HEARTS OF IRON 3

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QUICK START GUIDE

This Quick Start Guide will help you learn the "basic" concepts of HOI 3 without overwhelming you with the details included in the Manual. However, since HOI 3 is a complex game, you will need to read the Manual to pick up many important things which we don't have space for here. If even this "Quick Start" Guide seems like too much information for you, it might be better for you to play through the several Tutorials which can be accessed through the Main Game Menu when you load the game.

Read the section of the HOI 3 Manual which explains how to Start a Single Player Game, and follow those directions. Once you've loaded the game and you're looking at your country, you will see a series of black borders within a red boundary. The red boundary is your country's border, and the black lines are the borders of each region. Now, a region is not the smallest unit of property, so use your mouse's scrollwheel to adjust the zoom. Pulling back shows you more of the world, rolling the scrollwheel forward zooms in more. If you zoom in close enough, you will see there are thinner black borders within each region, which are provinces.

Click on a province, and you will see a Province Interface giving detailed information about what's in that province. The photograph tells you what type of terrain is in the province. The flag shows what country owns it. Below, you'll first see information on what the weather's like in that province, and underneath that you'll see more information about what resources are produced there, and then what kind of installations ("buildings") are present. Each of the 10 rectangular "spots" to the right of each installation icon represents one "level." An Airbase with three green spots is considered a "level 3 Airbase" and can support up to three Air Wings (the smallest unit of aircraft) without any harm to the operational efficiency of the Wings. You'll see these installations marked on the map itself, too. Click on a province with a marked installation and you'll see. The Province Interface shows some things that are not marked on the map, too, such as Factories, which produce Industrial Capacity (otherwise known as IC), which I'll explain in a moment. Almost everything on this interface has a "tooltip" to show you additional information about what you're looking at – just hover your mouse cursor over what you are wondering about, and within a second you should see a box giving an explanation.

Moving your mouse cursor toward any edge of the screen will move the map view in that direction, so you can explore different countries and oceans. Your "Mapmode" starts in Terrain Mapmode, and a tooltip will tell you what type of terrain is there. Clicking on a province from another, non-allied country will not be as informative than the one you looked at in your own country, because you do not have access to full information about non-allied provinces.

While you're zoomed out and exploring, notice the "minimap" of the world at the bottom right of your screen. A white box shows you what portion of the world your view currently shows. Just above that map is a series of buttons, which allow you to change the Mapmode. Click on the 2nd button from the left. Now, you should see several countries marked in different colors. Zoom out with your scrollwheel to see more. You'll notice that the provinces in your country and in allied countries seem "brighter" than provinces in other countries. That's because of what's called "fog of war" – you will be able to see what's in all of your own provinces, but you only have a one-province "range of vision" beyond your borders into non-allied provinces and into seazones. If you have divisions, planes or ships in enemy provinces or seazones, they will push back the fog of war and be able to mostly see what's around them. Keep in mind that this doesn't always work for finding other nations' ships and planes, because those have to be "spotted" first (see the Manual for more detail about that).

At the very top of your screen is the Information Bar, which shows basic economic information, plus other important things. On the far left is your national flag. Underneath it will be any active "alerts" – a tooltip will show what each one means, though some of them won't make sense just yet. You'll find these helpful once you've learned how to play. To the right of the flag is the name of your country and current game date and time in Greenwich Mean Time (GMT, or "Zulu"). HOI 3 keeps track of day and night for combat purposes, but around the world local time will vary from GMT, so if the game time says 13:00 (on a 24-hour scale), that means it's 1:00 p.m. in London, but it may be nearly Midnight in Asia, which would mean combat there at 13:00 game time would actually take part at night,

local time.

Above the time is a long row of information, reaching across much of the top of your screen. The first four icons represent mineral resource stockpiles, showing how much Energy, Metal, Rare Materials and Crude Oil your country has in stock, shown from left to right, respectively. To the right of this your Industrial Capacity (IC) is shown. A tooltip explains that the three numbers show your "Wasted IC" (what you could be spending, but aren't), your "Available IC" (the actual output of your economy, modified by various factors), and your "Base IC" (how many total Factories or IC Points you control). IC represents how much your economy can produce in one day. Later, you'll see a screen where you'll determine how to divide up this daily allowance of IC points. Basically, you must remember IC is not money – it's a daily capacity – and you don't store it up. If you don't use it for something every day, it gets wasted, which is why the leftmost number is called "wasted IC" – to warn you your economy is not being run as efficiently as it could be.

To the right of the IC are three numbers representing valuable goods. The first icon is your Supplies, which every unit needs to survive and operate, the next one is Refined Fuel, which motorised or mechanised units need to move, and the last of the three is Money, which you can use to purchase things on the World Market. Your nation's IC level determines how much Crude Oil may be refined every day into Fuel so your military units may use it to move. Everything from Metal to Fuel is tradeable on the World Market, through Trade Deals with other countries. Those trades will bring in money, and you can then turn around and use your money to buy more resources or supplies.

Further to the right are a series of icons representing Manpower, Diplomatic Points, Espionage Points, Officer Ratio, Dissent and National Unity, from left to right, respectively. Manpower is the "raw material" you spend to provide a military unit with troops or sailors. Diplomatic Points allow you to set up trade deals or to negotiate with other countries. Espionage Points, as shown here, represent how many Spies are produced each day. The Officer Ratio shows how well staffed your units are with competent mid-level leaders (underneath the level of general), and they're what keep your divisions from panicking and running in combat. Dissent shows the level of dissatisfaction among your population, while National Unity indicates national resolve to keep going. Those last two figures are related, but one may change without changing the other.

On the far right of the Information Bar is a box with lines inside it – that's how you pull up the Game Menu to make changes or to save or leave the game.

Underneath all those numbers and icons are the pause and gamespeed controls. Hitting the plus or minus buttons on the screen, or the keys on your keyboard, will allow you to control gamespeed, while clicking either the date or the Pause/Resume button will pause and unpause the game.

To the right of the pause control are a series of tabs which will allow you to control different aspects of your government. This QuickStart Guide will not explain the Intelligence tab, so look for details on that in the Manual.

Click on the Politics tab first. Here, you'll see what kind of government your country has, the relationship between different political parties, who is leading different aspects of your government, and how well the Strategic Warfare is going (I'm not going to explain either Political Parties or Strategic Warfare here – look for them in the Manual).

Each Minister has certain effects upon your country, including your Head of State and Head of Government, even though you cannot change those positions (they will change if a different political party takes over). Take note of the ways the Foreign Minister affects your country, and then click on the Replace button next to him. Do any of your other options for Ministers to fill that position look better? Replacing Ministers is one way to ensure that your country develops in a way like you would prefer it to change.

Below the Ministers is a series of Laws. Click on whatever it says next to the line Economic Laws. You'll see a set of Law options, with their effects listed next to each. If a checkbox on the right is green, you may choose to implement that Law. Otherwise, a tooltip will tell you what conditions need to change before you can adopt that Law choice. For instance, some options will only be available if you're at war.

Click on the "x" in the upper right of the Politics Interface, and the window will close. Before we look at the Technology tab, let's examine your country's military units. Zoom in closer, so that you start to see details on the game units (whether they're counters or sprites – counters are more informative, and sprites are more artistically pleasing). Unless you're zoomed in, you'll always see counters. Zooming in will change counters to sprites if you've chosen to display your units that way. Otherwise, the counters will simply show more information. Left-click on any of your own land units. In most cases, your Land Unit Interface will look as shown in the screenshot. Different Headquarters levels higher than the level you're looking at are stacked on top of the unit, any units attached to the unit itself will be shown underneath. If the unit icon, shown to the right of the commander's photo, is a Headquarters it will say "HQ." We'll explain Headquarters later, but if you've chosen an HQ, click on one of the attached units below instead. A lower level command will appear. Keep clicking until you're at the Division level (you'll see the "xx" symbol on top of the unit icon).

Each Division will show its commander's picture, its unit type icon, the names of the unit and its commander, and a representation of its strength in one row, from left to right. The troop strength is shown as a number, and it's current strength and organisation levels are shown by brown and green bars next to it. If either of the bars is not fully colored, that means the unit has either suffered damage or attrition. The brown bar shows basically the percentage of its maximum troop strength remaining, and the green bar shows the percentage of its maximum organisation remaining. A unit which loses all of its strength is destroyed, while a unit that loses all or most of its organisation will no longer be able to fight and will retreat instead.

Two green or red bars beneath this indicate its supply condition. Any red in either the Supply bar or the Fuel bar (the icons are the same as in the Information Bar above, and can also be seen by tooltip) indicates that unit is short of that supply and its ability to move and fight may be reduced or disabled.

Is there a little shovel icon on your interface to the right? If so, that means this unit has been "digging in" and will be less vulnerable to the enemy because they're better protected by foxholes or trenches. It takes time to dig in, and fully entrenching a unit will take a few days without being in combat.

Underneath are some HQ controls which we'll get to later, and various icons to upgrade, reinforce, reorganize or disband the unit. Tooltips explain each of these, and you should consult the Manual for



more detailed information.

At the bottom, you will see all of this Division's Brigades. Each will show its unit type icon, its name, and the unit type. The Roman numeral next to the type indicates what level of technology that unit has been upgraded to. To the far right of each brigade is another strength number, as well as brown and green bars to indicate percentage of maximum strength and organisation. The individual brigade's combat width is shown, too. Tooltips will help you with all of this. Clicking on the individual brigade will bring up a very detailed screen showing all relevant technology levels and model versions.

While keeping the unit selected, move your mouse cursor over a province that's adjacent to the unit you've selected, but still inside your country. Right-click, and an arrow will appear, indicating that unit will start to move to that province. If you hover your mouse cursor over the green arrow on the unit interface now, it will show you what province it's going to, and when it's expected to arrive. If you now right-click on the unit's current location again, the arrow will disappear and the unit will not move. Since you took back your movement order, it will not lose any entrenchment (dig-in) value it had. That's how you move land units. Click through more HQs and Divisons, and take note of what kind of units you have. Click on one of any unit's brigades, and you will see an informational screen pop up which will tell you more about the type of unit and its abilities, including its combat values against different types of targets.

Now, left-click on any Airbase inside your country which is "lit up" – i.e. it has a whitish color, rather than dark gray. Those lighter colored Airbases indicate they have air units based there. Clicking on it will bring up an Air Unit Interface which is similar to the unit interfaces we were just looking at. Each Air Unit is set up basically like the land units were, with each Air Wing shown underneath. Click on an Air Wing, and you will see an informational screen pop up which will tell you more about the type of aircraft flown by that Air Wing.

See if you can find a Naval Base in your country which is light blue, rather than dark gray. That's an occupied Naval Base, and your click should pull up a "fleet" including at least one ship. Same as with the others, click on the ship to get more detailed information about its abilities.

In each case, whether you're looking at land units, Air Wings or ships, left-clicking more than once will show you any units stacked underneath the unit you're looking at. Hovering your mouse cursor over any stack of units will give you more information about that unit, and will show any other units also in that province. The tooltip is great for checking things at a glance, but finding details about the units will require you to left-click and use the unit interface.

Now that you have an idea of what types of air, land and naval units your country has, let's click on the Technology tab. On the far left, you'll



see four Leadership sliders, which allow you to allocate your total points, as shown at the top of the box, between the four categories. Earlier, I mentioned Manpower as a sort of "raw material" you spend to supply units with soldiers. Leadership is like the "intellectual capital" you spend to carry out intellectual activities like research, spying, diplomacy and military leadership. Your total amount of leadership can be increased (or decreased) by a variety of things, including the Laws we just looked at in the Politics screen. Find more information in the Manual.

How many Diplomatic Points do you have shown in the Information Bar? If you have a few stored up, you may not want to have your Diplomacy slider very high. Left-click and drag it back to near the minus sign, then let go of it. Right-click it to "lock" the slider, so it won't move once you start moving the others. What do you want to do with Espionage? If you're a small country, you're not as likely to be able to accomplish much with spies, and your Leadership would be better directed toward Research or Officers, but if you're a large country, you can really benefit from spies. Lock the slider where you like it, leaving yourself more than half of the total points to allocate still. What's your Officer Ratio, shown next to the checkered flag in the Information Bar above? If it's really high, like above 90 percent, then you don't need to have this allocation very high either. Whatever you have left gets allocated to Research, which is how you develop new weapons and training for your military, or new improvements for your economy.

To the right is where you choose technologies to research. You remember what kind of units your country has? If you've got any tanks, let's look at the Armoured tab, along the top. This will show you different weapons improvements and technologies you can research that relate to tanks and armoured vehicles. If your tanks are light tanks, let's stick with the first "grouping" of techs (the one that has an arrow pointing to Motorised Infantry). Regular armoured divisions are medium tanks, and they're in the grouping just below. Click on one of the four tabs, and see the box at the bottom of the screen change to show you more detail on that tech. Read about it, and then click Start Research. The tech will appear in the box just underneath your Leadership Sliders, which is called your Tech Queue. At the very top of that box, you're shown how many points you have allocated to Research. Make sure it matches the setting you made for your slider, and if not use the slider's number, because the totals might not update until you close the tab and re-open it. That number, rounded down, is the number of techs you can fully research at once. Any fractional numbers left over can be used to partially pursue an extra research project. You might add an aircraft tech next, might take a look and see if any of the Industry techs look good, and then use the remainder of your slots for infantry. A more rational method of choosing which techs to research is discussed in the Strategy Guide. The Manual

and Strategy Guide also provide more detail on the bottom portion of the Technology Interface, where it shows a bunch of green and blue icons with numbers. You can always change your research projects once you've had a chance to read more about that. For now, I'm just showing you what the tools are, not the hows and whys of using them.

Now, let's look at what may be the most important of all of the tabs – Production. On the right, you'll see another set of sliders. Your total Available IC is listed at the top of that column, and you can allocate up to that number with the sliders below. Each category shows a "need" – how many points you would need to allocate to cover total demand all at once. If you're a rich country, you may have enough IC to cover all your needs, and have some left over. Otherwise, you'll have to make some tough choices. What's your Dissent, shown by the little flame on the Information Bar's far right end? If it's more than a small fraction above zero, you should probably try to bring that number down. Look to where your Consumer Goods need is shown, and click and drag that slider until you've allocated slightly more than what's needed. That will gradually bring your Dissent down. If you have no Dissent, you're okay just clicking on the "need" number, which will automatically set your IC allocation to that number, and will also lock the slider so you can move on to the next one. See what your Supplies need is. If it's really high, in comparison with your total available IC, you'll need to either draw from your stockpiles for a while or purchase more supplies on the world market. If you can afford to fund the need, set it to provide. If not, leave this slider unlocked and check Upgrades and Reinforcement. Both of these sliders are important, but not as much so if you're at peace, and not expecting war right away. Either can be set to provide only a portion of what's needed, and hopefully the need will be reduced to zero. If there is zero need for either of these sliders, you'll want to make sure these are set at zero, or else you're just wasting IC (and it will show up as Wasted IC in the Information Bar, as well as in a warning).

This leaves only the Production slider. If you have anything left over, you may produce something – a military unit, a ship, a new factory, an airbase, etc. The tools to do these things are along the top left of the interface. Some countries start with at least one item already listed below these, in what's called the Production Queue. The item listing will show you when it's expected to be complete, how much IC it requires to be allocated to Production in order for it to proceed as quickly as possible. Not everything in the Queue needs to be fully funded. Anything that's not fully funded will show up as orange or red, instead of green, and the percent of funding will be shown. There are lots of choices to be made of things to produce. Most are self-explanatory, but more information about critical thinking in Production can be found in the Strategy Guide. In brief, for instance, when you click on the Division Construction Interface, you will see a list of available brigade types, along with details on the unit's capabilities. Click on the brigade, and it appears in the Division Assembly box. Click a second brigade, and it's added underneath the first. The cumulative production costs, time to produce, and other values are shown. You may place a minimum of 2 brigades, totaling a minimum of 5,000 strength, into a division. The other interfaces operate in similar ways, except that only one type of unit is selected, rather than a combination. Clicking Start Production will place the unit, as ordered, into the Production Queue.

Look at the column of things sandwiched between the Production Queue and the IC sliders. The Resource column shows your total resource stockpile (it should match what you see in the Information Bar above), as well as a "+/-" indicator of whether you're increasing or losing your stockpiles at your current rates of accumulation and use. This same information is shown in a tooltip from the Information Bar, but it's often easiest to see it here. If you're about to run out of anything, especially money, you'll need to do something about it. We're about to jump over to the Diplomacy tab, though we'll come back, but before we leave notice there are two boxes underneath the Resources column and IC sliders. The first is a list of active Trade Deals you have running, and the bottom will list any Convoys you have active. You won't necessarily see anything in either of these lists, but you may.

Click the Diplomacy tab at the top. In the top right, you'll see a list of the three "Factions" (worldwide alliances) – Axis, Allies and Comintern – and flag roundels which show what countries are a member of each. A tooltip will show which flag is for which country, if you're not an expert with flags. Below this is a triangular grid which shows the ideological position of every country, with respect to the three Factions. The closer a country's flag roundel is to a point of the triangle, the more likely it might be to join that Faction eventually. Click on one of the flag roundels. The country's flag will be displayed in the interface's central column, along with information on your country's diplomatic relations with them, whether they are a neutral or threatening country, and how seriously that threat is felt by your own people and leaders. Below this is a series of diplomatic options. You can see what each does by checking the tooltip. Each of these options has a cost in Diplomatic Points (the ones shown in the Information Bar). To the far left is a list of every country in the world, showing various resource icons, and their threat to you. Above the list are a bunch of sorting buttons you can use to exclude any countries from the list if you don't need to look at them.

You probably need some Resources to keep from running out of something, and more than likely what you're closest to running out of at the start of a scenario is money, so let's try to get some. Are you at peace? Find your own country from the list, and click on it to see. The middle column will indicate if you're at war with anybody. Being at war means you can still set up overseas trades, but you may have to either protect your Convoys or get used to losing some to your enemy's navy. Does your country have a coastline? If so, you can set up Convoys. Otherwise, you're limited to only trading with countries on the same continent as you. In case you do have a landlocked country, I'll go into a little more detail as to what you'd see if you did have a coastline.

There's a little dollar sign at the top of the country list column – click it. Click it twice, if you need to, until you see dollar signs that are gold and not red. You've just sorted the country list to show which countries have money to spare (the others are having a cash crunch!). Hover your mouse cursor over each of the dollar signs and find one whose tooltip indicates they have more than a couple dollars to trade. Look at your resource stockpiles in the Information Bar, above. What resource do you have a large stockpile of? Does the country you're looking at – the one with cash to trade – have a red indicator for that resource? If so, it's a perfect trade. If not, look around. It may be that there's not a perfect match, and you'll have to play around a bit. But hopefully there's an overseas country (for coastal countries) you can trade with that has a deficit (a red icon) in the resource you have, and a surplus of the resource you want (i.e. money). Click on that country, and you'll see the diplomatic options to the right change. Some options may be grayed out, meaning you can't choose

them (maybe you're at war with them, or something), but hopefully Offer Trade Agreement is gold, meaning you can do it. Click on the Trade Offer button.

The Offer Trade Agreement interface is one you'll see a lot of. You're trying to sell something, in order to get money, so click and drag the slider for the resource you're trying to sell toward the left – the "sell" side. Be careful not to drag it too far, or you'll sell too much of your stockpile. This will be a daily trade, and so you're probably wanting to trade a few dozen units, at most. See how much money that will make you. Notice the indicator just above the Decline or Accept buttons – does it say "Impossible?" If so, drag the slider back toward the middle – it may be that they don't have that much money they're willing to trade. Hopefully you can get it to a place where the indicator says "Likely" or "Very Likely." When you're there, click Accept. Otherwise, try a different country and redo this process. Once you've sent the offer, you need to wait a few hours to see what their response is.

If you're at peace, this is easy. If you're at war... Well, a few hundred men may die while we're playing around. If you're a perfectionist, and you'd rather set up your military defences first, remember this step and come back to it to see how to set up convoys. In either case, you'll eventually need to click the pause button in the Information Bar, or the date, or use the pause button on your computer keyboard. That will set the clock to running... very, very slowly. Click the "+" button once, either on the screen or on your keyboard, and it will increase your gameplay speed. Don't get carried away – Speed 2 is fine for what we're doing. Close the Diplomacy tab, and watch the world for a moment as about 4 or 6 hours tick by... Just for fun, click the little triangle next to the Minimap (the small map of the world in the lower right corner). You will see things happening in the History Log that opens, and you may also see some event popups. If you see any little flag roundels appear in the top left of your screen, those are Diplomatic Offers other countries are making to you. If you click on them, they'll open a window that will allow you to choose whether to accept or decline their offers. After a few hours, hopefully, you'll get a popup box showing that the country you were dealing with has accepted your Trade Agreement, and you're now making money from that trade. For illustration purposes, let's let the clock keep rolling until early morning of the next day.

Now, let's look at the Production tab again. If you've successfully set up at least one trade, you'll see it listed in that Trade Agreement box. Tooltips will remind you what is being traded, and a "-" button to the right would allow you to cancel the trade, if you wanted. If any of your active trades is with an overseas country, you'll notice that a Convoy has been automatically set up in the box underneath the Trades. It shows where the Convoy starts, and where its destination is, what it's carrying (more detail offered in the tooltip), and how many convoy ships and escorts are assigned. Above the listings is the total reserve of convoy ships and escorts available.

Now it's time to discuss how units would be used in combat. Again, I'll describe, so that you don't actually need to be at war to understand. Before you get into serious combat, it's recommended that you read both, the Manual and Strategy Guide, because there are many, many aspects to combat which cannot be explained in brief.

Click on a land unit again. Earlier, I described how you right-click on a province to direct the selected land unit to move there. If you click on a province where enemy units are, it's considered an attack, because "movement is attack." Combat would begin the very next hour. There is an Advanced Movement Orders option, which requires you to control-right-click, which will bring up an orders screen. You can issue an order to move (or attack), to "support" an attack (which means your division will attack, but will not advance), and if you were asking them to move away from the front lines you could order it to move using Strategic Redeployment, which moves the unit more quickly by rail at a higher supply and fuel cost.

This interface can also be used to order coordinated attacks. Normally, attacks begin as soon as they're ordered, but if you select multiple units in that or in adjacent provinces, and control-right-click where you want them to attack, you can check the "coordinate" box and use the clock to set an exact time for them to begin attacking. This is useful for making sure everybody attacks at dawn, for instance.

Selecting an air or naval unit, and right-clicking on a province or seazone where they can move, brings up a similar interface, which allows you to choose a mission to send them on. The different mission types are described in the Manual, and examined in the Strategy Guide.

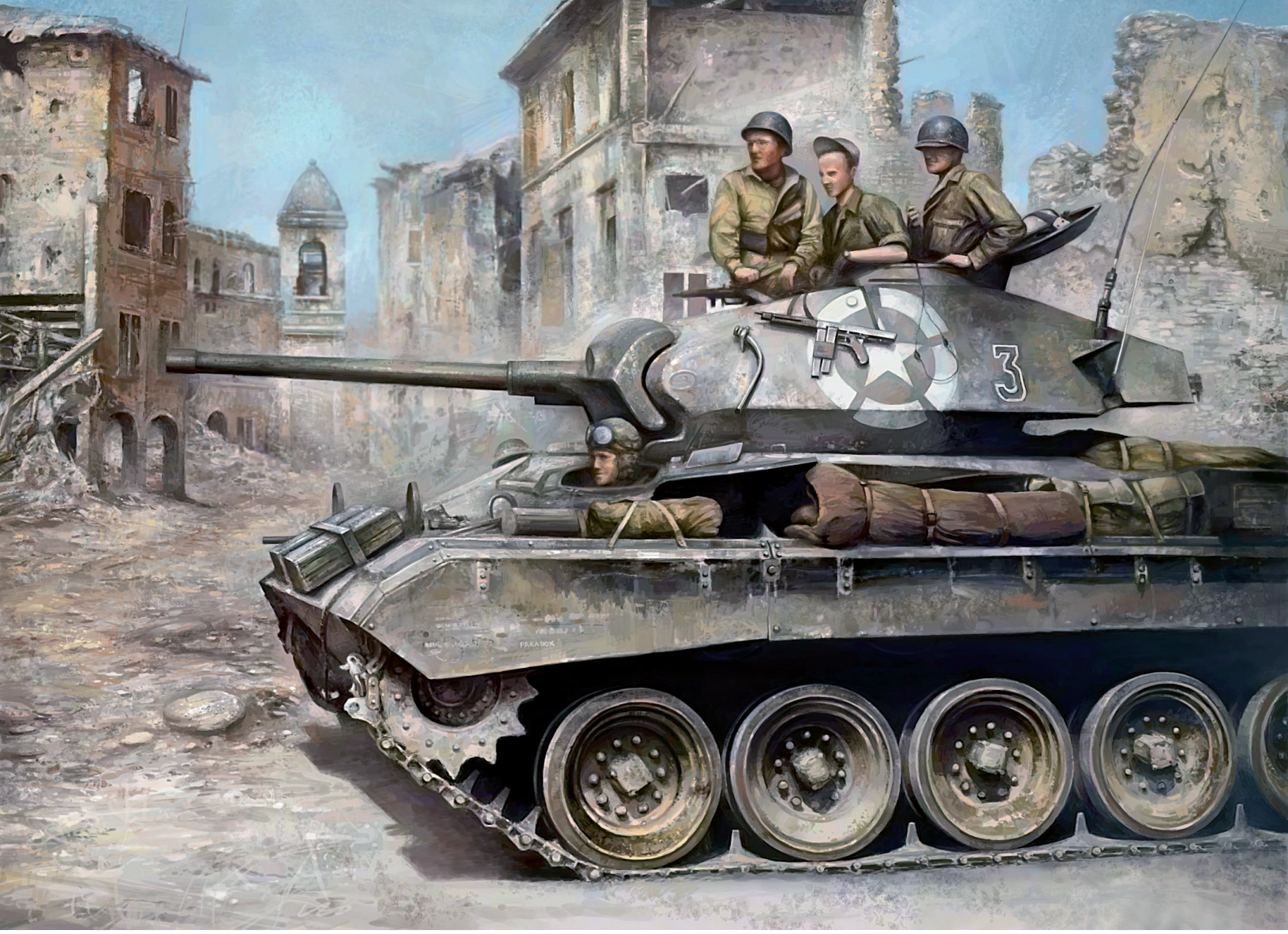
When units enter combat, a coloured spot with an arrow will appear, showing approximately how well that combat is going for the attacker – the colors range from red for losing to green for winning. If you click on a unit that's involved in combat, you will see a new tab attached to the bottom of the unit interface which also shows how well the combat is going for that unit's side. If you click on the tab, you will see a Battle Interface, which shows details of all the units involved in combat, including which units are in the province but which either cannot "fit" their combat width along the front, or which have recently arrived and so are still moving up to the front. One province attacking another single province will generally allow up to four divisions on the front lines at once. Attacking from multiple provinces into the same province opens additional room for more divisions to be on the front.

Land combat will generally continue until one side withdraws voluntarily, or until the unit's strength or organisation is reduced to a minimum level to sustain combat. Each unit attempts to fire at the enemy, using its combat values, and each unit fired at attempts to avoid being hit by using its defensive values. This is a gross oversimplification, so please do examine the Manual for more detail.

Air combat is handled in a similar way, except that there is no "front" and each side's planes suffer combat penalties relative the number of Air Wings engaged at one time. A combat also may end because a unit's Mission is done with, and it needs to return to its Airbase.

Naval combat is far more complicated, so you should again consult the Manual for details. Basically, if one fleet spots an enemy fleet, they will enter combat, but not every ship will necessarily be able to fire until they have "closed the range" and are nearer in location to each other. Damage to naval units is also different, in that damage is inflicted relative to the damaged ship's hull value, and there is also the possibility of a "critical hit," which could suddenly knock its strength or organisation down substantially, in just one round.

All this may seem overwhelming, but thankfully there are several unique features built into HOI 3 which help new players, or those who just don't want to micromanage every detail themselves. The Outliner is one of these aids, which will be explained in the Manual. Every interface tab (Diplomacy, Technology, etc.) can be set to AI control. And your divisions can also be set to AI control by using the Headquarters (HQ) concept. You can contribute a large or minimal amount of guidance to the HQ during



gameplay, according to your personal tastes.

Click on an HQ at any level of the command structure (which is explained in more detail in the Manual). If you're using counters instead of sprites, you will see a number of nearby units on the map begin glowing blue around the edges. That means those are part of that HQ's command structure, and that HQ can order them around. HQs are given direction by setting stances, setting objectives, and setting an "axis of attack."

Just underneath the fuel & supply bars is a section full of complicated-looking (they're not really) HQ related stuff. In the upper left corner of this area is a "banner" (flag) icon inside a circle. An inactive HQ's banner will be gray, but an active one is green. Your HQ's banner is probably gray, so click on it so it turns green and activates AI control.

Now, set your HQ's stance. If you're at war, and the HQ is near your enemy's border, you may set it to either Attack or Blitzing, both of which are different degrees of aggressiveness on offense. If you're not at war, you can set Defence or Prepare. Now, with the HQ still selected, right-click on some nearby provinces you want to be the objectives of that HQ's orders. If it's in defensive mode (Defence or Prepare), you'll want to choose provinces in your own territory. Attack modes can have objectives set in enemy territory, and the AI will attempt to conquer those objective provinces. You can choose as many provinces as objectives as you want, but the more you pick, the more resources the HQ is going to demand in order to get the job done. You'll see these requested units listed as icons underneath your objective list. These same requests will be shown in the Production screen, underneath the Production Queue. You can approve the requests, if you want, and they will enter the Queue.

Lastly, if you've chosen to place your HQ in an aggressive stance, and have chosen objectives in enemy territory, you can shift-right-click in order to set an "axis of advance" which shows the HQ which path you would prefer they take in trying to reach an objective. This is so you can point out an important path to the AI, which might otherwise have other priorities.

Even if your country is not at war, you can see how the HQ works by setting AI control on, and ordering it into a Defend or Prepare stance. You can select objectives to protect along the border, inside your country.

That's a very brief explanation, which should allow you to perform most of the functions of the game and begin enjoying the gameplay. However, many other aspects will have to be learned by reading the Manual, such as Amphibious Assaults and Paradrops, Espionage, Strategic Warfare, Convoy Raiding, etc. Hearts of Iron is a magnificently rich and detailed game. It is not possible to explain all of its aspects "quickly." I'm confident you will enjoy the game enough to want to learn more.



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