

## Getting Started in SOTR

Written by James Wright

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1949 Secrets of the Third Reich, SOTR for short, is the 28mm Weird World War Two miniature game from West Wind Productions. Players field armies of a Platoon of troops backed up by a variety of support units and led by daring heroes. As well as traditional infantry and vehicles, armies can include super-science, walking tanks, supernatural creatures and more.

As the name of the game suggests, SOTR is set in an alternate world where the Second World War is still being fought in 1949 with the aid of alien technology and supernatural powers. History is drastically altered as London is devastated by nuclear weapons, Russia invades Sweden, Japanese bombs fall on American soil and hordes of Zombies wander a ravaged Europe.

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### Getting Started in 1949 Secrets of the Third Reich

Despite all of the "Weird" elements of SOTR, what really makes it stand out as a game is the system; the game plays smoothly and is well-balanced because it loses a lot of the intricate complexities common in other games. In game terms, there is no difference between an American Soldier with a Thompson and a German Soldier with an MP47, meaning that each army is well balanced and easy to get the hang of, as play style does not vary greatly between forces.

At Nunawading Wargames Association, SOTR is proving more popular than much better known Sci-Fi/Fantasy Games like Warhammer 40,000 and Warmachine, partly because of its smooth style of play, but also because of the flexibility that the game allows.

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Players are actively encouraged to let their imaginations run wild when building and modelling their armies, there is no reason two armies need ever be the same.

SOTR draws upon years of popular fiction about WWII, it encompasses elements of Comics, Video Games, Pulp Magazines and Novels and countless other sources; this provides a plethora of fantastic units and weapons to let one's imagination run wild on.

### **The Armies of 1949**

As mentioned above, every army in SOTR has access to the historical weapons and vehicles of WWII, Americans have Garands and Shermans, Russians have SKSs and T-34s and so on. Most armies will feature at least 15 infantry with normal weapons and equipment, forming the core around which the "Weird" elements can be built. Whilst each army has their own unique Weird units to draw upon, some things remain "standard" across (almost) all forces.

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### Mechs

By 1949, walking armour, powered by reverse-engineered alien technology, has superseded traditional Tanks and Armoured Cars. The core SOTR Rulebook features several example Mechs, but also includes rules for creating Mechs from scratch, enabling the tailoring of forces to suit one's play style.

A good Mech is often the lynchpin of a force, but it can attract a great deal of fire. Smaller Mechs can operate like squads and flush out infantry from cover, but are more at risk from said infantry.

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### **Heavy Personal Armour/Power Armour**

Weapons and equipment may vary, but each army has access to squads of heavily armoured infantry. Be these squads British Steel Troopers or Russian Guards Armour, they can provide greater firepower than a normal squad of infantry, as well as enduring more hits, but can still be brought down by weight of fire.

Below is a quick list of the varied Platoons that can be fielded with each army to give a taste of the different forces that can be built.

#### **USA**

Armoured Infantry - A standard Infantry Platoon with Support

Lucky 7th APE Platoon - Multiple Squads of Power Armoured soldiers

Jet Rangers - Jetpack equipped Paratroopers

#### **Germany**

Mech Grenadiers - A standard Infantry Platoon with Support

SWD Jaegerhund Platoon - Light Infantry supported by Werewolves

SWD Vampire Platoon - Fanatical Vampiric Thralls afraid of nothing

SWD Sturmzombie Platoon - An Undead Horde

Para Drop Armour - Paratroopers in Power Armour

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### **Russia**

Survivor Platoon - A standard Infantry Platoon with Support

Siberian Shock Platoon - An army of gigantic mutant soldiers

Mechovaya - A collum of vehicles supported by infantry

### **Britain**

Rifle Platoon - A standard Infantry Platoon with Support

Para Platoon - Elite Paratroopers

Temple - A Secret Society obsessed with the Occult

### **Poland**

1st and 2nd Corps - A standard Infantry Platoon with Support

Independent Paratroop Brigade - Elite Paratroopers

First Army Polish - Volunteers fighting under Russian Command

Armia Krajowa Resistance - The remnants of the Warsaw Uprising

Bielski Brothers' Resistance - Jewish rebels and partisans

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### **Partisans**

Partisan Force - A non-specific platoon of Irregulars

The Palmach - Jewish partisans from Palestine

Radwraiths - Ghoulis Sub-humans warped by exposure to chemical weapons

Swedish Partisans - Irregulars supported by Creatures of Folklore

As varied as the above forces are, these short descriptions only scratch the surface of what can be brought to the battlefields of 1949. Further below is a discussion of some of the ways in which these basic outlines could be varied.

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### The Weird and the Wonderful

Each army has a variety of Support options to choose from, a standard force may have up to three Support options and one Character to lead the army. Rather than give a complete list of these, what follows below is simply a taste of what each army can offer a player in terms of theme and content.

### USA

The American Army can call upon the aid of no-nonsense commanders like Wild Bill Donovan and Crash Dixon or the Super Soldiers augmented with Alien technology known as the Sentinels of Freedom. The Dog warriors of the native American Crow tribe can be called in with their Wendigo ally as well as elite snipers in experimental chameleon suits equipped with anti-tank rifles. Super Science is the forte of American units with Tesla Cannons and Jet Packs adding punch to the traditional arsenal.

### Germany

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The German Special Weapons Division (SWD) is responsible for the mobilisation of mythical creatures like Zombies, Werewolves and Vampires but also has created the cyborg Drones whose hovering presence terrifies allied soldiers. The Von X children (Greta, Ilsa and Hugo) are Germany's twisted answer to the American Super Soldiers, augmented by their father in his secret underwater lab. As if they weren't scary enough on their own, the SWD arms Werewolves with machine pistols and packs zombie torsos with explosives.

### **Russia**

The great hero Vassily Zietzev, scarred by chemical weapons, leads the soldiers of the motherland alongside other workers who have distinguished themselves and even living myths like Kerochi the Deathless, a manifestation of the bleak Siberian winter itself. Siberian Brutes, a mutant legacy from the Tunguska crater act as brutal shock troops for the Soviet cause, wielding sub-machineguns in one hand and common sledgehammers in the other, they bring with them the fearsome Urzines, giant bears from the frozen wastes capable of rending apart tanks with their massive claws.

### **Britain**

The Empire is served by good fighting men, be they the cyborg Black Jack or the enigmatic Doctor Lazarus, the British fear little and work with what they have at hand. Battle Chaplains turn back vile monsters with their faith whilst the mysterious Temple unleash monstrous Flesh Golems into the enemy ranks. More and more the ancient magic of the British Isles makes itself known, Excalibur has been drawn from the stone by soldier Clive Goddard and Psychic and Mystic power is being rediscovered in more and more citizens.

### **Poland**

Many brave soldiers, resistance fighters and partisans fight for the scattered Polish people, but more than that, icons like Wojtek the Soldier Bear keep the morale of brave fighting men and women up. Through experience and necessity, saboteur and zombie fighting teams have developed the expertise they need to fight the new horrors of the SWD.

### **Building An Army**

Putting together an SOTR Army can be as simple as tacking a Mech onto a platoon of infantry and choosing a character and some support units. However, there are no limits to how varied and interesting you can make your army; want to run British as Anzacs or Ghurkhas? Go ahead. Prefer that your Axis be Italian or Spanish Rather than German? No problem there.

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There is no need, of course, to stop with a different nation or anything so simple. Atlantis, Latveria, Wakanda and many other fictional locales can furnish a fighting force, even Aliens and gods walk the Earth in SOTR. Unlike many other miniatures game companies, Westwind encourages players, both in the rulebook and their extended community, to build their armies from any and every figure that one could find to fit the bill. When NWA puts on SOTR displays at events like Little Wars we're often asked who made the figures we use and we're forced to answer that about a dozen makes of figure (or parts thereof) can be found between our armies.

To begin [most] SOTR armies, a platoon or so of WWII infantry is the best place to start; there are many 28mm boxed sets available from different manufacturers that include a variety of infantry with rifles as well as the handful of SMGs, Assault Rifles and LMGs you'll need. Fire support in the form of Heavy Machine Gun, RPG and Mortar teams won't always come in a platoon set, but are worth picking up for your army. An army can also have up to one character to lead it, providing an opportunity for a unique figure to really set off your collection. Finally, a mech or several can round out your force, once again, there are many to chose from.

Although Superheroes may seem like the obvious choice to lead your army (Captain America, Union Jack, Red Skull etc), there is so much fiction dealing with the Second World War, that the sky is almost the limit. Doctor Who, Sherlock Holmes and Tarzan have all, at some time, seen action in WWII. Even Sergeant Kelly and Colonel Klink are perfectly ready to join the battlefields of 1949; all it takes is the right figure and a sense of humour.

As well as the Westwind website and Forum, the "Weird Wars" section of [www.lead-adventure.de](http://www.lead-adventure.de) can be quite inspiring if you're a bit stuck.

Just for the record, the SOTR armies played at NWA include (but are not limited to) the following manufacturers:

Westwind Secrets of the Third Reich, Eureka Miniatures, Games Workshop, Dust Tactics, Fiendish Fabrications, Starship Troopers, AT-43, Warlord Bolt-Action, Wargames Factory, Heroclix, Tamyia, Reaper Miniatures.

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Dictated by,

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