

The Justinian Gambit

Applying the Measure of History to Design Assessment



By Rick D. Stuart



The acid test of any historical game design is that system's ability to accurately duplicate the historical events on which it is based. However detailed or abstracted the game's mechanics may be, given sufficient information about the period in question, the system should be able to faithfully replicate a recreation of those events as they originally transpired. Within the context of the game's design parameters, if history can be reasonably duplicated, then the design can be deemed sound.

JUSTINIAN, found inside *CATAPHRACT*, is GMT Games' new strategic depiction of the Late Roman emperor's attempt to reclaim the western barbarian provinces. The relative wealth of information available on the campaigns of the Roman generals Belisarius and his successor Narses make it possible to make a reasonable assessment of the game's historical validity with minimal effort—the game's maximum of ten game turns allows for a quick "play" of history.

This article addresses of question of *JUSTINIAN'S* design validity by offering a brief review of the major military and political events of the period in question. The author translated those events into specific game actions to see how well history could be tracked. The information detailed below is presented in chronological order, divided into specific game turns. Each turn's historical commentary is further sub divided into "Eastern" and "Western" categories for easier reference.

Presuming the game design is functionally sound, all of the historical events presented in this article should be representable in game terms with a minimum of "fudging." If not, then mechanically, something is very definitely missing. A full assessment is presented at the end of this article, but the design passes with flying colors.

REPLAYING HISTORY

The historical evidence available regarding the relative size of opposing armies are often largely at variance for this time period. Battle reports are similarly exaggerated or distorted to reflect the specific political axe the author may have been grinding at the time. Exact estimates of opposing forces cannot, therefore, always be obtained. With this in mind the strengths cited below and their game equivalents represent the author's "best effort/good faith" attempt to be historically accurate himself. Due to space limitations only major game actions are presented in this article. Bear in mind that the large time span covered by a turn necessitates that a "re-enactment" not be overly concerned about strict chronologies. Some minor historical overlap between turns will happen in order to fit within the game's mechanics.

Individual player activation rounds will be identified for each side as Byzantine Roman (R#) or Barbarian (B#) actions. Barbarian activations are further differentiated as (S)elect or (R)andom. FSP are Frontier SPs. In battle information, Byzantine SPs are listed first. *Note: You will find the editor's notations on rule misinterpretations in italics. As will occur with any replay of a new game, a few rules were overlooked by the author-though generally with minor effect. Some errors have been corrected, but some haven't-these notes serve as a useful reminder of those rules for new players. - SKT*

Turn 1-AD 528-531

East

The Persians invade Mesopotamia, pillaging the Byzantine northern cities. Their object is not conquest, but instead plunder on a massive scale. Justinian dispatches Belisarius from Constantinople to intercept. As the Persians begin to withdraw Belisarius forces battle near Dara in north-western Mesopotamia. Belisarius squares off with 25,000

Byzantines against the Persian general Perozes with 40-50,000. Belisarius wins his contest by maintaining better overall command control of his forces. The Persians return in 531, invading northern Mesopotamia. Belisarius follows, giving battle-at Callinicum in Eastern Syria. Belisarius attacks the retreating Persians prematurely and receives a minor defeat.

BS1: Persian Perozes (36 SPs, 3 MPs) moves to Mesopotamia, where he fails to eliminate both Frontier Troops, but passes the disorganization check.

RI: Belisarius (7 MPs) detaches 2 FSPs, and then attacks and defeats Perozes at Dara (23 [-4] vs. 35 [-7] SPs).

BS2: Perozes moves to Euphratensis, overrunning 2 FSPs.

R2: Belisarius detaches 2 FSPs, and then attacks, but is rebuffed by Perozes at Callinicum (17 [-8] vs. 27 [-7]), retreating to Antioch, removing Defeated marker (4 MPs).

BR3: Perozes uses his MPs to retreat to Persian box (where Disorg marker will be removed in the income phase).

R3: Raises 4 SPs (divided evenly between Euphratensis and Belisarius).

BR4: Frank activation is neutralized by 9G Byzantine bribe and an allegiance roll of 6.

R4: Raises 4 SPs for Belisarius.

BR5: Moors (6 SPs, 5 MPs) are bribed into Byzantine camp. Moors overrun Vandals in both Numidia and Mauretania Sitifensis, remaining organized.

R5: Belisarius (alone) moved to Antioch.

Turn 2-532-535

Highlights of Income/Army Phases: The Armies of Illyricum and Thrace go unpaid. Moorish Army placed in Moor box. Byzantium raises 7 SPs. New Army of Armenia led by Dagisthinus, placed in Armenia IV. Butzes leads Army of the East; Belisarius leads Praesental I. Gelimer replaces Hilderic. Tzazon (5 SPs, 1 fleet) is moved to Sardinia.

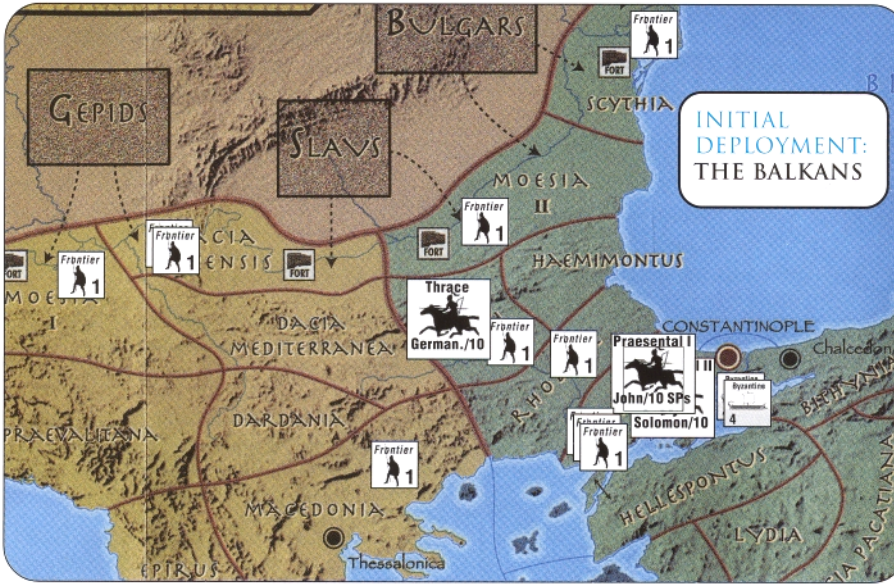
West

Pro-Roman Vandal king Hilderic is replaced by Gelimer who immediately abandons Hilderic's pro-Byzantine policies and begins persecuting local Christians. In Italy, Amalaruntha, the Queen of the Ostrogoths, enters into a secret pact with Justinian to back her in a succession dispute. Her entreaty is backed up by three million gold solidi to add weight to her claim.

Portions of the Vandal fleet moves to Sardinia to aid in the suppression of the local revolt on the island. The remainder of the fleet lies in port in Carthage.

Belisarius sails for Sicily with 92 dromons, 500 transports and a force

Historical Replay: JUSTINIAN



markers.

R2: Raises 4 SPs, divided among Lazica, Praesental I and Army of the East (+2).

BS3: Gelimer suffers defection of 2 SPs, attacks and defeats Moors in Numidia.

R3: Belisarius takes Praesental 1 (17 SPs) and 2 fleets to Sicilia to remove the Goth control marker, detaching 1 FSP. *Note: Here the author liberally (and incorrectly) interprets the movement limits on Praesental armies to allow sea movement, to make a move justified by history. It would have been more accurate to create a new Army of Africa in Europa and send that (and a few Hunnish allies) toward Carthage.*

BS4: Gelimer (11 SPs) returns to Carthage.

R4: Belisarius (16 SPs, 2 fleets) defeats Vandal fleets (1 to port on Sardinia) and invades Zeugitania. Belisarius defeats Gelimer at Tricameron (16 [-3] vs. 11 [-5] SPs), who retreats to Numidia. Vandal treasury seized.

BR5: Vandal Tzazon (2 SPs after defection, 2 fleets) moves to Numidia to join with Gelimer, reduce Defeated status to Disorganized, and together they move on Carthage. Belisarius intercepts, winning battle (13 [-3] vs. 8 [-4] SPs). Gelimer retreats to Byzacena.
R5: Belisarius (10 SPs) moves to Byzacena to finish off Tzazon and Gelimer.

of 18,000 (10,000 cavalry and 5,000 infantry [principally Hunnish mercenaries] plus Belisarius' personal household troops "Bucellari"). Belisarius achieves complete surprise, landing first in Sicily (which falls without a fight), then sails to Carthage. He arrives ostensibly to support the deposed Hilderic who lies in a Carthaginian dungeon.

The Vandal king Gelimer is off to the west of Carthage putting down Moorish incursions when Belisarius arrives. When he learns of the landing, Gelimer orders Hilderic's

execution. Belisarius is now free to move against the Vandals in Justinian's own name. This results in the battle of Tricameron, with Belisarius versus Gelimer east of the city. Initially the battle is a close run contest until Gelimer loses heart and tries to disengage. The Vandals are eventually routed by the Byzantine cavalry. Gelimer narrowly survives the encounter. Recalling Tzazon from Sicily he engages Belisarius a second time in a running series of battles. This time 8,000 Vandals are killed along with Tzazon. Gelimer himself is

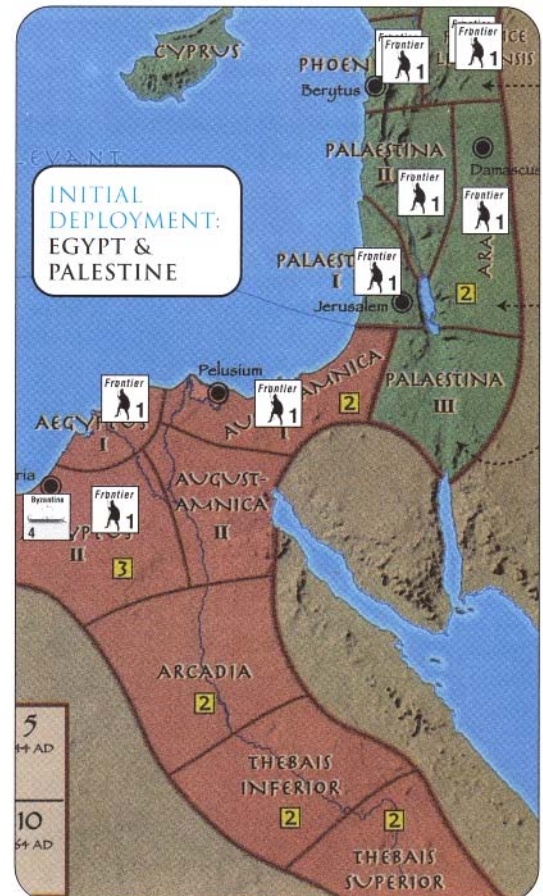
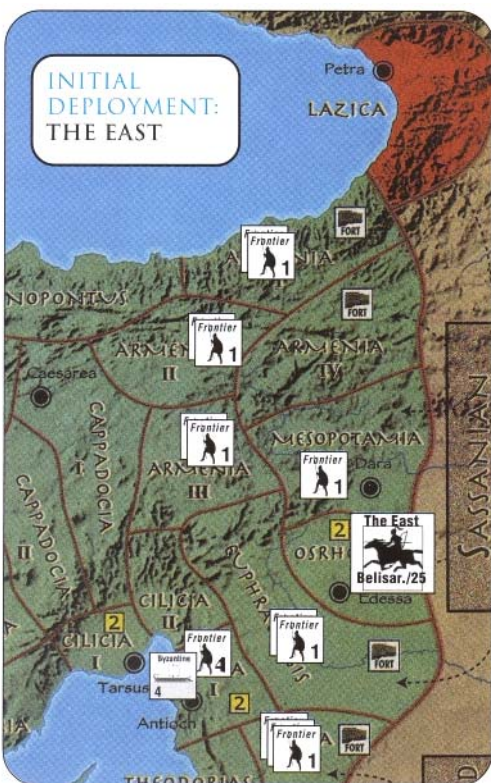
captured. Belisarius takes possession of Carthage and seizes the Vandal treasury. Belisarius is temporarily recalled to Constantinople with Gelimer and his treasury in tow to receive an imperial triumph in his honor. Solomon is left in command in Carthage.

BR1: Sardinian Revolt random event. Tzazon puts down revolt [-1 SP]. Lakhmid Arabs (4 SPs) engage FSPs in Phoenice Libanensis.

R1: Butzes moves to Theodorias to detach 3 SPs.
BR2: Moors (4 SPs) bribed to Byzantine control, removes Vandal control in Mauretania Caesariensis and occupies Numidia. *Note: This and BS3 are actions unnecessary in light of the ruling that Byzantine allies MAY NOT remove control*

Turn 3-536-539

Highlights of Income/Army Phases: Praesental I and Army of Armenia join the ranks of the "Not Paid." Byzantine raises



marker) and 1 fleet in Dalmatia. New Army of Africa led by Solomon, placed in Zeugitania. Witigis replaces Athalaric.

West

Byzantine troops in Sicily and North Africa remain unpaid. This situation eventually leads to an African army mutiny. Belisarius returns to the west, landing first in Sicily and then in Carthage, paying local troops and effectively quelling the revolt.

Meanwhile, in Ravenna, the capital of Ostrogothic Italy, the barbarian queen Amalaruntha is deposed, imprisoned and subsequently murdered by her political rivals. Witigis eventually emerges as the new Gothic ruler. The death of his secret ally provides the excuse Justinian needs to order Belisarius into Italy.

With his African army reorganized and now content, Belisarius embarks for Italy with 7,000 regulars, 500 barbarians and his own household troops. Belisarius quickly takes Rhegium and Naples, the later falling to Belisarius' Huns after a protracted siege. Disorganized and quarreling among themselves as to the best way to deal with the invader, the Ostrogoths are unable to prevent Belisarius from taking Rome without a fight.

Leading his forces northward, Witigis gains a minor Goth victory in Dalmatia giving his troops further encouragement as the Byzantine army leader Mundas falls in battle. Witigis reorganizes his army and marches back to Rome, beginning what will culminate in a year-long siege of the city. During this time Belisarius maintains his supply lines through the Roman fleet in Ostia / Rome region.

East

Justinian's magnificent cathedral, Hagia Sophia, is consecrated after years of construction efforts. During this time Arab forces under Al Mundhik (operating under Persian protection) begin raiding the Byzantine border. Justinian sends the magister Strategis to negotiate to no avail. Chaffing under heavy-handed Byzantine bureaucracy, local Armenian chiefs rise in revolt and beg the Persian king for assistance.

BS1: Ostrogoth reinforcements to Venice (3 SPs) and Witigis (+5 SPs), send fleet on patrol in Adriatic.

111: Belisarius detaches 5 FSPs in Carthage, sails 1 fleet and 9 SPs to Constantinople. *Note: This exceeds naval movement limits by one sea zone-diagonal*

movement is not allowed.

BR2: Random event "Justinian Builds." Lombards are neutralized by bribe.

R2: Solomon (10 SP, 1 fleet) invades Corsica. *Note: Naval and land movement cannot be combined, thereby preventing Solomon from moving thus to remove the control markers.*

BR3: Armenian Revolt random event. Moors (9 SPs) are barbarian this time, detaching 2 SPs in Numidia, defeat FSPs at Carthage, then pull back to Numidia. *Note: This violates the 6.53 prohibition against Minor Barbarian armies detaching SPs in areas other than where the major Barbarian leaders exist.*

R3: Belisarius takes Praesental 1 (9 SPs, 1 fleet) to Sicily.

BS4: Witigis (15 SPs) detaches 2 SPs in Flaminia, moves to attack the Army of Illyricum in Dalmatia (5 [-3] vs. 13 [-2] SPs), which retreats in defeat to Moesia I. R4: Belisarius lands at and sacks Naples.

BR5: Witigis (11 SPs) to Rome. R5: Raise 3 SPs for Praesental I.

Turn 4-540-543

Highlights of Income/Army Phases:

Only Army of Thrace goes unpaid. Byzantine raises 3 SPs for Praesental I (mandatory) and 4 SPs for Army of Illyricum (remove Defeated marker). New Army of Italy led by Narses, placed in Sannium. *Note: The Army should have been placed in a Byzantine-controlled province.* Totila and Teias replace Witigis.

West

Belisarius sends John, "the sanguinary," with a small force of 2,000 cavalry by sea up the eastern Italian coast to threaten the Gothic capital of Ravenna. Meanwhile, his troops reduced by disease, Witigis abandons his siege of Rome and moves north against John instead.

Narses arrives from Constantinople with 9,000 men. As a friend of John he quickly advocates that Belisarius rescue John from the Goths. This splits the Byzantine command into rival camps. Belisarius detaches several thousand men to penetrate as far north as Genoa and Milan in a hope of drawing off Witigis-Milan being the second richest city in Italy. The arrival in northern Italy of an unexpected Frankish army led by king Theudebert I complicates the situation.

Leaving a small force behind to mask John's forces, Witigis marches north. At first the Franks appear anti-Gothic (sacking Pavia after tricking the local garrison into admitting them), but later they come to an agreement over the division of spoils with Witigis. The pair quickly stamp out Belisarius' northern garrisons.

Back in eastern Italy Belisarius relieves John and proposes to next go to the relief of Milan but Narses once more objects. The division within the Byzantine camp widens and Milan is left to fall. The sack of Milan is especially horrific-and virtually the entire population is enslaved and taken north by the Franks. Enraged by this news, Justinian recalls Narses, leaving Belisarius once again in sole command in Italy.

Belisarius proceeds cautiously, taking out the remaining Gothic outposts in central Italy. Belisarius eventually moves Ravenna, investing it while the Byzantine fleet blockades the capital by the sea.

Hearing rumors of renewed tensions in the east, Witigis sends a secret missive to the Persian king, encouraging him to strike while the best Byzantine forces are in Italy. The Persian king Chosroes never officially responds to the plea but appreciates the situation and secretly begins to prepare for renewed war.

Having caught wind of Persian preparations, Justinian demands Belisarius conclude a quick peace. The Goths are understandably willing to make concessions, but Belisarius, seeing himself cheated of the fruits of a final victory, refuses to sign any treaty unless specifically ordered to do so by Justinian himself. Faced with the prospect of renewed war against his people, king Witigis tries to secure favorable terms by less direct means. Through secret negotiators, Witigis informs Belisarius he will surrender Ravenna to him if Belisarius will declare himself "Emperor of the West"-to whom Wittigis and his people would pledge their undying support (and survive virtual annihilation in the process). Belisarius lets Witigis believe he will accept these terms; Ravenna opens its gates to him. Once inside, Belisarius denounces Witigis and declares Ravenna siezed in the name of Justinian.

Despite the prospect of total victory in the west, Justinian finds himself in a dilemma. He knows he cannot risk loosing his wealthy eastern provinces at the same time. Justinian makes the decision to put Italian war on hold; Belisarius is recalled to Constantinople (accompanied by the captive Witigis).

In the wake of Belisarius' recall, Totila is raised to the kingship of the remaining Goths. He quickly goes on

Historical Replay: JUSTINIAN

Barbarian Negotiations

The Barbarian player may wish to enter into such negotiations in the hope of temporarily forestalling a Byzantine advance or possibly effect a Byzantine leader's recall. Negotiations may be initiated by the Barbarian player at the cost of 3 MPs levied against the active Barbarian leader. To enter negotiations, the active Barbarian leader must be in the same city province as the Byzantine leader to whom the diplomatic overture is made. Negotiations take place before interception.

Barbarian Negotiations Table

Modifiers:

- 1 for Vandals
- +1 for Persians
- +2 for Goths

Die

Roll: Result

<0	A
1-2	B
3-4	C
5-7	D
8	E
>9	F

Results Key:

- Negotiations are rejected. The Byzantines may immediately intercept/launch an attack in the same province with a +1DRM.
- The Byzantine player must Pass during the next activation.
- The city located in the province may be occupied by Byzantine troops, but no Barbarian withdrawal is required, and any local detached garrison automatically joins the barbarian field army. The Byzantine player must Pass during the next activation.
- As "C" above, except that barbarian troops are immediately displaced to an adjacent province not under Byzantine control. The Byzantine player must Pass during the next activation.
- As "D" above except that half (rounded down) of all barbarian troops are removed before displacement occurs. The Byzantine player must Pass during the next activation.
- As "E" above except that the Byzantine leader engaged in negotiations is immediately recalled to Constantinople (place him with any force in Europa and draw a replacement leader for his army immediately). The Byzantine player must Pass during the next activation.

the offensive, recapturing practically all of Italy (save Rome itself) in Belisarius' absence.

East

No sooner does Belisarius return east but the Bulgars invade, penetrating to the very walls of Constantinople itself. Justinian appoints Belisarius in command of the city and the *magister* drives off the invaders with a hastily assembled rag-tag army. Defeated, the Bulgars turn toward Macedonia, sacking the city of Cassandrea before returning home with their booty.

Chosroes invades Mesopotamia, breaking the "Eternal Peace" at the head of a large army, taking Sura on the Euphrates and Aleppo in Syria, finally closing in on Antioch on the Mediterranean coast. Local troops fall back before the Persian juggernaut. Antioch, despite a spirited defense by its inhabitants, is sacked. Further advances are halted when in 541-542 plague erupts, first in Egypt and quickly spreading through Palestine and Syria, eventually engulf the entire Mediterranean basin. Chosroes returns home unmolested.

BR1: Franks (13 SPs), bribed to Byzantine control, overrun Goths in Alpes Cottiae (1 SP, Disorganized).

R1: Narses moves Army of Italy, detaches 3 SPs in Flaminia, and returns to Samnium.

BS2: "Totila/Teias" (historically still Witigis) moves to detach 2 SPs in Picenum, moves (7 SPs) to Flaminia.

R2: Belisarius moves Praesental 1 (10 SPs) to overrun Tuscia, detaches 2 SPs in each of Alpes Cottiae and Liguria, returning to Tuscia.

BS3: "Totila/Teias" (9 SPs) besieges and takes Milan (Disorg).

R3: Belisarius with Praesental 1 (6 SPs) detaches 2 SPs in Tuscia, moves to Samnium, combines with Army of Italy, redistributes 1 SP to Praesental I, drops off Praesental I, continues moving with Army of Italy, overruns Goths in Picenum, moves (5 SPs) to Flaminia.

BR4: "Totila/Teias" (7 SPs) moves from Liguria to Flaminia.

INTERLUDE 1

At this stage of the campaign Belisarius and Witigis are prepared to square off against each other over the fate of Ravenna. Knowing that he probably lacks the ability to win a decisive victory over the Romans, Witigis tries his hand at diplomatic subterfuge, negotiating for his capital's surrender (and the safety of his people) at the same time he is secretly parleying with the Persians to "open a second front." A shrewd politician who appreciates the

Byzantine weakness for intrigue, Witigis also knows that Justinian could quickly become fearful of Belisarius were he to think his general had become a threat to him. With this in mind Witigis offers to surrender his capital to Belisarius if the later will proclaim himself "Emperor of the West." The general manages to turn the tables on the wily Goth at the last moment but he ends up being recalled anyway.

Unfortunately *JUSTINIAN* game mechanics do not allow for such political overtures. Still, Byzantine politics was always a major consideration in the mind of a Roman general in the field, especially if more than one senior commander was in the field with him at the same time (Belisarius' problems with Narses is a case in point).

At this juncture it seems both unrealistic and disrespectful of the designer's efforts (that have worked well so far) to conduct a major engagement with heavy losses to both sides where none historically occurred. As an alternative, this author devised an optional mechanic to cover potential Barbarian/ Byzantine negotiations (see sidebar). For this replay, this option was implemented to determine if the design could accommodate this new dimension with sufficient flexibility.

Barbarian Negotiations: Result F gives control of Ravenna to the Byzantine player. Half of all barbarian forces (including detached units), currently present in the province are removed. The remainder are displaced to a friendly province of the Barbarian player's choice (in this case Milan). The one Goth fleet in Ravenna is displaced to Adriatic sea zone. The Byzantine commander is placed in Constantinople, John is drawn to command Army of Italy. John seizes the Ostrogoth Treasury. At this point Totila takes command of the Ostrogoths in earnest

R4: Byzantine player must pass.
BR5: Chosroes (35 SPs) detaches 5 SPs in Mesopotamia, overruns 2 FSPs in Osroene, detaches 6 SPs, moves 24 SPs to Antioch.

Historically Chosroes sacked Antioch but quickly withdrew out of fear of plague in the area. No actual Byzantine troops were engaged in the defense of the city (the frontier garrison temporarily withdrew in the face of the Persian horde).

R5: Dagisthinus with Army of Armenia (10 SPs), removes Revolt markers in Armenia IV and III, ending his move in Armenia II.

INTERLUDE 2

While a Plague was not specifically triggered as a random event during the activation rolls for this replay, the widespread depopulation of 541-542 remains a historical fact of such magnitude that, at this juncture, it cannot be ignored. Therefore, the Plague random event is implemented, resulting in reductions of manpower (and lost income).

Turn 5-544-547

Highlights of Income/Army Phases:

Franks removed to box. Chosroes removed to box. *Note: Only if the Plague plus Persian Attrition [4.621 removed all of its SPs would the Persian army be sent back to the box; otherwise, the Persian army should remain on the map. Only Army of Africa goes unpaid. Byzantine raises Praesental I to 10 SPs and Praesental II to 7 SPs (mandatory). Note: The Army of Spain could have been created, but the author chose to consider the Plague as preventing such.*

East

Justinian's on-going problem with the Italian Pope (residing in exile in Constantinople) regarding questions of religious doctrine reaches an impasse—with the Pope taking refuge in the Church of St. Peter and Paul. Justinian orders Imperial Guardsmen to fetch the fellow, but these are stopped by the sudden appearance of an angry mob surrounding the church. It requires Belisarius' personal appearance on the following day to defuse the situation, narrowly averting a city wide riot. As religious disputes threaten to paralyze the Byzantine capital, a new eastern menace appears in the form of a Bulgar invasion that reaches the very gates of Constantinople itself.

Chosroes' Persians return, invading northern Armenia, raiding Lazica and capturing the fort of Petra. The Persians are deterred from continued advances by the ongoing virulence of plague in the region. Chosroes threatens to move via Persia back into Mesopotamia and Syria, repeating his depredations there. In the end, he agrees instead to a renewal of the five-year peace when Justinian offers him 5,000 pounds of gold from his personal coffers.

West

While the Byzantines face external eastern enemies and internal doctrinal strife, in Italy Totila sets about reorganizing the Ostrogoth army, re-building it into a major fighting force. Upon completion of his preparations, Totila quickly takes

the offensive. Marching south, he overruns much of the Italian peninsula, occupying the provinces of Calabria, Apulia, Lucania and Campania.

Meanwhile, in North Africa, the Moors are showing signs of becoming restless again, with an eye toward making a bid for Carthage.

13111: Religious Disputes random event. Bulgars (8 SPs) overruns 1 FSP in Moesia II and 1 FSP in Haemimontus, ending move in Rhodope.

R1: Pass (due to random event).

BS2: Ostrogoths raise Totila's army strength to 12 SPs, remain in Milan.

R2: Raises Praesental II to 10 SPs and Army of Italy to 5 SPs.

BR3: Moors (4 SPs) to Numidia.

R3: John takes Army of Italy (5 SPs) to Picenum, removes control and detaches 1 SP, moves to Apulia to remove control and ends move in Lucania.

BR4: Chosroes (31 SPs) overruns Lazica.

R4: Belisarius takes Praesental II to Rhodope to defeat Bulgars (10 [-0] vs. 8 [-3] SPs), who retreat to Haemimontus. Belisarius follows, eliminating Bulgar army.

BS5: Totila and Teias (12 SPs) to Flaminia, detach 3 SPs, overrun Samnium (Praesental I retreats before combat into Campania).

R5: Belisarius returns Praesental II to Constantinople.

Turn 6-548-551

Highlights of Income/Army Phases:

Return Moors to box. All troops in Africa go unpaid. Byzantine raises Praesental I to 11 SPs adds 1 FSP to each of Damascus, Alexandria, Berytus and Euphratensis. Replace Solomon with Aerobindus.

West

Reacting to Totila, John moves north to Rome to prepare for an assault on the city. Totila refuses to oblige the Byzantines with a chance for a decisive engagement. He moves, instead to reconquer southern Italy. As Totila remains out of reach, the situation in Italy is complicated by worsening developments in Africa. Local troop mutinies are compounded by Magister Solomon's unexpected death and new Moorish uprisings. Under Moorish pressure, Carthage itself falls after Solomon's

successor Aerobindus is killed under a flag of truce. John is quickly sent to North Africa to recapture Carthage. Thereafter isolated garrisons will be mopped up and Africa is at peace, discounting minor raids that continue into 563.

East

Despite previous peace treaties being in effect, Chosroes returns to the offensive, this time against the northern province of Lazica interpreting the peace treaty provisions as not applying to this disputed region. Once again Justinian is forced to dig into his coffers to buy off the Persian. The period ends with the last of the rebellious Armenian

chieftans laying down their arms.



BSI: Totila raises his army to 15 SPs.

RI: Raises 1 fleet (added to 1 in Dalmacia), 1 FSP each in Moesia II and Lucania, increases Army of Italy to 7 SPs.

BR2: Troop mutiny random event removes FSPs at Carthage. Bulgars are neutralized by bribe. R2: Politics random event removes Belisarius. John's Army of Italy moves to Campania, re-attaches 1 FSP. *Note: Once detached, FSPs cannot be reabsorbed into armies like this [6.311].* John combines with Praesental I and moves on

before combat into Picenum.

BR3: Moors move on Carthage and defeat Army of Africa (5 [-2] vs. 8 [-1] SPs), which retreats with fleet by sea to Byzacena.

R3: John detaches 3 SPs from Praesental I in Samnium and then sails (8 SPs, 1 fleet) to Byzacena, combining with Army of Africa (remove the Defeated marker).

BS4: Totila and Teias (15 SPs) overrun 3 FSPs in Samnium, detaches 1 SP in Apulia and stops in Lucania.

R4: John combines Praesental I with Army of Africa and defeats Moors in Carthage (10 [-1] vs. 6 [-4] SPs), who retreat to Numidia.

BRS: Chosroes (31 SPs) invades Lazica, where local Armenians raise 7 SPs who are promptly defeated. Chosroes marches back to box.

R5: Dagisthinus (10 SPs) removes Revolt markers from Armenia I and II.

Turn 7-552-555

Highlights of Income/Army Phases:

Return Moors to box. Byzantine raises Praesental I to 13 SPs and Army of Italy to 11 SPs. New Army of Spain created in Carthage and led by Sitias. Aerobindus is replaced.

Historical Replay: JUSTINIAN

West

Belisarius returns briefly to Rome in hopes of bringing Totila to a final, decisive battle. However, Totila steadfastly refuses to engage him in open combat. In the end, Belisarius is forced to send his wife, Antonina, back to Constantinople to plead with the Empress Theodora for additional support. Antonina arrives to find the empress dead and the anti-Belisarius ascendant. With the political winds shifting against her husband at court, the best Antonina can do is secure his recall without disfavor.

Justinian eventually appoints Narses to lead a final attempt to reconquer the west. Narses accepts his command but only on the condition that he is properly equipped for the invasion. In this, Justinian grants Narses the support he so often refused Belisarius. In July 552, Narses and 35,000 men begin moving up the Balkan peninsula into Northern Italy. His force includes several thousand Lombards.

Narses' campaign plans are supported by a strong Byzantine fleet operating in the Adriatic, which forces the Gothic navy to battle at Sena Gallica. The complete route of the Goth navy allows Narses to secure his seaborne line of supplies as he marches westwards. Near the village of Taginae, Totila finally gives battle. The net result is a Gothic defeat with over 8,000 Goths being slain (including Totila).

Narses wins a final battle at Mons Lactarus against Totila's successor, Teias. The remnants of the Gothic army pledge to leave northern Italy and never fight against the empire again. (Sieges of isolated Gothic outposts will continue for several years, but the Goths are no longer a threat).

In the Iberian peninsula, quarrels over dynastic claims to Visigoth rule lead one of the claimants to appeal to Constantinople for assistance. Justinian sends a Byzantine army to support the pro-Byzantine faction. The Visigoths find out far too late that once on the scene the Byzantines won't go home.

East

Justinian orders Germanius to prepare for another Italian expedition. However, few troops can be spared from watching Lazic tensions. Germanius' slow preparations are interrupted by a

renewed threat of Slavic invasion and he dies before he can complete his preparations.

BR1: Visigoths (17 SPs) are bribed to Byzantine control, move to Hispania and remove Vandal control. *Note: Errata to 5.13 prohibits Byzantine allies from removing Barbarian control.*

RI: Army of Illyricum increased to 13 SPs, plus 2 FSPs to Edessa.

BS2: Totila and Teias (13 SPs) overrun 1 FSP in Sicilia and detach 3 SPs, detach 2 SPs in Lucania, end move in Samnium.

R2: Raise 1 fleet in each of Dalmatia and Samnium, plus SPs for Army of Illyricum (2), Army of Spain (1).

BR3: Franks (13 SPs) overrun 2 FSPs in Tuscia, stop in Campania.

R3: Narses moves Army of Illyricum (15 SPs) to Dalmatia.

BR4: Politics random event replaces Butzes with Librius at head of Army of the East. Lombards (20 SPs) are bribed to Byzantine control and added to Narses' army.

R4: Sitas moves Army of Spain (11 SPs, 2 fleets) to Hispania, defeating intercepting Vandal fleet on way (which retreats to Septem), detaches 2 FSPs, returns to Carthage. *Note: The naval transport system does not allow for anything more than naval combat and a single land combat upon landing. Sitas' force should only be moved under these naval movement rules (thus disallowing the detachment, which costs land MPs).*

BS5: Totila (8 SPs and Teias) moves and picks up 7 SPs of allies on march to Aemilia.

R5: Narses detaches 5 Lombard SPs in Dalmatia. *Note: 4.34 prohibits detachment of Barbarian allies, but the Byzantines could have been detached to reach naval transport capacity.* Narses sails (3 fleets, 30 SPs) to Aemilia, defeating Gothic fleet, landing and defeating Totila at Taginae (30 [-4] vs. 17 [-9] SPs). Teias retreats remnant of army to Flaminia. Narses marches to Flaminia to defeat Teias at Mons Lactarus (26 [-0] vs. 8 [-8]). Teias and Totila both removed. *Note: This mopping up operation must be done in a separate activation.*

Turn 8-556-559

Turn 8-556-559

Highlights of Income/Army Phases: Return Lombards to box, but not the Franks, who are in a city province. Armies of Armenia, Illyricum, Thrace, Spain and The East all go unpaid. Byzantine raises Army of Illyricum to 20 SPs and Army of Africa to 5 SPs and places 1 FSP in Dacia Mediterranea.

West

With the scattered remnants of the Gothic armies moving northward out of Italy, Sicily is quickly regained. (Fighting over scattered outposts will continue for several years more but, for all intents and purposes, the Goths as a military power are extinct). Only the Franks remain a threat to the peace. Narses and his

confederates defeat these invaders before they can establish themselves in the Gothic power vacuum in Italy.

East

Pressure from various nomadic peoples begin in earnest again during this period and the Persians continue their on again/off again wars in the Lazica region until bought off by more Byzantine gold.

The renewal of plague places events largely on hold as Justinian finally succumbs and a less-than-equal successor is installed in his place.

BR1: Kotrigur Huns (8 SPs) overrun 1 FSP in each of Scythia and Moesia II, becoming Disorganized.

RI: Narses moves Army of Illyricum (20 SPs) to Tuscia, detaches 1 FSP, moves through Samnium to Campania, where he defeats the Franks at Casilinum (19 [-2] vs. 12 [-8] SPs), who retreat to Samnium. BR2: Second Plague random event instantly ends the game. Immediately check victory conditions listed in 10.21.

At this juncture the resumption of the plague effectively ends all further military operations. Historically Justinian dipped into his coffers once more to buy off the Persians, re-establishing the "Eternal Peace." His successor would do likewise. The game ends with the death of Justinian.

EVALUATION

JUSTINIAN is an enjoyable game for many reasons. Principally, the game gives both players excellent strategic opportunities. The die rolls are random enough to ensure a high re-playability factor. The rules allow solitaire play as well.

In terms of historical re-enactment, JUSTINIAN did surprisingly well (sometimes eerily so as combat results and the strategic decisions selected resulted in near perfect match-ups with their historical counterparts). In terms of specific game mechanics, a few issues surfaced but these are minor in nature. The first deals with the abundance of sieges that took place during the period-as many sieges as there were open combats. My first reaction to this situation was to consider employing some form of variable rule to cover siege activity. Upon reflection, however, this is unnecessary (given the turn time scale involved). Players should be aware that when isolated or detached strength points are engaged in minor

>>>Justinian continued on pg. 44

Thapsus: CAESAR

from a direct frontal attack by Caesar's legions.

This leaves the Macedonian legions all alone in the middle. Let's say hello to our lucky contestants, shall we—Macedonian A, the "dead meat" legion, and Macedonian B, the "toast" legion. These two legions are the sacrifice. As soon as Caesar's legions in the middle move within range, move forward and attack with the Macedonian legions. This serves a two-fold purpose.

First, Caesar suffers cohesion damage in the middle. Don't let up on the attack. Use the tribunes, the Macedonian section commander and Scipio himself to press home the attack with every possible orders phase. The Macedonian legions will eventually rout, and it will be difficult to rally most of them, but the continual attacks will break some of Caesar's cohorts. Scipio is hoping that a hole forms in the center of Caesar's lines. If such a hole forms, it must be exploited. Move surviving Macedonians through the hole and keep attacking. The Macedonians may be little more than road bumps, but since Scipio's leaders have lower initiative than do Caesar's leaders, Scipio can get in the first attacks in the center. Caesar must be careful he doesn't lose too

many legions with all these Macedonians throwing themselves on Roman swords.

Second, the cohorts in the second and third lines of Macedonians can threaten to attack outward towards Caesar's flanks. Caesar must take care as he moves his legions forward on the wings, lest his legions be exposed to flank attacks by the Macedonians.

Meanwhile, the attack on the wings looks to gain the winning positional advantage. With Caesar's legions tied down in the middle, the cavalry keeps hammering away on the flanks. Most importantly, the great elephant units can now move forward. Caesar's legions must get through the elephants to get to Scipio's legions on the wings, and the legions will be reluctant to attack the elephants. Use the elephants to pound on anything in sight. Caesar's Antesignani will be difficult to deal with, but use the elephants to drive off the cavalry. Be sure to take any opportunity to remove cohesion hits from the elephants.

After the elephants have moved forward and engaged the Roman forces, Scipio should bring his remaining legions in behind the elephants and attack Caesar's wings, which should be in some disarray by this point. As with the

Macedonians—who will probably be running to the rear with all due haste by now—don't let up on the attack with the Syrians, Cilicians and Cretans. Once they are engaged, use the leaders with the lower initiatives to get in the first attacks.

When the dust settles, hopefully Scipio will have inflicted enough rout points to steal a victory. It is a difficult task, but I maintain it's not an impossible one.

As I mentioned earlier, the Nike Gambit is a tactic that can be used in any number of scenarios in the Great Battles of History series. Give up some units in the middle to tie down the enemy forces in the center, and attack relentlessly on the wings. Here, at Thapsus, the Macedonians do what damage they can in the center in an effort to buy enough time for the forces on the wings to score some blows.

It is a risky tactic. The nonstop attacks almost guarantee your units in the center will rout, and if too many units rout, your center will collapse. However, it is an aggressive tactic that can pay off in a big way. It requires the sacrifice of a good number of troops, but hey, after all, it is only cardboard!



Justinian *continued from pg. 32*



combat, this essentially represents one or more sieges.

Justinian was as near to paranoid as one can get

regarding his generals gaining too much fame and power while away from his direct control. As such he often recalled his best generals whenever evidence (imagined or otherwise) suggested a *magister* was plotting his demise. Generals in the field were also withdrawn for "consultation" when they least expected it. This activity is reflected in the game to a point by the random event "Politics" but this event calls for the replacement of questionable officers, not their mere recall. In

practical terms, these temporary recalls can be represented by not activating the same *magister* in succession, but nothing in the game enforces that.

Considering the number of Barbarian leader casualties encountered historically, a provision for determining leader losses would be nice. Players might want to adopt a rule of rolling for leader casualties (at some mutually agreeable percentage) whenever an army loses twice as many SPs as the victor.

The final consideration of game mechanics involved the very specific incorporation of negotiations between Byzantine and Barbarian leaders. While this is dealt with indirectly through bribe money for

barbarian allegiances, there is no specific provision for direct negotiations, as transpired between Witigis and Belisarius. In the end, an optional rule was devised to account for this situation and the historical results obtained were easily applied.

These minor issues notwithstanding, *JUSTINIAN* has proved itself capable of recreating the historical events the game was designed to emulate. Having done so, I encourage players to explore strategic options other than the one's pursued herein. Perhaps you can find an easier way to regain the west or stave off Byzantine incursions once and for all. Either way, you'll have a good time trying.

