Debate On LUFTWAFFE
by TSGT Lou Zocchi

I thoroughly enjoyed reading "Indispensable for an Historian" by J.E. Pournelle, Ph.D. (GENERAL volume 8, number 4 November-December). However, I'm afraid a casual reading of his well written remarks might give readers the false notion that the American player in LUFTWAFFE is bombing German cities or that American Strategists favored such a practice.

The British bombardment policies practiced by "Bomber Harris" were aimed at the complete and total destruction of every German city, because he felt that such devastation would bring about an economic collapse. The American Strategic Bombardment objective was to eliminate a key German industry that would halt production in most of the other industries. Although the Americans occasionally participated in City bombing, such raids were the exception rather than the rule. Our few city bombardments were usually made for political reasons whereas the British motives for such raids were purely economic.

On one occasion, the Americans assisted the British in bombing a city because the Russians were approaching and it seemed that such a combined effort would serve as a gesture of cooperation and support to Russian forces.

When we wrote the rules for LUFTWAFFE, I it seemed easier to say, bomb the city," than it was to say, "bomb the specific factory complex located within the 20 nine square which is identified by the name of its largest and most significant City." Because I had to make repeated references to these factory complexes, the expedient phrase "bomb the city" was used, but it was not meant to be taken literally. The last paragraph on page 3 in the 1st column of the designer's notes states, "When more than one target falls within the same 20 mile square, the square is named for the most significant industrial complex within it. Although the square has only one name, it does not necessarily mean that all those targets listed on the target pad are physically within that city. Those additional targets could be in other towns which are somewhere within that square, but whose name was not used."

Because the rules continuously talk about bombing cities, it is easy to see how Dr. Pournelle concluded that the game had built-in strategic mistakes.

Dr. Pournelle's quotations from the Strategic Bombing Survey showed that German production increased inspire of bombing, But German production was scheduled to increase whether we bombed their factories or not! I believe that if we had not bombed, their production figures would have been higher than what has been recorded. While strategic bombardment did not turn out to be the overwhelming success we thought it should be, it was not such an overwhelming blunder that we'd have been better off to eliminate planes and produce only Land armies or naval units.

Increased production does not occur overnight. New equipment had been acquired and installed in accordance with the German production scheme. Furthermore, Hitler felt that a woman's place was in the home and rejected plans to use them on production jobs until late in the war. The impact of working women almost doubled the available labor force overnight. New equipment and an expanded labor force must make an impact on production even when some of the production facilities are being destroyed.

Many people have questioned the value of air power. During WWII, the most intelligent individuals were usually sent to the Air Corps. Although we can be justifiably proud of the combat records established by our armies, it is fascinating to speculate about how much more effective those armies might have been if the Air Corps had not drawn off the majority of high intelligence personnel.

But instead of speculating about what could have happened if there had been no Air Corps, why not speculate on what could have happened if the RAF had participated in our strategic bombardment campaign? To simulate their assistance, increase to 10 the number of targets the RAF may attempt to destroy each quarter.

Dr. Pournelle also questioned the value of attacking air bases. I hope it is clear to everyone, who read his article, that neither he nor I advocate destroying of bases as the sole method for achieving victory. The destruction of bases is a possibility in the game which should bc exploited for its tactical value only, i.e. Me262's are almost invincible in the air, but very vulnerable on the ground. Since range limitations prohibit B25's, B26's & A20's from bombing remote strategic targets, they can be effective as jet base destroyers. While this is similar to their role in real life, continuously using them for this one function is self-defeating because proper German anticipation prevents them from reaching their targets. Occasionally letting a B17 or B24 separate from the stack to destroy a nearby jet base multiplies the German defensive burden.

Jets refuel more frequently than or other planes and require special airports from which to operate. The destruction of one jet base without the corresponding destruction of its planes automatically doubles refueling time for these fighters. Prolonged refueling time diminishes the number of sorties they can fly and increases American chances to destroy them on the ground. The shortage of jet bases is an Achilles' heel, which can and should be exploited tactically.

I agree with Dr. Pournelle's opinion that the "roll-up" attack, in which the first waves blast near bases, the next wave deeper bases, etc, can be of great military value. In real life such a procedure is highly effective, but because of the time/distance/numbers ratio used to design LUFTWAFFE, it is not applicable or effective in the game. So to restate my case and avoid confusion I'm going to recap a little by saying that the indiscriminate destruction of bases which accommodate regular fighters produces little but the selective destruction of jet bases can be highly beneficial. There are too many regular fighter bases, which can be used as alternates. Unless a grounded unit is destroyed as the base is bombed, it is better to leave them alone. On the other hand, there are few jet bases and the destruction of just one causes the German to over crowd his remaining bases and double refueling time for all Jets. The alternative is to lose the services of a jet when it lands at a non-jet base and risk its subsequent strafing or bombing.