

NEW EXPRESSIONS FOR A FAMILIAR FACE

More Scenarios and Units for *PANZERBLITZ*

By Alan R. Arvold

In this wargaming era where games of tactical level armored warfare have been published, remained popular for a time, and then disappeared forever from the hobby store shelves, few titles have stood the test of time so well as *PANZERBLITZ*, now celebrating its twenty-third year in print. The secret of *PANZERBLITZ*'s longevity is simple: While lacking the complexity of more recent tactical games like the *MBT/IDF* or *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER* series, *PANZERBLITZ* boasts a playability which those games lack. With *PANZERBLITZ*, one can expect to begin and finish a game within a few hours. (By way of contrast, a single *game-turn* in *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER* may take an hour to complete, given a medium size scenario.) Now I am not trying to put down *ASL* or any other complex tactical game. But as a wargamer with twenty-three years in the hobby, I no longer have the time to play a long game as I once did. Like many other gamers my age, I have come to prefer simpler games with which to contest my opponents' skill, and *PANZERBLITZ* fits this need quite nicely.

This article provides six new scenarios for *PANZERBLITZ*. There is no central theme behind these scenarios, occurring as they do in different periods of the war, and thus they serve simply as an adjunct to the original scenarios presented in the game. Besides the original *PANZERBLITZ* counters, these scenarios make use of counters from Ramiro Cruz' articles "PanzerBlitz 1941" (found in Vol. 13 No. 3 of *THE GENERAL*) and "Panzer Leader 1940" (a *PANZER LEADER* variant published in Vol. 15, No. 2 of *THE GENERAL*), as well as counters represented in the *PANZERBLITZ* Campaign Analysis Booklet. There are also three new counters described in the following section. Finally, there is a short historical background for each scenario presented here. Although most are historical scenarios, they are not exact re-creations of actual battles, but approximate representations of them. Some have undergone numerous revisions over the years of their existence to bring them more in line with the historical set up, but all are designed simply for fun. I do not claim that these scenarios are balanced, because history shows that very few battles were ever actually "balanced". In each of these scenarios, all Optional Rules and the Experimental Indirect Fire rule from the *PANZERBLITZ* game are used. [Alternately, players who own *PANZER LEADER* may wish to apply the rules of that game here, where applicable, especially the rules for "Opportunity Fire". Ed.] At this time, I should like to mention that Situations 2, 5 and 6 were originally created by Al Muelling.

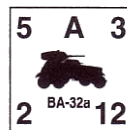
NEW COUNTERS



Jagdpanzer Tiger: Also known as the *Ferdinand* or *Elefant*, this was a very heavy tank destroyer mounting the 88mm Pak on the Tiger tank chassis. Used in the Kursk offensive as an assault gun — a role where it suffered heavy losses due to its lack of a mounted machine gun, which allowed Russian infantry to close-assault the vehicle and knock it out. Surviving *Elefants* were later used in the German withdrawing actions in the Ukraine during autumn 1943 before being recalled to Germany for rebuilding later that year.



T-70a Light Tank: Russian light tank used from 1942 to 1945. Withdrawn from front line service in early 1944, it was still used by some recon units at the end of the war. It should be noted that on various occasions during 1942 and '43, the Russians would use light tanks to temporarily make up losses suffered by their tank brigades during extended armored combat. Situation 28-3/5 is an example of what could happen as a result of this policy.



BA-32a Armored Car: The main Russian reconnaissance vehicle for the first half of the war. Due to poor cross-country performance, the BA-32a was withdrawn from service by the end of 1943, when the Russians began using halftracks as their recon vehicles.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND FOR THE SCENARIOS

Situation 1: By the first week of December 1941, the last German offensive of the year petered out just short of Moscow. Front line German units, many of them now mere shadows of their strength of six months earlier, would try to hold a line stretching from Leningrad to the Black Sea. One such unit was the 17th Panzer Division stationed just south of the city of Tula. Though its strength was down to that of a regimental *kampfgruppe*, this unit was expected to defend a frontage that would normally require a full strength division. Widely dispersed into battalion- and company-sized formations, the 17th Panzer prepared to meet the Russian offensive. On 3 December 1941, elements of the Russian 50th Army and a supporting cavalry corps struck all along the frontage of the weakened division. The Germans at first tried holding them back by shifting mobile elements to stop each Russian spearhead, but the spearheads were too numerous and the available defending mobile elements too few. Soon the Germans were forced to with-

draw to conserve what little strength they had left. (It should be noted that most of the German vehicular losses during this time period were due to mechanical breakdowns brought on by the extreme cold of the Russian winter.)

Situation 2: In the late spring of 1942 the Russians launched an offensive in the south with the objective of taking back the city of Kharkov, to be followed up by the clearing of the Ukraine. This offensive was launched on 12 May 1942 and caught the Germans completely by surprise. The Russian 28th Army formed the northern portion of the attacking force and initially met with tough resistance from the defending German units. But after four days of constant Russian attacks, the German defense finally collapsed and the Russians committed their mobile units to a deep penetration operation behind German lines. This penetration ran straight into the assembly area of the German 3rd Panzer Division (which was preparing for the Germans' own spring offensive), and the resulting German counterattack created a huge meeting engagement, with the Russians being thrown back with heavy losses. The Germans then launched their spring offensive, but the inexorable drain on their forces had begun again, and these losses would be sorely missed later in the year.

Situation 3: After blunting the Russian spring offensive, it was the Germans' turn. The Russians counterattacked furiously but were consistently beaten back. Although the Russian mobile forces were severely depleted after two months of savage fighting, the Russians did not pull them out of the front lines to rebuild them. Instead they were used to form small delaying forces to slow down the advancing German armored units. Situation 3 is not itself an actual re-creation of a specific battle; instead, it is a hypothetical representation of those delaying actions the Russians used against the Germans that summer. It should be noted that even though the Germans occasionally caught up to and destroyed some of these Russian delaying units, they succeeded in preventing the Germans from surrounding and isolating large concentrations of Russian forces. The Germans' delaying actions of the later years of the war were adapted from their own experience against such tactics during the summer of 1942.

Situation 4: At 1500 hours on 5 July 1943, the battle at Kursk began. In the northern pincer, units of the German 258th Infantry Division assaulted the forward defense line of the Russian 15th Infantry Division. Facing a determined Russian defense, this attack bogged down almost immediately. Armored units of the German 20th Panzer Division were hurriedly brought in to salvage the situation, and the attack resumed soon