

## **Partisan Warfare 1941-45**

Osprey Men-at-Arms series No. 142 (1983)

Text by Nigel Thomas and Peter Abbott; colour plates Mike Chappell

Review by Rob Morgan

Another early Osprey title, this was published originally in 1983, and as it says deals with partisan warfare, and that only in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and Greece. The theme of Resistance Warfare from 1940-45 in Western Europe is dealt with in Osprey MAA 169, by Jurado.

This war-behind-the-Ostfront title is standard format, and first outlines the German structures after the temporary conquest of the eastern territories, and then examines in brief detail the partisans in Poland and in Russia, and also the anti-partisan local forces -- especially those active in the Baltic States and Ukraine, and some served far beyond their borders, of course. To describe this war as complicated would be an understatement!

The problems faced in Yugoslavia, compounded by the Chetniks who seem to have fought everyone at one stage or another, the pro-Nazi Croat puppet state, as well as Serbia and Slovenia, all with troops in the field in this partisan war, are well dealt with, and provide massive opportunities for small-scale actions, and for massive far-ranging campaigns. Greece, I have to say, is one of the WWII partisan campaigns I know little of, but Thomas and Abbott explain the complexities of the partisan forces and of the collaborationists on the Nazi side with ease.

That leaves us with Albania. One of the most elusive of all wars, and yet clearly this long campaign against the Italians and the Germans has much to offer.

The book is a starting point, and also in many ways a gold mine of ideas, since partisan warfare, especially conducted against the vulnerable dinosaurs of regular forces, is ideal for solo gaming.

The title is illustrated well, with good and not (at least then) simply with stock photos and the insignia for several armies including Ukraine's UPA, which fought on, against the Red Army, until 1956, is provided. But in many, if not all, cases such insignia has only academic value. The plates, by Mike Chappell are delightful, and though most partisan gear is borrowed or stolen (look at Plate C) for this, some of the anti-partisan troops are unusual and make for a different force. The Ukrainian "Schuma" Korporal at Plate B 3 is an example. His uniform is splendid,

and so is that of the brutal and infamous Ustasha "Black Legion" at Plate D3. Others, the Italians and the German SD, appear elsewhere, of course, and I would have liked to see a little more detail -- and text -- about the Bulgarian Axis soldiers, and also the Greek Security Battalions -- a full-dress major general? Well, he's not exactly table top wargame material!

A decent volume though, and a good opener, especially if you're not up to speed on the astonishing battles, raids and transfers of loyalty which took place far from any recognisable war front, and which almost certainly were not fully understood by any of the combatant forces beyond kill or be killed. Nasty warfare which may not appeal to everyone, but has a good deal to offer on map and table, and the opportunity to field small units, skirmishes and ambushes a speciality. No heavy tanks either, and fewer aircraft than anywhere else in the war. Though naval forces were in use, the Germans had scores of well-armed auxiliary craft, and Tito had a flotilla, including trawlers, bristling with guns.

As for figures, well, plenty around. I've restricted myself to 20/25mm scale rather than dip into 15mm, that's because I think the options are much greater, and on the whole cheaper for the gamer! For partisans and militias, Home Guards, etc., then start with the Strelets Soviet Partisan figures, MO84 in Winter Dress are very scruffy, and MO85 the figures in lighter Summer gear are also good. The Caesar WWII Partisans H006 ("underground resisters") especially the prone and kneeling figures are good value and so are HO56, the Partisans in Europe. Again, select the low to the ground figures. I'm not sure what to do with the Nun though? Lastly, the Strelets MO96 Finnish Army 1944 provides some very good prone troops which pass nicely as Partisans of any hue. Polish partisans would be equipped by the Germans more than the Russians, of course, and be a little more urban and western in dress. There were not infrequent partisan v partisan scraps too.

You can of course always use the Airfix Commandos for coastal raiders or partisan support for Tito in the Balkans in late 1944 on.

The Fascist enemy's a bit harder to find, but a good start is the Odemars Company's Bosnian Infantry, which comes with a mounted officer. This will do for fez-wearing Croats, Ustasha, and Albanians and Handschar Waffen SS. Nice set, but quite difficult to come across.

Italians? Well the Airfix and Esci sets are as good as any, and the mountain troops in particular. The HaT Italians by the way are the Airfix set! Strelets have a set of Italians in Eastern Front Winter dress, pack

MO82, and you can certainly find a use for their winter-clad Hungarians that pack MO83.

In the German ranges, you pay your money and you take your choice, as they say; but Revell's German Engineers set will prove useful (lose the Goliath tracked mine though) and the Airfix Mountain Troops will fit in well. There were paratroop operations as well from time to time, and in 1944 the Germans attacked Tito's HQ at Dvar with gliders and paratroops. Do take a look at the Strelets (and Caesar's ) Germans in Stalingrad sets. Well wrapped up, and nice and scruffy. Remember, Winter warfare's slower and more cautious, which a greater effect on men and weapons, and animals. Radios too.

The HaT WWI Austrian Infantry will provide some of the Slovenians in plate D, figures 2 and 3, a simple paint job and little chance of a heavy weapon anywhere, beyond an lmg. As for a few well, the little CV33 tankette, or an old Renault 17 or a Somua perhaps. There were some Char 1 Bis with the Prinz Eugen Division I believe, and any light vehicle you can pick up from say Ravenshorpe or Airfix. The odd gun, if needed, like the HaT German 7.5 Infantry Gun; and just possibly an Airfix Feiseler Storch spotter plane to keep an eye on things, or transport your General. Outside the Balkans, the partisan war often assumed epic proportions, with ski troops and much heavier weapons in action.

That's a start anyway, the Greeks and the oddly uniformed Russian Defence Corps in the Balkans elude me so far!

