**One Way Of Looking At It…**

**by Mark Hannam**

**Just as a potential starting point, Mark has put together some ideas based upon his own gaming. Future supplements to the *Living On The Frontline* rules will look at ideas for creating the world of Winter of ’79, both within the Disunited Kingdom and elsewhere.**

**Free Taff Units in the Winter of ‘79**

**History & Organisation**

**The Mobile Commandos**

**Early days**

The Free Taff (FT) prior to the Crisis was focused upon recruiting and sourcing arms and equipment. Their structure was cellular and activity very low key. No uniforms were worn or needed; small purchases of kit were made from Millets and army surplus stores on a cash basis without suspicion. Sources of weaponry are still vague but a handful of Sterlings and SLRs were carefully written off by a supporter within the TA structure and some WW2 vintage items sourced by highly discrete private purchase. This did not provide anywhere near the volume of weapons needed. This was solved by the FT facilitating a ratline between Ireland and the nascent "Mad Trots" in the Midlands; as a fee, the FT obtained a quantity of Armalites and handguns. They also managed to penetrate the TA troop at Carmarthen as the Crisis and Emergency Government reaction deepened. At this point the FT became aware of unknown, longhaired, moustached men in leather jackets or anoraks being sighted in small towns and villages. They concluded that they were being watched by a govt agency. It was in fact the SAS trying to locate the ratline. The FT decided to strike first.

**Half Way to Shropshire**

The FT team that ambushed the SAS at Halfway was nominally designated Brecon Commando but was actually based out of the Llandysul area. Another Commando, Gower, was operating in Powys. Each was 10-15 men strong and armed with a variety of weapons though the most common was the Armalite from the Irish-Midlands deal; each had civilian Landrovers for transport. No support weapons were available. Following Halfway, the FT called in their sleeper recruits leading to the defection of the bulk of the TA troop in Carmarthen plus civilian volunteers. Arms were supplied from the TA armoury and GPMGs were now available. Uniforms were a mix of civilian and army surplus but the most common items were army webbing and a black woolly hat. Two distinct fashions developed, "the boyos" who wore leather bomber or donkey jackets and "the farmers" who sported long Barbour type coats. This was a question of style - the black woolly hat was ubiquitous.

The SLR was the most widely used weapon with the Armalites being used by distinct teams so as to avoid ammunition problems. The Landrovers were now hastily sprayed green and where available armed with GMPGs; an unidentified anti-tank weapon was carried in one and was used against the radar station during the famous Shropshire Gun Run. In a moment of incredible luck a pair of FT found a Ferret scout car outside a pub in Penally and it was driven, at speed and at night to a rendezvous with Brecon Commando who then joined Gower Commando in the gun run. Thus there were two Main Force units of FT on the move. In an attempt to confuse the Government however, the names of fake units were used, leading to absolute confusion as to how many separate nationalist units existed and even if they were unified. Each commando of 80-100 men was divided into crews by vehicle and crews were deployed as sub units rather than by platoon and squad.

**On to Abergavenny...**

The arrival of the regular Welsh Battalions, the Guards remnant and the Royal Marine establishment changed the face of the Free Taff. The old, quite wild looking Commandos were faced with forced merger into militia units at the behest of the regulars until the SBS spotted a kindred spirit in the mobile, long haired Commandos. The RM too had objected to the term Commando - though the Free Taff argued that they had looked back to the Boer raiders rather than the WW2 version. Thus the Mobile Commandos became the protégés of the SBS and developed a strategic hit and run style based on heavily armed Landrovers. Their main role at Abergavenny was raiding, diversionary attacks and dashing in with supplies, which is still a speciality of the YB - the Welsh Special Forces who now occupy a place in Y Rhyfelwr Cymru broadly compatible to the SAS.

**The Free Taff Militia**

The Free Taff Militia (y Rhyfelwr y werin, The People’s Army) was not part of the original plan to achieve Welsh Independence; it was never thought that such a groundswell movement could be trained or armed. In the immediate aftermath of Warminster it became obvious that Welsh TA units had universally gone over to the Free Taff. There was a surge in recruitment as volunteers arrived to join up. Some were rejected as possible plants but strong local ties also created units with great cohesion - the Rhondda Valleys already having formed left wing militias inspired by International Brigade veterans. These, after some hesitation, stepped across to join up with the overtly nationalist Free Taff. Ex-soldiers and cadre from the Welsh Guards who, together with Royal Marines of Welsh descent, quickly fostered an aggressive spirit and painstakingly taught vital skills joined these militias. Regardless though, the Free Taff Militia were not professional soldiers. Their performance at Llanover and Abergavenny both shocked and reassured the Emergency Government and the Regular Army; their apparent tendency to fight a bitter defence, then melt away in the night to another defence line, led to the belief that "if you hit Johnny Taff hard enough he'll choke". It emerged that the militias were trading lives for time and a ruse; behind Abergavenny, the Welsh regular battalions were setting up a string of large scale ambushes and defence lines which, as the Emergency Government backed forces broke through Abergavenny and into Wales, closed in hard and fast.

The Free Taff Militia were organised on conventional lines and dressed in a mix of DPM and civilian clothes, a green beret was worn with a shoulder flash of a red dragon on a white background or an armband saying ‘Cymru’ in black letters over a white background. Red, white and green tricolour patches were worn in north Wales and were known a ‘gog flags’. SLRs and Sterlings were supplemented by WW2 era SMLE Mk IV from government war stocks, hunting rifles and shotguns. Sten guns manufactured in workshops across the valleys, plus stocks of donated Czech and Polish sub machine guns, would increasingly supplement the Free Taff Militia firepower.