= Theatre Europe =

Theatre Europe is a turn @-@ based strategy video game developed and published by Personal Software Services . It was first released in the United Kingdom for the Commodore 64 , ZX Spectrum , Amstrad CPC and Atari 8 @-@ bit home computers in 1985 . It was later released in France by ERE Informatique in 1986 , and was released in the United States by Datasoft later that year . It was also ported to the Tatung Einstein home computer in 1989 , exclusively in the United Kingdom . It is the fifth instalment of the Strategic Wargames series .

The game is set during a fictional war in Europe between NATO and the Warsaw Pact , in which both sides use nuclear and chemical weapons against each other . The main objective of the game is to fight conventional battles in continental Europe , whilst trying to avoid a worldwide nuclear holocaust . Throughout the game , various capital cities and their civilian populations will be destroyed by nuclear weapons ; the game will only end once either side is forced to surrender or if the entire population of Europe perishes . In order to request a nuclear strike , the player was required to call a dedicated telephone number , which led to an automated message announcing the authorisation code .

During development , the developers obtained extensive information and statistics of military strength from the Ministry of Defence and the Soviet embassy in London . Theatre Europe gained national controversy upon release , receiving criticism from both the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and The Sun newspaper . Some high street retail chains refused to sell the game upon release . Despite the controversy , the game received critical acclaim from reviewers . Praise was directed at its accuracy , playability and value for money . It won the " Best Strategy Game " award at the 1985 Golden Joystick Awards and was nominated for the " Game of the Year " title .

= = Gameplay = =

The game is a turn @-@ based strategy and revolves around a fictional conflict between the powers of NATO and allies of the Warsaw Pact . The player has the choice of choosing either NATO or the Warsaw Pact (collectively referred to as Soviet forces) , or a " demo " computer versus computer option , where the game plays itself . The game takes place over a period of 30 in @-@ game days , in which one day is equal to one " round " . There are three types of difficulty ; level one , in which unless provoked , the enemy will not use nuclear weapons , whilst levels two and three will enable the enemy to use nuclear and chemical attacks to prevent the player from winning the game .

The main feature of the game is focused on a map of Europe and western Russia , which displays accurate terrain such as mountain ranges , major cities , borders and all military forces belonging to each side . The game also features an arcade sequence which involves shooting down enemy units in order to secure combat bonuses ; this gameplay mode , however , can be ignored by changing the game 's settings . If the arcade sequences are turned on , the player will be notified to choose a battle on the map . Depending on the area chosen , an illustration of a battle commencing in countryside or a city is presented with various forms of military equipment including aeroplanes , helicopters and tanks . The player must shoot down and destroy enemy units using their cursor , in similar style to Missile Command . The outcome of the arcade sequence will affect the game ; performing poorly will result in severe losses throughout that round .

After combat has been resolved , the player must move and assemble their forces in continental Europe , which is known as the movement phase . Two special units are exclusively available to the Warsaw Pact : " the 1st Airborne Army which can be flown directly behind enemy lines , and the 1st Amphibious Army which can move over the sea to a tactical attack point " . Units are moved by cursor , and only one may be moved at a time . Once all units have been moved within a round , the attack phase will begin . Any amount of friendly units may attack an opposing army ; however , once a unit has been dispatched for battle it cannot be stopped until the current attack phase concludes . During the attacking phase , a separate screen displaying combat information , such as enemy

numbers and casualties , is displayed . If the screen detailing the attacking phase has been turned off in the settings , the battle will instead be decided on warrants of air superiority and armaments .

After battle sequences , the player will have the opportunity to rebuild their units by allocating a quantity of armament supplies , such as air support , which can be issued to any friendly unit on the map . After rebuilding ground units , the game will move onto an " air phase " , which consists of commanding aircraft such as aeroplanes , bombers and a limited number of reserve air units . Several options for allocating air forces include : counter air strikes , reconnaissance on enemy movement , interdiction , assault breakers , and deep strikes . Counter air strikes involve attacks on enemy air bases , whereas interdiction involves aircraft being sent behind enemy lines in order to attack supply and movement networks . If interdiction aircraft are discovered in enemy territory , there will be a chance that the side will respond with a retaliatory nuclear strike . The remaining three aircraft options are to attack a single unit , strike enemy territory , and attack railways in order to disable enemy reinforcements , respectively .

The game allows the player to request chemical and nuclear tactical strikes against the enemy . A chemical attack is automatically targeted at an enemy capital city , and will conclude with a readout announcing the outcome of the attack , such as civilian casualties . In order to launch a strategic nuclear attack , the player is given 30 seconds to call a dedicated 1 @-@ 800 telephone number and obtain a special authorisation code from the automated answerphone message . Once the authorisation code has been received , the player will be given three separate options on how to proceed . Standby mode will postpone the nuclear launch , whereas a strategic launch will involve one nuclear warhead targeting a city . The third option , known as " Fire @-@ Plan " , will issue a full @-@ scale nuclear strike across Europe and may result in a nuclear holocaust , which will end the game .

= = Background and release = =

Personal Software Services was founded in Coventry , West Midlands , by Gary Mays and Richard Cockayne in 1981 . The company were known for creating games that revolved around historic battles and conflicts , such as Battle of Britain , Bismarck and Falklands ' 82 . The company had a partnership with French video game developer ERE Informatique , and published localised versions of their products to the United Kingdom . In 1986 , Cockayne took a decision to alter their products for release on 16 @-@ bit consoles , as he found that smaller 8 @-@ bit consoles such as the ZX Spectrum lacked the processing power for larger strategy games . The decision was falsely interpreted as " pulling out " from the Spectrum market by video game journalist Phillipa Irving . Following years of successful sales throughout the mid @-@ 1980s , Personal Software Services experienced financial difficulties ; Cockayne admitted in a retrospective interview that " he took his eye off the ball " . The company was acquired by Mirrorsoft in February 1987 , and was later dispossessed by the company due to strains of debt .

In an interview with Your Computer magazine , Richard Cockayne stated that Theatre Europe received heavy criticism from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and The Sun newspaper , respectively . The CND accused the developers of " bad taste " , despite Cockayne claiming that the organisation never " looked into the product " . During development of the game , Cockayne and Mays obtained figures and statistics of various military strength from the Ministry of Defence and the Soviet embassy in London . Cockayne asserted that the statistics the developers gained were realistically plausible , stating that he would let the " horrifying results speak for themselves " during the game . Game designer Alan Steel stated that during testing , he was " alarmed " to discover when the computer played itself , the Warsaw Pact always won a conventional war overwhelmingly , forcing NATO to either surrender or begin a nuclear war . Steel adjusted the game to give NATO a chance to win . Theatre Europe was first released in the United Kingdom for the Commodore 64 , ZX Spectrum , Amstrad CPC and Atari 8 @-@ bit home computers in 1985 . It was then re @-@ released in France and the United States for those consoles in 1986 . Due to lobbying from the CND , high street outlets such as Boots and John Menzies refused to sell the game in their stores , with the former finding it " morally offensive " .

= = Reception = =

The game received critical acclaim upon release . Gwyn Hughes of Your Sinclair defended the accuracy and morality of the game , stating that it was not in " bad taste " and that the game was a " well researched program " , which he thought would give the player an insight into the nature of modern war . Philippa Irving of Crash similarly stated that Theatre Europe offered more than a usual " run @-@ of @-@ the @-@ mill " war game and heralded its simplistic nature , adding that novice gamers would " get in to it with ease " . John Gilbert of Sinclair User added scepticism over the developer 's intention of making something " so serious " as opposed to their other titles , however he praised the game as a " brilliant , if chilling " simulation . A reviewer writing for ZX Computing similarly stated that the game was " superbly chilling " and " extremely " well @-@ presented . A reviewer of Computer and Video Games criticised the inferior graphics on the ZX Spectrum , stating that they were " a bit flawed " in comparison to the Commodore 64 version .

Mark Reed of Computer Gamer noted that the game attracted media attention , despite the objective of the game discouraging the use of nuclear weapons . Reed praised the presentation and gameplay , also stating that the use of a joystick and keyboard is " excellent " . A reviewer of Zzap ! 64 heralded the presentation and value for money , stating that it is overall " very special indeed " . The reviewer also gave praise to the sound , suggesting that the game featured " one of the best pieces of micro music ever " . Peter Connor of Advanced Computer Entertainment said that Theatre Europe was a " gift " , in regards to its value of money and level of playability . The game won the " Best Strategy Game " award at the 1985 Golden Joystick Awards and was also nominated for the " Game of the Year " title .