THE RETURN OF THE $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 8¼” 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

Game design by Howard Thompson;
ilustrated by Paul Jaqays
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...

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 gleaning fighters — spiked travesties of the busy workers — tears into their midst. Then the counterattack comes, and warriors rend warriors. The small, spindery 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.

MicroGame 4...

WARPWAR

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 warlines 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 “technology 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;
ilustrated by Winchell Chung

Metagaming’s MicroGames $2.95 each

$2.50 for subscribers to The Space Gamer.

Coming up: Rivets, Wizard, and Erewhon.

METAGAMING CONCEPTS

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. We've increased page count and matters and looks like it will continue. I won't get out of writing it, or putting thoughts in order. First of all, it's our decision to discontinue sale of other publishers' products. We may still sell 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 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' products 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 on 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 ARPGWAR elsewhere and it probably isn't too 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 or a move 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 Patron Subscribers 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.

YOU CAN HELP US GROW, as many already have, by letting stores in your area know you like our games. We send some freebies to stores when you send us their name to what their interest. In particular, we find stores doing very well with the Microgame box for the micros by this fall to help stores display them to advantage. We are right on target for tripling MG/TSG this year which is good for us all. H.T.
The big news this month is MELEE. As advertised in TSG 11, it's a fantasy MicroGame for archaic weaponry combat. It's standardized on a hex grid, with each counter representing one man, animal, or monster. What you DIDN'T read in the ad was that we weren't ready to spill the beans is that MELEE is the first component of an entirely new 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... bringing Order to Chaos, one might say. It's our most ambitious project yet.

The FANTASY TRIP started as an attempt to develop a more playable FRP game system. 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 mix. The main innovations here are play-aids, clean rules, and an integrated hex movement/combat system that works.

Branching off from 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 both take part of it. In other words, you'll have nothing to unlearn when the big game is out.

These two segments give you the "melee-scale" combat you'll need when things get sticky in the big game. The MELEE/WIZARD system will eliminate arguments about the arrangements of characters and "who can do what and when."

A "wargame" 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 or 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 may have contributed to this column. 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 brainwaves as we can.

Right from the start we'll cheerfully grab anything good that you send in, and we'll put your name on it.

We're also working up some solitary 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 one person can also 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 another 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 blantly teasing you! - Ed.)

At any rate, we're working hard on THE FANTASY TRIP - and enjoying it tremendously. The Labyrinth section is now being tested 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. In and the upcoming 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 wealinger, or a powerful blod. But you NEVER start with a superman or a total oaf; all beginning fighters are equals.

Having set up your TP and DX, you pick armor and weapons. The stronger you are, the bigger a weapon you can carry, and the 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 can 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 testing area where anyone coming into one of his 3 front hexes becomes "engage" and has to stop and, maybe, fight. If you strike at an area where your fighter is not, your DX is effectively increased.

Disengaged figures can move freely and use weapons. 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 giganteous start); the second determines damage.

Figures can be human, elf, dwarf hobbit, ogre, goblin, or hobgoblin. You can also have a giant, or a gargoylem (these are more than a match for two men). Animal counters are provided for wolves and snakes.

Beginning players should fight one-on-one until they get the feel of it, but the game is much more interesting with four figures on a side. It moves more slowly when you have a real mob, but the tactical possibilities are endless. A force B to retreat next to C. Thus engaging him there, so A can disengage, throw his hammer at B, and unslaying his companion to shoot D except E is charging with his weapon... and hoping he's still upright 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 (hanks to Liz Danforth and Shelly about 3/4" square; giants are bigger, of course), and shows a fighter and an identifying initial. But when you see the rules, get yourself an enemy, a big hexsheet, and thirty figures, and play out a MOB scene, you will learn some interesting tactics.

The other thing about this one, of course, is that it doesn't 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 single sheet. Or, going the other way, you can be a solitary, trying out different weapon, armor, and tactical combinations.

I'm really pleased with MELEE. There's a lot more I'd've 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.
Upcoming stuff includes:

WIZARD, which you already know about. Standing alone, it'll be a MicroGame wherein wizards slug it out with spells, curses, and created beings. Or it can be combined with MELEE, so that groups of fighters can take a wizard or so along as heavy artillery. That should be MicroGame 6.

MicroGame Number 5 will be RIVETS, Robert Asprin's robot game. It's in a future where all the pesky humans are gone, leaving the robots to fight, multiply, and generally cause trouble. Not only a good game, but a very funny one, with some artwork that should have Vaughn Bode turning in his grave.

And Number 4 (I don't know how I got into this stuff backwards) is Howard's WarWar, which has been getting a lot of playtesting lately. Only real problem left is balancing the CTR. Since it's diceless — an outstanding game, where each player picks an option for each ship and you compare options to find out what happened — it has to be EXCELLENTLY balanced to work at all. No point in putting in story obstructions that won't be used. But that's being ironed out. Considering the timelag between now and publication of TSG 12, it may be that WarWar can be considered available. (Ready Sept. 1, 1977, HT)

That's all we've got sequenced right now. Several other Micros are in progress, but publication order will depend on what grows ready first. Among the Micros to look for in 1978: Frank's EGOE, set on and underneath the surface of Mars. Lynn Willis (you'd better recognize that name — he did GODSPIRE) is working on this one. It could be #7 with no problem at all; the only bugs left in the last version were rule-clarification details and the fact that it took three hours to play. An excellent game,YS deals with an encounter with Chitin.

An orbital-satellite game. This is K. Allen Bjorke's design. A little rough as of this writing, but it has promise.

THE BATTLE FOR CLEVELAND. Yes... Cleveland. Many years in the future. Forrest Johnson has invented this game; playable and on sale in several months. I guess when he's satisfied with it, we'll send it back. I liked it. It's a full-unit-tactical game, set in a future history he's developing, and features some really neat ships and gadgets, all of whom want Cleveland.

Another OGRE game. I've got an OGRE article elsewhere in this issue, so I'll just refer to that and shut up.

Another CHITIN game. This is Howard's project. (Yes, he's still working on HYMENOPTERA. CHITIN II will get in some more advanced units.) (And working, and working, HT)

It's an alien game. A fantasy game, but emphasizing interaction, and bravado rather than tactical skill. It's still lacking something -— maybe it will figure out what it is, we'll print it. It's fun.

The Micros are the main project right now, with THE FANTASY TRIP running a close second as of now. The following are the things to watch for. Computer games will happen when they happen, and HYMENOPTERA will be out someday. People have been asking about selling MicroGame designs to Meta-gaming; we've even been sent a few. We're not interested in buying outside designs. The catch: it has to be finished work. If you send us something, it should be so complete that we can sit down with it as though it were a new game bought at the store, open it up, and play it. If we get one like that, we'll evaluate it; if we like it, we'll start detailed playtesting immediately. If we don't like it, we'll write and tell you why.

If you send us a sheaf of unplaytest notes, we'll send them back. Sorry about that.

The testing (a vicious corruption of your work for completeness is to give it to a couple of your friends who have never seen it before, and GO AWAY. If they can play it when you're not around to explain, you've got something that (at least) we'll be happy to look at. Have fun — SJ.}

GAME INTENT
by Lynn Willis

Every fantasy and science fiction simulation I know is worth playing—in fact, I have yet to come across one that wasn't worth as an acquaintance. A handful are memorable apart from specific games and opponents. This intrinsic appeal or interest should not be confused with brilliance, aptness, or ease of game system mechanics, though mechanics are 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. Aliveness 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 iron and氰化物 in the scenario rationale 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 ironclad. An approach that is instructively different from the deadliness and commitment evident in StarForce. Sorcerer's formulary predecessor. Commentary and rationales indicate that StarForce is realistic, evocative, important. Sorcerer is not.

WBARM, 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 scenario, Sorcerer concludes. The charm wears in its walk of expanding cloud of special units, expressing by a participatory peculiarity the essence of magic. In comparison, Sorcerer, with its barren air dragons, demonic infantry and trolls, neither gets its shoes off, nor its pants on. I agree that Sorcerer is the better game. WBARM is the better experience.

Like Sorcerer, StarForce features an elaborate and unusual combat and movement system, and a lengthy series of scenarios sketch fictive histories in both games. StarForce's two-page rationale (Sorcerer had a full 10 pages) introduces the 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 fueds 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 WBARM 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 players like myself feel obscurely cheated. (See Imperium-1 for some very information-rich outreach as well as the above.)

Starship Troopers, Rift Trooper, StarSoldier, Starguard, and Ogre are ground tactical games set in the future. All dealing with armored infantry, they owe a debt of perogative to Heinlen'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, and is regrettable that, once in the Campbell mold, he rarely escaped its obligate, the meanest, onirist criteria in the universe. There is also some Spencerian nonsense about races expanding or contracting to fill space (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 Kosnett's fine articles in Moves-32 for more information; better, read Heinlein's book.) Starship Troopers and Rift Trooper portray incidents from the
novel. ST in every conceptual, developmental, or physical way, is superior. I do admire the ST "Wild" 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 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 smearsy map apparently mastered from congealed antipasto. The game plays immaculately, however, and the programmed rules reflect the care of its design. The start 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 Move-'82, provides ESP rules and suggests some of the possibilities mandated by the linked rationale with StarForce. The game combines Sniper's split-phase task allocation system, so counter density remains very low, and interest accumulates on individual counteries in the true spirit of Starship Troopers. Both sides are mobile, also not true of the Avalon-Hill game, though SS's low TPA's sometimes ask where the heavy nuclear situations in a game-world of nearly omnipotent movement and fire capacity. Weaponry is surprisingly analogous to today's: support platforms (tanks), energy beams (rifles), launched weapons (PGM's) and unguided (LAW's), and deadly (smokes). (smoke) or orbital bombarding (off-map artillery). Roving 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 in what it does, not in what it is called. Lacking that decisive advantage, most players want 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--those for conversion beams and trident 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 too 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 resemble 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 nearly unstoppable cybernetic tanks--ogres, as they are called. Using a simplified CA system the long, narrow map funnels the impassive Ogre toward your beloved lowly HQ, and that bit of cardboard takes on the power of the hand of doom. I find the multi-Ogre battles less convincing, because more 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 Starguard that the time spent developing all those scenarios might be better spent in creating more depth in one or two versions of a game-world. On the other hand, after a number of games of Ogre players will legitimately ask where the nuclear bombs are kept, and where their delivery systems are, and why there are no provisions for blinding Ogres with magnetic dust, spray paint, etc. The disadvantage of small game systems is that you ram your head against a wall once in a while, and 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 in the Heinlein and in general (i.e., single combat with greatly expanded monitoring, fox and hounds situations, alien life forms and motives).
PLAYING WITH FIRE
by Edward C. Cooper

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

The calculated, wholesale destruction of life in the NARVW cluster by the deliberate triggering of Godsfire may then seem even more incomprehensible. 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 commanders. Winning easily 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 could 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 have 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 its revelation. Surprisingly, there is all to gain by comradery. The monosystem government has learned the manipulation of the fire and is about to re-emerge. Rebirth through death. Godsfire... a suicide 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. MK IIIs bask from the Frontal action to land and dispense in maximum strength to insure some will survive. Above, the enemy ships do not seem much better. LGs and Yaks to the people below. PDFs dig in. They too, are waiting...

... On the other edge of the cluster, a self-proclaimed victor wallows in celebration, openly parading his vast fleet, unaware of the disaster about to befall him...

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 interphase can increase wealth and power; the social interphase can also be used to create rapid social deterioration and dilute in time 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 Combine 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 planets. By natural selection, the situation on some is going to be worse than others. Under normal conditions, resources and capital can be readily transferred to a devastated region on a more troubled planet. With the occurrence of Godsfire, planetary parties may not as readily recognize the needs of the NG, attempting instead to hoard supplies for themselves. Torrering allegiance levels and loan problems associated with cash deficiencies and present loan defaults may handcraft the NG's 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 two, two systems to four, three systems to eight. Note, as the system number increases arithmetically, capital outlay required doubles. This directly relates to several areas: counter subversion costs, raising economic level costs, (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 epocidal disaster of Godsfire.

The biggest handicap the Combine government faces is "overextension and underdevelopment." Production is now too small to maintain a balanced budget to balance. Though weak, its production is adequate to maintain its small size. Forces are concentrated on one sphere augmenting what combat strength is left. Greater security is possible. It needs no outward threats to the stability of the living national governments in the NARVW.

And what of raising economic levels after the trauma of Godsfire has passed? The methods that will be necessary on the road to reconstruction. Only moderate controlled regions may have their economic base intact. The glaring factor now in favor of the monosystem becomes apparent: the monosystem player will have manipulated party alignment during social interphase 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 offensive to 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 SQD 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 and cheap buildup is possible for the monosystem-should Godsfire appear. The Combine will run the risk of revolt when trying to change parties and this will only add to the widespread social problems already present.

If the monosystem dares 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 new vulnerable empire. (Neutral NGs may find this period of chaos an excellent opportunity to reinstitute 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 AGs without the security 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 "neutral focus" 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.

Length 145m
Girth 300
Mass 94,000mt
Armament 1025m Grenade
Primary Drive PseudoBussard
Secondary Drive Fusion Torch

WINCHELL CHUNG
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. He recommended assigning star classes at players' discretion, maintaining the same balance of star classes as in SC, for the easiest card making. 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 Sol'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 multiple stars. 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 in their systems, and lower the value of planets of companion stars in multiple systems. As well, under present technological capabilities, 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.

If we assume that technology permits us to use more marginal environments (technology developed from pollution control, 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 M 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 dwarfstar 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 stars in the system. The grid co-ordinates are also given for some of the stars, where STARFORCE co-ordinates may cause confusion, and for the 4 new star systems within 17 light-years of Sol which have been discovered since the printing of SF.

The letter-number designations are the spectral classes of the stars, A (or B), F, G, K, and M from brightest to dimmest. Within each spectral class, O is the brightest; large star type, and 9 the dimmest/smallest. "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 that the system is 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 within 17 ly. of Sol, but I can find no listings which remotely correspond to CD-21 (3325/-5) or Innes' Star (1520/-8), at an angle 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): BD-2126/10/Sigma 2398
CD-36/2922/-7/Lacaille 9352
Luyten's Star/1608/1/BD 5 1668
DC-39/2727/3/Lacaille 8780
BD 12216/1/Gromioberio 1618
BD 68 (1926/14)/A Oe 17415-6
Lalande 21258/BD 44 2051
EV Lacertae/BD 43 4305

Table of Stellar Information

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<tr>
<th>Alpha Centauri (G5/K5/M5)</th>
<th>Beta Hydri G1</th>
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<tr>
<td>-12072/7</td>
<td>-71 Cygni K7/K7</td>
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<td>Delta Pavonis G7</td>
<td>92 Tau</td>
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<td>Kappa Cassiopeiae G0/K6</td>
<td>HR7703 K2/M5</td>
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<td>Sirius A1/wd</td>
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<td>40 Eradani K0/M6/M4</td>
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<td>Krueger 60 M1/M6</td>
<td>Altair A7V</td>
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<td>Groomebridge 34 M1/N6</td>
<td>EV Lacertae M5c</td>
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<td>AC 79 (291/16) M4</td>
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<td>BD 45 (0913/16)</td>
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<td>BD 50 (1121/-16) M0</td>
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<td>BD 12 (1132/-3) M5</td>
<td>BD 45 (1734/14)</td>
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<td>BD 68 (1926/14) M3.5c</td>
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<td>CD 058 (1420/-13) wd</td>
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<td>Newly Discovered Stars</td>
<td>G128-27 (3216/-4) M5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lalande 21258 (1531/3) MT</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stein 2051 (2313/15) M5/wd</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Contrary to Mr. Kirk's article, the stars on the SF display are already differentiated by habitable 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 system containing a class K star is 40 Eradani (Vulcan's sun), which also contains a white dwarf, lowering the system's desirability somewhat.

Information is available (somewhere!) to complete the list of stars. In the meantime, "?" stars can be rolled for using two dice and the following table:
star in a multiple system. Because there are many more stars on the StarForce display system than there are star cards of the appropriate type, players should not keep their star cards, but should replace them in a discard pile, and shuffle the original cards. When the original cards are exhausted, the discard should be reshuffled.

Using this system, a fairly interesting game can be played. As habitable systems are less favorable, the game will last longer than a standard SC game, and will be fought much harder.

Sources:

湯姆·麥克德莫特的文章，Ship Effectiveness in Stellar Conquest, 1973, 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 the 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 5 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 ISW (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 I point losses. Of course, one may question whether the player with 5 DN who attacks 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 IP 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 an ATK force...and this in spite of the fact that an ATK costs 5 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 an 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 9010 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 a 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 the cost effectiveness of ESCs and DN's.

As Stellar Conquest's designer, it may interest readers to know my favorite ship is the moribund ATK. It's my workhorse because of its ability to be used for both the ship's attractiveness and cost effectiveness. The preferred solution now is to have high-cost 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 ship industrial base the Fast ATKS allow conquests with smaller colonies for 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 Dreadnought fleet.

It's a matter of style and preference. A relatively large number of SAM or GMA Attackers striking early suits me. But, it should be noted I'm not only a strong player, not the best.

Howard Thompson
IRON MOUNTAIN
an OGRE scenario
by J. Richard Jarvinen

"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 tugs 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 lieutenant hesitated, as if to say something, but apparently thought better of his impulse. "Yes, sir," he said, and ran quickly down the caravan to issue the order. Hanson raised his glasses again and peered over the windshield of his jeep, studying the unexpected, unidentified vehicle. The roar of the giant diesel started up reverberated through the air as the 45 ton trucks began their arduous climb up the mountain road.

Five minutes later, Hanson was still standing in his jeep when an American GVE 45 ton truck drew up and shut down its power, falling to earth with the cry of tearing metal, rather than settling slowly as air-cushioned vehicles normally stop. 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 they did, he realized what it was in pants and he kept wiping his brow with his good arm. "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 our radar went out along with our radio." Jacobs eyed the remains of the antenna 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 GVE, 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 GVE's 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!" The lieutenant jumped up, barked a 'yes sir', and ran off.

"O.K., 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 they 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 his superior speed, will be able to catch up. 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 to the 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? Ahh... excuse me, sir."

---

**MAX SPEED (km/hr)**

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

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**Launch Site A**

17

20

30

---

**Launch Site B**

15

20

50
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 heading.

"Just what does this buy us, 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 strained 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 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 on 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. It also looks like it has two--"

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 have four missiles? And what else was he trying to say?"

"Could be a later version of the same thing. And if I'm afraid he was telling us around the Main, it is. OGRE batteries. It's going to be rougher than I thought. Get all the drivers on the radio. Tell them to put their lights out and stay clear of any temperature and pressure gauges. There should be a small howitzer up ahead. Get someone to check on it and make sure it's 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 and spun, they were spinning fast and kicking up dust. The howitzer in the lead jeep could barely move, it was spinning so fast it was actually accelerating. The driver of the howitzer acted quickly. The wheel was turned sharply, and the howitzer's barrel was aimed at an angle. The shell was fired, and the resulting explosion was heard throughout the area.

"What's 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 of the truck got out and pointed down the road to the entire convoy, all stopped behind the lead truck. The hoots and hollers were frantic trying to repair it. "Damn it! Don't waste time trying to fix that beast! Shove it over to the side."

"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 slowly moved 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 was deafening, the 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 its bearing its 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, had appeared on the horizon. Tactical nuclear missiles, primary and secondary batteries, anti-personnel weapons, independently controlled by a computer, and all controlled by a computer, unfeeling, unfearing and able to make the most accurate calculations. This, was an OGRE, the mobile weapon of its time. Even as Hanson was turning to look, a bright flash appeared, the signal, the sign of a missile being launched. Accelerating quickly, it arched high over the crevice and, locking on its target, plunged down toward the convoy. 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 could be heard, and truck after truck was destroyed by the intense heat of the nuclear blast. Hanson stood and could hear the screams and shouts of the men. Stunned, the men stood appalled at the horror. Suddenly, the first wave of those missile tanks to lock in with us! We've already lost too much time! The barrel of the howitzer lowered as it tracked the moving OGRE. A GEV went up in flames as the OGRE rolled over it. Simultaneously, the howitzer and the OGRE's main battery emitted jets of flame indicating 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 shattered remnants 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, he ran back to the jeep.

"Let's go, sergeant. We must 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 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:

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

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.
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.

11. 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.

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 Anti-personnel (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 Hansen 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 Hansen didn't gain his ten minutes. Makes quite a difference!) Have fun!

In the September, 1976 Avalon Hill GENERAL, Richard Hambleton 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 war game 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 3X, but rather roughly \(\sqrt{2X}\) as much, after taking into account that one hit on either man kills just as dead. (See the Fuzzy Wuzzys were this African tribe, and they beat a British square.)

The Fuzzy Wuzzy problem has already surfaced at 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. He and the 220th GEV Battalion are gonna 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's Armored 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 can over-run the dice-thighth, 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 Banks 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 can immobilize the 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 seperated positions. Pick off more treads, or silence the main
battery, depending on the situation. 
At some point, you must make a 
concentrated 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 and 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 
the 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 
Artillery.

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 artillery be less mobile 
than it is today? The U.S. Army 
currently plans to change gun 
position after EVERY FIRE MISSION 
without 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 bastards 
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 appro-
priate title and just started writing.

The subjects 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 
design. (3) An upcoming change 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 generated. 
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 calcu-
lations on Ogres (no doubts they'd 
be cost-effective) and some excel-
lent, if complicated, advanced 
movement rules. He also suggests 
(has several others) that there 
should be provisions for mobile 
howitzers. (Wait for the new game.)

Tracy B. Harns 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-
ments are done the way he suggested.

Greg Costikyan reviewed OGRE 
in his zine URP DURFAL...called it 
"the ideal game to play whilst 
smoking." Okay, Greg. He made 
a good point, and I quote: "It is 
not clear whether Ogres expend 
movement points when they move..." 
Well, this is true. It had never 
ocurred 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. Mea maxima culpa. Rules 
should be perfect; that will be 
corrected in the 2nd 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 Ogre goes 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
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 LINKED heavy tanks. Seldom, if ever, was a defense tried without some hotheads. And 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 placed hundreds of GEVs on the counter sets, and the testers didn't show up because 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 in here is: if you want to get all the bugs out of a game, PLAYTEST THE DUMB STRATEGIES. If you are wrong, your rules give the battle to the side that charges uphill against entrenched positions. If you have much experience, you're not going to learn anything unless you play with Civil War experts. You'll never find out about it, because you'll never hear people admit it. So go out and try. PLAYTEST THE DUMB STRATEGIES. That was the second lesson I got from Ogre: Make sure that the things you don't do will work. Don't work don't work. 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 winning 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 between three infantry and small armor units of circa 2085.

We will introduce a number of new rules, including terrain effects and stacking. It will also introduce at least one more "regulatory" clause. We will 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 can play the powered GEVs into the Ogre map...and we WILL supply terrain rules and scenarios for Ogre. But if you don't have Ogre, you can buy GEV and get a bunch of new rules instead of reusing references to things called Ogrecs, and a few Ogre MK IV counters.

The way that way won't work: GEV will stand by itself, and play well. (Incidentally, the size of the GEV will be bigger than the Ogre map.) GEV will also tie in 100% with Ogre. And each game will have stuff that the other won't. The total amount of material is greater.

There's a possible third Ogre microgame in the works, as well as a box game where all the rules are together and supplying a large tactical map. But these are quite a ways away in the future. GEV is only about 6 months away.

In order to make the armors for the GEV game face another threat, there will be some changes in their abilities. And when we put out a second edition of Ogre, we MAY change things in the original. Now we're in the next section; we 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 to the game. The factuality of the game: We MAY revise a few of the rules to conform with GEV and improve the balance between the armor units.

Physical changes will be as follows:

(1) The map will have larger hexes, and will have fewer hexrows on the "bottom." In other words, the Ogre starts 3 hexes closer. We may change the map graphics to a "realistic" portrayal of crackers and rubble. Comments? Do you prefer the present "abstract" map? Don't comment. The changes will be uncharted, unless the unit abilities are changed - see below. The cover 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:

(1) WEaken playtesting. Before I go any farther, two things. The rule changes below are taken from a DRAFT. We're inviting you to test them. They are NOT final. SECOND: Many rules have been incorporated into the second edition of Ogre will be printed in full in TSG. If you WANT to buy the 2d edition (like because you wrote your first one out), play it and that's fine. But nobdoy should feel like they "have" to get a new copy.

(a) GEVs can move 4 hexes on their FIRST movement phase, but only 3 after combat.
(b) GEVs take a MA of 3.
(c) Infantry can cross "rubble" hexesides. (This was Robert Schultz' suggestion.)
(d) An LGV's movement points whenever it rams or is rammed by an enemy armor unit. Exception: When an Ogre rams a GEV in GEV it loses 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 fort attack strength points of this force must set up on or BEHIND the line between the crackers at the map edges.

ADVANCED SCENARIOS. The defense gets any 22 armor units (again, howitzers count as 2 units) and 35 points of infantry. The 20 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 some changes, 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. Please read every letter, and reply to as many of the good ones as I can get to.

We're going to do our own play-testing, plenty, but we're not holding up the project. Good playtesters are hard to come by, and we're always interested in finding more.

THE OTHER OGREs, ETC.

We also playtested other cybernated maps for these in later games. Therefore, below are the 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 cybertank experiment. Simply a beefed-up heavy with computer guidance.

1 MB 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 more than a standard heavy — just harder to kill. So the Mark II was designed with more guns and armor.
1 MB 4/3 D4
2B 3/2 D2
6 AP 1/1 D1 against INF, etc.
30 movement 00000 00000 drops to 2
00000 00000 drops to 1
00000 00000 drops to 0

Then came the Mark III — the first really fearsome Ogre, and the first one to be useful as a battle-line unit. You know about the Mark III. The Mark III’s success inspired enemy copies... like the IIB in “Iron Mountain” (this issue). It also inspired a more-than-copy. The first wholly PanEuropean cybertank was called “Fencer” by the Combine. It lacked the characteristic Ogre “tower,” and carried a new type of weapon: the missile rack.

PANEUROPEAN “FENCER” CYBERTANK
4 MSL RACK D4
20 MISSILES 00000 00000
00000 00000
4 2B 3/2 D2
8 AP 1/1 D1 against INF, etc.
45 MVM 00000 00000 00000 00000 drops to 2
00000 00000 00000 00000 drops to 1
00000 00000 00000 00000 drops to 0

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 undamaged 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 INSEIDE.

OGRE MARK IV
The Combine turned around and copied the PanEuropean missile racks for the Ogre Mk IV, adapting them to the Ogre II design and their own desire for a light “raider” unit...
1 MB 4/3 D4
2B 3/2 D3
3 MSL RACKS D4
15 MSL 00000 00000 00000
8 AP 1/1 D1 against INF, etc. only
60 MVM starting at 4 MA.
00000 00000 00000 drops to 3
00000 00000 00000 drops to 2
00000 00000 00000 drops to 1
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
2B 3/2 D3
2 MSL RACKS D4
20 MSL 00000 00000 00000 00000
16 AP 1/1 D1 vs INF, etc. only
75 MVM 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 sluggish 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.

News

From METAGAMING:
* Games by other publishers will no longer be stocked by METAGAMING. Various problems in handling outside games and the desire to concentrate on METAGAMING publications were cited as reasons. Discounts on the entire line of METAGAMING products will continue to be given to TSG subscribers.
* Official notice: METAGAMING notifies all parties that the name “MicroGame” is the trademarked, copyrighted property of METAGAMING, and may not be used by any others in any form.
* Change of address notices must be made in writing by TSG subscribers. METAGAMING will not trace addresses. Bulk mail, such as TSG, is not automatically forwarded by the post office (unless the customer agrees to pay postage). It is important that subscribers notify METAGAMING immediately about any address change to assure uninterrupted delivery of TSG.

Orders returned by the post office because of a change of address will be returned to stock and mailed only after the customer notifies METAGAMING of the correct address. METAGAMING will continue to pay all postage on orders.

*MELEE Advertisement Goof!*
The name for METAGAMING’s fantasy role system had originally been Swords and Sorcery. Because of copyright complications and usage of “Swords and Sorcery” with other game materials, the name THE FANTASY TRIP was selected. However, Swords and Sorcery may appear in some ads for MELEE. The goof is ours.

THE EMERALD TABLET is a new release from CREATIVE WARGAMES WORK SHOP INC.: 330 East 6th Street, 1E; New York, NY 10003. The game is a set of rules for fighting fantasy battles with miniatures. It contains 60 pages, a reference sheet, and magic symbol sheets.

ORILLA, a game of future man to man combat in miniatures, is available from McEwan Miniatures: 890 West 17th South; Salt Lake City UT 84104. It is a rules booklet designed as a supplement to the STARGUARD rules, and cannot stand alone.

THE DUNGEONEER by the Fantas tic Dungeon Society, is an amateur fanzine devoted to D & D play. It contains good Jaquays art and above average content. For more information, contact Paul Jaquays: 3105 Dorothy Lane; Spring Arbor, MI 49283.
Conventions

"The Return of ORCON" 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.

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.

SunCon, the thirty-fifth world science fiction convention, will be held over Labor Day weekend, September 2-5, 1977, at the Hotel Fontainbleau, 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 Wargame 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.

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. This will be distinguished by a number of unique gaming events. A huge D & D tournament layout for miniatures play is already nearing 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 TSQ. 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.

For more information contact, TEXCON; Box 12385; Austin, TX 78711.

THE CONQUEST OF SPACE is a new game release from the publisher of SHOARDPLAY. Available from Wargame Publishing; 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 rule booklet, warg chits, 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 first move. 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 (A&A); Best Graphics and Physical Systems—AVANCE (GDM); 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 15346; Austin, TX 78761.
THE BATTLE BEFORE
THE PUBLIC SANITATION FACILITY
AT GURIK: 2043 A.S.

by Rich Bartucec

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 1987-2083 A.S. Involved were the kingdoms of Vulch'har and Yull'Iruk on one side and the F'tewe League on the other—a coalition consisting of the Grand Duchy of Iss'bik, the Bafones of Hurko-La and Grunwoka, and the B'gotha Republic.

The armies, tactics and resources on each side were as evenly matched that, in the force of only insignificant outside interference, the struggle continued over sixty-six years. 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 Chumbotti-Kuk, a senior subaltern in the IIIRD Legion of the Fifth Palace of the Second Kingdom of Yull'Iruk, ("Gargamone Spearponts") who later went on to betray his native land and rise to a high rank in the armies of the F'tewe League before his assassination in a prestigious peg-horse in 2084 A.S. Keeping in mind that the Public Sanitation Facility at Gurik controlled the entrance to the Vulch'har Valley—the primary route of access to the ore deposits—let us attend upon the story of Chumbotti-Kuk as the day of battle dawned:

—On that morning, our troops began rising from their sleeping mats in a mad rush.

...and clasping 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'inka-gruel served out by the kitchens. Captain Huuch-mulg, 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 cooking fires of the League's army across the Gungk-hro River, not two clicks away.

"Hello, 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 to 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 Nosh-P'toowe' (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 smiled, "On our left we'll have the IVTH Legion of the Temple of Prugg-Fyrd, 'The Puce Fanatics'. On the right it'll be the Vulch'har Legion IX, 'The Mingling Marauders'. You've heard of them, perhaps?"

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

"Yeah, I know. Old Ulberu 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, fixating their makeup in preparation for battle, and shrugged. "At least it should end his homosexual-rights problems in a few years. Those bitches take the heaviest..."
casualties of any Legion I've ever seen.

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

"It's the Iind Provisional Mob, Local Peasantry. The provost companies went out a couple of days ago and gathered up every bumpkin they could get their truncheons on. With their hangers and rakes, 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-triving populace of Kaeutu Island. They were dirty, and their evolutions would not be the most elegant on the battlefield, but cut through their shrieking ranks might tire the infidel soldiers of the League before they could get to us.

I nodded contentedly.

Crowned aghast, I held myself off to headquarters for a last-minute briefing from Tribune Wuxtra-dicha, our Legion commander. I bustled 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 thirty-three 'points' stood with our faces to the enemy, ranked in "The Whore's Invitation". I stole a glance at the left, where the Fantasticanatics were gathered around their priests. These gaudily-clad fellows were performing many unusual and obscure acts with some effect. I could only shrug and remember the words of the great philosopher and pedestrian Trudo-Quark: "Men's religion is another man's bull."

Across the river, I could see the troops of the League preparing for battle. The wake of the crowded flag of the Duchy of Ios'twikk toppled a force of perhaps three thousand men bearing what looked to be huge battleship-like ships. The assembled possibly two thousand archers and the blue-and-black colors of Grunducha. Before long, the enemy force was in full view, the line of several hundred P'una, their scales three-legged forms skittering across the pebbled riverbed. We assembles traditional two-handed shields and the chopping sword so well-beloved of their race. Around the neck of one of their officers I noticed a great number of iron boots, Tavfick.
IF THE STARS ARE GODS
by Gregory Benford & Gordon Eklund, Berkeley/Putnam $7.95

GATEWAY
by Frederick Pohl, St. Martins $8.95

CHARIOT OF FIRE
by E.Y. Hales, Doubleday $6.95

BOLO
by Keith Laumer, Berkley, $1.50

SWORDS & ICE MAGIC
by Fritz Lieber, Ace, $1.50

THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR #6
ed. Terry Carr, Del Rey, $1.95

IF THE STARS ARE GODS by Gregory Benford and Gordon Eklund is one of those type books Arthur Clarke wrote 15 years ago. I don't mean that in any way but as a compliment. Most of Clarke's best work was written then. Benford and Eklund give us a series of stories about Bradley Benolds, Earth's first space hero. While Part One (Mars exploration), and Part Two (alien encounter) are stand alone stories, the latter sections deal with the life systems of Jupiter and are interconnected. This book is for those who like their sf sprinkled with logical, rational, people, heavy on the theory with beginning, middle, and end. You can find all this and more. Serious fiction-recommended.

No one has ever won back to back Hugo and Nebulas in the novel category. Maybe this year. Fred Pohl has already won the Nebula with his excellent MAN PLUS. Now we have his 1977 novel, GATEWAY. In most ways, GATEWAY is better than MAN PLUS. Given the circumstances, the characters and plot are plausible. However, those circumstances are rather strange. An artificial asteroid near Venus is discovered. The asteroid, contains over nine hundred pre-programmed, faster-than-light starships left behind by an unknown race called Heechee. The ships for the most part, seem readied for aerial warfare. The question is that you will not know where you go, or if you will return, or what waits when you "pop-out" of FTL drive. If you are a rich man, or the wealth of a million worlds. One good journey, and your set for life! Artifacts, tools, anything that glint. The silver lining behind the Heechee disappearance can net the traveller a tidy sum, then shi, out again, seeking the big kill.

I loved this book. I like books that don't solve the big problems, but take care of the characters. In life, we find out what happened to JFK-the man. But why? Maybe my grandson will find out the answer to that one. Fred Pohl receives a Special Award in my book for writing two excellent books in a row.

CHARIOT OF FIRE by E.Y. Hales is one of those rare books that defies any attempts to place it in a specific category. Doubleday has written a novel that could be a SF novel, or a western, or a western novel, or a western novel and his Death. In the well known found-manuscript format, we find a Henry Brock of about 20 minutes dead. Indeed, Henry is flogging on a long form given to him by a helpful nun. He is computing the number of times he sinned with his former girlfriend. After due consideration, Henry is assigned the Second level of what appears to be the Hell Dante described clearly. But Henry doesn't like Hell, and when Cleopatra asks him to aid her in a revolution of Upper Hell against Satan, the book begins to move along. Everyone seems to get into the act. Caesar joins, bringing the mustered forces of Limbo into the bargeing table. A table chaired by "you know who" Brock, I can't spoil the ending, but I don't want you to buy this book unless you have old anesthetic and religious snicker/smackery. There should be a paperback some-day. Try it. A pretty good read.

PAPERBACKS OF NOTE:

BOLO by Keith Laumer is a collection of six stories about those crazy cybertanks we hear about...
every now and then. Since the Bolo is somewhat similar to the OGRE, we recommend this book to the readers who might not have heard of Keith Laumer, Ogres, or Bolo. It will be a rewarding experience.

One of the grand men of fantastic literature is Fritz Leiber. Few if any will dispute this, and most will claim to have been influenced by him to some extent or another. He is a GREAT writer. For summer, he has given us SWORDS & ICE MAGIC. Included in this book are some of the very best Pfahnd & Gray Mouser stories written. Mr. Leiber’s stories help shape the growing field of fantasy literature, and I expect to see the stories in this volume re-written by aspiring writers, and get printed. But remember, Fritz Leiber did it first, and better. THE BEST SF OF THE YEAR #6 edited by Terry Carr, is the only “Best of…” that truly lives up to its name. There are eleven of the best of the year by Carr’s standards, which are high. My own favorite of the year, which wasn’t nominated for the Hugo was an incredible tale called “The Eyeflash” by Gene Wolfe. The other excellent story is the zany “Custer’s Last Jump” by Steven Utley & Howard Waldrop in which Custer (of an alternate world) is pitted against an Indian force in fighter planes. The bibliography is very clever. I don’t think anyone can afford to miss what is at least the best SF published in the USA and U.K.

MOVIES OF NOTE:

If you are one of the three people in the world who has not heard of or seen the movie STAR WARS, please do yourself a favor and go see it before all the prints are scratched up.

JABBERWOCKY—New from two former Monty Pythonites, this movie is slow on pacing, but rich in sets, costumes, and characters. At times, the humor is strained and a bit hard to laugh at, but bits and pieces of scenes have been popping into my mind for three days now. Maybe that is a recommendation in itself—it stays with you.

NEXT MONTH—

I hope to have finished LUCIFER’S HAMMER, the big novel from the dynamic duo—Niven & Pournelle. See you in Miami.

BATTLEFLEET MARS

a review

by Howard Thompson

BATTLEFLEET MARS is SPI’s latest science fiction effort. It simulates the revolt of Martian colonists and asteroid miners against the Earth Corporation. The game is big in that the rules, 4,000+ 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 the game, not a detailed description of the game. How I felt about the game before and after playtesting dominated all other impressions. Examining the game components before play whetted my imagination and appetite. It looked neat with lots of neat things in it. But BF&M didn’t live up to the high expectations its initial impression created.

After Ben and I had play-tested BF&M in the strategic version, the first thing that came to mind was a recent interview with Jim Dunningan in Panzerfaust/Campaign. Jim discouraged long and convincingly on 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—all else being deemed a failure. BF&M looks like the kind of 40,000 word game you’d get on a tight, high priority design constraint. Another $1,000 and another month might have gotten the rough edges off and produced a great game. Alas, the ingredients of greatness were there.

Don’t take this as a negative review of BF&M. Mostly I’ve been left with a sense of disappointment. The Solar Display, for example, has orbital tracks for the inner planets and Jupiter. When 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 measure 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 box on the Vesta arrival chart. So far so good. However, if you change your mind after month one, you have to unbox the ships now the ships would have gone in a month, measure how many months it’ll take to get to the new destination from the solar system chart and place the ship on the Solar Display, and set up the new arrival chart. Not neat. In a game that mixes concepts of precision with approximation, this may hurt play most of all. When and where ships arrive counts more than anything else. Using approximations do determine those arrivals hurts. 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 course several times. The way the game plays, changing course ought to be one of the best tactical tricks (arrows and where you aren’t expected). With a little more time it looks like this game could have been cleaned up.

The components are the usual SPI good 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 there are even individual names for Miner ships, Catapult ships, and Transport ships. 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 BF&M package is impressive. Your imagination runs ahead to what the game could be if you’re an s-f fan.

The political interactivity 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
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 boardgame, played with 252 unit counters on a colorful 22" x 27" hex-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 in the western section of Dragon Pass. Prax was largely blasted in prehistory during the Gods' War. To this day, it is a mostly barren chapparal where the Dead Place, where all the mana of the once fertile ground was exhausted, is found. Near the Dead Place is the Sacred Ground, wherein the Earth deities reside in eternal peace. Prax is also where the Block landed—an omiencence cube of immortal stones, hurtled 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 deposited gems. You will have to make your own decisions regarding your tribe and the holy ancestors will manifest themselves at your call. The Shaman will cause the Death Winds to blow and destroy the enemy. Gain the alliance of any of the ten independent tribes and they will lend their often unusual strengths 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 from 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 ominous 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 count your luck by how many contacts Hyena is, who is well known for her keenness in dealing with the deities of the Plains of Prax.

The rules are easy to learn. 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 combat rules, but it 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

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 perfecl. 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); OGRE can overrun enemy units with surprising effect (especially platoons of infantry with jet belts and 48 mm of armor tougher than steel), but can't climb into a 50' deep 500' 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 craters 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 think the stacking line might be greater than 10,000. 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 strong points. The game mechanics are smooth, if unoriginal (ambushers fans should really like this game). As with most games, all the negative aspects listed under realism become positive aspects here. There is no right or wrong way, although, especially when shooting at the OGRE's movement points (roll one die for the attacker or 0-8 kills one point per attack factor). All in all, however, it is a 'clean' game.

Physical Quality: What do you get for your $9.95? (see from appearances, the answer is 'not much'). OGRE includes a 9"x14" sheet of paper, beautifully printed on both sides, with a list of movement rules, combat charts, and some extra game information. That's it. The box is well made, with some cardboard dividers, but is not made to be taken apart. The game is not new, but that's not much to do with the box's appearance.

Bookkeeping: The only bookkeeping needed in the game is to record damage to the OGRE. Although a sample damage record is included in the rules, it is up to the player to make his own. A nuisance, but, as the OGRE player has nothing else to do while the defender sets up anyway, it's not too big a problem.

Rules: Clarity: OGRE's best point. It even beats STELLAR CONQUEST at this. I had almost no problems understanding the rules, except for page 9 (see GRAPHICS).

Game Speed: This game was intended from the very beginning to be a fast mover, and it is. The maximum number of units on the board is about 50, and this gets whittled down very quickly. Also, with most units having an M of 2, there's not much to the movement phase. Combat is also over quickly, since the OGRE can out-run and out-range practically every other unit on the board. Although there are a lot of turns per game (about 10-20), the turns only last about 60-120 seconds each (average), making for a very short game.

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 it is never certain until the last moment who is going to win, (unless one side has made a BIG mistake). The ambles don't come when the defender selects his forces, according to a certain total of attack factors, (i.e. 1 Mk. III OGRE v.s. 20 inf. factors and 35 "armor" (Non-inf.) factors). Consider: All units move 2 hexes/tuns, except OGRE (3MA) and GEVs (4MA-another 4MA after combat). Also, 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 combat-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 runned next turn, (in which a Mk. III 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.).

OGRE as a Whole: Basically, I like OGRE. It is fast, simple, and fun. It's bad points, while annoying, can be ignored (i.e. the rules are not well written). I would rather pay $5.00 for a game, and I have it done with some attention to quality (especially fully die-cut counters, and some fancy writing) than pay a paltry sum for a paltry game, (besides OGRE and Gar-Garouk, Atlantis 12,500 B.C. by Excitabur 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 games 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 to a large extent to amateur play-by-mail ‘sins’.

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 various 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 rivers 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 province from which they began. This is a nice touch which allows the players to keep track of the various contingents of the army. Other counters represent important personages in the novel.

The rules are contained in a sixteen page rule book that is rather similar to that of most 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 joint decisions determine the outcome. Each turn the players must write an order for each of their armies. This can be either to move, to support another unit or hold, all standard functions from DIPLOMACY. In addition there is the option of a larger army (a variant of moving) termed attacking which draws strength away from the attacked unit, equal to the value of the attacker and the unit which can bring the greatest force (its strength plus that of any supporting units) will gain the province. In four cases of equal strength will stand off. Any defeated army in a province is disbanded and must reorganize in an adjacent province. Unlike standard DIPLOMACY, where each unit has a value of one, some armies in WOTR have strengths of two and three. The Mordorian army has a power of three.

Other interesting rules cover fortresses, supply centers that defend themselves against any unoccupied and doubles the strength of any occupying armies, and fleets, which are simply a way to convene existing armies to water movement.

Fortunately, the designer has placed an emphasis on the actions of individuals. These are represented by separate counters bearing the name of the being 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 captured 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). The number of a supply center allows the maintenance of one army. Loss of supply centers results in the removal of a corresponding number of armies. Thus the game is equally zero-sum in nature. There will always be twenty-four units (the number of supply centers) but the number which will fluctuate with the on-board military situation.

Quite appropriately, the Ring is the focus of the game. The Mordor will usually win a military victory, but he must prevent the Ring from getting to the Crank of Doom and to do this he must eventually pull his Nazgul away from spearheading his drives and send them to deal with the hobbits. The Mordorian win by destroying Gandalf, Strider and the two Elven armies, or by getting the ring to his province in Ferengard province. Gondorian player wins by getting the Ring to the Crank of Doom, or by having Gandalf or Frodo lead it to the Ring, becoming Ringlord, and fighting his way to Barad-dur. The good guys best shot is sneaking a hobbit over to Mordor and getting the ring into the Crank of Doom. The Mordorians will probably have the upper hand in the military situation. This indirect play is by far 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, searching for the Ring.

Examining the game from a critical point of view is interesting. The 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 wares 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 Lorien was lost to an orcish army is somewhat ludicrous. The attempt to fit 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 same-day box.
Dear Editor,

Re Dwayne God's article TSG #10--
I hate to play the spoilsport when wargamers are having fun doing what they do best. bend 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 our 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, where a third party might just happen to 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 its represents a bit of over sight 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-mediated 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, so 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 an example of the game Buffalo Castle, which was nevertheless the same issue. It is a solitary 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.