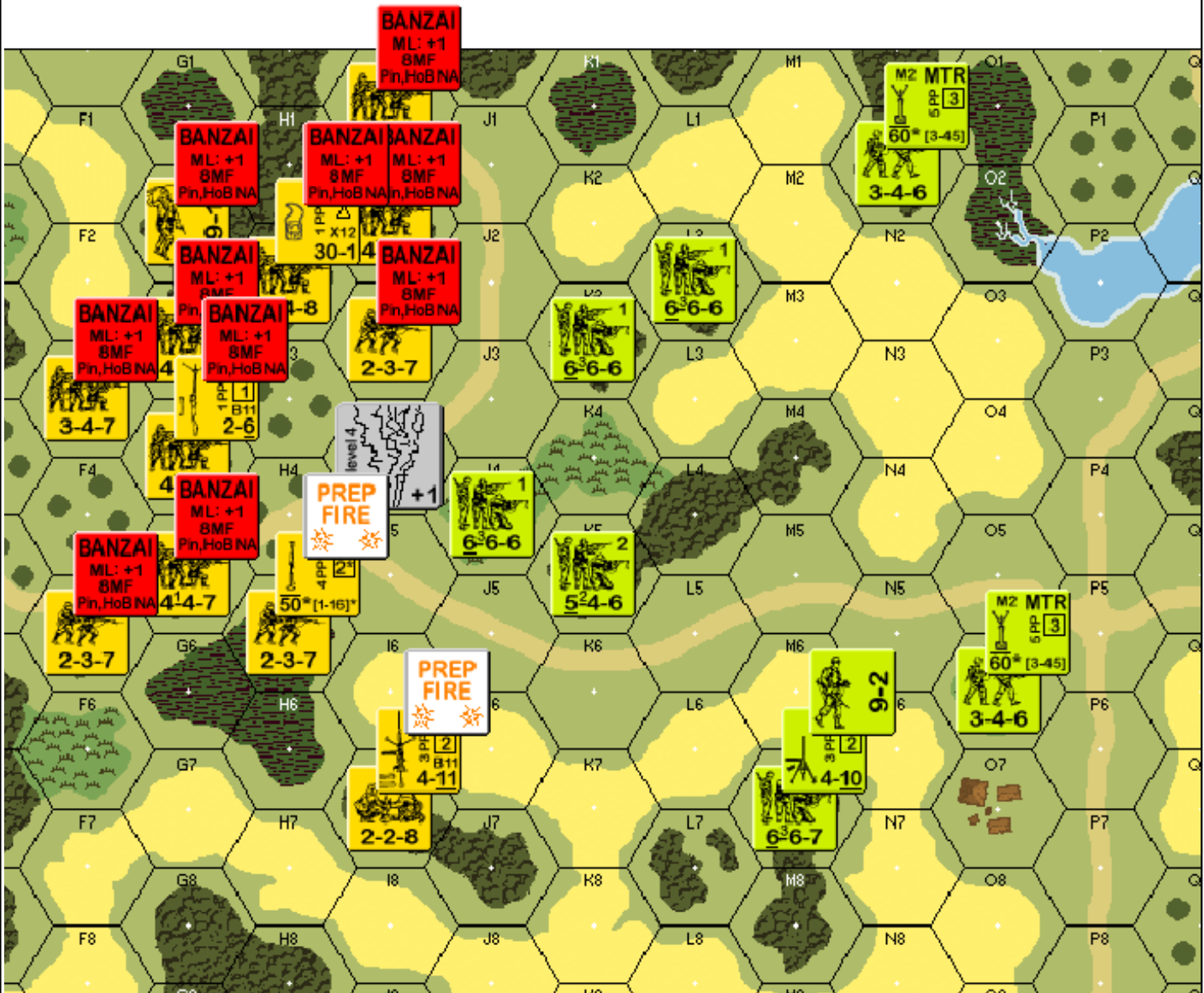


BANZAI!!!



The Newsletter of the Texas ASL Club

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EDITOR'S FOXHOLE

Rick Reinesch



Welcome back to another edition of our newsletter. There's plenty here to sink your teeth into. Rich Spilky takes us back to Stalingrad, this time with a thorough discussion of one of the largest *Red Barricades* scenarios, *The Last Bid [RB5]*. We profile Matt Zajac, get tactical tips from the renowned Carl Nogueira, take a trip to the SK Corner, get scenario recommendations from some of our grognards, and lay out Texas Team Tourney info to round out the issue. Thanks to everyone who submitted material. Without you we can't publish, so keep those articles coming! Enjoy.

SCENARIO REPLAY & ANALYSIS: THE LAST BID [RB5]

Rich Spilky



Introduction

Since the *Red Barricades* (RB) module came out in the 1990s I had often daydreamed of finding the opportunity to play this monster scenario. What ASL player hasn't felt that way at one point or another? My opportunity arrived in 2017 when a group of Chicago area ASLers and I decided to play a RB Campaign Game (CG) together. In order to practice for the CG we thought it would be a good idea to play this large scenario beforehand to familiarize ourselves with the RB rules and to better understand the nuances and tactics applicable to the terrain. Our thought was that by so doing, we would be better able to make wise unit purchases during the CG itself. During that playing of scenario RB5, my playing partner and I played the Russian side on the defense against two other players who took the German side on the

attack. In the end, we pretty much devastated the German attackers.*1

Afterwards, and also after having played the RB CG itself, my playing partner and I wanted to take advantage of the significant amount of familiarity we had now gained in playing so much RB over a number of months. We both felt that the RB5 scenario that we had previously played as partners had not received a fair evaluation. Consequently, we decided to play it again but this time as opponents. He agreed to take the Russian side while I took the Germans on the attack this time. On that occasion, the Germans achieved the Victory Conditions (VCs) handily. However, in this second playing I felt like I had been the beneficiary of a number of lucky DRs on many key occasions and that my opponent did not receive much good fortune in important situations despite the length of the scenario and the number of DRs involved. Therefore, I continued to believe that I had yet to experience the scenario as it was intended.

The Third Playing

Recently I had the opportunity to play this monster scenario a third time. My opponent – who had not previously played *The Last Bid* - agreed to help me take notes and pictures*2, and also to provide a detailed commentary on his setup, in order to create this article and to share the experience in writing with others who may want to try the scenario themselves sometime and benefit from these observations. On this third playing, I was to play the Germans on the attack and he, the Russians on defense*3. The remainder of this article is devoted to recapping this playing experience in detail.

*1: For those interested in listening to the details of that playing, you can download episode #183 of the *Two Half-Squads* podcast (www.the2halfsquads.com/) from September 2017.

*2: Notes on the pictures: The small yellow 'post-it notes' were used to denote multi-level buildings initially controlled by the Russians. Once the Germans took control of one of these, we placed the sticker off map to clearly indicate the current count per the VCs. The small white plastic x's which show up occasionally were used to indicate which units had moved and which hadn't yet. Finally, the crest status counters were sometimes used to track which hexes were known to be clear of minefields due to either a successful searching attempt or by other means.

*3: It should be noted that as of 29 Sept. 2018, the ROAR record on this scenario is 30 German wins to 19 Russian. Consequently, it was decided in all three playings referenced in this write-up that the Russian side was given the balance (which is to battle harden ten MMCs and two leaders).

[Ed. We are extremely pleased to provide the opportunity to publish this article. So, dig out your RB maps and follow along!]

Scenario Overview

The Last Bid [RB5] has 21 game turns and features 150 squads in the at-start order of battle (OB) between both sides. It also incorporates numerous Guns, HIP units/fortifications, AFVs, and OBA, as well as more than 40 MMCs and 28 AFVs as reinforcements (for both sides), and all of the ASL action and drama that these units can create unfolds over the entire *Red Barricades* map!

The VCs for *The Last Bid* are simple yet very dynamic. The Russians start the scenario in control of 18 multi-hex buildings and the Germans start with over 30 of these under their control. The VC states that the Germans must be net +12 multi-hex buildings at the end of scenario (as long as the two big factories R29 and S34 are part of that net +12).

German Pre-Registered Hex (prior to seeing Russian Setup)

The first thing I must do before any setup is to select my Pre-Registered Hex and my Observer's Location for my at-start 100mm OBA module. I believe that the multi-level buildings BB18 and AA25 are key places that I want to hit with OBA (be it Smoke or HE) and so I want to select one of these as my Pre-Registered Hex. Consequently, my Observer's Location needs to have an LOS to the Pre-Registered Hex and ideally will also have a LOS to many of the other 2nd levels of each of these buildings, too. With this in mind, I select the 2nd level of hex BB19 as the Pre-Registered Hex and choose the ground level of hex S12 as the Location for the Observer and Radio (not Field Phone). The Observer's Location has LOS to the 2nd levels of both of the key multi-level buildings and also has good LOS possibilities to the Chemist Shop sector should I need OBA assistance with my attack in this area. I am choosing a Radio over a Field Phone to gain mobility with the Observer/Radio should I need it. In doing so, I'm sacrificing a bit percentage-wise in Radio Contact performance, as well as Observer HIP status, but I'd rather have the mobility should I need it. Hex S12 is considered a Fortified Location from the outside per SSR4 so even though the Observer may be vulnerable to some Russian firepower in this spot, I feel he is about as well protected as he can be. OBA is important to the German attack plans and I can little afford to lose my Observer due to his breaking. Conversely, it will be important for me to locate the Russian Observer as quickly as possible in order to attempt to neutralize it. More on that later.

The Russian Player's Perspective (written by the Russian player)

Russian At-Start Setup: (at-start dispositions are displayed below (other than the HIP units) before the German At-Start Setup)

Just organizing this monster can take longer than playing some medium-sized scenarios, so we did the setting up in

advance to save time. After a good bit of study, I settled on the following defense (all at Level 0 unless indicated otherwise [C = Cellar, 1 = Level 1, 2 = Level 2]; [UNIT(S) + SW/GUN] designates HIP placement; units are in pillboxes/entrenchments where applicable):

Fortified Locations: V40 L0 & L1; V41 L0 & L1; V43; W30 L0 & L1; BB18 L0, L1 & L2

tunnels: Q33 - T-34; T37 pillbox - U35

minefields: (6 FP) Q37, P36, O36, N35, P35, O35, O34, O33, P32, & R32

Note that one trench was not used.

Hex	Contents
P33	?, 4-5-8 + LMG
P34	?, + 4-5-8 + LMG
Q33	tunnel - T-34
Q34	9-2, 6-2-8 + HMG, 1-2-7 + MOL-P
Q35	?, 6-2-8 + LMG
R33	?, 4-5-8 + LMG, 5-2-7
R34	8-1, 2 x 6-2-8
R35	?, 6-2-8 + LMG
R36	[6-2-8 + LMG]
R37	A-T Ditch
S31	5-2-7
S33	?, 6-2-8 + LMG
S33/6	[2-2-8 + 45L]
S34	2 x 6-2-8
S35	?, 6-2-8
T-34	6-2-8, 5-2-7, tunnel - Q33
T37	A-T Ditch
T37/4	[pillbox, 10-2, 4-5-8 + .50 cal.], tunnel - U35
U34	4-4-7, 4-5-8 + LMG
U35	4-5-8, tunnel - T37 pillbox
U39	A-T Ditch
U40	?, 4-5-8 + ATR
U41	?, 1-2-7 + MOL-P, 6-2-8
U43	?, 1-2-7 + MOL-P, 6-2-8
U44.C	?, 5-2-7
U44	?, 6-2-8 + ATR
V8	trench
V29	?, 2 x 4-4-7
V39/5	[pillbox, 8-1, 4-5-8 + HMG]

Hex	Contents
V40	?, 9-1, 2 x (4-5-8 + MMG)
V40.1/5	[2-2-8 + 76L]
V41.C	5-2-7
V41	?, 4-5-8 + ATR
V41.1/5	[2-2-8 + 76L]
V43	9-1, 2 x (6-2-8 + MMG)
V44	?, 6-2-8 + ATR
V44/5	[2-2-8 + 45LL]
W10.C	?, 4-4-7
W10	?, 4-4-7
W10.1	?, 4-4-7
W30	?, 2 x 4-4-7
W30.1	?, 4-5-8 + HMG, [8-1, 4-5-8 + HMG]
W40	trench
W41	trench, 7-0, 6-2-8, 4-4-7
W44	trench, 8-0, 2 x 4-4-7
X8	trench
X9.C	?, 4-4-7
X9	?, 4-4-7
X9.1	?, 4-4-7
X10.C	?, 4-4-7, 5-2-7
X10	?, 4-4-7
X10.1	?, 4-4-7
X11	?, 4-4-7
X12	?, 4-4-7
X13	?, 4-4-7
X21	4-4-7
X22	4-4-7
X24	4-4-7
X25.C	5-2-7
X25	4-4-7
X26	4-4-7
Y10	trench, 8-1, 2 x (4-5-8 + MMG)
Z1	5-2-7
Z2.C	5-2-7
Z2	5-2-7
Z8	trench
Z9	trench
AA25.2	4 x ?

Hex	Contents
AA26	7-0, 2 x 5-2-7
BB3	trench
BB18	?, 1-2-7
BB18.1/5	[2-2-8 + 45L]
BB18.2/5	[2-2-8 + 45LL, 2-2-8 + 76L]
BB19.2	?, 8-1, 4-5-8 + HMG
BB25.2	[8-0 + Phone: Pre-Reg S30, 4-5-8 MTR Spotter]
BB26	trench
CC25	3 x 5-2-7
CC26/5	[2 x (2-2-8 + 82* MTR)]
DD19	trench, 3 x 4-4-7

I chose to implement the Russian balance by upgrading 10 of the 5-2-7s to 6-2-8s, and promoting two 8-0s to 8-1s. Each improved squad therefore got a three-fer: the morale increase, a kick up to a higher IFT column, and very often a boost in Close Combat. Converting 4-4-7s to 4-5-8s gains the morale boost, but the slight increase in range only matters at 5-, 9- and 10-hex range; how many of those shots will there be in this scenario? My estimate: not many. And while it is tempting to transform a couple of very good leaders into uber-leaders, I wanted to be able to spread the favorable leadership DRMs more evenly around the board. The extra 8-1s allow me to do that.

Another good choice - perhaps the best choice - might have been to battle harden the 4-2-6 reinforcements into 4-4-7s. It may not sound like a great idea, and I suspect would not be seriously considered by most Soviet commanders, but in fact this generates a number of significant benefits: the obvious morale-level improvement (a **double** increase when broken); range increase; normal MF allotment; elimination of Inexperienced penalties for SW usage; a jump from Lax status to Stealthy via the RB18 SSR; and Disrupted status held to two ELR failures distant, instead of just one. A few other less-important disadvantages also disappear with the loss of Inexperienced penalties. Unfortunately, those improved squads would not be available from the beginning of the battle, which is why I passed on the opportunity here. But I might try this approach if I ever play the Russians again in RB5.

Some of my troops are beginning the scenario in large stacks, in order to economize on concealment counters for use in dummy stacks. These units, sometimes obscured under trench counters, are all in locations which are unlikely to take any fire on turn 1. I expect to disperse most of these in my first turn, after gaining at-start concealment growth.

The decision to abandon the R29 factory and the T26

building was difficult, but necessary (the lone squad in S31 is for anticipated sewer movement; more below). That sector is just a killing ground where massed Germans can best employ their FTs and DCs to maximum effect. Russians who fall there will mostly be eliminated, whereas the blue guys can easily rout and return to the fight in what is going to be a very long battle. It's better, I think, to give these up without a struggle, allowing me to deploy the units which would have been lost there to more-defensible positions where something might be achieved, for longer. I'm hoping that the Germans will try to pack their troops into the R29 factory as a base to invade the S34 factory, which would allow me to unleash crushing FP from OBA, HMGs, and mortars.

The S34 factory (hereafter simply "The Factory") is defensible, and is worth fighting for. Of course, I realize that it should ultimately be lost, but the point is to make the Germans pay a very high price in the process. Just contesting this position forces the German player to make a difficult tactical determination: the allocation of forces. If he commits too much strength to The Factory, his attack suffers everywhere else; but not enough, and he loses the game. Getting that balance just right isn't easy.

I have used all my available mine factors to ring the approaches to this key position (note that I would have liked to mine Q32 and S32, but could not because these are paved roads; B28.1, O1.3. But R32 is OK, since it is shellholed; SSR5). This will make it very difficult for the Germans to assault (and incidentally, makes it much easier to remember where the mines are located - not a trivial consideration). I am especially hoping that the German commander will try to move a substantial force up behind the P36-N35 wall, smack into the mine belt. The Factory's garrison is large and is composed of elite troops which enjoy the Fanaticism benefit of CG11 (SSR1). The perimeter is manned and there is a central FG positioned to react to a break-in. The tunnel between Q33 and T-34 (taken in lieu of one of the Fortified Building Locations, B8.6) should allow me to spring a nasty surprise, and is also an escape hatch permitting rout out of awkwardly-sited Q33. I fully expect to see the attackers use one or two of his assault gun AFVs to crash into The Factory, breaching (B23.9221) the fortified exterior hexes and unfortunately leaving trail breaks through my minefields (B28.61). Hence, I have sited two Guns in the fortified upper levels of building V40 in hopes of thwarting this move. A HIP 45L ATG is disposed in an anti-infantry capacity against the expected attack from the R29 factory. I am concerned about German OBA pounding The Factory (which is Gutted, [O5.5]), but I can only hope that my 9-morale MMCs can weather the storm, and perhaps the Wehrmacht will quickly find those two red cards!

An alternate possibility I considered for the mines would have allotted most to the 7 hexes from T39-T45. This would have been a strong shield against the thrust which is sure to

come on my left flank against the buildings clustered in the southern sector around V42. But I am harboring fantasies of later using my reinforcements to spearhead a counterattack in that area with the goal of capturing (or at least threatening) the dense cluster of stone buildings in the south. Needless to say, I don't want to be stymied by my own mines! And of course, those minefields would come at the expense of The Factory. In the end I decided that The Factory was more important.

Locating the Field Phone and mortar Spotter in BB25 L2 might seem a bit curious; AA25 is obviously a better choice. And that's exactly why I avoided AA25 - it simply is too obvious. I expect AA25 to attract Smoke or probing fire and have placed a stack of dummies there expressly to encourage this wastage. Meanwhile BB25 has just as good LOS into the southern half of the battlefield, which is where most of the action will be anyway.

The southern sector is also very heavily defended, with a combination of a substantial garrison, MMGs, HIP Guns, and five Fortified Building locations. These are supported by both bunkers (B30.8, B27.56). The 10-2/.50 cal. combo in T37 is bound to surprise the German commander; I'm sure that he expects to find this in some Level 2 position. But here it usefully covers the German staging area opposite southern sector, as well as a key stretch of Gully (the A39-JJ36 Gully forms a seam between The Factory and southern sector and is hereafter to be known as 'Dry Gulch'). The .50 cal. has great Fire Lane potential out to P43, and also down the T hex row road which the bad guys will surely have to cross. The tunnel into the S34 factory will hopefully allow me to keep this important position in action, even after the original occupants might be driven out. Conversely, the tunnel also allows me to have the opportunity to get the .50 cal. into The Factory if that appears more profitable (note that a standard Russian HMG cannot be dismantled, and hence could not be extricated through a tunnel due to PP limitations; A9.8, B8.6, B8.4). Other factors supporting this rather unconventional positioning of the killer combo: the TEM provided by the pillbox is the best in the game, and it is unlikely that the German commander will easily be able to bring to bear massive FP Fire Groups, OBA or Smoke to suppress this position once the surprise is sprung. Also note that SMOKE versus a pillbox is a bit less effective since the Location never contains SMOKE (B30.34) so A24.8 (Outgoing LOS Hindrances) is NA.

The HMG in V39 throws a nice Fire Lane out to M35, in case any stormtroopers are moving onto the factory from the southwest, and also covers another part of Dry Gulch (this pillbox might discourage the aforementioned German move up behind the wall and into my mines, but the German commander has to set up before he knows about the HIP pillboxes, so I'm hoping that he will not be deterred). The ATG in V44 has the specific task of taking on the German

assault gun which will predictably move to P44 to Smoke T44 and/or V44. The ARTs in V40 and V41 can also throw shells out to the relatively open area west of the factory, where we might be seeing assault guns taking up positions. And if that's not enough, the antitank ditches are sited to stymie German armor movement east in the vicinity of Dry Gulch. Ideally, the substantial HIP allotment in southern sector will mislead the German commander into allocating too small a force to the attack in this area.

All things considered, I believe that the German commander will have to work pretty hard to overcome all resistance around the southern sector. I am hoping that some of my reinforcements will arrive on scene to shore up the defenses before that happens.

A number of my 5-2-7s begin in Manhole locations. I chose 5-2-7s for this mission specifically because I believe them to be the least useful of my OB's squads. These will immediately use Sewer movement with the goal of infiltrating the German backfield. The Wehrmacht leader will have no choice but to detail significant forces to follow these guys around, because of the threat that they could pop out in the endgame to grab empty VC buildings.

Unfortunately, the northern half of the battlefield provides few good locations for ordnance. Therefore, I have stuffed 3 of my Guns into the BB18 Fortified tower. An 8-1 and HMG team is in over watch right next door. I actually don't feel great about clumping all these range weapons together like this. For one thing it's obvious, though the HIP Guns will not give things away right from the start. And then there are the OBA/Smoke threats. But this portion of the battlefield has to be defended, and I don't think there are any alternatives with the potential to be as effective. Despite the high-value weaponry in this building, the paucity of Soviet riflemen in this area has me concerned. Fortunately, this part of the front line is the closest to my reinforcements' entry area, which I hope will offset the obvious initial weakness.

I have made building X9 into a bit of a fortress. This is another example of my effort to give my opponent opportunities to make mistakes. There are only two VC buildings in the north - Z1 and X9 - but the German commander will have to make a large commitment to this area to get these, and again I am hoping that he will misjudge one way or the other. The MG nest in the Y10 trench controls this stretch of potholed Leninskii Prospekt. The hodgepodge of trenches I've placed in the vicinity may appear random at first glance, but in fact these combine with the terrain to form a block against the German turn 10 halftrack reinforcements (the halftracks cannot enter Debris, rubble, or trenches, and cannot cross walls or Cliffs). I wasn't thrilled to place trenches in V8 and X8, because these might ease the attack on X9, but they were necessary to construct my barrier against a halftrack raid from the north.

One important consideration to keep in mind is that the Russians don't have to win this fight just with their at-start OB. As I've already alluded, I expect quite a bit from the reinforcements we've been promised. I've got 31 squads on the way, with some decent equipment, and 3 tanks including a flame tank! Of course, the Germans will also be getting some help, but largely armor, and only 9 additional squads. The infusion of Soviet Infantry will be critical when the last big push for building Control gets underway in the end-game. And while there is no doubt that I would like to have more stuff to fight this battle, there is some consolation in knowing that the German commander would also surely like to enlarge his OB. We'll just have to see how this works with what I've got.

German Player's Observations of the Russian Setup

At first glance, I observe the following general dispositions of the Russian defensive setup:

- Far North Building (Z1), lightly defended (\approx 3 MMCs)
- Far South Buildings (V40, U43, V43), heavily defended (\approx 18 MMCs)
- Multi-Level Buildings (BB18, AA25), lightly defended (\approx 10 MMCs)
- Chemist Shop (W10), moderately defended (\approx 14 MMCs)
- Large Factory (S34), heavily defended (\approx 17 MMCs)

Of course, I have no idea where his HIP MMCs, Guns, pillboxes, Fortified Buildings (tunnels?) and minefields are located at this point, and so an area that looks at first to be lightly defended might actually be more heavily defended than I can tell at this juncture. Nevertheless, I've got to base my plan of attack on what I can observe at this time but need to allow for flexibility in that plan.

I'll cover each of these five areas separately for ease of reference. However, I realize that in order to succeed in fulfilling the challenging VCs as the German player in this scenario, each of the attack plans need to be coordinated and supportive of one another. Otherwise, the attacks might break down into piecemeal efforts that will give the Russians the ability to successfully counterattack at German weak points and take back multi-hex buildings making the German job that much more difficult.

Far North Building (Z1)

This building is lightly defended. Other than building Z1 itself, there aren't any other multi-hex stone buildings in the vicinity of Z1 and so I don't think it's worth devoting an abundance of resources to capture this building and the surrounding area. However, I do indeed plan to capture it and make sure there aren't any HIP Russians around to surprise me later, and then start moving the German units involved in

this effort south to support the other attacks. I do notice the Russian unit in Sewer Location Z2.C. I will need to watch out for movement from here in order to prevent the Russians from achieving cheap multi-hex building recaptures via Sewer movement. I will discuss my thoughts on countering Russian Sewer movement later in the write-up.

Far South Buildings (V40, U43, V43)

This is an area I plan to attack with significant force. This is a very important area in this scenario because there are many multi-hex buildings in the vicinity. The Germans must eventually eliminate the Russians in this area in order to:

- Win the multi-hex buildings per the VCs.
- Swing some of the German units involved around afterwards to attack the large factory S34 from the east/south.
- Prohibit Russian reinforcements from moving west to capture the abundance of multi-hex buildings in the German rear areas in this section of the map.

Multi-Hex, Multi-Level Buildings (BB18, AA25)

At first blush, the approaches to these multi-hex and multi-level buildings (and these buildings themselves) both appear to be relatively lightly defended. For those who tuned in to episode #183 of the two half-squad's podcast (www.the2halfsquads.com/) from back in September 2017, you know that I believe that these multi-hex, multi-level buildings are vitally important to the Russian player to hold. In fact, when I played the Russians in this scenario prior to the podcast recording I used almost my entire Fortified Building allotment of twelve Locations per SSR4 to fortify all three levels in as many of the front facing hexes of these two buildings as I could.

This not only afforded the Russians with +4 TEM, but also allowed them to set up HIP Guns (C2.7) in the upper levels of these buildings. This gave these Guns much improved LOS possibilities than they could ever have hoped to achieve from more traditional ground level Locations. This proved to be devastating to the German armor in that playing. Now in this case it's possible that my opponent has done the same and I just can't detect it from what I can see at start. He may also have mined the heck out of the hexes leading up to these two multi-level buildings as a trap to lure me in by making it look too easy. Perhaps. Nevertheless, my next area of attack will be directed towards the multi-level buildings. Longer term, I plan to place several MMGs and/or HMGs directed by decent leader in the 2nd level of BB25 in order to interdict Russian reinforcements in the last half of the game [see the bottom portion of the LOS Guidance Table further along in this write-up for more detail].

Chemist Shop (W10)

The Russians have set up what appears to be a moderate defense of this building. This is another sector to address in

my attack plans. I plan to overwhelm this building by game turn 5 or so and then make my way south towards multi-level building BB18 after that. Watch out for the Russian unit in the X10.C Manhole Location who may choose Sewer movement!

Large Factory (S34)

Right off the bat I notice that the Russians have set up a significant defense in the large factory building (S34). I understand that it is very tempting to do this as the Russian player since it is fortified on the perimeter via SSR4. Furthermore, the Russians are Fanatic while in the factory (due to SSR1: CG11). Therefore, it must *seem* like a good idea as the Russian player to do this when one considers having 6-2-8 and/or 4-5-8 squads manning both MMGs and HMGs, with an effective morale level of 9, protected (at least on the outside) by +4 TEM. Even if the Germans should manage to break a few Russian squads on the outside hexes with heavy FP under good leadership direction, these Russian MMCs can often rout back easily within the interior of this factory and rally back quickly with their high morale levels (Broken units are still Fanatic per A10.8 and the -1 Rally DRM afforded for being in a factory/building are both are in effect). Additionally, this is a factory/building that the Germans *must* take per the VCs and so, from the Russian perspective, why not defend it heavily? I totally get it. It does seem to make good sense from the Russian perspective.

Well, I'll tell you why I think this tactic may not be such a good idea for the Russian defender. I had read on previously posted AARs covering this scenario that setting up too strong a defense in factory S34 is not such a good tactic for the Russians because it can become too exposed to envelopment should the Germans carefully surround it and attack all sides of the factory at once. This type of attack would prevent the Fanatic Russians from routing and rallying back so easily and/or as often as they would like. If this type of attack is employed properly by the German player, he should be able to neutralize the major benefit that this defensive disposition was designed to create. In fact, if properly attacked, it may even bag the Germans a number of eliminated (elite) Russian MMCs in the end due to rout failures. In fact, I had discussed this notion at length in episode #183 of the Two Half-Squads podcast mentioned earlier. In that instance I was on the Russian side of the line and had decided *not* to set up my defense too heavily in this factory for this reason. I don't know if my erstwhile opponent has listened to this podcast in advance of our game or not, but if he did, he clearly didn't agree with my analysis based on his set up!

In any event, my plan in this case is to pretty much **ignore** the large factory for the first half of the scenario or so. I plan to just let those heavily armed and Fanatic Russians sit there for a long while simply stewing in their own juices. Meanwhile, I'll be going after less heavily defended areas and hopefully eliminate a number of Russian units along the

way. By the time I start to attack the large factory (S34) in game turn 11 or 12 or so, I plan to attack it from all sides and with a strong force under much more favorable conditions than I can muster at the beginning of the game, and this, after having reduced threats from other areas by that time.

Of course, I do need to make sure I have enough game turns and units to do this with when the time arrives because once again, it is a mandatory element of the VCs that this factory be taken. One thought I have is to utilize the (9) 8-3-8s that arrive in HTs on game turn 10 as reinforcements to attack the factory from the west. To facilitate this future action, I plan to set up (3) MMCs and an 8-1 leader in rubble hex C38 for clearance duty at the beginning of the game. Since the HTs have the option to enter on road hex A37 on game turn 10, this (now cleared hex) will enable the HTs to speed their way forward to disembark near the western and southern parts of the factory preparing to attack a turn or two after disembarking behind the safety of the nearby wall. By that time, I hope to have cleared out the southern defenders in buildings V40, U43, and V43 which should enable some of those units to join in the attack. Additionally, I plan by then to have taken multi-hex, multi-level building AA25 as well as most of the buildings in front of it. Many of these German troops (now presumably freed up at this point in the game) will now be able to attack the factory from the north and east sides in coordination with the attacks coming from the 8-3-8s in the reinforcement group moving in from the west/south. The remainder of these units who are not designated to go after the large factory will be used to contain the Russian reinforcement groups entering from the east.

Other Considerations

Deployment: Per A2.9, I have maximized the legally allowable 10% FRU (8 full squads) at-start deployment allotment and also plan to roll liberally for deployment of my remaining (4-4-7, 4-6-7, and 4-6-8) squads throughout the game. There are a number of reasons for this:

- a) The standard reason (which is to dissipate Russian Defensive FP at advancing units).
- b) To hold key multi-hex stone buildings in areas where Russian HIP units may emerge later in order to reclaim them.
- c) To help occupy Sewer Locations and serve as +1 drm per MMC in the Sewer Emergence dr (per B8.42).
- d) To perform Searching activities in areas where HIP mines and/or units are suspected.
- e) Sniper attack absorption (protecting my strongest leaders).
- f) The Russians have Booby Trap level C capability per RB SSR15. Consequently, the German player must watch out for DRs of 12 when

attempting to Deploy! This is based on my understanding that a deployment DR in the RPh is a Task Check and is therefore vulnerable to Booby Trap activation (B28.9).

Sewers: Again, in the Two Half-Squads episode #183, I talked about how surprisingly effective the Russian Sewer movement was at infiltrating behind German lines and threatening to take back multi-hex buildings away from the Germans, thereby frustrating their progress towards satisfying the VCs. In that playing, our German opponents were not expecting our substantial emphasis on Sewer movement and were not prepared. Consequently, they ended up devoting a disproportionate amount of their resources towards chasing down our Russian units moving behind them into the backfield through the Sewers.

In this case, while I am certainly aware of the possibility and consequences of Russian Sewer movement and will endeavor to prepare for it, it is not an easy thing to counter. I do plan to place some of my (at-start deployed) three full-squad equivalents allowed by SSR5 in one or more key Manhole Locations that the Russian must traverse in order to move deeper in the German backfield. In this way, I have a chance to cause the Sewer movers to become "Discovered" per the B8.42 Sewer Emergence dr and, if this happens, become subject to -2 Hazardous movement and Point-blank fire from the (no longer) hidden half-squads. Should the Russian units in the sewer break under this situation they will be eliminated (B8.45). I realize however, that the odds are less than 50/50 that all these things will go the way I want them to go, but this is the best method I can think of to try to counter the Russian Sewer movement. Russian Manhole Locations that I have my eye on for this possibility include V41.C, U44.C, and X25.C.

German Firebases: The Germans have a lot of firepower and good leadership in this scenario which they must use effectively to achieve the VCs. The table below identifies the key German firebases and leadership assignments.

Fort.	HIP/Deploy?	Hex	Units	Other	Firepower
		S43.0	9-2, (3) 5-4-8, LMG, MMG, HMG	Firebase	30
Trench		U13	9-2, (3) 5-4-8 (3) LMG	Firebase	24
Trench	Deploy	U16	10-2 (3) 4-6-8, LMG, MMG	Firebase	20
	Deploy	U25	10-3, (2) 2-4-8, (2) 4-6-8, (3) MMG, (3) HMG	Firebase	36

Notice that the important firebase of 36FP directed by the 10-3 leader in U25 has LOS to six of the seven level 2 Locations of both buildings BB18 and AA25 (see LOS Guidance

RB5- LOS to Russian Multi-hex Building Level 2 Locations																							
BB18.2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	
BB19.2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	
CC19.2	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y!	Y	Y!	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	
CC20.2	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	
AA25.2	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
BB24.2	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	
BB25.2	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y!	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Row U	U6		U12									U17	U18					U23	U24	U25			
Row T				T12										T18	T19			T21					
Row S		S11			S12	S13	S14	S15	S16						S20					S26		S41.1	S42
Row Q																					Q27		
Column	6	11	12U	12T	12S	13	14	15	16	17	18U	18T	19	20	21	23	24	25	26	27	41	42	

*Gray indicates Roofless Location; *Yellow indicates Pre-Registered OBA Location

From BB25.2:									
	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
GG	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N
HH	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
II	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
JJ	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

Chart). I'm hoping to find the Russian Observer early in one of these Locations and hopefully break him (or better) to minimize the number of Russian 120mm (24 FP) OBA FFE attacks coming back at me.

Meanwhile, the U16 firebase team led by the 10-2 leader, plans to move into a position from which to hit the well-placed Russian trench behind the Chemist Shop which can interdict the road going both north and south quite nicely. This must be addressed.

LOS Guidance: I've created a handy-dandy table that details the major LOS capabilities to the level two multi-hex, multi-level buildings BB18 and AA25 from most of the likely German at-start Locations. This can be used to identify where my firebases, large mortars, and ATGs can go in order to make sure they can hit the Locations they need to should hidden Russians appear in any of these Locations.

Clearance Duty: Although I'd rather have all my German MMCs and leaders attacking the Russians, this is a long scenario and I think it's worth the investment in time to clear some rubble and Debris hexes early on in order to allow the reinforcing AFVs an easier/quicker time to become engaged after their turn of entry. To facilitate this, I've assigned the units below to perform some clearing tasks (B24.7, O1.5). The idea is that the two large stacks should succeed on turn

HIP/ Deploy?	Hex	Units	Other
Deploy	C38	8-1, (3) 4-6-7	Clearing duty
Deploy	K20	8-1, (3) 4-4-7	Clearing duty
	L19	2-3-7	Clearing duty
	M27	2-3-7	Clearing duty
Deploy	P28	8-1, (3) 4-6-7	Clearing duty

1 or 2, while, at the same time, the half-squads will gain labor status in their Clearance attempts. From there, the larger stacks can join the half-squads and hopefully gain relatively rapid clearing success due to the increased labor force buffeted by the labor status DRM in turns 3 and 4.

Rooftop LOS: The three German half-squads that are set up in Rooftop Locations at start are all (collectively) within 16 hexes of the most likely Rooftop Locations that may contain hidden/concealed at-start Russian units. Per O.5/B23.82, “a unit can remain hidden or concealed on a rooftop only if there are no Good Order enemy ground units within 16 hexes of it that are at the same or higher level with a LOS to it”, so these 3 half-squads should reveal any of these. While I really don’t expect my opponent to have any units in Rooftop Locations, it doesn’t hurt me too much to place these 3 half-squads where they are at start just to make sure. They’ll quickly leave their Rooftop Locations on turn 1 and join the action.

HIP/ Deploy?	Hex	Units	Other
	Q44.R	2-4-8	Rooftop unit
	T24.R	2-4-8	Rooftop unit
	U22.R	2-4-8	Rooftop unit

Breach Duty: I’m going to burn a couple of DCs early on in order to Breach (B23.711, B23.9221, O5.33) a couple of Factory interior walls on turn 1. The first Breach attempt coming out of hex Q28 is for offensive purposes and will allow a freer flow of units attacking within the R29 Factory. The second Breach attempt coming out of hex U23 is more of a defensive tactic and is intended to enable a path for routing/moving backwards should the Russian OBA land in this area. I’ve played this scenario before and I know how frustrating it can be to be ‘stuck’ in the opponent’s FFE because of a factory wall. I’m glad to burn a DC in this case to prevent this from happening, thank you.*4

HIP/ Deploy?	Hex	Units	Other
Deploy	Q28	7-0, (2) 4-6-7, 5-4-8, (2) DC	Breach duty
Deploy	U23	?, 7-0, (2) 5-4-8, 4-6-7, DC	Breach duty

*4: I often like to use my 7-0 and/or 8-0 leaders for DC placement duty as they possess those extra 2MFs as SMCs (as compared to MMCs) that often becomes helpful when placing those DCs without experiencing the CX penalty, and we’re not sacrificing a negative leadership modifier for directing Prep Fire by using them this way.

Russian HIP Tracking: In order to track the Russian HIP units and Fortifications and make sure I’ve accounted for everything as the German player, I made a table to record everything I find of the Russian HIP allotment in order to

understand what’s left of his HIP units. [Ed. A copy of this table has been included at the end of this issue.]. I don’t want to lose in the late game by allowing the Russians to reveal some hidden crew that takes back two undefended multi-hex buildings at the last minute and I’m powerless to stop them.

Turn 1 German AFVs: I’ve deliberately set up most of my potential Smoke-producing Guns (MTRs and ATGs) in the north and central areas. However, I know I will also need Smoke eventually in the south for my attack in that region. Fortunately, all four German AFVs that enter on turn 1 have Smoke (S8/9) firing and SD capabilities and can get into the action in the south without need of any clearing assistance. This they will do.

----- Turn 1 Entry -----			
enter T1 at hex:	K45	150mm AFV	to T41
enter T1 at hex:	K45	150mm AFV	to T42
enter T1 at hex:	K45	75mm AFV	to T39
enter T1 at hex:	K45	75mm AFV	to T40

TEM Table: I have also prepared what I hope will be a useful table to be used as a reminder and/or reference indicating the various factory related TEM modifiers in play. Since SSR4 makes all non-interior factory hexes fortified, there are a number of TEM permutations created depending on circumstances. Most important of all, Indirect Fire vs a unit in a Roofless Factory Hex only receives a +2 TEM per O5.45, this creates a number of unique TEM possibilities that are likely to come into play in this action (also handy for other scenarios taking place on the RB map).

		TEM v. Direct Fire from <u>outside</u> of Factory	TEM v. Direct Fire from <u>inside</u> of Factory	TEM v. Indirect Fire
Roof Intact	Non-Fortified RB Factory	+3*	+1	+3
	Fortified RB Factory	+4	+2	+3
Roofless	Non-Fortified RB Factory	+3*	+2	+2
	Fortified RB Factory	+4	+3	+2

*Red cells are n/a in scenario RB5 due to SSR4 making all non-interior Factory hexes Fortified.

German At-Start Setup:

HIP/ Deploy?	Hex	Units	Other
----- On-Board Units At Start -----			
Deploy	C38	8-1, (3) 4-6-7	Clearing duty
Deploy	K20	8-1, (3) 4-4-7	Clearing duty
	L19	2-3-7	Clearing duty
	M27	2-3-7	Clearing duty
Deploy	P28	8-1, (3) 4-6-7	Clearing duty
Deploy	Q28	7-0, (2) 4-6-7, 5-4-8, (2) DC	Breach duty
	Q44.R	2-4-8	Rooftop unit
	R39	?, 9-1, (2) 5-4-8, 8-3-8, (2) DC, FT	
	S12	?, 8-0, Radio	Observer
Deploy	S41.0	?, 8-0, (2) 4-6-7, 8-3-8	
	S41.1	8-1, (3) 5-4-8, (3) LMG	
	S43.0	9-2, (3) 5-4-8, LMG, MMG, HMG	Firebase
Deploy	S44.0	8-0, 4-6-7, 5-4-8, 8-3-8, (2) FT	
	T24.R	2-4-8	Rooftop unit
	U06	?4-6-7	
	U11	?, (2) 2-4-8, 5-4-8	
	U12	???, 2-2-8, 2-4-8, (2) 4-6-7	
	U13	9-2, (3) 5-4-8 (3) LMG	Firebase
	U15	(3) 8-3-8, DC	
Deploy	U16	10-2 (3) 4-6-8, LMG, MMG	Firebase
Deploy	U17	8-0, (2) 4-6-7, 8-3-8	
Deploy	U18	9-1, (2) 5-4-8, 4-6-8, (2) LMG	move through Rubble
	U19	5-4-8, (2) 8-3-8	
Deploy	U21	8-1, (3) 4-6-7	
	U22	?, (3) 8-3-8, FT	
	U22.R	2-4-8	Rooftop unit
Deploy	U23	?, 7-0, (2) 5-4-8, 4-6-7, DC	Breach duty
Deploy	U25	10-3, (2) 2-4-8, (2) 4-6-8, (3) MMG, (3) HMG	Firebase
Deploy	W01	8-0, (3) 4-6-7, DC	
	W03	9-1, (2) 5-4-8, 8-3-8, (2) LMG, FT	
	W04	(3) 4-6-7	
Deploy	W05	8-0, 4-6-8, 5-4-8, 8-3-8, DC	

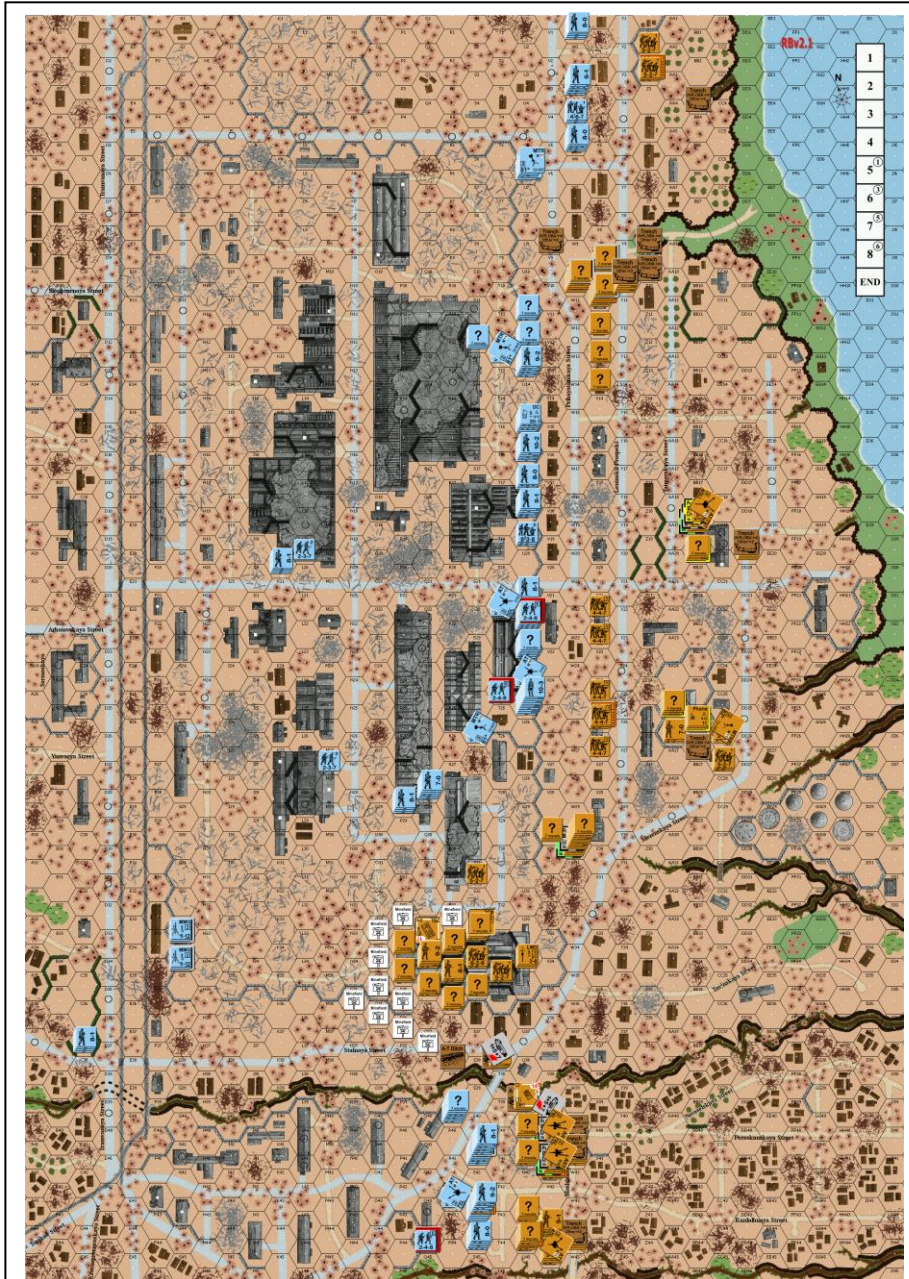
HIP/ Deploy?	Hex	Units	Other
----- HIP Units At Start -----			
HIP	G33.1	2-3-7, MMG	
HIP	G34.1	2-3-7, MMG	
HIP	R42.2	2-2-8, 75L ATG	
HIP	S26.2	2-2-8, 81mm MTR	
HIP	S43.C	(4) 2-3-7	
HIP	T12.2	2-2-8, 81mm MTR	
HIP	T21.2	2-2-8, 50L ATG	
HIP	U06.3	2-2-8, 75L ATG	
HIP	U06.3	2-2-8, 81mm MTR	
HIP	U24.2	2-2-8, 50L ATG	

Turn by Turn Analysis

(Note that all these are written from my (German side) perspective.)

German Turn 1

After setup, I learned that my opponent was caught unaware that the Germans are allowed to set up (in Buildings/rubble/trenches (see errata to RB5 at <http://www.multimanpublishing.com/Support/ASL/ASL/ASLOfficialErrata/tabid/107/Default.aspx>)) on the Perimeter and just not behind it as the Russians are required to do. This may have impacted his defensive dispositions significantly. But the reality is that any large alterations would be very time-consuming, so the Russian player stuck with what he had and we played onward. See the “Final Thoughts and Recommendations” near the end of this article for more thoughts on the Perimeter setup restriction. Another rule learned right off the bat the hard way was this: I thought that I could just draw a single black card and attempt to place my pre-registered AR/FFE into my Pre-Registered Hex per C1.73 and roll for accuracy, etc. However, my opponent pointed out to me that C1.21 still states that “Battery Access must be attempted a second (i.e., an extra) time if ≥ one non-hidden enemy ground unit is in/adjacent-to the AR . . . counter's hex but none of those units are Known to the Observer.” So, since there are concealed enemy units in/adjacent to my Pre-Registered Hex (BB18.2), I now needed to draw an extra black card in order to implement my plan. Luckily, I did so and the FFE came down accurately onto this building. Nothing major happened to the units therein but I rolled low enough to cause at least PTCs at the level 2 Locations of this building which means the HIP Observer with the Field Phone would have had to reveal himself had he been in one of these suspected Locations. He



At-Start Set-Up Locations (Note: HIP units have been placed on map for reference)

was not. That meant that I could now zero in on the AA25 building in order to locate this important enemy unit. I suspected that AA25.2 containing the large concealed stack was either an HMG nest or a stack of dummies. Either way I was not going to fire on this location with my 10-3-directed kill stack in U25 at this time as my goal was to find the HIP phone guy. I fired a 16 flat at the presumably empty BB25.2 location and low and behold he was there along with a hidden MMC Observer designated to provide Spotted fire direction for his large MTRs which were also HIP nearby. Unfortunately, I only Pinned the 8-0 Phone Observer and had

no effect on the MMC unit. If I could have gotten ROF with either the MMGs and/or the HMGs I would have been able to follow-up with either a 21FP flat or even 36FP flat coming back at them, but alas, ROF was not achieved. Looks like I may have to face some of his 120mm (24FP) OBA after all.

Meanwhile, he busted me up pretty good in S41.1 in the south. My rolling back-to-back 12s and then a 10 on my NMC rolls did not help matters there. His MOL-P guy nailed my first StuG in S42. Meanwhile, two of the other three AFVs are bracketed by the Russian 76L ART, Shocking one in the process. This pretty much obliterates my original plan of action for these four (now 3) AFVs that was previously designated.

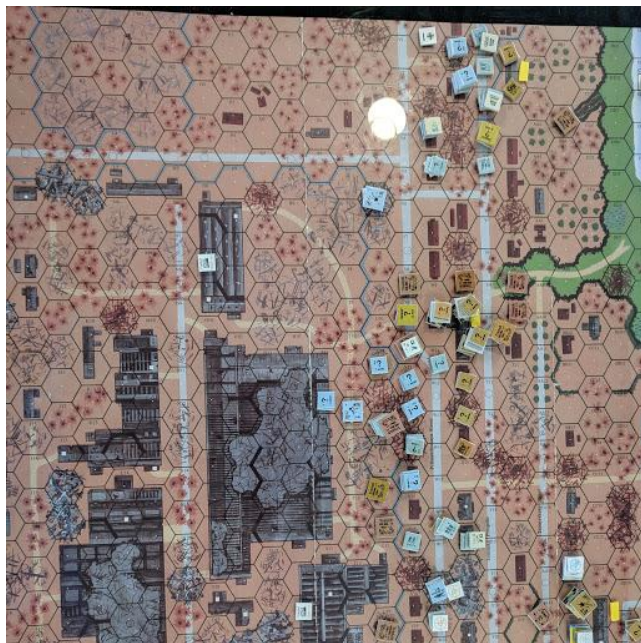
Russian Turn 1

Luckily his (now Known) Phone-man in BB25.2 did not have hex U25 or anywhere near it pre-designated as its Pre-Registered Hex. So, while he did successfully place an AR, it could not become an FFE immediately. This gives me another chance in the DFPh to hit that 8-0 with 36FP. However, my adversary cleverly filled my 10-3 firebase with Smoke [note that this will actually save my 10-3 leader's bacon from a Sniper attack on German turn 2] although I do still manage to break the 8-0 with a 2MC brought about by the 36FP +4 shot, which leaves the pre-existing Russian SR where it is. Again, I don't get ROF as I would have liked to potentially eliminate that pesky 8-0 with another a 21FP or 36FP +4 shot. Alas, it was not meant to be. However, I won't look a gift horse in the mouth

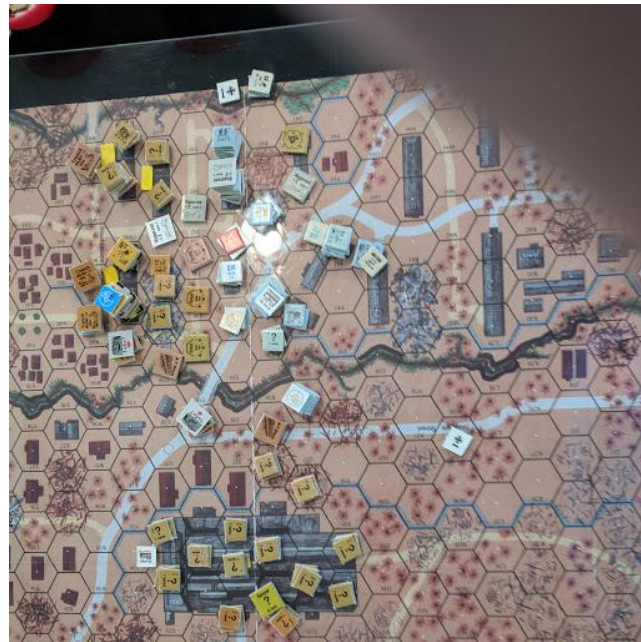
and will be comforted to know that the Observer is at least broken.

Meanwhile, in the south I now learn that I've run into a buzz saw of HIP Guns in level-1 fortified Locations which reveal themselves. Not only did I lose my first AFV to the MOL-P, but now have two of the remaining three AFVs under Shock counters and one of these is Immobilized as well. I'm actually fortunate that the Russian TK rolls were high enough not to eliminate them outright as they might have. At the same time, I did eliminate his first Sewer mover in S43.C

per my HIP half-squads! There are a number of other Sewer units on the move however in other sectors.



End of Turn 1: North



End of Turn 1: South

German Turn 2

The plan moved along ok I suppose, but back-to-back snakes from my opponent during Defensive Fire with 8-flat and 6-flat shots respectively took their toll. I also rolled a number of 12s on MC DRs in response. My only good fortune

appeared when the Russian sniper hit my 10-3 stack with 6 half-squads. Of course the 10-3 was selected in the Random Selection process and the dominos started tumbling from there. However, I was saved when I paused to notice A14.21 which reads that, "Only the lowest . . . in-hex TEM/SMOKE DRM applicable to any eligible target currently occupying that hex, regardless of LOS, is considered in the comparison." So, since Smoke does count in the lowest TEM evaluation, the 10-3 stack should not have been selected as it had a higher TEM. Whew! During the APh, I tempt fate by advancing the 10-3 stack to U24 which still can see BB25.2 but without the Smoke penalty in anticipation of his recovering his Field Phone with a Good Order leader once again. Finally, it should be noted that we had established a successful wind change on this player turn and it's now blowing as a mild breeze against me to the southwest. This may be a mixed blessing depending on how

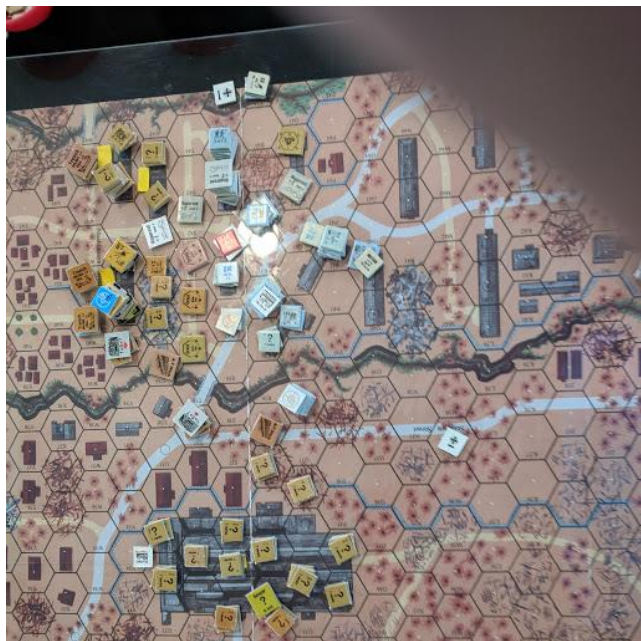
future Smoke placements unfold.

Russian Turn 2

He's continuing to sneak behind me with at least 5 Sewer movement guys. He's also taken back two multi-hex buildings making my count a net zero at this point (T26 and S24). He looks like he's going to recover his Phone in BB25.2, too. My 10-3-directed 36FP shots have done little so far and I haven't gotten ROF once in four fire phases. I'll count my blessings though since my 10-3 leader is at least alive and kicking from the close call last turn. I plan to swarm the BB18 multi-hex, multi-level building soon.



End of Turn 2: North



End of Turn 2: South

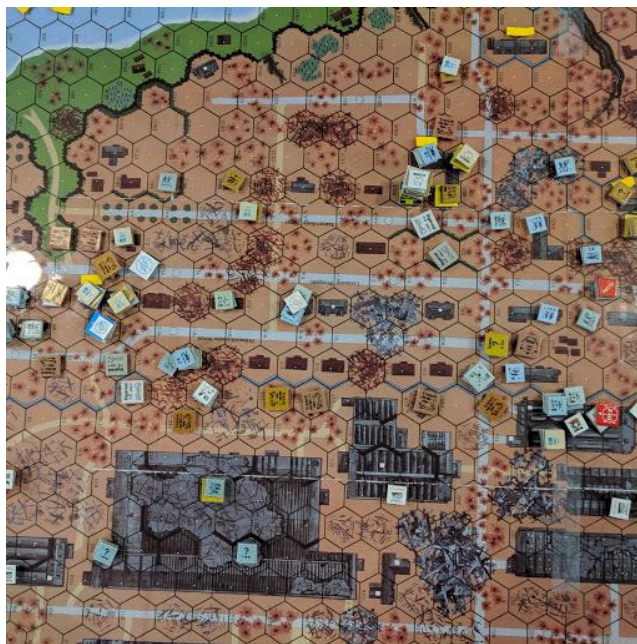
German Turn 3

Of course, he recovered his Phone with that pesky 8-0 leader and absorbed another 36 flat shot unscathed! My 10-3-directed fire group (now in U25) has now had five fire phases in which to fire and has not yet had ROF with any of his (3) MMGs and (3) HMGs. The Russian 8-0 Observer dutifully places his 120mm OBA SR right on the 10-3 kill stack, but it drifts away about five hexes. I did eliminate some Russians elsewhere in CC but I've got a long way to go. Notice how I'm not even trying to attack the large factory at this point. Also notice my two last HIP half-squads, each manning an MMG in G33.1 and G34.1, respectively, just in case he tries to move some of the large factory guys out in the westerly direction thinking it's free pickings on multi-hex buildings in that area. [I later learn that he didn't do this because he's got all the hexes mined just outside the west side of the large factory and didn't want to move his own units through them]. Meanwhile, his 10-2-leader-directed .50 cal. MG in the T37 pillbox malfunctions, but it's caused a lot of damage already previous to the breakdown.

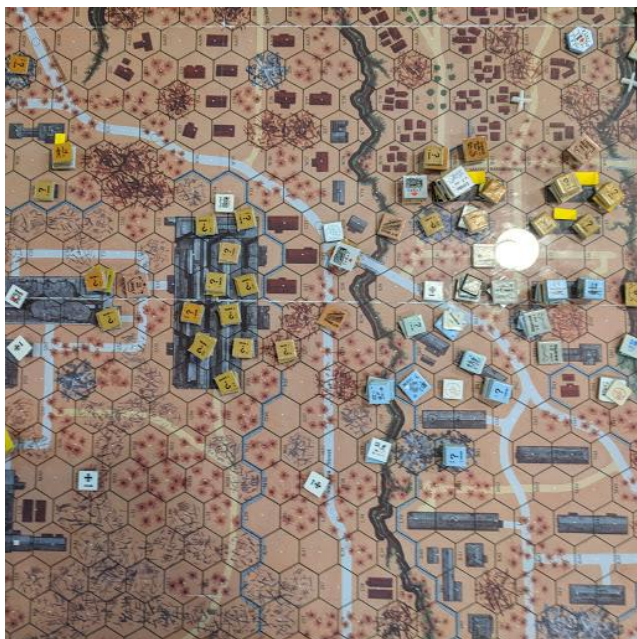
Russian Turn 3

This player turn was kind to the Germans. This time I had the snakes with my OBA in the north part of the map eliminating several Russian MMCs there and accelerating my takeover of the Chemist shop (W10). There was no rubble creation although that would have been cool. I rolled another snakes in the south with a fire group directed by my 9-2 leader which eliminated his crew manning the 76L Gun in the level-1 fortified Location (V40.1). However, his 24 FP OBA has now got onto my 10-3 stack and others. The big leader

Pinned, but I voluntarily broke him to enable him to rout back with the broken MMCs and away from the OBA (which I'm still complaining about him being able to use after what I've thrown at the 8-0 Observer). Also, lost a 75* StuIG to the 45LL ATG in the south.



End of Turn 3: North



End of Turn 3: South

German Turn 4:

This was a clean-up turn. I surrounded several broken Russians in the north and eliminated them for failure to rout. I took a couple more MMCs out via CC attacks (nearly always choosing the black CC numbers when the odds favored me). I only chose red HtH numbers when I had a successful ambush, but that was not often as I usually had to overcome the -1 Ambush drm for Russian Stealth. I now have six multi-hex buildings but neither of the mandatory factories. I'm still spending disproportionate resources chasing those troublesome Sewer guys all about just waiting for them to roll a 6 and get Lost. My opponent wisely dm'ed his (now malfunctioned) .50 cal. MG in the pillbox in T37. I assume there is a tunnel dug there to somewhere in the large factory that he will move it through next turn.

Russian Turn 4

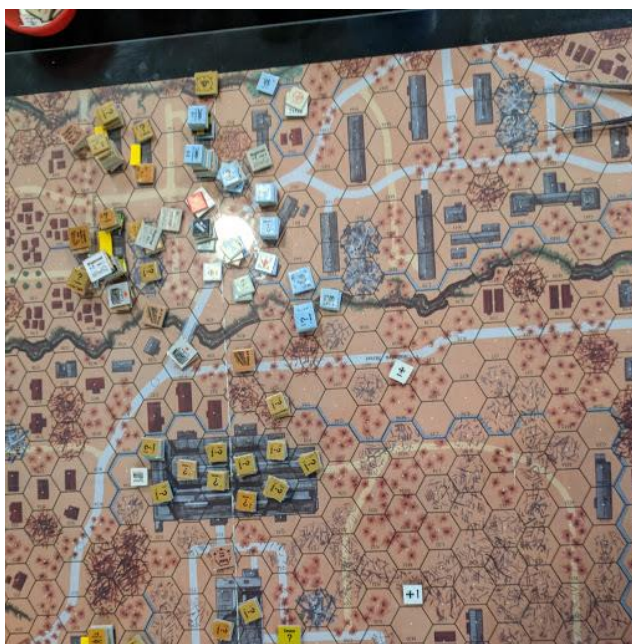
I've now taken building BB18 and will be trying for AA25 next, but expect that this will take several turns. As mentioned in the opening remarks, these are key buildings in my plan. By placing some MGs in the 2nd level of these buildings I will be able to seriously interdict his reinforcements which will eventually arrive and this will also prevent him from using these buildings as a strong firebase against me as I try to move on the large factory from the rear. Meanwhile, the lucky Russian continues to inflict damage on the Germans with his OBA. He cleverly converts to Harassing Fire (C1.72) which DMs the 10-3 and his compatriots. It is not just an astute move because of its two-hex FFE reach, it is also a clever decision because it doesn't



End of Turn 4: North

require the 'extra' black card draw since the 10-3 stack is out of the Observer's LOS but is not adjacent to the FFE counter. Nice! He also does move the (malfunctioned) and dm .50 cal. MG safely through a tunnel to the large factory into hex U35 per my expectation. Good move on his part. I'm hoping it will not be repaired.

Meanwhile, his Sewer dudes continue their subterranean forays. They haven't yet rolled a 6 to get Lost per B8.41 in approximately twelve tries. I don't know the odds of successfully avoiding any sixes in twelve tries, but I'm thinking it's not common. At this point I estimate that I can capture three more multi-hex buildings rather easily on top of the seven I now hold. That means that if I take the two mandatory factories, I will satisfy the VCs exactly, but that also means that if the Sewer dudes break out and recapture a multi-hex building then I will lose. So, I must hunt them down for as long as it takes. I also expect that the large factory will become a battle royal and will be very painful to take.



End of Turn 4: South

German Turn 5

My successful units in the north are now moving in a southerly direction as rapidly as they can to join in the action down there. I'm leaving one HS behind in each building in case he's got more of his HIP MMCs somewhere in the vicinity which will prevent him from retaking them too easily. At this point I've only revealed about 2/3 of his HIP units, so I need to play it conservatively. I've captured eight multi-hex buildings now and am making progress on the AA25 multi-hex, multi-level building. You'd think the Sewer guys would roll a 6 eventually, right? Meanwhile, I'm

trying to reposition my radio man in the 2nd level of BB18 to direct my remaining OBA modules allotted to this battery from this level 2 Location. I've only used two missions out of an original deck of 10B/3R. So now there are 8B/3R remaining which is equivalent to the standard OBA German draw pile. I told you that mobility for this radio may become important! On second thought, maybe I should move this radio towards the AA25 multi-hex multi-level building instead? I also double broke the Russian 2-2-8 crew manning the 76L in V41.1. My AFVs are now safer in the south, however, only one of them remains (from the original 4) to be able to appreciate this new situation.

Russian Turn 5

His annoying Sewer movers continue to avoid trouble (but they're causing me sleepless nights). No 6s rolled again this turn. He repairs his .50cal MG that was firing out of the bunker in the southern sector and was causing me great consternation as it was directed by his 10-2 leader. It was again a very shrewd move on my opponent's part to place the .50 cal. MG in that spot because it is the only MG that the Russian can dm (A9.8) and this ability also enables it to move safely through the tunnel he has established between the bunker and the large factory (no more than 3PPs may be portaged through a tunnel). Very ingenious.

I got very lucky in CC in the large factory (hex R29). He ambushed me, but despite this I eliminated two of his full squads while losing none of my own. No skill involved there. In the meantime, I'm still trying to capture building AA25. Should be able to do so next turn. I am wondering if my OBA (once repositioned in BB18) can do anything to neutralize



End of Turn 5: North

his MG nest in W30? This Russian strongpoint appears to be my next significant obstacle.



End of Turn 5: South

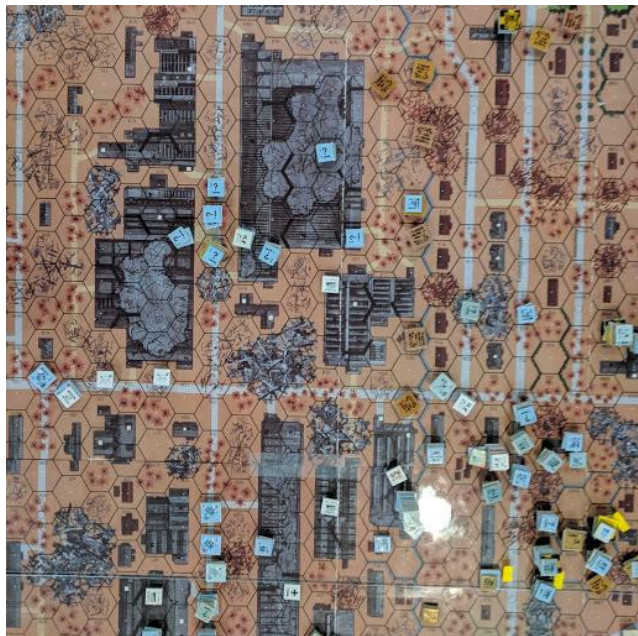
German Turn 6

I nearly have multi-hex, multi-level building AA25; he still has his 7-0 leader upstairs (now Encircled) and an MMC in the Cellar. Now I'm focusing on how to address his (2) 4-5-8s (2) HMGs, and 8-1 leader in W30 which are slowing everything up at this point. I'm still moving units that are freed up in a southerly direction in general, but looking to at least leave a few behind to interdict key areas where the Russian reinforcements may try to advance. I'm anticipating a big battle for the large factory in the not-too-distant future as I close in from the north.

Russian Turn 6

This is exhausting! His 10-2-directed and newly repaired .50 cal. MG went on a ROF rampage. It eliminated at least three full squads in the southern sector despite them residing in stone buildings and starting off concealed! The Russian Sniper eliminated the German 9-2 leader down there too, and he had been keeping the Russians at bay. Now the tables have turned down there. Instead of a continuance of the stalemate in the south, I sense that I will need to shift to a defensive posture as I suspect that he is going to counterattack in that sector now that he's gained a numerical advantage due to his .50 cal. MG attacks. Fortunately, his reinforcement DR is higher than 5 and therefore his reinforcements have not yet come on. Russian Sewer guys in the vicinity of the large

factory appear to be retreating via the sewers back toward the large factory.



End of Turn 6: North



End of Turn 6: South

German Turn 7

Still making slow but steady progress, I now have twelve multi-hex buildings but of course still need the large factory. However, the Russians win the shootout in the south, surviving my 36FP +1 attack and punching back with 16FP

+2 attacks with ROF causing the Germans more damage in that area. Meanwhile, One of my 150* AFVs runs into his 45L ATG in S33, but the TK DR bounces. Another 150* survives a Mol-P attack. I'm going to try to sneak a HS over to the DD34 building which looks unoccupied in order to grab an extra VC multi-hex building just in case (this HS ends up breaking and is eliminated later before it succeeds in its mission by the way). I still need to wipe out the W30 guys in order to converge more freely on the large factory from the rear. I'm thinking ahead to my reinforcements in HTs that are scheduled to arrive on turn ten. I acknowledge that his AFV reinforcements will be arriving on turn 8. So far, his SSR3 allotment of infantry reinforcements have yet to emerge due to high RPh DRs, but I'm sure they will eventually. This delay has helped my cause as well. I also reveal my last two remaining HIP half-squads manning MMGs in GG33.1 and GG34.1 to bring them forward slowly, as I now realize that he's not going to be breaking out of the large factory and I'm preparing to converge on it from all sides a couple of turns down the road.

Russian Turn 7

Still no SSR3 reinforcements. One of his HMGs in W30 has broken down and that leaves one to go. My 10-3 directed kill stack has reconstituted itself and is back in the game but has no bad guys in LOS yet. The Russian counterattack in the south is making progress. He's now eliminated my 75L Gun crew in that sector. I've decided that I'm going to have to redirect some of my (9) 8-3-8s in HTs that are due to arrive on turn 10 to that sector for defensive purposes. This is bad because this will dilute their efforts on the attack with respect



End of Turn 7: North

to the western and southern parts of the large factory as originally planned.



End of Turn 7: South

German Turn 8

Much happened this turn. I've now taken all the multi-hex buildings (but DD34) north of the gully other than the large factory. I've crashed (Breached per B23.9221) a couple of AFVs through the fortified outsides of two of the large factory Locations and rolled through nine of his ten 6AP minefield hexes surrounding the large factory, thereby creating a significant number of Trail Breaks from my fully-tracked AFVs in doing so (although not all the TBs are on ideal hexsides as far as the advancing infantry is concerned). I would have done even more breaching and trail-breaking but for the fact that three of my AFVs got bogged in the Debris nearby with either 9 or 10+ Bog DRs (depending on the ground pressure DRM per D8.21). In any case, I now have a weak toehold in the large factory.

Meanwhile, I had two CC opportunities in the south where I held a 2:1 advantage in both cases and did no damage. I continue to rethink my original strategy a bit here realizing that I'll need to devote a significant amount of my turn-10 reinforcements into the southern sector for defensive purposes rather than having them all go at the large factory from the south/west sides. Remember, I cleared the rubble in hex C38 on turn 1 in order to facilitate this tactic. Did I clear that hex in vain?

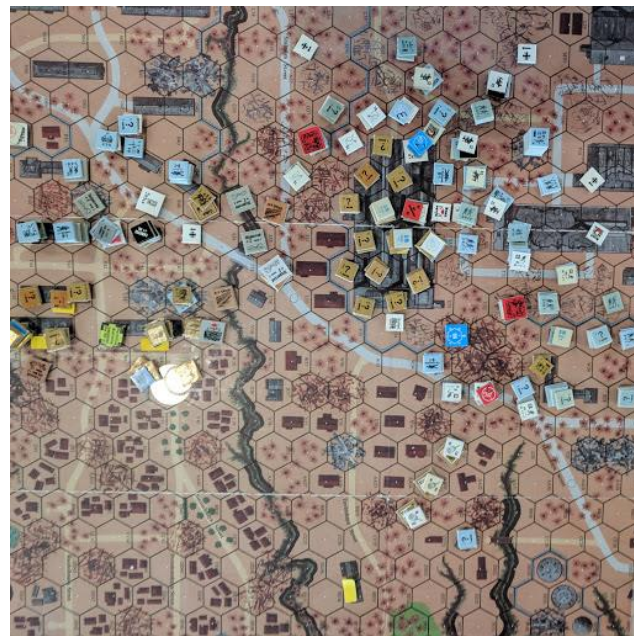
Russian Turn 8

Lots went the good guys' (my) way this player turn. I fired into the melee in S40.0 with a 20FP +5 shot and rolled a 3

which resulted in a 2MC. His 4-5-8 broke and my 5-4-8, and (2) Fanatic 2-3-8s (we'll call them 2-3-9s) all passed! Couldn't ask for more than that! I also won the melee in R39 with snakes which generated an 8-1 leader. Meanwhile, the crème-de-la-crème event occurred in the large factory though. The Russians used a MPH/APh tunnel attack from hex T34 to Q33 in the large factory. He ambushed my units there, declared HtH of course, but rolled too high to cause



End of Turn 8: North



End of Turn 8: South

damage. I did not return the favor and eliminated the attackers in CC despite the +1 penalty for being ambushed! And of course, his SSR3 reinforcements have yet to show, although his mandatory turn-8 AFV reinforcements did come onboard including his 32FP 2-hex range flamethrower tank! By the way, we take the time at this juncture to calculate the odds of not getting any reinforcements allotted by SSR3 at this point to be about 13.0%.

German Turn 9

A lot went the Germans' way again this player turn too, especially as far as progress in the large factory is concerned. I breached another outside Fortified Location with an AFV crash (which died in the process in CCRF). I also attempted another Breach attempt with a DC which failed by rolling too high. Another timely DC Breach attempt on an interior factory wall (O5.33) allowed me to fire a 24FP flat FT shot in the AFPh against his 10-2, 4-5-8, .50 cal. MG on the other side of the wall which had previously caused the Germans a number of casualties. I obtained a nice clean KIA on this attack which was about as good as I could ask for under the circumstances. The Russian sniper eliminated the 8-0 leader that had been in possession of the radio in the AA25 building. Then, the Russians followed up with a lucky snakes IFT DR on my 7-0 leader that was going after the radio to take the place of the now-deceased 8-0 and broke him of course.

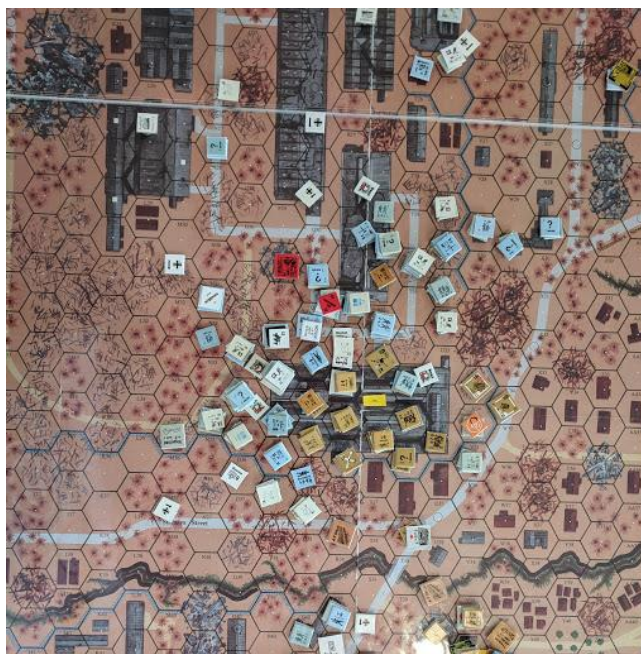
Russian Turn 9

Oh my! This was the turn that the Russians have been waiting for. This may have been the worst player turn I've ever experienced. I don't know where to begin; almost nothing



End of Turn 9: North

went right for the Germans on this player turn. Suffice it to say that I lost four leaders and nine squad-equivalents due to outright KIA results, double breaks, failure to rout, or CC attacks. There are also a handful more of my units broken and shivering in fear somewhere but at least they're alive. His flamethrower tank went on a rampage and his 9-2 leader directing another Russian HMG inside the large factory ripped me up big time as well. His Fanatic Russians in the large factory are standing strong and it's tough enough to Breach through the minefields and Fortified exterior Locations. Now I find that I also must contend with the interior walls which are a pain in the b*&^%! I won't be able to sustain too many player turns like this one. On the bright side, his SSR3 reinforcements still did not appear. We calculate the odds of having no reinforcements show up by turn 9 at 3.6%.



End of Turn 9: South

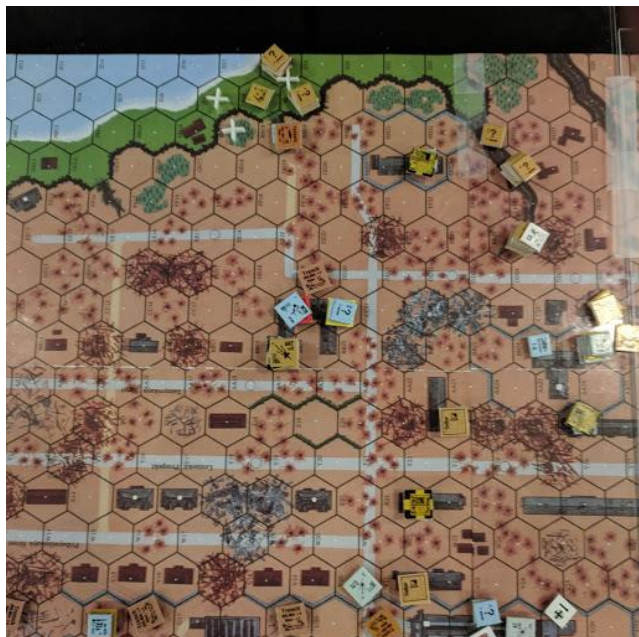
German Turn 10

Things started to turn around a bit after the last player turn. I'm still making slow but steady progress within the large factory. Most importantly, the Russian flame-throwing tank ran out of fuel with a DR of 10. It did fire successfully 3 times prior to this outcome and dished out death on those three occasions. Meanwhile, my nine HT-riding reinforcements came on at hex K45 (so I guess I did clear that rubble in C38 for no reason on turn 1). Five of the nine HTs went straight into the southern sector to help out there. The other four HTs turned the other way to loop around and move towards the southern and western side of the large factory. It will take them at least another turn or two to get into the action near their objective. One interesting problem

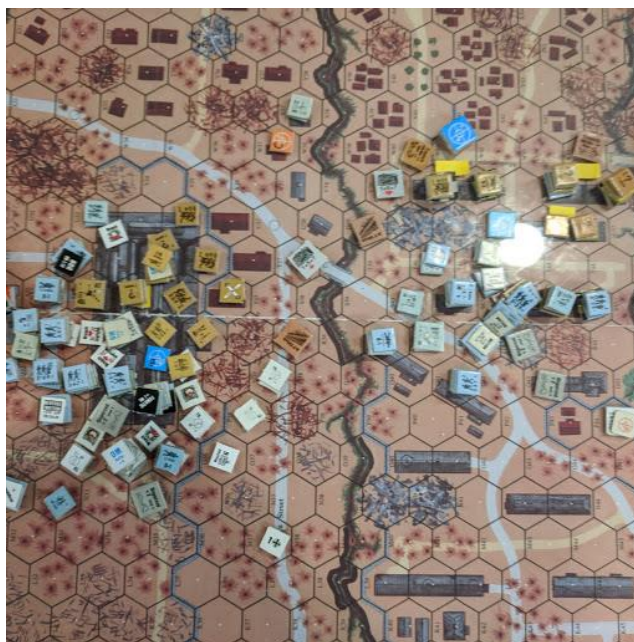
for the German in this instance is because the Russians have not had a single SSR3-determined reinforcement unit arrive yet, it still gives the Russian maximum flexibility as to where they can come on because he hasn't yet committed any of them anywhere. I acknowledge that this is nothing compared to the problem that the lack of reinforcements is causing the Russians and so I don't think my opponent will have too much sympathy over my perceived problem!

Russian Turn 10

Another bad player turn for the good guys (me). The Russians do get eight counters per SSR3 plus their mandatory allotment of infantry reinforcements on this turn. They enter in the weakly guarded center area from the west. My 10-3 stack took a simple MC result on the outskirts of the large factory and of course the 10-3 rolled a 12 (wounding but not eliminating him). The 10-3 led kill stack was also attacked by an ADJACENT 1-2-7 Russian crew which fired a 2PF +2 shot and yielded another NMC result. Naturally, this caused a double break of the wounded 10-3 and subsequent elimination on the wound check. The subsequent +2 LLMC busted up several of the six HS that were in the Location with the (former) 10-3, basically erasing the presence of the 36FP, 10-3 directed kill stack for this scenario. This stack has really done nothing significant in 10 turns of trying (other than look like a powerful stack of 14 counters containing 6 Half-squads, 6 MGs, a Fanatic counter, and all topped off with a 10-3 leader).



End of Turn 10: North



End of Turn 10: South

German Turn 11

At this point, the Russians only have about five MMCs and one leader in the large factory remaining. A slow but sure grind should take them out eventually, but there will continue to be nasty casualties in the process. My losses in attempting to take the large factory so far have been atrocious, but I have plenty of infantry units left to complete the job. Meanwhile, the southern sector has stabilized and even swung back to pro-German thanks in large part to the four reinforcing 8-3-8s and their accompanying SMCs and weapons. Meanwhile, my turn-11 AFVs (six of them) are marching right through the middle of the board, aided by the several Clearance attempts made on the Debris-covered road hexes in the early game (so not all of my previous Clearance attempts were in vain!). Finally, a small contingent of German forces has remained behind to hinder the mandatory (and SSR3-enabled) reinforcements that have started to arrive in the weakly guarded center area from the west. The Russians outnumber me there but these few units are enough to slow his reinforcements down in time for additional reinforcing units to get there in force.

Russian Turn 11

Russians get another eight reinforcement counters per SSR3. Twelve remain. My *original* OBA module has now obtained another SR with an observer in AA25.2. This should interdict his reinforcements nicely in the vicinity of HH18 and FF24 gullies. My opponent and I both acknowledge that reinforcing German AFVs heading up the middle will have enough MPs on German turn 12 to bring their guns and MG

firepower to bear on the Russian reinforcement groups. Unlike my previous AFVs, these each have 3/5 MG firepower which is very useful against Russian infantry. At the same time, my new OBA module brought in on Turn 10 has successfully landed its first FFE right in the middle of the remaining Russian units on the southern end of the large factory in/around T36. This seals the Russian fate in that key victory building. Now they're trapped between German

OBA and large German fire groups. Finally, the southern sector is down to about 3 Russian Good Order MMCs which are significantly outnumbered in that area and without hope of reinforcements at this point since the Russian reinforcements that have come on have chosen the middle of the board so far. With all that taken into consideration, the Russian commander throws in the towel and concedes the scenario.

Aftermath

Final count is +13 multi-hex buildings, but only one of the two mandatory factories is in this group. However, had the game continued, it is clear that the German player would have taken the three multi-hex buildings in the southern sector as well as the remaining (mandatory) factory which is why the Russian player yielded.

I thought it would be interesting to clear away the Russian and German units and show a close-up picture of the physical carnage around the large factory. In this picture you can see:

- Nine of the ten 6AP minefield hexes, (from the initial Russian OB)
- Ten Trail Break counters across them (most were caused by fully-tracked AFVs moving through (B28.61), while one was made by an infantry Clearance attempt (B28.6)
- Six Factory Breaches (B23.9221, O5.33)
 - Three of these were from fully-tracked AFVs while three others were caused by DCs
 - Four of the Breaches are on exterior walls, while two are on interior factory walls



End of Turn 11: North



End of Turn 11: South



Minefield Trail Breaks and Factory Breaches close up.

Interesting rules situations that occurred:

- We had an incident where an 8-0, an 8-1, and three MMCs were in a Location when fired upon and suffered an NMC result. The 8-0 went Berserk. When rolling to determine the Berserk status of the other units (per A15.41), the 8-1 became Berserk alongside the 8-0, but all three MMCs rolled high enough to avoid Berserk status themselves. However, per A15.41, “When a leader goes berserk, he must . . . attempt to change any . . . other friendly units . . . in the same Location to berserk status also.” We interpreted this to mean that the MMC’s had to try again (this time with a -1 DRM from the most recently created Berserk 8-1 leader) to become Berserk. Two of the three MMC’s did so, the remaining MMC refusing to do so twice!
- We had a circumstance in which a 9-2 and a couple of MMCs with a morale level of 8 were required to roll a MC DR. The 9-2 leader rolled a 12 on his MC but passed his wound severity roll per A17.11. Subsequently, the MMCs each passed their respective MCs. At this point the wounded and broken 9-2 leader had a morale level of 8, not 9. The question was whether or not the MMCs were required to take the +2 LLTC per A10.2 or not? We played it such that they were not required to do so since the leader’s *current* morale level was not higher than theirs. However, I now see that there is an official Q&A on this question and that the answer is that the MMCs should have been required to take the LLTC based on the leader’s morale level prior to his wounding.
- I had a fully-tracked AFV roll into Debris hex also containing an AP minefield. The AFV Bogged (O1.2, D8.2). The AFV was trying to create a Trail Break through the minefield per B28.6. However, per the Trail Break rules in B13.4211, we read that a “wreck or Immobile vehicle on a TB counter removes that TB”. Therefore, we agreed (reluctantly in my case) that since the AFV Bogged and was therefore Immobile, the Trail Break wasn’t there. Even if the AFV started successfully next turn and removed its Bog status, there would be no TB established. I’ve never had this happen before. I guess it makes sense after thinking about it.
- Another interesting situation occurred in the late part of the scenario. I had bypassed a Russian MMC in the ground level of a building with a CE HT which remained in Motion. This invoked the vehicle bypass ‘sleaze’ effect. The Russian MMC attempted CCRF during the DFPh and succeeded in immobilizing the HT. During the CCPh, the MMC did not eliminate the HT and a melee counter was placed. During the DFPh of the ensuing Russian

player turn, I wanted to fire into the melee in an attempt to break the Russian MMC. The question was whether or not my CE HT was susceptible or immune to this incoming FP from German units? We played it such that since the CE HT was immobilized, it also was held in melee and therefore would be susceptible to the incoming fire. However, a careful reading of A11.7 at this time indicates that “A vehicle is *never* held in Melee and, if Mobile, may move out of a CC Location normally in its MPH.” This says to me that a vehicle even if Immobile is still not *held* in melee. Meanwhile, A11.15 says that “. . . Melee units may be attacked by non-Melee units during a fire phase . . . but all friendly Melee and *enemy* units in the Location must be attacked”. This says to me that even though my HT is not ‘held’ in Melee (although it kind of is because it’s Immobile) it is still susceptible to incoming FP while in the Melee hex. However, the Q&A on the A11.15 rule indicates that the HT should not be subject to the incoming IFT FP. Hmm.

Final Thoughts and Recommendations

I’ve now played this scenario three times, once as the Russians and twice as the Germans. This is no small feat when one considers its size. Based on these playings I’m now of the opinion that the scenario is indeed pro-German. Very likely, the size of this monster made it impractical to playtest adequately prior to publication. I have prepared several recommendations to improve both the balance and playability for those who wish to incorporate my advice when playing this scenario. Here they are:

- Lower the number of game turns from 21 to 17. 21 game turns are way too many and favors the Germans too much
- Revise SSR3 to allow the Russians to enter exactly one counter of their random reinforcement group on turn 1, two counters on turn 2, three counters on turn 3, and so forth. This will allow them to enter all 28 counters (exactly) of their SSR3 reinforcement group by turn 7 and removes the uncertainty regarding the Russian reinforcements
- Add another T-70 to the turn-8 Russian AFV reinforcements and allow them to enter them on turn 7 instead
- Allow the Russians to enter their infantry reinforcements scheduled on turn 10 on turn 9 instead
- The Germans are allowed to set up on the Perimeter per the RB5 scenario errata. I suggest disallowing this thereby not allowing either side to set up on the Perimeter

- Lower the number of German HTs and 8-3-8 reinforcements on turn 10 from nine to six. But allow them to enter on turn 9 instead.
- Lower the number of German AFV reinforcements on turn 11 from six to four. Allow them to enter on turn 10 instead.
- Use the official Russian Balance provision.

While I don't guarantee that incorporating these changes will cause the scenario to become completely balanced, I do believe that these modifications will certainly make it closer to balanced and more playable than it is now. If anyone has a chance to play it with these alterations, I'd be glad to hear about the outcome. Let me know. Here's my email address: richspilky@comcast.net.

Until then, good gaming my friends!

PLAYER PROFILE: MATT ZAJAG

Banzai: Tell us a little bit about your gaming background. How long have you been gaming? What was your first game? Are there any particular games that stood out over the years?

MZ: I've been interested in "things military" for as long as I've been alive. My parents knew that I was destined to join the Army because I was always setting up plastic soldiers with Lego forts and then "commanding them" while wearing a plastic Army helmet. I couldn't read enough about WW2 battles and I had gotten into building models at an early age. Initially I was really interested in naval combat - I played *Bismark* and *Flat Top* repeatedly and a friend had a set of rules he developed for battleship combat so we would set up popsicle sticks cut to look like ships and shoot each other up. Naturally this led to exploring boardgames - Avalon Hill's classics like *Panzer Blitz* being my "gateway drug" that led to *Squad Leader*.

Banzai: When and how did you discover ASL?

MZ: I had been playing *Panzer Blitz* for a while but something about the platoon level just didn't fit with me. I found *Squad Leader* early in high school - so around 1980 - at a local hobby shop and immediately got hooked on the detail - individual vehicles, guns, leadership, national squad characteristics. Slowly I acquired the rest of the *Squad Leader* modules but by the time I had gotten thru *GI: Anvil of Victory* I was about fed up with the whole system - the rule system just wasn't coherent anymore. I probably would have stopped there but then *Streets of Fire* and *Hedgerow Hell* came out. YES - the deluxe modules. Here was something I could play in 3D! I loved both the playing and the historical aspects of researching and painting miniatures - it was a natural extension of my enjoyment of model and diorama building. So, I picked up the *Advanced Squad Leader* rules,

found a remarkably coherent system, and through the years built a large miniatures collection and terrain system to go with the modules.

Banzai: What nationality do you enjoy playing the most?

MZ: Any - the details of each country's national traits really make for unique command challenges as a player. For example, the British trait of not cowering means you can often be more aggressive with Defensive First Fire - and who doesn't like seeing either a Russian or Chinese human wave or a Japanese banzai attack executed? Further, if a scenario has been well playtested with a desire to create a balanced scenario then any nationality can do well if played properly. If I had to choose though it would be the Russians in MMP's core rules, but if I can expand to add Bounding Fire Production's portrayal of the Poles in *Poland in Flames* then I'd chose the Poles. Partly because that's my ancestry and because so much of the "common knowledge" of how well the Poles fought is simply wrong (i.e. Polish cavalry charging German armor).

Banzai: Describe your favorite kind of scenario. What kind of scenario do you find less enjoyable?

MZ: I think concealment plays a big role in whether I think I'll enjoy a scenario or not. I'm equally at ease attacking or defending, but if an opponent's forces are set up all unconcealed prior to my setup then I think the game loses some of its challenge. This aspect of the fog of war is really difficult to replicate in a wargame - and unless one is willing to use a referee it's hard not to have that omniscient perspective of knowing exactly what you're going to have to overcome - and developing perhaps unreasonable tactics during play. Simple example: if I know my opponent has only one machine gun - and I've found it - then I am likely to rush forward in other areas more aggressively. Scenarios that allow for selecting from amongst several groups of forces resolve some of this problem, but I think the old March Madness double-blind pack epitomizes fog of war. Again, it requires a referee at least prior to set up, but it's a whole different experience attacking an enemy who you only know has "elements of a panzer grenadier company with armor support".

Banzai: What would you say are your ASL strengths and weaknesses?

MZ: Strength would be tactical patience. By that I mean assessing the potential future aspects of taking an action against the immediate possible gain. For a simple example, shooting the first enemy unit that rushes across open ground isn't always the best course of action - even though the -2 modifier is mighty convincing! Weakness is probably speed of play. I enjoy the social aspects of the game as well as the game itself and at tournaments this can get me into trouble. Then there's almost everyone's weakness - the Chapter F North Africa rules. ;-)

Banzai: What is the best part of ASL, and what is the worst?

MZ: Best is how the “friction” of war is built into the entire system. Things like weapon breakdowns and repairs, heat of battle, the artillery card draw system, snipers and the whole morale system takes *Advanced Squad Leader* far beyond a dice game. The old saying “No plan survives initial contact” is beautifully integrated into the system, yet at the same time one can use probabilities - and tactical flexibility - to achieve success.

Worst is the artillery system - it’s cumbersome but more definitively it’s too unreliable from a scenario design perspective. My biggest recommendation is to eliminate the double red card draw loss of artillery. Instead I’d simply add another red card to the remaining draw pile each time one is drawn and allow for the possibility of artillery throughout in the game.

Banzai: What are you most looking forward to with regard to ASL?

MZ: I think the fear of ASL dying off as its players age has been somewhat tempered now. I’m amazed at the number of new players who show up at tournaments

Banzai: What’s your favorite game piece in ASL and why?

MZ: The Russian OT-34 flamethrower tank. The same mobility and firepower of a T-34 M41 with the bonus of a flamethrower. I’d love to see MMP issue an OT-34 counter based on the T-34 M42 chassis and get rid of that red MP number.

Banzai: You’re playing the Russians in a 1941 scenario, facing a German combined arms attack featuring several AFVs. Would you rather have a KV-2 or a platoon of two BT-7 M37s and two BT-7As? Now turn that around: which combo would you rather not have to face if you were playing the Germans?

MZ: No question - the two BT-7 M37s and the two BT-7As. The BT-7 M37’s 45L gun will skewer anything the German has. Their drawback is that they’re linked by platoon movement being radioless - but that’s the beauty of the BT-7As - they have radios and can move independently. However, if I’m the German I’d rather face the lone KV-2. It’s slow, is considered non-turreted, and can’t intensive fire. I’d probably try to quickly immobilize it and then take it out with infantry.

Banzai: You get to choose your side in a scenario set in the battle for France in 1940. Both sides have combined arms and a decent allotment of tanks. Would you rather command the French side to use their Char B1-bis, Somuas, and Renault tanks, or the Germans, with their PzIs and PzIIs, and a few PzIVs and Pz38ts?

MZ: A significant challenge for the French is going to be getting their armor into position due to their lack of radios and platoon movement requirement. If the French are defending, I’d go with them, but if this is a French attack then I’d take the Germans.

Banzai: How do you like PTO scenarios?

MZ: I like PTO. I don’t play that often, but the Japanese have so many unique nationality traits that it’s an art to play them well. I playtested a number of the Bounding Fire Production’s Japanese scenarios in *Into the Rubble 2* and really enjoyed the Japanese in an urban environment.

Banzai: What was your most enjoyable ASL moment? How about your worst, funniest, coolest, and/or craziest?

MZ: I’ll have to go to one of the craziest series of dice rolls and the up-down emotional rollercoaster that accompanied them. Matt Shostak may well remember this too. We played *SP173 Der Letzte Geburtstag* at the 2011 Texas Team Tourney. I had a German 4-6-7 out alone on the flank in some woods, and Matt chose to rush it with three Russian squads. Well, I covered on the first defensive fire shot and knew that squad was lost - so I made two more final protective fire shots - and both created heroes! I thought the game was just won and that Matt was going to explode. My joy was short lived though - Matt’s advancing fire shot caused both heroes to die from failed wound severity rolls - and he mopped up the squad in close combat. A perfect example of “friction”.

Banzai: What area of your play would you like to improve on most over the next year?

MZ: I’ve never quite got the hang of attacking with halftrack-borne infantry. One of my most frustrating losses was back in 2010 in *SP73 Seregelyes Slug Out*. I so badly botched the use of the German platoon of SP251s that I’ve shied away from halftracks ever since. Time to fix that.

Banzai: Is there an area you think is under-represented in ASL?

MZ: Depends on how wide of a net you cast. If you look at all the third-party options, you’d be hard pressed to find an action that hasn’t been covered - from before the Spanish Civil War to now Korea and even into the Arab-Israeli Wars. That being said, and without getting into a whole controversy, there are clearly some third-party producers who are focused on thorough playtesting and scenario development. I used to be a “buy everything” guy - but in the last few years I’ve scaled back my purchases to only those from what I consider to be ASL’s best developers.

Banzai: Dice glass or dice tower?

MZ: Glass - I hate waiting for dice to bounce their way down towers.

Banzai: Axis Minor scenarios: overrated or underrated?

MZ: I'd have to go with over-rated. I've enjoyed many of the Hungarian scenarios but quite frankly they play like second line Germans with some elite bonuses.

Banzai: What ASL products have your attention these days?

MZ: I'm thrilled to see a re-release of the initial deluxe modules in the works, and MMP's commitment to deluxe as proven by Winter Offensive Bonus Pack #9 with its four new deluxe maps and scenarios. As a side note, for deluxe fans - if you haven't got the LFT release of deluxe Pack 1 and its 7 new boards and 12 scenarios then you're missing out. Of course, there's *Red Factories!* I'm really looking forward to Charlie Kibler's reworked maps and getting **four** maps of Stalingrad laid out together on a table. I've played multiple *Red Barricades* CGs and the *Valor of the Guards* CG. Nothing like epic tactical-level city fighting with CG-added operational planning. Last, I've been fortunate to be a part of the development team for a Ponyri historical module which Pete Shelling and Jeff Coyle are designing for MMP. I've walked the battlefield at Ponyri and so have a personal interest in seeing this project become an official MMP issue.

Banzai: What advice would you give to players who are just starting out, and what advice would you give to ASL clubs in trying to attract and retain new players?

MZ: I'd recommend three things to new players. First, become fluent in infantry combat before rushing off to add guns and vehicles. The majority of scenarios define victory via infantry control - artillery, armor and ordnance are the enablers to getting your infantry where they need to be. The second thing I'd recommend is to have "tactical patience". Finally, go to tournaments - not to win but to learn. Tournaments are great teaching venues not only for learning the rules but for "how" to play - and gaining the hard-won experience of seasoned players.

ASL Clubs need to do two things - create an environment where players can regularly get together and get out and recruit new players. I'm fortunate that I have a strong core of players here in Houston (Jay Harms, Walter Eardley, and Mark Carter) and we meet weekly to either continue CGs or large scenarios suitable to multi-player team play. This keeps the rules fresh and reduces the number of breaks for flipping rule book pages. There are also players who host monthly game days, and this becomes a fixed date that one can plan for. Recruiting new players is tough with all the computer game options out there, but we've run several demo games at local gaming conventions - both historical and otherwise - to showcase ASL.

Banzai: What were your worst and best runs of luck?

MZ: I'd have to say that as opposed to runs of luck, I've had runs of playing and staying on top of the rules. I spent 20 years in the US Army and went through several periods of minimal or non-existent ASL play. I found that the re-entry

period was always challenging and that often coincided with a higher loss ratio. ASL is a demanding mistress - if you don't keep her close, she departs quickly.

Banzai: We'll get to your favorite ASL scenarios in another issue, so how about telling us what your other favorite games are?

MZ: I play around with a lot of WW2 miniature rules - now I'm focused on GHQ's *Micro-armor WW2* and the *Spearhead* sets. My other big gaming passion though is ancient miniatures in 15mm. It's a period of miniatures gaming I got into in the late 1990's and it has a vast breadth of historical options - from man's earliest combat in Mesopotamia to the beginnings of the age of gunpowder. I'm active with a local Houston group and we've latched onto a rule set called L'Art de la Guerre (aka ADLG). In my opinion it's taken the best of small rule sets like DBA and the largest like Warrior, Field of Glory, and Warhammer Ancients and created a well-balanced, historically accurate representation of ancient warfare.

Banzai: What are your other interests outside of gaming?

MZ: Travel, Scuba Diving, and Triathlon. I work with a national group called the Dive Pirates who help disabled individuals - both military and non-military - get SCUBA certified and get out to places like the Cayman Islands to enjoy the underwater world. I'm also constantly training or racing triathlons - I set a goal to complete my first full-distance 140.6-mile ironman triathlon when I turned 50 in 2017 and have since completed two full distance and several half distances. Next race is the 70.3 Gulf Coast in Florida in May. Before that though my wife and I are headed to Morocco for a two-week biking vacation. I've been fortunate to have travelled the world with her.

Banzai: Any final comments to wrap up?

MZ: Thanks for what y'all do - not only publishing *Banzai!!* but in running the Texas Team Tournament and keeping us all linked across Texas. And to all the married players out there - go thank your spouse for putting up with you and our hobby - as I said earlier ASL can be a demanding mistress and I for one am thankful that my wife understands (well, at least tolerates) my passion for moving little men around the battlefield!

SK CORNER: “NOVICES ON THE DEFENSE”



Peter Di Cioccio

Do you remember going to school and writing book reports? Did you ever think, “When am I ever going to write a book report when I grow up?” Well, my growing up is still up for debate, but here is a report on the article *The Agony of Defeat: Why Bad Things Happen to New Players*, by Mark Pitcavage which originally appeared in Journal 8 (2010). Any quoted material is from the article.

The article starts off with an anecdotal account of watching a game between an ASL veteran, and a newer player. The newer player asked the veteran, “At what point during the game did you know you had won?” Having thought about the question Pitcavage felt that there are choices an advanced player makes versus a novice player.

Thinking about the memory of the game Pitcavage watched, he came to realize articles over the years focused on improving game play, and not on tips of tried and true strategies. Pitcavage decided to write a blunt article telling new players what they are doing wrong that a face-to-face opponent may be uncomfortable to mention.

I have endeavored to apply those pearls of ASL wisdom to players of the Starter Kit set of rules. While many of these are applicable to players of full ASL, I have attempted to focus on these with a primary emphasis on what the SK rules allow players to do.

[Ed: Pete is planning on this being a 4-part series of articles covering this topic as it applies to Starter Kit players. We are pleased to feature this series for our SK readers.]

“Novices on the Defense”, Part I

“Setup”

When confronted with a map and a scenario card, newer players may feel overwhelmed. Trying to understand how to use the terrain to one’s advantage against the opponent in offensive and defensive tactics would be difficult with little experience.

“Problems with recognizing approach paths”

A key to success for a scenario attacker is mobility. Victory conditions generally dictate that the attacker’s order of battle (OB) generally start off the map or on the map, and have to do achieve some objective on the other side of the map. Newer players often don’t recognize difficult paths by which attackers can approach or outflank a position. Shown in Figure 1, the German player may feel the road is covered, but

in reality, the American is able to circumvent the road and get behind the German units, avoiding defensive fire.

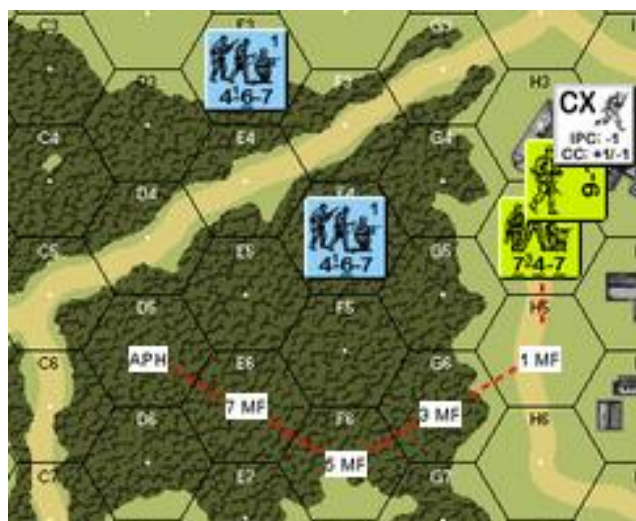


Figure 1

“No designated fallback positions”

Novices may lack the realization that the initial line of defense is rarely an effective last line of defense. Setting up the defensive OB in a position without an area to fallback to, can be a mistake that helps the opponent win the game.

“Tendency to stack”

Taking advantage of the moving bonus and high firepower shots makes stacking an attractive idea. The downside of the practice is the opponent may be in position to take multiple low firepower shots and affect a lot of units. Unstacking spreads the risk, and with careful movement, squads adjacent to each other can still construct high-firepower shots, albeit with the risk of covering due to the fact that leaders cannot direct multi-hex fire groups.

“Difficulty in recognizing vulnerable positions”

Newer players frequently will set up their squads in locations that look strong, but have no avenue to escape. See Figure 2. An attack during the American Prep Phase broke the German squad. Right after, in the Movement Phase, two American squads were able to move to hexes next to the German squad, thus forcing a rout out of the building, via a low crawl or an interdiction. The German should have not placed that squad in that position.

“Poor support weapon and gun positioning”

When granted large FP support weapons such as medium and heavy machine guns, an inexperienced player may think it is a good idea to put them in a forward defensive position to extract a heavy toll on the enemy as the attackers move into position. Often, a forward position is also a vulnerable position, and those heavy support weapons draw fire.

Eventually, the possessing squad may well break, and be unable to portage the large support weapon during the rout phase leaving it ineffective, or worse, captured by the attacking enemy. If the defending player sets up a large support weapon in a more protected position, a secondary squad could move into the hex and take possession of the support weapon in a subsequent rally or movement phase.

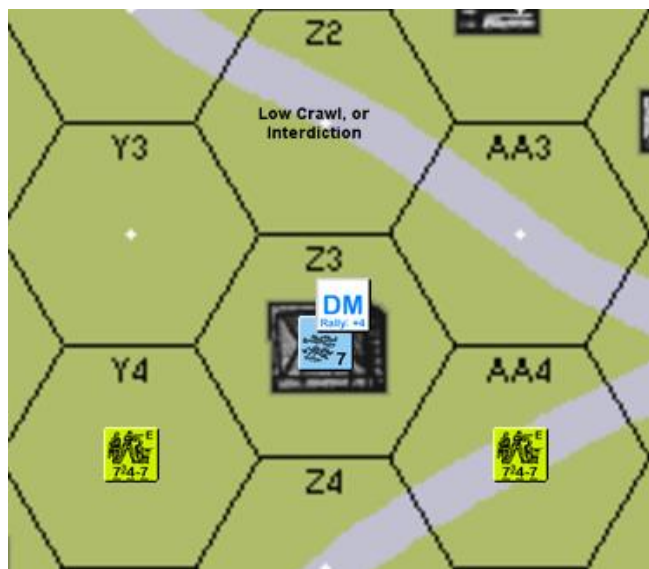


Figure 2, Map enlarged to show detail.

Anti-tank guns are also placed in a less than optimal position by beginners. An experienced attacker will send infantry in front of armored fighting vehicles to expose hidden ordinance to make it safer for the vehicles to advance.

“Inability to envision the end game”

Setting up a sufficient initial line of defense is not difficult for the novice player. Envisioning a second and third line of defense as the scenario progresses can be difficult. Inexperienced players might find it difficult to recognize locations to make a last stand. A more well-seasoned attacker will identify that a certain location is key to the defender’s victory, and would try to maneuver the defender out of that location to a much less strategic location.

SCENARIO RECOMMENDATIONS

With thousands of scenarios available, it can sometimes be difficult to choose one, or good ones can get forgotten or overlooked. Sometimes it’s hard to tell from just looking at the card whether the game will be exciting, balanced, and fun, so the endorsement of a fellow player is valuable. Therefore, we asked some players to say a few words about some scenarios they liked. Maybe you’ll like them too.

Jay Harms

Well I have never been known for my ability to write, but I have been known to roll low. I guess that qualified me in Mr. Matt Shostak’s mind as someone worthy of commenting on his favorite scenarios in the latest Banzai publication. It is hard to really identify which ones of the thousands of scenarios to choose from that makes it on my favorites list. For a scenario to be in the running, it must be well balanced, have lots of toys on both sides, and have a range of options for both the attacker and defender. That way it never really plays the same. There are a lot of scenarios out there that fit that bill, so my final criteria was that it had to be memorable. Given this, here are my top three (and not in any order).

RB2 Blood and Guts

This one is a classic. If you want a corn-fed, in-your-face city fight, look no further than Stalingrad. The Germans are attacking into the teeth of some dug-in, fanatic Russians and over 7 turns have to accomplish one of two secretly selected VCs prior to play (both around control of factories/rubble). But regardless of success, the Russians win automatically if they ever control one of the German jump-off factories (Foundry Hall or Assembly Hall). So right off the bat, replayability is good; sudden death and secret VCs always make for a more interesting game. Next are the toys. Fortified buildings are the Russian nuts that need to be cracked by the Germans, and they get plenty of toys to do it. StuGs, FTs DCs, lots of MGs, your everyday 10-3, and 34 squads, led by seven 8-3-8 assault engineers. Russians get toys as well: minefields, 76L ART, Mol-Ps, 0.50cal, your average 10-2, and not to be outdone, their own half company of engineers with FT and DCs.

Lots of action in this scenario, and it resulted in one of the most memorable games I have played. It has probably been 15 years since Walter Eardley and I faced off in this scenario, him as the Russians while I had the Germans. I secretly selected clearing him out of the Gun Tube Hall and the rubble north of the main east west road. I set up heavy on my left flank with a token force on my right flank just to keep him honest. Both of us were veterans of RB and knew all the tricks of attacking and defending factories. We made liberal use of DCs, FTs, assault fire, driving tanks through walls, etc. Walters defenders held tough through the first half of the game but I kept throwing bodies at him. He committed his engineers and counterattacked and it was a swirling melee in the factories. One favorite trick is to breach an interior wall with a DC in the advancing fire phase, then stick a FT though the gap. Nasty! Well, I got so mission-focused on finishing Walter off on my left flank I neglected the other side. With two turns to go, he positioned himself in the Power Plant building (4-hex two-story building that dominates the west central part of the interior factories) and started shooting my right flank up. I didn’t think much of as I had shifted about a

half company to my left flank for the final push. Needless to say, the last turn, after I had mostly abandoned my right flank factory in order to overwhelm his last units in the Gun Tube Factory and achieve my VC, Walter attacked across the road and took the Foundry Hall. During his assault, all I can remember is thinking oh &%\$#@! He killed the one unit I had in the Foundry Hall and grabbed the win. In my push for taking the Gun Tube Hall, I had left myself open. One of the all time great games! It had everything, right down to maneuvering myself from victory to defeat. Highly recommend it!

ASL 74 Bloody Red Beach

If you can look past the rules needed for beach landings in the PTO, this scenario has it all. The Marines are landing 2 full companies of late-war nastiness using 19 LVTs of various sorts, plus 4 tanks (one with a bow FT). Well led and equipped with everything you could want, along with NOBA and Air support, it feels like they would be unstoppable. They have 10 turns to clear either of the two level-3 hill complexes (board 2 or board 38) without losing 100 CVP or if at the end of any game turn they control one level-3 location on each hill. Sounds easy as nothing above ground can stand up to that firepower. Of course the Japanese have two cave complexes they can build on the hills, plus pillboxes. They have an assortment of guns and big mortars, along with MGs and light mtrs. Oh, and did I mention the entire Japanese force can set up hidden, including tank hunter heros? I have played it a couple times over the years, and each time, it came down to a close endgame on one or both of the hills. The last time, Walter Eardley, Matt Zajac, Mark Carter and I all sat down and played it, as it lends itself well to team play. I honestly can't remember who was my partner as the Japanese defenders, but it really was an intense scenario all the way through. Do you bring out the hidden MMG to shoot at that 7-6-8 moving in the open, knowing full well the world will fall on that guy in the advancing fire phase? When to activate the tank-hunter heroes? So many decisions. On the American side, it feels like you just stumble from one ambush to another, all the while cursing the 10-1 and heavy that keeps popping out of the cave to shoot and scoot. Great scenario with lots of replayability given the hidden defense and once again, options on the attacking VCs. The most memorable moment was the Marines parking one of their loaded LVT4s adjacent to a hidden tank-hunter hero of mine. I failed the attack, but it could have been so so beautiful!

To round out my top three, I have to go with:

ASL E Hill 621

I could stop there, as everyone is probably familiar with it and played it at least once. If not, you should feel ashamed, and should rectify the situation at your next game day or at the Texas Open. To summarize, there is a thin screen of

scared Germans holding off 48 Russian squads that are running across board 4 at them. Each side gets reinforcements multiple times, and it always feels like they are desperately needed. The Russians get an immense amount of troops but get whittled away every turn and by the end, every squad and tank on either side counts. This scenario plays differently every time you play it, starting with the mandatory MC that every German unit takes at the start. That combined with the defender moving first really can create some unique starts.

Mark Carter and I as the Germans recently faced off against Matt Zajac and Walter as the Russians. It turned into an epic fight up until the very last half turn, with wild swings both ways. Turn 1 had the Germans reeling from their MC and trying to position their MGs for fire lanes on board 4. The Russians promptly declared a human wave and started towards Hill 621. Turn 2 turned ugly for the Germans, with our radio leader breaking without ever getting our 81mm OBA down. That combined with a half dozen reinforcing T-34s racing towards the hill put us in a mild panic. The only bright spot was 4 MkIVs that had entered on the south side and were busy shooting up the Russian infantry crossing board 4. By German turn three, half of our initial infantry was down, and I think we lost 1 MkIV, but we had bagged 2 T-34s, one to a lucky critical hit using intensive fire against the hull-down T-34. Turn 4 saw a bone-headed move on my part as I lost the 75L AT gun and halftrack on the crest of Hill 621. I should have unloaded on the reverse slope and pushed it up, but got greedy and the Russians made me pay. Drat! In addition, the Russians continued their advance and had now wiped out about 80% of the initial infantry; just a squad and 9-2 were really left and they were feeling very lonely. Turns 4-5 were a game of cat and mouse as the remaining German tanks tried to get back to the hill for the final defense. All the while, Walter and Matt continued to pressure us as they moved effectively a division of infantry towards the hill. For our part, Mark took control of the 10-3 with a couple of HMGs, and StuGs on our left flank and blasted anyone that came in LOS. I positioned our peashooter 50L AT gun on the reverse slope (yes I can learn from my mistakes) and tried everything I could to slow the Russians with the few squads and tanks we had left.

On turn 8, the Russians made their move, and in an effort to checkmate us, Matt sent several ISU-122s and an Su-152 around our left flank and setup on the level-2 hill next to Hill 621. Side shots and enfilading fire against our remaining thin blue line were in our future. Not good, and Mark and I were feeling like we were on the ropes. The Russians had about 15 squads left ready to crest the hill, and we would be taking fire from all sides at that point. In addition, about 5 squads were also in support of the flanking attack, with a 0.50 cal. To make matters worse, we lost our second artillery mission about that time (stupid red cards). But not all hope was lost. If I recall, Walter made a comment about how this could get

ugly with their tanks and the 0.50cal shooting us up and I said I planned on burning the ISU-122, to generate smoke to hinder the MG. Well, I spun the 50L and took the shot thinking 13 to kill against a circle 11, bad odds but what the hell, it's all we had. Snake eyes! Not once but twice in a row and all of a sudden we were back in it as there were now two burning Russian tanks. Crazy! Probably the most opportune run of incredible luck I have ever had, and it literally saved the game and kept us in it. The next turn (turn 9) Mark and I gambled and moved on top of the hill to try and hold it for the last two turns. By this time the 10-3 was broken and we had one 8-3-8 and a couple crews left, but still had approximately 4 tanks and a couple halftracks. Our vehicles rushed the crest and parked there. I think we caught them just before they were going to do the same to us. A bit more luck on our part allowed us to trade 2 tanks for 1 in defensive fire and advancing fire. By then the Russians had too few tanks to take ours out, and the infantry had to pass a PATC to get to the crest. Long story short, we were able to shoot them up just enough on the last turn to keep them from CC'ing all of our vehicles. I think we won with 4 of the 7 hill hexes! Wow, what a game, and worthy of one of the best ASL scenarios out there!

So there you have it, my top three. The common theme really is the camaraderie of playing a great game with great friends. Looking forward to the Texas Open this year and making new memories! And if anyone wants on my dance card for any of the three scenarios I listed, either side, I am good to go!

Matt Shostak

OB 5 Tangle at Tolochin

The excellent *Onslaught to Orsha* product was released a long time ago, so it may be an afterthought for many players now. It contains many good scenarios, though, including this one. The attraction for me is about being able to use some weapons that rarely see play, in this case a pair of 170L artillery pieces in a direct-fire role. When else do you get to do that? There's also an artillery leader by SSR who can direct the fire of a gun. In practice these guns may not perform as well as the German player hopes, but come on, don't you want to score a hit on a tank with one of those huge shells, even if only once in your ASL career? It's 12:6 in favor of the Russians on ROAR right now, so maybe give the Germans some balance, but it could be fun.

OB 6 Hoffmeister's Charge

Again, the attraction here is about the orders of battle. For the Germans, it's the chance to use a 10-3. He leads a powerful combined-arms force including seven Pz IVs, three StuGs, a Flakpanzer, and 18 squads of various types: 8-3-8s, 5-4-8s, 4-6-7s, and 4-4-7s. The Russians counter with five T-34s, a few SU-76s, a meat-chopper, and an offboard artillery

observer directing either 120mm rockets or 70mm guns (only one at a time). In case that's not enough, they also have a couple of fighter-bombers with bombs and rockets. This is not a vanilla scenario, and currently stands at 9:8 in favor of the Russians on ROAR.

Ed Beekman

Every year I prepare a scenario list for the North Texas Shoot Out ASL Tournament. There are three criteria used to help select the scenarios. These are: Is the scenario fun? Is the scenario balanced? Can the scenario be played in the time available? The tournament rules also require that I select scenarios representing as diverse theaters and battle conditions as possible. Of course, my personal biases are naturally going to sneak into the selection process which may lead you to wonder what kind of scenarios would I personally recommend.

RPT72 Yangtze Doodle

First, I look for scenarios that pique my interest. Like most players, I really like combined-arms scenarios but I also have a soft spot for "pillow fights". These are low-density scenarios where an 8FP IFT attack seems like a Death Star strike. A good example of this type of scenario that I would recommend is *RPT72 Yangtze Doodle*. The scenario is short at 5 game turns. Each side has fewer than 10 squads and each gets to attack and defend at different times in the scenario. ROAR lists it as very balanced with only 1 win separating the sides as of this writing. The scenario can be very fluid and requires close attention to force preservation while also pressing an attack or preparing to counterattack. There is a caveat with this type of scenario, they can be dicey. One lucky or unlucky roll, especially early on, can spell almost certain defeat for a player. *Yangtze Doodle* is balanced, fits the bill if you are short on time and, in my opinion, is great fun. Highly recommended.

J179 Resignation Supermen

A nice tournament-sized combined-arms scenario I recommend is *J179 Resignation Supermen*. What's not to like? Americans in stone buildings being attacked by a mixed bag of Germans, ranging from SS to conscripts, creeping through the sewers and rubble to infiltrate the factories. Each side gets a couple AFVs and reinforcements allow for attack/counterattack possibilities. You have to be careful with the vehicles. A hit of the anti-tank type is usually fatal but you can drive into the factories for extra TEM and a rules dive to figure out how it affects building control. ROAR has this one favoring the Americans by a ratio of 9:7 at this time but I would take the Germans without a second thought. Highly recommended.

FrF40 Sporck's Eleven

When I think Russian Front, what comes to mind is Russian soldiers riding armored juggernauts through the snow, assaulting desperate, outnumbered German defenders. *FrF40 Sporck's Eleven* brings this mental image to life on the ASL battlefield. A dozen mixed T-70s, T-34s, KVs, and SU152s are carrying their riders into a hilly village with the aim of breaking through a picket line of SS troopers armed with panzerfausts, panzerschrecks, and Pak-40 AT guns. The Germans also get several Stumpies – halftracks with short barreled 75 guns which seem worthless against the Russian armor until you read the SSR giving them unlimited HEAT. It is a classic battle of Russian quantity versus Germans determined to show their quality. With over 60 playings on ROAR, only 2 wins separate the sides. Highly recommended.

My last recommendation is to find scenarios you like. Balance and playing time are objective measures, unless your opponent plays at glacial speed, but fun is subjective. I recall playing a scenario, which shall remain nameless to protect the innocent, that was balanced and fit our time constraints perfectly. At game end we both sat back and thought, “meh!”. There was nothing wrong with the scenario, it was so much better than a day at the office, but we both were looking for, and expecting something, well, different. At another time or in different circumstances or personal mood, it may have been more fun. Try to match your scenario selection to your current mood.

I have a couple other scenario aspects of which I am leery. First, some scenarios seem scripted. The attacker has to attack along flank A, then turn towards objective B to have the best opportunity to win. Any variation from this script will almost invariably lead to a failed attack. A script may be great for Shakespeare, but not ASL. Another pet peeve is scenarios that are simulations. There is a reason ASL is not absolutely realistic: it's a game which means it needs to be fun – criteria number one. There are scenarios that give you a feel of what that battle was like and you realize it was hell. Usually one side historically, and therefore in the simulation, has no chance whatsoever. Why put yourself through several hours of pain for this type of scenario when you could play a fun one, perhaps one I recommended above?

My last recommendation is to try a campaign game. These require an extraordinary time commitment and are by design more of a simulation than most scenarios, but the two balance each other out. You can try out ahistorical tactics and still have time to recover if they turn out badly. I have started four campaign games, *Red Barricades*, *God Save the King*, *Kampfgruppe Peiper I*, and *Pegasus Bridge*. I never finished any of them due to time issues, but have enjoyed and recommend them all.

When selecting a scenario ask around. Get recommendations from other players. Most importantly, have fun playing them.

TACTICAL TIP

Carl Nogueira



Is there any effective way to get troops past MGs dug-into buildings? These are some basic guiding principles. Some of these will apply in all instances, some won't, but all are good tactical approaches. Here goes.

Use Smoke

This may not apply in all situations as it is dependent on troop quality or type as to availability, or if smoke is an option from ordnance/OBA. However, if you do have a situation where you have access to smoke, lay it on thick. Directly smoke the positions of your opponent where practical/possible, or where he will be targeting when not.

Dash

In an urban environment, use dash at every opportunity to try and get across roads and into building clusters that can give you a covered approach. True, the -2 for moving in the open still applies, but your opponent's firepower is halved.

Freeze your opponent with less significant units that have gotten closer to him than your more important units.

Generally speaking, you move your least important units first, hoping to draw fire. You do this by threatening to get them to positions that really will be problematic for your opponent, thereby forcing him to shoot. This can lead to bad things for the guy drawing fire, but also potentially lessens the firepower your opponent can direct at more important pieces. Also, if he survives and only pins or breaks, no one marked with a first fire marker will be able to shoot past him. This, in the right circumstances, can afford a safe area of operations to operate behind.

If you can get a vehicle into a hex or bypass location of a problematic hex, you can prevent fire out of that hex, too. The rules are too extensive to go through here, but this is an oft-used tactic.

Concentration of Force

Usually in ASL, the attacker will have less numerical superiority over the defender than occurred historically. This is because, once you know the system, the attacker has a slight edge, all else being equal. So, concentrate on a small portion of the defense at a time. If half his force has no shots in your turn, then it is all of your force vs half of his for a turn. All a broad attack does is activate the entire defense to

fight you. Make him fight with a small part of his force against all of yours.

Take it out one strongpoint at a time and it begins to unravel.

Do all these concepts always work? No, the other guy gets to play too, but that is the beauty of ASL. Just like real life, what works in one circumstance, won't in another.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Such a topic could generate many tips articles.

A PREVIEW OF THE 27TH TEXAS TEAM TOURNAMENT

Rick Reinesch



The planning for the 2019 edition of the Texas Team Tournament is in full swing and the event promises to be just as much fun as in years past. This year marks 27 consecutive years of providing the very best that ASL has to offer down in Texas. So make those plans now to attend the Texas Team Tournament in Austin, TX, June 20-June 23, 2019. Last year we had record participation with 78 players from points all over the country registered for the tournament. The website (<http://www.Texas-ASL.com>) has been updated with information on tournament activities, the hotel info and the registration fees. We are constantly updating all that information leading up to the start of the tournament, so make sure to check in regularly for all the latest. Note that the last day to get our great hotel rate is June 6th, so don't delay! And while you are checking out the website, make sure to preregister; you never know what goodies I will come up with for those doing so.

As in previous years, Thursday's games will be informal gaming, with those games only counting toward the Major Johnson award. On Friday morning, we will launch the formal phase of the tournament where we will track wins and losses over the course of the weekend to crown the team and individual winners.

Our tournament runs an open format; players are free to match themselves with anyone, and play any mutually agreeable scenario. As the Tournament Director, I seed the team part of the tourney so that every team has (hopefully) an equal chance at the top prize. Each team consists of three players, which makes for a great race to the finish with the final team winners generally not being determined until those final matches on Sunday. The way we score the team award is not based on total wins or losses but on the difference between the two. So, a team with 10 wins and 4 losses has a score of 6. Likewise, a team that goes 6 and 0 also has a score of 6. But it ultimately depends on strength of schedule in the

case of a tie to determine who will come out on top. Check the website for all the details on how the team tourney works. Moreover, while we call ourselves a team tournament, individual play is still paramount. We offer plenty of individually based prizes, from the single elimination, individual champion bracket, to the Major Johnson award given to the individual playing the most ASL over the weekend, along with any number of mini-tourneys.

Thursday and Friday mini play will be featuring that time-honored institution – *Ferocity Fest*. For those that like their play brutal and deadly, this is not to be missed. Your objective is to do better than the other players of your side, either Allied or Axis. The individuals with the largest number of points at the end of scenario play will be the winner for that side. It's that simple. Last year players fought it out on the Eastern Front and honored the 75th anniversary of the end of the Battle of Stalingrad in the process by going old school with Scenario C, *The Streets of Stalingrad*. This year will stay out on the East Front with a timeless classic Z19, *The Trap at Targul Frumos*. This scenario has a little bit of everything, flamethrowers for both sides, Set DCs, heavy armor, and I may tweak a couple of things to make it just a little more brutal. This mini is always a load of fun and well worth the effort, and I give away some great prizes for 1st place and runner up for each side. We will kick off Thursday play at 9am, June 20th, but you can get in on it anytime. If you are interested in participating in *Ferocity Fest*, just let me know that day. No requirement to sign up ahead of time.

But that's not all for the minis. We will also be sponsoring an SK mini on Saturday for those folks new to ASL and would like to try their hand at some formal SK play. We'll have it as a classic pairing bracket using scenarios from the SKs and SK expansion packs, and who knows we might throw some SK PTO in as well, with one person besting all others and walking away with the prize.

I'll be sponsoring some minis on Saturday, which can include playtest minis for BFP scenarios. So, if you are looking to fill your Saturday, give one of the minis a try. I'll have signups for them during the tourney, so there are plenty of ways to get in on the action.

For the regular part of the tourney, remember that above all else we are an OPEN tournament; play what you want against whomever you want, or even as much (or little) as you want. Mostly, just come have a great time.

That being said, there are plenty of prizes to be had. We give out the Major Johnson Award to the player who plays the most ASL over the course of the weekend. We provide awards for the best team over the course of the weekend as determined by the best point differential between wins and losses (as noted above). And then there are awards given to the overall individual champion and runner-up. But even if you aren't in the running for any of those awards, you can

still try for the Audie Murphy Award given to the most snakes over the course of the weekend, or there is the Col. Klink for most boxcars. We also give an award for close combat points earned. But not just simple "I won" points, we give extra points for winning those close combats with style (or brutality, take your pick).

As always, we will be holding a drawing on Saturday of the tourney for all the merchandise our sponsors so graciously provide. As in years past we will be holding this drawing at 3:30 Saturday afternoon. I would encourage everyone to head out to our website and check out the listing of these fine sponsors of the Texas Team Tournament, and make sure to consider them first when you are making your purchases.

Registration this year is \$36 for all Thursday-Sunday gaming, \$31 for Friday-Sunday; and \$21 for Saturday only and can be done via PayPal through our website. Your entrance fee includes participation in any mini-tournaments you desire to enter as well as dibs on all of the great swag we give out. We are at the Wingate Conference Center at 1209 North IH-35 in Round Rock, TX with a fantastic room rate of \$94/night.

You can check everything out by following the ASL Team Tourney link from the Texas ASL home page at <http://www.Texas-ASL.com> . Hope to see you in June!

INCOMING!!

Astute reader Bruce Probst pointed out a couple of issues in the analysis of FrF 4 Barbarossa D-Day (issue 23.2). First, tank platoons can only consist of 2 or 3 vehicles, not more, as per D14.2, but the article said, "The tanks should probably stay together, maybe even all 6 of them in the same area, though probably not moving as one platoon." Also, the article mentions the importance of Good Order AFVs for satisfying the victory conditions, and then discusses their fickle B11 armament. Although it's not stated outright, it could still lead the reader to believe that an AFV with a broken MA is not Good Order, which would be incorrect. We should have been more clear. Thanks, Bruce. Can we sign you up as a proofreader for future editions?

CLUB NOTES

Lunch Gatherings

Lunch gatherings have been more sporadic lately, but they still happen. Stay tuned to our yahoo groups email list. The club sends out email reminders, or you can call Matt or Sam for information on the next get-together.

Game Days

The Austin, San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas/Ft. Worth groups have remained active, hosting various gatherings for club members to get together and knock cardboard heads. If

you missed any of these you missed a lot of fun. It's like a tournament atmosphere for a day. The Austin group meets on the first Saturday of every month. The DFW group has been meeting on the second, the San Antonio guys on the third Saturday of every month, and the Houston group on the fourth Saturday of every month. To stay informed of upcoming club events, stop by our club website, www.texas-asl.com or better yet join our email group. You can post a message at central-texas-asl@yahoogroups.com or you can point your favorite browser to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/central-texas-asl> and take a look. For those still not connected, give Matt, Rick, or Sam a call for club information.

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Thanks to Rodney Kinney for VASL, Carl Fung for his VASL counter images, and the VASL Map Cabals for their VASL map images. We use a combination of VASL counter and map images for scenario layouts with permission of use for that purpose.

NEXT ISSUE

- More articles about ASL
- Player Profile
- Favorite Scenarios
- Club Meeting Recaps

And much more!