

# A nasty encounter

## Fighting the Great Patriotic War one battle at a time: Part Four

**Andrew Rolph** continues his series of Ostfront scenarios with a fast-moving encounter where there's almost nowhere to hide.

### INTRODUCTION

After the Soviet winter/spring counteroffensives of 1941/42 had run their course, the Germans took the initiative again and initiated *Fall Blau* – the invasion of the Caucasus. German spearheads ranged far and wide and frequently landed blows on thin air as the Soviets learned that it was unwise simply to hold ground with a risk of encirclement.

Nevertheless, at some point the retreat had to stop. Stalin

issued a general order, which has become known as the 'Not a Step Back' directive, and, in the Don Bend in August, a fierce contest opened up with newly created Soviet Tank Armies engaging the reinforced panzer divisions. Tanks were available in numbers on both sides and the competence of the Soviet command was improving.

So here's a simple scenario, which some might see as typical of the war in the east – lots of tanks crashing into one another as the latest German thrust is parried.

### A NASTY ENCOUNTER

#### GERMAN BRIEFING

The summer has seen many gains in terms of distance if not in

terms of strategic objectives. The Soviets are now beginning to fight back more effectively and we need to drive them from the field now or never.

#### Mission

Drive south, brushing aside any enemy forces encountered – keep the attack moving forward. See common briefing for victory conditions.

#### Available Forces

The reinforced tip of a panzer division – a panzer battalion, two motorised battalions, some reconnaissance units and stuka support. See OOB overleaf.

#### Anticipated Enemy Forces

The Soviets are producing increasing numbers of tanks and weapons. You can expect mobile enemy resistance in brigade strength or more. However, reconnaissance reveals nothing immediately ahead of you and those Soviet units to the west of you are being pinned by other German forces.

#### Deployment

Enter the table from the north at any time from turn 1 onwards. One unit may enter the table from the western or the eastern edge of the table up to halfway down its length. It may not enter earlier than turn 5 and will do so on a roll of anything other than a 1 on 1D6.

The AT and Recce companies should be assigned to a parent unit rather than operate as independent units.

#### SOVIET BRIEFING

We can afford no more retreats and no more breakthroughs.

Every thrust by the enemy must be halted. Each time he tries to make the campaign a mobile one we must bog him down.

#### Mission

The latest enemy assault is expected from the north. You are to crash across its path with your force and slash it to pieces ensuring that no functioning units drive past you to the south. See common briefing for victory conditions.

#### Available Forces

You have two tank brigades and a motorcycle battalion. As this is a hasty counter-thrust on a mobile enemy; no artillery support can be organised. A mortar battalion has been provided to somewhat offset this. See OOB overleaf.

#### Anticipated Enemy Forces

A regimental *Kampfgruppe* of tanks and motorised infantry with air support is the likely lead unit of this attack.

#### Deployment

All units may enter the table from turn 1 onwards from the south eastern corner of the table up to 18 inches in. The heavy mortar battalion is to be assigned to any one other battalion. That battalion may then use its HQ to call in indirect fire from the mortars.

### COMMON BRIEFING

The terrain is naturally very open. The hills are no more than small undulations which offer spotting cover directly behind, but no spotting advantages atop them. Nor can armour expect to achieve a hull-down position. The wheat fields will likewise offer spotting cover but give no other benefit. The farm sector



German infantry, with AA support, follow the armoured advance. Photo by Mark Freeth.



Another scene from the Wargamers Holiday Centre - T34/76s with infantry on board amass to strike.



should offer some protection to infantry occupying it, but not a great deal – it isn’t Stalingrad (that’s yet to come!).

The long thin lines are balkas. They are deep and steep-sided ravines – more or less natural anti-tank ditches. They are impassable to wheeled vehicles and count as poor going for troops on foot. They are slightly more permeable to tracked vehicles than AT ditches, so they may be entered by such vehicles at a cost of half a move, but may not be exited on the same turn. They may be exited at normal speed next turn.

Balkas offer spotting cover and protection against fire from anything at ground level.

The German player receives one victory point for each Soviet unit destroyed or routed and one for each six stands that exit the south of the table with their HQ. The Soviets earn a victory point for every six stands of German casualties and one for each Soviet unit in good order (not compulsorily retreating or routing) on the table at the end of the game.

The table is five feet by five. For the rules for which the game was designed, that translates as ten infantry or around seven motorised turns of movement wide.

The game is 14–16 turns long. At the end of turn 14, roll 1D8+1D4. On a roll of 9+ the game finishes immediately. If it continues, roll again at the end of turn 15 and end the game on a roll of 7+. Otherwise the game finishes on turn 16.

### DESIGN NOTES – SPECIFIC

None.

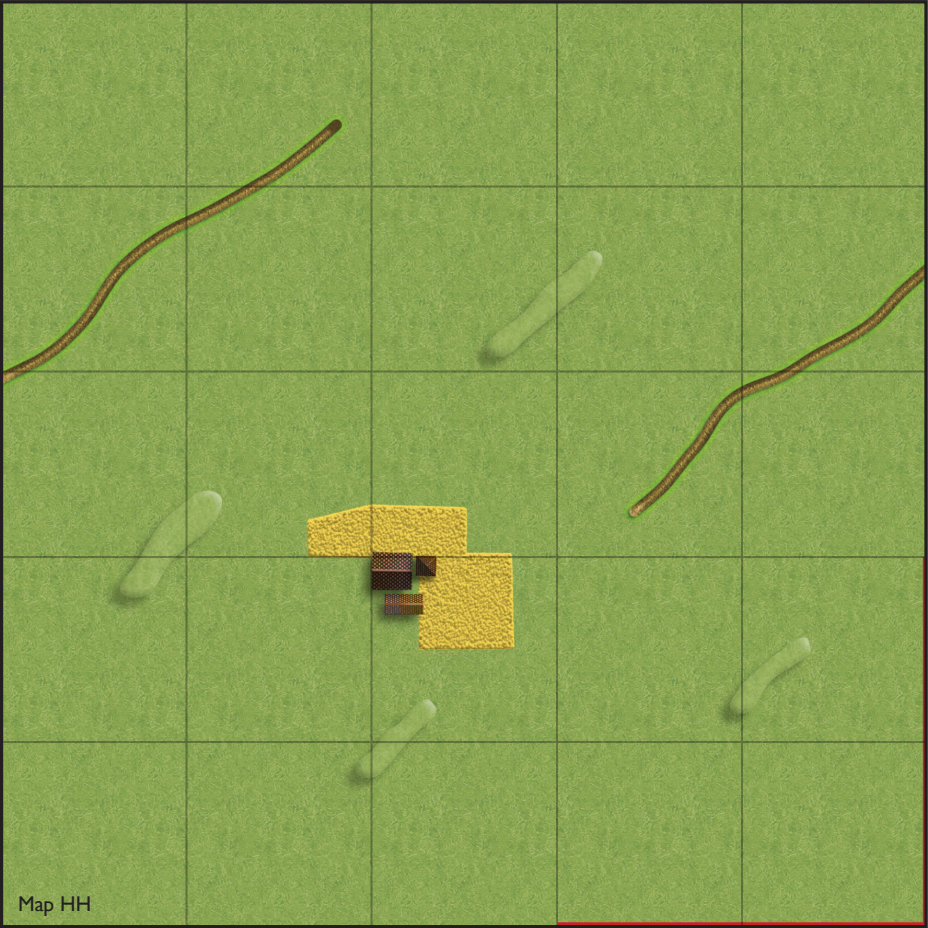
Remember that the general design notes can be downloaded as a PDF from the MWBG website at <http://bit.ly/1YfYxnQ>

### ALTERNATIVES

The terrain (or the absence of it) and the nature of the encounter are the distinguishing factors here. There are few places as flat and open as Ukraine and the Caucasus and the type of encounter battle where both armies move into contact with one another are always rare.

Many battles in our ill-defined ‘ancients’ period were fought, by mutual consent, on relatively featureless terrain. Perhaps a column of crusaders is making its way to the next castle/oasis and is being harassed by Arabs, similar to the battle of Arsuf (as I recall)? Or, further back in time, chariots would make a good substitute for the excess of armour in this scenario. It would be difficult to prove that one chariot army of biblical times did not try to cut across the advance of another.

Salamanca in 1812 occurs to me as the most obvious example of a horse and musket era battle which has some similarity to this scenario, with relatively open terrain. Alternatively, remaining in Spain but scaling the scenario down, perhaps it could be re-purposed to a guerrilla raid on a French column?



### OOPS

Unit	Quality	Constituent stands
1/4th Pz btn	Exceptional	HQ, 6 PzIIIs, 3 PzIVF2s, PzIIF
1/15th Gepanzert Infantry	Exceptional	HQ, 9 rifles, HMG (all in half-tracks), 75mm infantry gun, engineer (both with lorries), 1 PaK 38 and tow
2/15th Motorised Infantry	Competent	HQ, 9 rifles, HMG, 75mm infantry gun, engineer, 1 PaK 38 (all in lorries)
AT Company	Competent	3 Marder IIIs
Recce Company	Exceptional	1 Sdkfz 234, 2 Sdkfz 222
		2 Stuka sorties called in by an Air Ground Controller attached to one of the units above.

Unit	Quality	Constituent stands
32nd/31/21st Tank btns	Competent	6 T34Bs, 4 T70s and 30th Tank Brig HQ attached, 3 SMG tank riders
62nd Motorised Rifles	Competent	HQ, 6 Rifles, 81mm mortar, 45mm ATG, 37mm AA, Quad AA lorry and 1 SMG on motorcycles and 1 engineer from the Brigade HQ support attached
58/57/47th Tank btns	Poor	6 T34Bs, 4 T70s and 50th Tank Brig HQ attached, Three SMG tank riders
29th Motorised Rifles	Poor	HQ, 6 Rifles, 81mm mortar, 45mm ATG, 37mm AA, Quad AA lorry and 1 SMG on motorcycles and 1 engineer from the Brigade HQ support attached
99th M/c btn	Poor	HQ, 6 SMGs on motorcycles, 3 SMGs in half tracks (Lend Lease M2s), 2 BA10 armoured cars and 1 82mm mortar.
Heavy Mortar battalion		2 120mm Mortars (2 Lorries)