

Red Banner

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



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Commissar's Call: *SIZE MATTERS*



Busy lives and tight schedules often compel us to play smaller, tournament-sized scenarios. Therefore, when time and space permit, take a chance on something bigger. Monster scenarios were all the rage in the last century, and have made a comeback lately. They offer luck-leveling quantity as well as a breadth and depth that enables one to experience the full potential of ASL. Big scenarios, those with 20 or more units per side, do take considerably more time, about one hour per game time, but the investment is well worth it. And, you can always play the tournament-sized scenarios at the tournament.

Conscripts' Chatter: *STARTER KITS*



Several conscripts recently voiced on-line their support for the Starter Kits (SK). Bravo, it's great to see a vibrant "scene" cultivating new talent. Keep working those SKs and make your way to full ASL when ready.

https://mmpgamers.com/asl-starter-kit-c-2_8/asl-starter-kit-1-p-10

Amazing ASL Lore: *FRENCH ARMOR ACES*



A recent playing of ASL 242 *Swan Song* yielded three improbable critical hits, each at just the right time. The first came on turn 1 when a French Renault halted about six hexes away from an emplaced German 37mm anti-tank gun. The Renault fired with the following modifiers: +2 moved, +2 advance fire phase, +1 buttoned, +2 emplaced target, +1 small target, for a total of +8; ergo he needed to roll a ZERO on two dice to hit. Instead, he rolled snake eyes to earn a chance at an improbable hit. The subsequent die roll showed 1 for a critical hit which destroyed the gun and crew. Ouch. But wait, there's more. About mid game, six French B1-bis heavy tanks lumbered onto the battlefield. They had just enough movement to pull within six hexes of the German 88mm AA gun and remain in motion as a defense against that killer's inevitable fire. The 88 fired for a hit with rate, but the kill roll yielded a dud. So, it fired again to kill and burn one of the French heavies, but lost rate. Rather than risk breaking via intensive fire, the 88 went silent, ready to resume a shooting spree in its upcoming prep fire phase. Desperate, the French heavies tried bounding fire with these modifiers: +2 moved, +2 advance fire phase, +1 buttoned, +2 emplaced target, -1 large target for a total of +6. Since they were also moving, they had to double the lower die. Ergo, each of them had to roll a 1 (with two dice) to hit. Sure enough, the very first shot scored snake eyes! The subsequent die-roll again came up 1 for a critical hit. Bye-bye 88. Another critical AT asset gone before it could make a difference. But wait, there's more. A recalled Renault turned to exit as required, but didn't have enough movement to exit the playing surface that turn. So, during advance fire, it rotated the turret to take a motion shot at a concealed German squad in a stone building several hexes away. You guessed it, snakes and a subsequent die of 1 for the critical hit.

New Article: *HUNTING WITH BORZOIS*



An excerpt from:

Commanding the Red Army's Sherman Tanks
The World War II Memoirs of Hero of the Soviet Union
Dmitriy Loza

<http://img.4plebs.org/boards/tg/image/1366/70/1366701417638.pdf>

I do not know who first used hunting terms to describe the means developed by Emchisti for combating heavy German tanks. It was not for a lark that we had to resort to this tactic in the KorsunShevchenkovski operation (January-February 1944).

The tanks of the two sides were far from equal in firepower. The Tiger and Panther were equipped with a long-barreled 88-mm cannon. The Shermans also had a long gun, but of lesser caliber— 76.2 mm. The 85- to 100-mm frontal and turret armor of the enemy tanks made them practically invulnerable to the Emcha's projectiles at those points. But they did burn and could be immobilized in place by our precision shooting.

The Korsun-Shevchenkivskiy operation of two Ukrainian Fronts began on 26 January 1944. The recently created 6th Tank Army, to which the 5th Mechanized Corps belonged, was attacking in the southeastward direction toward Zvenigorodka from the area north of Tynovka. The 5th Guards Tank Army of the adjacent First Ukrainian Front was attacking from the opposite direction to converge with it. In coordination with infantry formations, these tank armies were to encircle significant enemy forces in the Korsun-Shevchenkivskiy bulge.

Beginning on the morning of 27 January, the 233d Tank Brigade—the backbone of the corps' forward detachment—received the mission not to become engaged in protracted battles for isolated enemy strongpoints but to penetrate into Zvenigorodka, where it was to close the ring of encirclement.

At midday, the brigade's 1st Tank Battalion, with tankodesantniki aboard, reached the outskirts of a large and important, in the operational-tactical sense, inhabited area—Lysyanka [135 kilometers south of Kiev]. The enemy, realizing the key significance of this strongpoint, had concentrated up to a battalion of infantry, reinforced by five Tiger tanks, to hold it. Lysyanka—a small regional town—stretched out in a deep hollow. Its houses could be seen only from a close vantage point. The Germans had dug in on the heights that framed this inhabited locale. They were covering the road and heights adjoining it with dense interlocking fires from all weapons. The defenders paid almost no attention to the gullies and ravines. They believed that their bottoms and side slopes, deteriorated from the bad weather, were unsuitable for deploying tanks.

We had to seize Lysyanka as rapidly as possible. The most important targets in its defenses were the tanks. They had to be knocked out in the first assault. It would then be much easier to deal with the infantry. The accomplishment of this task was further complicated by the worsening weather—the rain was growing heavier.

Captain Nikolay Maslyukov, the battalion commander, made the following decision: two tank platoons were to attack the enemy along the highway (demonstration group), and the platoon of Junior Lieutenant Mikhail Prikhod'ko, moving along the side of one of the broad gullies, was to reach the flank of the Tigers and attack them with armor-piercing rounds on their hulls.

This concept followed the model of "hunting with Borzois": the dogs tantalize the wolf from the front, while several hounds come at him from the flanks to take him down. Our tanks maintained radio silence to achieve surprise in this unusual attack. Only the radios of the battalion commander and the two platoons attacking along the road were left on. Nikolay Maslyukov quietly orchestrated the actions of the demonstration and flanking groups. The successful accomplishment of the battalion's mission depended on their skillful efforts.

Attentively studying the surrounding terrain, Prikhod'ko noticed nothing except dripping wet shrubbery and the occasional modest tree. The Emchas of his platoon crept forward on idling motors, avoiding movement along the same track. There was the possibility of getting bogged down in the soggy chernozem. As before, visibility was poor. A head wind hurled large raindrops into their faces and carried the noise of their laboring engines from their sterns into the endless steppe.

This encouraged the tankers because it provided additional security for their actions. It would have been worse for the wind to be blowing toward the enemy. "Today, the weather is our friend," the platoon commander said encouragingly to his crew.

Hundreds of meters of a difficult path lay behind. Prikhod'ko understood that his tanks could encounter the enemy at any moment, and he was not wrong. Up ahead, Mikhail noticed a mound—a small ground sheet hung suspended above the ground. It was motionless. Out from under the tarpaulin crawled a German soldier, who stared at the lead tank, clearly not knowing if it was his or ours. Without hesitation, the driver-mechanic veered his Sherman toward the enemy position and ground the soldier and his covered machine gun into the earth. The enemy's security outpost had been destroyed without a sound. This did not happen often.

"The defender's main forces are somewhere nearby," the platoon commander concluded to himself. A sheet of heavy rain hid the horizon from view. The enemy position was somewhere up ahead—but it could not be discerned. Prikhod'ko reported his engagement with the enemy outpost to the battalion commander and received the order to stop.

The demonstration group along the road began its spirited "teasing" attack, trying to attract the defenders' attention completely to itself. By doing this, it simplified for Prikhod'ko's crews the accomplishment of their mission.

The Shermans of the flanking group froze in place, their motors quietly idling. The commands of the officers of the tanks attacking frontally sounded crisply in the headphones. Frequent machine-gun bursts and the noise of motors were reported. The main part of the concept of "hunting with Borzois" had been accomplished successfully.

At this time, somewhere in the heights a strong gust of wind dispersed the heavy curtain of clouds, and a broad patch of sky shone through. The rain halted. Would it hold off long? A moment!

A fortuitous moment! Prikhod'ko fixed his glance at the unfolding view. Some seventy meters ahead loomed two immense black-crossed tanks. Their main guns patrolled the road, prepared at any moment to greet our tanks attacking from the front with deadly fire. Two Shermans of Prikhod'ko's platoon, moving in echelon, had stopped at the same time. This enabled them to open fire quickly, without interfering with each other. Their main guns had long ago been loaded with armor-piercing rounds.

"The right Tiger is yours, the left one is mine. Fire!" commanded Mikhail. Main gun fires ripped through the damp, cold air. The engine compartment of the right beast was enveloped in flames. The left Tiger shook from the strike of the solid shot but did not catch fire. Prikhod'ko shouted to the gunner, "Finish him off!" The second armor-piercing round did its work—the clumsy target belched black smoke. The German tankers began to jump out of their vehicle. Accurate machine-gun fires found their mark.

The Emchas attacked forcefully along the road, conducting intensive main gun and machine-gun fires. Prikhod'ko's platoon also did not spare their ammunition. Having been attacked from two sides, the enemy began to withdraw under fire to the south. Minutes later, the lead tanks of Maslyukov's battalion, in coordination with their desantniki, burst upon the enemy positions. Lysyanka stretched out below.

The Emchisti participating in the defeat of enemy attempts to break out of the Korsun-Shevchenkivskiy ring employed a different method of combat with the enemy's heavy tanks. Two Shermans were designated in each platoon for each single attacking Tiger. One tank fired armor-piercing shells at one or the other track, the other tank awaited the moment when the undamaged track had driven the German tank into a 90-degree turn, exposing its entire flank. Then it delivered a solid shot into the fuel cell. As a rule, attacking enemy tanks were permitted to close to four hundred to five hundred meters. It was difficult to break a track at greater ranges.