

VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES

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IN THIS ISSUE

BICSKE BRAWL - scenario analysis by Michael Davies

VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES 1 - 10th anniversary reprint

ASL JOURNAL 6 - a brief look

THE HIGHLANDER - a variant SMC

IN THIS ISSUE

PREP FIRE	2
INCOMING	3
BICSKE BRAWL	4
ASL JOURNAL 6	14
THE HIGHLANDER	15
“THIS IS THE CALL TO ARMS!”	16
ON THE CONVENTION TRAIL	19

PREP FIRE

For once my optimism regarding the publication of the next *VFTT* has been proven correct, with this issue being out just in time for HEROES 2005! And I am also optimistic that the next issue should also be out at the beginning of May, thanks to Michael Davies sending me another scenario analysis. There will also be a write of the action at HEROES 2005 and the usual Crusaders ladder updating so there shouldn't be too much to do to finish it off.

However I am still on the look out for material. Try your hand at writing a scenario analysis, or a look at a rules section, or some general tactics. Or if you are rally ambitious, how about a series replay?

By the way, I hope you enjoy the reprint of *VFTT1* in the centre pages. Its amazing to think that 10 years have passed since the first issue came out – not many third party *ASL* producers can boast such a record! Here's to the next ten years.

Double 1. My last, best hope for victory.

Pete Phillipps

COVER: The mast head for the early issues of *VFTT*, a French soldier in a trench in the Alps overlooking the Italian border.

THE ASL MAILING LIST

The *ASL* Mailing List is devoted to discussion of *Advanced Squad Leader*, and is run by Paul Ferraro via a listserv program at the University of Pittsburgh. To subscribe go to:
<http://lists.aslml.net/listinfo.cgi/aslml-aslml.net>.

EMOTICONS

With the growth of the InterNet, emoticons have originated to allow people to show expressions in text. I find these very useful for the printed word in general, so you'll see plenty of them in *View From the Trenches*.

An emoticon is created with keyboard characters and read with the head tilted to the left. Some typical emoticons are:

- :-) humour or smiley
- ;-) winking
- :-> devious smile
- <g> grin
- :-(sad
- :o shocked or surprised
- #-(hung-over

VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES is the bi-monthly British *ASL* journal. All comments are welcome. Even better, contribute. Write an article. Design a scenario. Share your *ASL* experiences with others. *VFTT* allows you to communicate with other *ASL*ers. Don't be a silent voice.

Issue 61 should be out at the beginning of May 2005.

VFTT costs £2.00 per issue (overseas £3.00), with a year's subscription costing £10.00 (overseas £15.00). Payment should be in pounds sterling, with cheques made out to PETE PHILLIPPS. Readers are reminded to check their address label to see when their subscription ends.

Back issue are now out of print but can be downloaded for free from:

<http://www.vfft.co.uk/vfft.pdf.htm>

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INCOMING

MMP GUNS BLAZING!

MMP have begun taking pre-orders for *ASL Starter Kit 2 – GUNS!* A stand-alone game, it adds Ordnance and Light Anti-Tank Weapons, including mortars, anti-aircraft guns, anti-tank guns, artillery, and bazookas. It contains a refined rulebook from *ASL Starter Kit 1* with new rules added and old rules clearly marked, a countersheet of 1/2" counters, a half countersheet of 5/8" counters, 2 new geomorphic mapboards, 2 player-aid reference cards and 8 scenarios featuring American, British, German and Italian forces. The estimated retail price is \$28.00, although it can be pre-ordered for \$21.00 plus shipping and handling.

ASL Starter Kit 1 is also back in print, priced \$24.00



CH UPDATE VALOR OF THE GUARDS

Shipping now is *Valor of the Guards 2nd Edition*. Priced \$19.95, it includes a large hex colour 24 x 34 map of the Dzerhezynsky Tractor Works, a small hex colour 22 x 34 version of the map for use in tracing LOS, and nine new scenarios. An upgrade version, which does not include the large hex version of the map, is also available for \$9.95.

FANATICS IN LUZON

Fanatic Enterprises have released *The*

Luzon Pack, a set of 12 scenarios covering the Luzon campaign. Priced \$14.50 including shipping (\$16.00 for non-US orders) it is available from Paul Kenny, PO Box 644, Haddonfield, NJ 08033. You can also order it from <http://fanaticenterprises.tripod.com/> and pay at www.paypal.com (use the name homercles11@hotmail.com if paying with a Paypal account based on a credit card or under the name paul_kenny@rve.com if paying with a Paypal account not based on a credit card).

In the pipeline are *The Oblivion Pack*, containing a dozen scenarios featuring vehicles and ordinance from *Armies of Oblivion*, which will be released soon after *AoO*; *Barbarossa North* which will contain a series of scenarios covering the northern theatre during Barbarossa, which should be out later this year; and *Fanatic Pack 4*: which will include a variety of scenarios and possibly a *Platoon Leader* Campaign Game or two which should be out late this year or early 2006.



THIRD PARTY PRODUCERS UK AVAILABILITY

As well as editing *VFTT I* also help to distribute those third party products not generally available in the shops over here.

The prices are as follows, and are effective until the next issue of *VFTT*:

<i>Wacht Am Rhein</i>	£14.00
<i>Canadians In Italy 1</i>	£9.00
<i>Canada At War 2</i>	£6.00

Add 50p per item for postage and send your payment made out to PETE PHILLIPPS to 24 Huggett Close, Leicester, England, LE4 7PY.

For the latest on stock availability telephone me (as usual evenings when Man United are not playing are your best bet!), or email me at pete@vftt.co.uk.

UK RETAILER STOCKISTS OF THIRD PARTY PRODUCTS

To purchase other third party products such as *Critical Hit*, *Schwerpunkt* or *Heat of Battle* contact any of the following shops.

LEISURE GAMES, 100 Ballards Lane, Finchley, London, N3 2DN. Telephone (020) 8346 2327 or e-mail them at shop@leisuregames.com.

SECOND CHANCE GAMES, 182 Borough Road, Seacombe, The Wirral, L44 6NJ. Telephone (0151) 638 3535 or e-mail them at sales@secondchancegames.com.

PLAN 9, 9 Rosemount Viaduct, Aberdeen, AB25 1NE. Telephone (01224) 624 467 or e-mail them at PLAN9@IFB.CO.UK.

If you know of other shops stocking third party *ASL* products let me know so I can include them here in future issues.



BICSKE BRAWL

Michael Davies

Bicske Brawl comes from *Critical Hit Volume 7 Number 1*, tucked away between some Dien Bien Phu scenarios, an early war mini campaign in Belgium, a 1956 Arab-Israeli War scenario, lots of world war two stuff, and even a few on the Irish civil War.

The scenario pits a strong “German” company supported by tanks against a slightly smaller Russian force stiffened by weak anti tank assets in strong defensive terrain. The Russians are an elite Guards division well dug in with masses of support weapons and two small anti tank guns. The attackers are SS, from the Wiking (Viking) Panzer Division. Originally founded in 1940 from Dutch, Flemish, Danish and Norwegian volunteers, some of these were already established Fascists in their own countries, while others simply joined in Hitler’s crusade against Bolshevism.

At the game start the Russians are slightly outnumbered, and considerably outgunned, and up against armour. The geography of board 36 and the weather conditions make for a much more equal fight. Ground snow and frigid streams are in play. Players need to brush up on the rule section B20.7 and parts of E3.7. The *ASLRB* is the best guide on this, but I’ll add a few pointers and paraphrase some of the main rules.

The streams are frigid, making it a shallow stream that costs little to move through but is hazardous to Infantry. Moving through near frozen water causes replacement, disruption or reduction. This is extremely painful for Wiking squads who drop to 4-4-7s, losing range, firepower and morale. Stream entry is an option, but should be limited. For vehicles the only risk is bog when exiting the stream or casualty reduction if bailing out in a stream; this probably doesn’t mean they are dead, but having been forced to bail out into frigid water will take no further part in the action.

Snow rules slow Infantry movement up or down hills, negate the road bonus for Panthers, and allow Winter Camouflage. Marsh is transformed by snow to open ground. I think the pond becomes a frigid pond impassable to vehicles and extremely hazardous for Infantry.

Winter camouflage is simply a white covering of cloth or paint that makes units harder to see in snow covered terrain. It allows troops to be hidden or concealed in

open ground and for Infantry to Assault Move and retain any concealment. The latter tactic is excellent fun, you can even Assault Move and try for smoke in some circumstances.

The *ASLRB* sets out the specifics better than I have so keep a copy handy during play, read it before play, and discuss anything that might be confusing before the game starts.

Russian Set Up

The game objective is to contest control of the paved road running from 36Q1-R6-Q6-P5-Q10, roughly east-west across the middle of the playing area. To win you need at least one unbroken unit on or adjacent to the road. A lone Leader, squad, half squad, hero or crew will do the job. Even a berserk unit counts, as do units in melee. You can win controversially by having a unit held as a prisoner in the right place at the game end. This isn’t very classy and if it cropped up I’d probably concede. Most German players though will not give you the chance!

The objectives only count on the last game turn. There are no prizes for holding on until the end of turn five, and no requirement to have units present until the last game turn. Before the game end you need to focus on either inflicting casualties on the German units and/or limiting their movement onto the board and along the main road.

Board 36 represents broken hilly country full of meandering streams, extensive woodland, and small sections of orchard and brush. With ground snow in place, open ground potentially become concealment terrain for troops with Winter Camouflage, hills become a little harder to traverse, and marsh freezes to become open ground. Moving any of your units through a stream will result in their immediate replacement with a lower quality unit. For the gun crew I’m not totally sure if you’d end up with a 1-2-7 unit or it would be immediately replaced. Any paddling heroes are eliminated. Moving through streams is a bad idea and to be avoided unless you are forced to use the route to retreat or stand to gain from a counter attack that crosses a stream and does significant damage. For example you might prevent the retreat of

broken units. Most of the time you will have full control over the decision to move or not move your units into streams, but unfortunately you have no similar control over the Third Reich. If the Wikings want to paddle you can’t stop them. It does take a 6-5-8 down to a 4-4-7 but if your opponent wants to try this, enjoy the spectacle, and figure out why he was prepared to make such a sacrifice. German tanks can move easily through streams. They risk bog as they exit, maybe immobilisation. If you are sighted to the exit hex and at the same level you just might get an underbelly hit resolved against an armour factor of 4. Barring an underbelly dud the 57LL will destroy a Panther. The 45LL should penetrate most of the time given the shot will likely be very short range and APCR, but if you are unlucky you also miss out on an immobilisation chance.

Spend some time looking at the map. There are plenty of players with a truly remarkable eye for terrain who will have definite ideas how to exploit key features. My main playing strength is being lucky but I’ll try and help with a few tips. As the Wikings enter from the western edge Infantry will be reluctant to enter the stream. This leaves wooded areas on the northern and southern flanks plus the central road. You can contest road movement by machine guns on level one hexes threatening fire lanes. A LMG in T4 is a fair example, and the wood in T6 similarly good. A heavier machine gun does the job better unless it is needed elsewhere. From higher elevations you gain line of sight but lose the ability to place fire lanes. If you are certain the advance will only be down the road using most of your troops you could create a deadly concentration of fire near certain to destroy an Infantry force and likely to disable or destroy the Panthers. Expect some German troops to use the road, likely to be less than a squad and a half, expect others to move down the wooded flanks.

The southern flank offers good cover for movement through the woods onto Hill 604, and the road leading from I5 to the crossroads. If exploiting this, the Germans could be on or near the crossroads by turn three or four. It also gives quick access to the eastern end of the road. This flank can be supported by armour. Entering on I1 a tank can cross the frigid stream and perhaps risk immobilisation crashing through the



woods in I4 to subsequently use the road. Note the double crest hexes in K2, J2, J3 cannot be crossed by the Panthers (B10.5 applies), and starting in a stream doesn't help! A tank crashing through the I4 woods would be nasty. You can defend by having the demolition charge nearby or trying to ambush the tank from woods as it moves further into your position. Specifically assigning an anti tank weapon close to I4 against this threat might be excessive. The Panther should be road bound and will appear in P5 later in the game so exploit other options and be patient.

To slow infantry movement down this flank, take a look at level three hex K6, the summit of Hill 604. Any pedestrians risk a fire attack and the threat of ambush. To attack the position will slow the Germans; to move past it risks casualties. Not a bad spot for a dummy stack. In the north, expect the paths in Y1 and X1 to appeal to the Germans. They offer a quick way onto hill 526, with little exposure to fire. Using either your medium or heavy machine guns in N6, M6, or L4 and bore sighting X2 presents a hazard, admittedly the brush in V2 offers some hindrance, and Winter Camouflage start to take effect at over eight hexes range for troops without cover. If the attack kills or breaks units this is a good start to the game for you, and may discourage further movement into Y2 or over exposed areas of Hill 526. Level three woods K4 can also see X2, although the range is a bit long. From the same hex you are placed to contest entry along the southern flank. Just maybe an anti tank gun in K4 has potential. It can shoot toward Hill 526, contest movement up the central road and turn to shoot at armour crossing the stream and crashing through the woods. Main The main weakness is the position is doomed to any early infantry attack.

Units placed to delay or destroy German units as they enter are important. You also must have some troops in position to contest the road. Hill 490 is a bit far back to contest entry early in the game. Later it can form an important part of your defence.

That was a very brief overview of the terrain in play. The German has the option of entering on two flanks or down the centre but is limited by the stream. Crafty lines of sight will not win you the game but setting units carefully on hills will help. This gives them better observation or line of sight, and makes assaulting them harder for the Germans.

I've drifted into a description of your troops and their capabilities already, perhaps more is needed. Your OB includes eight Infantry squads, all elite with a basic morale of eight and very reasonable ELR of 3, which

should make replacement a rare event. Squads are 4-5-8 giving reasonable fire power and range. All troops on both sides (including vehicle crews?) have Winter Camouflage. This allows your troops the option of concealed set up. You don't have to do this and might opt to leave some obviously powerful stacks without concealment to discourage attacks down a particular flank. You can set up in fox holes outside of streams or non woods paved road hexes. Fortifications remain hidden until their TEM is claimed, your troops lose concealment or good order enemy troops are within 16 hexes and have a line of sight to the hex. This rule complicates the use of dummy concealment counters. Any concealed stack without a fox hole in concealment terrain will look a bit strange. Concealment counters can be used as dummy stacks and can draw sniper fire, perhaps a better use is to increase the height of real stacks, more on this later. The squads have reasonable firepower for use on the IFT. Against armour they can use close combat perhaps with the benefit of concealment or ambush. This isn't the ideal way to fight tanks though! For such a compact force you get a lot of support weapons; two LMGs, a medium machine gun, and a heavy, plus a demolition charge. Remember to bore sight the heavier machine guns; the -2 modifier to attacks is lethal and reduces the morale of enemy commanders who realise they are leading troops exactly where you expect them. With five SW in play most of your squads can expect something. You have two Leaders, an 8-1 and 9-1, both important for directing fire combat and rallying troops. Either Leader could use a demolition charge later in the game. Early on they are more use directing fire attacks, the -1 modifier is helpful, rather more important retaining ROF and preventing cowering. Spotting and concealing the MMG and HMG is difficult due to the height of stacks. Any concealed squad, leader and machine gun will be three counters high. You can add to the fog of war by giving a lone squad a demolition charge and light machine gun or careful use of your four dummy counters. The preferred scenario is to surprise the Germans with your first attacks. One idea is to keep the Leaders and machine guns separate, not sure this is ideal.

The infantry force is pretty good, perhaps a little small. The option of declaring close combat is awkward as the Wikings firepower advantage translates to a massive edge in hand to hand, and is still pretty good in conventional melee. Unless forced you should only engage if you have some other advantage, for example ambush, combat against a CX unit, or Leadership.

Against armour your two anti tank guns need to be either lucky or well positioned. As Guards, your ammunition depletion numbers are increased by one, making the 45LL gun A8, and the 57LL A7 for APCR. Taking the 45mm gun first, the basic TK is 11, rising to 12 or 13 at very short ranges. If you shoot with APCR, the basic TK rises to 13, with more useful range modifiers taking it up to 16 at point blank range. The front hull of a Panther is 18, so you need a critical to damage. The turret is less well protected (down to 14 factors) so just about killable! Frontal shots against the Panther are painfully optimistic unless you have a chance of an underbelly hit. Against side armour the chance of damage is much better. A basic AF of six is vulnerable to APCR, and just about practical for a conventional AP shot. Using the 45mm gun makes deliberate immobilisation very attractive, even for a side shot. Once the Panzer V is immobilised you will eventually penetrate the hull armour.

The 57LL gun is more powerful, rather similar to the British 6 pounder gun in terms of effect. The basic TK is 15 for AP, and 18 for APCR. Frontal shots still need some luck, anything on the side is more likely to penetrate.

Part of the power of both weapons is fear. Your opponent should know how strong his armour is against gun shot, fortunately he doesn't know where you are. He may fear an attack from a side armour facing or later on from the rear. This fear will reduce as the position of your guns is known, unless a Panther went finding this out!

Enjoy the delicate duel between the armour and tanks. Keep in mind both guns can fire HE. Taking out German Infantry early in the game is a fair trade for a gun's position. The guns can bore sight, set up HIP in open ground, can emplace, and can just about move even in snow. The guns are really there to keep the Panthers honest, don't be too disappointed if they don't get a clear shot at the armour as long as they limit rapid movement and encourage caution.

The last Red unit to consider is the sniper. A SAN of four gives a one in six chance of activation every single time an eligible DR takes place. In a five turn game with a low counter density, expect a few attacks. Leaders are an important target. Killing or even wounding one reduces the effectiveness of fire direction but more importantly slows enemy movement. Have fun with this unit.

The Germans attack in strength. In terms of numbers nine SS squads is close to your eight squads. If looking at points each German unit is worth 15 while each of yours

is worth 11. The extra points come from higher broken side morale, firepower, inherent smoke, panzerfausts and ATMM, spraying and assault fire! Possibly the calculation of value also includes SS refusal to surrender or become disrupted when facing Russians. The Fascists even have Winter Camouflage and can declare Hand to Hand! You have to accept the quality of German squads is superior to your own, but they need to be as the Germans are on the offensive and you are dug in and concealed.

Some of the German abilities are pretty straight forward. Assault fire helps keep the tempo of the German attack high, Smoke gives concealment, and broken side morale makes units quicker to rally and less prone to elimination for double breaks. ATMM won't come into play unless a tank is captured, panzerfausts are marginally useful against your guns, but don't get paranoid. The rules covering disruption mean an SS squad failing and exceeding its ELR is deployed, not replaced, while Heat of Battle Disruption instead becomes a Berserk result. Keep in mind that some pretty wacky die rolls are needed to trigger such events!

Enemy SW are reasonable, two LMGs and a lone medium. All have good range, reasonable fire power and are very reliable. Enemy Leaders are an 8-0, 8-1 and 9-1. Given the enemy are likely to attack on two flanks this stretches their leadership a bit. If you can kill, wound or even break a lone Leader on a flank, suddenly that attack starts to slow down and struggle to rally troops.

The strongest units in the German OB are the Panther tanks. Truly superb in tank to tank combat the Panther is good for Infantry support. Thick armour will resist anti tank shots from your guns, mobility is very good, firepower similar. Combined coaxial and bow machine gun attacks strike on the eight FP column, strong enough against troops in foxholes. The long 75mm gun threatens to gain acquisition quickly, and destroy units when it starts to hit regularly or gain critical hits. For close defence it has a Nahverteidigungswaffe with a usage number of nine. These are temperamental weapons that discourage casual attacks. They are more useful creating Smoke to cover Infantry movement or cover moving away from anti tank ambush.

The Panthers do have weaknesses. Side armour is relatively poor and is vulnerable to your guns at combat ranges. Stalling can also help, nice when a tank is frantically trying to restart in front of a gun, or for frustrating armoured assault. Respect the Panthers, fear them a little but appreciate the German is in constant fear of their immediate destruction by a well placed

round from either of your Guns.

Although the enemy forces are strong, I think the length of the scenario adds a lot of pressure. The enemy has to cross ten hexes (a board width) in six turns, and gain control of the entire area adjacent to the road. If allowed free use of the road it would take just two turns maybe three. Fortunately difficult terrain gives you a hand, and of course you will be shooting, throwing things and fighting in close combat or melee to slow him down. A turn less and you would have an easier game, two turns less and the Third Reich either need phenomenal luck or a high level of skill.

Which I think brings us to set up. Earlier in the discussion of the map board some possible spots were discussed. With HIP guns it is always best to follow any hunches you have as a good spot is the one that surprises the enemy rather than conforming to a nice linear defensive pattern.

For the bulk of your forces you have to choose between forming a single strong point, defending two or more hill areas and an aggressive forward defence, then personalise your choice by carefully positioning one or two squads to fit in with your own tactical ideas.

If you choose a single area to defend it needs to be close to the main road. A good example is Hill 490, where you can easily position a gun and perhaps three or four squads. If you plan a true point defence then the rest of your troops go in flanking positions or outposts just in front. This is a simple defence to use and works well against ponderous attacks. You can improve your chances by using dummy stacks or a small part of your manpower to create the impression of some commitment to defending the area closer to the board edge.

Alternatively you might see to destroy the German Infantry as they enter with troops close to the board edge manning machine guns, with the AT guns threatening side shots on the Panthers or with HE in the breach for Infantry. If the enemy match your dispositions expect carnage. The more likely counter is an attack down one flank bypassing part of the defence early in the game.

My own choice would be to position some troops on each major hill. Perhaps two or three squads on each, and the thought of a last stand on hill 490. The main difference from a forward defence is sacrificing control of the entry areas, and going for more of a defence in depth. The main weakness is being defeated in detail by a concentrated enemy force.

In all cases make use of concealment, gain it when you can, lose it when you have to fire or move distance. Be prepared to

abandon a position before the Germans are in position to storm it, then give up just one or two hexes before turning to fight again. Sometimes you can slug it out. If at a higher elevation in woods in a fox hole you can win a fire fight, and may enter a melee with an advantage against CX units climbing into combat with you.

A few quick ideas. Use HE for the guns, the Red Army went for 45mm calibre mainly for its better HE round rather than it's slightly better anti tank effectiveness, the 57mm lost out to the "shorter" 76mm guns in tanks for the same reason. You can cross Frigid streams at a cost, if the plan needs it, or things are just plain desperate. There is no casualty cap, even a lone SMC can win this for you, the unit can be concealed, Berserk, in melee, as long as it is not broken you are on for a win. The prisoner thing still puzzles me, the objectives suggest a lone Russian prisoner could claim a win but doesn't seem right to me. One possible use for the DC is to use it for bridge destruction. A placed DC needs a snakes DR to do the job, but a set charge reverses the TEM to modify its attack and uses the next column on the IFT table. This gives bridge destruction on a nine or less! Pulling this off has considerable style, and makes crossing the stream much harder for the Germans. I'd attempt it if the Germans have concentrate on their left flank (my right flank) massing around Hill 526. Have to appreciate a lot can go wrong, setting the charge is hazardous movement, and requires a usage die roll that can be leader modified, finally you need to retire to a position less than six hexes away, have a line of sight to the bridge and pass a normal task check.

Expect a fun game. It is difficult to get hammered playing the Russians in this. Even in a game against challenging opposition you will certainly break some units, you may even kill some. In more even matches you will have strong winning chances so long as your defence is active, you move units to threatened sectors and don't hunker down waiting for the German to hand you a win by reckless attacking.

German Entry and Attack

Your objective is to gain control of the paved road running roughly east to west across the map. There must be no unbroken Soviet units on the road itself or in hexes adjacent to it. Appreciate a single unit can prevent victory, even a SMC, and note it doesn't have to be in Good Order allowing units in melee, hand to hand combat or even a Berserk unit to count. I think losing because a Soviet unit excels in close combat



or become Berserk and cheats death is a tough break unless you engineer the circumstances by reckless play! On the positive side eliminating or driving the entire enemy OB off board earns you a victory, and once in a blue moon a crazed Ruski might move away from the victory area and gift you a win. You expect trouble from enemy units, perhaps harder to factor from the game start is the need to cross the board to reach the eastern end of the road to neutralise any enemy forces there. Briefly the mission is to drive Soviet forces away from the road and it's adjacent hexes by the game end.

Your main assets are Infantry. Nine squads is pretty much a full strength Company, with a fair allocation of SW, two LMGs and a medium. Have a quick read of A25.1 for the special rules that apply to SS. Briefly these are higher broken side morale, Assault Fire for late war scenarios (not indicated on the counters), and in Eastern Front scenarios immunity to disruption and surrender by the RtPh method. The SS are also allowed to massacre, which is an unpleasant reflection of the units history. All of these characteristics are useful. Higher broken morale is in effect a -1 modifier for rally attempts, Self Rally is very realistic for the Wikings. Being immune to disruption is another bonus, as your ELR is underlined and normally a half squad subject to ELR replacement would disrupt. Going Berserk can lead to a quick death, but along the way you should be able to set up something clever to exploit the units capabilities more easy than rescuing a disrupted unit. Assault Fire just begs for aggressive movement by reducing the penalty for not firing in the PFPh. Lumped together these rules give a good representation of SS troops, extremely aggressive, high morale, and favouring automatic weapons, with the propensity to massacre.

In this scenario, ELR is un-usually low, down to 4, but still underscored, it needs a pretty high DR to suffer replacement. For squads this simply deploys them, and for half squads, well there really is no penalty other than breaking or perhaps elimination due to fate. Admittedly Leaders can slide down the quality ladder if you have abysmal luck. In a fire fight you can expect to break under extreme pressure, and return to the fight quickly, without significant reduction in combat effectiveness. Special rules allow Hand to Hand combat and Winter Camouflage. Winter Camouflage is a big help for concealment gain. You can enter using assault movement and try for Smoke without losing concealment in open ground! Hand to hand is a good choice when you ambush units, or if you have numerical

superiority and are happy to trade units quickly. With your squads higher firepower squad for squad you have a tremendous advantage in melee that becomes more pronounced in hand to hand.

As German troops you qualify for panzerfausts, eighteen in 1945. With no walls or buildings in play they are only useful against the Soviet AT guns or a captured Panther. In the latter case you could also try for ATMM. Don't forget inherent Smoke, still allowed in snow.

Leadership is pretty good, a 9-1, 8-1, and 8-0, is dandy for nine squads. When moving uphill in snow and woods the movement benefits of leaders helps. If the Reds start to pick off the officers you can still deliver strong fire attacks and rally quickly but your movement will slow and this scenario places a lot of reliance on movement.

On their own this would be a tough fight for just the Infantry, fortunately you have serious armour support. Two PzKpfw VG, or Panthers. Bad news first, these units are hampered by terrain, and the threat posed by hidden anti tank guns. Your tanks have good MG armament, 5 factors for the coax and 3 for the bow gives an 8 FP attack at normal range, even a respectable 4 factor attack after moving. At close range that goes up to 16, or factored into an overrun with the main gun you again get to 16. The gun is a superb anti tank weapon, but here it is used as a direct fire weapon against Infantry. Any Russian unit sitting in a woods or foxhole will feel nervous from the first shot, with mounting fear as you gain acquisition. With two tanks you can pick a spot in the enemy defence and make like very unpleasant for at least two Russian units. The Gun threat is mainly immobilisation at short range, or the odd shot from the flanks, maybe from the rear. With gun positions know you can manoeuvre to neutralise or reduce the threat. Before then, well you just need to be careful. Off board you are totally immune, as you move further onto the board the risk of immobilisation and flank shots becomes more serious unless you are carefully positioned protecting the armour by closely supporting it with Infantry. Armoured assault and even Riders are worth considering. Riders are one way to cross a stream without suffering replacement or reduction, or to cover ground quickly. Late in the game this might offer a last chance to reach a distant Russian unit close to the victory road.

The Tanks do have a smoke discharger that doubles as a close defence weapon. Using Smoke is a good idea, being aggressive with the weapon is not. The Nahverteidigungswaffe was designed to

deploy Smoke, and as a last resort close defence weapon, it could not be used from a moving tank to attack Infantry targets. Parking the tank then waiting for Russians to obligingly scamper forward to be attacked isn't likely, instead expect enemy units to ambush the vehicle hoping to destroy it then withdraw.

The tanks are very important. Their firepower is helpful, Smoke almost as useful, mobility and resistance to enemy fire are good. Expect to lose one or both tanks during the game. The loss may be down to enemy action, bog and subsequent immobilisation or recall after main armament malfunction. This isn't to be celebrated but is a fair indication that you have correctly used your armour assets to ease the burden of your Infantry, unless you have been caught by two lucky 45mm shots as you enter.

Russian forces amount to a strong company of eight squads of Guard Infantry, and an ad hoc section of Guns. The Infantry are Elite with high morale, good range, with slightly low fire power of just 4 factors. As mentioned earlier this gives you an edge in close combat, and in a straight fire fight. The Russians are also using Winter Camouflage, can declare Hand to Hand, and can massacre. ASL rules allow Human Wave, hard to see it applied here. Admittedly the Reds are good troops, remember they also have weaknesses. Firstly the Russian squads don't have inherent Smoke. Secondly they cannot deploy. This limits set up options and makes crewing machine guns a little harder for the Red Army. The third weakness of the Russians, and this is stretching it a bit, is their squads limited squad anti tank capability. This amounts to close combat, and the DC against your stacks of panzerfausts and ATMMs. After that it is hard to be critical of the Soviet force, an ELR of three is not as good as an ELR of four, so don't expect too much unit replacement on either side. I guess we are back to Soviet strengths! They do have a lot of SW, two reasonable LMGs, a MMG and a HMG plus a DC. That is five weapons for eight squads, almost one each. The heavier guns can bore sight, almost certainly a hex you will want to enter. Draw some solace from the B11 of the light and medium machine guns, these are three times as likely to breakdown as B12 weapons. The firepower of Russian squads and machine guns is a threat to Infantry, and encourages armour to button up. The perfect counter to a gutsy Infantry force is armour, the Panthers give you two 75mm Guns, and four machine guns immune to rifle and machine gun fire.

Without the AT guns the scenario would be a much easier game for you. Aggressive infantry probes would find the

Soviets before a Panther would move close and hammer them with machine gun and cannon fire. To keep the Guards in the game they have some anti tank capability in the form of two anti tank guns. The 45mm Gun threatens immobilisation. If it can shoot at the side of a panther it has a near even chance of destruction using Armour piercing, rising to a highly probable Kill at close range using APCR. Frontally a critical hit extremely low to kill number on a turret hit is needed. If being fired on the front target facings by this gun, and positioned to do serious damage to the enemy staying put and shooting should pay off. The 57mm gun is deadlier. With APCR the basic TK is 18, if modified for range a side hit results in near certain destruction. Against frontal target facings a turret hit followed by a low TK roll can destroy a Panther. Likely not on the first shot but sit there long enough and ROF and acquisition will eventually lead to your destruction. The best defence against the guns is LOS. What can't be seen can't be hit. By aggressively searching for possible gun positions ahead of the tanks and positioning the armour with its frontal aspects to the enemy you keep pressure on the enemy. If the first shot immobilises a tank, the hull facing is set, the turret can and should turn towards the newly discovered gun to engage and destroy it. Being hidden is the guns main strength. The guns can start in open ground hexes hidden and only revealed when you are fired at, the gun changes covered arc or the hex they are in is searched, moved through or subject to an effective fire attack. Most *ASL* players are aggressive and will seek to use the guns aggressively against Panthers. Being HIP the crews might also be used to contest control of the road. On turn six they can be revealed to claim a win, or abandon the gun on turn five and run for the road. Both of these events can only happen if you are lax in searching for the guns so don't have a hissy fit about your opponent doing either. It is your job to secure the road and finding the guns is part of that. Historically the 45mm Gun was also used in the direct fire role to fire HE against Infantry, the 57mm was more an anti tank weapon, but also has potent HE capability. A hit from the guns attacks at four or six factors, just enough to do damage, if you allow for ROF and some critical hits.

I think there is a delicate balance within this scenario. If you lose a tank to a gun your end game become easier by finding a concealed unit. By contrast if the Panthers have a better time the guns might be hidden to complicate the closing stages of the game.

The last Russian weapon to mention is the sniper. A SAN of four gives a one in six chance of an attack every time you take

a shot. You can't win without throwing dice, but think before you take shots that have little chance of success due to low firepower or very high modifiers.

Concealment is a big part of the Russian game, protecting his units from fire and making judging their dispositions a deal harder. At the start of the game the inability to deploy and set up restrictions of one squad per hex give you a better idea of the enemies dispositions even though they can all be concealed. You should be able to gauge the height of stacks, judge their positions and make some pretty good guesses about enemy deployment. With a 9-1 and 8-1 leader in the enemy OB some Russians may forgo using them to direct MG fire and create one or two stacks containing a leader and perhaps a SW, the DC looks good for this. You can't stop the enemy doing this, the gain for you though is the risk of the heavier machine guns covering and losing ROF, as well as firing without that extra -1 DRM. So stacks of one SMC are possible but unlikely. Most stacks will be a squad and SW, two will likely match up a squad, SMC and machine gun. With four concealment counters in the Russian OB, Russian set up options are between eight and twelve stacks. Apologies for being dull, but eight stacks means everything is real, with one squad per hex, twelve stacks means two dummies and two SMC based stacks. With practice you can make some pretty good guess as to what is under a concealment counter, if you are really good you'll have a better idea than your opponent! Knowing where the MMG and HMG are is most important, look for a four high stack and likely they will be there. Other things help. The squads can set up in foxholes, if these are onboard you can be certain there is a squad underneath. If eight are visible any other concealed stacks are dummies. If you are playing a regular opponent and know his preferences factor this into your estimate of the enemy position. Finally my top tip is keep notes as you find things. I favour a scribble on a scrap of paper, guess you could use a second board and mark progress with spare counters but have never seen anyone do it. Notes really do help to find the guns if the Soviets hold their fire.

The trickiest part of this scenario is the terrain. The Guards are tough troops, there are plenty of them and they have lots of SW plus two light anti tank guns. Change the map for something less congested without the frigid stream and your attack would be much easier, I go as far as to say a walkover!

The map is a muddle of features at first glance, but after some scrutiny you will start to see features that help the defence, other features that are fairly neutral and a

few bit of terrain that really do give you some opportunities to exploit. The main gains for the defender are masses of concealment terrain, the hazard created by frigid water, masses of trees to channel armoured movement and hill masses which allow for observation and slow movement. Rest assured enemy units will not find set up easy. For example whilst any of the hill appears daunting to assault the Soviets will be concerned about troops becoming isolated, the weakness of long range fire and a lurking doubt that you may bypass part of his forces.

Lets start with some extra concealment terrain. Snow plus Winter camouflage allows guns to hide in open ground; that is a lot of territory. You can find the guns by being shot at, moving Infantry through the hexes they are in, Searching, or when the Russian opts to drop HIP status to change covered arc or move the crew perhaps. Some Russian players will dedicate one or both guns to the end game and seek to keep them HIP on or close to the road. You can counter this tactic by moving through or Searching any hex within reach of either the road or a hex adjacent to it. You have to factor in bypass movement, and any Leadership or double time bonuses, and/or have troops ready to flatten any Reds appearing on turn five. This is part of the game. I guess you are trying to secure the road for transport elements to pass safely. Don't ignore concealed units. Finding an obvious dummy you bypassed early in the game is a real unit is careless.

The road is undoubtedly the most important terrain feature. At R4 and Q6 stone bridges provide a "safe" crossing over the stream. Anti tank guns can bore sight these hexes to give a high probability of a hit, at very short range if you are leading with the armour. The bridges are deadly as they fix vehicular covered arc as you approach and move over them. For example to use the Q6 bridge a tank in R6 must expose its rear to some of Hill 526, and some woods, brush and open ground immediately behind it, additionally there is a risk of fire from around Hill 490 striking the side armour or your turret front if you are cagey. With fair luck you will just be a bit surprised, sometimes you'll lose a tank. The upside is you always find a gun! For Infantry, snow negates the road bonus and again the bridges do channel movement. If you want to cross from one side of the stream to the other without paddling in the stream you must either hitch a ride on a Panther or use the bridge. The same restrictions apply to the Russians. If you control or occupy the bridges he can't get across easily. Don't

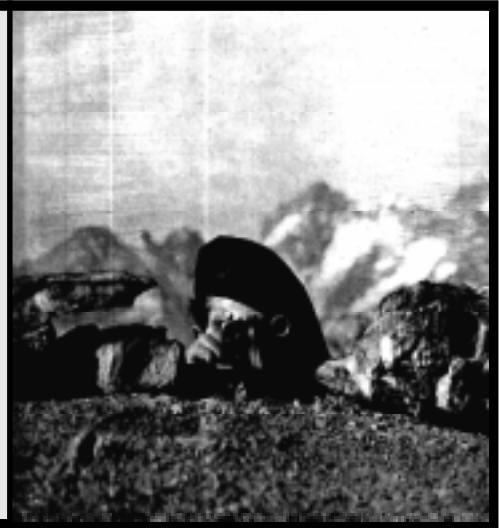
Continued on page 13, column 1



VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES

Number 1

Mar 95



PREP FIRE

Hello and welcome to View From The Trenches, the first of what is hoped to be a (semi-)regular British ASL fanzine. Although ASL 'zines seem to come and go, none has come from Britain, and offered a British view on ASL. Until now.

So, what can you expect to find in View From The Trenches? Well, news, reviews, tactics, scenario hints, stories, in fact anything to do with ASL. Most importantly, I want to give us British ASL players a chance to share our views, and allow us to keep into touch with each other.

Let's get the British ASL scene going (and keep it alive and kicking).

The most important thing I personally would like is to see lots of stuff on general tactics and play. Too many people seem to enjoy coming up with 'perfect plan' scenario articles, which, while interesting, don't tend to be of much help when you are viewing a scenario for the first time. And, in common with most such articles, they tend only to concentrate on the start of the scenario, since the number of variables that can affect the course of a game, particularly ASL, make it difficult to predict what the mid and late game situations might be. So, what I want to do is to offer more of a look at tactics in general, much like the 'SL Clinic' use to do in 'The General'.

Scenarios are the lifeblood of any open-

ended system like ASL. So, I'm on the lookout for lots of these. Tested or not. I realise that a lot of players may not have time to give their own scenarios much playtesting, but that many players want to see new scenarios. So, feel free to submit any scenario you design. All I ask is that you include a brief scenario design notes covering any aspects of your scenario.

I'm open to contributions on any aspect of ASL, but don't expect to get rich out of submitting stuff. All I can offer you is the satisfaction of knowing you're helping to keep the British ASL scene alive. So, whether it's an article on general tactics, a scenario dissection, a rules discussion, a variant, or a humorous look at ASL, write away.

Anyway, 'til next time, roll low and prosper, as Spock might say.

Pete Phillipps

INSIDE

PREP FIRE	1
COMMANDER'S NOTEBOOK	2
DEFENSIVE PLANNING	3
NON-COMMUNICATION	4

COMMANDER'S NOTEBOOK

The aim of 'Commander's Notebook' is to provide brief notes on the play of ASL. These can be tactical hints, scenario notes, or even a look at a particular aspect of the system, such as armour, air support, or even seaborne assault. This time, a look at a few of the more popular infantry scenarios.

As an introduction to 'Commander's Notebook', I've taken a look at a few of the infantry scenarios the system offers, and provided a few statistics about them. They take the form of the initial impressions of the battalion commander as he approaches the situation, and his subsequent after action thoughts. As such, they are short, sharp, and to the point.

ASL-1 - FIGHTING WITH-DRAWAL

Played twice (Finns 0 - 2 Soviets), taking 4-5 hours to play. Based on play so far it seems pro-Soviet, as the Finns lack the time to break through the Soviet delaying action so they can exit the board.

The Soviets must delay the Finns, which means causing breaks. Outnumbered in firepower, they should rely on attacks from out of sight positions as the Finns advance. The initial defense is a concealed screen along hexrow AA, a second line along hexrow X (with concealed LMG in V4) and HIP squads in H9 and K4 (2nd Level). In GT1 move the MMG to W1 to cover hexrow W. The Soviets must try to keep the Finns north of hexrow O-Q until GT4.

The Finns must blast the Soviets out of their way, advancing fast. As they must use GT1 to kill the Soviet front-line they effectively have 6 GT to move, which means a rate of about 4 hexrows per GT. If they exit, they must also leave some forces covering south edge to prevent Soviets exiting. A broad advance doesn't allow the Finns to concentrate their FP, so a flank advance appears best. Tried in the north, but is too easy for the Soviets to defend, so might be worth trying the south.

The Soviet plan works, but costs squads. Lose 1-2 squads in rearguard each turn as the others pull back a little. Finns

haven't advanced fast enough in early GT and by GT4 have been struggling.

RB6 - TURNED AWAY

Played three times (Germans 0 - 3 Soviets), taking about 3.5-4 hours to play. Despite the lack of German wins, seems balanced as most games have been very tight.

So far, the basic Soviet set-up has seen a fortified DD41 used as HQ twice, and a fortified FF37 once, with the remaining units in a shield along the FF37-BB40-AA44 axis. The basic tactic is to force the Germans to waste valuable time breaking through, while also inflicting breaks and (hopefully) kills to gradually reduce their overall firepower.

The Germans should deploy into two equal assault groups, one in the north the other in the south. The basic plan is to develop three firebases around AA40, AA42 and AA45. The tactic is to seize the Soviet flanks and use firepower from there to reduce DD41. While this goes on a lone squad moves along the northern gully to FF37 in case this is the Soviet HQ - should EE45 be the HQ it can easily be reached from the south using the rubble to cover the approach.

GEN-T1 - GAVIN TAKE

Played five times (German 3 - 2 US), taking 2-3 hours to play. Seems to be fairly well balanced, as most games have gone to the last turn.

The Germans should set up with the aim of controlling the northern parts of rows I and Y by having a squad and MMG on the 1st Level of 3R3 and 3S3. The other forces should be spread around village, with the aim of sending a LMG armed squad up onto hill 522 (3W6) to deter US advance onto the hill. The plan is to gradually fallback to the area 3K10-3O8-3R8-3I10, and cover 3Q10 so shots may be taken against US forces trying to exit.

The US should enter Gavin and 3 squads along the northern edge to bring fire onto 3S3 and 3U3. Once these Germans are broken/eliminated, Gavin-Maloney push through the village and on to 3Q10. Ostberg Force comes over the hills and into the woods, trying to reach 3Q10 from the rear. It

might be worth trying to send Ostberg Force into 3M2 and then onto village, combining with Gavin to sweep thru the village.

The German plan works well, holding up the US. The US tactic entails destroying main the German forces. The superior US leadership allows the rapid rally of broken units, allowing them to keep going.

GEN-T14 - GAMBIT

Played once (Germans 1 - 0 New Zealanders), taking about 5-6 hours to play. A tense race that needs aggressive New Zealander play.

The New Zealanders should deploy the onboard platoon on one map edge and enter the other troops on the opposite edge, thus forcing the Germans to spread their forces out. The entering units should basically plan on breaking thru on their edge and running for the nearest exit. Use a couple of LMG-armed HS to interdict German units trying to move across. Remember the ATR makes a good LMG as there are no vehicles around. The mortars are best used to provide Smoke to cover movement across Open Ground.

The New Zealanders have 28 VP worth of troops. If they lose at least 9 VP of these they cannot win. Since the onboard platoon will be worth about 5 VP (2 squads and an 8-0) the Germans should concentrate against it so as to destroy it in the first two GT. The other units should be spread out so as to quickly respond to the New Zealander advance. Try to delay the New Zealanders until the onboard platoon is destroyed, then fall back towards their exit target.

GEN-T16 - STRAYER'S STRAYS

Played three times (Germans 3 - 0 US), taking 2-3 hours to play. Much depends on the state of the US forces at the end of US GT1. Seems to slightly favour the Germans though.

The Germans must delay the Americans, but initially doesn't know where they'll enter from. The long front makes it impractical to cover it all (he who defends everything defends nothing), so concentrating in the centre and lightly covering the flanks is the best idea. Deploy some HS to help cover the

Continued on page 4

DEFENSIVE PLANNING

A brief look at a number of factors to consider when planning and setting up a defensive position.

Whenever you are planning a defense, there are several things to bear in mind. First and foremost, always remember to defend the ground you must hold to win. Although this can be done directly, by placing troops in the area, it is more often done by defending the surrounding area and the approaches.

Any defense needs depth, so it can absorb the enemy attack and slow down its momentum. A "thin red line" can be easily breached. Although the easiest way to provide depth is to have troops spread out in ever-widening defensive circles, all too often a lack of troops prevents such depth. In these cases, each position should be able to provide mutual support to neighbouring positions. Ideally, each position should be able to bring fire to bear on its neighbours and the approaches to them. Without mutual support, it is all too easy for the enemy to overwhelm a single position and surge through the gap.

Also be aware of situations where a defensive position can be attacked from more than one direction, and allow for such situations when setting up. Such situations are common at night, when lines can easily be penetrated by a cautious attacker, and defensive positions must be prepared to face an attack from any direction.

Defensive positions should be concealed where possible. Ideally, key positions and sites should be set up HIP if possible. Many scenarios allow a Scenario Defender to set up one or two squads HIP, and one potential use for these units is to set them up inside your defensive perimeter in positions which cover the key ground. These units can then ambush any advancing enemy units, possibly catching under FFNAM and/or FFMO. Where HIP is not available, try to set up in positions out of sight of the enemy, so that Concealment may be gained.

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NON-COM - MUNICATION

Non-com: a non-commissioned officer (EG a Squad Leader).
Communication: to talk, exchange ideas and information.

Well that's what this column is all about.

Or at least, it will be once I get some letters. Hopefully, this column will allow us to exchange ideas on playing ASL. I've written some of mine in this issue, so let me know what you think about them.

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COMMANDER'S NOTEBOOK

Continued from page 3

flanks. Deploy a pair of Conscript HS and a pair of 2nd Line squads on each flank, and everything else in the centre. Have the 1st Line and the leaders around the chateau to act as a reaction force. Alternatively, lightly hold the centre and one flank and concentrate on the other (but still keep the 1st Line units around the chateau). Also, try varying the exact units deployed so the set up doesn't become predictable.

The Americans have the initiative but must decide where to enter from. As the Germans will be spread out to cover all possible entry options, entering in one area allows a local concentration of force. The terrain to the west is mostly Open Ground and Grain, which makes crossing it dangerous. The east is mostly Orchards, which offer plenty of LOS Hindrances. The centre has the chateau, which is an obvious German firebase and central point. The east looks to offer the best chance of making good progress, but wait until seeing the German deployment before making a choice.

GEN-ASL-C - THE STREETS OF STALINGRAD

Played twice (Germans 0 - 1 Soviet, 1 draw), taking about 8.5-9 hours to play. This scenario is very balanced, with the majority of games being draws.

Set up is pretty much pre-determined.

The Soviets should put the 10-2 leader and 3 6-2-8s in 1G4, two killer stacks in 1X3 and 1X4, and a randomly deployed concealed shield in the Factory frontline (this prevents a predictable set-up). It is worth taking a Commissar for the rally benefits. The reinforcements should mass in the north, as this offers the most direct route to the Factory. Because of this, KG Stahler should be concentrated in 1U2, with light concealed forces (mostly dummies) to the south. The Germans should concentrate the engineers in 1AA4, and KG Tienham in 1Z7.

The Germans need to break the Factory shield and move the engineers in to DC and FT the main Soviet stacks. Ample use of SMOKE is required to cover the engineers as they do this. The other Germans, particularly KG Stahler must simply hold out as long as possible, as the Soviet attempt to break and overrun 1F5, 1K5 and 1U2. Those Soviets trying to reach the Factory should try to enter from the north. Moving in from the south requires them to cross too much ground (much of it Open as well) to reach the Factory. Too, with no attack on building 1U2, it can dominate the ground they have to cross. They should also consider the possibility of making a Human Wave assault, or using Sewer Movement to enter the Factory. However it is tried, expect lots of casualties.

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FINAL FIRE

That's all for this issue. Hope you enjoyed it. Feel free to write and tell me what you think.

Whether there will be a second issue, and what it might contain, depends on you, the readers. VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES is a chance for us ASL players to talk to each other, but if we don't talk, it will fail. Its future is in your hands.

VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES is an independant British ASL newsletter. It is available free on request (although an SAE is much appreciated). All correspondence should be sent to Pete Phillipps, 49 Lombardy Rise, Leicester, LE5 0FQ.

BICSKE BRAWL

Continued from page 8

forget the frozen marsh in S9. It is open ground and a concealed unit can even advance or assault move the gap. If you control the crossing points you make Russian movement towards the roads in the end game much harder.

Moving straight up the road with all your forces is risky unless the Reds are making a massed stand on Hill 490 at the far end of the road. In any battle where you approach from a single board edge you always have three main axis of approach, the left flank, centre or middle and right flank. Here the centre is the road which is attractive for armour. On the left flank entry is complicated by the stream, you might be better off going through the woods in X0 and Y1 and onto the largest hill. A path in Y1 connects to X1 to get your squads quickly on board. You can attempt this with armour, the risk of bog is very high but with two tanks you might want to chance it. Once you gain a foot hold on this hill you can move fairly quickly if unsighted by concealed or known Russian units. At most you would expect a gun and two or three squads to be on the hill so don't be too concerned about defensive fire. When attacking on this flank you must push hard. Charging on board then using advance and assault movement for the rest of the game will not help you. At times you need to make progress, not only using regular movement but double time and the odd leader assisted hike. By keeping the hill between you and the area to the South you are protected from long range machine gun and rifle fire, as well as odd bits of high explosive from the guns. By the game end any troops entering on the left flank should have searched or occupied most of Hill 526, control the woods by the R6 crossroad, and if they can get as far as the gap in the stream (S9) if there is a chance of a hidden or concealed or hidden unit nearby ready to break cover and run towards the road. Don't be too brave, moving in big stacks isn't needed, losing half a squad or a squad to find a concealed HMG and it's bore sighted location will not cost you the game, but three squads and a leader dieing is too much to risk. Remember you can enter over a period of several turns and in the APH as well as the MPh.

In the centre is better tank country. You need the tanks to provide fire support to help the Infantry. Coming in on turn one before the Russian defence is understood is risky. A frontal shot doesn't represent much danger to you, so maybe hugging the small hill (unnumbered) that takes the road from Q1 to R3 is worth the risk. Go to the side

that gives a line of sight to the biggest concentration of units, including dummies then open up with that 75mm gun and the machine guns. If the gun malfunctions, well that's tricky, I'd be tempted to move further onboard before fixing it, with the intention of drawing fire as there just isn't a casualty cap! The more sensible play might be to roll for repair and using the machine guns in the meantime. As your troops move forward on the other flanks, the armour has to advance. As mentioned earlier the road is scary if no guns are revealed! You can drive through a stream, take your time and check the move you intend is legal. The stream is effectively a gully so you can exit to and gain an elevation at the same time. From the west edge if you insist on crossing the stream you have to enter T2 to subsequently climb to T3 or U3. How annoying is that! Right of the road avoid the pond as it isn't frozen just frigid and deep enough to swallow two Panthers and any riders. That said you can move along a stream and I think under a bridge. Infantry moving in support should try to use the tank as cover as the terrain is very open, the brush in R1 and orchard hexes in R0 and T0 at least negate the movement in the open penalty!

On the right flank there are few practical route for armour. The best I can see is to cross the stream into I3, drive uphill into the woods then exploit the road if you have been lucky on bog rolls (no giggling at the back), and enemy countermeasures. Generally any plan that relies on die rolls for movement is frowned upon but if it worked and could be supported quickly by Infantry it has potential. I guess the strongest argument against the gambit is an immobilised tank can't see much from either the woods or if stuck exiting a stream. For Infantry, this side of the board has lots of cover, mostly woods, although some can be bypassed to speed progress. Entry through N0, M1, and L0 provides good cover. If a unit breaks it can remain in place to rally quickly and return to the fight. Occasionally you may get the chance to rout towards unknown enemy units. The rules allow this, expect Russian attempts to counter, if he can back you up against a stream you will lose a unit. Keep moving east fighting, search and gaining concealment when you can. Again use double time and leadership, and go easy on stacking until you know the enemy can't target you. Once you gain the road clear the tree line, and search for the guns.

On every turn you should feel under intense time pressure with too much to do for each unit, unless you have destroyed most of the defenders! This is a short game where the difficult terrain and need to clear the road add to the excitement. Don't relax

until you have found both guns, and revealed the rest of the Russian OB.

So far we have looked at the lines of attack you can exploit, you must decide what strength to commit to each thrust. This is difficult, as you don't really know what strength the Russians have in each area. One approach is to count Russian stacks, assume each is a squad and assign you troops in roughly equal numbers. My own preference would be to keep the tanks together aiming to move down the centre of the board, and commit a platoon of three squads a leader and LMG to each flank. The third platoon serves as a reserve whose function is to man the MMG, commit a squad or half squad to assist the armour and a small reserve to help exploit gains made on either flank.

You have the option of entering on or after turn one allowing you to keep units off board until you know more about the enemy dispositions. Exploit this to keep pressure on the enemy, and to keep a small reserve in case you lose units to a particularly lucky Russian attack. Being able to reinforce later in the game build pressure on the Russians defences. You can add to the fog of war by deploying and making use of concealment. Ivan will know when you have bought both tanks on but can be confused slightly about your Infantry strength onboard or in particular sectors of the board.

To win you need to move a lot, gain a lot of ground when not exposed to effective fire, move in the advance phase when subject to large attacks. You need to cross the board, and enter or search for Russian units. Expect some nasty surprises along the way, losing one tank and having the other immobilised is almost expected, similarly a determined Soviet defence might exchange their entire OB for most of your own. I'd expect to lose five or six squads mostly in the first three turns. High casualties don't matter too much as long as you are killing Bolsheviks and gaining ground.

Conclusion

The terrain rules initially make life difficult for the Germans who need to carefully plan their entry and importantly roughly where they will move on subsequent turns. The Russian needs to exploit the terrain. Concealment and hidden initial placement in open ground are key to set up. There is an interesting contest between the light anti tank guns and Panthers, hand to hand to speed up the attack and simplify the end game and the frigid stream which gives the scenario a lot of character.

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ASL JOURNAL 6

A Brief Look

The following is a brief look at the latest *ASL Journal* taken from various postings to the *ASL* Mailing List.

It's 48 pages this issue. Starting at the front, the cover is a painting by Ken Smith showing three British paras taking cover behind a wall; a certain bridge is in the background.

The inside cover is the first scenario, 'J90 The Time of Humiliations'. Page 3 includes the credits column, a short 5 entry table of contents, and errata for *ASLRB 2nd edition*, Chapter H (Brit vehicle note 51), scenarios J81 and SASL 15, and *ASL Journal* 5. It's about half a page worth.

The series replay of 'J73 Tired and Unsupported', begins on page 4 and runs through the top of page 16. The German player is J.R. Tracy, the American is Paul Sidhu; John Slotwinski provides the commentary. Also at the top of page 16 is a "Tips from the Trenches" cartoon.

The next article beginning on page 16 is "The Persistence of Firepower: A Nearly Exhaustive Look at Residual Firepower and Fire Lanes in ASL" by David Olie. The article runs to page 18; then picks up again after the scenarios on page 31. It finally ends, sort of, on page 33. There is a two page comprehensive example on pages 34-35.

Pages 19-30 are the other 11 scenarios, more on which later. One note to the scenarios is that 'J93 The Porechye Bridgehead' takes up two sides.

There is a very brief "From the Editors" section on the lower left of page 33. They say that J7 will include some more scenarios for Primosole Bridge (they're using PBr as the abbreviation), a set of linked scenarios by French designers (they don't say who), Steve Swann's Croatian Paratrooper vs. Partisan scenarios, Oliver Giancola's analysis of Got Milk!, an article on HIP play by Mark Pitcavage, scenario analysis by Matt Shostak, and the second half of the British Army article by Charles Markuss.

Pages 36 through 47 contain a very dense article by Charles Markuss—"Tommy

Atkins at War Revisited: A Deeper Look at the British in ASL". It has no pictures, other than a few counters, and just two small tables. It's part one of two. Another interesting item is that the article had to be "stripped" of its extensive footnotes to fit. At some point, the footnoted version should be available on the MMP web site (at the time of going to press it was not on the web site).

Finally, the back cover is an add for "Fire in the Sky: The Great Pacific War 1941-1945".

The insert is the Primosole Bridge (PBr) campaign game. The map is 21" by 30.25" (25 by 28 hexes). The rules pages are Z39-Z58 plus a two-sided (card stock) CG roster/purchase record.

CG I "Who Are These Devils" covers 12 dates from Night of July 14 through PM of July 17. (Note that there is an AM, PM, and a Night for each "day".) The British begin on the attack—a night attack via paratroop and glider landing. The initial defenders are Italians; Herman Goering units enter later on the first date. After the original date, the Axis can buy paratroopers, "regular" German infantry (447s), Italian infantry, guns, OBA, StuGs, etc. The British can buy infantry, paratroopers, tanks (Shermans), carriers, armoured cars, guns, OBA, pregame bombardments, etc.

CG II "Paying the Devil's Bill" covers 8 dates from July 15 through July 17 PM. The British are again on the attack in this one. Note that the Axis are limited to only one attack chit.

CG III "When Devils Collide" covers just three dates: Night of July 13 through PM of July 14. Basically, this one is the initial British assault followed by the Axis counterattack. The British can't choose an attack chit while the Axis have two. (Of course the initial scenario is an implied attack chit for the British.)

OK, on to the scenarios.

The Time of Humiliations - Another of Laurent Closier's scenarios set in French Indochina. A mix of 1st and 2nd liner IJA infantry backed by armour is on the attack vs Hutville. The French start out with a lot of infantry and receive a bit more supported by some FT-17 tin cans midgame. Chunky

at 7.5 turns and ~ 16 squads a side.

The Sooner The Better - Matt Romey gives us a tussle at Tobruk, as German infantry finds itself cut off behind the Australian lines and must fight their way out along with some panzers that stumble onto the board on the 2nd turn. Looks like a free for all as the Aussies get some armour support of their own. 6.5 turns, three boards, 16 Aussie squads, 11 German, 10 Brit tanks and 16 panzers.

Your Turn Now - Ken Dunn takes us to Cebu Island after the fall of Bataan. A dozen Japanese 2nd Liners go after 11 Filipino greenies - seven turns, looks straightforward but the troop mix is interesting.

The Porechye Bridgehead - From Xavier Vitry, this is early Barbarossa and it's a biggie, using both sides of a card. This represents a chaotic Soviet counterattack against the vanguard of the 6th Panzer Division. Conscripts, KVs, Soviet air support, a T-34 platoon, commissars, assault engineers, all up against a pretty tough mix of elite Germans and AFVs, lead by a 10-2. 8.5 turns of pretty crazy stuff.

Kempf at Melikhovo - One of Ola Nygard's On Top scenarios. These are popcorn size, such as this Kursk offering with 6.5 squads per side. The Russians get an ATG and a KV as well, while the Germans are supported by a flammpanzer and a PzIVH. A straightforward quickie at 4.5 turns.

Typical German Response - The first of the Primosole *HASL* scenarios from Randy Yeates, this has 20 German squads led by a 10-2 and friends attacking the Para bridgehead. The 8.5 648s get a six pounder and a captured Italian 47 ATG plus the benefit of the funky terrain, while the bad guys get a StuG a couple turns in. Meaty stuff, even at six turns.

Another Bloody Attack - The second of Randy's cards, this time the British are on the attack, with 16 squads and four Shermans, against a dozen German squads, a 40LL, and a 75 recoilless rifle. Six turns.

A Nice Morning For a Ride - The third Primosole scenario has another German attack against the bridgehead, but with a twist - if a British hero can scoot off the map on his bike, the British reinforcements appear

Continued on page 19, column 1



VIEW FROM

THE HIGHLANDER

A new SMC for ASL

Tom Repetti, Asad Rustum, Martin Hubley, Peter Raftos

"We were taking the Americans under fire when Corporal Tanaka heroically charged the enemy tanks with a bundle of explosives under his arm. All our hopes went with him as we watched him run toward the enemy lines. Eventually he was cut down by enemy fire; we saw his body fall lifeless to the ground. We said a silent prayer to his ancestors and resumed the firefight. Suddenly, the machine gunner grabbed my arm and pointed; there was Tanaka up and running again. He placed his demo charge with great effect; the enemy tank went up in flames."

"The Russian soldiers stumbled back to their trench in the dark, laughing and swilling great drafts from the bottle as they celebrated their evil deed. Major Kolgorev would never execute their comrades for "doctrinal disobedience" again; the grenade thrown into his sleeping tent had rid them of his menace once and for all. Already drunk and getting drunker, they were oblivious to the night until Ruchensky's eyes went wide with horror. There, on the lip of the trench, silhouetted by the moonlight, stood Kolgorev, gun in hand with a mad gleam in his eye."

Z14: Highlander SMC: The Highlander SMC represents a race of immortals who have lived among us since time began. They cannot die except by decapitation; all other "mortal" wounds are healed in mere minutes. Highlanders sense the presence of other Highlanders by feeling "the Quickening".

Z14.1 PRESENCE: At the start of a scenario, players roll five dice for each SMC and MMC in their OB. On a Final DR of 5, that SMC represents (or MMC contains) a Highlander, which is noted on a side record.

Z14.2 CREATION: If a Highlander's unit is eliminated by a non-Highlander CC attack, the player owning the Highlander must wait one complete Game Turn before placing the Highlander onboard in the Location of the previous unit's demise. The Highlander retains its previous SMC incarnation or is represented by an 8-0 SMC if the Highlander was previously present in an MMC unit.

Z14.21 FIRST AWAKENING: After placement, the Highlander SMC must pass an NTC; failure of the NTC indicates that this is the Highlander's First Awakening from death and is so stunned by the experience that he is placed under a TI counter for one complete Game Turn.

Z14.3 QUICKENING: If two enemy Highlander SMC's are ≤ 2 hexes from each other, they sense each other's presence and both must immediately begin the Highlander

Determined Walk and enter into Highlander CC.

Z14.31 DETERMINED WALK: The Highlander Determined Walk is a form of semi-simultaneous Berserk Charge, except the Highlander SMC does not run, but strides manfully with a determined look in his eye. Both enemy Highlander SMC's must simultaneously move TOWARD (not Toward) each other, at a rate of 4 MF per Player Turn. Note that this is the only instance where enemy units can move during a friendly Movement Phase.

Z14.4 HIGHLANDER CC: Upon reaching the same Location after a Highlander Determined Walk, the enemy Highlander SMC's must engage each other in Highlander CC, using the HtH rules with no Ambush possible. Highlander SMC's cannot engage non-Highlander SMC's in Highlander CC. Only a KIA result in Highlander CC (ie, decapitation) will permanently remove a Highlander SMC from the game.

Z14.41 HALLOWED GROUND: Highlander CC cannot occur while in Hallowed Ground (Cemeteries, Graveyards, Temples, and SSR-Defined Houses of Worship); upon meeting in Hallowed Ground, both enemy Highlanders must Determined Walk to the nearest (in MF) Non-Hallowed Ground Location in order to engage in Highlander CC.

Z14.42 LIFE FORCE TRANSFERRAL: After deadly resolution of Highlander CC, the losing Highlander's life force is transmitted to the victor in an impressive display of lightning and special effects. For the next Game Turn only, EC's are Overcast while storm clouds roll in, Wind Gusts are in effect, and the resulting lightning storms make all radio communication impossible. OBA Observers immediately lose Radio Contact, and all AFV's immediately operate under Radioless AFV restrictions. The victorious Highlander SMC is placed under a TI counter during this time, while lightning enters his body and he is jerked willy-nilly like a puppet. After the Life Force Transferral is over, the Highlander SMC is Battle Hardened to the next level.

Errata:

Z14.4 After the last line, insert the following: "Once one Highlander has been decapitated in Highlander CC, the player playing the

winning side must yell out "It's better to burn out than to fade away!"

***Z14.3 (addition) THE QUICKENING DUE TO SHEEP:** Can also occur when the Highlander SMC has a LOS and is within 6MF of a GO sheep counter. Sheep are randomly determined at setup, using a DR for each farmland (see SASL Table A9) board in play - the result being the number of sheep on that board, randomly setup as per SASL 4.1 (e).

***Z14.31 (addition)** Should the Quickening Due to Sheep occur whilst a Highlander SMC is stacked with any MMC of any Commonwealth Highland Regiment (eg Highland Light Infantry of Canada, Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, etc) or any regiment, usually but not necessarily of Scottish origin, or defined as such by SSR, such MMC must immediately take a NTC, utilising their ELR as a negative modifier. Should this NTC be passed, the MMC immediately goes berserk and must charge the closest (in MF) sheep counter. Once in the hex with the sheep, the MMC and accompanying Highlander SMC are TI for a dr of player turns.

***Z14.5 VELCRO BOOTS:** Velcro Boots are only available after 7/44 to elite Highland Regiments, on a subsequent dr of 1-3. Velcro Boots reduce the TI time of MMC who have gone berserk by the Quickening Due to Sheep by half (FRU).

***Z14.32 DYO:** Sheep counters have a BPV of 2, purchased in the Fortifications section of the DYO form. For every five sheep counters purchased, the owning player may make a dr. On a final dr ≤ 1 , the owner receives a Shepherd counter (use SL scout counters or hero counters from a different nationality.), the dr is modified by the following:

Elite: -1

ANZAC: -2

Scenario takes place in pre-1944

Russia: -1

Scenario takes place in PTO: +2

***Z14.33** Sheep have 4MF (6 if stacked with a GO Shepherd). Should sheep attempt to move in Movement Phase or Advance Phase without a Shepherd, they are automatically subject to a Straying DR as though Lax. Sheep are attacked (including Residual Fire, Fire Lanes and Mines (EXC: A-T Mines))

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If there are any mistakes, please let me know so I can correct them for the next edition.

Ω

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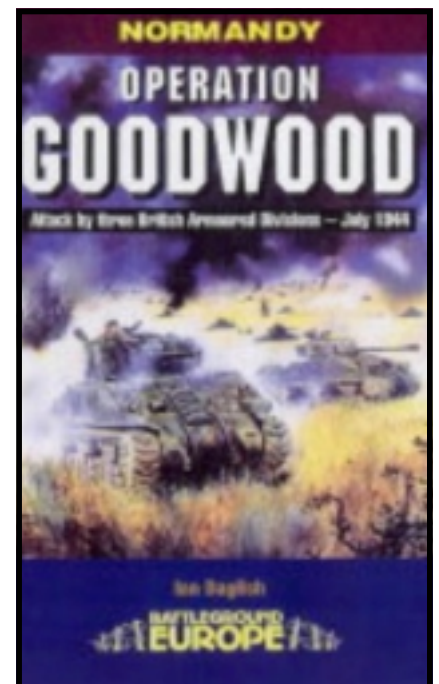
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This is the story of the largest armoured battle fought in the campaign for north west Europe. The book guides visitors around the tanks battlefield, showing what remains and what has changed, using present-day images alongside previously unpublished 1944 pictures.

Author Ian Daglish
Paperback 189 pages (January 2004)
Publisher: Pen & Sword Books / Leo Cooper
Price £9.99
ISBN: 1844150305

WALES



VIEW FROM

a turn early. The Brits start with 9.5 squads and get 9.5 more, along with 5 Shermans. The Germans get 16 squads at start along with three guns. The numbers look grim for the Germans but their objectives are modest and their initial position allows for interdiction of the reinforcements. 6.5 turns.

Lend-Lease Attack - Another of Ola's - 3.5 Germans squads and a pair of Tigers hold off two groups of Russians, each with a couple squads, a truck, an SU-85 and a pair of gyro-stabilised Shermans. 5.6 turns.

On To Florence - From Richard Weiley, this is set in Italy. 10 Kiwi 458s attack the board 10 town, defended by 7.5 Fallschirmjaeger 548s and Semovente the Tedeschi lifted off their former allies. The Kiwis get a little help from three Staghound A/Cs. All this takes 6.5 turns.

For A Few Rounds - Scott Holst has 14 Ami squads led by a 10-2, plus four Shermans with a 9-2 AL and a couple gyros, attack board 3. The German defence includes a dozen crappy squads, a couple of those triple-tube 20L halftracks, and two ultrasexy Sturm-tigers and their 380mm rocket launchers. Dunno, but anything with Sturm-tigers and a 9-2 in a gyro'd Sherman has to be worth a look. 6.5 turns.

The Coconut Plantation - The last of the batch, from Murray McCloskey. A mixed bag of 8 Aussie squads, including walking wounded, set up right next to three IJA halvesquads. Twenty more Japanese squads enter randomly on the attack to drive the Aussies off the only local source of fresh water. Both sides suffer ammo shortage, but the Aussies at least have a couple modules of scarce ammo arty. Looks interesting. 6.5 turns.

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THE HIGHLANDER

Continued from page 15

on the Vehicle Line of the IFT. There is no stacking limit for Sheep. *Z14.34 Sheep may NOT be used as Mules.

*Z14.35 **Mistaken Attack:** The Highlander SSATC (Sheep-Sighting Attack Task Check) is modified by the following DRMS (as applicable):

Smoke, Hindrance: as per counter/terrain

Shepherd is not Concealed/HIP: +2

The above DRMs are applied only if the Highlander fails the SSATC (and therefore does not attack the sheep). If the final, modified SSATC roll is 12 or greater, the Highlander will go berserk and charge the shepherd, as per *Z14.31 (addition).

Errata: add to the end of *Z14.33: The presence of Sheep counters in Road, Forest Road, Wire, Gully, Ford, Bridge, Sewer Entrance or Rooftop Locations increase the cost to enter such Location by 1 MF/MP (as applicable) per Sheep counter (EXC: Sheep increase the cost of moving below a Wire counter as per the above sentence, not entry of the actual hex).

Errata to the Errata: AFTER the word "Bridge", but BEFORE the word "Sewer", add "Path".

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THE TRENCHES

ON THE CONVENTION TRAIL

There are more and more ASL tournaments cropping up all over the world. In fact, it is possible to be involved in an ASL tournament at least once a month, often more, if you were so inclined (and had the financial means to live such a life - I wish!).

If you plan on holding an ASL tournament, please let me know and I'll include the details here, space permitting.

If you contact anyone regarding these tournaments, please tell them that I sent you!

MAY NASHCON 2005

When: 27 - 29 May.

Where: Cool Springs Marriott, Franklin, TN. Telephone (615) 261-6100. Room rates are \$89.00 per night - tell them you are with the Nashcon 05 event to get this rate.

Fee: \$18.00 prior to 15 May, \$20.00 thereafter. Non HMGS members add \$5.00.

Format: Single elimination, four or five rounds depending on number of players. Scenarios to be chosen from a list provided by the tournament director, although alternatives are OK if approved by the tournament director.

Contact: HMGS-MidSouth, Nashcon, 2819 Columbine Pl, Nashville, TN 37204. For convention registration contact Chris Edmondson by email at echris66@comcast.net; for further details about the ASL tournament contact Steve McBee by email at smcbee@midtm.net. For further details check the web site at <http://www.hmgs-midsouth.org/>.

OCTOBER 2005 ASLOK 2005

When: 2 - 9 October 2005

Where: Quality Inn & Suites, 7230 Engle Road, Middleburg Heights, Ohio 44130. Telephone 440-243-4040. Room Rates are \$69.00 plus tax for 1-4 occupants. Request ASL Oktoberfest to get the reduced rates).

Fee: \$25.00 prior to 15 September, \$30.00 thereafter.

Format: Same as always. Weekend tournament plus numerous mini-tournaments. Gaming starts Sunday 2 October and continues to noon on Monday 10 October. There is also an informal USA vs. World Cup where everyone keeps track of their games and a plaque is presented to the winning side.

Notes: Medium, large and extra large t-shirts are \$10.00 each, double-X-Large are \$13.00 each, triple-X-Large are \$15.00 each, quad-X-Large-Tall are \$18.00 each. T-shirts are available in numbers based on pre-registration sales so pre-order to ensure you get a t-shirt.

Contact: Bret Hildebran, 17810 Geauga Lake Rd, Chagrin Falls, OH 44023-2208. You can email him at damays@alltel.net or telephone him on 440-708-2356. You can also pay at www.paypal.com (see www.aslok.org web site for details).

INTENSIVE FIRE 2005

When: 27 - 30 October.

Where: The Kiwi Hotel, West Hill Road, Boumemouth, England, BH2 5EG. Telephone (01202) 555 889 or fax (01202) 789 567 to arrange accommodation. Single rooms are £33.00 per night, double rooms £29.00 per night per person if booked prior to 1 October - thereafter normal rates apply. Remember to mention INTENSIVE FIRE when reserving to qualify for the special rates. You can also book online at www.kiwihotel.co.uk.

Fee: £7.00 (entry is free for those only able to attend for one day). Players pre-registering will receive a tournament program in September.

Format: Three round Fire Team tournament (two rounds on Saturday, one on Sunday). There will also be some single day mini-tournaments on the Friday. Open gaming is available for those who do not wish to take part in the tournament.

Notes: Prizes are awarded to winning players and the Convention Champion, who is the player judged to have had the most successful tournament with all games played over the weekend being taken into consideration.

Contact: For more details or to register contact Pete Phillipps, 24 Huggett Close, Leicester, LE4 7PY. Phone (0116) 266 6894 (evenings only) or email if@vft.co.uk.

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INTENSIVE FIRE 2005

28 – 30 OCTOBER 2005



INTENSIVE FIRE is the UK's longest running tournament dedicated to the play of *Advanced Squad Leader*. 2005 sees us enter our second decade and players of all standards are invited to attend.

FORMAT

The well-established Fire Team Tournament is the main event and offers the chance for competitive play on the Saturday and Sunday. In addition, the Friday mini-tourneys offer the chance for glory in more specialised fields of warfare. There will also be a Training Camp for inexperienced players. For those not interested in tournament play, or not able to make it for the whole weekend, there is always room for pick-up games and friendly play.

VENUE

The Kiwi Hotel, centrally located in Bournemouth, offers both excellent gaming facilities and reduced accommodation rates (£35 per night for a single room or £30 for a double room). The hotel is within a short taxi-ride of Bournemouth rail station and ample parking is available. To book contact the hotel on (01202) 555 889 (+44 1202 555 889 from outside the UK). You can also book online at www.kiwihotel.co.uk. For foreign visitors, lifts can often be pre-arranged to and from major airports. For those contemplating an extended stay, Bournemouth offers an excellent base for the military historian, being within easy reach of important military museums at Bovington Camp, Winchester, Portsmouth and Aldershot.

COST

Weekend registration for the tournament costs just £7. The tournament program listing the weekend's scenarios and events is available from late September to anyone registering in advance.

FURTHER DETAILS / REGISTRATION

Contact Pete Phillipps, 24 Huggett Close, Leicester, England, LE4 7PY. Telephone (0116) 210 1798 (+44 116 210 1798 from outside the UK) or email if@vftt.co.uk.