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This special sample edition has arrived as announcement by Summit Publications of its new magazine, COMMAND. A limited number of leading gamers have been selected to receive this free issue as an introduction to our journal. Commencing monthly publication in January, COMMAND will offer complete coverage of the entire spectrum of strategic gaming, with special services for subscribers. This reduced size version should give you an idea of what we will be doing in future issues. Check our ad for details.

MORE THOUGHTS ON CRTs

by Bill Stone

In the July-August issue of Panzerfaust magazine, there appeared an article by John Michalski entitled "Some Thoughts on CRTs", an analysis of the playability and realism of 'whole unit loss' combat results tables as opposed to 'step reduction' tables, and an argument for a single CRT applicable to all battle games. Not an unreasonable essay, and I agree with much of what he says. I especially like his remark that using wargames to study history is mostly "...something to be used in defense against hostile wives and wary outsiders." For all their complexity and simulation of events, these are games, things to be played and enjoyed as just that. But even as games, there is a lot of room for discussion and disagreement concerning the two arguments -- the old standbys, realism and playability -- that John brings up.

According to the article, loss by whole units is at least as realistic as by step reduction. Let's examine his arguments. He talks about "relative combat effectiveness". That's what is computed and quantified to arrive at a combat strength expressed in factors, which is also what units lose when they take casualties in battle. Michalski states that step reduction is often defended by people "...confusing...combat factor with simple head count" rather than combat effectiveness, then he makes that very mistake in an example. According to Michalski, if a 12,000 man division rated four combat factors takes 3000 battle casualties, you might expect it to be reduced (by step CRT) a quarter of its strength to three factors. But, he says, the losses come from the front line troops, leaving 9000 "engineers, artillerymen, truck drivers, cooks, colonels, and clerks," which would reduce the unit to zero relative combat effectiveness rather than three. That amounts to the same result as an elimination, so why bother with step reduction?

But the point he misses is this: step reduction is concerned with the combat effectiveness of the front line troops. I won't quibble about the ratio of combatants to noncombatants, that has nothing to do with it. If the line troops number 3000 and 3000 casualties are taken, it might as well be eliminated. Don't worry about the "cooks, colonels and clerks"; the support elements won't amount to much. However, the effectiveness of the "rifles" can be reduced by steps as they suffer more losses in successive battles.

And that's what happens. In WW2, divisions were seldom eliminated in a single action. In the event of massive losses, they can be reflected by especially high step losses. Surely this is more representative of battle results than having 'elim' rolls which wipe out all participants on one side while leaving the other unscathed. 'Exchanges' remedy this somewhat, but with total destruction of one side. This is a glaring weakness of Afrika Korps. The 7-7-10s of the 21st and 15th divisions can make dozens of attacks at 5-1 or better and destroy dozens of Allied brigades while not losing a single tank themselves. Step reduction can correct this by assuring that sometimes, even at the best odds, the attackers will suffer some casualties.

Realism is a variable; everyone sees it differently. I like to quote Selim's Maxim: "The important thing is not realism, but what people will accept as realism." And so it is with CRTs. Most players will accept the original Tactics II type of whole unit elimination as a playable abstraction of actual battle results, but to call it more realistic than step reduction is unreasonable.

Michalski's second objection to step reduction is on playability grounds. He feels that the sorting and replacing of pieces required by factor-by-factor losses is too cumbersome and slows the game too much. Granted, this is a problem. Almost no one wants to wade knee deep through spare step reduction counters to get to the board. There have been a num-

ber of solutions to this problem, none of them entirely successful. Let's examine some of the alternate methods of reducing unit strength.

War in the East: The more powerful units are back-printed with kampfgruppe/battlegroup strengths. When the CRT calls for elimination, the unit is flipped to the reduced strength and remains in play. A half way approach to the concept of partial losses, but it solves the problem of sorting and storing substitute counters.

Blitzkrieg: Unit losses are computed in factors and the piece suffering casualties is replaced by one or more weaker counters of the same type from the substitute pile. This accurately recreates step-by-step losses, but has the disadvantages of piece shuffling, replacing one strong division with two or more weaker brigades, and necessitates (in the old rules) a Waterloo type stacking limit based on factors.

Guadalcanal: The original units remain in play and factors lost in combat are marked off the roster sheet, much as damage hits are recorded in Midway. It is a pain in the neck to keep comparing the unit on the board to its strength on paper when contemplating attacks.

Quebec 1759: The units are wooden blocks with varying strength in dots along each edge of the face. As casualties are taken, the block is turned so that the proper combat value faces upwards. Not a bad idea, but too clumsy for use in games with high piece density.

Outright replacement: I've seen this system in several amateur games. Each piece is replaced on a factor-for-factor, unit-for-unit basis with a reduced strength counter. True step reduction, but this could involve a huge number of pieces when fighting a large campaign with ten-factor panzer divisions.

Selim's system: Selim (who invented the maxim) has been experimenting with cheap, disposable unit counters that are marked with their combat factors according to a series of dots which can be erased or drawn

in. This can tend to be sloppy and hard to keep track of.

As yet there is no optimal system of step reduction from the standpoint of playability. Consequently, I'll have to agree with Michalski's preference of whole unit losses on those terms.

Returning to his article, the heart of it is concerned with establishing a standard CRT for universal use, with specific opposition to multiple CRTs used at different times by different sides in a single game, as in War in the East. Let's look at the second part of the argument first.

He claims that the War in the East system of CRTs is a gambit to cover a failure of design, and also prevents the player from exercising all of his strategic options because of this tactical impact, forcing the game into a repetitious rut: the identical, historical outcome constantly replayed. "The designers simply decide when it is time for one side to win or lose, then change tables at the chosen time to insure it." But he does recognize the changing nature of the war in the earlier section about step reduction, arguing that 1944 German divisions, although reorganized and chewed up for four years, still had the same firepower (and combat factor) as they did in 1941. "If they accomplished less, look at the nature of the opponent they now faced."

Exactly. Times changed. In '44 the Soviets weren't the patsies of '41. Their new respectability reflected the years of experience, new and improved weaponry, reorganization, better leadership at all levels and vastly improved tactical doctrine. Which is to say that a Soviet unit that survived the early years of battle and remained at reasonable strength, was no longer the same unit in terms of relative combat effectiveness. They caught up with the Germans.

So what is to be done? The increased capabilities of the unit can be shown several ways, chief among them either replace it with a correspondingly stronger piece, or alter

the CRT. Mr. Michalski allows neither. Such unit substitution involves "...puttering more than the playing..." Changing the CRT is ruled out. "The CRT must be an objective standard." Well, the Soviets could be doubled, or the Germans halved in battles as the strengths begin to equalize. But that seems an arbitrary solution. You could multiply the number of units available to the Soviets. Of course, this happens anyway. But if you add to the newly created divisions, the new pieces arriving to show increased effectiveness of existing formations-- now that's wading waist deep through spare counters. The whole problem is a little more subtle than that.

There are too many factors affecting combat effectiveness other than the obvious head count and firepower. Weather, disease, supply situation, tactical leadership and doctrine, training, operating among a hostile populace, and very importantly, morale, are some of the variables. Even if someone could come up with a universally accepted CRT (unlikely), it seems like an enormous task to quantify all the variables in all the campaigns the CRT would cover, to produce the continuity and interchangeability that such a table would require. For example, would the same division perform identically in a game where it was part of an advancing, victorious army as it would perform on a different front where it was part of a routed, fleeing army? Would the same division be as effective in the North African desert as on the Russian steppes? Probably not. But it would have to be quantified at a single strength in each case, unless there were substitute counters to represent its capabilities on each front. This is the sort of problem it looks like Europa could run into.

Beyond that is the difficulty of simulating the complexities of flesh and blood with cardboard and ink, and reducing the vast uncertainties of combat to a few simple

outcomes. I've always thought that five different battle results (A E-LIM, A BACK, EXCH, D BACK, D ELIM) were far too few, as were only six possible solutions to each battle (rolling 1 through 6). There should be many more possible results, including greater or fewer losses on both sides and simultaneous retreats and advances of varying length, with the possibility of both sides retreating. There should be contacts and engaged results, as in Battle of the Bulge. What's more, there should be a wider range of possible results with each throw of the die. I'd like to see a two dice CRT ranging from 11-16, 21-26, etc., which allows 36 possible rolls (at equal probability) for each battle. This would present a much broader mix of combat results. There might be 1 chance in 36 that the attackers would be repulsed in a 6-1 battle, for example, or that they would capture the position at 1-6 odds.

There are simulations and there are games. Each can be defined by realism and playability, which in both cases is a strictly personal point of view. To some people, Europa (and I'm not trying to knock it) may be the epitome of wargames. But I look for a more equitable balance between the two extremes. Nor do I care for the way some games are reduced to single-solution puzzles to be solved once and put away. But given the historical framework on which the games are designed, there has to be some allowance made for the circumstances of the individual campaign, which makes it difficult to construct a single CRT for all battles. Unless you want to design a Tactics II or Blitzkrieg.

I just can't accept Michalski's arguments that the standard CRT is as realistic as step reduction, though it is more playable. Nor could I accept it, or probably any other table (including the 'wider' one above), as the universal CRT.

Some phenomena cannot be reduced to a single, simple solution in games of simulation. ***

A U.S. WIN
by D. Agosta

A United States win in Origins of World War II, using the Historical National Objectives chart, seems to be very rare. The disadvantages of the small PF allocations and the NC, NU nature of the objectives are further amplified by the fact that the U.S. must place first every turn in normal ftf play. Simultaneous placement eases things a bit, but winning is still extremely difficult. Alone, the U.S. player can't keep more than one area free of German control, and only if the German allows him to build up turn after turn. This forces the U.S. to work closely with Britain and hope for the best (usually third place if Britain wins).

Poland is the biggest point area for the U.S. (5). This is usually the area that Fr/Br/U.S. will defend strongest since they all get points here and it takes points away from both Germany and Russia if it doesn't fall. Baltic States (4) usually falls early as does Rhineland (2). Of Austria (2) and Czechoslovakia (4) one will fall sooner or later in a normal game. The NU2 in each of the other major powers are almost always denied the U.S. in the turn 6 scramble.

The following game was played ftf using the simultaneous placement rule. While both Germany and Britain were guilty of some poor play, no one made what could be called a serious blunder in placement. It is obvious, however, that none of the players (except the U.S.) counted the U.S. points during turn 6, as his victory could have been prevented.

TURN 1:

U.S. 2 - Poland
Fr. 4 - Rhineland
Br. 4 - Austria
4 - Czechoslovakia
Russ. 6 - Romania
Ger. 6 - Rhineland
6 - Austria

Attacks: none
RUSSIAN C IN ROMANIA

U.S.: Standard opening, but almost useless without British support. If Germany moved last after seeing this placement Poland would probably have fallen and Germany would have had the game.

Fr.: Many France players opt for 4 PF to Alsace-Lorraine on turn 1; the Rhineland move is much stronger but can provoke a nasty response from Germany, as it does here.

Br.: The Fr/Br/U.S. alliance takes a chance that Germany and Russia won't move to Poland on turn 1 and hit it lucky. It is very rare for Germany not to gain control of at least one area on the first turn.

Russ.: Standard opening; Baltic States would have been better.

Ger.: Bad guesswork.

TURN 2:

U.S. 4 - Poland
Fr. 5 - Alsace-Lorraine
1 - Rhineland
Br. 4 - Poland
6 - Czech.
Russ. 8 - Baltic States
Ger. 8 - Baltic States
5 - Austria
3 - Alsace-Lorr.

Attacks: Fr. 1-1 vs Ger. in A.-L.
A Elim
Russ. vs Ger. in B.S. 1-1
Exchange
Ger. vs Br. in Austria 2-1
Exchange

FRENCE U IN RHINELAND
BRITISH U IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA
GERMAN C IN AUSTRIA

U.S.: Standard play.

Fr.: Same as above; maybe a little early for a 1-1.

Br.: Poland is made 2-1 proof along with Czech. A little cooperation from France could have made Austria 2-1 proof also.

Russ.: Standard play. A shared control here could have given Russia the game.

Ger.: Germany retaliates against French interference in Rhineland. Germany's position seems to be secure, but Rhineland should have fallen this turn.

TURN 3:

U.S. 1 - Poland
5 - B.S.
Fr. 8 - A.-L.
Br. 1 - Czech.
6 - Rhine.
5 - B.S.

Russ. 10 - B.S.
 Ger. 4 - A.-L.
 11 - B.S.
 5 - Rhine.

Attacks: Russ. 2-1 vs Br. in B.S.
 No effect
 Ger. 2-1 vs Fr. in Rhine.
 No effect

U.S.: The U.S. keeps Poland 2-1 proof and then makes a key move in defending his other high point area.

Fr.: France is in deep trouble; now is the time to work out a deal with Germany.

Br.: With Czech. 2-1 proof, Britain can cause problems for Germany elsewhere.

Russ.: At this point, Russia got Germany to agree to a shared control of Baltic States, in exchange for his help elsewhere. Germany's refusal to roll the 2-1 after Russia's attack failed should have warned the Russian; but apparently it didn't, as we'll see later.

Ger.: Germany needs the Rhineland points badly, but doesn't build up enough.

TURN 4:

U.S. 8 - B.S.
 Fr. 10 - A.-L.
 Br. 2 - Poland
 3 - Czech.
 9 - Germany
 Russ. 12 - B.S.
 Ger. 24 - B.S.

Attacks: Fr. 2-1 vs Ger. in A.-L.
 No effect
 Russ. 2-1 vs Br. in B.S.
 D Elim
 Ger. 1-1 vs US/Russ. in B.S.
 A Elim
 Ger. 2-1 vs Fr. in Rhine.
 No effect

BRITISH U IN GERMANY
 BRITISH U IN POLAND

U.S.: Rolling right along and praying no one counts the points.

Fr.: The only move; can't buy a roll.

Br.: Poland and Czech. secure, Britain makes a strong move. The Understanding makes the rest of the board secure while gaining points at the same time.

Russ.: A good move if you can trust Germany.

Ger.: Two bucks on a longshot is a good way to cover your bet, but putting the

family jewels on the nose is a great way to lose your shirt. After the attack in the Baltic States, Germany begins his fade-out.

TURN 5:

U.S. 10 - B.S.
 Fr. 11 - A.-L.
 1 - Fr.
 Br. 5 - Ger.
 2 - Poland
 2 - Czech.
 7 - Russ.
 Russ. 14 - B.S.
 Ger. 28 - Ger.

Attacks: Fr. 4-1 vs Ger. in A.-L.
 D Elim
 Russ. 1-1 vs U.S. in B.S.
 A Elim
 Ger. 2-1 vs Br. in Ger.
 Exchange
 Ger. 2-1 vs Fr. in Rhine.
 Exchange

FRENCH C IN ALSACE-LORRAINE
 BRITISH U IN RUSSIA

U.S.: The Baltic States is now secure, and with it goes 9 definite points.

Fr.: Alsace-Lorraine is finally controlled, but too late. France hopes for a bloody confrontation between Germany and Britain (and the U.S. if he had counted).

Br.: The loss of the Understanding in Germany hurts but isn't critical. If it had held up, Britain may have been able to win. After miscounting in Germany, Britain compounds his mistake by needlessly building up in Poland and Czechoslovakia. PF economy is the key to success in this game.

Russ.: The 1-1 was the only thing left to do.

Ger.: Even though his attacks were successful for all practical purposes, Germany can't find a win in this position unless Britain goes down the tube.

TURN 6:

U.S. 12 - U.S.
 Fr. 5 - Br.
 10 - Rhine.
 Br. 5 - U.S.
 5 - Ger.
 8 - Fr.
 Russ. 6 - Czech.
 8 - Ger.
 Ger. 10 - Russ.
 8 - Italy

Ger. 8 - Fr.
8 - Br.
12 - Rhine.

Attacks: U.S. 2-1 vs Br. in U.S.
Exchange
Br. 2-1 vs Russ. in Czech.
Exchange
Ger. 1-1 vs Br/Fr in Rhine.
D Elim
Ger. vs Br. in France
Exchange

FRENCH U IN BRITAIN
BRITISH U IN GERMANY
RUSSIAN U IN GERMANY
GERMAN U IN RUSSIA
GERMAN U IN BRITAIN
GERMAN U IN ITALY
GERMAN C IN RHINELAND

U.S.: Makes the winning move. At this point some of the other players must have realized the strength of the U.S. position, but no one could take away any of his points.

Fr.: Plays for the maximum point areas.

Br.: Britain was counting on the 5 points for the U.S. Understanding. If he had counted the U.S. points prior to turn 6 he may have gotten them.

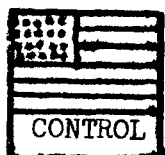
Russ.: Same as France.

Ger.: After Britain loses the U.S. and Germany gains Rhineland, Germany has second place.

FINAL SCORE

U.S. 15
Ger. 13
Br. 11
Fr. 10
Russ. 9

While the U.S. played an excellent game, he could not have won if it wasn't for a tremendous amount of luck, especially in the other players' die rolls. Origins is a fun game and four players have a decent chance of winning; unfortunately, our hobby's insistence on historical accuracy has given us an almost unplayable position in this game. ***



UNITED STATES DIPLOMACY
by Charles N. Reinsel

(Reprinted with permission, from Big Brother #130, 10/15/72)

- 1) In so far as possible, the 1971 rulebook is used.
- 2) Only armies are used in this variant.
- 3) The number of players may range from two to ten, and only the 48 mainland states are used.
- 4) The game is played on a large United States map with well defined borders.
- 5) Each player gets to pick his starting block of states, which may be adjacent like a confederation, or apart like outposts. Each player prepares a numbered list of states, and the top three states in each list (which do not conflict with other players' lists), become the players' home supply centers. For example, if one player lists Pennsylvania as number one and another player lists Pennsylvania as number two, the player who listed it highest gets it, and all others strike it from their lists. If, however, two or more players list a state on their lists in the same numerical position, then all said players strike it from their lists. This does not affect some other player who listed this state in some other numerical position.
- 6) All states are treated as supply centers.
- 7) A player may only build in his original three home states.
- 8) States like Michigan, Virginia, etc. are considered to be one space.
- 9) Rivers may be crossed by armies. Lakes, the Gulf of Mexico, or oceans may not be crossed.
- 10) Arizona may move (and support) to Colorado, Colorado to Arizona, Utah to New Mexico, and New Mexico to Utah.
- 11) The first player to have 25 states under control after a fall move, and have at least 24 armies on the board wins the game.
- 12) Movement is not allowed into Canada or Mexico.

If our readers show sufficient interest in this variant, COMMAND will run several games of it as part of our free gamemastering program. This will allow each subscriber to play in a number of games, plus an unlimited number as substitute players. Complete details and announcement of initial game openings will be forthcoming in Volume 1, Number 1, to be mailed in December. ***

THE PBM TABLE IN FTF PLAY
by D. Agosta

The greatest weakness suffered by the majority of wargames is that combat is resolved by the roll of a die, a supposedly random agent. A strong player can be defeated by a weaker one if the die goes against him constantly. Matrix systems for resolving combat are an improvement, but in many cases, the right choice of offensive or defensive options is clearly indicated, defeating the purpose of the matrix.

Dice are strange animals; in order for a die to be completely random, it must be a perfect cube, with weight added to each face to compensate for the fact that more material is carved from the faces of the higher numbers than is carved from the lower ones. In addition, even a perfect die can be influenced by an individual's rolling characteristics. John Scarne, the world's foremost gambling expert and card manipulator, can take a pair of professional gambling dice and roll any number he desires on a flat surface with no rebounding walls.

Most of the effect of non-random dice can be eliminated if both the attacker and the defender have some sort of effect in resolving the battle as in a matrix system. We present here such a system using a 10-digit PBM table, that does not involve any extra equipment other than a small chart and a second die. Before we investigate a method of using the PBM table, we must ask how will the table affect the outcome of the game. Tables 1 and 2 show the probabilities of each of the possible results on the basic CRT used

in such games as D-Day, Afrika Korps, etc. The only striking difference is in 2-1 attacks where the D-ELIM result is almost twice as probable in the PBM table. Also, the 1/2-A-ELIM result favors the attacker slightly since the full A-ELIM result drops to 10%. The 1/2 result can be quite suitable for the attacker, especially in games such as Stalin-grad, as if often forces the defender to retreat in his turn.

Table 3 is the meat of the system. Both the attacker and the defender roll one die and the results are matched on the table, producing the number actually used to resolve the battle. If both players roll the same number, simply roll again. This can also allow for using 'doubles' as a "contact", or some other experimental result.

TABLE #3

DIE #1		1	2	3	4	5	6
D	1	X	1	2	3	4	5
I	2	6	X	7	8	9	0
E	3	1	2	X	3	4	5
	4	6	7	8	X	9	0
#	5	1	2	3	4	X	5
2	6	6	7	8	9	0	X

(Doubles (X), throw again)

TABLE 1/FTF CRT

	1-6	1-5	1-4	1-3	1-2	1-1	2-1	3-1	4-1	5-1	6-1
A-ELIM	83.3	66.7	50.0	33.3	33.3	33.3	16.7	****	****	****	****
AB2	16.7	33.3	50.0	66.7	33.3	33.3	16.7	****	****	****	****
EXCH	****	****	****	****	16.7	16.7	33.3	33.3	16.7	****	****
DB2	****	****	****	****	16.7	16.7	16.7	33.3	33.3	33.3	16.7
D-ELIM	****	****	****	****	****	16.7	16.7	33.3	50.0	66.7	83.3

TABLE 2/PBM CRT

	1-6	1-5	1-4	1-3	1-2	1-1	2-1	3-1	4-1	5-1	6-1
A-ELIM	80.0	70.0	50.0	30.0	30.0	30.0	15*	****	****	****	****
AB2	20.0	30.0	50.0	70.0	30.0	20.0	10.0	****	****	****	****
EXCH	****	****	****	****	20.0	20.0	30.0	30.0	20.0	****	****
DB2	****	****	****	****	20.0	10.0	10.0	30.0	30.0	40.0	20.0
D-ELIM	****	****	****	****	****	20.0	30.0	40.0	50.0	60.0	80.0

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COMMAND

Just what the world needs...another gaming magazine. We think you'll like ours, though. It's the new monthly from Summit Publications. Not a game company's house organ, not a dusty historical tome or a poor excuse for a game-of-the-month club, not an amateur "comic book", and not a club newsletter. What are we? We could quote the same old facts -- professional offset printing, in-depth articles by recognized "names" in the field, quality graphics -- and it would be perfectly true, but there's much more to COMMAND than bare, dry facts, no matter how well written and presented. We are dedicated to covering the wide range of strategic gaming from the perspective of people who like to play, not just marvel at the rules and admire the mapboards. If you drink beer while you play, or bend your head in other directions, we think COMMAND has something to offer you. A six-pack in every issue? Not exactly. But the articles are aimed at readers who are players, not historians, and at competent, experienced gamers who play for enjoyment. Our only bias is toward merit and popularity. We're not coming down on complexity, or size, or history, and we're ready to try every game and discover its individual virtues. But the first yardstick we apply is that of enjoyment. If a game fails that test, no matter how pretty, how slick and how well intentioned, no matter who the publisher, it goes to the bottom of our closet, and we're not afraid to tell our readers about it. Which is not to say that we fancy ourselves the arbiters of good taste in gaming. As a gamer and reader, that's your job, and we won't waste our pages with articles on games or subjects you don't want to hear about. The games that people like to play and the things they want to learn, those are the articles you'll be seeing in COMMAND. In addition, we will be carrying news and features of interest to gamers, including interviews, profiles and background stories, with announcements before, and reports after, on events such as tournaments and conventions. As a monthly, we'll be considerably more up to date and on the ball with information and bulletins than the weeks ahead/weeks behind bi-monthlies and quarterlies.

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Thanks for taking the time to read this, and good gaming!

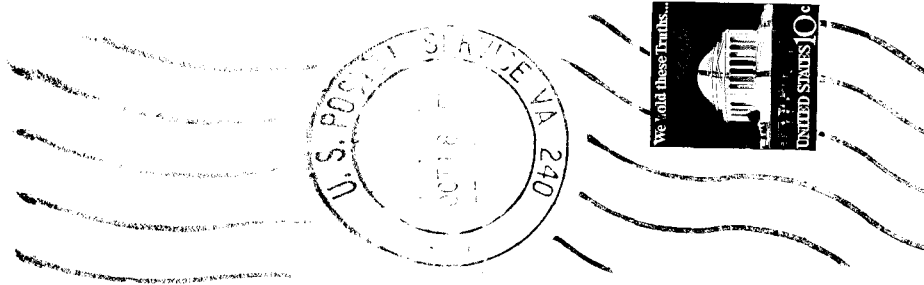
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