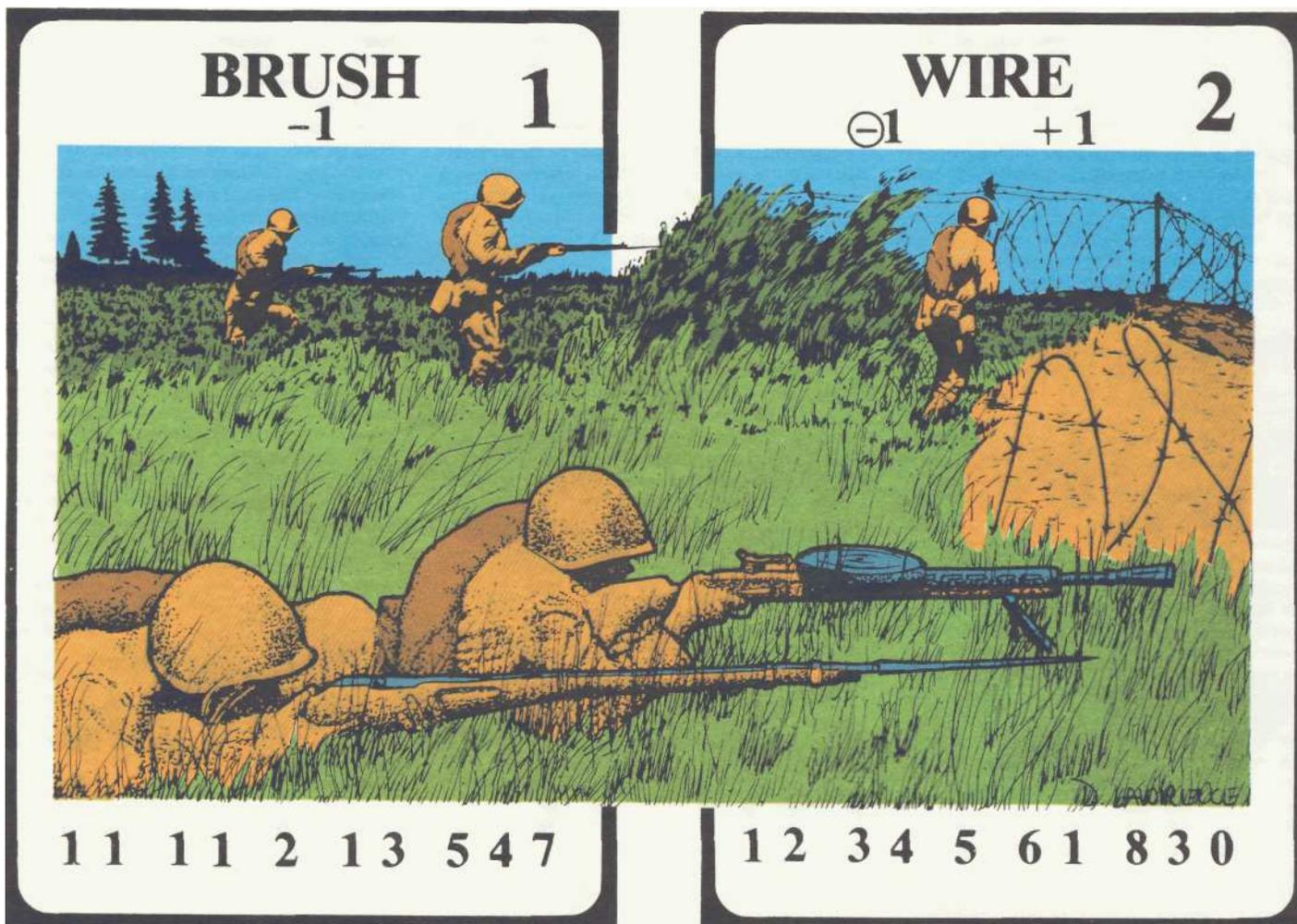


# PLAYING YOUR CARDS UPFRONT

## An Old Fashioned Card Playing Lesson

By Don Greenwood



Authoring "How to Win" articles for war game periodicals seemingly became unfashionable over a decade ago—the practice being derisively referred to as advocacy of "perfect plans". Perfect plans were no such thing of course. Wargames contain too many variables to be dismissed with a single course of action. Indeed, if a perfect plan did exist for one, it merely revealed a flawed product. The poorly developed wargame for which a single perfect strategy exists is not a game, but rather a puzzle which loses its value and allure with the discovery of the solution. Fortunately, *UPFRONT* labors under no such burden. During my 25 years in the hobby, I've never come across a game that more epitomizes my conception of what the perfect wargame should be. Indeed, after 12 years of game development, this is the first time I have been able to look back on one of my finished products with absolutely no remorse about what "should have been." Aside from the usual typos and proof-reading glitches, I am at a loss to describe how the game could have conceptually been any better. The second edition changes found elsewhere in this issue address only cosmetic errors, or clarifications to rare happenstance. Never have I seen a game blend such large doses of realism and playability into so successful a marriage. The lessons of squad level combat have never been so graphically displayed, nor the "Fog of War" been represented as effectively or effortlessly, [in short, those readers who

have grown over the years to share my taste in games, simply must have *UPFRONT*. It is, in my opinion, without parallel . . . either as a game or as a simulation. And now, with the commercial out of the way, let's see what we can do about playing your hand in *UPFRONT*.

### CARD COUNTING FOR FUN AND PROFIT

Like all card games, you can't claim to play *UPFRONT* with any great degree of skill unless you count cards at some level. Critics of the game may be quick to dismiss it as a game of chance and declare their preference for games of "skill". Freely translated, this means they can't count cards and prefer to play a game with 30+ pages of rules that they have read more recently and/or frequently than you. They will then proceed to demonstrate their "skill" by repeating the opening move they have memorized with great care during their last ten games and/or display their seemingly telekinetic control of the dice. On the other hand, veteran card players will hasten to defend card games as the ultimate test of skill kept constantly fresh by the ever changing fortunes of the draw. No *Hearts* or *Pinochle* player worth his salt will ever dismiss his game as one of chance, but that's because they count cards, and thereby transform their game into one of skill sweetened by the uncertainties of chance.

Very few games fall into the strictly skill category. Chess, *DIPLOMACY*, Dominoes, and Tiddlywinks are all that come readily to mind, and I gave them all up as boring years ago. I crave a game tinged with the uncertainties of chance that my skill can overcome. I doubt whether a Grand Master gets much of a charge dispatching a novice Chess player in three moves, but the greatest *FOOTBALL STRATEG Y* player in the world can be challenged and upset by a rank beginner even though he will probably win 15 out of 16 subsequent games. And so it is on the battlefield. A firefight may be many things, but it is never boring. Just ask anyone unfortunate enough to have been in one. I guarantee that boredom will not be among the emotions listed. The better armed, more experienced, or more numerous participants may have an advantage and be expected to prevail; but such results are by no means pre-ordained. Such is the role of fate on the battlefield. Should luck play any lesser role in our simulation? Assuming now that we've accepted the advisability of having a chance element in a wargame, let's turn our attention to how a good player can harness the luck element to his own advantage.

Card counting in *UPFRONT* is far different from the variety practiced in more conventional card games. A *Blackjack* player trying to beat a casino has only ten denominations of cards to observe and each of those is in equal proportions to



## THE AMERICANS:

SMOKE: 5/100%

MOVEMENT: 24/80%

CONCEALMENT: 13 (20)/60% (71%)

RALLY: 21 (62)/91% (97%)

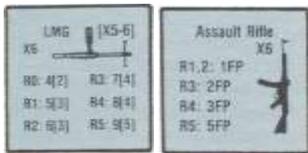
RADIO: 8/100% COWER 10/100%

MEN: 12 MORALE: 2.8 PANIC 4.3

The American has the luxury of a six-card hand, but can discard only two cards per turn and only if he takes no action during that turn. His advantage should be obvious . . . with a six-card hand he has the luxury of planning his moves to an extent far greater than any other nationality. He can stockpile the four principle components of a balanced hand (Rally, Fire, Move, and Terrain) while still discarding two cards per turn attempting to better his hand. These strengths are counterbalanced by the lowest Morale and Movement and the highest Cover capacity in the game. The net result is that the American should give extra weight to Movement and Concealment cards when discard time comes around.

The combination of his low morale and extra storage capacity should mean that the American never advances to Relative Range 2 or closer without a good terrain card already in hand to move into and an extra Movement card (preferably a Ford) in reserve to move quickly off of any suddenly appearing stream or wire obstacle. Conversely, his extra storage capacity allows an American to hold onto a Stream, or even a Marsh card, for an entire deck or more waiting for the opportunity to decimate a moving group. It takes courage (or foolhardiness) to advance against an American without either a Ford-Movement card in reserve or knowledge that the Stream cards have already been spent. Naturally, the deeper into the deck you delve, the more likely your American opponent is situated beyond a hidden stream. Therefore, the earliest moves are the safest.

The combination of his morale and movement capacity means that the American will seldom win the Patrol scenario by boldly moving into range chit 4. In any game that goes to the time limit, the American can expect 18 less Movement cards than any Japanese opponent and nine less than a German. Consequently, the American should think twice about strategies requiring him to do the lion's share of movement.



## THE GERMANS:

SMOKE: 5/40%

MOVEMENT: 27/90%

CONCEALMENT: 14 (22)/74% (79%)

RALLY: 23 (64)/100% (100%)

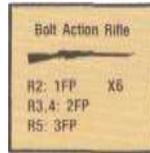
RADIO: 6/75% COWER 7/70%

MEN: 10 MORALE: 3.2 PANIC 3.9

The German five-card hand is generally believed to be the best in the game because it is the only hand of any line troops that allows a discard in the same turn as an action. The advantage is a strong one and more than makes up for the extra card advantage of the GI. The German is never tormented by a decision to either fire or discard, because he can always discard regardless of his actions. The German, alone of all the combatants, can add insult to injury by firing on a moving group and then dropping a Wire, Marsh, or Stream card on an already pinned group in the same turn. Every other player must decide between firing at a choice moving target or delaying them with a discard. The German can have his cake and eat it too. It is a tremendous advantage.

However, the German hand is not without its drawbacks. With a maximum discard capability of only one card per turn, the German player is in big trouble if he gets himself into a spot where he is unable to perform any action because he depends on his capability to use the cards in his hand to maximize the flow of cards. A German whose only groups are pinned and whose hand consists of Movement, Terrain, Cower, and unusable Fire cards is in difficulties, because he can draw only one card per turn in an effort to find the Rally or Concealment cards he desperately needs. Therefore, the German must be more alert to the need for a balanced hand than anyone. The German is the most difficult to back into a hole, but once there his chances of escaping unscathed are equally poor. The German who holds onto a Stream card and several high Fire cards in anticipation of an Allied advance which never comes is in big trouble if he is run out of Rally cards by an opponent who attacks him in place.

The German's strong suit is his Rally capacity. If anyone can afford to turn his back on a Rally 1 card in hopes of drawing a better one, it's him. The German also has a strong incentive to save delay cards due to the double whammy enticement of his dual fire/discard capability.



## THE RUSSIAN:

SMOKE: 0/0%

MOVEMENT: 30/100%

CONCEALMENT: 19 (28)/100% (100%)

RALLY: 19 (54)/83% (84%)

RADIO: 4/50% COWER 7/70%

MEN: 15 MORALE: 3.3 PANIC 3.9

The Russian hand capacity of four cards is much maligned—and not without good reason. A four-card hand makes maintenance of a balanced hand or planned moves extremely difficult. The Russian almost has to depend on the vagaries of chance to bring him the cards he needs. He often has to move without a terrain card in hand and must trust to luck to bring him one in his next draw. Fortunately for the Russian, he has other advantages which nullify his small hand capacity to a large extent. Even so, few new players opt to play the Russians, preferring instead to play the more larger and comfortable hand of the Americans. This is understandable; a four-card hand is not very reassuring, and until one plays with all the rules (including entrenchments which are introduced late in the Programmed Instruction format) the Russians do seem to get the short end of the stick.

However, all is not lost. The Russians can discard their entire hand if they take no action and need not count entrenchment attempts as full-fledged actions. Consequently, while the Russian is the most likely player to be short the card he needs, he will probably be without it for the shortest duration. And while the Russian can least afford to save terrain to move into, he has maximum use of Movement and Concealment cards to reduce this disadvantage. If the Russian can discard his entire hand, the odds are that he should be able to draw at least one Terrain or Concealment card for use next turn. Moreover, the Russian manpower advantage allows them to take a rather callous attitude towards casualties. A Russian short of Rally cards will seldom feel any need to stop an advance for a pinned man, especially a low morale one—and can afford to write him off in favor of a continued advance. His superior numbers should enable him to set up more groups and thereby take greater advantage of flanking fire and flanking movements. Once

the Russian closes the range, his numerical advantage, morale, and berserk status will give him the upper hand. Lastly, the Russian player should be cognizant of the existence of the two dual-action cards which he may play either as Movement or Concealment. While these cards are in his hand, his hand capacity is effectively increased to five cards and he should endeavor to keep them as long as possible.

On the negative side, however, the Russian suffers from a grievous lack of Rally cards and despite his lack of storage capacity can scarcely afford to ever discard one. Pity the poor Russian dealt three high Rally cards who knows he cannot afford to hold them all, nor can he afford to throw any away for he surely will have need of them eventually. Top that off with abysmal firepower until he closes the range, and the Russian has a hard time of it in the early going of most encounters.

(Being a developer has its advantages—including access to the, as yet unreleased, *BANZAI, UP FRONT Expansion Kit*. Those of you who thought I had nothing new to tell you are about to be surprised.)



## THE BRITISH:

SMOKE: 5/100%

MOVEMENT: 27/90%

CONCEALMENT: 14 (22)/74% (79%)

RALLY: 23 (64)/100% (100%)

RADIO: 6/75% COWER 5/50%

MEN: 10 MORALE: 3.1 PANIC 4.1

The British five-card hand is a blend of both the German and American. It shares the American two-card discard capability during any turn in which no action is performed and is able to use both American and German Split Action card capabilities. This gives it one-dual action card (#158) usable as either Movement or Smoke and the smallest Cover card count in the game. Despite this, the British hand would still be decidedly second rate to either the German or American were it not for a special firepower bonus rule. In recognition of the British renown for calmness under fire and special emphasis on marksmanship training, the British may deduct one firepower factor requirement from any attack they make (down to a minimum of one firepower). This firepower bonus can be used more than once per turn and may be switched from group to group, which means its incidence of Use is far greater than one would expect. The addition of this single firepower factor makes British fire among the most effective in the game, and makes the British especially deadly adherents of the *Cross Fire* attack technique.



## THE JAPANESE:

SMOKE: 0/0%

MOVEMENT: 30/100%

CONCEALMENT: 19 (28)/100% (100%)

RALLY: 19 (54)/83% (84%)

RADIO: 4/50% COWER 7/70%

MEN: 13 MORALE: 3.6 PANIC 3.6

The Japanese are perhaps the most interesting nationality in the game—which is saying a lot for a

four-card hand and a two-card maximum discard during any turn in which no action is taken. Without even the capacity to throw in their entire hand, one is tempted to dismiss them as a poor cousin to the Russians (whose Split Action cards they must use). However, the Japanese, like the British, benefit from special rules which more than compensate them for the worst hand capacity in the game.

The Japanese squad does not break until it suffers 75% losses (compared to the 51% losses of non-Asiatic forces). This is a tremendous advantage in any game approaching even attrition. Furthermore, the Japanese player is allowed free discard of any Cover card regardless of actions performed or other cards discarded so that the Japanese player will never be struck with the same worthless card two turns in a row. The Japanese player can play Movement cards without hindering his discard capability and thereby greatly increases the flow of cards through his hand. Most importantly, the Japanese overcomes in part his poor Rally capacity with a *Banzai* rule which allows him to rally pinned men without use of a Rally card by declaring an all-out charge on an opposing group. *Banzai* attacks are not to be taken lightly as they greatly increase the charging group's vulnerability, but as a last resort they can be a devastating tactic.

All of these special capabilities coupled with the highest morale, movement, and concealment concentrations in the game make the Japanese a very viable force despite the lowest firepower and Panic values in the game. The Japanese are the hardest to pin, but the easiest to kill, and consequently the most mobile force in the game. The Japanese squad is built for maneuver and without movement cards it will wither on the vine. Nearly every workable Japanese strategy involves closing the range to Relative Range 3 as quickly as possible, and as such, its play is not far removed from that of the other four-card hand—the Russians.

## FORMING GROUPS

In perusing the initial reviews of this game, the only consistent criticism that I've observed has been a stated fear that the game may grow stale quickly due to the limitations of what you can do with a maximum of four groups to a side. The theory of these novice players has been that they will discover the perfect way to play every scenario (i.e., that they will decide what group sizes constitute the most efficient use of a side's resources and that by applying that formula to every game) and that play will eventually evolve to stereotyped luck of the draw. Balderdash! I believe in making my own luck! After virtually hundreds of playings, I have yet to encounter two alike and each has presented me with a myriad of decisions to make which tantalized me with the knowledge that my decisions did make a difference and were based on facts, yet confounded me by denying me a perfect solution. Furthermore, what seems to work in one scenario is often foolish in the next. While the tactics of the game remain largely the same, the strategy varies a great deal from one scenario to the next. I've also run into numerous players who maintain that one side or the other can't possibly win. I then either beat them myself or introduce them to someone with exactly the opposite theory. All of this brings us full circle to my opening arguments—there is no perfect plan for *UP FRONT*, only knowledge based on solid analysis which can aid you in your trek through its adventures. So, as a final exercise, let's examine what I believe to be the optimum opening group compositions for a Meeting of Patrols.

**GERMAN:** The German bears the burden of initial set up which is only partially compensated by the first move and placement of the first terrain card. The latter can be a considerable advantage, but only when a Marsh or Stream card is available; thus the

burden of initial set up is usually just that because it always confers on the opponent the ability to react to the initial display of German intentions while he still has freedom to deploy his own groups. The weakest, or least numerous, group is always Group A since A's freedom of lateral maneuver is abstractly restricted by the "board's" edge. If it became necessary for Group A to move laterally to block an opposing Group B or C, it would be restricted not only by the lateral distance involved, but also by the presence of its own Group B blocking the way. Furthermore, Group A is "adjacent" to only two groups while Group B is adjacent to three. Thus, the player who deploys first must always set up his power base in the middle for the maximum flexibility of fire and movement to both left and right. Obviously, the SL and ASL must be in separate groups to maximize use of potential Smoke cover.

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With but ten men in the German squad, I've found it necessary to make do with only two groups, usually resorting to a six-man fire base and a four-man maneuver group. Against the Russians, I've found the 4 + 6 combination to be the most flexible in terms of providing both a substantial fire base (9 FP at RR 1) and a maneuver group capable of winning by reaching range chit 4 with four men. The fire base includes the LMG in position 6 and the ASL in position 5 as the assistant crewman. Obviously, a dependable man is needed as the ass't gunner, and the ASL is among the most dependable available and his Machine Pistol is of little value before the action closes to Relative Range 4. Once RR 4 is reached, the highest morale rifleman available should switch to crew the LMG during any lull which presents itself. Otherwise, Hessel can abandon his assistant crewman duties at RR 5 if the need presents itself. The SL and the three best riflemen form the maneuver group because they are the most likely to close to RR5 with the Russians and are better able to withstand Close Combat and the added danger of extra movement. Should the SL lead the fire group, he should occupy the sixth position rather than the LMG.

Against an American squads' long range FP, however, I've found the German fire base to be too fragile and prefer to use the three best riflemen in the fire base and the three weakest in the maneuver group. The latter tends to move under only optimal conditions and generally stays close to the fire base for possible individual transfers unless the Americans have been badly pinned. The SL remains with the lesser group because the fire base is the more likely group to be placed in harm's way on a hilltop while the maneuver group may well take cover in a Gully. A pinned SL is to be avoided at all times.

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Many players prefer to put their faith in the biggest fire base which the rules and their resources will allow, which in this case means an eight-man fire group and a two man throw away. I've never cared much for this approach as it smacks too much of putting all your eggs in one basket. Large groups insure maximum use of Fire cards and the most efficient use of large Rally cards and Concealment cards, but have several disadvantages including a lack of flexibility. A large group can throw a lot of lead, but it also attracts a lot. The larger the group, the more targets an opponent gets for every Fire Strength point he can deliver. This, in turn, means that a large group spends a lot of its time with at least one man pinned and is therefore hard to move and very vulnerable to Wire, Marsh, and Stream cards. Just as important, is the weakness of the two-man group which has but a single FP at RR 1 and whose use for Cross Fire attacks is consequently much restricted. More importantly, if this group gets into trouble it is easily wiped out and is a prime target for Cross Fire or Sniper attacks when either

or both men are pinned. The consequences of such a loss are far more meaningful than the loss of two men. The opponent derives an immediate increase in his card hand capacity due to your being reduced to one group. Moreover, the German, restricted to a one card discard capability, can easily generate a poor hand because he is now reduced to a maximum of one action per turn and the performance of actions is the main German method of maintaining card flow through his hand. Although I don't care for this set up, different opponents exhibit different tendencies and I will use it occasionally, if only to try something different. When I do, however, the throwaway group is always composed of the SL and the least valuable rifleman. The SL goes here both because he is less likely to be pinned with the non-target group, and he is the most likely to survive a fire attack. The major function of this group is simply to survive. Unfortunately, such a deployment increases the SL's vulnerability to Sniper attack. Consequently, the German should give extra weight to Sniper Check decisions when using this deployment.

**RUSSIAN:** The basis of Russian strategy is usually how to get to RR 2 as quickly and with as few losses as possible so as to be able to start trading shots with the German instead of practicing his javelin-catching act. I have found that the most effective means of doing this is to try to win the game with an End Run to the Victory Conditions.

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Basically, this consists of the two weakest riflemen in A, a fire base in B consisting of the LMG and from four to six of the mediocre riflemen, another minimum group in C composed of the two riflemen with a morale of 2, and four to six of the best riflemen in D. The SL should not be used to crew the LMG; his semi-automatic rifle being slightly more valuable should the group have to fire while on the move. Group A will probably never move nor fire—it's sole purpose is to allow Flanking Fire on the German A Group by the fire group should the opportunity present itself. The Fire group's job is to put whatever firepower it can manage into German Group B to prevent it from interfering with the maneuver group. Naturally, with only 3 FP at RRO and 4 FP at RR 1, its ability to throw lead is limited to the 14 weakest Fire cards—a performance even the presence of a Hero card will not improve. Therefore, the Fire Group should advance whenever possible in an effort to reach RR 2. Although the highest priority for Movement cards must be reserved for the Maneuver group, there will be times when the two can move together or the Fire group should have priority. For example, if the only terrain card in hand is a Hill, the fire group should move forward—whereas if a Gully is available, the maneuver group makes the jump. Less obvious, would be the availability of a Fire card usable at the next range, or perhaps the pinned or weapon malfunction status of the other group. Group C likewise exists only to allow Flanking Fire on a German Group C and to allow the maneuver group to start at the extreme right of the field. If circumstances allow, Group C should attempt to move parallel to the fire group to allow for the possibility of an Individual Transfer. Group D's task is to charge forward to Range Chit 4 as fast as possible and claim victory. If Movement and terrain cards are quick in coming, the game can be over in moments; if not, the threat of such discomfits the German and hampers his flexibility more than any other plan I've seen. The advantage of this set up is that the Russian maneuver group is not adjacent to the Germans and therefore the RR of any fire on it is reduced by one until the German makes a Lateral Group transfer to C. If the Russian gets the first Movement cards, he can be at Range Chit 2 before the German can muster more than four firepower factors to use against him.

This deployment telegraphs its intentions and any German worth his sauerkraut ration will use his first Movement card to laterally transfer his Group B to C and his second to laterally transfer A to B. However, this too can be advantageous for a Russian with a Marsh or Stream card, because he can now afford to hold onto those delay cards knowing that the German will move as soon as possible and that every turn he doesn't move is another turn of advantage for the Russian deployment goals. The German move, being lateral rather than forward, can now be halted very surely, if only temporarily, by a Marsh card. The tricky part is in the numbers of riflemen for B and D. I originally used only a four-man Maneuver group, but the drawback of this was that a single sniper shot could nullify a victory and three men at RR 4 is a big comedown from four at Range Chit 4. Obviously, the more men which were added to D, the larger the margin for error. One could even abandon a pinned man or two to panic in order to move quickly to Range Chit 4. The danger of having too much strength on the right, of course, is that the left becomes too weak. Should the German concentrate his firepower on your fire base he might quickly nullify it and then have an open road to advancing his own Group A to Range Chit 4. For that reason, I favor splitting the difference and going with a six-man fire base and a five-man maneuver group. A Russo-Japanese meeting engagement presents an entirely different set of parameters, so for the sake of brevity we'll end the discussion here.

**AMERICAN:** The best American set up has proven elusive, and after hundreds of games I still find myself experimenting with different combinations. One such experiment, a 2-6-4 alignment went over like a lead balloon and is recorded for posterity in this issue's Series Replay. The problem is a combination of the American's low morale, lack of a crewed LMG, and the use of machine pistols by both of its leaders. I would much prefer to use the carbine-equipped SL or the '45 variation with two BARs. Ideally, machine pistols should be used with maneuver groups because they are the more likely to become engaged at close ranges. However, you can't afford to throw away the large American smoke advantage by including both Machine-Pistol equipped leaders in the same group. Moreover, the one assigned to the fire group is relatively useless at long range because the BAR does not benefit from a crewing provision.

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Despite these flaws I usually set up with the SL and three best riflemen as the maneuver group in A, and the rest forming an eight-man fire base in B. Although the latter can match the German firepower at RR 1 with nine FP, it is a far more fragile force by being composed of four men with a morale of 2 or less and eight targets in all. As such, it is extremely easy to pin and therefore difficult to move or entrench. If it doesn't get into good terrain fast, it can be put in a hole from which it may never recover.

This usually means that the American is inclined to play a very conservative game, keeping movement to a minimum, and insisting on the best terrain before chancing an advance. The Americans win relatively few games by reaching Range Chit 4 unopposed, but if I am feeling particularly frisky or wish to vary my tactics for a familiar opponent, I often forget about trying to equal the German firepower and go with a seven-man firebase. This allows the maneuvering group to be a bit more adventuresome in the advance to the extent that it can still lose a man and remain a threat to win the game outright while reducing the sheer size of the fire group which makes it such a tempting target. Given the large hand capacity of the Americans, there is also something to be said for two equal groups of six and a dependence on Cross Fire at-

tacks. As far as that goes, I'm still not convinced that the 2-6-4 set up is without merit. The flanking fire opportunities on B which cannot be returned against C seems a worthwhile gamble considering the price is just two morale 1 riflemen which are often a detriment anyway. Analysis of an American vs. Japanese encounter is omitted for the sake of brevity, especially in light of the drastic squad composition changes for US Marines.

**JAPANESE:** The Japanese, like the Germans, share the burden of the initial set up, but because they are so movement-oriented the ability to move and place terrain first is more of a compensation. The Japanese deployment is obviously a variation of the Russian End Run handicapped by initial set up and two less men. However, the Japanese have several unique advantages which compensate them well for these shortcomings.

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Although they have no smoke capacity, the leaders must be deployed separately in the two largest groups to maximize the *Banzai* capacity. All the groups can be moved forward because the Japanese need not fear their squad breaking due to 51% casualties, although movement priority remains D, B, C, and A as was the case with the Russians. However, both the *Banzai* rules and the uncrewed (and undependable) nature of their LMG increases the importance of the individual transfers of C into B. Otherwise, A and C should move forward if for no other reason than to draw fire away from B and D. Keeping in mind that the Japanese can play Movement cards without hampering their discard capability, it is hard to envision conditions under which the Japanese would ever discard a Movement card.

**BRITISH:** The British, having the advantage of seeing the Japanese deployment, should probably try to combat it by setting up a six-man firebase in C which is adjacent to 11 of the 13 Japanese men. This way they need not be immediately concerned with a lateral transfer to C and can still call upon 9 FP factors to deal with the first Japanese move of any consequence to RR 1. When the availability of Movement cards and the lack of Fire cards for targets dictates, individual transfers from B to C can increase the firepower base with less danger or disruption than laterally transferring an entire group.

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Group A consists of the SL and his MP and the worst riflemen—both of whom can do without the excitement and bullets that the larger group would attract. The best riflemen and the Bren Gun compose Group C where they can put out the most firepower and also represent the best chance to withstand a *Banzai* charge or Close Combat. Small groups are much more viable for the British due to the utility of their + 1 firepower bonus. Indeed, one might well make a case for them being the best squad with which to use Cross Fire tactics, and therefore increasing the number of their groups from the standard two. However, against the Germans or a more concentrated Japanese deployment I'd be inclined to use a more conventional 2-8 or 4-6 approach.

## THE KILLING GROUND

The Killing Ground Chart lists the maximum firepower of each nationality's basic squad in the Patrol scenario at each of the game's six ranges. The chart does not attempt to hypothesize about the makeup of individual groups or the prospect of losses decreasing these relative values. However, it is safe to assume that these values represent the maximum firepower that can be exerted from each range and that as the range closes these values will decrease in proportion to the level of casualties sustained. Nonetheless, it is useful as a quick reference

to determine the optimum range each nationality seeks to sustain its firefight for as long as possible, tempered by the other requirements of the scenario in play,

## THE KILLING GROUND CHART

Squad FP/ Range	0	1	2	3	4	5
U.S.	2	12	12	24	<b>28</b>	42
German	4	12	13	22	25	36
Russian	3	4	<b>18</b>	<b>32</b>	33	47
British*	3	<b>12</b>	13	23	25	36
Japanese	2	3	16	29	29	<b>42</b>

\*Add 1 FP for each additional attack in excess of one. Optimum Relative Range for each nationality is stressed in bold.

For example, due to their excellent belt-fed, crewed LMG the German squad enjoys a slight firepower advantage over all nationalities at ranges in excess of 400 meters. Unfortunately for the German, he won't be able to hold many opponents at that range for very long and it is doubtful whether he should wait until his opponent closes the range before doing so himself. In the Patrol scenario, no one can afford to stay at Range Chit 0. Movement to at least Range Chit 1 is necessary both for the establishment of Aggressive Action Victory Points and to deny an immediate enemy win by occupation of Range Chit 4 with four men by either infiltration or massed Relative Range 5 firepower. Given the necessity to move, it is often best to move first so as to be in position to greet the other guy when he moves to an even closer Relative Range. Note that the German's firepower advantage over the Russian increases dramatically at Relative Range 1 while dropping to a slim disadvantage against the American and British (due to the automatic weapons' moving fire advantage of the former and the more versatile + 1 firepower advantage of the latter).

The most obvious need, of course, is for the Japanese and Russians to reach Relative Ranges 2 and 3 where their more numerous riflemen can neutralize the advantages of their adversaries. The American strength at Relative Range 4 is not so pronounced that the American should actively seek firefights at that range. Rather, proportionally little firepower is gained between Relative Range 3 and 4, but the American stands to gain the most from such a closing of the range. The ultimate truth, however, is that the nationalities with but a four-card hand capacity want to reach Relative Range 5 as soon as possible. Only there can the restraints of their smaller hands be minimized by the advantage of numbers and morale in Close Combat, and the added benefits of the Berserk and *Banzai* rules.

## PLAYING YOUR HAND

To quote Kenny Rogers, "You've gotta know when to hold 'em; when to fold 'em"; that decision isn't always as easy as it appears at first glance. For a few examples, let's take a look at the play of specific cards. **TERRAIN:**

**PREPARE FOR PLAY:** The first decision to be made in any game is how to play the terrain one's been dealt during "Prepare for Play". Too many players drop the terrain they've been dealt at the outset without a second thought. However, if a player has a Movement card to go with that terrain he is better off holding onto the terrain in expectation of moving into it on turn 2—especially if he moves first or if it is a particularly effective piece of terrain that he would like to occupy for a while. A player with a five- or six-card hand might want to consider holding onto such a card even without a Movement card—especially if he has plenty of other cards he wants to discard. A player with a four-card hand, however, probably can't afford that luxury and should place his terrain cards rather than wait for a Movement card.

About the only exception to placement of a beneficial card during "Prepare For Play" when one also has a Movement card, is when a player can set up his fire group on a Hill, and he already has a usable Fire card in his hand. This will occur for the German player most often and represents an especially irresistible opportunity when used in conjunction with a Stream or Marsh card.

If ever there is a terrain card that should be played during "Prepare For Play" it is the Marsh card because it cannot be refused (as it normally can later during play). Such an opportunity should not be kept waiting in order to place beneficial terrain on one's own group first. Placement of a Stream is not as pressing as a Stream card can never be rejected. Indeed, an American or German player may want to hold onto a Stream card for play at a closer range when he also has usable Fire cards in his hand. If beneficial terrain is placed, it should be allocated to the fire group first, because the maneuver group(s) will be moving as soon as possible anyway.



**BUILDINGS:** It doesn't take many mental gymnastics to realize that — 3 Buildings cards should be saved until they can be played. However, in most scenarios (including our Patrol) the first five Buildings cards to be revealed are cast out of the deck. This brings up the question of how long one holds onto a Buildings card while waiting for it to be activated. Naturally, the more Buildings which have been discarded previously, the shorter time one can expect to wait. Yet, like most problems in *UP FRONT*, there is no set answer and one has to reach this conclusion based on many contributing factors—such as the current makeup of his hand, the board situation, how long he expects to stay in that terrain, and the likelihood that his opponent too is saving a Buildings card. In general, unless one's hand is really garbage, no thought should be given to saving a Buildings card until at least three have been revealed, and then usually only with the American's six-card hand or a - 3 Buildings card. The four-card hands can rarely afford to hold onto a Buildings card for long; but they can extract some small measure of revenge by confounding the card counting habits of their adversaries who can by playing their useless Buildings cards as Open Ground, thereby delaying the opponent's use of the terrain and clogging his hand with an ineffectual card. Such cards need not be revealed when returned to the deck and, should enough such opportunities arise, can delay the appearance of the necessary fifth Buildings card into the second deck.

**BRUSH:** What good is such a lowly terrain card you might ask? "Better than nothing" would be the easiest reply. But as the lowest value beneficial terrain, Brush has a very real value as a delay card in the absence of a Marsh or Stream. In Scenario B, in order to qualify for Aggressive Action Victory Points a group must occupy Buildings. Chances are that any moving group late in a City Fight scenario has his sights set on a Buildings card held smugly in

his hand and if it is late enough you can ruin his day by ushering him into Brush instead. At the very least, you will have delayed him by forcing him to reject the Brush and move into his Buildings at his original range hit. Even if he accepts it and moves on you will have bought yourself some time with which to draw the Fire or delay cards you need to repulse him. As for our Patrol scenario, Brush still has its uses. Players, especially American players, are creatures of habit and many will refuse to move under any but the most dire of circumstances unless they have a - 2 TEM or better terrain card to move into. Such conservative players can be deprived of either their hefty terrain-security blanket or their advance by discarding a Brush card in their way. Such tactics must be used sparingly, however, or an adversary will learn to bluff his way into terrain he hasn't got. Usually (except in Scenario B) only the American can afford to hold onto a Brush card for lack of a better delay card and such occurrences are chance encounters, but dropping Brush on a Russian or Japanese opponent is rarely a good idea as they usually welcome any terrain they can get. One must also be careful not to get overzealous in this business of discarding terrain. For example, suppose you have just discarded a Marsh card on an advancing group in a Gully which was rejected and thereby turned the advance into a sideways move. Having already deprived your opponent of advancing, is it really worthwhile to discard another delay card on that group which he can reject, thereby negating his sideways move altogether and allowing him to advance once again in the safety of the Gully by playing another Movement card? However, outside the realm of a Gully, any non-flanking or non-lateral transfer sideways move is obviously intended to better a group's terrain and you can rarely go wrong by providing your opponent with some Brush for his trouble, because rejecting it also burns his Movement card.



**STREAM:** The two Stream cards would be among the most valuable in the deck simply because they cannot be rejected, but they also enjoy a number of side effects which make them far more devastating than their 0 TEM would imply alone. Streams not only require a sideways move to exit, they also carry a 50% likelihood of failure if a Ford is unavailable. Indeed, I vividly recall one game in which I burnt seven straight Movement cards trying to ford a Stream to no avail. By the time I drew a Ford card, my group was so thoroughly pinned, I couldn't play it. That stream resembled the Little Big Horn after Custer's Last Stand. Streams are especially bad news to Americans who suffer from a shortage of movement anyway and whose low morale makes them especially unfond of 0 TEM. All of which is impressive enough, but when one considers that heavy weapons can't be fired from a Stream, LMGs therein must use their bracketed values, all Fire Strength is reduced by one, and that no weapon can be repaired while in a Stream, it behooves one to do everything possible to prolong his adversary's wet feet as long as possible. Numerous small attacks are

preferable to one large attack with the expectation of pinning the opponent so that he cannot attempt to ford. Once an enemy has forded the Stream, remember that he cannot reject a terrain placement without going back into the Stream; so discarding a Marsh card on him takes preference over almost any action you might care to make. Lastly, keep in mind that premature discard of a Stream is no cause for celebration. The American player especially has the card-hand capacity to hold onto a Stream for play against a bigger group or at a closer range when the firepower he can follow up with will be greater. Indeed, an American with no usable Fire card may be wise to allow initial advances to pass unhindered in hopes of playing his ace in the hole at a more opportune time.

**MARSH:** Marsh is an extremely good delay card because almost no sane attacker will accept it, but it seldom gets anybody in serious trouble for that very reason and therefore is rarely held for more than a few turns (and almost never in a four-card hand). However, Marsh can become an extremely powerful 1-2 punch when held in conjunction with a Stream card as alluded to above and this is a prized combination—especially by an American on the defense with the hand capacity to accommodate it. As it requires two Movement cards to exit with no hope for smoke (this permitting at least one + 2 attack by any fire group), a Marsh card should never be accepted unless the opponent has committed the ultimate *faux pas* of playing it on a group which has reached Range Chit 4 and can thereby claim victory by occupying beneficial terrain. Even if the moving group does not plan to move further, the — 1 penalty for fire from a Marsh and the difficulty of infiltration therefrom make acceptance of Marsh terrain under almost any conditions a highly dubious deci-



**GULLY:** A Gully can be either an extremely valuable piece of terrain or a worthless one—depending on one's goals in the scenario. A player rarely wants to put his fire base in a Gully because doing so leaves him little opportunity to contest his opponent's advances with fire attacks. For this very reason, the Gully can act as a valuable delay card when discarded onto the opponent's principal fire-base group. However, such tactics are risky because the opponent may well have another Movement card already in hand and be quite happy to accept the Gully as a safe lane to yet another advance. The German player, however, can employ his luxury of dual action/discard capability to observe the results of his fire on such a moving group and if he does pin the group he can then decide to dump the Gully, confident that his adversary will be blinded therein for at least several turns if he accepts it.

A Gully discard is also a great follow up for the Stream combination placement (provided you want him in the Gully). Just how bad you want him in a Gully will depend not only on the amount of his firepower that you blind, but also on your own ability to take advantage of that blindness with your own Movement and (preferably) terrain cards. Ob-

viously, if you have a group on a Hill the extent of his blindness is not total; but if you are also blessed with usable Fire cards for that Hill group, the chances of keeping your opponent in that Gully blinded to the advance of your maneuver group gives this move the possibility of being a game winner. For the most part, however, Gully cards will be hoarded to play on one's own movement group(s) to allow them to advance free of fire—especially at dangerous Range Chit 3 from where an uncontested advance to Range Chit 4 results in victory in the Patrol scenario. The shortest patrols are usually those in which the same player has managed to parlay all the Gully cards into a quick advance to the Victory Conditions. A player who knows that the Stream cards of the current deck have been accounted for can also use a Gully to make a safe play of a Movement card, thus taking an extra card out of his hand and increasing his chances of drawing a needed card. He can leave the group perpetually moving without fear of drawing fire so long as he remains out of Relative Range 5 and the enemy is not on a Hill. A Gully is also the optimum terrain in which to place your mortar—freeing it from all but hilltop or indirect fire while still allowing outgoing fire.

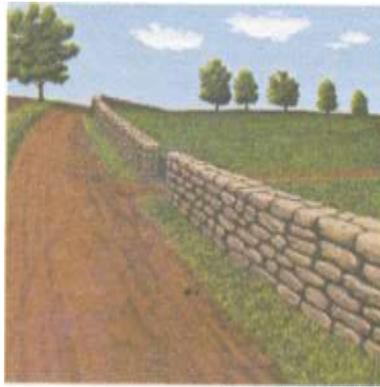


**HILL:** Occupation of the high ground is amply rewarded; the + 1 attack modification for outgoing fire more than compensates for the relatively low protective TEM. This advantage is especially felt at Range 0 where the + 1 modification has its strongest proportional effect when used in conjunction with an effective ranged weapon and can give a solid initial edge by hindering the initial movements of the opponent, thereby allowing one's own troops to make the first important advances. Hills are more valuable in the early going as one generally likes better TEM when advancing at close range and one rarely gets the opportunity to entrench at Relative Range 4 or 5. A Hill, being both a sought-after position and one with a low TEM, requires more than the usual consideration when it comes time to weigh the relative value of an entrenchment attempt against that of a discard. This is even true on the other side of the table when deciding on targets. Other considerations being equal, it is often wiser to take a Fire 0 vs. a hilltop than a Fire 1 or 2 against other terrain. More often than not, your opponent has placed his best Fire Group on a Hill, and as such, it represents his biggest threat to you—even before one considers the added + 1 modification to the attack. It is usually therefore more important to pin men on the hill than elsewhere—not only to reduce the firepower threat to yourself, but to prevent him from entrenching on that Hill. Lastly, if you are playing a scenario with an AFV/IG, the ultimate position in the game is to get that AFV/IG on a Hill—especially if the opposition has ordnance which can be affected by Hull Down status.

**WOODS:** There is little to be said about Woods in the Patrol scenario. The fact that their -2 TEM can be improved by entrenchment makes them close to the best beneficial terrain in the game. However,

the introduction of indirect fire weapons and AFVs thickens the plot somewhat. If the opponent has offboard artillery or a mortar, Woods lose their — 2 TEM to such fire and may be considered inferior to most other types of terrain. The player must judge for himself how serious the indirect fire threat is in that scenario in assessing the relative value of Woods vis-à-vis other terrain. In scenarios containing an AFV, Woods take on an added value as a delay card—forcing AFVs to waste a Movement card in the sideways mode upon exit.

The already valuable Woods, Gully, and Stream cards take on added importance as *Bog* cards when an AFV is involved. An AFV is such a powerful force in the game, that the highest priority should be given to discomfit/safeguard it at every opportunity. Terrain cards requiring the AFV to make a Bog check upon entrance will usually serve to turn the iron monsters away for another turn and thereby burn one of what is hopefully a short supply of Movement cards. Moreover, if the defender has ordnance capable of hurting the monster, he is afforded a flank shot as well. Under such circumstances, these cards become extremely valuable as discards although their value as protective terrain is enhanced even further by their added protection against Overrun attacks (as are Brush, Walls, and Smoke; 29.4).



**WALLS:** About the only thing that needs be said about a Wall card is the obvious desire to place it directly opposite the opposing Fire group. Should the disparity in firepower potential of opposing groups be considerable, one might well give credence to placing the Wall card opposite the fire-base at the expense of placing a more valuable terrain card on a less important group. Otherwise, one need only be concerned about keeping Walls away from opposing AFVs so as to avoid giving them Hull Down benefits in addition to their normal advantages.

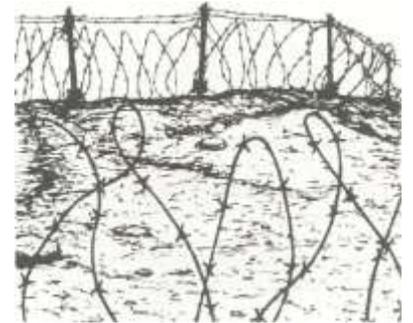
**OPEN GROUND:** As Open Ground can never be discarded onto an opponent, its use is limited to acts of desperation by the owning player. Nonetheless, there are times when such placement is advised. Obviously, one hits Open Ground only to remove the + 1 modifiers of movement status or to cease movement so as to be able to fire effectively without the halving effect of moving fire. Usually this occurs to the player with only a four-card hand who has moved in hopes of drawing a terrain card in the very near future, but sooner or later affects almost everyone. However, if one has kept track of the Stream cards (and Minefields if applicable) and doesn't mind canceling his advance by rejecting a Marsh card, there is little reason to hit the dirt at the first sign of a hand devoid of terrain cards—especially if you don't have any cards you care to discard, or conversely, are in need of a large draw and can't afford the luxury of a single action to stop your advance in Open Ground. For example: if the card you have to use as Open Ground is a Concealment — 1 or Rally card, aren't you better off canceling the + 1 Movement modifier of your opponent's fire with that

Concealment card or rallying the men he pins while waiting for the fortuitous draw of a more satisfactory terrain card? Surely, if you are moving out of beneficial terrain that movement modifier is at least nullified by the terrain just left. Clearly then, it is worth drawing even the arrival of the dreaded Stream card to stay moving in Building —3 terrain with a - 2 TEM rather than to do a belly flop in the open with a 0 TEM.

So when is the belly flop preferable to a dash through the vines? Well . . . 1) When you have a Fire card that you believe will give your opponent enough problems of his own so that he will leave your public gathering alone *and* it can be delivered only by your non-moving group. It would help to also have a Concealment card that at least makes up the difference of the TEM surrendered by your belly flop. 2) When stuck on a Wire card with no immediate hope of getting off, especially as a non-German player when you have a Cover card to be rid of and actions to perform. 3) When you're so desperate for a Rally card that you'll do anything to increase your Draw capability for the turn. 4) When you've pushed providence as far as you dare, and you decide to get out from under the volcano you're sitting on in the form of those two consecutive movement cards.

*(Because I'm a Nice Guy:* There is one instance in which it pays to forget your warlike nature and contribute beneficial terrain to your opponent. . . even if he does want it. Should you be fortunate enough to kill a moving man whose principle weapon is of great value you may wish to discard whatever terrain card you can muster on his group to prevent recovery of that weapon.)

**ARTIFICIAL TERRAIN CARDS:** Smoke and Wire are not terrain cards and great pains have been taken in the rulebook to make that distinction very clear. Not wishing to lead anyone astray, I point out that fact again. A discussion of Minefield and Pillbox cards is omitted as not being germane to the self-proclaimed limitations of this article (i.e., cards applicable to the Meeting of Patrols scenario).



**WIRE:** As described in both the rules and the Designer's Notes, Wire abstractly represents far more than just manmade obstacles to movement. It is intended as a form of fate card which can take many forms in discomfiting the enemy—of which the Wire representation is only the most graphic and easily grasped. It could also represent an imagined enemy movement which diverts attention or freezes a group in its tracks, or any of a host of other battlefield phenomenon. It is important to grasp this because all too often players feel it should be treated as terrain (i.e., requiring a Movement card before it can be discarded on a moving group). While such use gets the maximum benefit out of a Wire card, the pressures of the game frequently dictate its use without benefit of movement. As a result it is the single most versatile card in the game. One would be hard pressed to define a situation outside the realm of an ending game in which a Wire card cannot be used to advantage even though it can be used only as a discard.

Optimum use is to drop it on a moving group, hopefully in combination with some means of pinning a man therein (thereby increasing the value of the card to a German or elite troop player who enjoys dual fire/discard capability). If the moving group contains a pinned man or lacks a movement card, it may have to consider going to ground—which will ultimately eliminate three Movement cards (the one already played, the one required to remove the Wire card, and the one that will have to eventually be played to get the group out of Open Ground). The only alternative is to remain moving with a +2 modifier to the last played terrain card. Obviously, every effort should be made to maintain the pinned status of the group so as to prolong its stay on these painful barbs. It is the cumulative effect of the Wire's +1 modifier to that of both Movement cards and other Wire cards which makes this card so devastating. Usually if an entire group is blown away at other than Relative Range 5, a Wire card can be found beneath the bodies.

However, Wire cards are often pressed into service without waiting to catch a group on the move. Any substantial group on a Hill is a prime target for Wire because it not only negates the +1 Fire effect of the Hill but reduces crew-served weapons to their bracketed value, and prevents entrenchment attempts, all prime considerations when facing a large firepower concentration. Multiple Wire cards can reduce a position's TEM to manageable levels as well as penalizing its fire. Four-card hands seldom have room for delay cards, requiring them to be discarded as soon as possible for whatever benefit they might bring. Lastly, a player needing a Rally card is then thankful for the chance to discard a Wire on whatever group is bringing fire to bear both to reduce its fire and to feed his hopes for a Rally replacement draw.

While Wire may not be placed in Streams or Marshes, they make excellent greeting cards for groups emerging from same. Although Wire can be used to cause a Bog check, it is far too valuable to be used in that capacity given the small likelihood of success against all but wheeled vehicles. Wire should also never be used against a flanked enemy group in an entrenched hill position (or any other good defensive position), because removing the Wire card by placement of a Movement card allows the defender to void the flank as well while maintaining his position.

**SMOKE:** Smoke hinders outgoing fire as well as incoming fire, and for that reason is frequently not played, but discarded unused—especially by those with a five-card hand capacity. However, the American's six-card hand and high percentage of Cover cards frequently allows him to hold onto a Smoke card for lack of anything better and the card is not without its uses. The added -1 TEM makes it a valuable precursor to any movement, albeit one which telegraphs an impending move to a waiting enemy who may be encouraged to hold onto a delay or next-range-effective Fire card a little longer as a consequence. And any pinned group lacking a Rally card or stuck in a Wire or Stream is always happy to have a Smoke card or two. The cumulative effects of Smoke also makes it quite productive as an infiltration tool (13.27), and although the American's low morale doesn't make him a likely candidate for initiating close combat once at Relative Range 5, it is still to his advantage to be the infiltrator rather than the infiltratee. Unfortunately for him, however, Smoke affects infiltration attempts both coming and going, so placing smoke at Relative Range 5 would give his opponent first crack at the infiltration effort and probably shouldn't be considered unless the opponent is still moving, or in Marsh, Stream, or Wire, or the American truly does welcome Close Combat.

Unfortunately for the Western Allies (who have the most of the stuff to use) Smoke placement re-

quires an unpinned leader and is subject to the vagaries of the wind (represented by Breeze cards which "blow away" smoke when drawn during any RNC/RPC check). This means that smoke protection is available for only two groups at the most; and if the SL or ASL has been pinned or killed, the Smoke card becomes a Cover card in effect until he is unpinned. A player who wants to place a smoke screen should fire first and place smoke later if the wind allows. A player wishing to keep an already existing smoke screen in play will do well to postpone his fire attacks or at least fire at smaller groups, for every RNC consulted increases the chance of a smoke-clearing breeze. Conversely, an opponent wishing to be rid of a smoke screen will be happy to make fire attacks at ridiculously low odds against the largest group in sight just to increase his chances of a breeze. Should a player plan a "Cross Fire" attack into a smoke-covered group, the smaller attack should be declared and resolved first. Often, smoke is played on the maneuver group for no other reason than to get it out of the hand efficiently without wasting a discard.

However, Smoke really comes into its own when ordnance or AFVs are around. The presence of Smoke on either the firer or the target prevents target acquisition, and an AFV making an OVR against a group in Smoke is subject to adverse effects. Furthermore, an AFV of sufficient ordnance size can place smoke on opposing groups (which is really a neat trick and a considerable advantage when facing Panzerfaust-toting Huns).

## TECHNIQUES AND TACTICS

**SNIPERS:** On the surface of it, one would think there is very little of consequence to say on the play of Sniper cards. When one draws a Sniper card, he is destined to discard it—the only question is when and where. The play of Sniper cards becomes largely a question of target priorities. As a Sniper can affect only one card, the obvious target is that group containing the most valuable card; usually the SL, other things being equal. The problem with this simple idiom is that other things are seldom equal, and like most decisions in *UP FRONT* there is a wide choice of factors to be considered.

Perhaps the least important of factors is the matter of retribution. Every time a sniper attacks, the unpinned survivors of its target group have the option to make a *Sniper Check* which, if successful, ends your ability to ever make another Sniper attack in that scenario; should you be unfortunate enough to draw another Sniper card you can congratulate yourself on the acquisition of another Cover card while trying to keep a straight face. Obviously, you can avoid this unpleasantness altogether only by attacking groups that are completely pinned, or which contain only one unpinned man so that if the attack is successful no one remains to make a Sniper Check. Unfortunately, this brilliant solution seldom presents itself; but if it does, it should be given commensurately more weight at the beginning of a scenario when 11 other Sniper cards still remain to be drawn than midway through the third deck where the loss is likely to be minimal. Conversely, the opponent should also give more weight to making a Sniper Check in the beginning and should probably disregard the practice altogether once into the third deck (unless he gives up nothing in the attempt). It is doubtful whether a Sniper Check should be attempted if it means foregoing a more useful action or discard, but the temptation is great early in the game following a 0 RNC attack. A 0 RNC attack will result in a successful Sniper Check 36.4% of the time, falling off to 25.3% for a 1 RNC, and 16.6% for a 2 RNC. Obviously, the desirability of giving up anything at all for a Sniper Check decreases rapidly with each Sniper card played and in direct proportion to the size of the RNC drawn.

The single most valuable sniper target is any IC or unbuttoned AFV, and use against anything else while these targets exist borders on criminal misuse of resources. During Patrol, however, the best target is usually the enemy SL in an attempt to reduce the opponent's card hand capacity. A pinned SL will usually draw even a Rally 6 or Rally All card if that's all that is available because no one wants to have a reduced card hand capacity at any price. But perhaps the SL is in a group which isn't much of a threat at the moment and you have pinned men receiving grief from another. In that case, the emphasis shifts to gaining relief for your pinned troops by subtracting FP from the most dangerous enemy group—>, especially if there is a crewed LMG which can be silenced with a lucky shot or hampered by pinning the ass't crewman. Then too, there is the value of a pin to be considered on any group in Hill, Wire, or Stream for reasons already alluded to.

Yet, the single most important factor to keep in mind when selecting a sniper target is the fact that high morale and/or good terrain are totally negated. A sniper attacks a Building or a group consisting of morale 5 or better with the same effectiveness it musters against a morale 1 man moving in the open. Many players form their groups on the basis of morale—concentrating all the high morale men in the same maneuver group. As these men are more difficult to pin with conventional fire, they should naturally draw sniper attacks. If gaining a kill, any kill, is more important to you than pinning a particular man, you should switch your target emphasis to that group containing the highest percentage of pinned men, because a pin result vs. an already pinned man results in a Rout (14.3) or Panic/KIA (6.531).



**HERO:** The two Hero cards offer a frustrating contrast of high and low utility that makes their relative worth hard to judge. On the one hand, they offer a free action and the combined advantage of Rally and increased FP in the same card, plus a host of special uses. On the other hand, they still fill a spot in the hand and are often used with no more benefit than a lowly Rally 1 card. Just where does one place a Hero card in the hierarchy of value when deciding what to keep and what to discard? The question has few definitive answers unless you have an AFV. Once an AFV enters the game, the value of the Hero card is increased many fold and primarily to the benefit of the AFV player. The ability to use a Hero to negate a Pin result or to bring a buttoned-up AFV back to CE status makes it one of the most valuable cards in the deck to the AFV player, and his needs should be desperate indeed to consider discarding it or using it for any other purpose. The pure infantry scenarios, however, offer no such clear cut decision of its worth.

The Hero is most useful to the American because his six-card hand seldom forces him to discard it, his BAR is a splendid candidate for "herodrom" due to its lack of bracketed values, and it allows him to Rally a man and still discard in the same turn—the only time the American can discard

a Cover card and still draw three or more cards. The Hero is less valuable to the German for just the opposite reasons; his LMG is a bracketed weapon, he can always take an action and discard in the same turn, and his limited discard capability will often force him to use the Hero prematurely to increase the flow of cards through his hand in times of stress. Nevertheless, a Hero card has so many uses, it is usually held in high esteem by one and all. Pity the poor Japanese and Russians whose four card-hand precludes them from saving them for very long. The other nationalities, however, if blessed with a reasonably good hand should always try to hold onto the Hero card for a rainy day—even if it means allowing a low value man to panic in some cases. Keep in mind that a Hero card can be played at anytime—including prior to the resolution of an opponent's attack. Why waste a Hero card as a Rally 1 in your own turn when you don't know what the next turn will bring—either in the form of your opponent's fire or your own draw from the deck. Perhaps your opponent can't fire next turn and your next draw will bring a Rally 1 card; the moral is "never play a Hero card before you have to". Wait until your opponent's Sniper attack has settled on a pinned man, or his Fire attack has cleared the preceding man without a malfunction canceling his attack before playing your Hero.

Other oft-forgotten Hero usage tricks include playing a drawn Hero card immediately as a Rally 1 thus enabling you to draw another card (or two in the case of a pinned SL), and saving a Hero card until the end of the first or second deck so as to prevent an Endurance check (33.7) on a valuable wounded man and averting the 50% chance of a KIA for another deck. A Hero also not only rallies a man attempting to infiltrate who fails his MC (10.43) but gives him a second chance at that infiltration attempt in the same turn. Ultimately though, the most devastating use of the Hero is as a combination Rally and double firepower card, resulting in a maximum possible pinning of as much as 24 FP factors for a flamethrower or 12 for a Bren Gun at Relative Range 5.

**CONCEALMENT:** There's more to the play of Concealment cards than smacking them down every time someone fires at you. Concealment -2 and -3 cards are very valuable and ideally should be saved to cover advances to new terrain—especially at the closer ranges where fire attacks take on devastating strength. The more numerous Concealment -1 cards are of less value and are often frequently discarded from pat or shortaged hands in order to increase the flow of cards. Indeed, one of my most frequently encountered dilemmas is whether to save a Concealment -1 card or a Rally 1 card when I have no other Rally card. The decision usually is swayed by the nationality factor (i.e., Russians save the Rally, Germans the Concealment, and Americans flip a coin). Ideally, of course, one decides to save or use a Concealment card depending on a combination of the gameboard situation, the strength of the fire attack, and the other cards in his hand. For example, a player with a pinned, moving group in wire will play any Concealment card regardless of strength, both because he can't afford any further losses and because he needs to vacate a card from his hand. A player with an unpinned group undergoing a 1 or less strength attack may want to save even a Concealment -1 card and allow the attack to be resolved unchallenged because he has a surplus of Rally cards in his hand and no pressing need to perform any other action in the next turn. Even a 6 RNC will not kill an unpinned man on a 1 or less Fire attack so, as long as you have sufficient Rally capability to deal with the consequences, why use a scarcer commodity? The decision is not so clear cut when pinned men or higher strength Fire attacks are involved, however, because there is always the danger of casualties.

Generally, one plays a Concealment card whenever it will reduce the chance of sustaining irrevocable casualties, but even this rule has its exceptions.

Suppose you are without a Rally card and your SL is pinned—thus reducing your card hand capacity by one. Should you play your Concealment -3 card to save your pinned SL or should you save it for later use to cover the advance of your four-man maneuver group to range chit 4? If I also have a Movement and terrain card in my hand, I'll have no trouble bidding adieu to Sarge; but if I'm lacking one of those ingredients, then what? That's just one of a million hypothetical situations that constantly arise to place players on the horns of one dilemma after another. The decision points are frequent and mind boggling—I have yet to even begin to contemplate them all.

Concealment cards are also handy to have during *Infiltration* attempts and *Close Combat* resolution. But their single most important use is to reduce the To Hit frequency of ordnance weapons since in so doing they also reduce the maximum effect of those hits (25.4) by reducing the size of the RNC drawn which can be added to the basic hit effect. A glance at Table 2c in Jim Burnett's fine accompanying article "THE NUMBERS OF UP FRONT" will reveal that the most effective use of Concealment cards occurs when one is able to drop a 0-1 range shot to a 0 To Hit probability (a drop of 22.2%), followed in order by reductions of the 0-2, 0-3, and 0-4 category. It obviously pays big dividends to use Concealment cards anytime an opponent has a 0-1 To Hit frequency or better. To Hit frequencies of 0 or less can easily be overlooked in favor of saving a desired Concealment card.

Occasionally a defending player will have such a perfect hand that he will "Pass" rather than change his hand while waiting for his opponent to walk into a trap. This can be disconcerting to an inexperienced attacker who not only has the burden of carrying the attack to the enemy, usually against time pressure—and now must walk into the Valley of Death knowing the Devil has a pat hand. An attacker with his wits about him, however, will realize there are two solutions to the problem. Either he can freely discard in search of his own pat hand, reassured that he is burning much less of the deck than if his opponent were also playing. Or he can "Pass" too and force his opponent into an action or a discard (4.6). The latter course puts at least one dent in his pat hand the turn before you embark on your next advance with your own pat hand fully intact. Almost every tactic has an appropriate countermeasure in *UP FRONT*.



**CROSS FIRE** Cross Fire is my own definition for any two fire attacks on the same group in the same player turn. This frequently occurs naturally simply because it takes two groups to muster the necessary Firepower to use two different Fire cards—especially with groups of near equal strength. Cross Fire becomes more interesting as a point for discussion when it is done by choice by splitting the use of two or more Fire cards between different groups as separate actions even though one group has the

necessary firepower to use them all. The theory behind opting for a Cross Fire attack is that two low odds attacks are more likely to cause casualties due to Panic of men pinned by the first attack, than one single large attack is likely to cause KIAs. This tactic is usually employed against an unpinned group whose owner appears to have cornered the market on Rally cards. The sole advantage of a Cross Fire as opposed to a concentrated attack is that the opponent has no chance (barring a Hero) to rally his pinned men before they are attacked again. The tactic is most useful against men with low morale and high card hands for the storage of Rally cards (Americans) or men with low Panic values (Japanese).

The Cross Fire technique has other advantages too, including a number of tricks that can be used on an opponent expecting to be the target of but one attack. For example, let us assume your opponent has a Concealment -1 card which he really doesn't want to keep. By leading with the weaker of your two attacks, you may get him to waste that Concealment against a poor attack, and then be free to strike with the main attack free of Concealment problems. Furthermore, because you don't have to declare all actions simultaneously and can await the outcome of one attack before declaring the other, you have the advantage of flexibility. If the first attack does not pin anyone, you may want to forego the second, especially if you can take another action with that group, and thereby save at least part of your Fire capability for the next turn should your opponent opt to move and present you with a more opportune target. Obviously, the better the TEM of the target, the less advantageous Cross Fire is since extra fire power must be consumed negating the terrain modifier. As a general rule, Cross Fire attacks should not be attempted against any group in -2 or better terrain. In addition, extra consideration should be given to Cross Fire attacks when a target is in +1 or +2 terrain because the TEM is now favorable to the attacker and can be applied more than once with multiple attacks.

Conversely, concentrating fire has its uses too. Oftentimes when an opposing group is situated in good terrain, it is almost futile to attempt low strength attacks. At such times it is best to exercise patience and accumulate Fire cards for a combined punch rather than fritter away fire opportunities piecemeal and trust to luck. Unfortunately, the pressures of the game situation usually dictate using whatever fire is available as soon as it is available because a group with a lot of firepower usually means close proximity to the enemy—and that means a large capacity for return fire. However, in those fleeting moments of exquisite joy when a nearby enemy is helplessly pinned before a nearby flanking group, patience becomes a virtue while waiting for the extra Fire cards which will administer the *coup de grace*.

**MALFUNCTION:** Weapon breakdowns are always unpleasant, especially when one has just advanced to Relative Range 5 against the business end of a MG which is usually not predisposed to look upon your approach as a neighborly visit. In such a situation, one doesn't mince words but repairs his weapon as soon as possible unless he has a masochistic target fetish. Yet, it is seldom that simple. Repair attempts have to be assessed a certain priority in the hierarchy of actions or discards to be considered. Like so many other factors, this intrusion of fate on the battlefield presents the player with an entire new set of choices to ponder. Which is more important: attempting to repair a weapon or trying to entrench? As always, there is no clear cut answer because so many variables enter into each decision. How valuable is the weapon, or the man possessing it for that matter? Do you have a Fire card made unusable by the absence of that weapon? How vulnerable are you to fire in your

## WEAPON BREAKDOWN, REPAIR, AND LOSS PROBABILITY CHART

WEAPON	AMERICAN	GERMAN	RUSSIAN	BRITISH	JAPANESE
Rifle	1.9/63.6/1.9	1.9/63.6/1.9	1.9/50.0/1.9	1.9/63.6/1.9	1.9/5.0/1.9
Carbine or AR	1.9/50.0/1.9	1.9/36.4/4.9	1.9/36.4/4.9	-----	-----
Machine Pistol	1.9/36.4/9.9	1.9/36.4/9.9	1.9/36.4/4.9	1.9/63.4/9.9	1.9/75.3/9.9
LMG	1.9/50.0/4.9	1.9/36.4/9.9*	1.9/36.4/9.9*	1.9/50.0/4.9	4.9/36.4/9.9
MMG	1.9/63.6/1.9*	1.9/50.0/4.9*	1.9/36.4/4.9*	1.9/53.0/4.9*	1.9/36.4/4.9*
ATR	—	1.9/36.4/9.9	1.9/36.4/9.9	1.9/36.4/4.9	1.9/36.4/9.9
Flame-Thrower	4.9/1.9/50.0	4.9/1.9/50.0	4.9/1.9/50.0	4.9/1.9/50.0	4.9/1.9/50.0
LATW	9.9/4.9/50.0* +	9.9/4.9/35.4* +	—	16.7/16.7/36.4	—
Mortar	4.9/50.0/9.9* +	4.9/25.3/16.7*	4.9/25.3/16.7*	4.9/36.4/9.9* +	4.9/36.4/9.9* +
Other Ordnance	4.9/50.0/1.9 +	Same	Same	Same	Same
Radio	4.9/16.7/9.9 +	4.9/9.9/9.9 +	4.9/9.9/16.7 +	4.9/9.9/9.9 +	4.9/9.9/16.7 +

Each set of figures represents breakdown/repair/and permanent loss probability as read from left to right. \* A crew-served weapon whose breakdown probability increases when using bracketed values  
 + Breakdown probability is only for first RNC drawn; the actual breakdown probability of other weapons is considerably higher when used to attack multi-target groups.

current position? What is the "count" on red 6's (or 5's for the more susceptible weapons)? How badly do you need to move cards through your hand? Do you have a Cover card that needs to be discarded (for a non-German player)? These are only a handful of the factors to be considered and the process must be repeated for every other relative choice: repair or fire, repair or move, repair or rally, etc.

Surely no general rule more meaningful than always remembering to attempt repair if you have nothing else to do can be all encompassing; but there are a few relevant factors that can guide your decision. Aside from the lowering of one's available firepower, a malfunction also means a drop in morale/panic values as long as it persists. Thus, a repair attempt is an effort to improve upon your defensive potential as well as your offensive capabilities. An entrenchment attempt is successful only 27.2% of the time (slightly less after the first deck due to prescribed removal of terrain cards), whereas most weapons, depending on weapon type, can be repaired 50% of the time ranging from a high of 63.6% for most rifles to a low of 1.9% for a flamethrower (see Weapon Repair Probability chart). On the other hand, entrenchments can only be attempted if the group is unpinned and free of wire, while repair attempts are not so encumbered and can still be attempted later after being so afflicted in the absence of a Rally card. It is probably generally better to rally a pinned man than to attempt a weapon repair; but if the weapon is an extremely valuable one or the pinned man a not too vital one, this becomes less readily apparent. A player can also be understandably hesitant about using a high Rally card to rally one man, especially if there is some other useful action he can take in the meantime while hoping to draw a lower and more efficient Rally card in the interim. The permutations of factor and counter-factor are practically infinite.

Perhaps our attention would be better spent trying to avoid the affliction in the first place, rather than contemplating the cost of the cure. Exercising preventive medicine in this case means embracing some very simple but frequently overlooked practices. As alluded to earlier, you can't play *UP FRONT* in constant fear of incurring a malfunction result, but you can attempt to minimize the risk even without counting cards. For starters, never use a group containing a valuable weapon (like a LMG) to deliver an attack when a group of riflemen could administer equal damage. Sometimes it's even worth foregoing a slightly better attack from a Hill position or directly opposite a Wall if it means the

LMG group can entrench on the Hill while the riflemen chance discovering the unaccounted for red 6 RNCs. The most obvious example of this principle is use of a bazooka, PIAT or panzerschreck against infantry targets when an AFV is still to be dealt with. Chancing a malfunction of these valuable high-breakdown frequency weapons against a non-AFV target is rarely an acceptable risk. One must also be aware of the added danger of firing a crewed weapon with the bracketed value. In almost every case, this at least doubles the chance of a malfunction. Moreover, such occurrence isn't limited to the absence of the asst. crewman; occupation of Wire, Marsh, or Stream also bears the burden of bracketed firepower values, and with it the added likelihood of malfunction. Lastly, one can slightly reduce the incidence of breakdown for select weapons in a multi-weapon fire group by not positioning them in the first or second positions within certain sized fire groups (see Table 5 of Jim Burnett's "UP FRONT BY THE NUMBERS"). The variance in the RPC draw bias towards the forward position ranges from 2.5% in a four-man group to nearly double that in an eight-man group. This slight RPC bias also comes in handy when enemy infiltrators start jumping on people in Close Combat and snipers are searching for targets. Moreover, the safest position in any group is to the rear. The last position in any group is less vulnerable than any position before it (barring the presence of a smoke screen) because a malfunction could occur earlier in the attack resolution process and reduce or even cancel the remainder of the fire attack before it gets to the final position. Moral: leaders and valuable weapons to the rear.

**FLANKING FIRE:** Flanking fire is the great equalizer in *UP FRONT*. Just when you've settled down at range chit 3 in -3 strength protective terrain and think you've got the game by the tail, your opponent whips out a Flank card, doubles his firepower, and threatens to blow you into the next room if you don't vacate the premises. A well-played Flank card has turned the tables in many a game, but it usually takes considerable coordination to turn the fortuitous appearance of one of the four Flank cards into a game winner. Usually, but not always . . . The classic art of bluffing has its applications also and *Poker* players can practice their craft while conning an opponent into making a hasty exit of his haven for fear of an enormous attack that will never come for lack of big Fire cards. It takes a lot of intestinal fortitude (or stupidity) to stand fast in front of a flanking group with 9 or more firepower factors which, when doubled, will

enable it to play any Fire card in the deck (and probably several of them simultaneously). Generally speaking, if the group is close enough to have any firepower of consequence, it's wise to pack your bags before he hits terrain. Still there is something devilishly irritating about being suckered out of Buildings and into a Stream when the perpetrator never had so much as a Fire 1 card to his name.

Bluffing aside, flanking presents a very strong opportunity which, when played under optimum conditions against a pinned opponent can devastate even the strongest enemy position. Like all courses of action, however, it can backfire and the pluses and minuses of countless factors must be weighed before making the decision. However, if you have the big Fire card which such a move will make usable, and if you have an equal or better terrain card than the one you presently occupy, it's usually hard to resist. Target groups will often abandon pinned men to their fate, so great is their dread of the envisioned onslaught to follow.

The biggest single thing to remember about flanking fire is that it can only be used against adjacent groups—not directly opposite groups—and the target group must be fronted by a directly opposite group. This means that the side which fields more groups will have more opportunities to use Flanking Fire, and conversely will be subject to ill effects far less. "Natural Flanking Fire", which occurs without use of a flanking card by moving past an adjacent group, seems to be a much rarer occurrence (as is encirclement) because it requires movement past Relative Range 5; usually when groups reach such close quarters they are too busy throwing lead, being pinned, engaging in infiltration and Close Combat, or all three to "waste" turns with further movement. However, a group which has no fire cards and little ambition for Close Combat and is still capable of movement could do far worse than moving into a natural flanking fire position because it lengthens the range and offers an alternative to the discard for creating card flow in pursuit of those missing Fire cards. And if the target group is unable to respond, it could lead to encirclement from which few survivors ever emerge.

So, our travels through the cards of *UPFRONT* comes to an end. Some may think our conclusion overdue, but much remains unsaid. Many weapons and rules were not even mentioned, and others only in passing. Each scenario presents a new approach with countless permutations of the factors already discussed. My own interests, after virtually hundreds of games, now focuses on play of that fir! basic scenario—A Meeting of Patrols—albeit with a new twist—simultaneous team play of two games side-by-side with one partner helping the other whenever he can spare the chance. Drat! Private Greenwood has been pinned. "How about some covering fire, partner?"




Range	To Hit #	MG FP
0	0	4
1	0-1	5
2	0-2	6
3	0-3	7
4	0-4	8
5	0-5	9