AT THE POINT
-- The Journal of ASL

AT THE POINT

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#2
CONTENTS

FAUST PONTIFICALS 3
A NOTE TO THE TROOPS: Rex Martin 3
FAUST'S FORUM 6
AN ASL DECISION 8
MAKING PRIMER: Eric Baker 12
POINTE REPLAY: Dave Connel, Dean Halley 14

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AT THE POINT is published 10 times a year by Marc Hanna, 718 Bounty Dr., #1820, Foster City, CA, 94404.

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FAUST PONTIFICATES

Hello again, true chums! Last month, I sent out 350+ sample issues to known ASL players, most of whom were on Rick's and Bill's mailing lists. As I write this, ATP has over 50+ hardcore subscribers, and I expect that more will trickle in as the next couple of weeks slide by.

Of course, I was hoping for more, but all things considered, this is a phenomenal return rate for a first-time rookie publication! Some of you out there really thought ATP was a hit. Thank you for sending in your hard earned dollars to prove it. I can only promise you that ATP will just get better with time, and you can bet that many of those couple of hundred other guys will eventually see the light and regret that they missed a single issue.

Recent developments lead me to surmise that ATP will grow on a regular basis. Rex Martin was impressed enough to offer to plug ATP in the next issue of The GENERAL - an honor indeed. I'm still twisting his arm to get into the ASL Annual, heh, heh...HAD ENOUGH, REX?

Beyond that, the word is spreading via Gene (some type of computer network, I gather), Kurt (that's KURT) Martin's local newsletter "Rout Report," and by the old fashioned verbal method. If you like ATP, then please tell a friend about it. The goal here is to become the premier amateur journal of ASL. Appreciate your help.

Woops Depl.

First, apologies to Kurt for being unable to get his name straight in his article in issue #1. Apologies to Eric Baker for getting his name confused with Kurt's.

Mark Nixon pointed out a couple of oversights in my transcription of his article to print.

1. CS.11 All non-mortar guns, not just NT guns, suffer fixed CA penalties and double case 'A' DRM in woods/building/rubble.

2. A10.51 Mark clarifies that a unit is free to take a lengthier path to the nearest woods/building hex, but it may not take an alternate rout to a different building/woods. As Mark had specified thusly in his original wording, let me assure him and all writers that I will be more cautious with their material in the future. My comment is that, though not specifically forbidden, allowing a unit to take a lengthier path violates the spirit of the rule. Readers, take a look at the well-read (but not so well-written?) A10.51 and tell me what you think.

Finally, at several points in Issue #1 I mentioned that units using Subsequent First Fire must use SW in their possession. Not true. They must either use the 5W or forfeit such use for the rest of the Fire Phase. See A8.3.

Thanks again to Mark Nixon for that pointer.

Gripe Depl.

Does anyone really understand how to use the bo occasion rules in conjunction with the wall advantage rules (B9.5, B9.31 and B9.32)? Anyway you slice it, it seems messy, vague and unrealistic, especially when you try it in Deluxe. There's a beautiful passage in B9.32 which states that wall advantage is gained by hexside, not by hex, in DASL...nice, but what does that mean? Think about it. There are a lot of interpretations with this stuff.

It's not my place, or even desire, to criticize these excellent rules by which we live; nonetheless, these are the only ones that I cannot seem to make work. Please send your ideas in on this.

And now, without further ranting, let us proceed with our guest editorial....

NOTES TO THE TROOPS

Rex Martin

When Mr. Hanna invited me, way back at Oktoberfest, to draft a piece on the ASL hobby for his new publication, I assured him that it would be a pleasure. But as so often these days, I forgot my promise as other demands vied for my attention. A too-gentle reminder with his Christmas greeting called it to my mind, long after the self-imposed deadline to make the first issue of "At The Point." Blame my involvement in several Diplomacy games, blame the '91 ASL Annual or The GENERAL or any of a dozen other projects; blame Don Greenwood; blame my furious painting of a horde of 15mm Turks for our weekly NAPOLEON'S BATTLES game at Craig Taylor's; blame my own absentmindedness. But, hoping that the opportunity hasn't passed me by, here at last is my welcome to any plans for a new and brightest offering from some of your fellow ASL experts.

In point of fact, I'm rather glad I had the chance to see the first copy of "At The Point" before I dispatched my ramblings to Marc. It caused me to tear up my initial draft and start again. Simply put, vague generalizations on the state of ASL won't be served up - or serve - in these pages. "The Journal of ASL" is that rarity in our hobby: a polished amateur magazine devoted to some analysis of the PLAY of the game. It represents another step in the steady maturing of ASL. Unlike "In Contact" and the Belgian "ASL News," ATP offers no scenarios to feed the insatiable demand for novelty (which is all well and good, but a vibrant hobby needs other things as well). Nor will it, hopefully, merely offer vague "hints and tips" or amorphous "insights" on the strategy of this wonderfully complex tactical system. Instead, ATP holds the promise to become a forum for examining what's right and what's wrong with the system, for offering sound precepts to...
play, and for contact with the best players around. At least, that's the impression I have after devoting some time to reading the first issue of "At The Point."

A healthy hobby needs such a forum. Let me share a bit of history - on DIPLOMACY of all things. (I know some of you probably aren't even aware of such a thing as a popular multi-player game of strategy, but there are some around; DIPLOMACY is the daddy of them all.) Some 30-odd years ago, Allan Calhamer designed and marketed a seven-player game of no-luck strategy set in pre-WWII Europe. Initial slow sales could not hide its promise, and he soon sold the rights to various companies around the world. Avalon Hill even began to make its annual offer for the US rights. In 1963, a gentleman by the name of John Boardman, quite taken by The Game (notice the caps), founded what is now the extensive play-by-mail (PBM) hobby by gamemastering the first-ever postal match. He also began publishing the first amateur 'zine devoted to a single game - "Graustark." With that, he laid the foundation for an explosion of amateur publications devoted to every aspect imaginable on the play of DIPLOMACY. In 1976, Avalon Hill finally made an offer that Games Research (the company which held the US rights) couldn't refuse, and this true classic entered our line. Over the past 15 years, expansion of the DIP hobby has quickened. There is a national tournament held annually (well, in fact, the 1991 convention is being staged in Toronto). There is even a world convention/tournament (the third slated for Australia in 1992). Dozens of 'zines concerned with it, of every ilk, are put in the malls monthly around the world. Sales number several hundred thousand to date. Even the electronic age has discovered DIP, with many games being played on GEnie and other online bulletin boards. A generally-accepted rating system of players is in vogue, and there are several volunteer hobby services which keep track of all sorts of things dealing with the play and enjoyment of DIPLOMACY.

I offer this too-brief view of another game to draw some parallels with what is happening, and what I'd hope continues with ASL. A game becomes a "classic" and draws new blood due to the devotion of its fans. Nothing a company, or retailer, can do can "spread the gospel" as quickly or as thoroughly. In fact, that's the litmus test of what makes a game a great one for me: the unselfish interest of many intelligent players who are willing to share their love of a good design. Starting slowly, the ranks swell as new players catch the fires fanned by the old. Competitive play of the game becomes de rigueur at better conventions; soon after, there are conventions devoted solely to the game, drawing the faithful to pit themselves against the very best players. And then come amateur periodicals, unbound by the limitations that govern professional publishing, to serve as centers for commentary and news. A "brotherhood" (no matter how trite, no other term evokes the feeling as well) develops, bound by a common interest in The Game.

That is what's happening with ASL. Even as we here at AH continue a steady pace of ASL production (this year will see another Annual released at ORIGINS, and late in the year, GUNO HO will hit the stands), the fans' efforts far outstrip ours. Bill Conner's ASL Oktoberfest is slowly evolving into the most prestigious ASL competition (although the event he will host at AvalonCon in Harrisburg in August is to be billed as the "National Championship" and Jon Mishcon's ORIGINS 91 tourney will certainly be a premier showing). Russ Gifford and a dedicated core of players liven the GEnie wargame heading with their very active ASL topic, and even play the game by E-mail. The likes of Mark Nixon, Jim Stahler, Charles Markkus and Steven Swann produce reams of well-written material on the system, its play and the history that serves as the basis for design decisions. As with the DIP fraternity, we have now come to the stage where we can poke fun at our "love" (the mark of a healthy relationship) - something you don't see respectability. A hundred able, underappreciated playester's "round the world" dedication, and help with supply of dozens scenarios each year, more volunteer each month, looking to play a role in the growth of their favorite game.

And, of course, the amateur press grows, becoming steadily more polished and professional in both appearance and content, with divergent styles offering something for each shade of fan.

There is also a progression in the amateur press to which I'd like to call attention. First out the gate are the "fanzines," effusive with praise. They serve to bring the scattered hard-core together. Some time later come the "players' 'zines." In DIP these offered variants, news of the hobby, and reportage of postal matches. With ASL, these bring you new scenarios, rating schemes, and news. Finally come the 'zines devoted to analytic investigation of the play, strategy and considered commentary. I see "At The Point" as the first true one of these for ASL. For that, Mr. Hanna is due a word of congratulations.

So, you aren't a writer, or a scenario designer, or a playester, or a GM, or any of these other over-achievers. You just want to enjoy the game. What's your role in this growing "brotherhood?" I'd think that self-evident: you are the glue that holds it together. Without your support, none of us would be able to exercise our craft. You continue to buy the product and new releases, encouraging AH to keep up the expansion of the system (and incidentally keep Mac, Charlie and I earning a paycheck). You attend the conventions and tournaments, showing others the entertainment value of ASL. You subscribe to the amateur press, encouraging other would-be editors to turn their hands to production of new 'zines. You read all the words written on the game, debate and draft letters on the fine points raised therein, adding your voice to the excited babble. And you introduce your friends to the hobby, bringing new blood into the "brotherhood." Finally, and inevitably, you too become an...
over-achiever, writing, designing, testing, feeding the growing hobby. Thanks.

I guess a word is due here for those who might be looking for a more active role than that of "supporter." At the very least, make your views and questions known through letters to us and to the amateur publishers. This sort of feedback helps immensely. It is our sole chance to judge how we are doing, what needs to be corrected or altered in the system, if we are providing the majority with what they want. The ASL world is growing and expanding. Without some input, you have no say in the direction it takes. Exercise your right as a customer and make your voice heard. (Incidentally, it does get tiresome to have nothing but complaints. If it strikes you that we have done something right, please write. A stack of such letters helps immensely when faced with an intransigent management passing judgment on our latest scheme. That's how I finally got the ASL Annual off the drawing board and into production.)

If you want a more active hand in the quality of the product, offer to become a playtester. Those 150+ official scenarios are the sum of the effort of a lot of your comrades. If you want to try your hand at playtesting for AH, write to Bob McNamara. He maintains a file of names/addresses that we draw from, both experienced and novice testers. As we move steadily towards a solitaire and PBM procedure, even isolated gamesters can serve. But I should warn that playtesting is a chore, one with little compensation. Weekly or bi-weekly reports, a lot of playing, a lot of thought and analysis; let no one kid you, the playtesters whose names you see in a module or Annual are the unsung heroes of this "brotherhood."

Many eventually turn their hands to scenario design. While I don't want to discourage anyone from submitting their efforts, I would be remiss if I didn't point out how slim your chances are of having one see print under the AH banner. Each year we manage to publish 24 or so. In that same span of time, hundreds are submitted by the hopeful. (And that doesn't include those custom-designed by Mac, Charlie of I for a specific purpose.) Competition for our attention is fierce. We scan every one that is received, making snap judgements as to their worth. The poorly written, poorly researched, mundane or obviously flawed are discarded. Submissions which do not follow our format do not even get this cursory consideration. Those that remain get a quick couple of playings by the fellows who drop by each Wed evening at our offices for our weekly playtest session. Many more proto-scenarios do not weather this and are returned (with suggestions, if we have time). The survivors go into a file for potential future use. But even this is no guarantee that they will see print as "official" scenarios. Many concerns dictate when, or if, such a scenario will be published. (For my role in the ASL Annual, for instance, I look at the articles and try to offer something that dovetails with one or more of the articles, always with an eye toward putting together a varied mix of nationalities, situations and size.)

I will note that we are not the only outlet for your design efforts. There are several amateur 'azines for which scenarios are an important element of their content. Consider, especially if you are a novice scenario-designer, offering your efforts to those. Most of them are experienced playtesters, designers and writers on the system. They can devote the time to your project that we'd like to, but usually can't. At the very least, they can provide some suggestions and comments. Indeed, their return post will certainly be more insightful than ours (they are, after all, better players than we).

Likewise with article submissions. I have limited space in The GENERAL and the ASL Annual to give over to the game, as with scenario submissions, I receive lots of offerings from the hopeful. To save all of us some time and expense, please draft a letter of enquiry to me for any lengthy piece (especially any contemplated Series Replay) you may wish to submit to Avalon Hill. And again, if accepted, it may be some time before your article sees print; there are many horror stories (all true) of fine works sitting in my files for half a decade. So, what am I looking for in an article as far as content (it goes without saying that the piece must be literate and well-organized to stand a chance of being accepted)? Well, most any approach will serve. Take a look through past published pieces. Analysis, strategy, historical, design-oriented. But there is a fine shading to this; don't give me copy-cat articles. By this I mean that I don't want, and will promptly reject, a piece similar to the approach Steve Swann has taken with his "reference notes" or Mark Nixon has with his "scenario analysis." Develop and polish your own approach and your own style. A healthy amateur press gives you the chance to do this.

As for turning to publish your own 'azine, I will leave discussion of that to Mr. Hanna. He has insights into the amateur press that I, with the full weight of a professional organization behind, cannot possibly appreciate. Maybe, should you be considering such, you should drop him a line.

All of this feeds upon itself, of course. A healthy amateur press provided a proving ground for writers and designers to hone their skills. They then bring us the best of material to add to the system. In turn, the efforts of they and the amateur publishers encourage more to try the game, expanding the pool of players. More players means more potential subscribers to both the amateur and professional offerings. Players clamor for and organize tournaments in ASL at conventions round the world; results there become news to feed the amateur press and "legitimize" the competitive challenge of the game system. All of this brings steady sales, encouraging us to keep up the pace of development and to explore the other commercial means (new markets, new products, more advertising) to exploit this popularity. And that, assuming you have an interest in the game, is good for all of us.

In seven years, the ASL hobby has reached the point the DIP (cont. on page 13, col. 3)
Dear Marc,

I just got my first issue of ATP. You've done a great job, and I've enclosed my $15 check for the first year's sub. ATP has far outdone the venerable On All Fronts. Competition is what this hobby needs, and perhaps you will inspire others to try their hands at putting out ASL zines. [...] 

Compliments on all those who contributed, too. Yes, I'd like to see the rest of Mark Nixon's ASL trivia. I consider myself to be an experienced player, but I learned something from 8 of his 23 examples. I'd remind Mark, though, that A10.5i has to be read in conjunction with F.1C.

The only feature I'd like to see added to ATP is a regular scenario offering. It's the output of new scenarios that keeps ASL fresh and interesting, I believe, and without one it seemed to me that ATP was missing something. Playtest them thoroughly (I'm sure there will be no shortage of volunteer playtesters) and then let the readership at them. I think you'll find that a regular scenario feature will also supply plenty of grist for the subscriber feedback and debate. Good Luck!

Robert Banozic

True, so let this be a call for scenario designers and, especially, volunteer playtesters! I'd be happy to publish very well done scenarios, but treasy scenarios belong in their namesake. I would also appreciate a volunteer to coordinate the scenario design and playtest-- as it is, I've got my hands full with ATP. Anyone care to validate Robert's hypothesis?

Marc,

[...] Bruce's Article on Platoon movement was very interesting, as I had done a fair amount of study a few years ago. I would point out that, contrary to your comment in his article ("only for those R vehicles, hope") that there are instances where platoon movement is not a bad idea for radio equipped vehicles. Mechanical reliability is one instance that springs to my mind.

Mark's article was, as always, excellent. I consider Mark to be the finest writer in the ASL community, perhaps in all of wargaming. He is also a fun opponent and always in demand at Oktoberfest.

I totally agree with your comment about Savcial in Kurt Martin's article. I played Fish three times and beat him three straight by waiting and using TBPP; the effect was devastating and renders the scenario totally unbalanced (ANY scenario Fish can be beaten 3 times straight must be unbalanced!!)

Keep up the good work and let me know if there is anything I can do to help.

Darry! "Action" Burk.

I've had second thoughts about my interjected commentary--it's getting me in trouble... In all fairness to Kurt, he explained to me that he intended to demonstrate an example of a charge, not necessarily analyze that particular situation in Savcial.

Dear Mr. Hanna,

I found your first issue very interesting, especially the replay, which happens to coincide with my playing of the DASL version of the scenario (Berserk!) via PBEM. I have a question on one of the comments you made on the game.

You note in your commentary for turn 3 that event #212 was invalid because the unit holding the DC cowered. I'd like to know why this is so. When I read A7.53 and A7.531, I find nothing there that indicates that a leader can only direct fire of a unit in his own hex. All that is required is that all units be in the same FG. Of course, if all units aren't with a leader, then no combat modifier would be permitted, but that is not the issue in question at this point. Also, A7.9 states that "IFUT attacks are adversely affected by any IFT resolution DR that results in Original 'Doubles' unless a leader directs that attack."

When I read these, I get the impression that a leader directing fire for a FG protects all units [...] from cowering. If I am wrong on this point, could you please print the reason for this for the benefit of those who don't know any better? Thank you.

David S. Raley

I'd be interested in soliciting an article from the readership on "PBEM and ASL" ATP might be a good place to spread the word about this (not to mention my own selfish interest in learning how to get involved...). Your question is a very good one. I think you answered it yourself-- the leader can direct a multi-hex FG and prevent it from cowering. Dean and Dave must have known this, but not Faust, who is now demoted (temporarily). If any reader can refute Mr. Raley's points, please let me know and I'll print your reply here.

Dear Marc,

[...] My second point actually refers to two of your articles. "Code of Bushido-- First Impressions" and "Cavalry in ASL." It seems to me that rule A2.9, automatic deployment, was forgotten in both articles. [...] 

Rule A2.9 can also help the Japanese player to retain his FP a little longer. By deploying 10% of the squads during set-up and deploying as many as possible in the RPs, the Japanese player can retain a greater part of his FP during the early part of the scenario. [...] While you will risk "broken HS," it should be remembered that the Japanese SMC raises the morale of each unit stacked with him by one [and also negates the effects of DM]. This benefit makes it easier to deploy, recombine and rally any Japanese unit. As the many Japanese HS near their objectives, the SMCs begin recombining the squads for the final assault. The British player has a hard time stopping 20 Japanese squads in Kokoda Trail, just think what it would be like trying to stop 40 Japanese HS. The
Japanese would also lose some range, but in Jungle fighting this is a very minor inconvenience.

[...] I would be willing to contribute to your magazine. I have several articles and scenarios published in both General and in the ASL Annuals. What I and my opponents up here in SD have to offer is a small general article (designer's notes?) on Gliders (E8) and a series replay of ASL-A1 "Tavronite Bridge" or ASL-C11 "Pegasus Bridge" using the Gliders. Since I am the designer of both scenarios, I would act as a referee while overseeing two balanced opponents playing the scenario. If you think there would be an interest in this please let me know and we will do it.

Keep up the good work. Semper Fi!

Steve Swann

Sorry about cutting out so much of your letter, but I needed the room for some others. First, your point about A29 is well taken. In fact, the Japanese could easily deploy all their squads by simply voluntarily breaking them (C1.131). Since Japanese leaders rally like Commissars, most would be up quickly. There is a danger with your plan, however. Japanese leaders are very fragile, and may die before they can recombine the squads "near the objectives." If you hold them back out of harm's way, your troops won't move up so quickly, and there is always the danger of snipers.

Second, yes, I'm interested in all of the above, especially the series replay. Let me know what your schedule could be for that. Thanks for offering. I've enjoyed those scenarios, by the way, so you keep up the good work, too!

Dear Faust;

Your new magazine is GREAT!! I love it. Keep 'em coming. I am a charter "On All Fronts" subscriber and still love it, but I believe that I may have a question [...] regarding mortars. Do mortars use the C4 Gun and Ammo Basic To Hit Number Modifications? At Oktoberfest "Fish" Conner explained to me that mortars DO use the C4 modifiers. [...] Many thanks for the free issue.

Barnie Hegdahl

I agree with Mr. Conner. I have researched this point several times, and can find nothing in the rules that specifies that Mortars do not. Thus, mortars (short-barreled) are modified at ranges greater than 12 hexes, C4.1

Dear Marc,

This is just a brief note to accompany my subscription fee and to let you know I think you did a great job on your first issue.

There is one slight aspect of your journal that bothered me and that was buried in your comments of what your journal "isn't". The references to nerdy cartoons and advertisements seemed to be directed at "On All Fronts." At least that is the impression I got as I know of no other publications to which such comments might apply and I read them all. I don't blame you from distancing or positioning your journal away from "OAF" from a marketing standpoint, however, unwarranted criticism doesn't serve the hobby on the whole or ASL in particular.

I am not defending Terry Treadaway's somewhat bombastic journalistic approach but he does get out a serviceable product on a consistent and timely basis. I know that those close to AH have no love for him or his publication and unfortunately you hear that wherever the main ASL playtesters or AH gather. Terry does draw on considerable talent for playtesting and I find his tournament scenarios for his SL Rally are the equal of some of those from AH. Others, well, they often stink. I just would hate to see more division in the ranks.

off base and I apologize if I misinterpreted your comments. I look forward to your next issue.

Ray Wołoszyn

Not at all, nor did you, in fact, I sense that you didn't really find my comments unwarranted, but rather overly critical.

Let me assure you that the objective of ATP is to promote and develop the ASL hobby. You yourself have a vested interest in this, as you run the well-known "Winds of War" tournament in Greensboro, NC, and have earned playtest honors (A Partisan Leader nameless) long before I really fathomed what ASL was all about.

As such, I have no intention or desire to promote or encourage division in the ranks. Can you tell me that Terry feels this way himself? - I sent him a complimentary copy of ATP... no words of encouragement, acknowledgement to a fellow publisher, an offer to trade or an exchange of mailing lists.

Now, I'll grant you that ATP has got to prove, but will prove, that it will be turned out on a regular basis. Perhaps, for this reason, Terry chooses not to recognize ATP. I do notice, however, that many ASL lovers and major contributors have done quite the contrary, as evidenced in both #1 and #2.

Terry can prove for himself if his true interest is in promoting a grand hobby. I will write to him and ask for his mailing list, a plug in his 'zine or a trade. A response to the first request will definitely show his interest in a unified hobby, the second, a little less so, the third, at least a show of opening up. A letter (and a courtesy copy of #2, of course) will go to him soon. I'll let the readers know what happens.

Finally, many apologies to those who sent letter that did not get in here this time. Such a response! Keep sending 'em in, I hope to print them here.
ANALYSIS

AN ASL DECISION-MAKING PRIMER

Eric Baker

ASL is unique among wargames. No other game approaches its total complexity; yet as complex as it is, basic infantry combat is deceptively simple. That's the beauty of the system; while anyone can play correctly, there are an incredible number of subtle tactics available. The use of these tactics are what separate the elite from the conscripts.

One of the common situations that arises in ASL is the taking or holding of a building for victory. When discussing taking a building in ASL we commonly think of Assault Engineers and FT's, Smoke and DC's; in short all the "necessary" implements of street fighting. But what if you don't have all these niceties? What if you are the Soviets, commanding standard, first line squads— the building must still be taken. This article will point out some of the essential infantry tactics for use in getting across that inevitable street and into that building, as well as providing fundamental "building" blocks for success in any situation.

PRELIMINARIES

First of all, three basic principles for ASL are in order. Consider these axioms carved in stone; the best players use them all.

1). PLAN— This cannot be over-emphasized. Your plan needs to relate directly to the scenario victory conditions (VC). Especially on the attack, ASL is like chess; you should have multiple moves planned out. This show in the pace of play in an expert's game— the best ASL'ers are quick. Their speed comes from having a plan that is independent of their opponent. Remember, the VC are usually static, so your plan to reach them should be set.

2). FORCE REACTIONS & AVOID SURPRISES— As either side, but especially as the attacker, YOU need to be the one calling the shots. Keep your opponent off balance, and keep yourself "expecting the unexpected." You do this by knowing the rules (and hence your options), knowing the scenario at hand and having a coherent plan. The victory will go to he who has the initiative.

3). EXPLOIT MOMENTARY WEAKNESSES— This is not a contradiction of #1. Many times, ASL scenarios break down into games within games— typically the opening, the mid game, and the end game. At each phase of the scenario, crises and opportunities will spring up on both sides. Recognizing when an opportunity presents itself, and knowing how to act on it when it does are the keys to winning. Within you plan, take advantage of every opportunity that leads toward victory. Do not let yourself be sidetracked by pursuing irrelevant tangents. This principle is doubly important because the good defender will constantly throw bait for you; situations that look good, and look as if you have the opportunity to deal him some dirt, in reality merely distract you from your real goal. Remember, your goal is to achieve the VC; this demands that you exploit the opportunities that present themselves.

While the above tenets are crucial, they are pretty broad. The following observations can be made about attacking and defending in ASL, and can be used as more concrete guidelines in the "real world" of ASL tactics.

The attacker generally has a number of advantages over the defender:

• 1). Being able to chose the main point of effort.
• 2). Having safe places to rally, while he can many times deny this to the defender.
• 3). Ability to Encircle the defender.
• 4). Numbers, leadership, firepower, or some combination of these (or he wouldn't be on the offensive in the scenario).

The defender, on the other hand, generally has one big advantage: terrain. The attacker must come to him, thereby incurring negative DRM.

The list of respective advantages implies something about ASL that I firmly believe. The attacker is fundamentally stronger than the defender. He possesses numerous advantages and can use certain tactics to offset the advantage of terrain. This does not mean the attacker will always win; balance of the individual scenario is crucial. But when a scenario is balanced, I'll tend to wager on the attacker.

[Why would you do that if it were truly balanced?]

Use the above information to maximize your advantages before the scenario even begins. Know your forces and the VC, and plan your set-up to take advantage of all the factors in your favor. The examples of play that follow demonstrate how to do this as well as the associated tactics.

Now for some numbers. Make no mistake, I am not about to inundate you with statistical tables, but to play ASL at the Elite level you need to have a certain grasp of the actual odds of the dice falling your way. One of the most pertinent and useful pieces of advice I've ever received is to "always assume that you're going to roll a seven; any less and you've got a break, any more and you can bitch about your rotten luck!" I also use the converse— assume that your opponent is going to roll a seven. While simplistic, this maxim will help you immensely when it comes to making tactical decisions in ASL. A look at the IFT will reveal the following firepower required to generate a 1MC on a DR of 7 at a particular type of terrain:
I use the information pessimistically. I assume it will take me two or three shots at a 50% chance to get a result. For example, a target in a stone building will generally be broken after two or three fire attacks of 20FP. On the other hand, when I am the target I assume the worst; it’ll only take one or two shots for my opponent to get the same result on me. What this means is the play of the game is that if I cannot muster the listed FP in the FFPs, then I will generally forgo firing and use the units to better effect at something else. If I am going to take an action, and my opponent can’t get the listed FP, then full speed ahead. If he has less than a 50% chance of breaking my guys, then I’ll take the action and live with the consequences. Naturally, there are exceptions to such rules of thumb.

With these preliminary operating principles, observations, and stats in mind, let’s move on to an actual sample of making them work.

THE SCENARIO

For this exercise, we’ll be using deluxe ASL board ‘C’ hexrows B-G (see figure 1 on page 13). North points along the hedge row C3-D2-E2-F1. All terrain is as printed, except that hex D1 is considered Open Ground, not Orchard. The German holds building E1, the Soviets set up in any building or lumber yard across the street G2-F3-B2. The Russian wins if he has more unbroken squads (or equivalents) in Building E1 than the German by the end of turn two; otherwise, the Germans win.

The Order of battle is as follows:

**GERMAN:** 447 (X3), 8-0, 7-0, MMG, LMG

**SOVIET:** 447 (X4), 527 (X2), 8-1, MMG.

**GERMAN INITIAL SET-UP**

F1 8-0 MMG 467

**SOVIET INITIAL SET-UP**

E4 447, 447, MMG, 447, 8-1

B3 447

G3 527, 527

This gives the German a 16FP(2) shot into E1 or F1. The 527’s are placed opposite the first objective, which is the ground level of F1. The plan (never leave home without one) is to use the firegroup to suppress fire from E2 and F1 and have the SMG troops enter the objective. The lone 447 serves a couple of purposes. One, it denies the German any haven in the victory building for rally; the 4(+3) shot it can exert into all locations of E1 or E2 is adequate (just barely) to keep broken units in these locations DM. Second, it is a threat in itself in that it can easily get to C1 or C2 and threaten the German building. It’s location is relatively secure; as our table shows, a 20FP attack is needed on a stone building to have a reasonable chance to break the unit. The best German shot at this 447 is an 8FP(+3).

Why did we pick the north side of the objective building as our focal point? There are a couple of reasons. Even though the building is surrounded by Open Ground that we must cross, the north side of the objective offers wooden building G1 as a possible handoff point.
and are forced out of F1. Another reason is distance. With only two turns to play, we don’t have a lot of time to maneuver. KNOW YOUR VCI! We need to get into the building quickly, and G3 is only two hexes from our goal. The southern flank, with C3, D2 and D1 open to the MMG and squad (Remember the SSR) is not nearly as hospitable, as well as being further away. For the FG to suppress the German MMG on turn one (ie from C4), it would be set up too far away to get in to the building by gaze’s end. G1 does have it’s risks, however. It is isolated by the board edge, offering no rout path if the German occupies F1.

[It seems that nothing is perfect in ASL....Faust]

Turn one FFPh sees the 16FP group fire at F1. With 7FP in F1, the German can always exert 6FP or more into G2 and F2. The two half-squads then cover E3 with 6FP. This precludes a good chance to be able to move into any of the three hexes in question during the MP(FFPh table above). Now, with the 467 and LMG out of action, the German faces a dilemma. He can still exert 6FP into G2 and E3 and 8FP into F2, but he can only do it once. Subsequent First Fire (SPF) will only put 4FP into F2 and 2FP into G2 and E3. Thus, while the street cannot really be called safe, it will be a lot less lethal than it used to be.

Assuming the German breaks (a big assumption, actually contradictory to my philosophy of pessimism) the MP(FFPh) will see a S27 at G3 Assault move into F2. Though appearing rash, this move serves a definite purpose. A look at our table shows that the S27 will probably end up broken or pinned; a 6FP attack is needed, and we’re offering him an 8FP (-1) shot. That is exactly what we want! By firing both HS into F2, the next move will see the remaining S27 Assault move into G2. The best shot the German has is a 2FP(-1) with the HS in F1.2, the HS in E2.2 cannot fire because the broken S27 in F2 is closer (A8.3).

Why not send both S27’s into G2? In this way we would only under a single 6(-1) during movement. The reason relates to the inherent advantage the Soviet has in numbers, namely an increase in the number of targets. Generally there are only two good reasons to stack your troops— to gain the advantage of any leadership present in the location, or to create a FG that can’t be created with ADJACENT units. Barring these circumstances, you are usually better off spreading your infantry out amongst different locations [and moving them at different times, not as a stack...].

This is one of those times. By moving to F2 first, we deny him a single First Fire shot at both units. His fire will have to be dispersed or he will have to gang up on one target to the exclusion of the other. A look at our table demonstrates that a 6(-1) is still enough to break both S27’s. By not moving them together, we do not put “all of our eggs in one basket,” either during the MP(FFPh) or DFFPh.

This move illustrates an important facet of the offense in ASL; almost NOTHING is simultaneous in this game! The order in which you execute each of the actions within your phases can radically alter the outcome via-a-via an alternate chronology. For instance, if our plan is to occupy F1 during the AFPh, we obviously have to get into F2, G1 or G2 by the end of the MP(FFPh). By using a S27 to draw fire, we take the heat off our brother SMG unit and allow it to get adjacent to the building.

The lone 447 in B3 will Assault Move (AM) to B2. Why? Because even though B2 is “obviously” out of LOS of any German, it always pays to be cautious. I’ve been burned often enough by “obviously blocked” shots to live by the rule that if I only want to move one hex, I will use assault movement. In a tight contest your opponent will not give you the benefit of mercy! Remember to declare it when you use it.

The German has little to do during DFFPh. Either two 2FP(-0) shots into F2 or G2, or a single 4FP(+0) into F2. Either way nothing should manifestly change the outcome, unless the VP’s are broken, and the APh or AFPh have 12FP(+0) as a 12FP(+0) shot in the next FFPh.

F2 is already broken, and the other S27 weather’s the 2FP shot. During the AFPh, we will assume, likewise, that the German is unaffected.

The broken S27 will rout a single hex to G3, where, if he self-rallies, he will be able to influence play more effectively than had he continued on to G4. The German LMG and 467 rout to E3.1.

During the APh we do the following: S27 into F1, 447 from B2 to C2, one 447 from E4 to F3, and the 8-1, MMG, 447 and 447 will advance to E3. The move of the big FG may require some explanation. Again, know the VCI! Unless the bulk of our units are adjacent to the building by the time we advance in turn two, we will lose the scenario. Being in the street also makes the group that much more powerful against the locations in E2, by virtue of PBF.

[Not at E2.2, my friend, per A7.21, if you are lower than an adjacent target, you must be within one level of it to get doubled FP...]

The CCPh may or may not see an ambush, how lucky do you feel? The 5:2 odds are perfect for us; on an original & we will destroy the HS, while it needs a 3 to do any damage to us. In this case, we will NOT declare Hand-to-Hand CC, the odds are already heavy in our favor, and we want the S27 to survive the encounter. Being pessimists, we’ll assume that the CC is not successful for either side, and we remain locked in Melee.

Even a cursory glance at the previous turn reveals a single, crucial event—the breaking of the LMG, 467 in F1.2. Without this occurring, our thrust into the street is probably doomed, both S27’s will end up broken, and our firegroup in E3 the recipient of a 12 FP(+0) shot in the next FFPh. So what do we do if the 16(+2) shot doesn’t break the German?

First, Prep the S27’s at F1.2, an 8FP (+3) shot. This is a desperation shot as our table shows; we will probably not get a result from it. That is OK, however, because we are not going to move into the street until turn three. Mostly, we want to rattle the VP’s. The VP’s are already broken, and we can readily adjust our strategy if need be.
street until the APH. This is another
trick of the trade in ASL. By using the
APH to get into the street, we avoid
the negative DRM that accrues due to
movement in the open. What we lose,
of course, is entry of the building itself.
We'll have to endure the German
PPPh whilst in Open Ground.

During movement, move the 447 from
B3 to C4 to D4. It should weather the
8PP (+1) shot from the MMG, but if it
doesn't, it makes no difference. By
not breaching the 467 on the first shot,
we have become desperate. The short
scenario length demands decisive
action. In the DFPPh the best shot he'll
get is an 8PP (+2) at our FG, which
should not be a problem. During the
APH we do the following: S27 to G2,
S27 to F2, 447 from D4 to E4, MMG,
447 to F3 and 8-1, 447, 447 to E3.

In order to win we must be in the
building, and if we begin turn two on
the wrong side of the street, we have
slim hope of getting there. Given that
fact, we need to take the preceding
bold measures. Whenever you take a
bold action in ASL, go all the way. If
you are going to charge the street, let
it be with everyone. Overwhelm him
with targets. Note that few of our
units are stacked, again keeping our
conjones in separate baskets. By being
adjacent to him, we gain PBF (so does he).
We also gain a short distance to
go gain entry to the building.

The most important facet of this
example is timing. The German RPh
sees the 467 rally attempt (needed a 4 or less). All
broken units lose DM status.

The German now has a decision to
make to shoot 16PP (+3) into the
Melee in F1, an 8PP (+2) at C2, or
either. The German shoots into the
Melee and gets a mixed result by
breaking both units. During the MPH,
The 247 moves from E2 to E1.

During DFPPh we force the 467 to
regain DM by taking the 4PP (+3)
shot from C2 at E1.1. This is a tactic
often overlooked by beginners, but
used to the hilt by the Veterans. We
could, of course, have taken a
4PP (+3) at E1, but that shot fails well
below our standards according to the
table. By keeping the 467 DM we
almost guarantee its absence during
the next Russian turn.
The RTPh sees no movement: the two
units in each Melee must withdraw
from CC (A11.16). The German
withdraws to E1, the Russian to G1.
The German chooses not to advance
any units, preferring to keep a
potential 20PP PBF group in E1. This
has a good chance to disarm anyone
in E2 or F1.

On turn 2, the Russian RPh sees all
broken units remain so. Since this is
the last Russian turn, we will not Prep
Fire anything. To win, we need 3
unbroken squads in the building. To
do this, all our units will be moving
and/or advancing this turn. The first
move is a 447 from E3 into E2 (AM).
This accomplishes a few things. First,
if may draw fire from the enemy group;

a 20PP (+3) shot is definitely
worthwhile. If it does draw this fire,
ethen the units will not be able to fire
at the other 447 if it wishes to move
to D2. It will also lock the MMG into
a specific CA for the rest of the MP,
either F1/E2 or D1/E2 (A9.21),
thereby leaving one flank uncovered.
We will assume, however, that the
holds fire.

The next move is to race a 447 from
F3 to F1. Now the German is on the
corns of a dilemma. If he fires, he
needs to shoot at least a 16PP (+2)
to affect the squad. This will lock the CA
at F1/E2, however, and only leave a
potential 16PP (+3) for final fire into
E2 even if the MMG maintains ROP.
If he doesn't shoot, he'll wind up with
two +3 targets in the DFPPh. We will
assume he takes this shot, breaks the
squad, and maintains ROP in the
process.

Next, the 447 from C2 will AM into
D2. With the MMG CA fixed away,
this unit is subject only to a 2PP (-1)
shot from the HS in E1. The German
refuses this, which puts the squad into
a position to advance into the building.
Finally, we AM the 8-1, MMG, 447
from E3 to E2. This looks like a
contradiction of our "eggs in one
basket" rule, but there is a rationale
for it. The best shot to be had is a
16PP (+3), either during the MPH
or DFPPh. Our 8-1 and 447 should be able
to weather that attack. Secondly, a
look at our forces will show that, if
one more squad is broken, we'll lose.
So the benefit both squads gain by
being stacked with an 8-1 outweighs
the disadvantages. Last, the act of
moving the leader and squad to F1
will incur the Residual 8PP (+2) and
another 16PP (+2) attack. Moving to
F0 and abandoning the MG will give
the German an 8PP (+0). Thus, the
first choice is best.

The DFPPh is obvious, everything into
E2. If we break, we lose. ASL is like
that, and at the end of a tight scenario
it'll get down to a couple of dice rolls.
If we both roll sevens all around,
however, the result will be a big "no
effect."

In the APPh the 447 in D2 does not
bother to fire at E1, with a 2PP (+3)
attack we can't even DM him (A10.62
again). We will fire both 447s and the
8-1 into E1 with an 8PP (+2), but
again assume this does nothing.

The RTPh sees the 447 in F1 rout to
G1. The 247 in E1 routes to
E1.1.
and the 8-1 drop the MMG and advance into E1. The 447 in D2 advances to E2. We advance all the marbles into E1 because it is imperative not to lose another squad. To best accomplish this, we need to cripple the Kraut and keep him from hitting us in his last turn. The 8-1 gives us an advantage in ambush as well as CC. The best the German will be able to muster is a 3:2 against a single squad. We leave the MMG behind because: 1) it is useless in CC, 2) the advancing 447 can pick it up in the RPh. If we are lucky and get an ambush, we immediately declare H-T-H CC at 1:1 with a -2 DRM. If we miss the ambush, then we’ll concentrate on the full squad, NOT declare H-T-H, attacking at 3:2 or 2:1, depending upon who the 8-0 defends with. We don’t want to risk H-T-H in simultaneous attacks, but we want to take out as much of the firepower as we reliably can. His attack will probably be a 3:2 at our unaccompanied 447. In all cases, if we all roll sevens he either ends up dead or reduced, while we are unscathed.

The two broken units upstairs are DM, by the way. What we couldn’t accomplish in the APh we did by moving ADJACENT to the broken 467 in E1.1. This is yet another good attacker’s tactic—using movement/advance to keep the defender DM per A10.62.

[The advantage of doing this in the APh is that DM units will not be able to lose that status during the subsequent RPh...]

The player turn is over. In the German RPh, we’ll assume that no units rally and the 447 in E2 recovers the MMG. German Prep Fire is nonexistent; all armed units are locked in Melee or broken. Movement is also uneventful, the 7-0 is simply waiting to advance to E1 to lend his weight to the final CC.

[Note that the upstairs units have no path of egress and are therefore Encircled, A7.72, and therefore morale lowered by one].

Our DFPh is another story. We have yet another major choice to make. A glance at the H-T-H numbers on the CCT reveals that we will most likely take a HS casualty and lose the scenario. With the 7-0 involved, the German can get a 3:2 against our lone 447, needing an eight or less to inflict damage. With this in mind, our MMG, 447 combination in E4 will open fire with a 16FP (+3). Again, if sevens are rolled all around, the German ends up with two pinned HS, while we are unscathed. In truth, this still gives the German a 1:1 against a squad, but hey—a seven beats an eight!

**ALTERNATIVE 2. 467 NOT RKN**

The German PPPh is all-important. We purposely gave him a diverse selection of targets. The MMG is in open ground, while two 527s and two 447s are adjacent to the building. By spreading out thusly, the impact of his Prep Fire will, hopefully, be minimized. If he attacks the MMG, he leaves the 527 in G2 unaffected.

In his PPPh, we’ll assume that he breaks both 527s using two attacks from the HS on ground level and the LMG, 467 on F1.2. He chooses not to move any units.

During our defensive fire we again fire at the 467, this time with everything we’ve got, a 20FP (+3) shot. This is our second shot at odds that, from our table, should break the defender. If he doesn’t break, our chances go way down, we’ll assume that this time we are successful.

The RiPh sees the 527s rout to G3, the 467 to E1.1. In his advance phase, the 8-0, MMG and 467 advance to F1; the HS in F1 advances to E2. The reason for this is pretty clear, with only one MPh left we can’t waste a lot of time firing, we’ll have to move. To combat this, the German can create a forward defense, with his heavy firepower protecting the front of the building. All good order units in hex E1 gain concealment. I’ll say here that the situation looks pretty grim for the Russians, again showing the critical nature of the opening shot at the 467.

The Russian RPh sees no broken units rally, but all lose DM status. In our last PPPh we’ll take a 20FP (+3) shot at the FG in F1. If he breaks, and we weather the fire from E2, we can get two 447s into the building. If not, the fire from the MMG will probably break one or both 447s. We could execute some maneuver to further split up our forces and draw some fire, but there is one major flaw with that approach, it still leaves the MMG, 467 combo in the building. On his final PPPh he’ll be able to generate a 20FP (+3), which is probably enough to throw us out of the building. We need to break that capacity now, then move into the building. We’ll assume that the fire does indeed break the 467 and pins the 8-0.

In the German DFPh both HS in E2 fire into E3. Again, if we break, we lose, but the 8FP (+0) shot he has should be withstood with the help of the 8-1 leader. If we survive, the APh sees us put two 447s and the 8-1 into CC in E2. The MMG, 447 advance to F2 and as 447 from E4 goes to E3.

In the CCPPh, assuming we do not ambush the defender, we will not declare H-T-H and will take one on (-1) attack on the 247s. The reason for the single attack is to take advantage of the leader DRM; if we declare two attacks, only one would have the leader participating. If we lose a squad, or do not destroy at least one HS, we will probably lose.

By firing all of our units in the PPPh, we deprived ourselves of the opportunity to keep the 467 in E1.1 DM; no units could fire at it, and no one could move ADJACENT. In the German RPh, the 467 will need an eight to Rally, which we must assume he will do. With that squad back, he will have between one-two unbroken squads in the building going into the final player turn. We are not in a position to affect this unit during the DFPh, so we must assume that he will have the flexibility to tie up the game (i.e. by going into CC as necessary, or hiring upstairs if not).
CONCLUSION

So what has this exercise in moving a dozen units around shown us? Hopefully you've gleaned some small insights into basic urban infantry combat ala ASL. More importantly, I hope this article points out the importance of planning your moves and having a handle on the odds involved every time you are shot at. While there are some obvious rules of thumb, a good part of playing ASL well is just making sound decisions. If your decision making follows guidelines that coincide with the basic odds of the game, you'll do well.

If I have any parting words of wisdom, they are to always keep an eye on the clock (turn record) and the VC. They, more than your forces or opponent, determine what you have to do and when you have to do it. What you do with your tools, and what decisions you make, need to center on those two items.

[Thank you very much, Eric. A sound discussion of basic principles for ASL—I know I gleaned several insights from your article. A few minor considerations:

1. Since it became apparent that a single LMG and 467 in the front of the building was enough to make or break the attack, and the Russians barely had enough FP to break this unit, following your principles as the German commander, I would have certainly set up the MMG, 467 in the front (where it could do something) rather than E1. After all, the Russians do not have enough firepower to affect more than one stack with "reasonable probability." I don't know if you "balanced" this scenario, but I certainly would have favored the German player with a forward set-up.

2. I take issue with your analysis of H-TH in hex E1 on the last player turn during ALTERNATIVE 1. While it is certainly true that the Russian can be destroyed or reduced, he has an even better chance of immolating the German. With a 447 in E2 left to win the game in case we see every unit in hex E1 perish, firing into the Melee seems to be tempting fate a little too much; though a careful statistical analysis would need to be done to confirm which course is best (which we would never have time for during the game).

3. Finally, keep in mind that a 1MC may not normally break an 8-1, but it will, on average, Pin it. After being pinned, look out! All of a sudden, that 1MC which your 8-1 was protecting you from can now break your "7 morale units in the hex. (next time you'll use a 9-1 in your example, eh?—Faust.)"

(Cont. from page 5, col. 3)

hobby was at ten years ago, a state that DIPLOMACY took two decades to reach. A healthy, vibrant hobby devoted to what is becoming a phenomena of sorts is the result of the efforts of those like you. Within ten years, I fully expect ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER to have reached the same level as DIP among the ranks of great games. It's been a privilege and a pleasure that, in my life, I've had the opportunity to be involved in both, and have so many friends among the two wonderful "brotherhoods."

FIGURE 1
## POINT REPLAY #1

(Part Two)

### BREAD FACTORY #2 [RB3]

**GERMANS:** DEAN HALLEY  
**RUSSIANS:** DAVE CONNELL  
**COMMENTATOR:** MARC HANNA

We return to the “blood & guts” action near the bread factory. At the start of turn 4, The Germans have taken H41 (their stated initial objective) and have a toehold in victory building F42. The Russians have moved their reinforcements up quickly, however, and it’s far from over. Let’s check out the action.

**Turn 4 - German**

### Rally Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misc.</th>
<th>235</th>
<th>45L ATG [H43] CA to H41/42, box?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>256</td>
<td>ATO TH Area vs H41 2.5 MISS, -1ACQ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Advance Fire Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misc.</th>
<th>257</th>
<th>STACK [F40] vs G43.1 SFP(+1) 5.6 NE, 456H HH DM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>258</td>
<td>STACK [O41] vs G43.1 SFP(+3) 6.2 NE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>259</td>
<td>467GG [F42.1] vs J41 1FP(+2) NE, STACK DM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>260</td>
<td>LMG [F42.1] + STACK [F42] vs G43.1 SFP(+2) 4.2 PTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>261</td>
<td>8-1 PTC 5.1 NE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rout Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misc.</th>
<th>262</th>
<th>447EE from F42 to D44</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>263</td>
<td>237G from C41 to B40 (Regal not DM or OK)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Advance Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misc.</th>
<th>264</th>
<th>467A from G41 to H41, DM adj. enemy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>265</td>
<td>9-2, LMG, 465Y from F40 to G41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>266</td>
<td>7-0 CX from C59 to B39</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>267</td>
<td>LMG, 467DD from F40 to F41</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Close Combat Phase - None

**TURN 4 - Russian**

### Rally Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misc.</th>
<th>268</th>
<th>Wind Change 1.4 NE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>269</td>
<td>447EE [J41] wff (0) 6.1 RALLY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>270</td>
<td>9-1 [J41] wff(+4) 6.1 NE, DM off STACK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>271</td>
<td>458HH [H43.1] 8-1(+2) 3.4 NE, DM off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>272</td>
<td>467A [H41] LMG recovery 3, DM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>273</td>
<td>24IC [O41] 9-2(-3) 1.3 RALLY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>274</td>
<td>247FF F45(2) 3.4 RALLY</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Prep Fire Phase

| Misc. | 275 | DM off D4 |

### Advance Fire Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misc.</th>
<th>276</th>
<th>45L ATG [H43] TH H41(+) 3.6 MISS, -2ACQ, ROF</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>277</td>
<td>SAME SHOT (0) 1.5 HIT, ROF</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>278</td>
<td>HE EFFECT SFP(0) 1.6 PTC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>279</td>
<td>467A PTC 3.1 NE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>280</td>
<td>SAME SHOT(0) 1.3 HIT ROF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>281</td>
<td>HE EFFECT SFP(0) 4.3 PTC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Defensive Fire Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misc.</th>
<th>282</th>
<th>SAME SHOT (0) 1.5 HIT, ROF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>283</td>
<td>4HE EFFECT SFP(0) 5.4 NE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>284</td>
<td>SAME SHOT (0) 3.4 HIT, ROF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>285</td>
<td>HE EFFECT SFP(0) 5.3 NMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>286</td>
<td>467A NMC 2.4 OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>287</td>
<td>SAME SHOT (0) 6.6 BKN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>288</td>
<td>LMG, 458II [O41] vs F41 SFP(0) 1.1 COVER, E2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>289</td>
<td>467DD to 247DD 2MC 4.4 BKN, DM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Movement Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misc.</th>
<th>290</th>
<th>447EE from L41 to H43</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>291</td>
<td>447EE from J34 to H39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>292</td>
<td>LMG, 458II from L45 to H45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>293</td>
<td>1, 9-0 from J42 to L43 Assault mv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>294</td>
<td>LMG, 27AA from J42 to L43 Assault mv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>295</td>
<td>447CC from J42 to L43 Assault mv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>296</td>
<td>447DD from J42 to J44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>297</td>
<td>1, 447CC, 467BB from L41 to K41 Assault mv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>298</td>
<td>8-1 from G43.1 to G43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Defensive Fire Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misc.</th>
<th>300</th>
<th>LMG, 467A [H41] vs F41 SFP(+2) 4.3 NE, DM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>301</td>
<td>STACK [F45] vs H43 SFP(+1) 1.4 PTC, SAN, ROF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>302</td>
<td>SAN 2 EFFECT 4.3 F45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>303</td>
<td>Rainbow Selection 6.3 9-1 Wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>304</td>
<td>wound Severity 3 OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>305</td>
<td>458II PTC 1.2 OK, SAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>306</td>
<td>SAN 4 NE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>307</td>
<td>SAME SHOT (+1) 1.6 X, ROF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>308</td>
<td>SAME SHOT (+1) 1.2 1MC, ROF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>309</td>
<td>458II 1MC 6.1 PIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>310</td>
<td>SAME SHOT (+1) 5.2 NE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>311</td>
<td>STACKS [F42.1] + [F47] vs G43 45FP(+2) 6.1 2MC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>312</td>
<td>8-1 2MC 6.2 BKN, DM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>313</td>
<td>458II 2MC 4.1 OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>314</td>
<td>STACK [etc.-LMG] [O41] vs G43 15FP(+1) 6.5 PTC, NE, inv LMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>315</td>
<td>LMG [O41] vs G43.1 SFP(+3) 2.6 NE, DM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advancing Fire Phase

316 458H 2445 II to F43 1FP +3 5.5 CC W E, NE
317 LMG, 403AA, 467CC [43] to H41 5FP +4 6.5 NE

Route Phase

318 406HH from H41 to L41
319 STACK from H41 to L41
320 8-1 from O43 to O43.5
321 LMG, 247DD from F43 to O43

Advance Phase

322 447DD from H44 to H64
323 466AA from K43 to K43
324 466AH and 466CC from K41 to H41

Close Combat Phase

325 466AA [43] S AIN 7

German: Since turn 3 left both of us scattered and disorganized, I thought it was a good (safe) time to consolidate before I attacked G43. But at the same time I wanted to keep Dave from doing this, so I used harassing fire on those units that deserved it.

In spite of what I said at the beginning about large FG, I went ahead and moved 467DD into F41. The possibility of all that firepower for one attack was too much to pass up...even for someone who rolls like I do. After all, anything less than a 12 DR would have given me something. I guess Dave felt the same way, but at least 467DD drew fire away from F42.

I know that moving 467A into H41 was a risky thing to do, especially with the ATG acquiring that hex. But I needed it there to make Dave think twice about sending reinforcements across the road. 467A rose to the challenge with another spectacular stand, and Dave gets what he deserves by firing his ATG so much. The pin result did limit my options in DFPh, however. With a +3 IIFT attack against anything unbroken, I opted to go for the cheap shot against the broken units at J41. Not only did this keep the DM, but it scared them so much that they ran all the way back to L41. Now, if and when they rally, I can get back into the action.

458H proves that he's one tough hombre by surviving 24 IIFT and 19 IIIT attacks. I may be forced to go into CC against him yet, but at least with a hero, I'll have a slight advantage to do it with.

Overall I think things went well and that I'm in a good position for turn 5.

Russian: Dean's rush towards H41 and F42 is paying dividends for him. Unable to rally my boys to reorganize my defenses, he shifts his 9-2/HMG group right down my throat. I further injure myself when my defensive fire produces a hero and Battle Hardens the squad at F42, something I didn't really need.

In the hope that I can clear H41, my ATG's barrel melts for no effect. I split my reinforcements, one group to assist the J41 group; if these can rally they can apply pressure to his units in building H41. The other group, with Commissar, will attack G43. To start this attack, I sent a couple of squads into the F44 block in hope of cleaning out his remnants around there, and flank G43 and F42.

The squad at J38 decides they want to play again and I'll send them towards G40/G41, seeking to pull some of his force away from the main battle and maybe cut some of his retreat routes.

It is probably poor judgement to send my 8-1 back to G43 with so many hostiles in the area. If I get lucky, however, G43 won't fall without a real fight. With a few rallies, I still hope to move in force back towards G43 and F42, using the F44 block and wall for a last turn push into the victory heartes. I also must keep his units from forming a killer fire group at H41 or I'm sunk!

Neutral Commentator: As happens in PBM (or FTF, for that matter), Dean forgot a few rallies and moves that he could have made. When I play by mail, I use transparency overlays and write down the position of every unit, rather than set them up each turn. The disadvantage is that I can't read my own writing, or forget to update a position.

As noted previously, both players are treating rubble as if it were building terrain in every sense—for rally, movement, etc. which it's not. Note that Dean's rout of 237G from C41 to B40 was illegal, you can't rout unless under DM or forced to because you are in the normal range of an enemy unit and in OG. Dean, apparently, wants to have his rubble and rout from it too...Note that, contrary to popular opinion, you cannot grow DM voluntarily so as to rout. A10.62 is very specific about the option to retain DM; once you've removed it, only those situations as outlined therein will cause you to regain it. Note also that it is possible to rout when NOT under DM when forced to do so by being in OG, in LOS and normal range of an enemy unit. See A10.5.

I would have been tempted (but not necessarily smart) to enter into CC at G43 were I the German player. Even if a melee had resulted, the upstairs units, still broken, would have persisted. Dean made the decision to consolidate and held back on this; Dave ensures that it was the right move by gunning down 467DD instead of blasting F42. 467DD did its job as bait, and Dave is in serious trouble now.

Dave is not being sensible about his broken units in J41. Dean wisely keeps every enemy unit he can under DM. Dave tolerates this at J41 for two player turns, then finally routs! Now these units are way out of position and cannot possibly help (unless a suicidal charge down the street is called for) in the counterattack until turn 6. If they rally, worse, he routes them to L41, in LOS of F42.1, so Dean can still keep them DM! Why? Why, is not the Commissar over on this flank and rallying these guys at gunpoint?

The additional morale benefit to the troops in H43 is of less value than getting the others back into the game.

Dave's plan to sneak up on the victory objectives along the H44-F43 wall has merit, but how are his...
going to help out with that? Dave is committed to a piecemeal counterattack at this point. Dean ought to feel good about his position. But... let’s remember that Dean still needs to wrinkle the Russians out of G43. If 458II turns out to be half as much a man as 467A, look out! No Russian counterattack will be needed.

It was fun watching the dueling ROF this turns! Net result: 2 pinned squads, a broken ATG and the Sniper attack Dean has been trying to earn all game with his (at times) questionable low odds attacks. Imposing DM is one thing, rolling a lot of low odds shots because you perceive you have bad luck might just lead you to perceive that you have bad luck, don’t you think?

Turn 5—German

Rally Phase

326 Wind change 3,3 NE
327 247II [840] ef(0) 5,4 NE
329 ATG Repair 4 NE
330 8-1 [G43.1] ef(+0) 3,6, DM off STACK
331 9-1 [L41] ef(+0) 3,2 RALLY
332 44700 [L41] 9-[1] 4,3 NE DM off
333 257X [L41] 9+[1] 2,1 RALLY
334 456HH [L41] 9+[1] 2,1 RALLY

Prep Fire Phase

335 SSR. #2 4 9-1 WND, 247FF [F43] BERZERK
336 456HH, 149 [F43] + LMO, 46700 [F42.1] vs G43 247FF(+) 4,2 2MC
337 458II 2MC 1,4 NE
338 STACK [G41] vs G43 247FF(+) 1,1 1,1XIA, ROF, 458II ELIM
339 Random SW Deal 5 NE
340 HMO [G41] CA 042H41
341 8-2,HMO,LMO [G41] vs G43 10FP(+) 1,6 NMC, ROF
342 8-1 BKN NMC 3,5 NE
343 456HH BKN NMC 4,6 245HH BKN, DM
344 SAME SHOT 10FP(+1) 1,1 EK ROF
345 Random Selection 5,4 8-1 Wounded
346 Wound Severity 5 ELIM
347 245HH 3MC 2,6 ELIM
348 9-2, HMO, LMO [G41] vs 143 10FP(+) 1,6 NMC, PTC, HMO ROF
349 9-0 PTC 4,5 NE
350 447-1MC 4,3 OK
351 527AA -1MC 3,5 FIN
352 22R(12) NMC 3,3 OK
353 9-2, HMO [G41] vs 143 7FP(+) 1,1 Z/2 ROF
354 Random Selection 5,3,5 9-0 Wounded
355 Wound Severity 1 OK
356 447CC 2MC 3,4 BKN, DM
357 527AA 2MC 4,3 BKN, DM
358 22R(12) 2MC 4,1 NE
359 SAME SHOT 7FP(+) 6,1 PTC
360 9-0 WND PTC 3,3 NE
361 22R(12) PTC 4,4 NE
362 HMO (Cap), 457AA vs 143 10FP(+) 2,1 1MC, ROF
363 HMO CA 142H42
365 9-0 WND 1MC 3,4 OK
366 447CC BKN 1MC 5,1 NE
367 527AA BKN 1MC 3,3 NE
368 22R(12) 1MC 3,6 FIN
369 HMO (Cap) [H41] vs H44 4FP(+) 4,3 NE

Movement Phase

370 9-1 WND, EZ, 247FF EZ from F43 to BP. G430446
371 1MC, 455II [H45] vs 9-1 WND, EZ, 247FF EZ 16FP(+) 3,3 COWER, 3MC
372 9-0 WND, EZ 3MC 4,6 Wounded Twice
373 Wound Severity (+1) 4 6cm
374 247FF EZ 3MC 3,1 OK
375 247FF EZ from G43046 to H45 CC
376 247DD [H44] vs 247FF EZ 4FP(+) 1,3 3MC
377 247FF EZ NMC 4,2 OK
378 HMO, 455II FPF vs 247FF EZ 12FP(+) 5,6 1MC
379 247FF EZ 4,3 NE
380 447DD [H44] SFF vs 247FF EZ 4FP(+) 1,3 1MC
381 247FF EZ 1MC 6,3 NE
382 247FF EZ 4,6 NE, 455II BKN, DM; HMO MAI.
383 7-0 from B35 to B40 Assault ev.

Defensive Fire Phase

384 456BB, 467CC [F41] vs H41 8FP(+) 2,1 1MC, SAN, low 7
385 527AA 1MC 2,5 BKN, DM

Advancing Fire Phase

386 247FF EZ [H45] vs H45 3FP(+) 6,2 NE

Route Phase

387 456II from H45 to J44
388 9-0 WND, 46700, 527AA from G43 to J44

Advance Phase

389 149, 458IIH from F42 to G43
390 LMO, 46700 from G42.1 to F42
391 247C from G41 to TRENCH G40
392 STACK [Exc 241DD BKN] from G41 to H41
393 247FF EZ from H45 to H44

Close Combat Phase

394 247FF EZ vs 441DD 1:1 3, 441DD to 253DD
395 441DD vs 247FF EZ 2,1 6,4 NE, MELEE

Turn 5—Russian

Rally Phase

397 ATO [G43] Repair 6 ELIM
398 527AA [J44] 9-0 WNDX(1) 5,6 NE, 527AA to 421DD
399 447CC [J44] 9-0 WNDX(1) 1,2 RALLY
400 455II [J44] 9-0 WNDX(1) 5,3 RALLY
401 44700 [L41] 1-1(1-2) 3,3 RALLY
402 467A [H41] 9-(1-1) 1,3 RALLY
403 3250 [B40] 7-0(1) 4,5 NE
404 247II [B40] 7-0(1) 3,2 RALLY

Prep Fire Phase

405 447EL [J59] vs G40 6FP(+) 3,4 PTC
406 247C PTC 1,1 NE.
Three snake eyes in seven shots is simply amazing (and without a sniper at that)! If I were in Dave's shoes I'd be feeling a little discouraged right now, and if truth be known I even feel a little (well, almost, anyway) guilty.

SSR#2 finally makes my 9-1 and 247FF berserk (where was it in turn #3 when I really needed it?). The 9-1 does about what I expect, but 247FF surprises me by hanging on long enough to break 458II and malfunction an MMG. I suppose it was stupid to try and withdraw 247FF from the Melee, but I'm getting tired of losing units. I should have gone 1:1 vs. 237Z, at least that way I could have taken someone with me.

I was surprised that Dave pulled back his conscripts. They may not be much, but with time running out he'll need all the help he can get. Maybe he's planning to link them up with his 9-1, 237X and 447GG for a flanking attack on H41. An attack like that could conceivably tie up my big FG while the rest of his units run across the road to G43. It's definitely something I need to keep an eye on.

I put 247C in the trench at G40 to force 447EE to fire instead of move, keeping at least one of Dave's units out of any counterattack. The fact they ended up in melee could be an added bonus if they stay that way.

Things are looking very good at this point, and unless I roll 10's, 11's and 12's next turn I think I'm in F42 and G43 to stay.

Russian: Well, what can I say? My defense gets hammered. To quote a famous witch, "I'm melting!"

G43 and H41 become veritable fortresses, with H41 too nasty to even think about. Both will be tough nuts to crack. His berserk HS ends my flanking move pretty easily. With the hope I can still send people into that area for a flank move, I lead in with a conscript which finally clears the block. But the H41 fireguard may make it impossible to cross that street. Again, I need some hot dice during the next Rally Phase.

Neutral Commentator: I think we're through listening to complaints from Dean about his luck! Regarding what 458II rolled for morale checks, it couldn't stand up to an outright KIA. Dave's defense withers under the raking fire from MGs in H41. Maybe that's why Dean was so eager about H41: he needed that "hex" to charm his dice rolling.

247FF dances through enemy fire into H45, where Dave made the mistake of taking a second FPF attack. Now, with reasonable chance of success, an FPF attack with an 8 morale unit is usually worth it, but a 12FP(+1) shot on a berserker that he'd probably cream in the CC phase anyway is nearly irresponsible. "Nearly," because in the heat of the moment I would have been sorely tempted to take the same shot.

Continuing the analysis of the Berserker movements, note that event #394 was illegal—a berserk unit cannot advance (A15.431). Further, per J2.31 HH CC is mandatory for berserk units. Still, in the exchange of errors Dave was, once again, hurt severely as his path along the wall is blocked by the melee.

It's hard to tell what Dave is trying to accomplish on the northern flank. At first, I thought he was setting up for a human wave (targeted at G41). This cannot be, however, as he ends the turn with only 5 MMC on that side and he needed a minimum of 6. Advancing his conscripts exposed into K42 and 237X into J41 puts them in needless jeopardy. What they needed to do was try to advance into CC at H41 (not an easy task, I'll grant you). The best hope he has for a street crossing would involve eliminating, crippling or (just as good) tying these valuable units in CC. Nevertheless, Dave demonstrates his ability to pull back and prepare for an assault—his patience can make me sweat, that I know! Yet, something tells me he's waiting one turn too long.

As a final comment event...
429 was illegal, as per A15.46, a
berserk unit must remain so until it
eliminates every unit in its hex via
TBPF or CC. Otherwise, I found
Dean's comments about the
withdrawal very pertinent...

Turn 6 - German

Rally Phase
434 Wind Change 1 2 NE
435 247DD [G41] self+0 3,3 RALLY
436 237G [B40] 7-X-1 4,4 RALLY
437 426DD [E41] 20 WNDY, 1 6,6 ELIM

Prep Fire Phase
438 STACK [H41] vs H44 2RFP(0) 5,2 4MC
439 426HH 4MC 1,3 BKN, DB, DM
440 237X 4MC 3,3 BKN, DM

Movement Phase
441 149, 465HH from G43 to G43 1 Assault av.
442 465HH LMG Recovery 2 0K
443 STACK [K42] + 237X [E41] vs 149, 465HH
444 149 NMC 4,1 NE
445 465HH NMC 6,1 NE
446 LMG, 441500 from F42 to G43 Assault av.
447 STACK [H44] vs 467GG 10RFP+5 2,3 PTC
448 467GG PTC 6 2 PTC
449 LMG, 247DD from G41 to E42
450 STACK from B40 to F40

Defensive Fire Phase - None

Advancing Fire Phase
451 STACK [D43] + STACK [G43] vs 144
452 228(12) NMC 5,6 BKN, DM
453 438J NMC 3,4 NE
454 447CC NMC 5,5 BKN, DM

Rout Phase
455 23700 from H44 to H44
456 228(12), 447CC from H44 to J44

Advance Phase
457 247II from F40 to G41

Close Combat Phase
458 247II from F40 to G41
459 247C 7-0 vs 447EE 1/0 1,5 NE
460 447EE vs 7-0, 247C 1/1 2,2 ELIM

Turn 6 - Russian

Rally Phase After a fruitless rally
phase the Russian player resigns.

German: My big FG at H41 comes
through once more, and 247FF is
avenged in the process. I moved my
7-0 leader into CC against 447EE to
bring the odds down to 1:1. As you
saw, it didn’t help. But I had
anticipated that, so that’s why I moved
247II to G41 and left 237G at F40.
447EE may have won the melee,
but with my two HS blocking his way,
there was no place for it to go.

I doubt that either of these things
carried much weight by themselves,
but they were the straw that broke the
camel’s back.

Russian: The Fat Lady is singing
now. H41 and G43 are too tough so I
throw in the towel. What’s left would
only get mowed down as I charge
G43. Sorry fellows, but I’m not that
blood thirsty.

Final Remarks

German: My idea of attacking down
the gully was stupid and I’ll never do
it again (I think), but it was enough to
get the job done and in the end that’s
all that matters. If this had been an
RB campaign game I doubt I’d be so
smug about it. I lost 50% of my
squads and 75% of my leaders. That’s
not a good receipt for victory over an
extended period of play, but since I
was the one who insisted on a battle
of attrition it was acceptable for now.

The only tactical posse I showed in
this scenario was attacking F42 in turn
three. I think this took both of us by
surprise, but it was an opportunity I
couldn’t pass up, even if it meant
rupturing my entire plan (which Dave
was disrupting anyway).

My dice rolls were so out of character
for me that I’m still a little stunned by
them. They were good (most of the
time), and it just goes to show how
even a bad plan has a chance to work
if you give it enough time (not that I
recommend that you do it that way).

As you saw, I was vindicated over my
obsession with building H41. It was
my FG in H41 that kept Dave from
crossing the street (and in essence held
onto G43). In my opinion that makes
building H41 just as important as F42
and G43.

The final comment I have to make on
the way Dave played is that I thought
he tried to do too much with too little.
By defending the gully as heavily as he
did, he left the rest of his position
spread out. This allowed me to split
his forces as I attacked. Other than
that I thought he played a good game.

Russian: In spite of the outcome, this
was a real fun scenario, a good
introduction to the RB board. I
correctly assumed that Dean would
attempt to run up the gully and he
found out that it would be a tough
job. But focusing on the gully lost me
the game, because the F42 area was
much too weak when Dean changed
his mind and came up the middle. I
had fun removing many of his
counters off the board, but even with
those heavy losses, he was able to
secure himself and put me away. I
didn’t help myself much when I made
a few tactical errors early. Turns 3-4
could have had the battle turn either
way, but I got my buns burned! Good
game, Dean, and next time...

Neutral Commentator: The German
player does not even bother to shoot,
but makes needless maneuvers in G43
instead. His lucky AFPh shot from
there may have been the last
humiliation upon Dave’s troops.

A very entertaining game, and I’d like
to discuss the last turn some more but
I’ve run out of room! In issue #3, I’ll
give a detailed endgame statement.
Please send in your comments about
the game to share your view.

Next issue will feature a variety of
smaller articles, including the one by
Mark Nixon which was
promised last time. Until then,
hate off to the troops! Faust.