

DESIGN NOTES FOR SCENARIOS OF ODE TO PANZERBLITZ III

By
Alan R. Arvold

Continuing on with the conversion of Panzerblitz scenarios to East Front II ones, these six scenarios presented here comprise the next set. They follow a particular theme, that being that they all occur in the year 1941. These scenarios were originally published in two different articles in the General Magazine. Five of these scenarios came from the article "Panzerblitz 1941" by Ramiro Cruz, in General Vol.13, #3. The other scenario came out of "1941 Panzerblitz" by William A. Farone, in General Vol.14, #3. While none of these scenarios were very popular, they did point the way for other authors to explore the early years of the war using Panzerblitz and in that they succeeded, considering the number of early war scenarios for the game are around today.

As before these scenarios are converted to the same standard as those of Ode to Panzerblitz I & II. For the original design notes on these standards, refer to the original Ode to Panzerblitz. Thus these design notes will deal with the set up and construction of the scenarios. Variables such as changing the environmental conditions, morale, or changing the orders of battles for either or both sides, I leave to the judgment of the individual players.

One will note that these scenarios are rather small compared to the previous ones. Indeed, five of these scenarios are one board scenarios and all have a low unit density on the boards. This will lead to more free-wheeling play in these scenarios. Also these scenarios do not recreate specific battles, but rather recreate specific situation, even though historical unit designations are used in them.

Scenario #26

This scenario is the only one of the set that has been previously converted to East Front II, "Guderian's Breakthrough" by William Velovoch. Of course, his version contained some errors which had to be corrected. Of course the original scenario itself was full of errors in that it used 1943 units to portray a 1941 situation. Fortunately historical corrections found in the Boardgamer's Guide to Panzerblitz were able to give the correct 1941 units to use the scenario. William included air strikes for the Germans in his version due to a design note in the original Panzerblitz scenario, which is not possible in Panzerblitz. I left them out, due to the fact that in the early morning hours of 22 June 1941, the Luftwaffe was busy gaining air superiority and was not concerned with tactical support at that time. In the original scenario, the north-south stream was considered impassable except at the ford. I solved this problem by making the stream a minor river. The Germans are set up west of the river and the Russians are set up east of Hexrow 13. I used a standard Panzerblitz set up for the Russians. Being on the defensive, the Russians get improved positions as per the standards for conversion established back in the original Ode to Panzerblitz. The order of battle is based on the historical corrections to the original scenario.

In the original scenario, the victory conditions are based on unit destruction for both sides. In addition, the Germans receive victory points for exiting units off of the east side of the mapboard and the Russians get victory points for possession of town and road hexes. The Russians also receive bonus victory points if the Germans do not exit enough units off of the east edge of the board by the end of the game. Most of these were easy to duplicate in East Front II. I did not put any objective hexes on roads, only in the towns and I compensated for the Russian bonus points by increasing the point values for the objective hexes in Grabyosh.

There is not much variation one can do in this scenario. Essentially change the initial positioning of the starting units is all you can do.

Scenario #27

This scenario is the only one with multiple mapboards in the original Panzerblitz version. In this scenario, which depicts a battle on the frontier on the opening day of the war, the Russians are set up anywhere east of Hexrow 11, and the Germans set up anywhere west of Hexrow 9. The Russians, being the defenders, are set up in improved positions. In the original Panzerblitz scenario, the Russians had T-60 tanks in their Order of Battle. However, the T-60 was not introduced until August 1941 so I substituted T-40 tanks for them. On the German side, the original scenario had two Wespe units with a movement factor of 0. These represented towed artillery. I replaced them with three 105mm How units, thus giving the Germans the same number of big guns.

The German victory conditions were based on clearing a road from the west to the east side of the board and in getting a certain number of units off of the east side of the board. The Russians merely had to prevent the German victory conditions to win. The exiting of units was easy as I just established six exit hexes for the Germans on the east side of the board. Clearing roads was a little bit harder to duplicate, so I substituted this by placing objective hexes in key locations along the roads on each map. Of course there is also unit elimination which is a natural part of East Front II victory conditions. The victory levels were adjusted so the Germans would have to get a certain percentage of the force off the board, plus capture at least two objective hexes by the end of the game.

The only variation that I see is in the starting set up for each side as both sides start with all their forces on the board.

Scenario #28

This situation depicts the problems that the German encircling forces had in creating those large pockets of Russian troops. They were just too thin to hold the Russians in the pockets. At best they could inflict casualties on those troops that were breaking out. The Russians, on the other hand, did not coordinate their breakout attempts and thus many

units which did break out ended up being shadows of their former strength. Here the Germans set up anywhere on the board. Being on the defensive, they get the usual improved positions in their starting locations. The Russian all enter the board on the west side on Turn 1. Because these breakouts were historically uncoordinated, the Russians have no overall commander or unit HQ for their force.

In the original Panzerblitz scenario, the victory conditions were based on the Russians getting a certain number of units off the east edge of the board by the end of the game and the Germans preventing this. I thus established three exit hexes for the Russians on the east side of the board. There are no objective hexes in this scenario as the primary mission is escape, not capture. The Victory Levels were based on the percentage of troops that the Russians had to get off the board, translated into unit victory point versus actual units in Panzerblitz, and supplemented by unit destruction which is a natural aspect of East Front II.

The variations to this scenario are of course variations in the setup and entry hexes for the two sides. The Russians also have an additional option. In the original Panzerblitz scenario the Russians could vary the turn of entry of their various units. Here they can do the same in an obvious bid of coordination by the Russian player.

Scenario #29

Scenario #29 is an armored meeting engagement, in other words a tank battle. As such neither side is set up on the board, but instead they enter on their respective ends of the board on Turn 1. The Germans enter first and so will be the aggressor in this scenario. This will put the pressure on the Germans as the Russians will probably just move up and pick their initial firing positions and stay there for the rest of the game, letting the Germans do the majority of the moving while they do the majority of the firing. I substituted the Russian BT-5 and BT-8 tanks in the Panzerblitz version with B-7 and BT-7a tanks respectively in East Front II. The victory conditions of the original Panzerblitz version were quite simple, who ever destroyed more units than the other was the winner at the end of the game. For the East Front II version I merely took half of the total victory point amount of the Russian side and set that at the German Minor Victory Level and then adjusted the rest of the victory levels from there. There are no exit hexes or objective hexes in this scenario as the sole criteria for victory is enemy units destroyed. It is a real demolition derby.

Although the date for this scenario is August of 1941, given the composition of the Russian forces it more likely occurred in late June 1941 (the only time that the T-35 tank was used in mass).

Not much variation in this scenario, just altering the entry hexes and order of unit entrance for each side. However it will not make much difference as both sides will be using the roads to get to the center of the board and start slugging it out as soon as possible.

Scenario #30

This scenario is a Russian armored assault countered by a German panzer battalion. In other words, it is another tank battle. More over, it uses the same mapboard as the last scenario. There are differences between this scenario and the last one. For one, the Germans start the game set up in the middle town of Opustoschenia and being the defenders, automatically get the improved positions (presumably prepared by other units before the scenario occurred). Both sides are a pure armored force, no other supporting combat arms at all. The game has two fewer turns than the last one. The Russians, being the aggressors, enter on the east side of the board and do not have a lot of time to accomplish their objectives. This has the makings of another demolition derby.

The victory conditions of the original Panzerblitz scenario required that Russians win by achieving a certain number of victory points by exiting units off of the west side of the board and by destroying German unit. The Germans won by preventing the Russians from reaching the minimum required number. These were easy to duplicate. The Russians have two exit hexes on the west side of the board and unit destruction is a natural part of East Front II. There are no objective hexes in this scenario as the Russian primary mission is getting units off the board.

Historically this battle occurred in June 1941 as again this was the only time that the T-35 tanks were massed together and also because this was when the KV-1 actually first fought the Germans.

Again, there is not much room for variations here. The Germans are required to set up in the middle town and really do not have a better spot to set up in order to interdict the Russians. The Russians could change the order of entry for their units but will want to stay on the roads due to their time crunch in this scenario.

Scenario #31

Situation 31 is a Russian tank raid on a German position. Again, it uses the same mapboard as the previous two scenarios. The Germans start the game set up in the town of Opustoschenia again although this time they are a reduced infantry battalion with anti-tank support. Again the Russians are the aggressors with a tank brigade entering the board from any side of the Russian player's choice. However the Russian is under an extreme time crunch to achieve his objectives as there are only five turns in the scenario.

The Germans have a reduced infantry battalion with only two companies plus the mortar platoon. However they have Pz Jg 1's for anti-tank support. In the original Panzerblitz version there was one Pz Jg 1 platoon of six vehicles. For East Front II I broke it down into three two-vehicle sections. The Russians, who enter on the north edge

of the board on Turn 1, have a full tank regiment from an independent tank brigade. However they are a pure tank force with no supporting combat arms.

The victory conditions in the original Panzerblitz scenario called the Russians having more victory point at the end of the game than the Germans. The Germans won if they had an equal number or more victory points than the Russians. Victory points were score purely by unit elimination. In the East Front II version these were easy to duplicate in the victory levels. There are no objective or exit hexes in the scenario.

An interesting historical side note; the Russian commander of the 8th Tank Regiment in this scenario, Lt Col Rotmistov, happened to be the real commander of the regiment at this time and in just 18 months would be the same person, as a general, in command of the Russian 5th Guards Tank Army at the Battle of Prokhorovka.

There really is not much variation to this scenario. The Germans are restricted to setting up in Opustoschenia. The Russians may enter on any side of the board, but due to time constraints, would only find it feasible to enter on the north or south edges as close to Opustoschenia as possible.

Conclusion

This marks the third installment of Panzerblitz scenario conversions. As their popularity grows, there will be more in near future. Until then, enjoy the scenarios.