

LA VALLEE DE LA MORT

THE BATTLE OF DIEN BIEN PHU, 1954

AND BONUS GAME AN ILLUSION OF VICTORY

THE BATTLE OF NA SAN, 1952

AGAINST the ODDS

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4 THE BATTLE OF DIEN BIEN PHU PAUL ROHRBAUGH

The French were certain that they could bring the Viet Minh rebels to a decisive battle by occupying the tiny village of Dien Bien Phu. They were dreadfully correct.

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John uses his background in game design and military history to examine whether we are going into wars with the right set of plans.

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IN JANUARY 2001 I learned via email from Kerry Anderson that General Vo Nguyen Giap was taken with the DTP version of *La vallee de la mort*, then published by the Micro-game Design Group. The translator and editor of his memoirs, Lady Borden, discovered the MDG web site and the DTP version of the game in the course of an internet search on events from the General's life. She purchased a copy and gave it to him as present. He and General Tranh apparently so enjoyed the game that they purchased additional copies and gave them out as presents as well. I received a very nice thank you note from General Giap and notification that copies of the game were put in the Dien Bien Phu Museum and Archives for the 304th, 308th, 312th and 316th Divisions (the Viet Minh units that fought at Dien Bien Phu). Needless to say I am very proud of the game you now have for your gaming table. Working with John Prados for his article on Na San that appeared in the last issue of *Against the Odds* inspired me to complete the mini-game on Na San that is this issue's bonus. If you don't have a copy already, be sure to purchase a copy of issue 15 of *Against the Odds* to read the gripping account of the events that led to *An Illusion of Victory*.



In the next issue...

the largest naval clash in history, the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Featuring 1/2" and 5/8" counters, 22"x34" map and two tactical displays.

ORDER OF APPEARANCE Works in Progress

by Paul Rohrbaugh, ATO Staff Developer

Next issue features *Imperial Sunset: the Battle of Leyte Gulf* by Mark Stille. The game deals with the pivotal naval and air battles in the largest naval campaign ever fought. Units represent individual ships for submarines, cruisers, battleships and carriers, two or three ships for destroyers and escort carriers, and 6-12 aircraft. The Imperial Combined Fleet is a shadow of its former self. Its carriers' hanger decks echo for the lack of aircraft and crew, most of whom perished earlier in the year at the Battle of the Philippine Sea (Marianas Turkey Shoot). In contrast, the USN is the most potent naval armada ever assembled. However, the game is very competitive and tight. The US has a lot to accomplish in a relatively short period of time, and is absolutely driven to sweep the last of the Japanese carriers from the surface of the seas. The Japanese are literally down to their last throw, and have nothing to lose in what

will be the final chance to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. A truly "Against the Odds" situation. The game for issue 17 is a big one to go along with its subject matter. Components include 176 bigger than normal 5/8" counters for the naval units, as well as 200 half-inch counters for the air and marker units, one 22" by 34" map, a pair of "battle boards" (one 8.5" by 11" air battle board and one 11" by 17" naval battle board), two pages of ship damage roster sheets, and 18 pages of rules/charts.

Another game that will be nearing release by the time of your reading this column is *Toppling the Reich: the Battles for the Westwall* by John Prados. The game is based on his classic *Panzerkreig* (Eastern Front) game but with new twists for the Western Front of 1944-45. Units are mostly divisions, a hex is 5 miles across and turns represent one week's time. 480 half-inch counters, one 22" by 24" map, and 24

pages of rules and charts make up the game. There are five scenarios that detail significant battles (Arnhem, Hurtgen Forest, the Battle of the Bulge, Operations Veritable and Grenade, the Ruhr Pocket) as well as the entire September 1944 to May 1945 fight. *Toppling the Reich* will be the first of our Annual Editions and I am very much looking forward to your "After Action Reports" as you slog your way through the Dragon's Teeth to tear down the Third Reich.

As usual, both games feature Craig Grando's outstanding graphics. Be sure to vote on the many other games under development and review at our "in the pipeline section" of the ATO web site. Remember, the best way to avoid missing an issue of ATO, or the hard-to-find, upcoming Annual and Campaign Study editions is by getting your very own subscription. Visit us at atomagazine.com and subscribe today! Let the dice fly high!