

TABLE TOP BATTLES

Battlegaming Models
By H.L.D.



IN February, the layout of the different Armies' divisions was given. From this we saw that the only readily available items of equipment with which the Battlegamer can equip his American forces were the Airfix models of the Sherman tank, Jeep, and M.3 half-track. Now, however, the ROCO Minitanks range is becoming increasingly available, and we can turn to their catalogue to see what is suitable to use in the 00 (1/76) scale for the World War II period. Luckily for the 'American Army', here we find all the artillery pieces we could wish for.

First, we find the 155 mm. Self-propelled Gun M.40 (ROCO No. 104). Before dealing with the model itself, here is a brief historical note. The M.40 was developed from an earlier 155 mm. SP Howitzer M.12 'King Kong' that had appeared in 1942. The M.12 chassis was that of the Sherman tank then in production, thus it had the original vertical volute suspension similar to that on the Airfix model of the Sherman. When the famous 155 mm. M.2 Gun 'Long Tom' became available it was decided to increase its mobility by mounting it on a suitable mobile carriage, and the latest Sherman chassis was adapted. This featured the horizontal volute suspension and wider tracks which account for the different appearance.

The M.40 entered service with the American artillery batteries attached to Central Command, in 1944. It served on all fronts and was again in action in Korea from 1950 to 1952. It was finally replaced in 1955 by the M.53 which is also represented in the ROCO range (No. 157). Some M.40's were used by the Royal Artillery, and one example is on display at their very interesting artillery museum at the Woolwich Arsenal Depot in South London.

This M.40 is one of the early models of the ROCO range, and is somewhat lacking in detail when compared to their recent issues. (Fortunately it is modelled to 1/80 scale, which is almost the same as 00 scale.) The main deficiencies are the missing buffers on the gun and the most important recoil spade. This spade prevented the running gear and suspension from being damaged by the recoil of the gun. The basic model costs 2s. 6d., but for an additional 2s. 6d. and the minimum of work, we can make it into a perfect replica of the prototype. Acquire one of the modern 155 mm. SP guns (No. 136), as it has a fully detailed spade and gun. From this the gun is removed and the circular platform and seats are cut away. Next carefully remove the rear 6 mm. of the gun mount-

ing, which should leave the gun as shown in the photograph. A shield, for the gun layer, is made from a piece of Plastikard and cemented on the left-hand side of the gun mounting. The original gun can now be removed from the M.40 and the new one stuck in its place. I do not think it worth the trouble trying to reproduce the traverse in such a model, but if this is required, the gun section of the 'Long Tom' model (No. 120) can be substituted. This, however, does not represent the best solution as the gun is not quite the same as the one on the real M.40 and it still costs 2s. 6d., leaving you without the spade mechanism.

Carefully remove the spade, making sure not to break any of the brackets. Take the two angled stays and cut away the single end pivot. Cement them back onto the spade the opposite way, so that the straight members are closest together. Cut 4 mm. lengths from the thin portion of the hydraulic rams and cement these vertically in the attachment points, where the thick ends were attached. Now cement the unit on to the base of the tail platform, making sure that, when this is lowered, the spade rests upon the ground. When set, the model can be painted and markings applied, leaving us with a highly detailed reproduction.

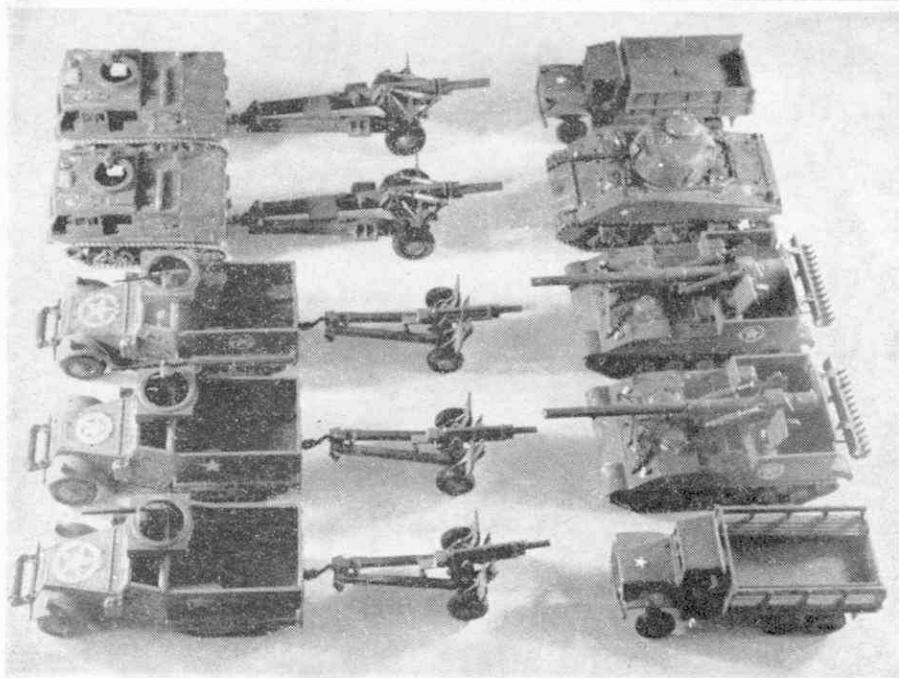
Every country has had its famous weapons, and when reproducing a model army it is necessary to include some of these more famous pieces, or the whole thing would seem wrong. Just as we could not have a British army without a 25 pounder gun, the Americans must have 105 mm. Howitzers. Luckily, we Battlegamers have been saved much work here as ROCO provide a wonderfully detailed model (No. 183) of this gun. It is fully operational, the trails split, the barrel elevates and traverses just as with the real thing. All that is needed is a coat of paint. This model scales about 1/80 so at 1s. 6d. is an excellent buy for an 00 scale army. The towing vehicle for these Howitzers is the M.3 half-track, as modelled by Airfix.

The M.2 105 mm. Howitzer was first introduced into service in 1935. It was the result of careful development of the model M.1 which appeared in 1928. The M.2 served throughout the War and later in Korea, without undergoing any major changes. It was capable of firing a high explosive shell weighing 33 lb. a distance of 12,500 yards. In 1942 the SP version, 'Priest' M.7, appeared on the 'Grant' tank chassis and these were used by Montgomery's force at the battle of El Alamein.

Another ROCO model which scales 1/80 is the American field Howitzer, 155 mm. M.1 (No. 187). Costing 2s. 6d. this highly detailed model is an excellent buy. Not only does the trail split, but the spades can be detached and carried on the side of the trails during travel. There is a travel steady that locks the barrel straight and a large jack that holds the wheels off the ground for more stable firing. The barrel traverses and elevates, with the buffers working most realistically. The M.1 was used by the Americans and their allies until the late fifties. Shell weight was 95 lb. and this could be fired a distance of 16,350 yards. For a towing vehicle ROCO M.4 tracked prime mover 'High Speed' 18 ton (No. 178) is based upon the chassis of the M.3/M.5 series of light tanks which entered production in 1942. They served in Europe from 1943, and usually towed the heavy 'Long Tom' and 203 mm. Howitzers. As can be seen from the photograph of the models prepared for this article, we have two 155 mm. M.1's, towed by M.4's to represent the heavy artillery battalion of the U.S. Infantry Division. The three 105 mm. M.2's towed by half-tracks represent the medium battalions, while the M.40's are attached to this particular division for special tasks such as the laying down of a barrage before an assault. The M.4 Sherman tank is an artillery observation post. Such OP tanks are essential as they must go forward near the front line to observe fire and report targets back to the batteries. Two ammunition supply trucks are also provided.

Many Battlegamers feel that artillery is too complicated and powerful, so they just don't use it. However, this limits them to using certain arms only. In the long run it inevitably reduces the realism, for every army is open to long range attack by artillery at some time. We can use artillery in Battlegames by making it just a bit more difficult to use, thereby decreasing its apparent power.

As shown last month no gun can fire more than fourteen inches. This is what we assume to be the maximum range of direct vision. To fire further, the gun must be layed with the help of information passed on by an Observation post not more than fourteen inches from the target. Again we assume each OP can signal only eighteen inches, but information can be passed on by different posts, thus increasing the range. An artillery piece is fired, as explained before as follows: indicate the target, and let the dice decide (one dice only); above four, a complete



hit; three, blast damage only, and below three, a miss. A one inch diameter circle is the area of damage caused by a 105 mm. or 25 pounder. Their ranges are from zero to twenty-one or twenty-three inches respectively. The 155 mm. M.1 and 5.5 inch Howitzers have a similar performance; a three inch damage circle and a range from six to twenty-five inches. The 155 mm. 'Long Tom' of the M.40 is the same but has a range from ten to thirty-four inches. The towed guns take one move to prepare for firing, as does the M.40 (a towed 'Long Tom' would take considerably longer). The medium field guns can fire once every move but the heavy ones only every alternate move.

Opposite page: an M.40 SP 155 mm. ('Long Tom') in action in Korea, 1950.

Top: an M.40 on display at the American Armour Proving Ground, Aberdeen, Maryland (Warpics photo).

Left: the completed divisional artillery of an American Infantry division, as described in the text.

Below left: rear view of two improved M.40 models showing details of the spade fitting.

Below right: the basic ROCO model of the M.40 with its gun removed. On the right is the modern SP carriage from which we get a detailed gun and recoil spade. In the front right is the gun modified to fit the M.40.

