



# At The Point

## The Journal of AS

#7

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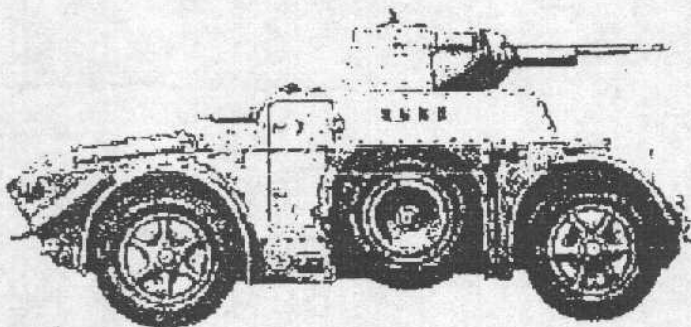
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## FOR A BRIEF MOMENT

FAUST HATS HUMBLE PIE

Yes, that's right, and since this is very painful I will make this as quick as my wordy ways enable.

While I know many of you enjoy those Faustian comments interspersed within the body of the authors' text, it has come to my attention that this really can destroy the chain of reasoning that a person is trying to get across to the readers. Rather than scaring off some of the finer contributors to the magazine, a new policy will now be enforced (by the editor) upon me. Mighty Faust must now wait until the end of the articles before ranting and raving! I hope this satisfies all...

## A MORE SERIOUS MATTER

A lot of interesting rules discussions have been occurring on the electronic bulletin board (BB) GENie recently. [See this issue's MAIL CALL for more information on signing up for this exciting service and getting involved with the ASLers on the network....ed.]. One revolved around an interpretation of A23.1, which states that a DC explodes in the target hex, and not just in the target location. Now, a certain Mr. Troha, known for his excellent scenario designs and pursuit, moreover, of excellence in the ASLRB, inquired of the BB:

*Does this mean that a DC placed in a hex attacks everything in the hex, that is, all locations in the hex?*

Now, Faust, of course deemed himself capable of answering this question, and, on the BB, stated something to the effect that:

*No, such a DC really only attacks a single location, not the whole hex; this is clearly the intent. There are several places in section A of the rules which confuse "location" and "hex. Other participants had a different view which they shared.*

Personally, my thinking is that if DC are allowed to affect all the occupants of a hex, it can turn your squad into a collection of Bruce Willis's, a Die Hard lot indeed. Now you can creep up to the

cellar windows in RB, carefully place a remarkable shaped charge device (otherwise known as a DC counter) downstairs, have it explode so perfectly (every time folks, every time) that it doesn't damage your Bruces huddling outside next to the wall, but explodes directly up elevator shafts, ventilation ducts and so on. All locations-- the cellar, level 0, level 1, level 2 and the roof, by gobs--take a 30FP attack. Those on the roof only get a +1 TEM for height advantage, we suppose! Best yet, due to the provisions of A7.4, these beauties only harm enemy units, never friendlies, just what we would expect of our Bruces! (well, there is Melee, but we can't ask the Bruces to handle everything just right...)

Well, we always knew that a squad of Bruces is better than a rocket barrage. These can only attack cellars located in a two story building with a 36FP +7 attack and, worse, are likely to kill friends and neighbors located adjacent to that building; DCs don't do that. Aw, heck, a DC has a better chance of taking out a skyscraper than a rocket barrage!

Anyway, the debates on GENie are quite fascinating and I'd like to encourage grognards old and new to sign up. On the network, there has recently been several proposals made to form an "ASLRB Committee" with a charter to field these discussions, make rational sense of them and collect a list of "House Rules" (for lack of a better term) that would address nebulous issues and ratify them for all ASL players. This list would then be submitted, on a regular basis, for review at AH. I'd like to get some feedback from the AIP readership on this idea. In any case:

It's amazing what fun you can have on GENie, so sign up today!



## FAUST'S FORUM

Marc,

The IIFT as found in the '89 ASL Annual has shown itself to be a very good substitution for the original IFT with no real effect on the play or reality of the game. Although I am a capable mathematician I have decided not to try to prove with cold numbers that the IIFT is without merit. [1] What I did do was look at the IFT and the IIFT to make some comparisons and talk with some survivors of infantry combat in the ETO and PTO during WW II. In the '91 ASL Annual the brief article entitled "Using the CRT (Concealment Stripping Table)" does a disservice to the originators of the IIFT and throws smoke on the efficiency of this improved results system. [2] Lets review each point the author made.

The first point concerned the size of the IIFT and it being hard to read. Our local group generally has found a trip to the local copy shop the best remedy. Increasing the size of the columns section to 8 1/2 x 11 makes the chart very eye appealing, even for us 39+ year olds. [3]

The second contention is that the columns do not change gradually enough but in "fits and starts" Should the reader highlight the changes (first go to copy store) in the additional columns you will find the new results have not changed so dramatically! Since the majority of attacks seem to be in the 1-16 FP range you will note that only 36 of the 111 changes appear in this range or 32%. In addition to that fact, 24 of the 36 changes (67%) are only activated on a final DR result of 5 or less! Assuming IIFT modifiers from -2 to +2 the odds of a successful result on the 5 DR line run from 55% to 9%. Sure the IIFT might be massaged a tiny bit but I don't think any change is needed. Two good questions are: What's the big deal? Does the IIFT negatively change the way fire and maneuver is conducted? [4]

The third point mentioned in the '91 Annual article is that "the changes make the game more deadly." The 111 changes don't necessarily attest to this because you have to roll the real low numbers (the lucky) to get the benefit of these

changes or rather improvements, at least in the 1-16 FP area.[5] The changes in the 17-36 FP area (75 of III or 66%) do make it a bit more deadly, but if a player is able to combine the fire of 5 or 6 squads along with some heavy SKs you would definitely expect some dreadful damage! What Many ASL Players don't recognize is that each hex is only 40 meters across and we all continually jam a platoon (3 squads) in that little space. The WW II veterans, of the ETO & PTO, that I know have indicated that the disposition of 3 squads on a 40 meter front in the LOS of an enemy would be both foolish and dangerous for their men. [6] It just wasn't done! If anything, we may be playing a game that is skewed at least in terms of unit stacking, but I am willing to accept what the designers decided made the game playable. The IIFT really causes the player to play more realistically. [7]

The fourth point that was made concerned the thought that went into the assignment of the FP values of the combatant counters and their relationship to the IFT and IIFT. I have no doubt that the designers knew what they were doing when they assigned FP values and we would all like to read future articles about their methodology. The IFT appears to have been designed for simplicity in a very complex game system. [8] The IIFT was a product of the desire to stop the infamous "panzerbush" and have a very workable user friendly results table. [9] 3 FP squads are now stronger, but in order to get the benefit of the IIFT K or MC increase they must have a "low" DR. The IIFT 3 FP extra PTC is also acceptable since in combat the volume of fire is not always as important to the infantryman because any fire can do damage and as a result a low volume attack may pin the unit receiving that fire. It is also realistic! The sniper attack although rare is a good example of a low volume attack, maybe just one well placed bullet.

In short, if some ASLers think we might need to change the new IIFT we should "first" listen to those who developed the ASL game system and "approved" publication of the IIFT in the '89 Annual.[10] I don't think we need to have a mathematical model devised to give us more odds that are to be used to say "the IIFT is faulty," since we

all know about statistics and their ability to prove anything. [11] Before we all go wild proving this or that about anything in the ASL system lets hear from the designers of the greatest game system. I think the "silent majority" of players think the system is just fine with the inclusion of the IIFT.

Best Regards, John H. Farris

[1]. Am I remiss in perceiving that this is indeed what you do later in the letter?

[2]. It's not improved, it's just different: Mr. Nixon makes no claims that it's worse.

[3]. Copying onto larger sheets makes them more unwieldy. ASL is DK using cardboard mounted dividers, but I don't want to be shuffling pieces of paper around, too. You might counter that it is easy to mount the IIFT on sheets of cardboard, but then, if AH really felt the IIFT should be official, wouldn't they be willing to provide that?

[4]. Is that really two good questions or just one? The fact remains that the IIFT is more potent than the IFT and does not correct the tendency for players to create killer FP stacks--it only makes it harder to figure out the best ones. I do feel that maneuver is less effective with the IFT and games tend to a "blast em up" when using the IIFT.

[5]. This is an example of using statistics in an subjective manner to support a personal view. Your assessment that only really low numbers matter inherently assumes that players are always going to roll sevens. If players roll per the normal distribution (have good luck AND bad luck) the higher results have the same effect, but the lower ones are more potent, thus rendering the IIFT cumulatively more effective.

[6]. Some of us do that only when it is smart to do that, others pay the appropriate price when it is foolish to do so. A hex is not to be considered a 40 meter "front" but a 1200 square meter "area!" I've read several historical situations where a platoon is emplaced in such a manner. Are we to ignore these experts and accept only the views of yours?

[7]. Forgive me, but I see no evidence presented which supports that conclusion.

[8]. How can you say this and, at the same time, refute their consideration of the original IFT? Why is an abstraction of squad firepower any more valid than an abstract fire table that simulates its effect?

[9]. What is "panzerbush" as it pertains to ASL? Also, the IIFT is definitely less, not more, workable than the IFT.

[10]. The same individual(s) approved Mark's more recent analysis (based on his experience with and assessment of the IIFT) published in the '91 Annual!

[11]. Only if, like any analytical tool, it is misused and not applied with appropriate methodology.

Dear Editor,

Your At The Point looks very good. I would like to subscribe.

I am one of those who came late to the SL-ASL world. I never played SL, being attracted by ASL's variety and use of the same rules for so many scenarios. I have been disappointed by Avalon Hill's ASL articles in the General, they don't explain how to play the game for a beginner like myself. I hope your ATP will try to include hints on play and get those rules translated so newcomers can understand how to really enjoy the game.

I am playing ASL by mail and am fortunate to have forgiving opponents because I make many errors per turn. I have great interest in the game, but limited time to spend on memorizing rules; I hope ATP can help me through clear sequences of play, when to use certain rules (for instance, when and how to use subsequent first fire) and generally hints on good play. HELP! We are not all grizzled experts out here!

If your magazine can help me please enter my subscription.

Thanks, Todd Hively

It is indeed unfortunate that the editor of Avalon Hill's fine maga-

zine is not permitted to include more works on ASL; I am sure he would if he could. It is true that the historical treatises about special forces and the like are dry and don't directly address the play of the game. Worse, many of the scenarios associated with these are imbalanced. As suggested in the ASL News, the terrain for the likes of "Pegasus Bridge" is all wrong. Perhaps a closer look should be taken at this series of scenarios and articles since little enough ASL reaches the pages of the General, anyway.

I would hope to include more articles that discuss the strategy and tactics on a basic level. The policy of ATP with respect to most published scenarios is that the designer provide an article that addresses fundamentals of tactics pertinent to it.

One of those grizzled veterans you refer to just sent me a letter with all kinds of advice, including catering to the new players of ASL rather than publishing scenarios, I can always take new advice, patronizing that it might be; but I'd prefer to receive the articles that this individual promised long ago! Guidelines can be established for input to ATP, but, in the end, the output of this magazine is driven by those that are kind enough to provide input pretty much when they say they will. If it is not received as promised, ultimately I will be returning subscription checks, because I won't be able to help you or anyone else.

That said, the primary emphasis of this journal remains, and will remain, analysis of the essentials for good play of ASL. Thanks for your letter.

-----  
Marc,

[...]

Some comments concerning Mark Nixon's "Snapshots from the Rulebook" [issue #2]. Mark states "that first MMC self rally attempt occurs after all leaders attempt to rally." I believe he is mistaken. The Advanced Sequence of Play on the Chapter D divider states:

1.25A First MMC rally attempt as self-rally.

1.26B Rally broken units.

Therefore, that first MMC self-rally must be attempted before any other units attempt to rally, including leaders. [1]

A couple notes that I would like to add:

A10.531 actually defines open ground for concealment loss, among other things, as any hex in normal range, in which any interdictor could apply, during a hypothetical first fire opportunity, the -1 PFMO DRM without any positive DRM. Wow! This means you could assault move in open ground towards a CX unit or 1 hex outside his normal range and maintain concealment. Makes it pretty easy to move up on those 628s or 527s! [2]

[...]

One more. In issue #2 you said that mortars use the \* short barrel modifier of C4. I agree but would like to point out that they also use the <=57mm if applicable at >12 hexes. Thus, the modified to hit # for a \*50 is 6.

Thanks for listening, Tom Wenck

[1]. On GENie, there was recently a fervent debate about the use of the Advanced Sequence of Play chart as it pertains to MMC self rally. After a long-winded discussion, some of the conclusions were:

A. Where in the rules does it ask players to consult the Advanced Sequence of Play for any purpose?

B. Keeping point A in mind, A10.63 is the rule pertaining to self rally. It indicates that the first MMC rally attempt may be self rally. The rule does not prohibit a leader from attempting self rally first; nor does it say that leaders must attempt self rally before the first MMC self rally.

C. The conclusion is that the ASLRB takes precedence over the Advanced Sequence of Play. However, the latter is very useful and cannot be ignored. The basic feeling is that anyone who absolutely insists on following it in the rally phase may be technically correct but is no fun to play.

[2]. True, but this would also mean that a 527 with an LMC now has ex-

tended LOS Range, as weapons are permitted to interdict if manned (A10.532). Moreover, why not interpret the hypothetical case to mean that the sighting unit, regardless of actual status, would not be CX and could have a captured German HMG and could see out to 16 hexes?

Because the whole situation is ambiguous, players should use common sense and ask themselves: "If I were armed with a SMG and not a rifle, could I see the enemy units running across open ground 100 yards away?"

The answer, of course, is yes, and most players don't use that interpretation of the concealment loss rules.

## RETURN OF SNAPSHOTS

Mark C. Nixon

Selecting more "Snapshots" forced me to consider what was and was not appropriate for the feature. If I didn't limit my picks, the entire Rulebook might eventually find its way into this column, and I'm sure none of us want that. The only way I knew to control this was to categorize all possible rules considerations, so that "Snapshots" could exist as one component of the total, secure in the knowledge that everything else could (theoretically) fall into place under its own heading (the "complete universe"). I believe it is essential to organize our look at the rules in this manner, so that we all understand exactly the nature of the topic of discussion at all times. Plus, gearing our thinking toward a systematic approach will prove beneficial elsewhere as well.

Now, I don't want to confuse anyone with this; I want to help shed some light on the rules. For example, a treatment of my personal interpretations of certain rules and how they might be applied to tactics could make an interesting topic (at least in my humble opinion), which might provide the impetus to set your own thoughts in motion, and would, at least, demonstrate how differently we all

sometimes interpret these rules. But such a treatment could lose its value and actually prove detrimental at that point if the readers were misled into believing they were reading "official" rulings, and not just my own thoughts. Properly identifying the criteria of such coverage, then, becomes as important as the information transmitted itself.

My nine general tiers of rules coverage, subdivided into five "Verbatim" and four "Equivocal" categories follow:

#### VERBATIM RULES

##### I. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE:

Items which probably do not require discussion, they are so basic to ASL understanding. [EXAMPLE: A4.52 CX infantry have an IPC one less than normal.] The vast majority of the rulebook falls into this category. One might still write a very great deal about how all the various GK rules meld together to formulate tactics, but looked at individually, the gamer simply must remember a lot in order to play ASL with any degree of skill.

##### II TRIVIA:

Minor obscure points and cute little quirks of the game. [EXAMPLE: C1.6 Concealed units in non-Concealment Terrain and in the LOS of a Good Order Observer are (usually) known to that Observer for his OBA actions.] On any given day a trivial item might actually make the difference between victory and defeat, so they are important, but the gamer could play a solid game without full knowledge of this tier of information. You'll notice the grognards revelling in their command of these tidbits.

##### III SNAPSHOTS:

Valuable small items with profound tactical implications [EXAMPLE: C3.71 FFAM and FFMO apply to the effects of a CH.] These are not trivia because they directly impact vital tactics and game mechanics, and yet do not require major analysis to understand, fully, as do items in tier IV. The gamer with a firm command of these will usually be winning more than losing.

#### IV ANALYSIS/TACTICS:

Major rules and their application, requiring detailed study and coverage. [EXAMPLE: See Bruce Bakken's article on platoon Movement in ATP #1.] This is where the majority of written material on the play of the game falls. See also all the Clinics in The General, Series Replays, scenario analyses, and so on. Knowing how the rules work together to formulate tactics separates the novice and the hard core ASL public.

#### V ARMOR/ORDNANCE LISTINGS & NOTES:

Any uncommon items gleaned from these reference sections will do. [EXAMPLE: German Vehicle Note #30 calls the VIE "M" Secondary Armament here, but this does not exclude the VIE from D3.7 Recall, because the "M" is not listed as Secondary Armament in the Vehicle Listing itself, only in the Notes.] The counters themselves are extensions of this information; if you fully understand the capabilities of your vehicles and ordnance, you may wield a very real advantage over an opponent not so well prepared.

#### EQUIVOCAL RULES

##### VI INTERPRETATION/ QUESTIONABLE MATTERS:

Unclear and or complicated items. [EXAMPLE: B9.5 Bocage rules.] Some things just never seem to add up.

##### VII DEBATABLE RULES:

Ahistorical, overly complex, optional, incomplete, unpopular or even unnecessary rules. [EXAMPLE: My personal opinion here: I'd rather there were no B25.11 Kindling ability.] The problem with this section of rules, is that everybody has their pet peeves, and the game can't satisfy everyone. The overriding rule, however, is that it is the best game system in the world, and does a remarkable job, all things considered.

##### VIII ERRORS/TYPOS/OMISSIONS/ CONTRADICTIONS:

Histakes and the confusion of rules and more rules. [EXAMPLE: Can MOL be used in PFF? Check the contradiction between A8.31 and A22.611.] Sure there are glitches,

but I, for one, continue to be amazed at all the "new" things I continue to discover in these rules after all these years. Don Greenwood and Bob McNamara included so much finesse in these rules way back in 1984, without the advantage of the following seven years to play the game continuously, that it scares me. It's a very humbling feeling.

#### IX ERRATA/AVALON HILL ANSWERS/ FUTURE POTENTIAL ERRATA:

Precisely, what determines when errata is "official"? [EXAMPLE: "My opinion", again, is that only The General, The ASL Annual and AH published Errata Rulebook inserts, (wasn't that Chapter E page a pleasant treat in COB?) are "official".] A written answer from Bob McNamara (Mac) is the next best thing, as he is the ASL Guru, world's leading authority High Priest of All Bombardment and all around Main Cheese but you still may hold in your hands an answer which will never be published or which Mac might later alter or, (gasp) even forget, although the latter is unlikely. But, since I can't resist, Mac says that A8.31 takes precedence in VI above; MOL cannot be used in PFF.

Granted, this begins to look like we're headed for saturation level coverage of rules lawyership, but I have no intention of employing this organizational table to split hairs. What is Trivia to you might be a Snapshot to me and General knowledge to Fish. It's really no big deal; I only want to use the table to clarify, not to create additional work. And bear in mind this structure defines only the rules themselves. During the course of writing or reading an article such as "An ASL Decision-Making Primer", by Eric Baker in ATP #2, one would identify elements of all nine rules tiers and spend a good deal of effort to explain how they all pull together, merely as a prerequisite to establish the authority to attempt the task in the first place.

Obvious at this point, the above is laid out with an eye to the future. I plan to examine the rules over an extended period of time. (not a systematic grinding, but at a leisurely stroll) courtesy of ATP, and I feel this sort of structure invaluable to the process.

Certainly, I won't stand in the way of anyone else who would care to write about the rules. In fact, I invite you to please do so. To this end, it is not my intention to suggest anyone else need follow the format I have just proposed, although you are certainly welcome if you choose. But I do advise any who write and all who read to recall this structure when you consider material written about the rules. Asking yourself whether the passage in question deals with a Verbatim rule, an interpretation, a debatable matter, an answer to a question received from AH, etc., will certainly prove enlightening when you attempt to apply any knowledge gained to your own play.

### A TIER III RULES BREAK

A4.431: Stacks freely rearrange in RPh. APH or as a result of creation of a sub-unit from a MMC. Pretty basic stuff here, but it's amazing how many players fail to take full advantage, particularly of the APH Transfer capability. It can be a key transaction, and all should force themselves to consider such transfers at the very beginning of APH, which is the proper time for it.

A8.312: TPBF must be used at certain times. I can't emphasize enough how important a concept this is for many tactics. The premise is simple enough, but involves so much detail and so many sections of rules, that tier IV coverage of Analysis/Tactics is called for. But till then, turn your thoughts on how this can be used to advantage.

A9.2, L10-11: MG firing multiple shots at a moving target in a single Location, must take those shots consecutively. You do not have the option of firing someone else at that target in that Location and then returning to use the MG's ROF, or risking breakdown with SFF/FPF. MG are the only weapons with this restriction.

A15.24: It is important to realize the differences between heroic DRM and leadership DRM. For instance, a hero DRM cannot be used with multiple ROF weapons after that initial shot unless the hero himself is actually firing the weapon. Note also, use of a hero's inherent FP precludes using spraying fire with a fire group.

B23.922: Concealed units in a Fortified Building Location are subject to AJ2.15 concealment loss when enemy units attempt to enter. This can be used to strip away some concealment from the defender, for there is nothing to prevent trying to move in even after you already know the location is fortified. This might be less expensive than taking Search casualties, and avoids leaving your troops TI.

C1.331-1.337: There is nothing in this section which allows one to maintain a SR in a hex without converting it to an FFE. If it won't be converted, it must be corrected.

C1.57: An FFE concentration less than 70mm does not cause a +1 LOS Hindrance. So watch those U.S. 60mm mortars held offboard per U.S. Ordnance Note #1.

C3.71: FFNAM and FFMO apply to the affects of a CH, as does Air Burst. It's a deadly game.

C5.33: A vehicle wishing to fire during its MPH before expending any MP can still be caught by a defender who declares a Gun Dual, which actually occurs before a MP is spent. The former is a solid tactic, the latter an intriguing way to combat it.

C6.5: Only Guns of 20mm or more may acquire. Watch those little popguns, like the British MK VIC tanks in "The Crux of Calais" and their 15mm cannons. No acquisition for these boys!

C6.5: Using a gun for interdiction vs. a different target causes loss of acquisition.

C7.31 TABLE: It appears only on the TK TABLE, but .50 Cal MG equals 12.7mm for TK purposes. Instead of a 4TK like other MG, the .50 Cal is 5TK. It has been only a Trivia item in the past, for most .50 Cal have always been used against infantry, on those rare occasions when such weapons appeared at all. But now, with the Pacific war bringing us many .50 Cal vs. Japanese tanks against which the difference between a 4TK and a 5TK is substantial, the fact is an important one to remember.

C8.31: AP/APCR/APDS/ATR attacks never leave residual FP. Most important here is to watch out for those FG with ATRs participating.

C13.31, L25-28: A PF hit vs. multi-target Location can select who takes the hit from among Known units manning Gun/SW. Also, in line with C8.31 above, the PF/PFK do not leave residual FP.

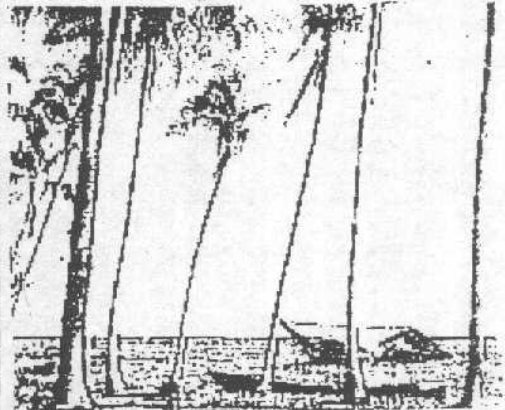
C13.36: A PF TH 12 DR (11-12 for inexperienced) results in casualty reduction for the firer. Notice that a 12 DR on the IFT results in no effect, while a 12 TK roll is a Dud.

D6.2: "A vehicle not otherwise granted Rider capability can always carry one SHC as a Rider and the two PP he possesses". Now, I ask you, does this allow SMC to ride any vehicles they want before 1942, since no vehicles prior to 1942 are granted Rider capability? That's what it says to me, and there may be times when jumping that leader on my early war vehicle and running offboard makes the difference between a win and a loss. [Maybe a tier VI Interpretation matter?]

D6.21: No Riders in orchards. Is it just me, or do you also get the feeling you have let opponents get away with running their infantry laden tanks through those board 6 orchards about a hundred times in the past?

D9.3: Yes, units unloading/bailing out from an AFV do get the +1 IEM from that AFV/non-burning wreck.

*Excellent, Mark. Regarding D6.21, one little oversight (shall we consider it a Tier VII matter?) is that palm trees are considered orchards, and therefore cause rider bail out. Anyone who has been in the tropics knows that the palm fronds cluster at the top of the tree and are not likely to sweep those troops off the tank decks! Perhaps I am overlooking the coconut crunching factor?*



# PANZER GEGEN PANZER

## Part One; Going Mobile

Bruce E. Bakken

### Introduction

The engine roars obediently as the driver carries out your latest order; "Forward eighty meters." Cautiously your tank creeps forward, turret swinging as if to sniff the air for danger. The gunner peers expectantly for the enemy tank known to be lurking up ahead, just behind that cluster of trees to the left. Finally you reach the desired spot. A small adjustment, then, "Halt."

Nerves stretch taut as the waiting begins. The crew hardly breathes, and the only noise you hear is the intermittent chatter in your headphones, an indication that all around you individual battles are being fought.

Then... there he is! The enemy tank appears right where expected, apparently oblivious to your presence as it approaches. "Steady now, not too soon..."

Abruptly the enemy stops, swinging his turret. Surely he has spotted you. "Fire!" A hit! It seems to have had no effect, for still the turret swings. Then, a puff of smoke indicates that now he is firing, though his aim is off. He misses.

Quickly, before he can reload-- "Fire!" This time, an explosion offers grim testimony to the validity of your tactics. Once again your patience has paid off. No enemy crew are seen escaping the burning tank...

Even though ASL tank warfare may not be quite so dramatic, it does offer perhaps the finest playable system available for simulating armored combat. And, like every other aspect of this great game, to become really good at armored tactics requires practice and study.

Commanding a tank in ASL is a personal affair. The player assumes the role of tank commander every time he fires the gun or moves, and

the player, basically determines whether or not the tank will survive. More so than for Infantry - which may break or become berserk - you have almost total control over a tank's actions, and the decisions you make as tank commander will largely determine its fate.

The basic premise of this discussion is that a tank's primary task is to destroy the enemy tanks, and that it is the enemy tanks which pose the greatest threat to your tank. This is a generalization, of course, but your own tanks will usually be your best anti-tank weapons. Certainly, whenever opposing tanks appear on the ASL battlefield they almost invariably tend to search each other out, and at some point during his playing career an ASL player can expect to become involved in a "tank battle". Survivability, then, depends upon your ability to defeat the enemy armor.

Tank battle action occurs during an Engagement. Simply put, a tank has Engaged the enemy when it can apply To Hit Case N (Acquired Target; C6.5) to its next shot. Thus, a full Engagement takes place when opposing tanks have Acquired (and thus Engaged) each other. At this point, both tanks are concentrating their fire on one target, and will usually continue firing until one or the other is destroyed. Since the winner of a tank-versus-tank encounter will usually be the one possessing the best odds (either To Hit or To Kill), the objective of a successful tank battle at the individual level becomes that of increasing one's own odds while reducing the opponent's, and by this manner increasing one's chances of winning the Engagement.

Fundamental to the study of "winning the Engagement" is an understanding of the weapon itself, the tank. Three principles have characterized the tank from its inception: Mobility, Firepower, and Protection. In ASL these principles are expressed in the tank's Movement Type (D1.1), Gun Type (D1.3), and Armor Status (D1.2), respectively. It is the optimum application of these three principles which enables a tank to win an Engagement and survive on the battlefield, and it is the first of these, Mobility, which is the focus of Part One of this article.

Keep in mind throughout that only Chapters A-D will be covered here, and that Optional Rules or those cited as applicable by SSR have not been considered unless specifically mentioned. Also, note that the points discussed herein apply mainly to tank-versus-tank warfare, and that some assertions may not always hold true, for instance when confronting infantry.

### Going Mobile.

Heinz Guderian, generally regarded as the founder of the German *Panzerwaffe*, once said that the engine of a tank is no less a weapon than its gun. He knew that it was the tank's mobility which allowed it to bring its firepower to bear at the time and place of the commander's choosing, and that it was through movement that the enemy's weak point could be discovered, and a breakthrough achieved. Once the front had been pierced, the tanks advanced into the enemy's rear to spread destruction and confusion, and it became the tank's very mobility which afforded it the best protection when behind enemy lines.

Even though Guderian may have been referring more to the strategical or grand-tactical level, his comment is also pertinent to the smaller tactical level such as is found in ASL. The tank's relatively high MP allotment allows it to position itself quickly at the "crisis point" of the battle and indeed for some this mobility is the most enjoyable aspect of tank warfare; certainly it adds to ASL's inherently dynamic nature.

Mobility refers to more than just a tank's speed (MP allotment), although speed is an important element. A complete understanding of Mobility includes how to best take advantage of a vehicle's movement options, and how to maintain that mobility throughout the battle. A tank's enemies are myriad, and a tank which fails to remain Mobile (D.7) becomes much more vulnerable to attack, indeed becomes a virtual "sitting duck" to any roaming enemy AFV. A corollary to winning the Engagement, then, is to protect and maintain your tank's mobility.

Movement takes place during the MPH, naturally, and a "vehicle may expend up to its full MP allotment... in accordance with the COT entered..." (D2.1) Aside from the



distinction that vehicles expend MP rather than MF, the "mechanics of vehicular movement are the same as for Infantry (A4.2 ...)". The most important part of A4.2 is the statement: "The player is not allowed to take the unit back to a previously occupied hex and begin again..."

Notwithstanding that most games are "friendly", a player is well within his rights to invoke A4.2 while his opponent is moving. Indeed, this is one of those few rules which preserves something of the spontaneity of combat, and helps lend that "snap decision" nature to the game. A real-life tanker would have no such opportunity to correct an oversight and "begin again".

Once the decision to move has been made, a "vehicle not under a Motion counter must expend one MP to start movement before entering a new hex or changing its VCA during the MPh." (D2.12) Furthermore, a "vehicle must expend one additional MP in its current hex to stop movement, unless it is ending its MPh under a Motion counter, 2.4)." (D2.13) Indeed, a vehicle may stop and start as often as it wishes providing it has sufficient MP to do so.

What this means at the practical level is that a vehicle really has two less MP available than its printed allotment (this assumes, of course, that your tank will not stay in Motion between Player Turns -- more on that later). These Starting and Stopping expenditures are, frequently overlooked by novices, and a meticulously planned move may come to grief if it fails to account for them.

Since a vehicle "must move within its current VCA- as it enters a hex..." (D2.11), and since most ASL mapboards are strewn with obstacles, figure on having to change VCA at least once during the MPh. Generally, VCA can be changed at a cost of one MP per hexspine. Again, each VCA change means one less MP available for movement.

Taking into account the costs for Starting, Stopping, and changing VCA, a tank may end up with only about three-quarters of its printed MP available for physically moving, that is, for entering a new hex. The actual number may be

lower still, but this is not as bad as it may seem. Most tank Engagements will take place at seven-to-twelve hex range, over terrain not generally conducive to far-reaching moves. Once the battle starts in earnest, movement will probably consist of small adjustments as both sides jockey for position.

One unique feature of vehicles is their ability to remain in Motion at the end of the MPh. This occurs when a "...Mobile vehicle... has used its entire printed MP allotment during its MPh, without expending a MP to Stop (2.13) or Delay (2.17) at the end of that MPh..." (D2.4). There are three primary advantages of remaining in Motion. First, a Motion vehicle does not have to expend the Starting MP to begin movement in its next MPh, a particularly useful point for vehicles with a red MP number (D2.51). Second, a Motion vehicle receives the Case J To Hit DRM for any shots taken against it, regardless of phase (C6.1). Third, Point Blank Fire (Case L) is NA versus a Motion vehicle (C6.3). These advantages may be considered defensive in nature, since they decrease the enemy's odds of hitting you, and may provide you with an opportunity of entering a new hex before the enemy can intervene with Defensive First Fire.

However, a Motion vehicle's odds of successfully hitting the enemy are even worse, since a Motion vehicle must use To Hit Case C4 (Motion Firer; C5.35). This means at least a +4 DRM, with a doubling of the lower dr on top of that. A Motion vehicle which fires at an enemy eligible for Case J is now approaching Improbable Hit (C3.6) territory. Thus, a Motion vehicle becomes virtually powerless to strike back. Since only a Stabilized Gun can claim Case N (C6.55) while in Motion, and since a Motion vehicle may not Prep Fire, the enemy may get two good shots at it before such a vehicle can effectively return fire.

For these reasons, it generally may not be a good idea to remain in Motion if the enemy is within movement range. Of course, at times the two sides will be widely separated and it will be clear that the first couple of turns will be spent advancing to contact. Then, a vehicle might elect to remain in Motion in order

to "gain" those couple extra MP which might otherwise be spent to stop and start movement. A hopelessly outclassed tank may even wish to remain in Motion in order to avoid combat. But if the tank's objective is truly to Engage and defeat the enemy's tanks, then Motion status will probably defeat that purpose. Besides, if you find it desirable to remain in Motion, there is another option available.

A DEFENDING Mobile AFV may attempt to gain Motion status during the enemy MPh (D2.401). A Motion Attempt is successful if the DEFENDER makes a dr less-than-or-equal-to the "number of MF/MP expended by an enemy ground unit in its LOS during that MPh. The enemy unit must be one that had not been in the vehicle's LOS during that player Turn prior to entering it during that MPh." Note that if a Qualifying ATTACKING unit expends six or more MF/MP in LOS, the Motion Attempt automatically succeeds. Also note that a vehicle may not make such an attempt if it is already marked with a fire counter, and that "a vehicle in Motion may make a Motion Attempt dr in this manner so as to freely change VCA at that time."

Keep in mind that Motion status may be attempted as a result of any enemy movement, not just vehicular. The enemy may believe that he has cleverly maneuvered himself into an excellent position, only to find that your Motion status becomes automatic as a result of some careless movement of his halfway across the board. Of course, you must be alert to such opportunities if your intention really is to gain Motion status.

Which leads to the next decision: When is it best to try a Motion Attempt rather than to "duke it out"? Actually, the answer is usually quite clear, if you keep in mind the earlier stated objective of "winning the Engagement". If your position is favorable for Engaging the enemy, sit tight. If you are outnumbered or in an unfavorable position, it may be time to bug out. The timing of a Motion Attempt is important, because the enemy could use that Motion status as an opportunity to approach with impunity. However, providing it has survived the enemy AFPh, and providing it has made optimum use of terrain, a Motion vehicle should be

able to make good its escape during the next MPH.

In addition to travelling forward, a vehicle may also use Reverse Movement (D2.2), namely when it "may wish to leave its present hex without directly entering a hex within its current VCA." This will usually occur when an AFV is unwilling to present an inferior side/rear armor facing to the enemy, yet does not wish to Engage the enemy at that time.

As might be expected, Reverse movement is much slower than forward movement, being quadruple the normal MP entry cost. This is slow going indeed, and a tank will not get very far using Reverse movement. However, a vehicle may combine forward and Reverse movement in the same MPH (D2.23) with all that implies for maneuver. Most of the time a tank will use Reverse movement as a defensive measure, as one of those "small adjustments" of position referred to earlier.

Unfortunately, an AFV cannot remain in Reverse Motion, and thus could not claim Reverse movement as a result of a successful Motion Attempt. But remember that a tank which starts the MPH in Motion is eligible for Case J when fired upon, so if the frontal armor must face the enemy, a tank which starts its MPH in Motion could stop, start into Reverse and back out of the Position. [No longer true if we look farther than Chapter D, see P.11 for reverse motion--editor] Defensive First Fire would be unavoidable in this case, but at least Case J would apply (C.8).

If insufficient MP are available to reach a desired position, a tracked vehicle may attempt to exceed its MP allotment by risking ESB (D2.5). Using ESB, an AFV may gain an additional one-fourth of its allotment by passing an ESB DR, which is modified by the number of MP gained and by a nationality DRM. Failure of the ESB DR results in Immobilization, which of course is irreversible. Again, since you want to maintain your tank's mobility, ESB should be viewed as a calculated risk and used only when absolutely necessary.

Perhaps the most common misuse of ESB is when a vehicle finds itself with one MP remaining, but has its VCA facing the wrong way and

wishes to stop in its present hex. The player expends that last MP to change VCA, then attempts to gain one extra MP to stop.

This particular application of ESB could be avoided if the player was more aware of when VCA can be changed. Just remember that VCA can be changed "... at the end of any fire phase in which it is still eligible to fire its MA" (D2.11) Thus during the AFV you could change VCA to face the appropriate direction and avoid ESB in this case.

Of course, a tank may expend MP while doing absolutely nothing. Such expenditure is termed Delay (D2.17), and there are a couple of good reasons for using it. Besides using Delay "in LOS of its target during that MPH before firing (so as to use To Hit Case C instead of Case C1 or C2)...", Delay might also be used while out of enemy LOS before entering enemy LOS.

There are few things as maddening as having a carefully planned move blown away by Defensive First Fire. Defensive First Fire might be discouraged by expending as few MP in enemy LOS as possible, thus incurring one of the subcases of Case J and further reducing the enemy's odds. This can be accomplished by hiding behind an obstacle using Delay, then expending the final two MP of its MPH to move to an adjacent hex and stop. Many players seem unconcerned that a "moving vehicle that ends its MPH with MP remaining is assumed to expend all those MP in its present hex..." (C6.16), but since an ordnance weapon may Defensive First Fire at a target as many times as the number of MP expended by that target in that location, the enemy may get several shots at you before the MPH is even over.

A further benefit of this Delay tactic is that the enemy will have less chance of making a successful Motion Attempt, thus possibly allowing you to shoot at it in the ensuing enemy MPH without Case J, should it choose to move rather than Engage you.

Because a tank is classified as fully Tracked (D1.13) for movement purposes there are few terrain features which totally impede a tank's movement. A tank may travel just about anywhere it wants, and usually at a lower cost than for

other vehicles. Indeed, a fully-tracked vehicle may enter some hexes which are NA for other vehicles.

For instance, from time to time a player may feel it desirable to enter an obstacle (building/woods/ rubble) hex in order to benefit from its TEM (To Hit Case Q; C6.8). To do so, however, requires a Bog Check DR (D8.2), the failure of which results in the vehicle bogging in its current hex, and thus becoming Immobile. Since preserving your tank's mobility is a relatively high priority, chancing a Bog Check should be viewed as a calculated risk at best, and the actual benefit of entering the obstacle should be weighed carefully against this possibility.

If the tactical situation is such that the risk is deemed acceptable, then all that remains is to ensure that your tank has sufficient MP (half of its MP allotment) available. Also keep in mind that "Bog penalties for entry of difficult terrain are also applicable to VCA changes in that terrain..." (D2.11), and that the Case A To Hit DRM "is doubled if the firer is in woods/building/rubble." (C5.11)

If entering a building, the Bog Check DR may result in the AFV falling into the Cellar (B23.41), or in the building becoming rubble and possibly requiring yet another Bog Check (B24.121).

Bogging is the only concern for entering a woods hex, but if successfully traversed a fully-tracked vehicle will place a Trail Break (B13.421) across the hexsides of its path of movement; thereafter a fully-tracked vehicle may use the TB without the threat of Bog. Bog Checks are also required for a vehicle leaving a stream hex via a higher elevation hexside (B20.46), and for crossing a bocage hexside (B9.54).

If you are aware of these Bog situations and are willing to risk them, then you have made a calculated decision based upon the known possible outcomes. The rest becomes the luck of the DR.

Like infantry, a vehicle may move through a building/woods hex

using a form of Bypass known as Vehicular Bypass Movement (2.3). Using VBM, a vehicle may travel around the obstacle along the hexside, and may even end its MPH in Bypass of that obstacle (D2.34). The most important point to remember is that "the interior of each hexside traversed must be clear of any obstacle depiction to the depth of an edge of a unit counter for VBM to be usable...", and that the "hexside clearance measurement cannot be made until the VBM and all applicable MP costs are announced..." The tendency among most players might be to allow an opponent to use VBM without challenging the clearance measurement. Care should always be taken to ensure sufficient clearance before using VBM, and if the enemy uses VBM, be alert and invoke D2.2 if necessary.

The obvious advantage of VBM is that a vehicle may traverse a woods or building obstacle without the threat of BoG, and usually at a lower MP cost. Especially in a village or city, the main avenues of fire might be avoided by staying off the roads and using VBM.

On the other hand, VBM imposes certain restrictions or penalties upon VCA or TCA changes. In particular, Bypass VCA cannot be changed as a result of a successful Motion Attempt (D2.33), also, Bypass presents a more restrictive Target Facing (D2.32) than usual, which may result in a Bypass vehicle becoming more susceptible to a side hit under certain circumstances. And finally, since LOS to/from a Bypass vehicle is drawn from the CAPP (D2.37), the field of vision of such a vehicle may be somewhat limited.

All in all, though, VBM should be viewed as an important movement option, one which will undoubtedly come in handy in close country such as a city.

Throughout Part One, emphasis has been placed upon the mechanics of vehicular movement, on the different options available for getting your tank from point "A" to point "B". Other options which occur during the MPH, such as Bounding First Fire (D3.3) or HD Maneuver Attempt (C4.22), will be covered in later installments of this article. For now the player must concentrate on learning the different means available for plac-

ing his tank at the right spot for winning an Engagement.

At some point in the battle you are going to have to move, and at times that move may have to take place right under the enemy's nose. If Defensive First Fire cannot be totally avoided, remember to try to increase your odds by expending as few MP as possible in enemy LOS. Rather than running a straight line, scoot from obstacle to obstacle, hopefully incurring one of the Case J subcases or forcing the enemy to lose any previous Target Acquisition.

Drive through a grainfield or behind brush to benefit from any LOS Hindrance (Case R; C6.9). Use obstacles as flank protection, both during movement and while stopped. Yes, even use the dreaded "board-edge-creep". The board edge forms the ultimate in flank protection.

Above all -- and this has been stressed throughout -- maintain your mobility. Risk BoG or ESB only when absolutely necessary. If you become Immobilized as a result of combat (C7.5), well, you just have to live with it. But keep in mind that the enemy may be just as pleased to see you immobile as destroyed, and especially if he is outmatched, he may try a Deliberate Immobilization Attempt (Case G C5.7). However, you can take away that option by remaining seven or more hexes from the enemy.

Making the best move may be the most crucial aspect of tank warfare. Once the shooting starts, success or failure depends largely upon luck. No (honest) player has control of the dice, but the player does control where his tank will go and when, which route it will take and how many MP it will expend.

An Engagement is not won by moving, however. You will at some point have to stop and fight. And it is the tank's mobility which allows it to bring to bear that most important element of the Engagement, which is the second principle of the tank and the subject of Part Two of this article: Firepower.

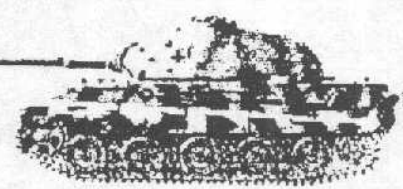
*Outstanding, Bruce. All the elements necessary for understanding the maneuver of AFVs are here. I*

*can't wait for your next part in this series!*

*In particular, I agree with your comments regarding the applicability of A4.2. More players, myself included, should just "move", and not take the moves back when they decide it isn't going to work. Alas, if you do invoke it on a player, he may consider you (unfairly) to be unsportsmanlike, and, worse, might cause him to count out his tank's MPs mentally before picking up the piece. This destroys the spontaneity of ASL and turns it into an unrealistic and long-winded chess match. Unfortunately, if that's what a player does, it cannot be prohibited.*

*Gaining motion status during the enemy's movement phase is one of those rules that falls into a tier VIII situation. When can motion be attempted? At any time during the opponent's movement phase? Or only at the time that particular enemy unit is moving? If I see a stack of infantry move 6MP in my LOS, and later he moves his Panzer VIb in sight and stops with 2MP, if I roll for motion, is a 6 dr or a 2 dr needed to succeed? A look at the Advanced Sequence of Play reveals that each moving unit has its own movement phase and leads me to conclude that I would need a 2 dr to gain motion status. However, we already mentioned that this Sequence is not invoked in the ASLRB, so how is it applied?*

*Delay: of course, if a defender just waits until the DFPh to take his shot he can avoid the effects of Cases J1 and J2, which only apply during first fire. The disadvantage is that the Attacker could have used bounding fire at your tank while you waited patiently for the DFPh to occur...Unlike the Attacker, the Defender has no recourse to invoke a Gun Dual!*



## MAIL CALL

Keith Larson

This issue's Mail Call column comes to you via the capable pen of Russ Gifford. Those who have read recent columns of the "Area News" in the General are familiar with his name. If I can be called the Apostle of PBM, Russ deserves the title of the Apostle of PBEM. Largely as a result of his efforts the ASL Bulletin Board on GENie has exploded. In addition he has been the moving force behind the annual PBEM tournament found on the GENie network. Finally he pens an electronic version of the AREA news which can be found on both the GENie and CompuServe networks.

I am confident that you will find Russ' piece both entertaining and enlightening. It was this article, in fact, that convinced Marc and I to join GENie. Speaking for myself I am very glad I did. I find the Bulletin Board to be very much like a national ASL club and have great fun with it.

Before I turn you over to Russ, I do have some business I need to take care of. I have recently moved. Therefore, if you have a PBM article, news or opponent wanted ad, it should be sent to:

Keith Larson  
355 Washington Blvd.  
Holland, MI 49423

## THE CASE FOR PBEM

Russ Gifford

It was late, and it was raining when the cab dropped me at the corner of the Telephone Exchange building. I walked the last few steps to the club with the sound of thunder accompanying my footsteps on the deserted streets.

After I keyed in my personal code, the door opened and the doorman greeted me, taking my damp coat.

"Good to see you again, Mr. Gifford. I think it was last Thursday, wasn't it?" He knew it was definitely last Thursday, from the tagged response to my door code and password. But I knew he was only checking. If I hadn't been

in on Thursday, then I'd also know someone else came in using my security code. Of course, it had never happened in 6 years, but that never stopped Jeeves from checking.

"Anyone else in, Jeeves?" He checked his notes. "No, not at the moment; though Mr. O'Connor was here earlier, and has left you a message, and Mr. Greenwood is expected later this evening."

A note from O'Connor! That meant a move! I nodded my thanks, and headed for the hall.

As I passed the library, I could see 8 to 10 Diplomacy games, all at different stages of completion, all waiting for their owners to return. I could also see the reams of negotiations falling like leaves to the floor. (Hmmm... must be a Fall turn!) I could hear France and England deciding the fate of Germany, and debating whether the Russians were a threat. The Russians were ALWAYS a threat, friend, especially if you're allied with them! I happened to know the Russian in question, better known around here as "Diplomacy1." Poor fools, I thought. I'll be reading about their demise soon enough!

Any other night I might have stopped and checked out their situation. But this wasn't going to deter me tonight. Bob had left a message, and I couldn't wait to see if he'd fallen for the trap!

I took the stairs two at a time to area 21. We use to be down the hall in 4, but we'd outgrown those rooms when Rex and Don started dropping in, and telling their friends about it. Now area 21 was JUST Avalon Hill Games, and the traffic was brisk, thanks to the PR bits in Don Burdick's AREA NEWS column in the GENERAL.

As I topped the stairs, I heard a dull roar. I couldn't decide if it was the thunder, or the Continuous Role-playing Party down in the Dungeons. I never went near their lair, and they never bothered me, but we often said "hi" as we passed on the doorstep. What more could you ask of neighbors?

When I swung 'round the corner to "our" quarters, I still marveled at the "AVALON HILL" on the glass door. I'd been gaming here 6 years, and boom, this happens 6 months af-

ter Rex Martin first stops by! Incredible!

Inside, there was a bulletin board in the anteroom. Here were the general notices, important changes, and fun stuff for AH players. "CHECK IT OUT," proclaimed the big message, and I always did. Anything of interest to all the AH players could be found here. (When we were downstairs, they posted letters from Evan during his tour of duty in the Gulf!)

The messages on this board were always aligned from oldest to newest, so it was easy to see what had been posted since my last visit. Hmmm... a new B-17 squadron was heading out tonight... They're looking for more players in the On-line Statis Pro Baseball league... and ... Oh Ho! A Round Table Conference was scheduled tonight with Don Greenwood in Conference Room 1! So that was the excitement! I could hear the chairs shuffling as they prepared the room. I'll have to stop by .. AFTER I see Bob's move!

I entered the largest interior room, and though I had seen it many times, the sight of all these tables with ASL games in progress, all awaiting the return of their players, still awed me. It was an incredible collection of people and players, and knowing there were other rooms for other AH games, it always seemed a little overwhelming to me. Some boards were flagged, denoting their status as part of the 1991 ASL On-line Championships. I looked over a few of those, noting the changes since my last visit. Hmmm, Ronald has finally given up the "Death Trap" in his battle for Guryev's Headquarters with Phil. It looks as if Lance is in trouble with Les "On the Kokoda Trail", too. Interesting... since Les would become my next opponent in the tourney, if he should win!

Continuing on toward my board, I stopped by my pigeon hole (also known as my mailbox) and pulled Bob's message. I hadn't opened it yet, but I noticed my hands were almost shaking in anticipation as I peeled the envelope off the letter. He could have fallen for my trap... or he could have just shot the hell out of my troops! Which would it be?

I stood there over my board, poised with tension, ready to

translate from the paper to the mapboard. Would it be death, or glory? I started to move the pieces according to Bob's instructions ....

Maybe this isn't what it's really like on-line at GENie: I mean, the doorman isn't really named Jeeves, but he's there to greet me every time I enter, or "sign on", as we call it. Of course, I can't "hear" things, like the wild D&D party, or the conversations, but as I read through the different snippets and messages, it "feels" like I'm overhearing the other parties.

Going on-line has always seemed like entering a huge building, filled with different rooms, and many different floors. Leaving the gaming area, which alone houses Sections for role-playing, wargaming, computer games, PBM games, and many, many others, there are various locations for almost any hobby. From short wave radio DXers to comic book collectors, science fiction enthusiasts to military historians, there are "rooms" for all of them, and a multitude of others. But of course, this is just the HOBBY section we are covering. There are areas on-line for business, for research, and for communication. There are areas for finance, and for fun. There are on-line shopping malls, college level correspondence courses, and many other interests. There's something for everyone, and like Disneyland, too much for any one person to see OR afford.

But for us, there is ASL. And that's what we are here to talk about today.

Most wargamers are familiar with the acronyms FTF (Face to Face) and PBM (Play by Mail). Less familiar is PBEM, meaning Play by Electronic Mail, or "E-mail", as it's known. Electronic Mail is the name given to computer text messages passed between computers, and PBEM is the acronym for using computer E-mail to play wargames (See below for more technical notes).

The truth is, PBEM is really the same as PBM, only the method of exchange is different. In E-mail, your move is in your opponent's mailbox as soon as you "send" it! This single difference, though, allows multi-phase games, like ASL,

to become more popular in the PBEM format, since you can play a full player turn in a very short time, preserving the feel of FTF play. Also, since ASL by mail/E-mail has to allow the attacker to send only part of his movement, to see what defensive fire he draws, E-mail's speedy delivery means you're not waiting a week or more just to hear "No Defensive Fire -- go ahead!"

It should be noted we have been using Keith Larson's "On My Honor" system from ON ALL FRONTS as the "official" PBEM system on both GENie and CompuServe. Terry Treadaway of ON ALL FRONTS had generously allowed us to "upload" a copy of the original article to both GENie and CompuServe so the potential players could access and copy the system for their use. Unfortunately, this is no longer available, but I think Keith's new ASL PBM system, "Chapter XL" will be available on-line soon. [And of course "Chapter XL" is available in ATP #5 from Keith and Faust!]

After 50 games by the various users, I can say "On My Honor" works great, and my initial uses of "Chapter XL" finds it works even BETTER! As Faust said in issue 2, yes, it requires the honor system, but I've tried a number of ASL PBM systems, and only with these do I feel as if I'm REALLY playing ASL.

Worried about someone cheating? Sure, it would be easy. They can do it in most of the other systems I've tried, too, so why work so hard to prevent the unpreventable? If you play with someone you think might be cheating, your option is simple: don't play with them again. It's a small price to pay to play ASL by mail, and in all my PBEM ASL games, I've never felt I was being cheated, nor have I had any thoughts of cheating.

Think about it: if I cheated and won, I could never tell myself I'd really "won" anyway, so what's the use? And if I cheated and still LOST, what would that say about my ability to play this game!?? I'd be so embarrassed to know I couldn't even win by cheating I'd have to quit!

Now that we have the ground rules out of the way, let's look at where to play ASL via E-mail. There are many different BBSs available, though CompuServe and GENie are the

best known. Both are fine services, and offer many special features that set them apart. This article, though, will feature GENie, since this is really "where the action is" at the moment!

GENie, which stands for General Electric's Network for Information Exchange, is a little different from most Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs). The heart of any BBS is the posting of public messages to fellow users. On most systems, these are placed on a "forum" or board with room for a limited number of such messages (though that "limit" is usually VERY high!) When one more message than the limit is placed on the board, the oldest message is "pushed off" the board, or scrolls off, as we say on-line. Most of these systems have general topic sections, such as "board wargames", or PBM Games. Diplomacy is one of the few board games to get a section all it's own in most systems. These sections are usually part of 10 to 15 such sections, all sharing a common theme, such as "Strategy games" or PBM games.

But GENie is different, and it's this difference that has allowed ASL and now other AH games to come into their own.

GENie provides a category for boardgamers, and then it allows the USERS (that's you, me, ANYBODY) to start a "topic" of discussion. If you gather enough people posting notes to your topic, it stays a topic. The ASL topic languished for a month or so when it was originally started on GENie, but it finally began to attract a few other ASLer's notice. As the messages began to pile up, so did the interest. We slowly took a few steps, played a few games, and then, in 1990 we decided to hold a tourney. This netted us a few more players, and some attention, and we were off!

In any other system, it wouldn't have worked as well. The messages we posted would have "scrolled off" before it could ever have started to grow. With nothing there to catch their interest as they came in, the players would have passed right on by. Sure, GENie cleans out our section when we hit over 300 messages, too, but they leave a base of messages to catch attention. (We now hit about a hundred new messages a month.)

A key step in our efforts was the declaration of our initial tournament as an AREA tourney. This meant the players had to join AREA since all tournament games were to be reported for AREA rating. It caught Rex Martin's and Don Burdick's attention, and they were nice enough to write us up in AREA NEWS for the GENERAL. The word started to spread, and our next tourney, again AREA rated, drew 16 players, but by then the second mention in AREA NEWS was plugging the new tourney, and an explosion of talent followed!

Rex Martin began stopping by in July of '90, and now Avalon Hill has "officially" joined GENIE, and even have their own section. With this event, we have transferred our topic into their new category, and we are now the flagship of the AH section!

At this point, we have 8 players willing to be alternates should any of the tourney players drop out. I recently made a nose count of different people who have posted messages in the ASL section in a two month period: Of the 200+ messages, there were 40 to 50 different people chiming in! And there are still more coming on!

In essence, we have created a nationwide "club", someplace to "talk ASL", to find new opponents, and to gather the hottest news on the system from the guys on the Hill themselves!

Rules questions are posted and discussed, which is VERY handy. SOMETIMES they are commented on or resolved by Mac (aka GOD) via Rex. It's like being "plugged in" to a nationwide network of dedicated ASL players... because that's exactly what it is!

Here's a sampling of what's happening on-line as of this writing: There's an experiment in "double-blind" multiplayer ASL just beginning, with 6 players, using the "Last Bid" scenario from RB. We are in the second round of our second annual AREA ASL tourney, a four round Swiss system. Two members are undertaking a PBEM game to be used as an AT THE POINT Replay. [*Ahem-- and how is that going, may I ask, Mr Gifford?...Faust*] Many more games are happening on-line than just the tournament, and many of them are AREA rated. Players take part in rule discussions in the

section 2 bulletins, and Rex drops by rather often with news. Of late, some "name" players have started arriving, like Eric Baker, [*Faust*] Ray Woloszyn, [*Faust*], Rick Troha, Mark Nixon and others [*such as Faust*].

All this started from nothing. Now that AH is "on-line", there are also sections for other AH games, and discussions for other topics, such as inside news of Avalon Con, and a special "on-line" version of AREA NEWS co-written by Don Burdick. This column features updates on the ASL AREA tourneys from CompuServe, GENIE and FTF ones around the country. (AREA ASL Specific memberships have risen dramatically since the introduction of these AREA rated tourneys. With the advent of Avalon Con, these should REALLY take off!)

There are costs involved in using an on-line BBS, but they are worth it to me. On GENIE, the E-mail area (where you send and receive your moves) is a flat \$4.95 a month, for unlimited usage. The AH section is part of the cost per minute rate, which is roughly 10 cents per minute in non-prime time (6PM to 8AM). It can take 2 minutes to go through the "new" messages in the ASL section on-line if you check in every other day. You can spend up to 10 minutes if you read many sections, or "download" (copy) different files from the library sections. Of course, all this depends on the usage that day or week, and how often you check in to read the messages.

But remember, what you spend is up to you. If you compose your messages on-line, spend much time "wandering the halls" looking for "something" to happen, you're going to spend much more than you need to. Use your word processor to write your answers "off line", when you aren't hooked into the system. Then sign in, collect your mail, read the new messages, upload your messages, then sign off and read the new messages, and compose your new replies. It's not difficult, and it's a lot cheaper.

PBEM may or may not be right for you. I will say that since I started PBEM, I have gotten "use" to PBEM. I have now played many ASL games via "normal" mail, and found it equally rewarding. The difference is PBEM is a very solitary endeavor. PBEM on GENIE is

much more. There are messages posted updating players on the games in progress, conferences with top AH personal, and conversations with opponents and friends. It's like stopping by your wargaming club late at night, reading all the messages your friends left, and getting a message from your opponent with your move. Bottom line: It's a hell of a lot of fun!

....  
I finished the move, and sat back to look at the situation. Well, it wasn't glory, but it wasn't death, either. Next time, Bob... next time. I started composing my defensive fire, listening to the thunder, like the sound of distant guns, and heard the rain splatter on the windows like debris from a near miss. Yeah, this should work! This time, Bob, this time!

#### TECHNICAL ITEMS

Hooking up to a BBS (Bulletin Board System) is easy. Using a modem, the computers could be hooked directly to each other, or they can be connected to a "network", which is another computer system designed to allow other computers to link up and gather or exchange information. This network may be a huge system, like the one I describe in the main article, or it may simply be a small "bulletin board" service, designed to accommodate one user at any given time.

What do you need to join in? Very simply, a computer, and a modem, the device that allows your computer to "send" messages via the phone lines. What kind of computer? That's up to you. It does not have to be the newest, or the largest, or the nicest for this purpose. I use many high powered PC's during my day, but I've been using the same \$100 Atari computer for E-mail since 1983. In fact, I recently bought a used "spare" for \$25!

Any computer that works with a modem will work to put you on-line! Your best option is to also have some sort of word processor program, too, so you can create and save your moves "off-line", saving time and in some cases, money.

The modem is more specific. Most bulletin boards accept 300, 1200 and 2400 baud transmissions. (Don't get hung up on the numbers; just realize this is the speed your

computer uses for data exchange, and both computers have to be set at the same speed to share data.) The key point is 1200 baud is 4 times faster than 300, and 2400 is twice as fast as that. Most GENie telephone access lines accept any of these speeds. Other systems might not.

Modems have specific settings: you'll want to check your manual, but the standard setting is 8 bits, no parity, and half duplex for GENie. If you see "double letters" anytime you type something on-line, change your duplex setting (from half to whole, or vice versa.)

Again, don't get hung up on this technical jargon. Do you care that your car ignition opens a switch from your battery to turn on your starting motor, which attaches to your flywheel to spin your pistons to create a vacuum that will pull a fuel and oxygen mixture into a cylinder, etc? No -- all you care is if the car gets you where you're going. The same principle applies here.

Signing up to GENie. First, you need to find out the nearest GENie access number. Do this by dialing information for the nearest GENie access number, or the nearest Tymenet access number [GENie now has an 800 number for signup: 1-800-638-8369...Faust].

After you connect, type H three times (do NOT hit enter/return). Then, when "H:" appears, enter "XJM11999,GENIE" or "SIGNUP" and hit enter/return. After you are connected, they will take the info they need to allow you to become a GENie member. You need to apply the bill to either VISA, MASTERCARD, AMEX or your checking account. Whichever you decide to use, have that account number ready.

After you are actually on-line, you can find the ASL section easily. Type M 805:1 at the first prompt, and then join the Gamer's Round Table. After that, type SET 21, which places you in the Avalon Hill Category. Then REA 2 LAST will give you the last message in the ASL section, and REA 2 #-# will allow you to read a span of numbers in that same section. But a REA 2 ALL will take at least a half hour, so use it carefully. REA 1 ALL should net you my on-line message for negotiating the system, but a

TOP command will show you a listing of ALL the topics in the Avalon Hill section, and the number of messages in each. And if you have any trouble, type H for help, or leave me a note on 2 (Type REP 2). Or leave me E-mail directly at my address: SHANGRI (Don't ask....)

One last note: Don't overlook small private Bbss in your home town for great gaming opportunities. For over a year, I used a local "free" BBS to teach and run 10 different Diplomacy games. It was great, and on the side a local friend and I played TRC and ASL. PBEM has many different forms, but it's all wargaming! Good Luck, and hope to see you on-line!?

### TIDBITS

Just for the record, Faust is known to be one of the more vociferous rule debaters on the GENie network; but understand, Bob, Don and Rex: I concur 100% with Mark's comments about the finesse and insight that has gone into the rules. Salutes! We are ever impressed with that ASLRB! That's why we love the game, and appreciate your efforts to add and improve upon them with modules, clarifications, and errata updates. Thanks....Faust. [I had to kick him to make him say this...editor]

DON'T BE FOOLISH and not SUBSCRIBE TO "ASL NEWS" just because a couple of scenarios appeared in ATP. The scenarios that appeared in last month's issue are those that have not been published in America in "ASL NEWS". Any new scenarios that the gentlemen overseas design will be published in "ASL NEWS" and will not appear in ATP. You will need to subscribe to "ASL NEWS" to get them. Aside from excellent scenarios, you will get insightful articles (published in English) on the play of ASL. GET IT NOW!

Speaking of scenarios, ATP will normally publish them only in conjunction with a pertinent article on tactics and/or strategy. This had always been our policy, so if you wrote me a letter and told me to do that, don't put yourself on

the back. buster, because we thought of it first!!

This means, Mr. ERIC BAKER, that you owe us such an article for your fine scenario that appears on the reverse! No excuses! We want that piece by the end of October or we'll set up a dance card for you at the next Oktoberfest that even MIKE MCGRATH would cringe to see! (Well, you might try and shove it on KURT MARTIN'S lap; that would be fair turn-around for the time he volunteered you as a "Scenario Editor" without prior acquiescent grunting or dice rolling.

Speaking of KURT MARTIN, we have received such written acclaims from the readership about his work that we must arrange to secure more of his efforts.

Thus, without his prior approval. (a chuckle, ERIC?), we are arranging for him the opportunity to provide a regular feature to ATP in his own column, "KURT'S KORNER", where he can prattle away without any molestation from a sardonic Faust! Heck, he can even rename his column if it now reminds him too much of "HEE HAW!" In all seriousness, we have to say: no excuses! We want that kornerpiece by the end of October or we'll set up a dance card for you at the next Oktoberfest...(they, this sounds familiar)...Truly, we all hope you will accept.

### ANNOUNCEMENT!

ATP HAS JUST PURCHASED AN OPTICAL SCANNER TO BE USED TO IMPROVE THE VISUAL APPEAL OF THE MAGAZINE! IT ALSO HELPS WITH THE TYPING; WHY SO MANY GOOD AUTHORS USE THE OLD-FASHIONED INSTRUMENTS IN THIS AGE OF WORD PROCESSORS AND PCs, I'LL NEVER KNOW. DUE TO LIMITED ACCESS TO COPIERS, CUTTING AND PASTING HAS NEVER BEEN OUR CUP OF TEA. NOW, AIDED BY THIS NEW TECHNOLOGY, IT IS HOPED THAT COMPUTER GENERATED DIAGRAMS WILL BE POSSIBLE. I ASK THAT ALL WRITERS NOT HESITATE TO SEND VISUAL AIDS.

# Italian Brothers



Near Brihuega, Spain, March 10, 1937: The civil war in Spain has been called the "world war in miniature". Few conflicts in this century aroused so much international emotion. In spite of a non-intervention policy adopted by the League of Nations foreign nationals flocked to Spain by the thousands. As a result, both the Nationalists (an alliance of Conservatives, Monarchists, Falangists, and Fascists, among others, led by Francisco Franco, and determined to overthrow the government), and the Republicans (a coalition of Liberals, Socialists, Communists, and Anarchists, among others), used foreign troops to fight their war. On March 8, the Nationalists opened an offensive with the objective of taking Guadalajara and surrounding Madrid. Near Brihuega, in one of the ironies that only a conflict as convoluted as this could produce, units of the same nationality clashed on the road to Guadalajara; the Garibaldi Battalion of the 12th International Brigade made up of Italian socialists, communists, and other anti-fascists, and the Black Flame Division of the regular Italian army.

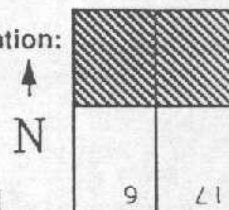
**Victory Conditions:** The Republicans win the instant they control building 6N4. If they never control the building, the side that controls three of the following four buildings at scenario end wins: 17P2, 6J8, 6K4, 6K1. If neither of the preceding occur, the side that scores the most Casualty Victory Points (A26.2), by scenario end wins. In case of a tie on Casualty VP, the Nationalist wins.

### Balance:

Nationalist: Replace the 7-0 Leader with an 8-1 Leader.

Republican: Replace the Russian MMG with a British MMG.

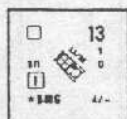
### Board Configuration:



Only rows A - P are playable

NATIONALISTS Set Up First	1	2	3	4	5	6
REPUBLICANS Move First						

Armor attached to the Black Flame Division, set up in hexes 17M6, N5, and O5, in motion, with all VCA's facing south:



3

Elements of the Black Flame Division [ELR 2], enter turn 1 on the north map edge: {SAN 2}



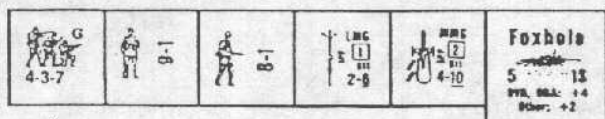
12

6

4

2

Elements of the Garibaldi Battalion [ELR 3], set up concealed within one hex of 17H4: {SAN 4}



6

2

(Allied Minor) (Russian)

3



Foxhole  
5  
13  
VCA, MGA: 1-4  
Cover: +2

Elements of the Garibaldi Battalion, set up concealed on Board 6, on or south of hexrow 'C'.



8

2

(British)

### Special Rules:

- 1) EC are Wet, with no wind at start.
- 2) Use Allied Minor 4-3-7's for the Garibaldi troops with the following modifications: They suffer NONE of the "inexperienced personnel" (A19.2, A19.3), penalties. The broken morale of MMC's is one HIGHER than is printed on the counter (Ignore A25.9). They never disrupt because of ELR failure; a squad failing ELR is split into two half squads, a half squad failing ELR suffers no additional effects. They suffer no penalties using any of the SW in their original OB. Other than this, treat them exactly like Allied Minor troops.
- 3) The Garibaldi Commissar affects other Garibaldi units just as if both were 10/42 Russians [EXC: if he fails to rally a squad it is Replaced by its two HS (or eliminated if already a HS)]. No leader may be exchanged for a Commissar.

- 4) All Orchards are Vineyards (F13.6). All buildings are stone. Building 17P4 has only a ground level. Buildings 6N4 and 6J8 have only a ground and first level, but are otherwise as printed, ie, printed stairwells are in effect. All buildings are Uncontrolled at scenario start.
- 5) Neither Garibaldi Leader that sets up on Board 17 may move in the MPH of turn one (they may Advance in the APH normally).

Aftemath: At noon the Garibaldi Battalion advanced north along the road from Torija to Brihuega, unaware that Brihuega had already fallen to General Giovanni Coppi's Black Flames. Three miles short of Brihuega a Black Flame patrol encountered the internationals and, hearing Italian voices, assumed the Garibaldi's were actually a patrol from another Italian Division. Upon hearing this report, Coppi ordered an advance south down the Torija/Brihuega road. Ilio Bartoni, the commissar and acting commander of the Garibaldi's, also continued his advance. He established his men in the vineyards on the left of the road as Coppi's tanks came rumbling down the road. The International's machine guns engaged the AFV's, and the Black Flame infantry was sent in to attack. For the rest of the day the Italians fought a civil war of their own around a country house known as the Ibarra Palace. Nightfall saw the Black Flames holding the major portion of the Ibarra, but their advance towards Guadalajara had been halted.