

# TABLE TOP BATTLES



**This is the first of a series of articles which will deal with the building of scale model military vehicles and equipment to form a Wargames Army. Wargaming, apart from being a fascinating hobby in its own right, enables military models to be used rather than stand around gathering dust. Detailed information on military vehicles is not always easy to obtain, but this is no drawback, as Wargames models can be as simple or as detailed as you wish. After all, a real-life general is not too worried about the look of his forces, so long as they win the fight!**



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THE Second World War is the one that will be dealt with mainly, as it represents the period when the greatest strides in the military vehicle field were made. The 00 scale (1/76) is, of course, the most suitable on which to base any collection. A complete range of vehicles and men is modelled by Airfix at very reasonable prices and this scale has the added advantage that, should you wish to incorporate trains, most model railways are also to this scale. Aircraft (at 1/72 scale) are reasonably close enough in size to be utilised as well. Wargaming rules can, like the models, be as basic or as complex as you wish. Later in the series we will be giving you a few ideas on which you can base your own rules. First however, let us have a look at the approximate type of formation that we will need to develop for the sort of game where the tank is the most important feature. We must at the outset, adopt a somewhat false unit, based on the establishment of a division but, of course, with considerably fewer men than a *real* division. Though, naturally you are free to adopt any size you wish, it has been found that a model division with six to eight tanks and fifty men is adequate. If you examine most of the currently available 00 scale models, you will notice that they are all vehicles that fought in Europe after the D-day invasion of 1944. It is interesting to note the actual size and make-up of the British, United States and German divisions at that time, so that you will see the type of vehicles

required, and decide for yourself what size your own divisions will be.

The British and American troops were generally better equipped with transport, but suffered from the fact that the German tanks were superior to the American Sherman. Airpower was the deciding factor on the Allied side. A *British Armoured Division* comprised three tank regiments with a total of 190 Sherman tanks; three infantry regiments of about 800 men in each, all transported in halftracks (M-3 halftrack kit); carriers (bren carrier) and 15 cwt. trucks. Two regiments of artillery had a total of forty-eight 25 pdrs, which were either towed by the Quad Tractor or were self-propelled ('Sexton' will appear in a later article). One anti-tank regiment had forty-eight 6 pounders. Finally the division had detachments of Engineers, Signals troops, Reconnaissance, Transport and Medical services.

The *Infantry division* was formed from nine regiments of men, totalling about 7,200. These were transported by similar vehicles as described for the armoured division. When it was required that they should all be moved at once, extra transport had to be provided. The divisional artillery consisted of three regiments of towed 25 pounders having a total of seventy-two guns. Otherwise it was similar to the armoured division.

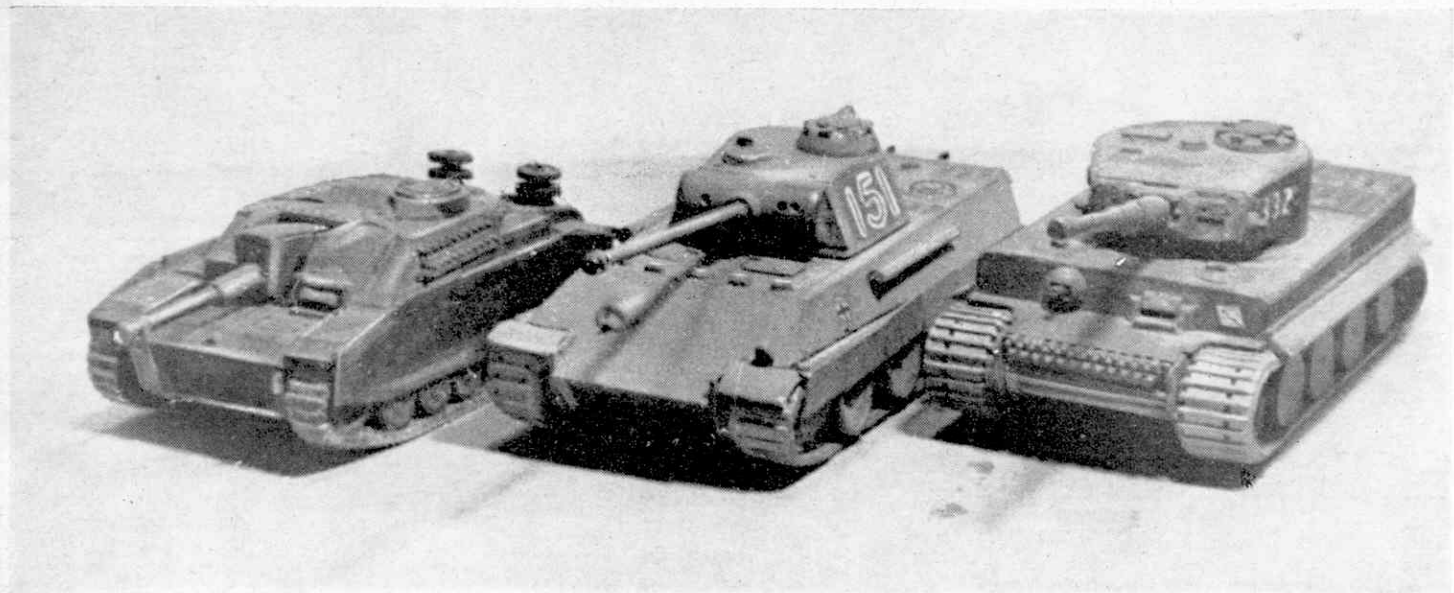
Commanded directly by the Army commander were *Independent Tank Brigades* of 190 Churchill tanks; these were used to support the infantry in

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1. A typical action scene from North Europe 1944. American infantry await the order to advance. They are using captured German half-tracks to supplement their own jeeps, Eager Beaver lorries and armoured cars. 2. German Panzers; the 'Tiger', 'Panther', and assault gun 'Sturmgeschütz III'. 3. An American GMC truck, an M3 half-track and a Dublo Dinky Austin lorry. The latter is in German hands. 4. The British Quad and 25 pounder, Churchill tank, and Bren carrier towing 6 pounder anti-tank gun. 5. A selection of the beautiful little Austrian made H.O. scale (1/90th) Minitanks. The plastic mouldings incorporate incredibly fine detail which just cries out for some hand paint work, and since most of the parts of these models simply clip together, they can easily be taken apart for painting. The tyres in particular are greatly improved by a coat of matt grey/brown paint. Just about everything (except the tracks) seems to work on these models—even the tiny machine gun on the tank turret rotates and elevates! Big surprise is the low price particularly for an imported line of such high quality. The Bridge Layer (top) with completely operating bridge, costs only 4s. 9d. The Chieftain tank 2s. 6d. The impressive tank transporter costs 5s. 3d. and the La Crosse Missile truck 3s. All come packed in attractive transparent moulded display cases, and an illustrated catalogue is available from the U.K. distributors, Model Hobby Products, Mebro Works, Cuckoo Hall Lane, London, N.9. Price 3d. in addition to which you *must* send a *stamped*, self-addressed foolscap envelope. 6. The American Sherman tank was the main allied battle tank. It is accompanied here by the Roco model of the M-40 S.P. 155 mm. gun

attacks. *Medium Artillery Regiments* were also under Army command and were equipped with sixteen 5.5 inch howitzers towed by Matadors. The troops for the model division can be obtained by putting the heads of the 8th Army set onto the combat group or simply by using these figures without alteration, despite uniform difference for the European front.

*American Armoured Divisions* were formed with three Tank Battalions of Shermans, a total of about 186 tanks; three infantry battalions which had about 1000 men each, and were all transported by the M-3 halftracks or Jeeps; three artillery battalions were each equipped with twelve 'Priests' (which we will deal with in a later article). The division had all the usual other divisional troops. Their *Infantry Divisions* consisted of nine battalions of infantry which were transported in the same way as the armoured division, but in addition used the 3 ton GMC 'Eager Beaver' truck (we can use the under-scale ROCO-Peetzy model of this vehicle) and had eighteen 'Priests' and a similar number of 57 mm. anti-tank guns attached. They were exactly the same as the armoured divisions from here on but often their artillery battalions used towed 105 mm. howitzers instead of the self-propelled 'Priests'. The troops for the Wargames can be the 'U.S. Marine Corps set.'

While the German name for an armoured division will be familiar to all, a brief description of the

*Panzer Division* will be appropriate. The main units were the two Panzer Battalions of 150 tanks, usually 'Panthers' or the 'Pz Kw IV'. These had four infantry battalions of about 1000 men each all transported in the armoured halftrack Sd Kfz 251. Unfortunately, we have no ready-made suitable models to represent these, so use 'captured' M-3's and the Dinky Dublo Austin Lorry (although obsolete, many of these Dinkys are still around). Forty self-propelled howitzers made up the three artillery battalions; while the one Panzer Jaeger battalion (anti-tank) was equipped with twenty-four assault guns and twelve towed or self-propelled 7.5 cm. anti-tank guns. (The German Armoured Car Sd Kfz 234 will represent the S.P. 7.5 cm. gun). The division then had all the other usual units similar to the British and American divisions.

The German mechanized infantry were known as *Panzer Grenadier Divisions* and were identical to the Panzer Division except that they had only one Panzer Battalion of assault guns instead of tanks. The infantry divisions were very poorly off, by comparison to their Allied counterparts, having to rely mainly upon horse-drawn transport to carry their six battalions. They also included an artillery battalion of twenty-four horse-drawn 15 cm. (6 inch) howitzers; but their anti-tank battalion used motor tractors to tow the thirty-one 7.5 cm. guns. Directly under Army control were *Independent Battalions* of

'Tiger' tanks and the heavy Tank-destroyer 'Jagdpanther'. These units had forty-five tanks in each, and were generally manned by the Waffen-SS, who were Nazi party members (unlike most of the ordinary German Wehrmacht soldiers.)

We will be covering all the equipment mentioned later in the series, but for those of you who wish to commence your study of armoured vehicles immediately, here are the names of some publications that will help you. The Royal Armoured Corps Tank Museum, which we will deal with later, produces the 'Illustrated Record of the Development of AFV's' an excellent series of booklets. The Curator will be pleased to send you a complete list of publications if you write to him. The address is Bovington Camp, Wareham, Dorset. 'German Tanks' by B. T. White published by Ian Allen Ltd. is a fine book available at your local bookshop. Finally Merberlen Ltd. of Hawthorn Hill, Bracknell, Berks, publish the Bellona Military Vehicle Prints. These are exceptionally useful as they are accurate drawings of tanks to OO scale. In addition to the drawings a complete technical specification and history are given, and the more recent issues include photographs of the actual vehicles. Other useful accessories are supplied by this firm, and a stamped addressed envelope to them will get you a complete list. Please remember when you are enquiring about books and information, to mention the Meccano Magazine. H.L.D.

