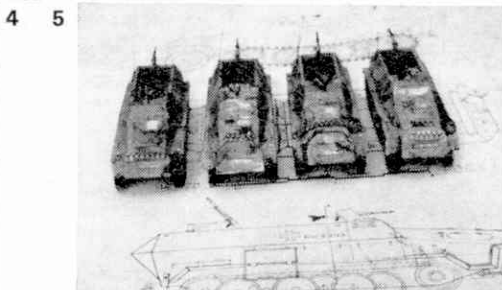
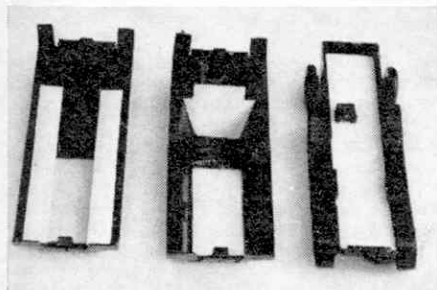
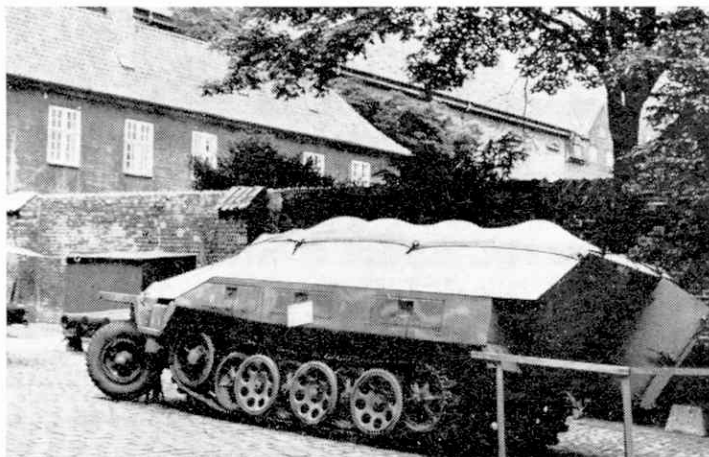


Table Top Battles

By H.L.D.



JUST before the invasion of Poland in 1939 the first of the 3 ton semitracks (Mittlerer Schutzen Panzerwagen, abbreviated m.SPW) medium armoured troop carrier, SD Kfz 25/1 entered service with the German Army. During the course of the War they were produced in ever increasing numbers. They were used, in addition to their design purpose, for virtually every light service required by troops in front line areas where there was danger from high explosive blast or small arms fire. By the end of the war there were twenty-two officially listed versions ranging from ambulances to Flakpanzerwagens (anti aircraft).

Any attempt to reproduce a realistic German Army in model form will be incomplete without a considerable number of these SPW's equipping the Panzer Grenadier battalions of both Panzer and Grenadier Divisions. No manufacturer has as yet marketed a kit of this vehicle. The serious modeller, only requiring a model for display can, however, tackle this, using the Bellona Print. Unfortunately it is rather impractical to build sufficient of these vehicles from scratch for use in Battlegames.

Roco Minitanks produce a range of models of the German S. W. S., a heavy 5 ton Military Tractor which appeared just before the end of the war. These are quite accurate, but unfortunately to 1:89 scale and are a bit small for use in their original form by an 00 scale enthusiast. Comparison of this

model to a 1:76 scale SD Kfz 25/1 shows that it has the same general dimensions. The superficial appearance of one of the armoured versions is not that much different except for the rear plate, from the SD Kfz 25/1's built after 1943.

The Infra-red Searchlight vehicle (No. 129) costs only 1/6d. Thus if converted so as to be utilized by 00 scale Battlegamers as suggested in this article, the cost per unit is not high. If, at some later date, an accurate kit of the m. SPW is released one will not have wasted too much money or time.

Taking any of Roco Nos. 129, 130, or 131, disassemble and discard the swivelling equipment. Carefully cut away the central roof plates to give an open topped compartment. No driver's hatch is fitted, so file this down flush with the roof. The bulkhead can now be fitted to separate the engine compartment; strips of card 4 mm by 50 mm are cemented along the sides of the superstructure to cover the gap left, when this is fitted to the chassis. These can be made wider (6 mm) so as to extend further into the vehicle forming seats should these be desired.

A floor of card can be fitted in the chassis. A driver's seat, from an Airfix Kit, is fitted on the left, but the backrest is cut away. The major components are best painted before reassembly. The basic overall colour of the German AFV's from 1943 was Sand. The tracks are best painted black and later touched up with random dashes of silver.

When the model is in one piece, a shield for the forward machine-gun must be fitted over the driver's cab, 4 mm high and 10 mm wide; it is folded in the middle to form a V. The German machine guns MG 34 and 42 at this small scale are almost indistinguishable from large rifles, so pins etc. can be made to fill this role. Alternatively one could use the guns supplied in the Roco (No. 125) packet of Decals and accessories. A radio aerial of bristle can be fitted to the rear right hand side.

Camouflage of green and/or brown can now be mottled over the basic paint job, if desired. Detailed painting and fitting of markings as on the finished models is now

completed. Wehrmacht number plates help, especially the front plate—the only source of these is from the Airfix Armoured Car Kit. General dressing can now be added to give the vehicles a used look. (Petrol cans, tow ropes and spare track—got by cutting a piece of Airfix Sherman track in half.) Finally, to give a weathered look, roughly dab matt earth around lower body and track-work; a dash of silver on odd corners of the superstructure heightens this effect.

For Battlegames, these vehicles are proof only against small arms and machine gun fire, and the blast and shrapnel caused by high explosive artillery fire. The road speed was approximately 30 m.p.h. The crew was five, and ten troops were carried in each vehicle.

1 This model of the m.SPW SD Kfz 25/1 was built between 1939 and '41. Drawing is to 1:76 (00 scale) and is reproduced by courtesy of Merberlen Ltd 2 (Heading photo). A Panzer Grenadier column of m. SPW's pass through a Russian city—note stowage of spare track and tow rope.

3 A 1944/45 model of the m. SPW SD Kfz 25/1, with canvas tilt fitted. This vehicle is on display in Copenhagen, Denmark.

4 The additional parts required, from left to right; 4 x 50 mm strips of card cemented to the underside of the superstructure, the engine bulkhead, and finally the chassis with floor and driver's seat fitted.

5 Four completed and painted semitracks built from the Roco models.

6 Completed and painted semitracks built from the Roco models seen here travelling through rough ground.

