

Banzai!!

The Newsletter of the Austin ASL Club

Issue #2.1 January 1997

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charge you for it.*

Club Notes and Ladder Standings

Player	Points	Record
Shostak	1301	24-6
Seningen	1289	13-7
Smith	1280	20-7
Hailey	1119	8-4
Esparza	1049	3-1
Purnell	1045	9-5
Phelps	1038	1-0
Tom Woller	1037	1-0
Lavan	1010	2-3
O'Quin	1000	4-6
Kirk Woller	991	10-19
Milder	984	0-1
Morgenthaler	978	0-1
Swantek	971	1-2
Fritz	963	2-3
Toreki	936	0-3
Knatcher	924	0-3
Lester	907	0-4
Austin	905	0-3
Hively	856	5-15
Gerstenberg	849	5-15

Recent Results

Shostak (Germ) def Milder (Fren) in The Witch's Cauldron
 Smith (Amer) def Hively (Germ) in Winter Wonderland
 Esparza (Brit) def K Woller (Germ) in Faugh A' Ballagh
 K Woller (Germ) def Esparza (Fren) in Last Defense Line
 Phelps (Amer) def K Woller (Germ) in First and Goal
 Seningen (Amer) def O'Quin (Ital) in Savannah Rain

If you'd like information about our club, please call Matt at 280- 8414 or Mike at 288-3778.

Scenario Analysis: The Awakening of Spring

Mike Seningen

This is a fantastic scenario which might frighten the novice as well as intimidate the intermediate player. This is a shame because this scenario is well suited for learning some interesting lessons about armored combat and how to support armor with your infantry. You are not likely to win this scenario with your infantry, but neither side will win without the grunts. The Scenario is a hefty 10 turns and 4 boards. These too will scare off more than their share of players. Add to that 16 vehicles and this is no stranger to a multi-sitting marathon. But there is little in the way of strange rules. Aside from falling snow everything is from Chapters A-D, and the more mundane rules at that. All that said I feel it is a 'must play'. The Germans have a great OB. They get the creme of the crop of AFVs, including a pair of King Tigers. Yet not even these behemoths can waltz across the field impervious. They have sixteen top-notch SS squads to blaze the trail, and the fog of war with a pair of possible VCs to choose from. The Russians are no pushovers either. They start off a bit overextended but have two nasty AT guns too ward off the unwary panzers. They have a small screening force of ten squads to slow the German advance and protect their reinforcements in the mid to late game, And what reinforcements they are! Nothing like a trio of Stalins, with an SU-100 wingman each and six of mother Russia's finest to ride along. The Stalins can shrug off most attacks, and each of the Russian AFVs can put a serious dent or two in the German armor.

German Advantages: AFV Numbers, plethora of SS squads, time, initiative. The Germans have ten top notch AFVs at their disposal including four Panthers and a pair of King Tigers. Initially they face only 2 hidden guns and only the 100L can realistically take out the larger German AFVs from the front. With 10 turns the Germans have the luxury of sending out those tenacious SS squads to feel out the Russian resistance and seek out those guns. Once the guns have been found the full weight of the panzers can be brought to bear on the Russians, hopefully positioning themselves to achieve the German VC, while keeping the Russians off-balance and guessing. In the middle to late game the SS squads can take their toll on the isolated Russian infantry, while pressuring the Russian AFVs with threats of PF attacks, distracting the Russian armor from their primary goal.

German Disadvantages: Terrain, need for aggressiveness, low and red MPs (excl. Panthers). Large Targets. The Germans have to initially cross a considerable amount of open ground, potentially face-to-face with some lethal AT guns. Once on board 17, the German armor must maneuver through some possibly nasty choke points. By the time the Russian reinforcements arrive, the Germans will need to overcome multiple layers of defense with the Russian armor interlocking lanes of fire. In the middle and late game the German will find that the lower MPs, especially those 11s, really make it difficult to maneuver in such a way to exploit the Russian defenses. In addition, the fear of immobilizing your King Tigers on a boxcar may make you think twice about stopping. Let the less valuable vehicles handle less important engagements, and save the King Tigers for when they are really needed. Also, keep in mind

that all but the TDs are +1 TH large targets, the King Tigers, +2. This makes assaulting those choke points that much more difficult.

Russian Advantages: HIP Guns, choke points, lethal base TK numbers, enemy must bring fight to you. The Russians need to use their HIP AT guns wisely. The mere threat of these guns may carry more weight than their shells. Their infantry should set up to protect the guns from early discovery, and once revealed, they need to keep the SS from hampering the AT crews. Initially the guns should be set up to take advantage of choke points on board 17 and prevent the Germans from exploiting too early and hampering the Russian reinforcements, especially their ability to organize their even tougher choke points. Toe to toe the Russian AFVs (and 100L AT) should leave some panzer wrecks on the board. With a 25TK (122L) and a 27TK (100L), Russian shells can pierce all but the hull of the King Tigers front armor. Throughout the scenario, the Russians should be in the position to get in the first shots. In reality, the Russian should have two fire phases, DF, and their following PF, before the Germans will get a high-percentage return shot. Don't forget that the probabilities of a BFF shot hitting can be pretty good, and setup your reinforcing armor with mutually supporting fields of fire so that the Germans cannot utilize their numbers to out flank you.

Russians Disadvantages: Initially heavily outgunned, restricted setup, unknown VC, SU-100s are turretless, low ammo on AFVs. Initially, the Russians find themselves at quite a disadvantage numerically, and tactically. The Germans outnumber you in squads by 60%, and they have 10 AFVs to your two guns. The Russians are further hamstrung by the lack of concealment counters and their setup restrictions. The Russians can ill afford to setup exposed lest they be plastered by the initial German PF, nor do they have the luxury of setting up in depth. They have 10 squads to cover the entire width of the playing area, and are restricted to setting up within the boundaries of the two road networks on board 16 and 17. The Russians basically have to fend off the Germans for three turns and allow their reinforcements to set up unmolested. Not knowing the Germans' intentions will keep you guessing until that crucial moment when the Germans have turned a flank, or made a run for the board edge! Keep an eye on his maneuvers, especially during the middle game, see if he positions himself in such a way as to give you a peak at his playing cards. Either way, if you have been fortunate enough to keep most of your infantry intact, and maybe even bagged an AFV, by the time your reinforcements have settled, the German will have to be aggressive in trying to bag a few of those high VP AFVs of yours if he is going for the VP VC. If the German is planning to get off board, he will still need to be aggressive, and at a minimum he will need to tie down your AFVs with a couple of his own and make a quick dash with some for the east edge. I suggest that to thwart either VC you will need to protect the flanks of your AFVs. This is where careful placement of the Russian tanks is essential, especially the SU-100s which suffer non-turreted penalties when firing out of VCA, or during BFF. The tank destroyers should be paired up with an IS-2m each, sitting slightly behind to give a better field of fire within the SU-100's VCA. Though I believe the tank fights will most likely be fast and furious, the low ammo storage of the Russian AFVs can come into play and really turn a nice defense into a very porous line in a hurry. Try not to waste valuable ammo on poor shots, or at infantry targets unless in a crisis.

Don't Try This at Home... Halftrack Driving for Professionals

Tim Hundsorfer

The use of a halftrack is no more difficult than the use of any other ASL vehicle. O.K., there are the passenger loading/unloading rules, but essentially, they are basically pretty simple to drive. In this article, we'd like to give you some pointers on the use of those passenger toting halftracks (as opposed to meat choppers, TD, mortar carriers, etc., etc.) The beauty of professional halftrack driving lies in skillfully keeping it alive and making it a subtle, but potent, part of your arsenal. This is what separates the 8-1 from the 7-0. The use of halftracks requires:

- 1) a sound knowledge of the vehicle rules in Chapter D;
- 2) an appreciation for the vulnerability of your weapon;
- 3) a knowledge of special vehicle notes; and
- 4) a knowledge of how to use vehicles to your best advantage.

Knowing Chapter D is your first step, and is applicable to all vehicles. Pay particular attention to the rules on passengers and halftracks. There's no reason to go over Chapter D here. Read it, know it, live it.

Next, appreciate that your halftrack is pretty vulnerable to virtually everything on the battlefield. That does not mean that it sucks. It means it's vulnerable. Almost anything can kill a halftrack—machine guns, light mortars, anti-tank rifles, street fighting and close combat. What is more, there is generally a host of things that WILL kill a halftrack—40L, 37L even a lowly 20L has quite a good chance of scoring a close-up kill. Remember that the halftrack, unlike other AFV, is considered CE unless marked. So it's very vulnerable when driving by an infantry unit. Remember also, that when fighting halftracks, a point blank shot is often better than a lame street fighting attack.

A word about CC versus halftracks. Unless the halftrack is in the firing unit's hex, the squad must first pass a pre-armor attack task check (PAATC or "patsy") (a little better than a 50% chance for a first line squad.) Also, note that a PAATC is a concealment loss activity. The squad then has a close combat value of 5, which is modified with a -2 for an open topped vehicle, a -1 for ambush (always incurred when street fighting is taking place) and possibly a +2 for fighting a moving vehicle as well. This would mean a 6 is necessary to immobilize the vehicle. Keep in mind that SMC do not have to take a PAATC, modify the PAATC of a unit in the hex (if applicable), add one to the CCV of the unit making the attack, and also modify the attack.

EX: A 447 and 149 are in a street fighting location, and elect to street fight. The 447 must make a PAATC, which it makes, and both units are placed in the halftrack's hex. The attack is modified by +2 for a moving vehicle, -2 for an open topped vehicle, a -1 for ambush and a -1 for the heroic DRM. The Hero combines with the 447 for a 6 CCV, meaning the halftrack will be immobilized on an "8" and destroyed on anything less than that, with no chance of crew survival. The 447 and 149 are then moved back to their original hex.

The other advantage of street fighting is that the infantry unit is not held in melee, but is returned to it's hex after making the CC DR.

Your percentages may be better if you are, say, a 666 with a MMG, and the CE halftrack is adjacent, giving you a 20FP+2 attack. Now you will only need a “9” or less to get a potentially stunning MC—much better than the “6” you’ll need to immobilize the halftrack with a street fighting attack. This is a good time to mention that an original “12” on a CC DR causes a casualty reduction.

Finally, remember that units marked with any type of fire counter may not use street fighting and that street fighting marks the fighter with a first fire counter.

Since halftracks are generally loaded with passengers, it’s vital to do everything you can to keep them alive while they attempt to deliver their cargo—whether it’s getting them to the front, or punching through the lines. Since they have such thin armor, not only are they easily destroyed by anti-tank weapons, but they also brew up easily, making things much more dangerous for their passengers. Still, if it is mostly small arms and machine gun fire that they will be facing, the passengers are better off with the halftrack, since they can go farther, faster while in +2 TEM, as opposed to moving on foot, often in the open with the -1 FFNAM modifier. Moreover, with the halftrack, they can button up, making them immune to small arms fire.

Halftracks are small targets (usually), and when moving or in motion, they are pretty tough to hit. Throw in even one smoke hindrance, and they can usually expect to get away unscathed. There is little incentive to stopping loaded halftracks, so it’s usually a good idea to stay in motion.

You do, however, want to stay out of close combat situations with halftracks. Ambush is likely (especially if BU). Modifiers add up pretty fast—starting with that -2 for being open topped. Close combat can be avoided by keeping clear of enemy units and keeping a little open ground between you and them. Staying in motion also provides a little cushion of relief.

BU or CE? It depends on the situation. Don’t subject yourself to point blank shots with crew or passengers, but you don’t want to be BU if close combat is a fear. Essentially, being BU at the end of your advance phase neutralizes that halftrack for the entire next player turn—potentially, a very dangerous situation. Essentially, appreciating the vulnerability of halftracks boils down to remembering that they can be destroyed very easily. So much for point #2.

You need to keep in mind your halftrack’s capabilities. Can you take the AAMG with you when you go? (D6.63) And the most often forgotten capability is the ATR or PSK that comes included in every SPW251/10 command vehicle (with the 37L gun) (Chapter H, German vehicle note 65). The German SPW251sMG has the really neat capability of allowing its 3FP AAMG to be removed as a HMG, while retaining its 7FP CMG (Chapter H, German vehicle note 58). You always need to read the vehicle notes before you start the scenario, but with halftracks this is particularly important. Also, remember that some halftracks have infantry (not vehicular) crews (Kampfgruppe Peiper rules).

So, besides the “secret” stuff in Chapter H, what else can your halftrack do? Well, best of all, it can get infantry where you need them to go. They are often immune to small arms fire as well (by

remaining BU). This means that you can deliver a small force of infantry behind the lines, threatening rout paths and providing encircling fire.

Take the scenario Wintergewitter. The Germans start out with a few halftracks, and are assaulting the board 12 village. Without the halftracks, this scenario would be nearly impossible for the Germans. While halftracks are vulnerable to the Russian MG and ATR, they enable the infantry to get up and into the village on Turn 2—which would be totally impossible if they were on foot. Now, once the halftracks are unloaded, they become even more dangerous—the vulnerable stage is over. In game terms, an empty halftrack is a disposable halftrack. It can provide encircling fire, cut rout paths and lock units up in vehicular bypass, and if it gets killed, no big deal (unless CVP matter, which they do not in WG).

Once you have an unloaded halftrack in the village, it can move around, cutting off the Russians’ line of retreat into the core of buildings around the marketplace. It can also move adjacent, firing a 6FP+2 (against a wooden building)—not a scary attack in itself, but use it right before the 8FP+0 attack of the 9-2/MMG/548 stack, or a 16FP+2 of the PzIIIN’s MG, and you have a nasty encircling attack.

There are a number of ways to kill the halftracks, of course, but these generally draw fire from your useful infantry units. Moving the halftrack into bypass of a location (remaining in motion) is dangerous, of course—the street fighting is murder versus your open topped halftrack—but again, it does draw some fire (the unit is marked with a first fire counter). There are also a number of possible detrimental consequences: possible casualty reduction, possible burning wreck. In any case, concealment IS stripped, unless the unit passes a TC. Also, remember that units which are marked with first fire counters are not eligible for reaction fire. You can expect to lose a lot of halftracks if you try the bypass freeze with them. But once the halftracks are unloaded, who cares?

Halftracks can also cut down on subsequent first fire opportunities, simply by getting them in between the firer and the unit you want to move next. Since the halftrack is closer than the moving unit, the firer may not use subsequent first fire against the moving unit.

Other things to remember about halftracks: Their AAMG are their MA, so they may attempt to roll a to-kill and can use sustained fire. When buttoned, they cannot use their AAMG, and thus are probably defenseless—another modifier in CC. Passengers may use their FP in an overrun attack (see D6.1). For SS or American units, this adds a significant amount of firepower. Passengers may also fire SOME SW from halftracks, including LMG, PIATs and thrown DC. Halftracks may form fire groups with other halftracks and infantry—and their MG can be modified by an infantry leader in the same location. It can be quite intimidating to have three or four halftracks standing off at an 8 hex range, each stacked with a squad and LMG, firing at units in a treeline. The infantry can even use the halftracks as +1 cover!

So you do NOT want to leave your halftracks sitting empty around the battlefield. Even when unloaded (or particularly when unloaded), your halftracks have a job to do—make sure they are doing it on every turn.

Conscripts may leave those halftracks empty, safely behind buildings. They might not have troops loaded up when they enter. They may drive around CE when they should be BU, and BU when they should be CE. They may scoff at their value.

Professionals, however, do not.

From the Weekender (I'm out there on the weak end)

Greg Swantek

I have been trying (sporadically, and with some minor success) to get a grip on the basic mechanics of this ASL thing. My regular opponent has been Thomas Salazar, a fellow WWII re-enactor with a dice phobia and a bad haircut. I figure I ought to stick to purely infantry scenarios until I get a thorough understanding of the nature of things ASL and then build from there. After several scenarios in which I quite mercilessly mopped up the floor with Thomas (prompting Mr. Salazar to attempt to remedy his luck by the logical step of bringing his own dice to our meeting - it didn't help) one thing has become quite clear - we are both making a ton of mistakes. It seems that we spend more time searching through the rulebook than playing. I suppose it can't be helped - at least not until I invent "the mechanical voice-activated Shostak" that will sit in the corner quietly, flinging no dice around the room, and respond only to rules questions (and, of course, to commands to fetch beer). Anyway, Thomas and I are beginning to feel that we are starting to get the mechanics down, so we went ahead and tossed in some armor (well, French armor, anyway). A recent playing of *No Better Spot to Die* prompted Mr. Salazar to remark that yes, there are indeed many better spots in which to die, just perhaps none quite so pathetic. I was the Germans, and my attack got off to a good start as I snuck up on and then ruthlessly eliminated a stack of the dreaded ? counters hiding (like the cowards they are) in an entrenchment. By this time Thomas had managed to malfunction one of his HMGs and have his crew (sniveling bastards) fail a MC and abandon their mortar. Under cover of the fire support provided by my tanks (rather, in spite of the total impotence thereof) my sturdy Landsers trotted up and took his forward entrenchments and the mortar so thoughtfully left behind as a trench warming gift. By this time (turn 2) Thomas was blaming the dice (even though they were his own and he wouldn't let me use them), so I decided to press the attack in reckless fashion - I exposed one of my captured French tanks to his 57L. Upon viewing the resultant flaming wreck I was prompted to remark that the French designers had finally achieved their aim of making French armor lethal to the Germans. That minor setback could hardly even slow the rampaging Huns, however, as Thomas conceded shortly thereafter.

Mr. Salazar had a chance to retrieve his honor at *Le Manoir*. He needn't have bothered. This time I was the Amis, and looking at the OB it didn't take a mental giant to realize that effective use of the mortars would greatly aid my attack. So, with their second shot, they obtained a critical hit on a suspected position and broke his 9-1 leader. Thomas again ascribed this to luck, but I told him that it wouldn't have happened if his HIP hadn't been in such an obvious location (and if I hadn't been using my loaded dice). The remainder of his defense fared about as well (with the notable exception of one of his HMG shooting for about twenty minutes straight without losing rate - but it only affected one of my three

"sectors," and that only for a turn), with his last gasp being a lone wounded hero in building 4S2 attempting (and almost succeeding) to hold off two squads. After that, his hero was no longer wounded. He was dead.

The scenario did generate a rules question, however. Perhaps you out there (who have not yet been bored into a stupor) could answer. In the course of said last gasp by said wounded hero, he used FPF and rolled snakes. Does this qualify him for battle hardening? Thickheads like me want to know. Auf wiedersehen.

These guys seem to be having a whole lot of fun. Thomas, can we hear your side of the story? In answer to Greg's question, A8.31 says the FPF shots acts as a NMC versus the firer. A Q&A from the '91 Annual implies that heat of battle does apply, but if multiple units are firing, then only the one(s) selected by random selection get the heat of battle result (or CR if the roll was boxcars instead of snake eyes). However, A15.1 points out that heroes are not subject to heat of battle. So in this case, no heat of battle roll would be made. - ed.

Scenario Analysis: The Commissar's House

Matt Shostak

I've often wanted to do an analysis of this scenario, since I have enjoyed playing it, and although I have seen it discussed on the Internet, I have never seen a full scenario analysis article for it. With the plethora of new products and scenarios now available to the ASL player, and with this club's efforts to encourage and help new players (who might be feeling a bit overwhelmed by the smorgasbord), the time appears ripe to revisit this old classic from Beyond Valor, the very first module.

Attraction: Meat and potatoes city fight in Stalingrad with the chance to use excellent units, notably the German 838s, and some cool weaponry as well such as flamethrowers and demo charges. A simple objective: *take the building!* Well balanced (German 40, Russian 50 according to the Internet record as of this writing).

Take Note: Despite the title, the Russians are not entitled to a Commissar due to the date of the scenario being after Nov. 1, 1942 (A25.22). Although the unit designation and the prelude and aftermath suggest that the German 838s are assault engineers, the absence of an SSR citing them as such means they are not considered such for the purposes of this scenario. Thus their smoke exponent is indeed 3 as printed on the counter (see A1.5 and H1.22).

Russian Advantages: Sewer movement, HIP, fortified building, sniper.

Russian Disadvantages: lack of initial concealment, lack of good rally locations

Comments: So how can the Russian maximize his strengths and minimize his weaknesses to win this scenario? As usual, the first step should be a careful look at the victory conditions. The Russians can win by having an unbroken squad or its equivalent in either building 20S6 (the Chemist's Shop) or 20Z3 (the

Commissar's House) at game end. Note that this is different, and much easier, than maintaining building control (A26.12). Thus even a squad that has remained HIP in some crevice of the Commissar's House for the entire game is enough. That already should give some players ideas about ways to utilize the HIP capability, which is a generous 3 squads plus any leaders, SW that stack with them. They have a good force, half elite, but they can't go toe-to-toe with their impressive German adversaries. So the heroic defenders in this corner of the Great Patriotic War will have to pick their shots. A lot of *skulking* (assault moving from the front line to a location out of enemy LOS, followed later by an advance back to the front line, to deny fire opportunities to the other side) will be in order. A look at the initial setup locations for both sides, however, reveals that the Germans can hit most locations of both victory buildings either at game start or soon thereafter, making this tactic a little difficult (but not impossible). The sewer movement helps offset this disadvantage somewhat, allowing wily Russians a little more freedom to rearrange their defense without being shot at in the process (if all goes well with the dice, of course). Only 12 concealment counters are provided for 25 squads, so the Russians have to make some tough decisions even in the initial setup, especially if they want to use any of them for dummy stacks and yet still provide the front line troops with initial concealment. Thus they will probably want to set up several squads in locations that are either likely, or better yet guaranteed, to be out of all German LOS after setup, allowing them to grow concealment counters of their own before play begins. The fortified building provides 15 locations with +4 TEM, so it should obviously be considered the cornerstone and last-ditch position of the defense. Lastly, the Russians have to be alert on every roll, because the very generous SAN 6 allotted them will be one of their best weapons for hurting the Germans, and it would be a shame to let some chances slip away. The same could be said of the Booby Trap capability.

Now with those general principles in mind, let's look in a little more detail at Russian setup considerations and overall game strategy. First of all, the Russian player should write off the Chemist's Shop. It will fall. It will fall fairly early. And every Russian you put in there will die. Still, some poor Ivans have to take one for the team and set up there, just to force the Germans to spend some resources to take it. The tricky part is to put enough in to delay the Germans and force them to use more than they would like to get it, without risking more than you can afford. This is somewhat a matter of personal preference and play style, but I favor only setting up 2-4 squads and perhaps one leader in this building. Their orders are to hold out to the last man. Turning attention to the fortified building, I like to make it into a serious strongpoint, meaning as many of the elite troops that I can cram in there get stationed there. Certainly the HMG and 9-1, and perhaps one of the MMGs as well, goes there. Use the lesser quality guys for the cannon fodder outside this building. I prefer to spread out as much as possible to limit the danger of one good German roll shredding an entire stack. Note the importance of hex 20AA3. It is the only hex of the entire building that is likely to remain a rally haven out of German LOS for any considerable length of time. Thus a leader goes here, probably an 8-1 or 8-0, and probably at ground level to start His job is simply to keep bringing broken units back so they can cycle back to the other locations of the building and attempt to keep the Germans at bay.

The trenches are an interesting problem. They cannot be set up in a variety of locations, including paved roads, making it seem at

first as if they are useless. Consider, however, a nifty little trench line in the 20GG2 area. A team of 8-1, MMG, 447 stationed here can not only threaten a firelane down the street in front of the Commissar's House, but can even squeak a LOS all the way out to the 20X7-20T9 road, perhaps catching unwary Germans with a nice -3 shot!

I think there are two basic philosophies on how to use the HIP capability. One is to play hide and seek, meaning the HIP guys will hold out as long as possible without revealing themselves, hoping that the Germans will not find them and that they can be used to claim victory in the end game. For this strategy to be effective, they should of course either be in the victory buildings themselves, or very nearby so that they can dash in during the Russian half of turn 8. For some reason, level 1 locations of building 20Z3 seem ideal for this purpose. The fighting always seems to revolve around the ground and second levels, and a German player could easily miss or forget about a squad hiding in a clever spot at level 1. The Chemist's Shop itself is not a good location for this tactic, because it is small enough, and will fall early enough, that a decent German player will certainly move through or search all locations very early on. Better spots for a Chemist Shop gambit might be the 20R4 rubble across the street, or level 1 of 20T3. I don't put a lot of faith in getting someone in the Chemist's Shop on turn 8, because a good German player will likely garrison all three ground level locations until the end of the game, but you never know. It's this very possibility that forces him to keep good troops here when they could be helping the assault on the Commissar's House. Since the hide and seek strategy hinges on *not* revealing units, I would use 447s for this duty rather than elite troops, whose morale is better employed in a combat role. The second HIP philosophy is to try to set traps for the advancing Germans, hitting them at inopportune moments with -2 shots in the street. Here you could spread three squads out in different locations, hoping that *someone* will get a juicy shot (maybe a 4-2 or 8-2). Or as another intriguing possibility, demonstrated for me quite painfully by Kirk Woller in a game some time ago, would be to set up a very powerful kill stack somewhere, hoping to really wallop some Germans on the high end of the IFT. Consider that a stack of 3x628 firing point blank would be shooting on the 36 column, meaning they could probably put the serious hurt even to a group of those vaunted 838s in good cover, should they have the bad luck to stumble upon such a trap. Since the best locations for this trick seem to be outside the Commissar's House, a key Russian consideration is to make sure he can get these excellent troops back to the fortified building after he has sprung his trap. Therefore the location for this gambit should be chosen carefully. If the trap nets, say, one 838 squad eliminated, but the 628s then get caught outside the victory building and are unable to get back, it's probably a net failure for the Russian side. Also, put an 8-0 with that stack. It would really be a bummer to cower on that 36 FP shot!

So, in summary, I picture a good Russian setup involving just a minimum of units covering the Chemist's Shop, the majority of the best squads, weapons, and leaders in the Commissar's House, a left flank MMG in a trench threatening a firelane across the German line of advance, and a sprinkling of lesser quality troops in front line and supporting locations to delay the German advance and hopefully disorganize it somewhat. Finally, Booby Traps, an omnipresent sniper, sewer movement, and a few HIP surprises all combine to make this a hard day at the office for the Germans.

German advantages: troop quality, leadership
German disadvantages: tough VC, tough adversary

Comments: These are great troops, but they have a really difficult job to do. Those pioneers can really dish out the firepower, and even bring some special weapons to the party. And just look at the leader ratio! The Germans have one leader for every 2.5 squads, and a total of -9 leadership modifiers including a 10-2 and a 9-2. The Russians, by comparison, have one leader for every five squads, with a total of -3 leadership modifiers, their best leader being a 9-1. However, all the things listed as advantages for the Russians will have to be countered somehow.

First of all, the Germans will have to have some sort of plan for dealing with the Russian sniper. While I wouldn't let it completely dominate my thinking, I would take some measures to limit its effectiveness. One thing I like to do is to use a 247 half squad on "sniper duty," meaning that I set it up near my best leader (who is often directing my most powerful kill stack), but in terrain with a lower TEM. Its sole purpose is to absorb sniper hits that might otherwise get lucky and eliminate a 10-2 or 9-2 from the game. I have actually seen this pay off. In addition, I think this is one of those rare scenarios where it might be a better rule of thumb to stack leaders with squads as opposed to leaving them behind in possible rally locations by themselves, ready to rally the first units to break. If they are indeed setup by themselves behind the line, a crafty Russian player will position his sniper to maximize its chances of picking them off. By the end of the first turn, the German could be without the services of a few 8-0s or 8-1s. I have seen that happen, too. Other than that, there's not a lot you can do about the sniper, so just condition yourself to take your lumps when they occur. Just think twice before taking very low-odds shots. And be a good sport and point out the sniper activation when your Russian opponent doesn't notice it; it's easy to overlook several in this kind of game, and sportsmanship is everything.

Now take a look at the starting and ending positions for the Germans. They start practically right up against the Russians, and in any given sector the farthest they have to go is about a half dozen hexes or so. They have 9 turns to do it, so there's no need to hurry. This is not to say that they have time to spare, but the Germans can be methodical and efficient in their attack. The key difficulty is estimating the amount of extra time it takes to clear out the Commissar's House once you have broken in. So when planning your assault give yourself some extra leeway for the endgame. I also wouldn't be too concerned about committing too many resources to take the Chemist's shop. Do what it takes for you to conquer it quickly, then garrison it to avoid a last turn gambit by any HIP troublemakers as described above, and push your way with the remaining units through to the Commissar's House, the real objective.

High firepower is necessary to harm units in the +4 TEM of that fortress, so at least one kill stack is called for. Three rifle squads armed with HMG and 2xMMG, stacked with a 10-2 is my favorite. I have heard others advocate using the 9-2 for the kill stack since it is less likely to be receiving fire, and using the better morale of the 10-2 to lead some of those pioneers in the actual assault. I can't argue with that either. A good location for such a kill stack might be the second level of 20P9, which has LOS to two-thirds of the Chemist's shop, plus the entire east side of the Commissar's House, although it would be at long range for the inherent firepower of the squads. Working a kill stack into a location such as 20Z7 might be an option as well, if you wanted that group closer

to the action so that they could participate in the endgame clearing out of that fortress.

It is a little more difficult to point out exactly how to attack with the assault groups (those not providing overwatch fire), since I believe you will have to adapt yourself to what happens during the course of play. There are still some things to keep in mind though. You'll want to assign some units to silencing that MMG in the trench in 20GG2 to clear the way for your other advancing troops who will want to venture out into and across the street Y6-FF2. Although it's a shame that the 838s are not assault engineers for that whopping 5 smoke exponent, the 3 is still very effective. Use infantry smoke. A lot. Keep in mind that the 838s have assault fire capability, which often makes them nearly as effective in advancing fire as they are in prep fire. Aside from the kill stack(s), try to avoid stacking, but instead strive to create massive multi-location fire groups. Consider a situation in the midgame where you have succeeded in getting an 838 in each location of building 20BB5, some perhaps even concealed, and maybe even others in DD4 and EE4 as well. Sure, that +2 TEM is kind of wimpy compared to the castle across the street, but how many Russian players will dare to fire at these units? Your opponent will have to weigh the possible benefit of breaking a German squad or two against weathering a return fire shot somewhere on the high end of the chart, perhaps as high as the 36 column. Ouch. Although board 1 may seem superfluous, keep it in mind as a possible route for repositioning your troops from one sector to the other, out of Russian LOS, if necessary. Consider also the utility of a MMG in 1Y3 ground level, which can throw a firelane all the way to 20Y1 to help keep any outlying Russians from getting back to the fortress. Remember that DCs can be used to breach fortified buildings, making it possible for your troops to enter for CC when they might otherwise be prohibited. I never count on the flamethrowers to do too much, so if they break right away I'm not too disappointed, but if they prove useful it's a bonus. I like to hold them back in reserve, manned by an elite half squad, always ready as a threat, or ready to provide that extra oomph needed to deal with a particularly pesky Russian (that would be Ivan Pesky, Hero of the Soviet Union). Remember that if you invoke No Quarter it may be a little harder to root out broken Russians afterwards.

Correction

Dang! Astute reader and author Tim Hundsdoerfer has pointed out that riders are not allowed on armored cars (D6.2), meaning that part of the opening move written up in *The Eye of the Tiger* after action report in last issue was in error. Dang!

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