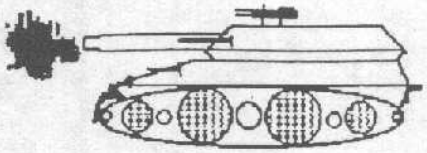
AT THE POINT -- The Journal of ASL



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AT THE POINT

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SMALL GLITCH

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ARTICLES and LETTERS are encouraged from all readers of AT THE POINT. The objective of this magazine is to allow all readers to share their thoughts and experiences regarding the play of Avalon Hill's game Advanced Squad Leader. To that end, AT THE POINT offers a generous subscription bonus policy to the readership. Writers of letters to the editor that are published in the forum will earn 1 issue per page of written material. The minimum reimbursement will be 1 issue. Writers of articles that are published in the Analysis or Replay columns will earn 1.5 issues per page of written material. The minimum reimbursement will be 2 issues per article. It is explicitely stated by the publisher that this magazine is a non-profit endeavour; all subscription monies received are utilized solely for the advancement of this periodical. As such, participants are expected to subscribe. All articles and letters to the editor are preferably received in a double-spaced, typewritten format. Writers are also encouraged to submit articles in ASCII format from DOS based computer systems. When sending diskettes through the mail, please use a jacket for 5.25" types (low density only). The publisher can also accept such text files on 3.50" high density diskettes. All 3.50" disks will be returned at the earliest opportunity.

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

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FAUST PONTIFICATES

Hello again, true chums! Last month, I sent out 350+ sample issues to known ASL players, most of whom were on Rick's and Bill's mailing lists. As I write this, ATP has over 90 hardcore subscribers, and I expect that more will trickle in as the next couple of weeks slide by.

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

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

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

Woops Dept.

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

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

1. **C5.11** All non-mortar guns, not just NT guns, suffer fixed CA penalties and double case 'A' DRM in woods/building/rubble.

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

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

Gripe Dept.

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

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

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

NOTES TO THE TROOPS

Rex Martin

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

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

play, and for contact with the best players around.

At least, that's the impression I have after devoting some time to reading the first issue of **"At The Point."**

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

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

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

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

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

over-achiever, writing, designing, testing, feeding the growing hobby. Thanks.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FAUST'S FORUM

Dear Marc,

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

Compliments on all those who contributed, too. Yes, I'd like to see the rest of Mark Nixon's ASL trivia. I consider myself to be an experienced player, but I learned something from 8 of his 23 examples. I'd remind Mark, though, that A10.51 has to be read in conjunction with F.1C.

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

Robert Banozic

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

Marc,

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

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

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

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

Darryl "Action" Burk.

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

Dear Mr. Hanna,

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

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

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

David S. Raley

I'd be interested in soliciting an article from the readership on "PBEM and ASL." ATP might be a good place to spread the word about this (not to mention my own selfish interest in learning how to get involved...).

Your question is a very good one. I think you answered it yourself– the leader can direct a multi-hex FG and prevent it from cowering. Dean and Dave must have known this, but not Faust, who is now demoted (temporarily). If any reader can refute Mr. Raley's points, please let me know and I'll print your reply here.

Dear Marc,

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

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

Japanese would also lose some range, but in Jungle fighting this is a very minor inconvenience.

[....] I would be willing to contribute to your magazine. I have several articles and scenarios published in both General and in the ASL Annuals. What I and my opponents up here in SD have to offer is a small general article (designer's notes?) on Gliders (E8) and a series replay of ASL-A1 "Tavronitis Bridge" or ASL-G11 "Pegasus Bridge" using the Gliders. Since I am the designer of both scenarios, I would act as a referee while overseeing two balanced opponents playing the scenario. If you think there would be an interest in this please let me know and we will do it.

Keep up the good work. Semper Fi!

Steve Swann

Sorry about cutting out so much of your letter, but I needed the room for some others. First, your point about A29 is well taken. In fact, the Japanese could easily deploy all their squads by simply voluntarily breaking them (G1.131). Since Japanese leaders rally like Commissars, most would be up quickly. There is a danger with your plan, however. Japanese leaders are very fragile, and may die before they can recombine the squads "near the objectives." If you hold them back out of harm's way, your troops won't move up so quickly, and there is always the danger of snipers.

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

Dear Faust;

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

Burnie Hegdahl

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

Dear Marc,

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

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

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

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

Ray Woloszyn.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ANALYSIS

AN ASL DECISION-MAKING PRIMER

Eric Baker

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

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

PRELIMINARIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now for some numbers. Make no mistake, I am not about to inundate you with statistical tables, but to play ASL at the Elite level you need to have a certain grasp of the actual odds of the dice falling your way. One of the most pertinent and useful pieces of advice I've ever received is to "always assume that you're going to roll a seven; any less and you've got a break,any more and you can bitch about your rotten luck!" I also use the converse– assume that your opponent is going to roll a seven. While simplistic, this maxim will help you immensely when it comes to making tactical decisions in ASL. A look at the IFT will reveal the following firepower required to generate a 1MC on a DR of '7' at a particular type of terrain:

- **4FP**— Non-Assault moving in Open Ground
- **6FP**— Assault moving in Open Ground
- **8FP**— Open Ground
- **12FP**— Woods
- **16FP**— Wooden Building
- **20FP**— Stone Building
- **24FP**— Fortified Stone Building
- **30FP**— Bunker with +5 CA TEM

The significance of a 1MC is that a morale seven squad will, of course, break if it rolls a seven. Note that the information above is easily modified for leadership and other factors. For each negative leadership DRM, lower the firepower needed by one level. The actual odds of adversely affecting a morale seven unit with the above firepower/terrain combinations are about 50%. (See Robert Medrow's article in **The GENERAL**, Vol. 22, #6, for a very in-depth look at ASL infantry related statistics. The article is excellent, but be forewarned–some of the statistics he displays are open to debate; at times the tables within the article contradict each other.)

Now, 50% is no sure thing, but it is a place to start. By knowing the threshold at which you have a 50% chance, you can make some educated moves. This is a direct contradiction of the "shoot a lot of little attacks" philosophy that some go by. The advent of the Sniper in ASL has done a lot to discourage it, but the philosophy is still out there. Its weakness is more a reflection of the quality of the player who uses it than the actual philosophy; we've all been hosed by the series of 4FP (+2) shots that just happened to hit pay dirt for our opponent, so we all know it works, sometimes. My point is that knowing the odds and using the above table is a good way to KNOW what's going on; you will be better able to allocate your forces in all matters. In this way, you'll be able to use tactics I use the information pessimistically. I assume it will take me two or three shots at a 50% chance to get a result. For example, a target in a stone building will generally be broken after two or three fire attacks of 20FP. On the other hand, when I am the target I assume the worst; it'll only take one or two shots for my opponent to get the same result on me. What this means in the play of the game is that if I cannot muster the listed FP in the PFPh, then I will generally forgo firing and use the units to better effect at something else. If I am going to take an action, and my opponent can't get the listed FP, then full speed ahead. If he has less than a 50% chance of breaking my guys, then I'll take the action and live with the consequences. Naturally, there are exceptions to such rules of thumb.

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

THE SCENARIO

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

The Order of battle is as follows:

GERMAN: 467 (X3) , 8-0, 7-0, MMG, LMG

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

GERMAN INITIAL SET-UP

F1 8-0, MMG, 467

F1.2 LMG, 467

F1 247

E2 247

This set-up covers the street well (able to exert at least 6FP per street hex), while holding the MMG in the rear area (such as it is). One of the squads is deployed (A2.9); many times the best defense is to increase the number of targets available to the opposition. The 7-0 is in a good place to act as a rally point for any broken units.

To counter this set-up, the Russians will maximize their advantages of numbers and Encircling (A7.7) ability.

RUSSIAN INITIAL SET-UP

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

B3 447

G3 527, 527

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

Why did we pick the north side of the objective building as our focal point? There are a couple of reasons. Even though the building is surrounded by Open Ground that we must cross, the north side of the objective offers wooden building G1 as a possible haven/jump-off point

and are forced out of F1. Another reason is distance. With only two turns to play, we don't have a lot of time to maneuver. KNOW YOUR VC! We need to get into the building quickly, and G3 is only two hexes from our goal. The southern flank, with C3, D2 and D1 open to the MMG and squad (Remember the SSR) is not nearly as hospitable, as well as being further away. For the FG to suppress the German MMG on turn one (i.e from C4), it would be set up too far away to get in to the building by game's end. G1 does have it's risks, however. It is isolated by the board edge, offering no rout path if the German occupies F1.

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

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

Assuming the German breaks (a big assumption, actually contradictory to my philosophy of pessimism) the MPh will see a 527 in G3 Assault move into F2. Though appearing rash, this move serves a definite purpose. A look at our table shows that the 527 will probably end up broken or pinned; a 6FP attack is needed, and we're offering him an 8FP (-1) shot. That is exactly what we want! By firing both HS into F2, the next move will see the remaining 527 Assault move into G2. The best shot the German has is a 2FP(-1) with the HS in F1.2; the HS in E2.2 cannot fire because the broken 527 in F2 is closer (A8.3).

Why not send both 527's into G2? In this way we would only undergo a single 6(-1) during movement. The reason relates to the inherent advantage the Soviet has in numbers, namely an increase in the number of targets. Generally there are only two good reasons to stack your troops-- to gain the advantage of any leadership present in the location, or to create a FG that can't be created with ADJACENT units. Barring these circumstances, you are usually better off spreading your infantry out amongst different locations

[and moving them at different times, not as a stack...].

This is one of those times. By moving to F2 first, we deny him a single First Fire shot at both units. His fire will have to be dispersed or he will have to gang up on one target to the exclusion of the other. A look at our table demonstrates that a 6(-1) is still enough to break both 527's. By not moving them together, we do not put "all of our eggs in one basket," either during the MPH or DFPh.

This move illustrates an important facet of the offense in ASL; almost NOTHING is simultaneous in this game! The order in which you execute each of the actions within your phases can radically alter the outcome vis-a-vis an alternate chronology. For instance, if our plan is to occupy F1 during the APh, we obviously have to get into F2, G1 or G2 by the end of the MPH. By using a 527 to draw fire, we take the heat off our brother SMG unit and allow it to get adjacent to the building.

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

The German has little to do during DFPh. Either two 2FP(+0) shots into F2 or G2,or a single 4FP(+0) into F2. Either way nothing should manifestly [illegible] F2 is already broken, and the other 527 weathers the 2FP shot. During the AFPh, we will assume, likewise, that the German is unaffected.

The broken 527 will rout a single hex to G3, where, if he self-rallies, he will be able to influence play more effectively than had he continued on to G4. The German LMG and 467 rout to E1.1.

During the APh we do the following: 527 into F1, 447 from B2 to C2, one 447 from E4 to F3, and the 8-1, MMG, 447 and 447 will advance to E3. The move of the big FG may require some explanation. Again, know the VC! Unless the bulk of our units are adjacent to the building by the time we advance in turn two, we will lose the scenario. Being in the street also makes the group that much more powerful against the locations in E2, by virtue of PBF.

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

The CCPh may or may not see an ambush, how lucky do you feel? The 5:2 odds are perfect for us; on an original & we will destroy the HS, while it needs a 3 to do any damage to us. In this case, we will NOT declare Hand-to Hand CC, the odds are already heavily in our favor, and we want the 527 to survive the encounter. Being pessimists, we'll assume that the CC is not successful for either side, and we remain locked in Melee.

Even a cursory glance at the previous turn reveals a single,crucial event– the breaking of the LMG, 467 in F1.2. Without this occurring, our thrust into the street is probably doomed, both 527's will end up broken, and our firegroup in E3 the recipient of a 12(+0) shot in the next PFPh. So what do we do if the 16(+2) shot doesn't break the German?

First, Prep the 527's at F1.2, an 8FP (+3) shot. This is a desperation shot as our table shows; we will probably not get a result from it. That is OK, however, because we are not going to move into the

street until the APh. This is another trick of the trade in ASL. By using the APh to get into the street,we avoid the negative DRM that accrue due to movement in the open. What we lose, of course, is entry of the building itself. We'll have to endure the German PFPh whilst in Open Ground.

During movement, move the 447 from B3 to C4 to D4. It should weather the 8FP (+1) shot from the MMG, but if it doesn't it makes no difference. By not breaking the 467 on the first shot, we have become desperate. The short scenario length demands decisive action. In the DFPh the best shot he'll get is an 8FP (+2) at our FG, which should not be a problem. During the APh we do the following: 527 to G2, 527 to F2, 447 from D4 to E4, MMG, 447 to F3 and 8-1, 447, 447 to E3.

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

The most important facet of this example is it's timing. We recognize that the critical attack was on the LMG, 467 and when it failed it was time to activate plan 'B.' If we dawdled, all would be lost, so it's into the street and damn the torpedoes. Many a scenario has been lost waiting for a critical attack to get a result, or not even realizing an attack was critical until it was too late. The pace of the scenario is dictated by its length and VC. It's into the street with everyone, making certain to offer the largest number of targets feasible, while still retaining a coherent force for our next fire and movement.

We end the Russian player turn with two alternatives, hinging on whether or not the 467 in F1.2 was broken or not. possibilities, the better to educate ourselves as to the options available.

ALTERNATIVE ONE: 467 BKN

The German RPh sees the 467 fail its rally attempt (needed a 4 or less). All broken units lose DM status.

The German now has a decision to make: to shoot 16FP(+3) into the Melee in F1, an 8FP(+2) at C2, or neither. The German shoots into the Melee and gets a mixed result by breaking both units. During the MPH, the 247 moves from E2 to E1.

During DFPh we force the 467 to regain DM by taking the 4FP(+3) shot from C2 at E1.1. This is a tactic often overlooked by beginners, but used to the hilt by the Veterans. We could, of course, have taken a 4FP(+3) at E1, but that shot falls well below our standards according to the table. By keeping the 467 DM we almost guarantee its absence during the next Russian turn.

The RtPh sees no movement: the two units in each Melee must withdraw from CC (A11.16). The German withdraws to E1, the Russian to G1. The German chooses not to advance any units, preferring to keep a potential 20FP PBF group in E1. This has a good chance to discomfit anyone in E2 or F1.

On turn 2, the Russian RPh sees all broken units remain so. Since this is the last Russian turn, we will not Prep Fire anything. To win, we need 3 unbroken squads in the building. To do this, all our units will be moving and/or advancing this turn. The first move is a 447 from E3 into E2 (AM). This accomplishes a few things. First, it may draw fire from the enemy group; a 20FP(+3) shot is definitely worthwhile. If it does draw this fire, then the units will not be able to fire at the other 447 if it wishes to move to D2. It will also lock the MMG into a specific CA for the rest of the MPh, either F1/E2 or D1/E2 (A9.21), thereby leaving one flank uncovered. We will assume, however, that the holds fire.

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

Next, the 447 from C2 will AM into D2. With the MMG CA fixed away, this unit is subject only to a 2FP(-1) shot from the HS in E1. The German refuses this, which puts the squad into a position to advance into the building.

Finally, we AM the 8-1, MMG, 447 from E3 to E2. This looks like a contradiction of our "eggs in one basket" rule, but there is a rationale for it. The best shot to be had is a 16FP (+3), either during the MPh or DFPh. Our 8-1 and 447 should be able to weather that attack. Secondly, a look at our forces will show that, if one more squad is broken, we'll lose. So the benefit both squads gain by being stacked with an 8-1 outweighs the disadvantages. Last, the act of moving the leader and squad to F1 will incur the Residual 8FP (+2) and another 16FP (+2) attack. Moving to F0 and abandoning the MG will give the German an 8FP (+0). Thus, the first choice is best.

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

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

The RtPh sees the 447 in F1 rout to G1. The 247 in E1 routs to E1.1.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ALTERNATIVE 2: 467 NOT BKN

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the CCPh, assuming we do not ambush the defender, we will not declare H-T-H and will take one 2:1 (-1) attack on the 247s. The reason for the single attack is to take advantage of the leader DRM; if we declare two attacks, only one would have the leader participating. If we lose a squad, or do not destroy at least one HS, we will probably lose.

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

CONCLUSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

(cont. from page 5, col. 3)

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

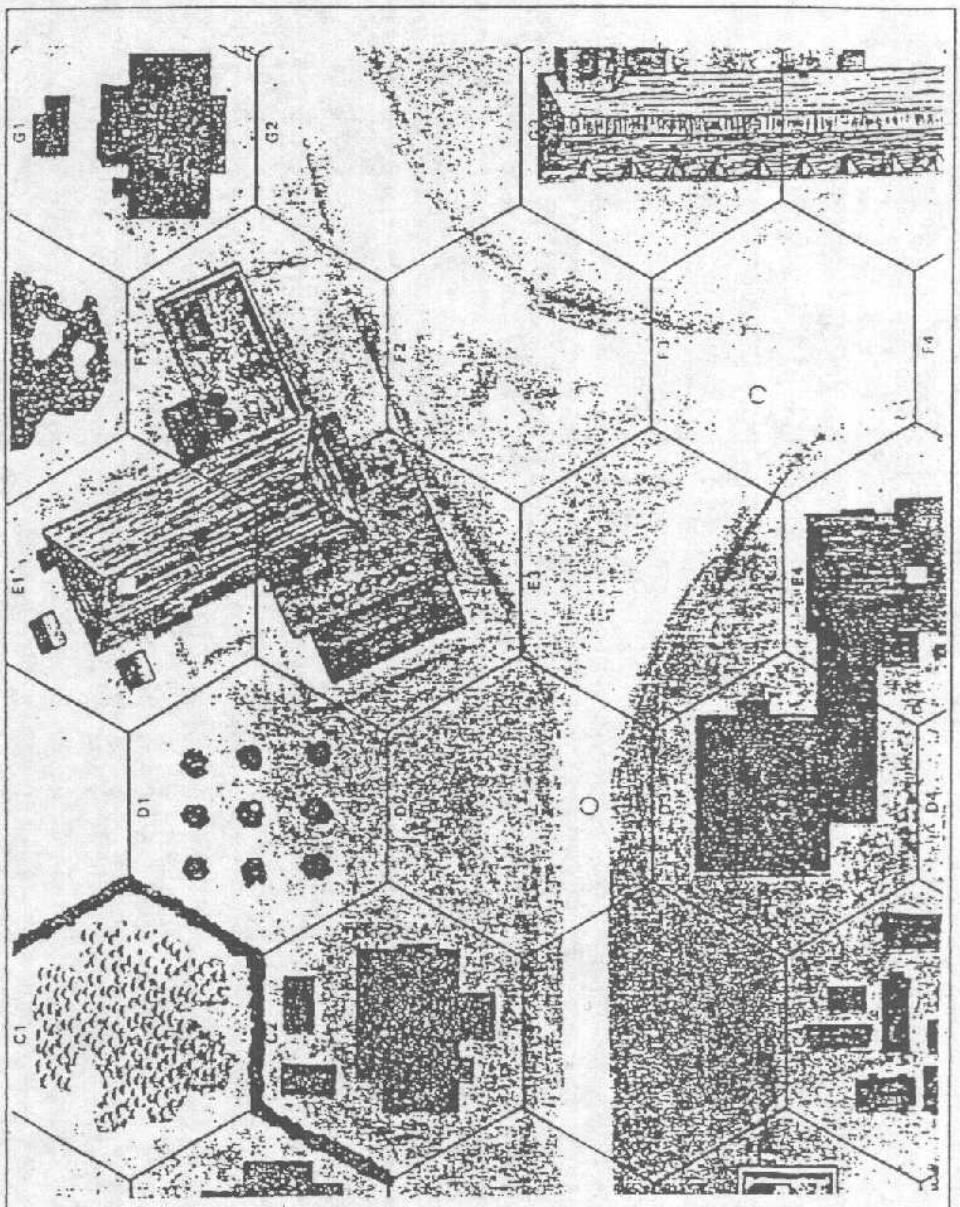

FIGURE 1

POINT REPLAY #1

(Part Two)

BREAD FACTORY #2 [RB3]

GERMANS: *DEAN HALLEY*

RUSSIANS: *DAVE CONNELL*

COMMENTATOR: *MARC HANNA*

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

Turn 4- German

Rally Phase

237 Wind Change 5,6 NE

238 8-1 [O43.1] self(+4) 1,3 RALLY

239 458HH [O43.1] 8-1(+2) 3,4 NE, DM off

240 9-1 [J41] self(+4) 5,6 NE, DM off STACK

241 DM off C41, B40, G41

Prep Fire Phase

242 SSR#2 6 NE

Movement Phase

243 7-0 CX from G39 to C39

244 LMG, 468X from F40 to G41

245 247EE from F43 to F42 assault mv.

246 LMG, 467GG from F42 to F42.1 assault mv

247 STACK [exc--?, 9-0] [J42] CX vs LMG, 467GG [F42.1] 12FP(+4) 2,4 PTC

248 467GG PTC 3,5 PIN

249 467HH from E42 to F42 assault mv.

250 STACK from F38 to F40

Defensive Fire Phase

251 LMG, 458R [G43] vs F42 12FP(+3) 3,2 1MC

252 476HH 1MC 1,1 HOB

255 45L ATG [I43] CA to H42/I42, lose ?

256 ATG TH Area vs H41 2,3 MISS, -1ACQ

Advancing Fire Phase

257 STACK [F40] vs G43.1 5FP(+1) 5,6 NE, 458HH DM

258 STACK [G41] vs G43.1 5FP(+3) 6,2 NE

259 467GG [F42.1] vs J41 1FP(+2) NE, STACK DM

260 LMG [F42.1] + STACK [F42] vs G43.1 6FP(+2) 4,2 PTC

261 8-1 PTC 5,1 NE

Rout Phase

262 247EE from F42 to D44

263 237G from C41 to B40 (illegal-not DM or OG)

Advance Phase

264 467A from G41 to H41, DM adj. enemy

265 9-2, HMG, 468Y from F40 to G41

266 7-0 CX from C39 to B39

267 LMG, 467DD from F40 to F41

Close Combat Phase- None

TURN 4 – Russian

Rally Phase

268 Wind Change 1,4 NE

269 447EE [J38] self (0) 6, 1 RALLY

270 9-1 [J41] self(+4) 6,1 NE, DM off STACK

271 458HH [O43.1] 8-1(+2) 3,4 NE, DM off

272 467A [H41] HMG recovery 3, OK

273 247C [G41] 9-2(-3) 1,5 RALLY

274 247FF F45(-2) 3,4 RALLY

275 DM off D44

Prep Fire Phase

276 45L ATG [I43] TH H41(+1) 3,6 MISS, -2ACQ, ROF

277 SAME SHOT (0) 1,5 HIT, ROF

278 HE EFFECT 5FP(0) 1,6 PTC

279 467A PTC 3,1 NE

280 SAME SHOT(0) 1,3 HIT ROF

281 HE EFFECT 5FP(0) 4,3 PTC

283 SAME SHOT (0) 1,5 HIT, ROF

284 HE EFFECT 5FP(0) 5,4 NE

285 SAME SHOT (0) 3,4 HIT, ROF

286 HE EFFECT 5FP(0) 3,3 NMC

287 467A NMC 2,4 OK

288 SAME SHOT (0) 6,6 BKN

289 LMG, 458II [O43] vs F41 6FP(0) 1,1 COWER, K/2

290 467DD to 247DD 2MC 4,4 BKN, DM

Movement Phase

291 426AA from L41 to K43

292 447EE from J38 to H39

293 MMG, 458II from I45 to H45

294 ?, 9-0 from J42 to I43 Assault mv.

295 LMG, 527AA from J42 to I43 Assault mv.

296 447CC from J42 to I43 Assault mv.

297 447DD from J42 to I44

298 ?, 426CC, 426BB from L41 to K41 Assault mv.

299 8-1 from G43.1 to G43

Defensive Fire Phase

300 HMG, 467A [H41] vs J41 5FP(+2) 4,3 NE, DM

301 STACK [F45] vs H45 3FP(+1) 1,4 PTC, SAN, ROF

302 SAN 2 EFFECT 4,3 F45

303 Random Selection 6,3 9-1 Wounded

304 wound Severity 3 OK

305 458IJ PTC 1,2 OK, SAN

306 SAN 4 NE

307 SAME SHOT (+1) 1,6 N, ROF

308 SAME SHOT (+1) 1,2 1MC, ROF

309 458IJ 1MC 6,1 PIN

310 SAME SHOT (+1) 5,2 NE

311 STACKS [F42.1] + [F42] vs G43 24FP(+2) 6,1 2MC

312 8-1 2MC 6,2 BKN, DM

313 458II 2MC 4,1 OK

314 STACK [exc-LMG] [G41] vs G43 19FP(+1) 6,5 PTC, NE, rmv MMG

315 LMG [G41] vs G43.1 3FP(+3) 2,6 NE, DM

Advancing Fire Phase

316 458II [H45] vs F45 1FP(+2) 3,3 COWER, NE

317 LMG, 527AA, 447CC [I43] vs H41 5FP(+3) 4,6 NE

Rout Phase

318 426HH from I41 to L41

319 STACK from J41 to L41

320 8-1 from G43 to G43.1

321 LMG, 247DD from F41 to G41

Advance Phase

322 447DD from I44 to H44

323 426AA from K43 to J43

324 ?, 426BB AND 426CC from K41 to J41

Close Combat Phase

325 426AA [J43] GAIN ?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dave is not being sensible about his broken units in J41. Dean wisely keeps every enemy unit he can under DM. Dave tolerates this at J41 for two player turns, then finally routs! Now these units are way out of position and cannot possibly help (unless a suicidal charge down the street is called for) in the counterattack until turn 6 – IF they rally. Worse, he routs them to L41, in LOS of F42.1, so Dean can still keep them DM! Why, O why, is not the Commissar over on this flank and rallying these guys at gunpoint? The additional morale benefit to the troops in I43 is of less value than getting the others back into the game.

Dave's plan to sneak up on the victory objectives along the H44-F43 wall has merit, but how are his

going to help out with that? Dave is committed to a piecemeal counterattack at this point. Dean ought to feel good about his position. But.... let's remember that Dean still needs to winkle the Russians out of G43. If 458II turns out to be half as much a man as 467A, look out! No Russian counterattack will be needed.

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

Turn 5– German

Rally Phase

326 Wind change 3,3 NE

327 247II [B40] self(0) 5,4 NE

328 247DD [G41] 9-2(+1) 5,3 NE DM off

329 ATG Repair 4 NE

330 8-1 [G43.1] self(+4) 3,6, DM off STACK

331 9-1 [L41] self(+4) 3,2 RALLY

332 447GG [L41] 9-1(+2) 4,3 NE, DM off

333 237X [L41] 9-1(+2) 3,1 RALLY

334 426HH [L41] 9-1(+2) 2,1 RALLY

Prep Fire Phase

335 SSR #2 4 9-1 WND, 247FF [F45] BERZERK

336 468HH, 149 [F42] + LMG, 467GG [F42.1] vs G43 24FP(+2) 4,2 2MC

337 458II 2MC 1,4 NE

338 STACK [G41] vs G43 20FP(+1) 1,1 1KIA, ROF, 458II ELIM

339 Random SW Dest. 5 NE

340 HMG [G41] CA G42/H41

341 9-2,HMG,LMG [G41] vs G43.1 10FR(+1) 1,6 NMC, ROF

342 8-1 BKN NMC 3,5 NE

343 458HH BKN NMC 4,6 248HH BKN, DM

344 SAME SHOT 10FP(+1) 1,1 K/3 ROF

345 Random Selection 5,4 8-1 Wounded

346 Wound Severity 5 ELIM

347 248HH 3MC 2,6 ELIM

348 9-2, HMG, LMG [G41] vs I43 10/5FP(+1) 2,5 NMC, PTC, HMG ROF

349 9-0 PTC 4,3 NE

350 447 -1MC 4,3 OK

351 527AA -1MC 3,5 PIN

352 228(12) NMC 3,3 OK

353 9-2, HMG [G41] vs I43 7FP(+1) 1,1 K/2 ROF

354 Random Selection 5,1,3,3 9-0 Wounded

355 Wound Severity 1 OK

356 447CC 2MC 3,4 BKN, DM

357 527AA 2MC 4,3 BKN, DM

358 228(12) 2MC 4,1 NE

359 SAME SHOT 7FP(+1) 6,1 PTC

360 9-0 WND PTC 3,3 NE

362 228(12) PTC 4,4 NE

363 HMG (Cap), 467AA vs I43 10FP(+3) 2,1 1MC, ROF

364 HMG CA I42/H42

365 9-0 WND 1MC 3,4 OK

366 447CC BKN 1MC 5,1 NE

367 527AA BKN 1MC 3,3 NE

368 228(12) 1MC 3,4 PIN

369 HMG (Cap) [H41] vs H44 6FP(+2) 4,3 NE

Movement Phase

370 9-1 WND, BZ, 247FF BZ from F45 to B/P G45/G46

371 MMG,458II [H45] vs 9-1 WND, BZ, 247FF BZ 16FP(-2) 3,3 COWER, 3MC

372 9-1 WND, BZ 3MC 6,6 Wounded Twice

373 Wound Severity (+1) 4 elim

374 247FF BZ 3MC 3,1 OK

375 247FF BZ from G45/G46 to H45 CC

376 447DD [H44] vs 247FF BZ 8FP(+1) 3,4 NMC

377 247FF BZ NMC 4,2 OK

378 MMG, 458II FPF vs 247FF BZ 12FP(+1) 3,4 1MC

379 247FF BZ 4,3 NE

380 447DD [H44] SFF vs 247FF BZ 4FP(+1) 1,3 1MC

381 247FF BZ 1MC 6,3 NE

382 MMG, 458II FPF vs 247FF BZ 4,6 NE, 458II BKN, DM; MMG Malf.

383 7-0 from B39 to B40 Assault mv.

Defensive Fire Phase

384 426BB, 426CC [J41] vs H41 8FP(+3) 2,1 1MC, SAN, lose ?

385 SAN 6 NE

386 467A 1MC 2,5 BKN, DM

Advancing Fire Phase

387 247FF BZ [H45] vs H45 3FP(+2) 6,2 NE

Rout Phase

388 458II from H45 to J44

389 9-0 WND, 447CC, 527AA from I43 to J44

Advance Phase

390 149, 468HH from F42 to G43

391 LMG, 467GG from F42.1 to F42

392 247C from G41 to TRENCH G40

393 STACK (Exc 247DD BKN) from G41 to H41

394 247FF BZ from H45 to H44

Close Combat Phase

395 247FF BZ vs 447DD 1:2 1,3 447DD to 237DD

396 447DD vs 247FF BZ 2:1 6,4 NE, MELEE

Turn 5– Russian

Rally Phase

397 ATG [I43] Repair 6 ELIM

398 527AA [J44] 9-0 WND(-1) 5,6 NE, 527AA to 426DD

399 447CC [J44] 9-0 WND(-1) 1,2 RALLY

400 458II [J44] 9-0 WND(-1) 5,3 RALLY

401 447GG [L41] 9-1(-2) 3,3 RALLY

402 467A [H41] 9-2(+1) 1,3 RALLY

403 237O [B40] 7-0(-1) 4,5 NE

404 247II [B40] 7-0(-1) 3,2 RALLY

Prep Fire Phase

405 447EE [H39] vs G40 8FP(+2) 3,4 PTC

406 247C PTC 1,1 NE

Movement Phase

407 447CC from J44 to I44 Assault mv.

408 7, 426AA from J43 to I45

409 458JJ from J44 to I44 Assault mv.

410 9-0 WND from J44 to I44

411 426BB, 426CC from J41 to K41

412 9-1, 237X, 447GG from L41 to J40

413 426HH from L41 to K41 Assault mv.

414 228(12) from I43 to J43 Assault mv.

Defensive Fire Phase

415 STACK [G43] vs I44 5FP(+2) 5,6 NE

416 247 [G40] vs H39 4FP(0) 6,6 NE

417 9-2, HMG [H41] vs H44 7FP(0) 6,5 NE

Advancing Fire Phase

418 447CC, 458JJ [H44] vs G43 4FP(+3) 1,2 NMC, SAN

419 SAN 3 NE

420 149 NMC 5,1 NE

421 468HH NMC 6,1 NE

Rout Phase- None

Advance Phase

422 447EE from H39 to G40

423 426CC from I45 to H44

424 228(12) from J43 to I44

425 9-0 WND from I44 to J44

426 237X from J40 to J41

427 426HH from K41 to J40

428 426BB, 426CC from K41 to K42

Close Combat Phase

429 247FF BZ [H44] Declares CC Withdrawal, 237Z, 426AA vs LMG, 247FF BEZ 3:1 (-2) 5,3 ELIM

430 447EE vs 247C 2:1 5,6 NE

431 247C vs 447EE 1:2 5,6 NE MELEE

432 9-1, 447GG, 426HH [J40] Gain ?

433 9-0 WND [J44] Gain ?

German: The game plan for this turn was to clear G43. When 458II survived another 24IIFT attack I was beginning to sweat, but then the FG (and specifically the HMG and LMG) at ... Three snake eyes in seven shots is simply amazing (and without a sniper at that)! If I were in Dave's shoes I'd be feeling a little discouraged right now, and if truth be known I even feel a little (well, almost, anyway) guilty.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As a final comment, event

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

Turn 6- German

Rally Phase

434 Wind Change 1,2 NE

435 247DD [G41] scf(+0) 3,3 RALLY

436 237O [B40] 7-0(-1) 4,4 RALLY

437 426DD [I44] 9-0 WND(-1) 6,6 ELIM

Prep Fire Phase

438 STACK [H41] vs H44 28FP(0) 5,2 4MC

439 426HH 4MC 1,5 BKN, DIS, DM

440 237X 4MC 2,3 BKN, DM

Movement Phase

441 149, 468HH from G43 to G43.1 Assault mv.

442 468HH LMG Recovery 2 OK

443 STACK [K42] + 237X [J41] vs 149, 468HH 6FP(+3) 3,1 NMC

444 149 NMC 6,1 NE

445 468HH NMC 6,1 NE

446 LMG, 467GG from F42 to G43 Assault mv.

447 STACK [I44] vs 467GG 10FP(+3) 2,5 PTC

448 467GG PTC 6,2 PIN

449 LMG, 247DD from G41 to E42

450 STACK from B40 to F40

Defensive Fire Phase—None

Advancing Fire Phase

451 STACK [G43.1] + STACK [G43] vs I44 4FP(+2) 1,3 NMC

452 228(12) NMC 5,6 BKN, DM

453 458IJ NMC 3,4 NE

454 447CC NMC 5,5 BKN, DM

Rout Phase

455 237DD from H44 to J44

456 228(12), 447CC from I44 to J44

Advance Phase

457 [illegible]

458 247II from F40 to G41

Close Combat Phase

459 247C, 7-0 vs 447EE 1:2 1,5 NE

460 447EE vs 7-0, 247C 1:1 2,2 ELIM

Turn 6– Russian

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

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

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

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

Final Remarks

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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