

## WARGAME FIRST REVIEW

<b>Berlin 85</b>	★★★★☆
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<b>Period</b>	Cold War Gone Hot	<b>Publisher</b>	SPI
<b>Conflict</b>	World War 3/Battle of Berlin	<b>Designer</b>	James Dunnigan
<b>Force Size</b>	Corps vs Div	<b>Date</b>	1980
<b>Mvr Units</b>	Battalions	<b>Grid Size</b>	Hex, ~1km
<b>DOWNness</b>	3DOWN for WARPAC, 2DOWN for NATO	<b>Map Size</b>	City, 26 x 19 hexes, ~ 2.6km x 1.9km
<b>Players</b>	2	<b>Turn Dur.</b>	8 hrs

### Introduction

<b>Subject of the game</b>	The expected battle for Berlin if WW3 had happened.
<b>Scope</b>	Whole of the battle from WARPAC crossing the borders into West Berlin. About ~5 days of fighting (16 turns)
<b>Components</b>	S&T Magasine Game version. c.A1 (22" x 32") thick paper map, incl reference charts. 12pp rulebook. Single sheet of 200 double sided counters.
<b>Presentation</b>	Very S&T standard for 1980. Straightforward and business like. Having reference sheets on map rather than separate not useful (and orientated so have to be read from the far side of the map!). Colour/shape discrimination between suburban/industrial/urban not as clear as it could be. A myriad of roads which don't seem to resemble real-life much. Busy map. At least each hex only has one terrain type. Clear counters.
<b>Designer's focus/objectives</b>	Despite a 10 page article in the magazine there are no designer notes anywhere in the issue/game. Perhaps in Moves?
<b>Overall system description</b>	Very Old Skool SPI although uses a differential CRT. IGO-UGO, with only FPF interrupting it, movement then combat. Abstracted air support, and arty which should be more abstracted (see below).
<b>Real Battle Notes</b>	Never happened! (just as well as I was there in 84 or 85 on a German Culture course with the British Army!)

## The Game System

<b>Principal areas of reality represented in the game</b>	The isolated nature of the battle, NATO holding out against all comers. The size of the city and variations in urban terrain. Rubblisation from big arty stonks. Large number of rivers/canals and importance of bridges. Importance of airfields for NATO reinforcements. Basic supply lines.
<b>Important abstractions</b>	No C2. Simple Att/Def values for fighting units. Simple line-of-supply based logistics. Air power as a +1 chit. Die roll for what is going on elsewhere influencing air superiority/reinforcements.  No morale.
<b>Intricacy of the system, and the mechanical ease of play</b>	Fixed WARPAC then NATO turn, move then fire within it.  All can move to MA, sensible MP costs for hex types and sides. Rivers seem pretty easy to cross. Standard ZOC – can see arguments pro and con against ZOC in urban. Can use U-Bahn to move underground (just an extra cost). No stacking.  Differential CRT. Surround as much as can (no stacking), add in arty and CAS, THEN take column shift based on terrain. Standard Dn, An, Br, Ax, Dx type results – tends to Dn so vital to block retreat routes. If use excessive arty/CAS then extra roll for rubblisation, and fires if on POL site (nice).  That’s about it. VP based around comparative losses and WARPAC seizing large number of KPs.  Nice para landing mechanic, with deviation and UTZ dependent losses.
<b>Likes/Good Elements (really good below)</b>	UTZs pretty OK, CAS good, Arty OK, simple system
<b>Contributions to the wargaming state of the art</b>	Untried units – start on reverse with just MA, but drawn from a standard pool UBahn travel Rubble and firestorms NATO “surrender” option table

<p><b>Deficiencies</b></p>	<p>Urban colouring and play aid placement as above. Map is just far to dense.</p> <p>Column shift and DMs seems one too many methods.</p> <p>Hex map encourages “standard” hex plays, in terms of trying to get 120 degree coverage, put unit just-so to null retreat etc.</p> <p>Playing the hex grid not the battle.</p> <p>Given arty range don’t really need on table, could just have counters like CAS plus possibly a no fire beyond X hex-row, otherwise hard to keep track of what’s fired.</p> <p>High number of D results seems inappropriate for attacker in this case, perhaps asymmetric CRT, different result depending on who’s attacking?</p> <p>Bldg damage is an extra roll, and have to check table to see if even need to do it, would be nicer to build in to CRT</p> <p>And no bldg. damage if just tanks and mortars and ATGWs!</p> <p>Easy to forget FPF support</p> <p>Doesn’t encourage counter-attacks due to defender bias on CRT (as with many/most CRT games) and no cognitive/morale effect</p> <p>Not a lot for Blue to do on their phase other than pull their line tighter.</p>
<p><b>Improvements? (beyond fixing above)</b></p>	<p>Retreats (upto 4 hex) seem overlong, esp in urban – perhaps relate to UTZ (e.g. to next highest cover)</p>
<p><b>Evaluation of the system's success at achieving the designer's goals and representing the real situation</b></p>	<p>Hard to tell given no real battle and no designer notes but seems to give an OK narrative of what might have happened. Perhaps needs something more for NATO to do other than just last 5 days (but guess that’s meant to tie in with 7DTTR).</p>

## MECHANICS (relative to Urban/PhD)

Aspect	Mechanic
Activation/C&C	No real C2 modelling.
Movement	Reasonable MP for different UTZs, but seems to far/too little depending on location
Direct Fire	Standard differential CRT, column shift for PV
Damage	Retreat or loss, no step
Assault	No differentiation
Indirect Fire	On table, but long range so could be off table. FPF option.
Air Support	Abstracted, counters per turn
Engineers	Nil
CEMA	Nil
Comms	Nil
UxV	Nil
ISR	Nil
Morale	Nil
Building Damage	Extra roll if high AF, firestorm option if POL site
Civilians	Nil
Subterranean	Nice use of U-Bahn
Other Urban Specifics/Notable	Nil

## The Game in Play

Play time	c. 30 min a move at start, but reducing
Player roles	NATO and WARPAC
Types of decisions required	<p>WARPAC</p> <p>Fixed starting points really limit options. Just which NATO units to focus on within each sector and whether can win faster by bypassing – would need multiple plays.</p> <p>NATO</p> <p>Could almost write AI for a standard H&amp;C defence (and probably offence) so seems a bit mechanical – may not be much room for flourishes.</p>
Effects of the game system's mechanical requirements on the player's decision making	MA normally OK, so all about min/max, but UTZ shift often more important than point density. (4 shifts for dense urban, =~10 when biggest units are 5 and arty is 6, and table maxes out at 12.
Evaluation of the player's experience	Fun game, just about the right number of counters and they fade quickly, and no stacking so easy to manage. Old skool.

## Overall Evaluation

<b>Does the game work? (Veracity)</b>	Yes, pretty slick.
<b>Does it have real world validity?/Insights?</b>	Certainly highlights some elements of urban, although probably not as much destruction as there should be (but table would get very busy), but use of U-Bahn may be unique. Not sure that the hex resolution really needed, would probably work better as an area game. With MP=12 that is ~12km movement in 8 hours, which unopposed in urban seems crazy, but then too much once close to enemy.
<b>Is it a good game?</b>	Yes, on its terms
<b>Who would be most interested in the game?</b>	Anyone with an interest in Cold War Gone Hot or possibly urban combat
<b>Is the game good value?</b>	£34 s/h but unpunched and mint from eBay. Certainly has replay value, but a little on the pricey side given basic (but good) nature of components.

[Per scenario/run through]

<b>Date</b>	7 Oct 22	<b>Scenario</b>	Solo, main game
<b>Players</b>	DB	<b>Constraints</b>	None

## SET-UP

As per standard

## HOW IT PLAYED

Best to do by sector.

French: Good forward defence blunted initial WARPAC assault, then a pretty continuous line of Police and French units made it hard for WARPAC to make much headway as even a +18 becomes +12 instantly, then reduced to ~+2 by urban, and then just D results.

British: Nice little fight by Gatow airfield which ended up with a Sov MRB holding the RSDG and a German Police unit up in Montgomery Barracks, but making the airfield useless to both sides. Meanwhile the rest of the Berlin Bde fought a stalwart defence of the bridges over the Havel See and just managed to hold WARPAC off, although came a cropper when they then tried to follow-up, but by that time both sides effectively spent.

American: Far longer and more accessible border here. Started off with a big E German push over the Tannenberg and the Wannsee, which then opened up the autobahn to the centre, and a route onto the main US flank. Stiffer fight by the Soviets to get over Teltow Kanal with the deadlock only being broken by the pressure from the East Germans and a Soviet air drop on Templehof. The US then gradually pulled back towards the centre. The airborne Bde was then enough to take out the remaining US troops and open up the way to the centre behind the French and British.

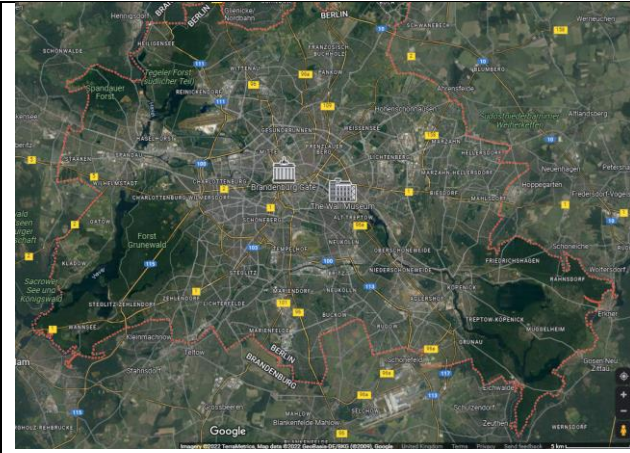
## RESULTS

Allied victory given delay and amount of damage inflicted

## THOUGHTS (c.f. RL AND URBAN)

Mostly covered by above. Can't help thinking that game would make more sense and I'd have a better idea of the bits of the city I'm fighting over if done as areas, rather than just hunting for the next small bit of dark grey in which to make my stand. The overall narrative seemed OK but surprised that there wasn't a greater weight of WARPAC forces available, but then again this wasn't where the main battle was going to be. The police units seemed at once both too powerful (W German, just by their presence and hex blocking) and too weak (E German, couldn't really attack, only useful to run around claiming VPs).

IMAGES



Real terrain



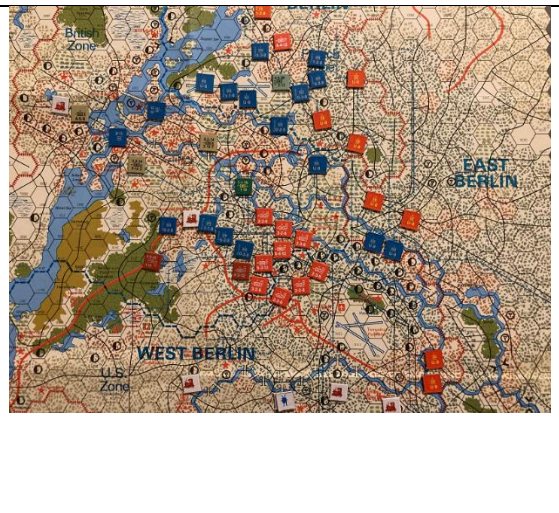
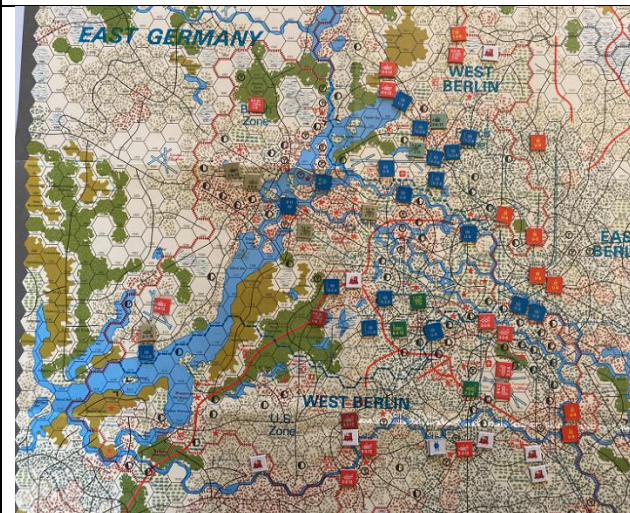
STARTEX



End Turn 2



End Turn 3



<b>End Turn 4</b>	<b>End Turn 7 - ENDEX</b>
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