Red Banner

A quarterly fanzine for the Advanced Squad Leader (ASL) board game
By the DC Conscripts ASL Club

Table of Contents

Commissar's Call: *The Maginot Men*

Comrades, in this issue we get our France on! Yes, they define bourgeoisie and decadence. But, they did put up a good fight against the Nazis and their ASL counters come in a beautiful, powder blue. Yes, the French have broken-side morale issues and the dreaded one-man-turret, along with radio-less AFVs. Still, we love them just the same.

Conscripts' Chatter: *Miscellaneous Musings*

We've made it to our 2nd issue with one victory in hand. The Conscripts are meeting more often and in greater numbers thanks to Brian's diligent work in booking venues. And, there's talk of a June convention!

New Article(s):

Let's take a look at my favorite scholarly articles on the Franco-German fight for the Belgian plain in 1940. You'll have to access the links via an academic institution to actually read the articles.

Gunsburg, Jeffrey A. "The Battle of the Belgian Plain, 12-14 May 1940: The First Great Tank Battle." *The Journal of Military History* 56, no. 2 (1992): 207-44. doi:10.2307/1985797.

http://www.jstor.org/stable/1985797?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

Gunsburg, Jeffery A. "The Battle of Gembloux, 14-15 May 1940: The Blitzkrieg Checked." *The Journal of Military History* 64, no. 1 (2000): 97-140. doi:10.2307/120789.

http://www.jstor.org/stable/120789?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

Both works provide a wealth of information for students of history and scenario designers. I drew from them to create two scenarios for this issue of Red Banner. So, it's informative to see what these articles have to say about French tanks and then compare that to ASL rules. Here's what Gunsburg had to say about French tanks in The Battle of the Belgian Plain.

Equipped in principle with a radio, the SOMUA's three-man crew none-the-less bore a heavier burden than the five-man crew of the German mediums. The two-man crews of the Hotchkiss had it even worse: although their small machines were armored up to 40mm, few carried radio and in the 3rd DLM only twenty-five had the long-barreled 37mm gun which could penetrate all German tanks. The rest of the Hotchkisses had a short-barreled 37mm piece which was effective against the PzKpfW I, and the older model PzKpfW II, but only marginally so against the German mediums. All the French tanks had one-man turrets compelling the tank commander to act as gunner and sometimes as unit commander – a challenging assignment. The explanation for this quirk may lie in the French predilection for cast armor, it proving difficult to cast large diameter turrets.

ASL models all of those characteristics in various ways. One man turrets (D1.322) are always "slow" in ASL, with a +2 for the first turret covered arc change, and cannot fire turret mounted weapons when "commander exposed." Furthermore, French tanks lack rate of fire numbers and use red to hit numbers. But the real kicker is the need to use platoon movement (D14.2) for lack of radios (D14).

Basically, AFVs without radios need to pass task checks to move unless they use platoon movement which is based on "impulse movement" explained in the rules as follows.

14.3 IMPULSE MOVEMENT: Impulse Movement is a form of movement where units in different Locations coordinate their movement. This represents situations such as Human Wave (A25.23) or Platoon Movement (14.2). During Impulse Movement, all participating units move as a stack as per A4.2, even if moving in multiple Locations. A leader using Impulse Movement only affects other participating units in his current Location, not units in other Locations of this "multi-Location stack" [EXC: MF bonus for a leader participating in a Column; E11.52].

14.31 IMPULSE: When using Impulse Movement, the MPh of all participating units is broken into a number of Impulses. During each Impulse each participating unit may perform a maximum of one MF/MP expenditure (EX: moving to a new Location; changing VCA one hexside; using VBM along one hexside; exiting a Foxhole; using Infantry bypass along 1-4 hexsides). Actions that cost no MF/MP (EX: dropping a SW; changing CE/BU status) may be performed as normal during each Impulse. An Impulse ends when every participating unit has completed its single MF/MP expenditure, or the player declares the Impulse to be over. Units using Impulse Movement do not need to predesignate their actions, as in normal stacked movement (A4.2).

The MF/MP cost of an Impulse is equal to the most MF/MP spent by any unit during that Impulse, and all the units are considered to have spent this number of MF/MP during that Impulse (even if they didn't perform an MF/MP expenditure). This even allows a Non-Stopped vehicle to spend MP doing nothing if other units expend MP during that Impulse. No unit may expend MF/MP unless all units participating in that Impulse have enough remaining MF/MP, so all the participants must end their MPh if one of the units lacks necessary MF/MP [EXC: wounded SMC; A25.232].

14.32 FIRST FIRE: All rules for Defensive/Bounding First Fire treat all units moving during an Impulse as a single stack. Hence, Defensive/Bounding First Fire may only be declared at the end of each Impulse [EXC: before the first Impulse; C5.33]. The same restriction applies to other actions by the DEFENDER (EX: Motion Attempt, Vehicular Smoke Dispensers).

14.33 ARMORED ASSAULT: Impulse Movement and Armored Assault (9.31) may be combined with certain restrictions. The only forms of Impulse Movement that can be combined with Armored Assault are Human Wave (A25.23) (including Banzai Charge [G1.5], but not Cavalry Wave) and Platoon Movement (14.2).

When combining Impulse Movement and Armored Assault, all units must use Impulse Movement—even if some units normally would not (e.g., a single AFV, a single Infantry stack. There will be two simultaneous Impulses, one for vehicles and one for Infantry. The MF and MP cost are calculated independently per 14.31 for each of the two Impulses, possibly with zero MF/MP cost for one of the two Impulses. For the purpose of follow-up attacks, each Defensive First Fire attack constitutes one allowed attack against all units in both groups.

EX: Two AFV moving as a platoon expend 2 MP in an impulse while the squad Armored Assaulting with the second AFV spends 1 MF. A Gun attacks and eliminates the first AFV on the first MP and attacks the second AFV on the second MP. This second shot cannot affect the squad, which spent only 1 MF.

14.331 BREAKING OFF: When one or more units cease using Armored Assault, those units must postpone their MPh while the remaining units finish their MPh, before the postponed units finish theirs—or vice versa [EXC: platoon (or HW units) no longer using Armored Assault continue to move simultaneously until all units of their platoon (or Human Wave) have ceased using Armored Assault].

So, mulling about without a radio is hugely inefficient. See what happens when a platoon of tanks goes through a hedge in single file. Then have each "pay" for the same covered arc change over and over again as each individual vehicle comes to that fork in the road. Of course, one can ditch all this by passing a task check, but only at the start of the move, and if you fail there is no move!

New Scenarios:

When the Odds were Even, DCRB 2
Prelude: Ernage, Belgium, 15 May 1940: As the Germans swept across the Belgian plain, they collided with French combined arms formations near Gembloux. Numerous "fair fights" ensued. One such action unfolded at 1800 hours just west of Ernage as French tanks and Moroccan's attacked southeast from Chastre into the flank of German tanks and infantry heading due west from Ernage.
Board Configuration: Use board 66. Row 10 is the north edge. Column GG is the west edge.
Game Length: Play seven game turns. German sets up first. French moves first.
Victory Conditions: At game end, the side with more victory points wins. The Germans earn one VP for each squad equivalent on any level two hill hex at game end. The French earn one VP for each squad equivalent that exits the east edge of the map on or adjacent to hex A2 at any time during the game.

Order of Battle:
German elements of the 3rd Panzer Brigade and 3rd Infantry Regiment, ELR 3, SAN 3
    Set up anywhere within two hexes of H3.
        2 x Panzer IIF
        9 x 4-6-7, 1 x 8-1, 1 x 8-0, 1 X 7-0
        1 x LMG, 1 x ATR, 1 x dmMMG, 1 x dm50mmMTR
    Reinforcements enter on turn 2 on or adjacent to A5.
        1 x Panzer IIIF, 2 x Panzer IB, 1 x 9-2 arm leader
French elements of the 2nd Cuirassiers, 3rd DLM and 2nd Battalion, 7th Moroccan Regiment, ELR 3, SAN 3
    Enter on turn 1 along the north edge on/between I10 through Q10 having already spent 1/2 of their MF/MP.
        2 x H39, 2 x R35
        9 x 4-5-8, 1 x 8-1, 1 x 8-0, 1 X 7-0
        1 x LMG, 1 x ATR, 1 x dmMMG, 1 x dm60mmMTR
Special Rules:
1. EC are moderate with no wind at start.
Aftermath: According to eyewitness accounts, "a few" French Hotchkiss tanks and Moroccan infantry attacked a German force that included at least one panzer and two infantry companies led by Major Kratzenberg. In reply, 6th Panzer rushed forward a platoon led by Lieutenant Buchterkirch in a Panzer III with some Panzer Is close behind. He *claimed* six kills that day, but lost his own tank and three others. Kratzenberg's infantry did reach their objective, the hills west of Noirmont. So, the action ended in a draw. But, further south, the 39th Panzer-Korps had breached the French 9th Army at Dinant-sur-Meuse forcing French forces around Gembloux to abandon the ground they had so fiercely defended.

Forgotten Epic, DCRB 3

Jandrain/Merdorp Belgium, 13 May 1940: As the German right wing swept through Belgium, the well-equipped 3rd and 4th Panzer Divisions closed on the Gembloux Gap, a three-mile wide causeway of mostly flat, rural terrain between the streams Petite Gette and Mehaigne, defended by the French 3rd DLM (armor division). The two sides clashed on the 12th, but action climaxed on the 13th as opposing combined arms forces fought bitterly for control of two key villages, Jandrain and Merdorp, in opposite corners of an area barely 2 km square. On that day, the French committed almost 240 tanks and the Germans more than 560 in what was then the largest armor battle in history.

Board Configuration:

Game Length: Play eight game turns. French sets up first. German moves first.

Victory Conditions: At game end, the side with the most victory points (VP) wins. A side earns one VP for each victory hex it controls. The victory hexes are: all stone building/stone rubble hexes within two hexes of 10Z5 or 46Z5, and all dirt road hexes within two hexes of 11R9.

Order of Battle:
French: ELR 3, SAN 3, elements of…

Jandrain garrison, 1st battalion 11th Dragoons and organic Hotchkiss Tanks
Set up within five hexes of 10Z5
2 x H35, 3 x H39
7 x 4-5-7, 1 x 8-1, 1 x 7-0
1 x MMG, 1 x LMG

Merdorp garrison
2nd Cuirassiers with remnants of Dragoons from Crehen
Set up within five hexes of 46Z5
4 x S35, 2 x H39
4 x 4-5-7, 1 x 2-2-8, 1 x 7-0
1 x LMG, 1 x 47mm ATG

LOC garrison
Set up on any hill hexes of board 11
2 x 4-5-7, 2 x ATR
2 x 1S foxhole

NE Perimeter garrison
13th Divisional Anti-Tank Squadron
Set up in any hexes within five hexes of 46J6
1 x 4-5-7, 2 x 2-2-8, 2 x 25mm ATG, 1 x 60mm MTR
1 x 1S foxhole

Reinforcements from Jauche, 1st Cuirassiers
On turn 3, enter on or within two hexes of 10Q1
3 x S35
1 x 9-1 armor leader

German: ELR 4, SAN 3, elements of…

4th Panzer Division, 5th Panzer Brigade and 4th Motorized Rifle Brigade
On Turn 1, enter anywhere along the south edge of board 11
2 x Panzer IIIF, 2 x Panzer IIA, 3 x Panzer IB, 9-1 armor leader
9 x 4-6-7, 1 x 8-1, 1 x 8-0, 1 x 7-0
1 x dmMMG, 1 x LMG, 1 x dm50mmMTR

Reinforcements
3rd Panzer Division, 3rd Panzer Brigade and 3rd Motorized Rifle Brigade
On Turn 2, enter anywhere along the north edge of board 11
2 x Panzer IIIF, 2 x Panzer IIF, 3 x Panzer IB
9 x 4-6-7, 1 x 9-1, 2 x 8-0
1 x dmMMG, 2 x LMG, 1 x dm50mmMTR, 1 x ATR

On Turn 3, enter along any south or east edge hexes of board 46 within nine hexes of 46 GG1.
5th Panzer Brigade and 4th Motorized Rifle Brigade
3 x Panzer IVD, 2 x Panzer IVC
1 x 9-2 armor leader
5 x 5-4-8, 1 x 9-2, 1 x 8-0, 2 x Demo Charge, 2 x LMG

Special Rules:
1. EC are moderate with no wind at start, no bore sighting allowed.
2. After set up, but before the first Rally Phase, board 46 suffers a bombardment (C 1.8).

Aftermath: Throughout the morning, German artillery and then Stukas attacked relentlessly to inflict terrible losses on French Dragoons and scare away some anti-tank gun crews, but largely missed the French armor. German formations rolled forward at 11am under French harassing fire. German light tanks and grenadiers swept around villages to bypass resistance and gain ground. But the French Hotchkiss and SOMUAs sortied to punish them. So, the Panzer IVs pushed on into the villages with infantry support. By 3:30 the French were in retreat, but had stung the Germans by destroying 50 tanks and damaging 100 more at a cost of about 120 French machines.

After Action Report: *ASL 126 Commando Schenke*

AAR ASL 126 Commando Schenke
David Garvin

My forces were a mix of first line and elite Germans including assault engineers with plenty of smoke. The first line units are great for rooting out the Russians and helping the engineers get to the objective building. Facing me were a number of poorly-lead Soviet first line units, some with SMGs, and three machine guns. Not very good facing Germans equipped with demo charges and flamethrowers, all necessary to bust my way into his fortified building.

So, the forces were set. In the words of Caesar, Alea Iacta Est! Away we went. His forces were set up concealed and my initial goal was to strip away his concealment as early as possible before maneuvering to his right (my left) flank. From there I would have a base from which I could (hopefully) bust my way into the building with DCs to breach if necessary.

My initial plan worked. I found one of his 5-2-7 SMG squads and entered into close combat despite his concealment. This gave him a great initial advantage, but I figured that my 3 squads would prevail. They didn't. I needed to augment this building (he did as well) and in the end I took out two of his squads for three of my own. Not good. But I pressed on!

I used infantry smoke to get around to his right with my assault engineers. Due to some fairly effective defensive fire, only my 8-0 leader made it into the fortress, entering against pinned defenders.   I survived the first round of close combat, but the Russians finished off my leader before I could reinforce. Lack of smoke stalled my second attempt to move forward.

In the end, both sides suffered heavy losses. This result reflects what happened there back in 1941; the Germans needed two days and heavy artillery support to finally clear Liepaja. What was supposed to be a quick battle took six days' effort. Setbacks such as this may very well have been key to ensuring eventual Soviet victory on the Eastern Front.

DC Conscripts ASL Ladder, 13 March 2017

Name	Rank	Standing
Josef Stalin	Generalissimus Sovetskogo Soyuza	0
James Montgomery	Majór	1
Stephen Frum	Kapitán	2
Bill Stoppel	Starshiy Leytenant	3
Craig Stark	Leytenant	4
John Stadick	Mladshiy Leytenant	5
John Gorkowski	Senior-Praporshchik	6
Paul Washington	Praporshchik	7
Andy Goldin	Starshina	8
Gary Fortenberry	*Starszy Sierżant (Armia Polski)*	9
David Garvin	Serzhant	10
Jason Sadler	Mladshiy Serzhant	11
Jan Spoor	Efreitor	12
Brian S.	Ryadovóy	13