off. Any defeated army in a province is dislodged and must retreat to an adjacent province so that standard DIPLOMACY, where each unit has a value of one, some armies in WOTR have strengths of two and the largest Mordor army has a power of three.

Other interesting rules cover fortresses, supply centers that defend themselves as Puerto Rico does, and one of which when unoccupied and doubles the strength of any occupying armies, and fleets, which are simply a way to convert existing armies to water movement.

Fortunately, the designer has placed a high emphasis on the actions of individuals. These are represented by separate counters bearing ions name of the going represented. The Mordorians have nine such units, the Ringwraiths or Nazgul, and the Gondorians have Gandalf, Strider, and the three hobbits, Frodo, Merry and Pippin. The Nazgul, Strider, and Gandalf all have a "quasi-military value" when operating with other armies. This rule is not as clear as it should be.

The hobbits are a special case. They move slower than other individuals but their counters are not placed on the map unless they are accompanied by a Gondorian army (by retreating a unit they are with, or by ending the turn with them unescorted). The Ring can only be detected by the Nazgul, however, so a player might capture a Ring-bearing hobbit and not know it.

Players maintain their armies by holding supply centers (certain provinces are identified as such). Beyond the mapboard area, the number of units is the number of supply centers they control. The number of units will fluctuate with the on-board military situation.

Quite appropriately, the Ring is the focus of the game. The Mordorians will usually win a military victory, but he must prevent the Ring from getting to the Crack of Doom and to do this he must eventually pull his Nazgul away from spearheading his drives and send them to capture the hobbits. The Mordorian win by destroying Gandalf, Strider and the two Elven armies, or by getting the ring to his hand. Any Gondorian player wins by getting the Ring to the Crack of Doom, or by having Gandalf or Strider in Mordor, becoming king, and fighting his way to Barad-dur. The good guys best shot is sneaking a hobbit over to Mordor and putting the ring into the Crack of Doom. The Mordorians will probably have the upper hand in the military situation. This indirect approach is probably the best game wise, as well as being true to the books. Mordor can defeat the field armies of Gondor, but he must direct a large portion of his efforts, especially those of the Nazgul, to searching for the Ring.

Examining the game from a critical point of view is interesting. This game plays well as a game, but the use of a DIPLOMACY type system in a game of this nature is questionable. The combat system was originally designed for multiplayer use, but with two players tends to eliminate surprises. More importantly, the game stresses the economic aspects of the war through the use of supply centers. The wars of the books were never economic in nature; they were basic conflicts between good and evil. The thought of the Elves fighting for Mordor simply because Lórien was lost to an orcish army is somewhat ludicrous. The attempt in this particular game was a good one; I just don't feel this game system is really appropriate to the subject matter.

This consideration, coupled with ambiguous rules and makes this game to come close, but never quite achieve its aim.

WAR OF THE RING was designed by Thomas Drake and is available from Fantasy Games Unlimited, P.O. Box 182, Roslyn N.Y. 11576 for $10.00 + .50 postage or $8.50 + .50 postage sans the box.
TUNNELS & TROLLS
a review
by Robert C. Kirk

TUNNELS & TROLLS, with a $3.00 price ticket compared to $10.00 for Dungeons & Dragons, is the game an unsuspecting newcomer to fantasy gaming is likely to buy. Unfortunately, to someone who has never played D&D, T&T is practically unplayable.

The rules book starts with general guidelines for digging a dungeon (or tunnel). It suggests that you let your imagination run wild when it comes to stocking the dungeon with traps and treasures, magical items and monsters. I would like to point out that for anyone never previously exposed to a fantasy role playing game, this requires more imagination than the normal human has. The result is a boring dungeon.

The guidelines for designing monsters are fine, but if you've never been in a dungeon and actually fought a monster, your new pets are likely to prove unkillable. As to traps, which are supposed to be clever and devious, no guidelines are given. You may know that there are trolls in the tunnels, but an example or two would be more helpful down there.

The character section works well and can be understood. The combat section is also easy enough to figure out once you latched onto the fact that on the weapons table "D&A" means, respectively, the number of dice you roll and the extra bonus strength you add to them—this is not actually stated anywhere.

The object of the game is to advance your character by obtaining experience points. This is clear enough, except for that business of designing the tunnels wherein the character gets experience.

Before going into the tunnels, your character needs supplies (apparently the character arrives stark naked at the store, which is found at the entrance of every tunnel complex). A player has a certain amount of gold to spend for his needs. For items costing less than a single gold piece, he receives change in the form of silver or copper coins, but aren't told how much silver or copper equals one gold coin. Then again, if you buy a piton hammer (for driving pitons into walls), it costs you 5 gold pieces and weighs 25; the same hammer is listed in the weapons section as weighing 50 and costing 3 gold pieces. One can even buy armor for your horse, although you do not have a horse, cannot buy one, and could not get him into the dungeon.

Magicians can buy Deluxe Magic Staff, fabricated by a 17th level wizard which retains the ability to cast any spell known to the owner, even if the original owner dies. Wasn't the 17th level wizard the original owner? Does this give wizards the power to cast any spell at any level—even those they haven't learned yet? You'll have to decide for yourself. Why not design your own game?

There are 17 levels of magic. Each time a spell is cast it drains the user of a certain amount of his strength. This is a clever section. The spells have very cute names. Some of them are nearly incomprehensible as to their effects. It seems obvious that the designer already knew how to play, thought all his readers did too and felt he could leave out extraneous matter like explanations.

There is a supplement to TUNNELS & TROLLS, but it doesn't help a whole lot. It does give a time scale, which wasn't in T&T. It suggests a method of generating treasures, fills out the section on armor and charisma, and presents a better way of determining if you can hit anything with slings, bows, and the like. It also attempts to clear up some of the questions about spells. It'll set you back another $1.50.

All in all, T&T sounds like an interesting game. Too bad a beginner cannot play the thing unless he goes out and gets DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, especially since T&T was designed because D&D cost so much. If you're already familiar with FRP games, for $3.00 you can probably find something you'd like to incorporate into your own games. If you have never played—try something else.

TUNNELS & TROLLS, designed by Ken St. Andre, is published by Flying Buffalo, Inc., P. O. Box 1467, Scottsdale, Arizona 85252.

DEAR EDITOR,

Re Slayne God's article TSG #10—
I hate to play the spoilsport when wargamers are having fun doing what they do best, breaking the rules; but some of the dirty tricks mentioned seem dubious. For example, burning off one of your own 1 pop/1 i. u. colonies to deprive another player of a planet. If someone tried that on me, I would politely but firmly (well, firmly anyway) point out that the relevant rule states that the planet is uninhabitable if the colony is burned off by an opponent's ships. And despite the fact that some people are their own worst enemies, I suggest that all that occurs is the useless destruction of one CT and contents. There are ways around this however. The population of conquered colonies, for example now becomes rather useful (in a gory sort of way). Or, you could leave 1 pop/1 i. u. colonies, which a third party might just happen by them and finish them off (pity about that!)

I also have qualms about the population shuttle tactic. Oh, its permitted by the rules; I checked that carefully; but I don't see how shuffling people from one overcrowded planet to another would help at all (in 'real life'). I feel that this represents a bit of oversight on the designer's part. Who, after all, would emigrate people from one overcrowded planet to another? (Wargamers, that's who. If there's anything for them in it!) Logically, a planet would either be sending emigrants or receiving them, not both. Perhaps there's a way to modify this in a simple rule; but I haven't thought of a fool-proof one yet.

Ed Beauregard
Vancouver, B.C.

Correction from TSG #11—
There is one typographical error which appeared on Page 36 that makes one paragraph sound odd. It is in the eighth paragraph, that reads: "(2) Make computers for the fleets..." It should read: (2) Make counters for the fleets..."

Jay Reese
Eugene, Or.

The fifth paragraph of my review of OGRE in TSG #11 reads: "The Ogre's sole objective is to survive..." It should read: "The Ogre's sole objective is to destroy the command post. In order for the defenseless command post to survive..." The portion underlined was omitted in the magazine.

Robert C. Kirk
New Carrollton, Md.
On the subject of computer games, in the last paragraph of the letter (TSG #9) the following statement was made:

"One more point: I disagree that computer-moderated games are more demanding, and that computer-opponents are more intelligent or tougher. Perhaps conceptualizing a computer simulation is more difficult for the individual player, but I think a board version of most such games would be easier to play (excepting the paperwork, which is merely tiresome). Try computerizing Strategy I or Tunnels and Trolls sometime. It doesn't work."

This is simply not true. The only point made which is valid is that computer opponents are not necessarily more intelligent than a human. The only reason for this is that at present a computer is only as intelligent as the person who programmed it. Any selection a computer makes, with the exception of generating a random number, which can be done with a die or a set of numbered chips, can be traced through the program by a human who would arrive at the same answer. The only difference is that the computer would arrive at the answer thousands of times faster. The computer is not more intelligent but definitely tougher. As for computer simulations being more difficult to play, not so either. With the right equipment computers can be programmed so that all that is required is to input the moves of each player and the computer eliminates the "tiresome paperwork."

Finally, I have never heard of Strategy I. I cannot say anything about it, but I do know a little about Tunnels and Trolls and from what I know, it would not be impossible to computerize. To illustrate this, I will use as an example the game Buffalo Castle, which was reviewed in the same issue. It is a solitaire game designed to be played with T&T rules. The review said that the game was a flow chart in booklet form. Since all computer programs, whether games, scientific or otherwise, are flow charts, computerizing is simple. The full T&T game would only require a larger and more complex, though still possible, flow chart.

Anthony Giancola
Upper Marlboro, Md.

### HOW ABOUT A $2.95 QUICKIE?

Metagaming's MicroGames are small, fast-playing, and inexpensive. But not trivial. A MicroGame is a classic wargame... that you can put in your pocket and play over lunch.

Each MicroGame includes a rulebook, an 8 1/4" by 14" (or larger) game map, and 42 to 112 counters.

More play for less money? Play a MicroGame and see.

**MicroGame 1...**

Your instruments pick it up ten kilometers away... and you know you're in trouble. It's 30 meters long. It has guns, missiles, armor.

It's as smart as a man. And it's coming to kill you.

**OGRE** is a tactical game set in a future where antimissile technology has made armor vehicles practical again.

Hovercraft, tanks, and powered infantry slug it out with tactical nuclear devices. But the most feared weapon of all needs no human guidance.

It's the giant cybernetic tank called the Ogre.

SF fans and WWII experts alike will enjoy this fast-moving game of man versus super tank.

**Game design by Steve Jackson; illustrated by Winchell Chung**

### MicroGame 3... **MELEE**

Man-to-man combat with archaic weapons... from The Fantasy Trip.

**MELEE** is a tactical abstract from the ultimate role-playing games... The Fantasy Trip. It's the most detailed simulation of single combat yet developed.

Players create fighters, set their strength and dexterity, choose their weapons and armor, and send them into the arena against human, animal, or monstrous opponents. Victors build their skill; losers die.

**MELEE** can be used as a tactical supplement to any fantasy game. It will also interest any student of history. You can play out small-scale affairs in any period... against an opponent, or solitaire.

**Game design by Steve Jackson; illustrated by Liz Danforth**

$2.95 each $2.50 for subscribers to The Space Gamer.

Box 15346
Austin, Texas 78761

Write for a free catalog of all our games and game products.