

whether, historically, the abysmal German supply situation could have sustained the operations entailed here; but if they could have, it certainly seems the correct move.

I do hope that by the time this sees print, *Van Manstein* will be available in a new edition with a full countermix and corrected rules and units. A most beautiful design, but a terrible job of production. I don't recommend that anybody buy this game unless you can obtain *two* sets of countersheets; color the front of one black and the back of the other one black - and you won't have to worry about whether a particular unit counter is supposed to be a bridge or an artillery unit (!), etc .

Hopefully, *Fire & Movement* will present a complete Close-Up feature on this game at a later date. The design is a classic.



VON MANSTEIN: History of the Game's Development

by John Prados

I first seriously considered doing *Manstein* in 1974, in spite of what pundits always say about Russian front games (another one?), no title had appeared on the subject in two years and I felt a serious case could be made for using the Army Group commander's name as a title for a game on Army Group South. It was a game I had wanted to see in print ever since I trooped down to the store to get my copy of AH's *Stalingrad* about a decade before. But I had never had the time to sit down and do the detailed research. Meanwhile, in the context of collecting information for one of the tables that I included in my historical notes to *Third Reich*, I came across some material on Army Group South strengths that I had forgotten that I had. At that point, I dug back into my library and set up a working file on the Ukraine.

Parallel with collecting information about the campaigns in the Ukraine was the issue of what to do with a completed game. Initially I approached Avalon Hill with the idea in a letter during October 1974, within the context of a letter I sent Don Greenwood arguing against their disaffection with World War II. game titles. Don was lukewarm on the idea, replying on 28 October that he would look at it, however, and a month later AH had feedbacked the title in their latest issue of the *General*. However, AH never followed up that contact by informing me how it had done: reflecting the general disposition on the part of game production companies that designers must come to them. There is much to be said for that viewpoint, but one problem with it is that it causes poor communication between companies and designers. In any case, though, that summer I had already been engaged in setting up Morningside, alongside of Al Nofi and Jimmy Cumbo, with the intention of producing a game called *Vicksburg* on our own. It was during the last months of 1974 that Rand approached Morningside on the possibility of doing a new series for them in 1975, including *Vicksburg* and three other titles. Having heard nothing from AH, I decided to convert *Manstein* from a personal project into an MGP and offering it to Rand. Thus it was not that AH lost their chance, it was that they did not grab it. When feedbacked by Rand (under a title like '*Panzerarmee*'), *Manstein* scored among the top four on the list, so that by early 1975, both MGP and Rand were solidly behind *Manstein*.

On the design end, research on *Manstein* got to the point at which I could start laying out scenarios when I flew down to Puerto Rico over Christmas 1975 and culled the substantial resources I had left at my parent's house there. In late January, I returned and searched Columbia University's map library for a good map of the Ukraine, finally coming up

with an ideal scale for the counters. *Manstein* then had to take a back seat while I did course work at Columbia. I pulled it out of the file in March and did a draft version of the rules, and in April I reached the point that the prototype game was completed. Thus in April I got in touch with a Russian front freak friend of mine, Jim Dingeman, and over the space of a week, Jim and I played over all of the scenarios one by one. The game was then ready for playtesting.

Through April and May, *Manstein* was playtested at Morningside's regular playtest sessions. The tests demonstrated remarkably few problems, possibly because of the long period of forethought between concept and the initiation of playtests. Simultaneously, Rand decided that *Manstein* should be their new game for the Baltimore sweepstakes of *Origins I*. This put a premium on completion of the game as early as possible in order to get it in to the typesetter and artist, Al Zygier, and then on to the printer. Here is where problems intruded. An addition of all the counters required for all eight scenarios came out to about 350 counters. But Morningside's agreement with Rand called for 200-counter games. Rand complicated the problem because they had already advertised *Manstein* with all eight scenarios. Consequently, I confronted them with the choice between doing more counters or cutting out scenarios. They opted instead for backed counters. However, going back to analyze the scenarios, I then found that even with backed counters, more than 200 pieces were needed.

Thus the countermix problem emerged as the major production difficulty with *Manstein*. Back at the drawing board, I tried several solutions. First was a corps-level countermix substituting hard zones of control for the original system. I called in another Russian front freak friend, Steve McDermitt, and we played through a couple of the scenarios using this arrangement. Unfortunately, it left the counters too thin on the board. Consequently, I went back to the original system and adopted the 70% compromise which proved to be the final solution, saving additional counters by eliminating air force pieces and using an air point method instead. This finally initiated a new round of playtests, to check if the 70% compromise had injected quirks into the game. Minor adjustments were then made, using the finalized countermix, to rectify the quirks that occurred.

In the end, *Manstein* went into production in late June 1975, with about a month left before Baltimore. It was then Al Zygier's race to have the game prepared in time. I caught several major mistakes on the artwork, such as start lines left out, and Al Nofi caught some others on the entry hexes for reinforced units. Al Zygier's ingenious idea of using dropped-out hexes prevented the board from looking 'too busy', and the printing was completed only a day or two before *Origins I*.

VON MANSTEIN: ERRATA

The following questions arose during the course of the game between Mark Saha and Roy Easton. The replies are those of Designer John Prados and may be considered official rulings. The following is courtesy of Walter Luc Haas and *Europa* magazine.

- (1) Q.: *Movement* rules (last sentence) state that a unit may never enter a hex containing enemy units *except* enemy artillery units; these may be simply overrun and removed from the board by moving through a hex in which they are alone. May you also overrun solitary *Leader* counters in the same fashion?
- A.: Yes
- (2) Q.: What about enemy *Headquarters* units?
- A.: No.
- (3) Q.: During *Deployment*, may the player who moves *second* in a scenario deploy his CAP counters during set-up?
- A.: No.
- (4) Q.: About the unit counters: We have, for convenience, assumed the counters are correct where they differ from the *OB* sheet.
- A.: Convenience is your choice, but the *OB* is correct, not the pieces.
- (5) Q.: According to the rules, major cities on the Black Sea cannot be isolated. Does this include Rostov?
- A.: No.
- (6) Q.: We assume all river crossing costs are in addition to regular terrain. Thus, it would actually cost an armored unit 5 movement points to cross a river - 4 to cross and 1 to enter a (clear terrain) hex.
- A.: Yes.
- (7) Q.: Regarding the Kerch Straits, we assume that: (a) crossing, and attacking across, is possible **ONLY** at and between the single *hexside* joined by the *crossing* symbol.
- A.: Yes.
- (8) Q.: (b) A bridge cannot be built across the Strait.
- A.: Correct.
- (9) Q.: During play of *Operation Blue*, an odd situation arose with respect to *Supply* rules: The German captured Entry Hex 15, which theoretically *places* all of the Russian units in the Stalingrad area out of supply - including *new arrivals* via Entry Hex 16! This seemed unreasonable, so we improvised as follows and would appreciate a comment: (a) You are always in supply if

you are within 10 hexes of a friendly Entry Hex, whether it is a railroad or not.

A.: Yes. Excellent.

(b) You are always in supply if within 10 hexes of a friendly mapsheet edge.

A.: No.

- (10) Q.: We cannot find a ruling about what happens to *Reinforcements* if *all* numbered Entry Hexes are blocked. We used a common sense ruling during *Operation Blue* that said if the Germans captured Entry Hexes 13, 14, 15 and 16, then the Russian reinforcements use Entry Hex 17, even though it isn't 'live' in the scenario. Would they be delayed a turn?

A.: (John Prados answers this question and adds some additional clarification in the following:)

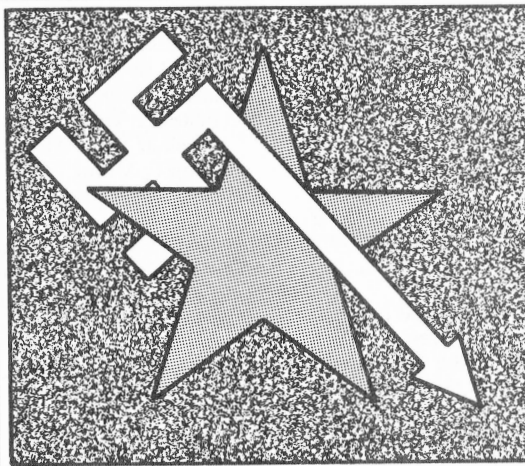
Reinforcements: When their order of appearance Entry Hex is occupied or controlled by an opponent, the Entry Hex of reinforcement units may be displaced to an Entry Hex (except numbers 20 and 21, i.e., the Caucasus) controlled by the player who is to receive the reinforcements. Arriving units are not delayed by displacements nor do they suffer any movement penalties for such displacement.

In the case of Soviet reinforcements listed to arrive in the Caucasus (Entries 20 and 21), reinforcement arrival may be delayed one turn in order to arrive at Entries 18 or 19. Caucasus reinforcements cannot be displaced further than Entry Hex 18, and if all these four Entries are controlled/occupied by the opponent's pieces, arrival of reinforcements is delayed until the Soviet player is able to re-establish control.

- (11) Q.: Any other omissions, addenda or clarifications?

A.: (a) *On Deployment Limitations*: 'Aftermath of *Zitadelle*'; The German player must physically occupy or cover with zones of control all hexes of the start line. (b) *On Stalemate CRT Result*: There can be no intervention in a stalemate situation. No counterattacks by involved or non-involved units can be made against stalemated pieces, either attackers or defenders.

(c) *On Exchange CRT Results*: (1) Leaders can be exchanged voluntarily at their full face value. (2) In exchanges resulting from riverine attacks, the attacking player exchanges at his modified combat value all units, including artillery units. The defender exchanges at face value. (3) In situations where exchange is the result of an attack by forces primarily comprising air support points, the defender need match only the unit values of the pieces actually eliminated by the attacker.





Battle Report CHACO

Fire & Movement's BATTLE REPORT feature does not pretend to be an in-depth or definitive review of the game in question. Rather, the BATTLE REPORT is an informal guide to help the bewildered gamer find his way through a glutted market of titles, to get some idea of the physical quality and action flow of a particular title, so he may judge to some extent the level of his own interest and buy more wisely. Thus, the brief description of a sample game is often the first one played between the opponents. The emphasis is not necessarily on quality of play as on the 'feel' and 'flow' of the design. Informal comments by the players are aimed more at whether they enjoyed the title and thought it a good simulation. *F & M's* editorial staff also attempts to estimate, in an impartial manner, the games physical quality and value. BATTLE REPORT will seek out games of interest to the gamer, especially less well known items. The titles will not necessarily be new - some may even be out of print - all will be games that can be found one way or another, if you're willing to make a diligent search and pay the going rate. The publisher and price will be given when a game is currently in print.

A CONSPECTUS

Chaco is a grand-tactical simulation of the Bolivian-Paraguayan Chaco War which occurred between July 1932 and July 1935. The Chaco Desert had long been the object of border disputes between the two countries before open and full-scale hostilities broke out.

Chaco is played on a three-color 22-inch by 28-inch mapsheet showing the Chaco Desert as it lies between Argentina and Brazil. The counters are over 350 in number and the printing is carefully centered in the middle of each counter (a pet peeve of mine). Assorted charts printed on high-quality cardstock accompany the game. Overall, the graphics and physical systems are functionally excellent and, for art lovers,

sufficiently beautiful. The map is printed in blue and black on white cardstock, with terrain features clearly defined. The counters are black on field green for the Paraguayans, and black on gray for the Bolivians. The U.S. Marine counters for the Intervention Scenario are black on red.

The game is played in sequential turns and is on the regimental level with some battalions and company-sized patrols. Each turn represents six months time and each hex ten miles distance. The game system itself is standard single-phase-movement-followed-by-combat, but it incorporates many minor innovations. The most important of these is patrolling, in which each cavalry regiment may spawn one company-strength patrol, represented by a separate counter. Patrols and parent units are kept track of on easy-to-use charts. Patrols and other small units play important roles in *Chaco* and can be used to operate in supplyless desert areas and to guard rear areas and flanks.

Supply is very important in *Chaco* and goes a long way towards determining tactical and strategic maneuvers. Friendly towns are supply sources and they supply all friendly units within three hexes or on roads leading to the town. In addition, rivers supply all units adjacent to them. The supply rules are based on the profound importance of water on the Chaco campaign. Unsupplied units are halved in combat and movement ability. All units normally have a movement allowance of four.

Combat is mandatory for units in enemy zones of control (a la *Napoleon at Waterloo*). The Combat Results Table is built on an odds system, and attackers and defenders can be either eliminated, disrupted, or retreated as a result of combat. There are no exchanges.

A host of optional rules, which can be used collectively or individually, and several hypothetical scenarios are supplied to make basic *Chaco* into *Gran Chaco*. *Gran Chaco* introduces into the simple *Chaco* framework such concepts as combining units into divisions and corps (similar to the U.S. Army ROAD organization), divisional patrolling, reserves, motorization, tanks, gunboats, air units, anti-aircraft units, limited intelligence, human cost victory conditions, etc. Good physical systems and graphics keep the 'dirt' from these additional rules to a minimum. Most of the rules are based on technical innovations which were available to the belligerents but, which, historically, were not exploited due to lack of finances and/or imagination. One of the hypothetical scenarios calls for a third player who controls the units of the U.S. Fifth Marine Regiment plus supporting units who intervene in order to restore the status quo.

Chaco is the brain-child of designer Marc Miller. The graphics are the handiwork of Rich Banner, and further assistance was rendered by John Harshman, Frank Chadwick and Mary Beth Miller. *Chaco* is available for \$6.80, postpaid, from Game Designers' Workshop, 203 North Street, Normal, Illinois 61761.

COMMENTS — Raymond Lowe

Chaco is a fairly simple, straightforward game, which, from the looks of the additional rules in *Gran Chaco*, has the capability of being a Latin version of *1914*. While the game system is not particularly innovative it incorporates enough different ideas to make it a good game in its own right instead of a stereotyped 'played-one-you've-played-'em-all' game.

The aspect of the game which struck me most was the finely tuned play balance of the victory conditions. Although the mapboard situation almost always goes to the Paraguayans, the victory conditions have been manipulated in such a way so as to make it a challenge for both sides to pick up points. As far as play balance goes, *Chaco* is the most evenly weighed wargame I've had experience with.

The game plays fairly quickly and smoothly, depending on which optional rules are used. As far as complexity, I would rate basic *Chaco* alongside SPI's *Destruction of Army Group*