

MANUAL

& Weapon Systems

MILOP-Battle Consoles
Rev. 2-94



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1. Installing the Scenery CD

A note before you begin: To make it easier for you to recognise commands you have to enter into your computer we have decided to place the ">" symbol in front of every command. This symbol is the same as the one you normally encounter before the flashing cursor on your screen. Obviously, you must not enter this character which is only there, as we have just said, to indicate that what follows is a command. In other words, when you see ">install" in your documentation, it means that you should enter **"install"** (without the quotation marks).

This Scenery CD fits seamlessly into your already existing "Battle Isle 2" environment. With all its options, maps and new units, it will provide plenty of entertainment for weeks to come.

Until now, you have been playing the "Battle Isle Saga" games on your own or with a partner on a single computer. You are now given the opportunity to link several computers and to participate simultaneously in an interactive game.

We will explain how to create such a *Battle Isle* - network in this manual. Don't worry; it won't be too complicated. For the moment, we will concentrate on installing the Scenery CD.

You will find further details about hard- and software requirements, preparing your system and any problems that might arise on the reference card that came with Battle Isle 2.

Installing the Scenery CD is very straightforward. Just follow the simple instructions below.

- Place the CD into your CD-ROM drive and switch to that drive on your machine.
- If the designation of your drive is 'E' then enter >e:
- You now have access to your CD ROM drive. Start the installation program with >install.
- If the program prompts you for a path name in order for it to copy data then enter the one which already exists for Battle Isle 2.

Even though the installation program for earlier versions did

not permit copying data into an already existing directory (in case valuable data was overwritten), this is now not only possible, but necessary, since a number of data blocks need to be replaced in order to speed up the main program and make it run more efficiently.

Assuming your Battle Isle 2 was located in
C:\GAMES\BLUEBYTE\BI2

then you would have to enter this path name.

Once you have confirmed that your entry is correct, the program will copy all the relevant data onto your hard drive. No need to worry - all your important data, like saved games, will be preserved.

To save time you will not be asked to confirm the sound card(s) you are using. Should you wish to change the way a sound card is set up then simply run the installation program on your hard drive and choose SETUP.

If you need further information then you will find this in the Reference Card for Battle Isle 2.

Once the installation has been executed without any problems, you can start the program as usual. So what has changed?

The data from the Scenery CD will replace or significantly expand some of the files already in existence. In addition to ensuring, for example, that the maps and functions of the new game will be available to the player, the existing main program has been optimised. Some of the changes relate to the fact that we have increased the speed of the computer opponent by approximately 35%, making it much faster than the original version. Another change concerns the reduction of the main memory requirement to approximately 550K. You will certainly feel the benefit of this when you see how much easier configuration has become. It has also given us scope for a number of enhancements that will be explained later. One example is the option to set yourself targets so that you can, for example, occupy Enemy HQ without the hassle of dealing with enemy units.

As stated above, your old data will merely be expanded.

Further information about the game

If you liked the Intro (we hope you did!) and would like to run this independently of the game, then enter the command

>intro

from your BI2 directory. The Intro will then be loaded and played direct from the CD.

Old Campaigns and **New Campaigns** naturally assume that the appropriate CD is present in the drive. The same applies for **Saved Games**.

If, therefore, you want to play a map from Battle Isle 2 (or a saved game from a particular map), then the Battle Isle 2 CD must be in the drive. If, on the other hand, you want to play a map or a campaign from the Scenery CD, the Scenery CD should be in the CD-ROM drive, otherwise the map will not run.

2. Expanded Functions of the Scenery CD

2.1 The BLUENET.EXE Program

BLUENET.EXE is a new piece of Blue Byte software that provides an easy way to run games in networks. Although the graphics interface should be fairly self-explanatory, we will nevertheless explain some of the basic terms and functions before going on. After all, we can't all be network specialists straight away.

Two terms are very important to help you understand the principle involved: Server and Client. Not surprisingly, the "server" serves its "clients", which means that it delivers something and thereby establishes specific relationships. In our case, it will obviously deliver data.

Relationships require communication. There must be some contact between server and client, so that information may be exchanged. Computers make contact when they are linked. Computers can be linked into an information network in a number of ways. We are interested in establishing a proper network, in other words, linking several computers via null modem. Networks are professional connections common in the world of business. In addition to their enormous speed, they are very stable in operation. On the downside, they are extremely expensive, which is why non-business users frequently prefer to link computers via a null modem cable.

The Scenery CD, or rather BLUENET.EXE, supports both options. But let us explain some of the terms in more detail:

NULL MODEM

In null modem operation, computers are linked via null modem serial cables (see NULL MODEM CABLE). The number of cables required depends on the number of participating clients. Each client must be connected to the server with a null modem cable. The number of clients that can be connected to a server is determined by the number of COM ports available to the server.

NULL MODEM CABLE

This is a serial cable with two 9 or 25 pin connectors. The difference

between serial and parallel connectors lies in the fact that the serial pins are located on the computer rather than the connector. Most computers have two COM ports for one 9 and 25 pin cable each. A 9 pin cable may be connected to a 25 pin port with an adapter. Such adapters are usually provided with the mouse, but they can also be purchased at any computer shop.

FILE

If all participating computers access a common directory, a FILE net can be created. This will allow up to six stations to be linked. They communicate via files written or read by the individual stations (computers).

SERVER

All clients are linked to the server. All clients send their messages to the server which then forwards them. The server manages the complete process. It collects all the messages from the individual stations and passes them on to the recipient. Because it has the highest workload, the job of server should always be allocated to the fastest computer. Each network has only one server.

CLIENT

Clients can only send their messages to the other stations via the server. This is advantageous in that null modem operation will not require all stations to be linked with each other.

NUMBER OF STATIONS

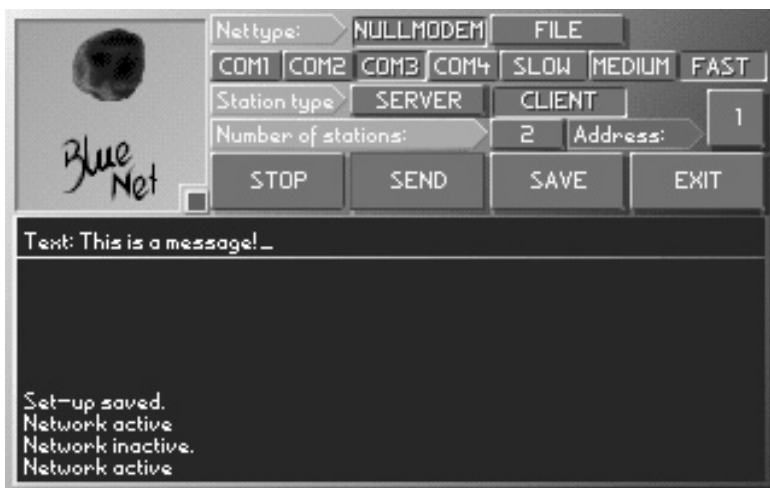
A minimum of two and a maximum of six stations can participate in a game on a network.

In null modem operation, the number of stations is determined by the number of COM ports available on the server. Two COM ports allow three stations to be linked; if the server has four COM ports, you can create a network of five computers.

STATION ADDRESSES

The address serves to identify the computer, so it must be unambiguous and unique. The server always has the address 0. The first client is known as 1, the second as 2 and so on.

Null modem Setup Information



Each client must be given the COM port number on the computer to which the null modem cable is connected. As a rule, this will be COM port 2, since the mouse will be connected to COM port 1. If you need to use the mouse port as well, you should always deactivate the mouse driver **first**, otherwise interference might occur.

In each case the server must know the client's COM port number which links it (the client) to the appropriate station.

The data transfer rate is selected from three different speed settings. The data transfer rate is chosen to suit the slowest computer in the network. **All stations must be set to the same transfer rate.**

For further information please consult the step-by-step guide featured later on in this manual.

FILE setup information



Each station must be given the same path name to facilitate FILE operation. All stations must be able to access the directory both for reading and writing.

For further information please consult the step-by-step guide featured later on in this manual.

SAVING YOUR CONFIGURATION

Once you have chosen all the settings, the configuration must be saved before it can be used in the game. All settings are checked automatically prior to saving. If an impossible configuration is noticed, an error message describing the problem will appear.

CHECKING THE CONNECTIONS

The configuration should be checked again before it is used in the game. If faults occur during the initialisation process, an error message describing the nature of the problem will appear.

Once the network is ready to start successfully, the red LED underneath the BLUENET logo will start to flash. If no connection could be made with the target computer, the LED will stay lit continuously. In this case, you should stop the test run and check the configuration.

Once the network is running, messages can be sent to all stations. To do this, you should start the **clients first**, and then the server. Next, call up BLUENET.EXE. Use START to start the network, then click SEND. You may now enter your message in the text bar underneath. Once you have concluded your message by pressing <Return>, the program will prompt you for an address. Enter the address number corresponding to the address given to the target computer during configuration as your destination. After a short while, the receiving station will display your message.

QUITTING THE PROGRAM

If the test ran without problems, you may leave the program once you have saved.

2.1.1 Step-by-step configuration with FILE

- Start the BLUENET.EXE program on all stations.
- Activate the FILE button.
- Set the network path by clicking on the appropriate bar under the network buttons and entering the path name in the text box.
- Activate the SERVER button on the intended server station.
- Click the CLIENT button on all other stations.
- Enter the number of participating stations on each computer by repeatedly clicking on the appropriate button until the correct total appears. 2 to 6 stations can take part.
- Now set the address for each client by selecting the address button for the appropriate number of times. Take great care not to allocate the same address more than once.
- Save the settings on each station by clicking the SAVE button.
- Check again that all chosen settings are correct.
- Now start all **clients first**, in any order, by clicking the START button.
- Only start the server once all the clients have been started.
- Observe the LED on all stations. If it flashes, everything is fine. If, however, the LED remains constantly lit on one or more stations, a fault has occurred. In this case you should stop all stations (STOP button), and check the following:
 - do all stations have access to the directory?
 - did you enter the same directory on all stations?
 - maybe you duplicated an address?
 - did you enter the correct number of stations in the network?
 - did you start all clients before starting the server?
- If all LEDs are flashing, you may send messages from each station to any other.
- Try to send at least one message from each station to all the others. You can send as many messages as you wish simultaneously.
- If a fault occurs now (an LED remains lit for some time),

stop the network and again check all the points mentioned above.

- Stop the test by means of the STOP buttons.
- Save any changes you may have made to the configuration.

2.1.2 Step by step configuration with NULL MODEM

- First decide which computer will be the server. The most suitable computer is the one with the most COM ports and the fastest processor.
- Connect all the other stations to the server via null modem cables. The COM ports may be allocated at random. Clients should use COM port 2 so that the mouse can be used during "Battle Isle 2". Mouse control on the server is only possible if the computer has two COM ports and only one client is connected, or the computer has four COM ports and only three clients are connected. In these cases, the mouse should be plugged into COM port 1.
- Start the BLUENET.EXE program on all stations.
- Activate the NULL MODEM button.
- Enter the number of stations to be linked.
- Now select the CLIENT button on all client stations and set the station addresses. Take care not to duplicate any address.
- For each client, select the COM port number (Com Port #1, Com Port #2 etc.) appropriate to the port the station's null modem cable is connected to.
- Now enter the COM port number for each connected client at the server station. Activate the CLIENT button and set address 1. Now select the COM port through which the station is connected with the server.
- Repeat this procedure for all clients connected.
- Afterwards, activate the SERVER button again.
- Now set the transfer rate for all stations (SLOW = 38,400 baud, MEDIUM = 57,600 baud or FAST = 115,200 baud). The same transfer rate must be set on all computers, otherwise transmission will not be possible.
- Check that the right settings have been chosen for all stations.
- Now save the settings for all stations. If the server displays the message "COM port no. X allocated twice", check the COM port numbers entered by selecting CLIENT and cycling

through the addresses.

- Once all settings are correct and the configuration has been saved, you can start the network.
- Now start all **clients first**, in any order, by clicking the START button, before starting the server!
- Observe the LED on all stations. If it flashes, everything is fine. If, however, the LED remains constantly lit on one or more stations, a fault has occurred. In this case, you should stop all stations (STOP button), and check the following:
 - are all null modem cables connected properly?
 - did you enter the correct COM port numbers on all stations?
 - is the transfer rate setting the same on all stations?
 - did you enter the right client COM port numbers at the server?
 - maybe you duplicated an address?
 - did you enter the correct number of stations in the network?
 - did you start all clients before starting the server?
 - did you perhaps use COM port 1 without deactivating the mouse driver?
- If all LEDs are flickering, you may send messages from each station to any other.
- Try to send at least one message from each station to all the others. You can send as many messages as you wish simultaneously. You will find a detailed instruction in section 2.1.1.
- If a fault occurs now (an LED remains lit for some time), stop the network and again check all the points mentioned above.
- Stop the test by means of the STOP buttons.
- Save any changes you may have made to the configuration.

Hint: BLUENET.EXE should first be set to SLOW. The slower the network runs the more computing time is allocated to the processor, which will affect the length of a computer turn. Should you own a really fast machine, then you should also try setting the other modes.

If there is interference on the screen during a network game, you should first check that all the connections are functioning properly under **BLUENET.EXE**. Once you have done so, no further problems should occur.

Important: Blue Byte Software GmbH accept no liability for any damage caused by inappropriate user handling. Cables etc. should only be connected or exchanged once a device has been switched off!

NETINFO.EXE

The NETINFO.EXE program lets you see the configuration currently loaded in the program.

2.1.3 Starting up "Battle Isle 2" in the network

Once you have successfully gone through the configuration procedure, you are ready to start "Battle Isle 2" in the network for the first time.

First, start **all clients** with the
>BI2 NET

command, before you start the server **last** with the same command. You are now connected to the network game interface.

The clients will display a message to the effect that they are waiting for a connection. Once the server is started, it will seek a connection to each of the clients and issue a message for each client, stating whether it has been found or not. During this time, the client stations will not respond to mouse or keyboard commands.

Once the server has established all links required (and requested), the game will start with the network menu. This differs from the normal main menu as it allows you to set the number of players, alliances etc. We will explain these options in more detail later.

As soon as you have finished entering your settings and taken up the game itself by activating START, the clients will unfreeze and can now be operated in the same way as in "Battle Isle 2". The main difference is that your opponents in a network game will react very differently from the computer response you have become familiar with.

A quick summary:

- start all clients with **>BI2 NET**
- start the server last (also with **BI2 NET**)
- once connections have been established, enter game settings on server
- click START to begin the network game
- "man all battle stations" (including the clients)

Some special aspects of the network operation still remain to

be discussed. Because a network game is complex, some of the main menu functions will not be available.

Saving is as important in the network game as in the normal game. In contrast to the familiar single computer missions this mode allows you to store just the one game by pressing **F10**.

Saving in a network is possible when Player O (in control of the blue forces and playing on the server) takes his turn. There is a simple reason for this.

Because the system can only be controlled by the server, the clients cannot call up any menus. The server accesses the main menu and selects the settings for the clients, including saving the game. If the server receives the Save command, the clients will automatically save their game status at the same time. If **LOAD** is clicked on the server's network menu, the clients will also load their last saved games simultaneously.

Should a network player lose before the others have finished, his/her console remains shut and deactivated, whilst the other players carry on.

Sending messages on a network can be amusing as well as useful. How about informing your opponent on screen that you have built up an enormous attacking force which is just outside the range of his reconnaissance units and that in the next few minutes you'll make mince meat of him! You could also warn one of your confederates that you have just noticed that the enemy is about to attack him. All this is possible and at the same time very easy to carry out.

Anyone can send a message to anyone else, even if it is not that person's turn.

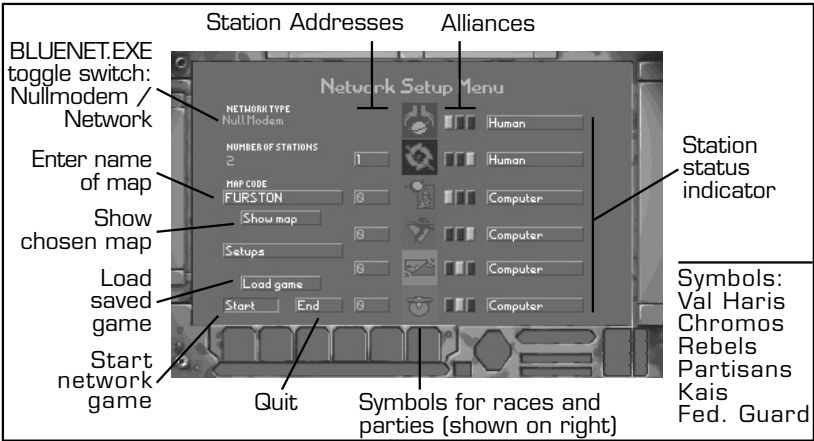
F8 informs the computer that you wish to **send a message**. You can enter a message into the text box beneath the control bar, but it must not exceed the space available in the box. You confirm the message by pressing <RETURN>. The computer will now ask you to which station the message is to be sent. Enter the address (which you will already have set up in **BLUNET.EXE** - page **6** in the manual), press <RETURN> and the message is

on its way.

Tip: If you have forgotten the address of a particular machine, you can call up NETINFO.EXE on any computer (page **15** in the manual), note the information and write it on a 'post-it' slip or sticker, which you can then attach to your machine.

If you change your mind and don't want to send the message, just press ESC to quit the process.

2.2 New Menu Options



You can tell from the screen shot that the **network menu system** is very different from the normal main menu. This is where you can adjust the environment for your network game to your personal requirements.



The **normal main menu** has also undergone some changes. You will find an additional box under the NEW MAP menu option on the main menu. This box could not previously be activated in

"Battle Isle 2".

You select whether victory on a map is achieved "simply" by occupying the enemy HQ (entry: "HQ"), or whether you still have to destroy all enemy units (entry: "all units"). Setting these main

mission goals creates a variety of new situations in the actual game, and you will need to adjust your strategy accordingly.

It does, of course, make quite a difference whether you are merely obliged to capture the enemy's HQ without the need to destroy all his units, and you will have to have to take this into consideration when you decide on which units to produce. Long range transport systems combined with infantry units may become more important than long range artillery. Ultimately, all these options lend a greater depth to the game and increase the motivation, as you will no doubt find out for yourself.

If, in a network game, you intend to set the objectives which must be attained (e.g. all players must capture the enemy headquarters), then you must make sure that every player actually possesses a headquarter. The easiest way to ensure this is to view a map from the network main menu.

In the SETUP option on the network main menu there are a number of new features. You can now change the DIFFICULTY level by clicking on that option, toggle RECONNAISSANCE on and off and, as already indicated, set the conditions for final victory (HQ, HQ + ALL UNITS, ALL UNITS).

2.3 The Tournament System

For all fans of on-line mailbox games and correspondence game addicts, we have invented the tournament mode, a new type of multi-player mode.

The tournament mode offers the same advantages and functions as the complete game, but differs in one vital aspect. As soon as you have made your moves and activated the MODE CHANGE symbol in the control bar below, the game will be saved. You can now deposit this file in somebody's mailbox or post it to your friends. This method has some obvious advantages.

Exchanging data via mailboxes offers significant savings in cost compared to those incurred by players waiting on line for each other to finish their moves. In addition, similar to the benefits of correspondence chess, you can use the extra time to refine your individual strategy to such an extent that it will take the other players by surprise when they are faced with it several days later.

So why not use normal saved games? The normal game status is transparent to the extent that cheats might be tempted to end their moves very quickly or even skip them completely in order to spy on the enemy's positions after the next mode change. This is not possible here. Only one move can be made before the game is saved again and the next player takes his or her turn.

These files are saved in a directory called SAV on your hard disc below your "Battle Isle 2" level. What does that mean?

Let us assume that your game is installed on hard disc C: in the following directory:

C:\GAMES\BLUEBYTE\BI2

From the directory "BI2" you then enter DIR for a display of the directory contents. Among these files you will find the "SAV" directory that contains the file you are looking for. A tournament file is always called TURNIER.DAT. This is the file you should forward.

Starting the tournament mode is easy. Simply enter the following command:

>BI2 TURNIER:PASSWORD

You can chose any password you wish, for example names of

people or cars, as long as you use only the following characters: O-9, a-z, A-Z. Special characters cannot be used.

This is due to the fact that the first player not only sets all the parameters such as map name, number of players etc., but also picks the first password that will afterwards show up in the saved file, along with all the others. This may need a little example, so here goes:

Let us assume that three players are participating in a tournament mode game. The first player starts with the password CLOUD, saves and thus establishes the first password. The second chooses the term RAIN, saves and thus establishes the second password. The third player enters NOSE, saves and advises the program of the third password. The program now knows all the passwords, but each player only knows his own. In other words, each player can only load the tournament game by entering the correct password after the colon. Does this not give the first player who made all the settings an unfair advantage, since he can look at a map before the other players? This may be right in principle, but matters will have changed beyond recognition after the second move. Even the worst cheat will thus not have gained anything from his spying. Please bear in mind, though, that each player must always remember to forward the TURNIER.DAT file to the next player, who will then start it with his password.

The command for each of the three players should be as the following:

Player 1:	>BI2 TURNIER:CLOUD
Player 2:	>BI2 TURNIER:RAIN
Player 3:	>BI2 TURNIER:NOSE

Playing a tournament really is great fun. Fine so far, but what happens when someone has forgotten his password? It would now be impossible to load a tournament file or play a tournament, since only one file at a time can be stored in the SAV directory. Should you find yourself in this situation, then you can start a new tournament at any time with

>BI2 NEW TURNIER:PASSWORD.

Be careful to include the spaces indicated!

We do not recommend that you remove the old tournament file from the SAV directory. In general, no Battle Isle 2 data should be either moved within or removed from the Battle Isle 2 directory. If you do, then this could seriously affect the way the game runs.

3. The Basics

You will be familiar with the basic functions of the game from "Battle Isle 2". We will now focus on all those functions, which you might have encountered to some extent before, but which have now become more important because of their network function.

The animated sequences, along with other aspects, have undergone some revision. During a sequence (e.g. a weather report) you can now **turn to the next page with the SPACE bar** or **leave the sequence with the ESC key**. This is only advisable if you are sure that you will not miss an important status report or hint. But even then you can always call up the last message by activating the appropriate icon on the control panel, as described in "Battle Isle 2".

You reach this icon by clicking on the MENU symbol, followed by the LAST MESSAGE symbol. The last message will now be repeated.

3.1 Alliances

In addition to the new "Campaign" maps, "Titan's Legacy" includes ten additional multi-player maps. These are not based on the same background story as the campaign game, but were designed especially for multi-player or network applications.

At the end of this chapter, you will find the passwords and maximum number of players for each of these maps. But let us consider first what group games mean for the players. ("Group" here simply means more than one player, no matter whether they are taking turns in a network or on a single computer.) In group games the thrill comes from the "malicious" pleasure you experience in taking over your best friend's last tank factory, rather than through a sense of victory when defeating a computer opponent. Maybe you fancy yourself as the underdog taking on one or more far stronger opponents. Or you wish to join forces with the computer against others. These options are now available

to you.

Let us, for example, look at the multi-player map **GALTRAX**. This map is designed for four players. We need to take a quick look at the menu to check on the number of players and the nature of the alliances.

Replace the password in the first line under the option NEW MAP with GALTRAX, then click on PLAYER.



You can activate or deactivate the players on the menu that appears now. As soon as you have set the desired number of players (bearing in mind the possible maximum!), click BACK to return to the previous menu. Now select ALLIANCES.

Feel free to click around a bit. You will soon see that there are



different kinds of alliances. Three players may, for example, join forces in Alliance 2, or two in Alliance 1 etc. You only have to ensure that those playing on the same side have joined the same alliance. This might seem to be stating the obvious,

but then the obvious is most easily overlooked.

Return to the previous menu with BACK, and then START the game.

You may wonder if there is any point in alliances, since all the players are human and therefore likely change their minds frequently - after all, isn't history littered with examples of broken alliances? But then you too can break your alliances and if your former ally is having a hard time, this could turn out to be very interesting (and maybe have some serious consequences). An

alliance is automatically dissolved when two formerly allied units fight each other, so watch out before you lash out.

The term 'alliance' indicates an intention to co-operate. The practical upshot of this is that as well as the reconnaissance information from your own units you also have access to that of your ally.

The few examples listed here should have given you some indication of how many possibilities there are to get together to build a game that could last for a very long time and remain completely unpredictable.

3.2 Generating Energy

Along with all the landscape details on the maps, the woods, lakes and mountains, you will have noticed some spiky objects. If you move the cursor over them, their name is given as "Aldinium". As explained previously, Aldinium is the source of the key elements needed on Chromos. Naturally, the material contained in Aldinium must be processed and refined. To do this, and to ensure a constant supply of material and energy for your factories, you must collect the Aldinium and deliver it to factories.

This is quite easy. Move a transport vehicle over the material object shown. Loading then takes place automatically, as does unloading once you have moved the transporter into the factory building. The "material" level at the top of the screen will increase according to the amount of Aldinium you have delivered, and you can go ahead and order another unit.

3.3 Production / Gaining Experience

The need to replace damaged or destroyed weapon systems increases in times of crisis. You have to know how to produce new units and train the existing ones.

Let us first turn to the production of units. The various types of buildings are already illustrated in the "Battle Isle 2" manual,

so you only have to search for the factory installation of your choice on the map. Move the cursor over the building, select one of the CONTENTS symbols and, when the menu appears, click on one of the empty boxes. Depending on certain circumstances such as energy and material stores, a hammer-shaped symbol will appear in the control bar. Activate this, and all units you are able to produce currently will be displayed in the formerly empty boxes. Select the desired unit by clicking on the production symbol once more and the unit will be ready for the next round.

Gaining experience works in a similar way. Your units gain experience either during the distribution of experience points made during a campaign at the beginning of a new map, or during short visits to various training centres (the ones with the swimming pool). The relevant illustration in the original manual will help you to find them.

Once you have moved a unit into a training centre, it behaves in a similar way to a unit under repair. Training will not take effect until the next round, so the unit will have to wait until then. When the time finally comes, click on the unit in the training centre,



and a symbol in the shape of an abacus appears in the control bar. Because the unit is now undergoing training,

as you can see from the changing shape of the experience

symbol, it will be out of action until the next round, when it can be

moved and deployed again.

The more of your units are

trained, the more successful

the implementation of your strategy. Naturally, your opponents

are also aware of the benefits of training.



3.4 The New Maps

You must know the first password before you can start a new campaign.

The first campaign password is HOLLEKO.

Once you have entered the password, you will see a map by map guide through the story of "Titan's Legacy". You will be familiar with this process from "Battle Isle 2".

The following is a list of passwords that are of particular importance in multi-player mode.

<i>Password</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>No. of Players</i>
FURSTON	"The Six Lords"	6
GALTRAX	"The Dwarf States"	4
ELGANIW	"Lake Kerbath"	2
LOPIROT	"The Islands"	6
AGRETIL	"Arena"	2
FELTONG	"The Mountain Base"	3
WILKORS	"Pilots of Victory"	2
MEKLARA	"The Swamps"	2
HOLITUS	"The High Altitude Bombers"	2
NERTING	"The Race"	4

BATTLE ISLE 2

1
2
3
4
5
6



QUASAR

Light Artillery

Weight:	7
Tank Volume:	50
Consumption:	1
Costs (M/E):	9/4
Max. Group strength:	10

Action Ports:

	Specification	#	Range						
A	40 mm cannon	10	1-3			375	375		
B									
C									
D									



3,25



210



600



2



1,5



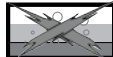
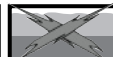
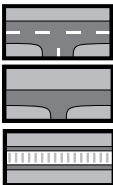
1

Description:

The QUASAR is the "little brother" of the PULSAR.

It is cheaper to produce, but is of only limited use against heavily armoured opponents.

Deployment



SAMURAI - 3



Main Battle Tank

Weight:	11
Tank Volume:	80
Consumption:	3
Costs (E/M):	9/10
Max. Group strength:	10

Action Ports:

[illegible]

5

520



410

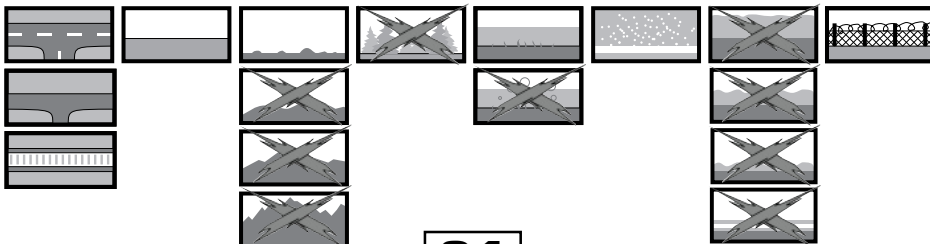


2.5

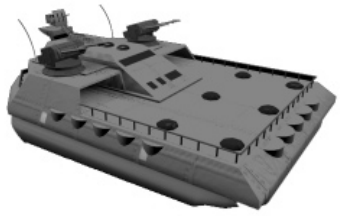
Description:

The SAMURAI-3 is an improvement on its forerunner, particularly as regards its fighting strength (armaments and armour plating).

Deployment



1
2
3
4
5
6



VADER DF

Attack Hovercraft

Weight: 13
Tank Volume: 86
Consumption: 2
Costs (M/E): 14/8
Max. Group strength: 10

Action Ports:

	Specification	#	Range						
A	40 mm cannon	8	1			375	375		
B	Ground-Air-Missile	6	1-4	400	400				
C									
D									

7

300

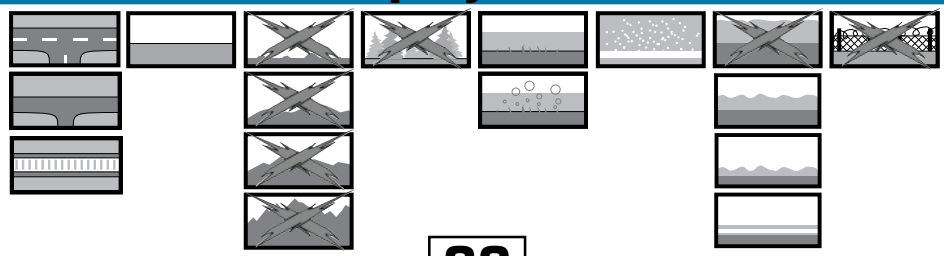
405

5

Description:

The VADER DF is particularly impressive because of its fighting power and its ability to serve as a transport vehicle.

Deployment





MEDUSA - 2

Anti Aircraft Tank

Weight:	8
Tank Volume:	60
Consumption:	2
Costs (E/M):	8/15
Max. Group strength:	5

Action Ports:

	Specification	#	Range						
A	Ground-Air-Missile	6	2-5	430	430				
B									
C									
D									



6



200



990



5

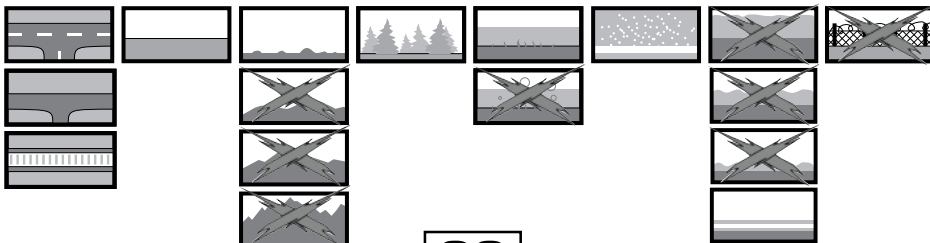
Description:

The development section has finally put this eagerly awaited anti-aircraft tank into service.



1

Deployment



1
2
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6



UX - 2

Intermediate-range Missile

Weight: 13

Tank Volume: 300

Consumption: 3

Costs (M/E): 50/12

Max. Group strength: 1

Action Ports:

	Specification	#	Range						
A	Ground-Ground Missile	1	5-20			940	940	940	940
B									
C									
D									

2,25

5

995

2

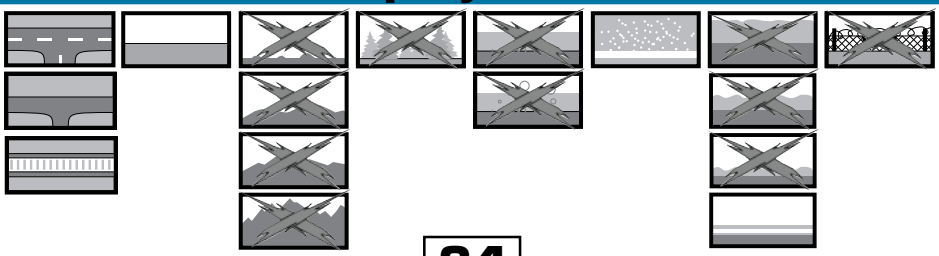
1

Description:

This is an extremely dangerous long-range weapon whose range and power can decide a battle by themselves.

Should always be used in conjunction with reconnaissance vehicles.

Deployment



Weight:







Tank Volume:


Consumption:


Costs (E/M):


Max. Group strength:


Action Ports:

	Specification	#	Range						
A									
B									
C									
D									












Description:


Form for reconnaissance results.


Deployment
















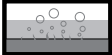






























BATTLE ISLE SAGA - The Darkest Hours

by Stefan Piasecki

Editor: Michael Schönenbröcher, Bastei-Verlag

The room was dark and quiet. Only the sound of the rain pattering against the windows and drumming on the roof above him disturbed the absolute stillness. In one corner of the room was an AV which gave off a pale light. The latest pictures from STAG's news centre were flickering across the screen, but he took no notice of them. Yet again the pictures showed Argok Kraal, one of the eleven ministers and at the same time the government's fiercest critic. Only the previous evening, in a live broadcast, he had spent several hours listing and analysing the government's failings, employing his skill with the media to maximum effect. This time the broadcast showed him in the bosom of his family and his closest friends; and to remind the viewers who the *real* benefactors of the people were, the program also unmasked yet more *Heretics* - criminals, corrupt politicians and other such wretched characters.

It was still early morning, and before long the suns would be rising. Val Haris stood at one of the large panoramic windows and looked through the rain at the city lying below him, dark and covered in cloud. He was filled with a deep peace, a peace which after the past few weeks he thought he would never feel again. Hallwa, the capital, seemed to be sleeping, and when now and then a light went on behind a window somewhere, it was as if an eye had opened momentarily to check that everything was still as it should be. Further out, where the red-light district had sprung up very soon after the War, neon adverts flashed nervously, sending their sinful messages into the darkness, where dirt, criminality and a new and growing poverty lurked.

Val Haris had grown to love Hallwa.

Deep in thought, he listened to his own breathing, and watched his fingers as they brushed backwards and forwards over the flat, transparent surface of his large desk, under which numerous lamps and small monitors were trying in vain to cut through the darkness. As reports from the major news agencies came in,

they appeared on one of the monitors. At the moment they were still uncensored, some had not even been read, and it would be tomorrow morning at the earliest before they had been prepared, evaluated and made ready for public consumption by the masses. Haris chuckled in spite of himself. How well he knew all that...and how he hated it. He had been kidnapped from his native planet, the Earth, and after many weeks and months of struggle had rescued Chromos from TITAN-NET'S yoke. Finally he had realised that all creatures, whether Earthmen at home or Drulls here on Chromos, were basically the same; they all longed to be lied to and flattered, wanted to know everything, and wouldn't even listen for fear of learning too much.

There had been a time, just after the TITAN-NET Headquarters had fallen, when things had been different. Never before or since had he seen Drulls so relaxed and ready to look optimistically to the future. It had seemed as if the Drullian people, freed from their chains, had shared a common vision, and were prepared to enter into a new era. But now it was all different. The vision had disappeared, and anxiety was spreading. People were worried about their own small lives, their own survival; the energy of the entire people was being directed more and more towards their own individual needs. Soon after the end of the War a start had been made on rebuilding the capital, Hallwa; the outlying regions, many of which were isolated and difficult to reach, were so badly destroyed that it would be a long time before they could be recultivated. Even now, a year and a half later, it was proving difficult to relieve the suffering of the many thousands of refugees who had flooded into Hallwa, causing the capital's population to mushroom. Almost all the Drullian administrators had been trained in the ROOM's bureaucracy, and found it difficult to abandon their old habits; they were not able to put into practice the suggestions made by Haris and his young team of advisers. Of course, he had not really been able to choose freely who to appoint as his advisers; too much of the ghost of the old Empire still lingered on. So Hallwa had grown like a poisonous mushroom; and Val suspected that it would soon be spreading its spores far and wide.

He had dismissed the guards a good hour ago. A screen right at the top of the bank of monitors showed a bare corridor. Not-

hing stirred in the light of the lamps fixed to the wall, and the Great Strategist slowly turned from the window and sat down at his desk, deep in thought.

When the War had ended more than a year ago he had really believed he would be able to accomplish something in this country, that the kind of democracy he was familiar with could work here too. And at first it had seemed that he was right.

He propped his elbows on the desk and rested his chin in his hands. Without knowing what he was looking for, his eyes glanced over the silhouette of the city.

He had known from the start that once the euphoria of victory had died down he would meet with massive opposition from the apparatchiks of the old regime; and he had not been mistaken. Many of the civil servants had been schooled in the ROOM's bureaucracy, and most of them were incapable of changing their way of thinking. They had never had to question their actions before; they had simply had to obey the directions of the Central Brain. But suddenly, caught up in the new mood of freedom, they had no longer been prepared to carry out the bidding of the nation's leaders; instead, they began to question the aim and purpose of their instructions, and became involved in endless discussions, which led to delays particularly in the reconstruction and supply programmes. These same officials then blamed the government and the state for issuing unclear directives.

Haris himself had coined the term *Drullian Federation* to emphasise the fact that this Federation was to be an alliance of all Drulls, irrespective of philosophy, religion or political allegiance, against all the enemies of the past and the future. There was no doubt that the people were on his side. But soon he ran into difficulties with the apparatus of government, and it became obvious that even the former Central Media Authority was still permeated by the old ways of thinking.

Val Haris leaned back again. The synthetic upholstery of the armchair creaked gently, and he decided to stand up. He took a few steps to the corner of the room, where there was only a little light. He leaned against the wall and looked back at his work station. The myriad lights and monitors were glowing and flickering

impatiently against the backdrop of Hallwa's skyline. I wonder what ordinary people think goes on in here, thought Val. What kind of work do they think I do? Do they have any idea? He knew the answer, but he forced himself not to think about it. He knew very well what the people thought he and his colleagues were doing up here, under the roof of Hallwa's most exclusive hotel, the gigantic Hallwa Palace. Hundreds of meters beneath the hotel's foundations were the remains of the ROOM, buried under stone and rubble and radioactive for eternity, thanks to the Sostrum Bomb which his friend Land Markow had detonated to save the Drullian people from falling into the hands of TITAN-NET. For the first time for a long time he thought of Markow; of the repulsive grin he used to wear when he had got his own way yet again in the Drullian Defence Council, and of the courage which he had shown shortly before his death. The man had always sensed what he would need to do to go down in history. Now he was lying far underground. After the explosion which had released enormous amounts of radiation, there had been no question of attempting to rescue him. Val hoped that Land's sacrifice for the people would be remembered, and that when one day future generations found his remains, they would not wonder what the poor guy had been looking for hundreds of meters below ground.

The old ways of thinking and the inability of the administration to solve the real problems created an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear from which even the media combines were not immune. Haris had a very simple solution to restrict the power of the media. Only three months after assuming power he had split up the state-owned media companies and had transferred the individual firms into private ownership, so that any opponents of his government would have no central mechanism to coordinate propaganda against him. Unfortunately, the advisers who urged him to take this course had overlooked the fact that the numerous small media companies had become far more susceptible to false offers of assistance. A later, apparently clever step was the formation of a representative body of the media, STAG, which aimed to safeguard its members' independence and withstand political pressure.

However, as one by one the former officials returned to the

highest echelons of government because there were simply no better candidates to replace them, STAG had to be increasingly strengthened and supported. The present situation was paradoxical; on one side were the people, on another was STAG, and on yet another was the government under Val Haris, the Great Strategist. At first, STAG had reported the true statements made by the top echelon of the government, while the lower levels were still staffed predominantly by representatives of the old order, who possessed more experience and power than most of the people at the top. The pronouncements of the low-level administrators were quite different from those of the higher representatives, and although the people still sided emotionally with the Strategist, it was becoming more and more difficult to ignore the ever louder voices from the state ministries. The upturn, particularly in the political maturity of the people, was taking much longer than had been expected.

A soft buzzing sounded and one of the small lamps on the desks began to flash agitatedly. Automatically Haris looked towards the surveillance monitor, which showed the corridor leading to his office. For a few seconds he could not see who or what had set off the alarm. Without making a sound he stepped nearer to the monitor, as if this would enable him to see more. Soon saw a figure approaching slowly and cautiously. One of the lights was shining into the camera, so that he did not recognise the intruder until he was almost at the door. For an instant he cursed his foolhardiness in dismissing the guards, but almost immediately his mood changed to hope as he recognised who the man was. It was a man who had been at his side at many times of great danger; it was Benuntai Quaila.

In response to the safety mechanism, Haris entered a short code word to open the door.

Quaila was amazed. The door made a quiet scraping sound as it slid into the walls of the narrow corridor. Inside the office which appeared before him it was dark and quiet. At the back of the room he recognised the sparsely lit silhouette of Hallwa. The uncertainty and foreboding he had felt when he saw there were no guards now became stronger. He was unarmed - and for

good reason. Ever since the political situation had become more tense, anyone who openly carried a weapon was treated with suspicion, and even the army officers had been instructed to carry out their duties unarmed. There was a danger that, in this tense atmosphere, a minor quarrel between supporters of opposing political parties might escalate and involve large numbers of people. Quaila's hand moved away from his hip where his gun used to be, and he stepped cautiously into the shadows.

The rear of the room was so dark that he could not see anything, but in a corner near the door, not far from the large window, he could see an indistinct figure which seemed to be turned towards him. Quaila was aware of a constriction in his throat. "Haris? Strategist, is that you?" he stammered.

The figure nodded and took a step forward so that Quaila could see him more clearly. The light in the hallway accentuated the paleness of the Great Strategist's face. Quaila stepped towards him, and as he moved away from the doorway the door scraped shut again. He extended his hand in the greeting which Haris himself had introduced and which had now become common.

Haris did not return the greeting, but stiffly motioned Quaila to one of the chairs in front of his desk. He himself sat down on the other side of the desk. The flickering lights cast various colours onto the Benuntai's face as Haris looked into his eyes, or rather at the place where he assumed his eyes to be.

"What is it, Benuntai?" he asked quietly.

"Where are the guards, Strategist? Have they been removed? What is going on here?"

The Strategist shook his head. "No, my friend, I dismissed them myself."

Quaila made to get up from the chair, but Haris indicated to him to remain sitting. "How could you do that? I can't believe you feel as safe as all that!"

"I know", sighed Haris, "I know. But a handful of guards would not be able to prevent history from taking its course. It would just mean that more lives would be lost."

Quaila was obviously moved. "But Strategist, excuse my saying so, but that's nonsense. I could have you guarded by mechanical

units if you wish!"

"And what would that achieve?"

"They wouldn't get you."

"Yes they would; even if I fled, they would still get me. Quaila, your concern does you great honour. But even if the place were swarming with Demons, they would just send some of their own." He leaned forward slightly and spread his hands out on the desk. "It would just prolong things, don't you see that?"

Quaila said nothing. He was a man of strategy, used to military planning and fighting on the front line. When it came to politics he felt less and less certain of himself. He had never admitted it even to himself, but he no longer understood what was going on in this country. For weeks now he had been haunted by a feeling of danger. He knew what areas the danger was coming from and what the consequences might be, but he had no idea what to do about it. All this had simply strengthened the faith and trust he felt for the Great Strategist, and now he saw that the Strategist could no longer help himself, he was gripped by a fear greater than any he had felt before.

"What can I do for you, Quaila?"

"Actually, I've come to see what I can do for *you*", the Benuntai answered.

"Is there any news?"

"Probably nothing that you don't already know about. What do you think about the business with Benuntai Gerr? That was one of the reasons I came to see you."

Haris frowned in puzzlement. "Benuntai Gerr? Don't tell me my military adviser has gone over to the other side as well!"

"Haven't you heard?", asked Quaila tonelessly. "He was arrested only an hour ago."

Val Haris jumped to his feet. "What? You can't be serious. Arrested? Why?"

Only now did Val Haris realise just how much he had secretly been counting on Benuntai Gerr. Gerr had been the leader of a strong Drullian guerrilla band during the war with TITAN-NET, and had later played a decisive part in ROOM's overthrow after it had been infiltrated by TITAN-NET, and he was highly respected

by everyone. Working with Gerr had not always been easy, as he refused to become involved in any sort of intrigue, but always remained strictly neutral. For this reason he had become one of Haris' most valued advisers. Only he had repeatedly dared to criticise Haris, whereas his other advisers had frequently kept quiet so that they would not have to admit that they had acted wrongly. When Haris was faced with blind hatred from his enemies and equally blind subservience from his advisers, Gerr had always been a calming influence at the centre of events. And now he had been arrested. Why had Val not known about it? What were the grounds for his arrest?

"May I?", said Quaila, and stepped up to the Strategist's desk. He pressed a few buttons and retrieved the news reports of the past few hours. When he had found what he was looking for, he stepped aside so that Haris could see the screen too. There was no sound, but they recognised one of the dams outside the city, and saw a huge hole gaping in the centre of the dam. A woman news reader appeared in the STAG studio, commenting soundlessly on the events which had taken place only a few hours earlier. In the disastrous flood which had taken place, hundreds of Drulls had apparently perished, as could be seen from the corpses on the screen. Haris slumped in his seat as Benuntai Gerr's face appeared, shouting something before he was dragged struggling to waiting helicopters by members of the security forces. Repeatedly a word they both hated was flashed on the screen: "Heretics." It was impossible, it was senseless, but it seemed that the opposition in the Drullian Federation's State Council had now managed to get rid of Benuntai Gerr. They did not need to hear the commentary to realise that; it was obvious that, under some pretext or other, they were trying to implicate Benuntai Gerr in the disaster at the dam. Their suspicions were confirmed when the muted news reader held up to the camera some metal fragments which had been found.

"A bomb?" asked Haris, and did not look at Quaila as he nodded.

"They say hundreds of people have been killed", said the officer without emotion, and Haris swallowed hard. He would not be able to help Gerr, and he sensed that now no-one would be able to help him either. The broadcast had ended, and the system

switched back to the current recordings. Quaila sat down again.

"How could it happen?" Haris' eyes were staring into the distance, far beyond Hallwa, to the place where, not long ago, he had set out to fight in a seemingly hopeless war for this city and this people.

"It wasn't your fault, Strategist! You couldn't have done anything to prevent it. No-one could. Things just happened."

But Haris was not satisfied with this. "I must have made mistakes, Quaila. Nothing happens without a reason. Not even here on Chromos."

"You may be right. But what could you have done? You did what you thought was right."

The Strategist waved his hand impatiently. "I don't want to bore you, Quaila. I will have to accept responsibility for everything that happens. But please wait a while and listen to me. I feel guilty. Even if you and all my advisers keep telling me I've done everything right. I must have failed somehow. Be honest with me." He stood up and went to the window again. He knew what was going to happen in the next few hours, and there was no way he could prevent it. He had to force himself to stay calm, so that he could face what was to come with a clear conscience.

His fingers brushed the cool glass of the window pane. From here in this room it was impossible to tell what the weather was really like outside. He could see that it was still raining heavily, but he could only guess at the temperature, and he had no idea whether it was windy or not. He turned round and leaned against the glass. He felt the coolness of the window through the material of his uniform, and shivered. But that really was irrelevant.

"You know, maybe it all started when I gave the order to split up the old ROOM media centre and transfer it into private ownership. But what could I have done instead? We're surrounded by people who learned their trade in the ROOM training centres. There were enough problems in the state administration. If I had left the media combines as they were, there would have been nothing anyone could have done if they had decided to support my opponents. Such a concentration of power would have torn the whole country apart in a matter of weeks." He wiped the

sweat from his brow. It was hot in here, and now he was getting worked up as well.

"Strategist, everyone in Parliament realised that. If you remember, even the people who are criticising you now supported you then."

Haris laughed bitterly. "Yes, Quaila, you're quite right. But those people didn't sign the resolution. It was one of those damned closed sessions, so afterwards anyone could claim he'd done anything. And don't start telling me about the minutes of the meeting. Who has access to the archives? Not the people at any rate."

"But I don't understand what you have to reproach yourself for. Alright, the media combines were broken up and their place was taken by lots of small companies, and of course they had serious financial problems at first. But you realised these companies might be easily bought by one interest group or another, didn't you? That's why you formed STAG, as an association of all these companies, so they could make their voice heard by the government. That was what really brought the media over to the side of the new system. They were independent, yet they had their own mouthpiece which made them more powerful and meant they were not open to being influenced from the outside. That was why you decided to form STAG, wasn't it?"

"Yes, yes, you're right. STAG was certainly a great organisation." He laughed again. "I should have had a new ROOM programmed while I was at it."

They were silent for a while. Quaila looked out into the darkness. A lot of lights were hovering over the high-rise buildings as if they were waiting for something. They seemed to be helicopters, but fortunately the noise of their rotors could not be heard through the armoured glass of the window. He turned back to Haris. "That's nonsense, Strategist. And you know it is."

They were silent again. Haris sensed that the conversation could not go on like this; but he had an urge to talk about everything again. He just wanted Quaila to tell him what he had done wrong, so he could concentrate on that. There was no sense thinking about everything over and over again if no-one told him their opinion.

"Why is it nonsense? Forming STAG was probably the biggest mistake I ever made. Look, it was obvious that there would be opposition and resistance. But just think how optimistic the people were just after the end of the War. And only a few months later the situation is completely reversed. The instructions of the State Council, my instructions, were simply not obeyed, and that held up the process of reconstruction. The Drulls had no homes, no work and no plans. So what happened? The people who didn't agree with my policies began to claim that they could do everything better, and maybe they were right at that. Anyway, they got a lot of support from the civil service and the media; maybe with all that support they really would have done a better job than me." He raised his arms. "I would even have given them the chance to put their ideas forward and put their plans into effect. But the main aim of their policies was to reintroduce a centralised system of government with an electronically planned economy and a centrally controlled propaganda machine. I ask you, Quaila, what would have been the point of all the suffering of the last few decades if we had let ourselves be taken over by the very same forces that we thought we had finally beaten? Argok Kraal, one of the eleven ministers of the State Council, didn't even bother to hide what he was planning. He probably thought the people were so used to a central system of rule that no-one would oppose him. And shall I tell you what makes me saddest of all? He was right. The wealthy members of our society were only too happy to let the media seduce them, and the poor didn't have the energy to believe anything but what they were shown day in, day out. Anyone who wanted to create a really democratic nation and didn't believe in the power of a central system of government they called *Heretics*."

Quaila fiddled nervously with his hands. "You have no reason to reproach yourself. At least you tried to give the people a vision again."

"Yes, a vision."

Haris took a few steps away from the window and disappeared into the shadows at the back of the office. "Of course I wanted them to have a new vision, an aim so big that no-one could lose sight of it. Do you remember the excitement a few months ago

when our satellite picked up signals from the Terosagon system that might have come from intelligent beings? That was the vision that would have given everyone the strength to carry on working, researching and thinking. That's why I ordered an interstellar spaceship to be built that was bigger and more powerful than anyone could have imagined. Something really big, do you understand? Every Drull, of whatever class, could have thought about it every day and been proud of it. But Minister Kraal and STAG began an unprecedented campaign of slander against me, saying I wanted to exploit the people and create a monument to myself." The strategist's dark shape stepped back into the circle of light.

"I remember. But you were able to disprove all the allegations, and I remember everyone saying that you had done Kraal a lot of damage when you joined in the public discussion..."

"But it didn't last long", he interrupted the Benuntai. "STAG actually promised to support the project. But I could see the sniping was still going on. I admit my advisers were young and inexperienced, but I didn't have any better ones, at least none with a clean political record. I knew they were an ideal target for the media, and really I can't even blame the media for attacking them - there was certainly plenty to aim at. They set it all up very skillfully. The media were very restrained, and so was Argok Kraal; he even asked me for advice on a number of occasions at that time, which I gave him. Why not? After all, we were all working for the Federation, each in his own way." Haris returned to his desk and sat down opposite Quaila again. "No, I think the biggest mistake I made was entrusting Chief Katai Kandiris with the task of looking for General Dengh."

Quaila raised his eyebrows. "I think I know what you mean", he said. For a moment he was distracted by a number of helicopters which were flying away soundlessly but very close to the roof of the hotel. They must have been the same ones whose lights he had seen a few minutes before. That wasn't surprising. Everywhere in Hallwa was unsettled at the moment. Even he had had difficulty getting to the Hallwa Palace, even though he had shown his ID at all the roadblocks and was also in a military car. "But who else could you have found to do it? Chief Katai Kandiris is one of our most experienced front-line commanders. It was not for nothing

that you put him in charge of the Guards after the War."

"Maybe we should have wiped out General Dengh's partisans then; I've often thought so."

"I'm surprised at you, Strategist. Why do you have to doubt every one of your decisions? This probably isn't what you want to hear; but the decision not to arrest General Dengh was not a sign of weakness, it was a considered decision. The people were tired of war. The civilians were only interested in the war against TITAN-NET, and that was over. It would have been impossible to embark on a guerrilla war with Dengh's units that might have lasted for years. No-one would have agreed with it, especially since he had his units far up in the north. You were quite right just to keep him under observation at first. And that's where the weakness of our mechanical units became obvious - they aren't flexible enough. They may be practically invincible in battle, but they aren't designed for surveillance work. So when we lost track of Dengh it was quite logical to send Kandiris to the north with only a small force."

"Quaila, don't you understand..."

"No Haris", he interrupted. "You may be used to thinking analytically and always looking for past mistakes. But that doesn't bring us any closer to a solution. A lot of Drulls respect you, but you still understand too little of this world. It is like our game of Gombo - one wrong or clumsy move and the whole game can be lost, even if it goes on for hours or days longer. You're always thinking about the past, and trying to learn for the future from the mistakes you made then. But Drulls don't feel like that. We say that you will keep making the same mistake over and over again until you finally solve the problem; in other words, the future is always different, and no-one can determine or even influence it. No-one can tell whether or not the problem he has just solved arises from old mistakes. The old people say that, if it does, you don't have to be afraid of the old mistakes any more."

Haris shook his head in disgust. "You're talking like the Aristo disciples, the ones who have been on the increase like Argawi cows since the Kai merchants have started trading in Hallwa."

"You still don't understand us very well, Strategist" said Quaila quietly, but with anger in his voice. "Kandiris was the only one

who was capable of handling the situation. No-one is more experienced in underground fighting than him. It didn't take him long to find one of Dengh's combat groups, mechanised units that he must have obtained from TITAN-NET with the aim of inflicting more damage on us. It wasn't Kandiris' fault that he was discovered and attacked."

"But he didn't withdraw and continue his surveillance, as he had been ordered, but instead he called for air support, which was provided by Benuntai Gerr. That could be called refusing to obey orders." Haris banged his fist on the desk. "You are all experienced officers. You should know that you do not openly attack a partisan leader who is badly weakened, if not already beaten. Of course the destruction of a whole mechanised brigade was a military success; but don't try and tell me that it was a political success too, when the madman who had been attacked then declared war on the Federation. That was exactly, I repeat exactly, what our opponents had been waiting for." His voice grew louder. "I can still see the STAG report. War declared on Drullian people! Wonderful. No mention of the fact that this declaration of war had been made by a madman with a couple of hundred battle robots and tanks somewhere in the north, no mention of the fact that our airborne units had destroyed one of his brigades without suffering a single loss themselves. Not a word about any of that. They just kept talking about the declaration of war, and calling us *Heretics*. How I hate that word. Of course, the people were immediately reminded of the war that had lasted for generations; you can't blame them for rioting in the streets. But although I still value both Kandiris and Gerr as much as ever, it is thanks to them that Argok Kraal was given the opportunity to turn Parliament into a hotbed of rebellion right in front of STAG's cameras. It was a fantastic image for the media. People and Parliament in turmoil, and all the fault of the national leaders. Even when I declared a state of emergency and ordered Kandiris' guards to make the streets safe, it didn't affect the general mood of unrest. In fact, I realised that the state of emergency would actually make things worse, but what else could we have done?"

Muffled bangs could suddenly be heard from above them, and Quaila thought again of the helicopters. He leaped to his feet.

Haris, who had not noticed the helicopters, hesitated and looked up uncertainly. He had heard the noises, but did not know what they could have been. He continued speaking hesitantly.

"Kandiris was clever enough not even to return from the north. They say he wants to pursue Dengh himself. Doesn't that say something about the state of the Federation? I am the Great Strategist, but no-one does what I tell them. My advisers are incompetent, the second and third echelons of the government are corrupt, Parliament is in revolt, the people are like sheep, my military adviser has been arrested as a terrorist, the leader of my guards is up in the north, and STAG is on the side of the opposition now more than ever."

Quaila cried out and pointed in panic at the small monitor which showed the corridor leading to the office. Haris looked at it, and understood. A dozen heavily-armed soldiers were positioned along the corridor. A man surrounded by several senior officers stepped forward, a man they both recognised; it was Argok Kraal.

Val Haris took a deep breath. "You know, Quaila", he said, "maybe STAG is right after all. The whole apparatus of state is against me. The people are against me now as well. The media are against me. So is Parliament. My comrades have all disappeared or been arrested, except for you. Only you are here. Why?" Haris voice had taken on a strange tone. Quaila remembered how energetic and decisive he had been when fighting TITAN-NET, a soulless robot empire. Surely he wasn't going to give up now, when he was up against intelligent people with human emotions?

"I came to warn you and help you to escape!" said Quaila tonelessly, staring at the surveillance monitor.

"Thank you", said Val Haris. "Don't worry about me. The door will hold for a little longer. There should be enough time for you to escape if you leave at once."

Quaila did not understand. Loud blows reverberated against the door, the first attempts to force it open. "Strategist, you're the one who has to escape, not me. You're the leader of the government!", he shouted.

"No", replied Val calmly, "I am a *Heretic*. It's true. If everyone else is convinced of something and I am not, then I must be a

Heretic. But I'm not angry at the description any more. In fact I'm proud to be a *Heretic*."

Despite his stocky figure, Benuntai Quaila leaped round the table with surprising speed. He grasped the Strategist's uniform in a firm grip and shook him.

"Listen! The people need you. You said something about escaping, so that means there must be a way out of here. You've got to go, right now!"

With enormous strength, Haris pulled Quaila's hands away and hurled him to the floor, his eyes blazing with rage. "You don't understand anything at all, Quaila. If I try to escape, they will search for me everywhere, and they're bound to find me sooner or later. That won't save anyone. No, I'm going to stay here. No-one knows you're here. You are my only chance. You must escape and organise the resistance with Kandırıs or Kel Gon Garin, if you can find him. Chief Katai Darburg might be able to help you too. The only hope I have is if you are successful."

The blows on the door grew louder and seemed somehow to be getting closer. On the monitor they saw Kraal's self-satisfied grin. He seemed hardly able to contain his impatience until the door was opened. Haris pushed a concealed flap of the desk to one side and pressed an insignificant-looking switch. A circular patch of bright light poured into the room as a portion of the floor slipped to one side, revealing a narrow passage leading down into the ground.

"No-one knows about this passage apart from myself and a few others - certainly no-one from the State Council or the Army. It leads to a little-used corridor a few floors below us. From there you can easily reach the other parts of the building, and with a bit of luck you might be able to escape. You will now go down this passage. That is an order. As I said, no-one suspects you; that is your big advantage."

Reluctantly, Quaila went to the opening and looked into the brightly-lit passage. Then he began to descend. Soon he heard the trap door closing above him.

The bright light from the corridor was beginning to pour into the room through the first holes in the door. Val Haris sat down at his desk, closed the hatch to the secret passage and turned

on the light. There was no need to hide any more.

Finally the door opened, and the soldiers rushed into the room, followed by Argok Kraal and his officers. They stopped in amazement. There, in front of the impressive backdrop of a rain-swept Hallwa, sat Val Haris in his spotless Great Strategist's uniform, looking at them calmly. For a moment Argok Kraal could not think of the words which he had been preparing for so long to mark his great victory. It was to have been a short speech, but great and memorable. But now, as he saw his opponent sitting so calm and unconcerned, he could not think what to say; instead he stared at him as he sat silently, his hands resting on his desk.

The soldiers had raised their weapons and the officers were looking at him, waiting for instructions. For a moment Kraal hated himself - it was only an instant, but one he would remember for the rest of his life.

"You are under arrest", he managed to gasp, and was silent again. One of the officers fished a piece of paper from his pocket and spoke on the minister's behalf.

"You are charged with squandering funds from the national exchequer on useless projects, destroying the prosperity of the nation, aiding a military attack and provoking a subsequent declaration of war by a foreign power against the Drullian people, declaring a state of emergency without due cause, and other serious crimes. A people's court has already been convened and is awaiting you at this very moment. You are ordered to come with us, and you are advised not to try to resist."

Val Haris stood up and walked towards them. Immediately he was grabbed and dragged out into the corridor. Argok Kraal remained in the room, filled with fury and hatred at his own weakness. On an impulse he snatched his pistol from its holster, aimed at the crest of the state which Val Haris had founded, and fired. With a deafening crack the crest shattered into a million pieces. He noted with surprise that the rain had stopped in the past few minutes, and that the skyline of Hallwa was glistening in the morning glow of Chromos' two suns. It must be a lucky omen! With a feeling of deep satisfaction, Kraal followed his men out of

the room.

High above a shot echoed, making Quaila jump with fright. He was sweating with the effort of negotiating the narrow steps and confined passage. For a moment he paused and listened, but he heard nothing else. Hastily Quaila continued his descent.

Now he knew what he had to do...

6. Credits

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