DESIGN NOTES FOR "ODE TO PANZERBLITZ"
By
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Ode to Panzerblitz is a collection of the original twelve situations that came in the game. These have been converted to East Front II standards so that these scenarios may be played in this format. There have already been some Panzerblitz scenarios converted to East Front standards by authors such as Edward Hayes, Martin Rapier, William Velovoch, and Warren K. Wawrosch. My thanks go to them for leading the way with their very worthy efforts. Some of their scenarios merely give the real battle that inspired the Panzerblitz scenarios. The others though do convert the scenario from the game to the East Front standards, to include the recreation of the mapboards and opposing forces, and a close rendition of the victory conditions too. However, having different authors means that they do not always convert to the same standards. They differ as to the elevation values between each level, how the road network is portrayed on the map, how the villages are constructed, how the Panzerblitz pieces break down in terms of East Front units, etc. Even in cases where two different authors did their versions of a particular scenario, the maps do not exactly match and the Orders of Battles for both sides do not match either. Something had to be done to correct his situation and I took it upon myself to do just that.

One may ask, why am I doing this? Well to pay homage to the game that started it all in the gaming industry back in 1970. Indeed the Campaign Series by Talonsoft has often been referred to as Panzerblitz on the computer. Being of the same scale as Panzerblitz and at the same unit level certainly backs up the assertion. But I think that it was more than that. Those other authors list above took the scenarios from Panzerblitz and made them into East Front scenarios. I, on the other hand, wanted to play Panzerblitz using the East Front system. To do this I made the mapboard all to the same standards and when converting the order of battles from Panzerblitz to East Front established the standards for unit conversion. And of course the weather is always warm and clear not matter what the date of the scenario is, just like in Panzerblitz.

These scenarios are not for every body. If you want to play East Front, just go to one of the several hundred fine scenarios that the game has, both those with the game and its expansions and those that are on various websites on the Internet. But if you want to play Panzerblitz on the computer, then try one or several of the twelve original scenarios which came in the game, which I have presented in here.

The Mapboards

The first task that I had to accomplish was to establish the standard size of the mapboards based on their arrangement in the various scenarios. For a single mapboard, the dimensions were a length of 34 hexes and a width of 11 hexes. These dimensions insured that the half hexes on the individual boards were filled out into whole hexes. Unfortunately it created extra hexes in the width which do not exist on the boards. There

is also an extra row of hexes in the length. The length of a playing board is 33 hexes, which includes the filled out half hexes. However the computer program only allows me to have map lengths of even number of hexes, so I opted for 34. These extra hexes do not present a problem when I make my maps as I leave the extra hexes clear and they only exist on the bottom and right edges of the map (or top and left edges when the map is reversed.

However the scenarios in the game have mapboards set up to two fashions, either side-by-side square fashion or in the end-to-end oblong fashion. In the square fashion, the boards are placed on top of each other in East Front II due to the layout of the grain hex. In the square fashion the map dimensions are a length of 34 hexes and a width of 31 hexes. In the oblong fashion the map dimensions are a length of 98 hexes and width of 11 hexes. Again, in both of these fashions there are extra hexes in the width and an extra row on the length.

The next task was to establish the road net on the boards. I chose to use hard surface roads with all the routes as this is how the roads are on the boards in Panzerblitz. I know that the other authors have made some of them into dirt roads in their scenarios and this is probably more realistic, but then again we are recreating Panzerblitz here, not reality. In cases where the roads go into the extra hexes at the bottom and right side of the maps I merely extended the roads to go in the direction that they were going to the map edge. Once the roads were in place, the towns were next on the list. I chose to use village hexes in all of the hexes of the towns. I know that some of the other authors like to insert a suburb hex in some of the towns but after observing the building density on the playing boards I found that suburb hexes were inaccurate. Yes the towns on the board look rather sparce as far as buildings are concerned, but there are more buildings in a village hex than what the hex symbol in East Front II shows. As the towns in the game are villages in size, so they will be portrayed as villages.

Having established the road net and town set-up, the problem of portraying elevation and terrain was next. Different authors have used different bases and delta distances for their maps. In some cases the delta distance is so small, that additional levels are established on the boards. This may be more realistic as many of the scenarios occur in areas were the hills were more the rolling type, not the steep sided ones portrayed on the Panzerblitz boards. But again, this is Panzerblitz, not reality. I used an elevation base of 0 meters and a delta distance of 50 meters. Thus there are three elevation levels on the boards, level 0 which includes elevations of 0-50 meters, level 1 which includes elevations of 51-100 meters, and level 2 which includes elevations of 101-150 meters. This worked out very well as the hills take up the same shape as they appear on the Panzerblitz boards, yet vehicle units can still traverse the changes in elevation without having to take a road. Naturally level 1 is reserved for the slope hexes in Panzerblitz.

There were problems where adjacent slope hexsides on the Panzerblitz boards are parts of different hills. This occurred on Boards 1 and 2 and along the board edges in situations where the boards are set up together. The other authors merely made one giant hill mass where all these slope hexes were nest to each other. I, on the other hand, used gully

hexsides to separate those slope hexes, so that they take up the shape of the separate hills as they appear on the Panzerblitz boards.

   A couple of authors on their maps have placed Embankment hexsides on the slope hexes in the same hexsides as where a brown hexside symbol is placed on the Panzerblitz boards. This is an error. Brown hexsides in Panzerblitz represent obstructions to Line of Sight, not movement. Embankment hexesides cause additional movement costs in East Front II which should not exist on these boards. Thus I do not use them. Yes this does cause an occasional situation where a unit can see through many level 1 hexes where they could not on the equivalent Panzerblitz board due to an intervening Brown Hexside, however the East Front II game system has a wonderful program for determining Line of Sight/Line of Fire and these previously mentioned occasions happen only rarely.

   The item on the list was vegetation. On the Panzerblitz boards the only vegetation shown is forests. Therefore forests are the only vegetation which I have placed on the maps. Now the other authors have placed other forms of vegetation such as fields and even some orchards on their maps. However I found that while these are probably more realistic, especially the fields in the rural area depicted by the Panzerblitz boards, they are not part of fictional reality of the Panzerblitz boards. One author placed hedge hexsides in the forest hexes on the same hexsides as Green Hexsides are on the Panzerblitz boards. Very unrealistic, but I can see his point. The Green Hexsides in Panzerblitz serve two functions. First they serve as barrier to Line of Sight/Line of Fire. The aforementioned Esat Front II program for determining LOS/LOF eliminates this purpose. The second function is to serve as a barrier to vehicular movement through forests, except on roads. In East Front II vehicular movement through forests is allowed, albeit rather slowly, and this is one aspect I could not eliminate from the game. Besides, hedge hexsides do not serve as a barrier to movement so there is not purpose to have them there.

   Last on the list was the water features. The Pond on Panzerblitz board #3 was easy enough, though I only made into a one hex pond. On Panzerblitz board #3 the Pond extends a little bit into the six surrounding hexes. One author is response to this made the pond into a seven hex pond. However this made it too big and on the Panzerblitz board units may move into those six surrounding hexes. So I kept it to one hex size. Furthermore I made it into a regular, not shallow, Water hex to prevent units from moving into it just like on the Panzerblitz board. Likewise the Marshes were easy to place in the hexes matching their placement on the Panzerblitz boards.

   The Streambed hexes in Panzerblitz presented something of a problem. These streambed hexes are placed in the middle of the hexes that they occupy. In East Front II the Stream is placed on the hexsides, not the in the middle of the hex. So using a Panzerblitz PBM sheet I drew on it which hexsides of the Streambed hexes would be on in the mapboards in East Front II. I made sure that there was enough space between the Streams and other terrain features to give the Streams the same approximate location that they have in the Panzerblitz boards. Where the roads cross the stream I place Heavy Bridges to insure that all vehicles may use them like in the game. Also I placed Fords in

the Streams in the hexsides of the corresponding hex where they have them on the Panzerblitz boards.

Sometimes, when the mapboard is arranged the square fashion, the Stream hexsides do not match up or connect because they are on opposite hexsides of the same hex due to individual board orientation. However I would connect them using a connecting hexside in the hex that would be either a half hex on the Panzerblitz board or whose hexside would normally be an individual board edge.

After finishing the maps, it was time for the labels. I labeled all of the towns and roads with the same names that they have on the Panzerblitz boards. I also labeled the hilltops in the same hexes as they appear on the boards.

The Orders of Battle

The next challenge was translating the Panzerblitz opposing forces on the scenario cards into appropriate orders of battle for East Front II scenarios. To do so we must divide the counters into three categories, infantry, artillery, and vehicles, because each category must be handled separately.

The infantry counters in Panzerblitz represent more than just the type of units named on the counter. Frequently these represent the named unit plus attachments from support elements such as machine gun and anti-tank rifle units. These units have no counters in Panzerblitz (with one exception and it's an AA machine gun unit at that) but do have units in East Front II. Thus I used the orders of battle for the type of major organization and time period in question and added the support unit in proportionate numbers to the number of rifle, engineer, and SMG units. There are a couple of units that deserve explanation. Panzerblitz German SMG units did not exist as such in the German Army. These were just a convenient way to represent more heavily armed infantry, albeit with extra sub-machine guns and/or assault rifles in the later years of the war. In East Front II these are just the more heavily armed rifle units in the later years or units with extra machine gun units in the early years of the war. Panzerblitz German Security units are represented in East Front II using bicycle troops. The Russian Recon Company in Panzerblitz is a sort of swing unit, representing several different types of units. Given their actual size, they can be used to present a recon platoon, given their given unit symbol they can be used to represent the larger recon companies, and given the attack and defense factors they can be used to represent SMG platoons. Just which type of unit they represent depends on the larger organization they are part of in the Panzerblitz scenario cards.

Artillery units were rather easy to convert. In Panzerblitz most artillery units come with either six, four, or two guns or mortars per unit. All I had to do was to count up the number of guns or mortars of each type and make the equivalent number of units in East Front. The number of units will not always match, but the total number of guns/mortars represented in both games will be the same most of the time. Sometimes in Panzerblitz an

artillery unit will be used which will represent more guns/mortars than what the unit would realistically have. (Example: An 81mm Mortar unit (six mortars) supporting a company of three Rifle Platoons, which would in reality have a two mortar section assigned to it.) In cases like these I will assign the appropriate number of mortar sections instead of a whole platoon. In Panzerblitz, whenever you see six Russian 76.2mm ATG counters in the order of battle, these can represent different formation. On the one hand they can represent an anti-tank regiment, on another hand they can represent a light artillery regiment, and finally they can represent the light artillery within a rifle division's artillery regiment. This may sound confusing as they are using the 76.2mm ATG counters to represent them all. The 76.2mm Field Gun was used as both an anti-tank gun and as a light artillery piece. Thus these guns can be set up in the order of battle in East Front II as either anti-tank or light field artillery, depending on the scenario in question.

Vehicles are treated differently for each side. For the Russians in Panzerblitz, the counters are company size units. Thus in East Front II each Russian company breaks down into three light or medium tank platoons, two heavy tank companies, or two SU batteries. In cases where there are SU-76's involved, I will grant five or four SU-76 units for every two SU-76 counters, depending on whether they represent an anti-tank battalion or a light SU regiment respectively. For the Germans in Panzerblitz, each tank platoon represents five tanks, each tank destroyer unit represents six vehicles, each armored car unit represents seven armored cars (including an HQ vehicle), each SP artillery unit represents six vehicles, and each assault gun unit represents two or three vehicles. I merely added up the number of counters for each type of unit, multiply the number by the number of vehicles the unit represents, then take the result and create platoons for them in East Front II. In a lot of cases where there are not five or six vehicle units in East Front for the unit in question, I will merely create more platoons, making them as even in strength points as possible, while keeping the total number of vehicles equal to those in Panzerblitz. Transport units in East Front such as trucks, halftracks, and wagons are merely provided for those units that are meant to have them without regard to the number of transport units in Panzerblitz. This is due to additional "invisible" units that are not present in Panzerblitz. I also give units the proper type of transport meant for them as noted in the order of battle lists in the organizational files in East Front. In addition, I also only give enough strength points in each transport unit to carry its assigned dismounted unit.

Before leaving the subject of units I need to address the Headquarters and Leader units in East Front II. Panzerblitz does not have these units, except for the CP units which act more as artillery OP's than as command centers. I supplied Headquarter units for each organizational level present in the scenario. These include a supreme Headquarter unit for each side be it a division or corps HQ for the Russians and a Division or Kampfgruppe HQ for the Germans. I did not include very many leaders for each side. The supreme commander for each side is usually a command level three leader with subordinate brigades, regiments, and battalions receiving command level two leaders. Independent companies receive a command level one leader. Sometimes I while vary the command level of an individual leader by one to represent a poor or excellent leader in that position. Sorry, there are no command level five leaders in my scenarios.

The Scenarios

   There are a lot of considerations when setting up the scenario. First concerns those sides which start the game on the defensive. In Panzerblitz these sides are usually given minefields, blocks, and fortifications. In Panzerblitz the Minefield counters cause a 2-1 attack against any unit that move onto them. Thus in East Front I give a level two Minefield for each minefield counter in the Panzerblitz scenario. Blocks are easy since they represent the same thing in both games, therefore there is a one to one ratio in blocks between the games. Fortifications can be tricky. In Panzerblitz fortifications represent trenches, bunkers, and pillboxes. In a scenario I will usually give one bunker and three trenches for every four Fortification counters in Panzerblitz, but I may vary the ratio depending on the scenario in question. Because pillboxes are concrete in construction, I do not use them unless the scenario depicts an assault against well established fortifications where concrete would be used. Improved positions are a whole other story. Because improved can be constructed during a scenario, I give all units on the defense not in a trench, bunker, or pillbox an improved position. Since improved positions can be constructed during a scenario, whose to say that they can not be constructed before the scenario began. Besides, during the war units that settled down in defense, if even for only a few hours, always made foxholes or even rifle pits, which is what improved positions represent. So it seems only fair that the units on the defense get them automatically. However, units on the offense, including those scenarios where both sides are moving towards a meeting engagement, do not get any improved positions at the start, although they are still free to construct them during a scenario.

   The next thing to consider is environmental conditions. In Panzerblitz, the environmental conditions are assumed to be perfect with unlimited visibility. Yes, there have been many variant articles bringing the effects of weather to Panzerblitz, but they are variants and not the main rules. Granted, this gives perfect weather conditions to the game all year round, no matter what date the scenario in question occurs. Thus in East Front II all scenarios will have a maximum visibility of 20 hexes and normal conditions in all environmental categories, regardless of what time of year the scenarios occur.

   The next thing to consider is the length of the scenarios. Other authors who have made their versions of Panzerblitz scenarios tend to add four to six turns to the scenario length, compared to what the length of the scenarios are in Panzerblitz. I, on the other hand, prefer to keep the scenario length the same in both games. I found that the movement rates of the units in East Front II, tend to match their counterparts in Panzerblitz, although the infantry seems to be a little fast in East Front II. Thus, the opposing forces have the same relative ability to move around the playing board in both games. However, this is assuming perfect environmental conditions and visibility. In games where environmental conditions play a factor, the scenario length in East Front II must be increased to over what it is in Panzerblitz in order to give the respective forces the same relative chance of being able to move around the playing board in a given scenario. I can see why those other authors increase the scenario length and I do not blame them for doing so. But since

we are playing Panzerblitz using the East Front II system, my scenarios will be the same game length as their counterparts in the regular Panzerblitz board game.

There are some scenario functions that I assign default values to. For example, for Ammo both sides get 80% availability. Both sides get zero smoke as there are no smoke rules in Panzerblitz. Neither side gets any aircraft as there are no aircraft rules in Panzerblitz. As none of the scenarios occur at night, neither side gets any starshells. For the AI I assign 80 for the attacking side or both sides in a meeting engagement and 40 for the defending side. In the morale department, if the higher level organization in the organizational file of the scenario is a Guards unit for the Russian or an SS unit for the Germans, than all units in those organizations get a morale level of 7. Otherwise, all units get a morale level of 6 for both sides.

The last thing to consider is the victory conditions. In victory conditions in Panzerblitz where the destruction of enemy units, the capture of geographical objectives, and exiting of friendly units are the norm, East Front II can easily accommodate them as it has the same type of victory conditions built into its system. However, in scenarios in Panzerblitz where the ratio of friendly to enemy units on the board or destroyed, the capture or possession of a particular counter (usually a CP counter), or the establishment of a friendly "corridor" across the board are the criteria for victory, certain substitutions have to be made. These substitutions usually appear in the way of additional objective hexes or adjustments in the first player's point total requirements for victory or defeat in an East Front II scenario. Generally, I usually establish the minimum point total for a minor victory to between forty and fifty per cent of the total point value of the second player's forces, both on board and reinforcement, and the objective hexes in the second player's possession at the beginning of the game.

Variations

None of the scenarios are written in stone. All are unlocked and players are free to make any changes to them as they wish. Recommended variations would include changing the positions of starting forces or the entry points of reinforcements, changing some of the default values listed above, adding the effects of environmental conditions, giving one or both sides smoke and/or aircraft, and changing the length of the scenario. Of importance is if environmental conditions such as soft ground, mud and snow are added to the scenario, two, four, and six turns should be added to the scenario length respectively. This is in order to insure the relative ability of units to move across as much of the board as they would in normal conditions.

Conclusion

This article has explained most of the rational behind the design decisions that went into the making of these scenarios. I wish to thank those previous authors listed at the beginning of this article, who blazed the trail in their attempts bring Panzerblitz to East

Front II. Though their scenarios were flawed, they certainly pointed in the right direction which I followed its ultimate conclusion in my "Ode to Panzerblitz". Enjoy the scenarios.