

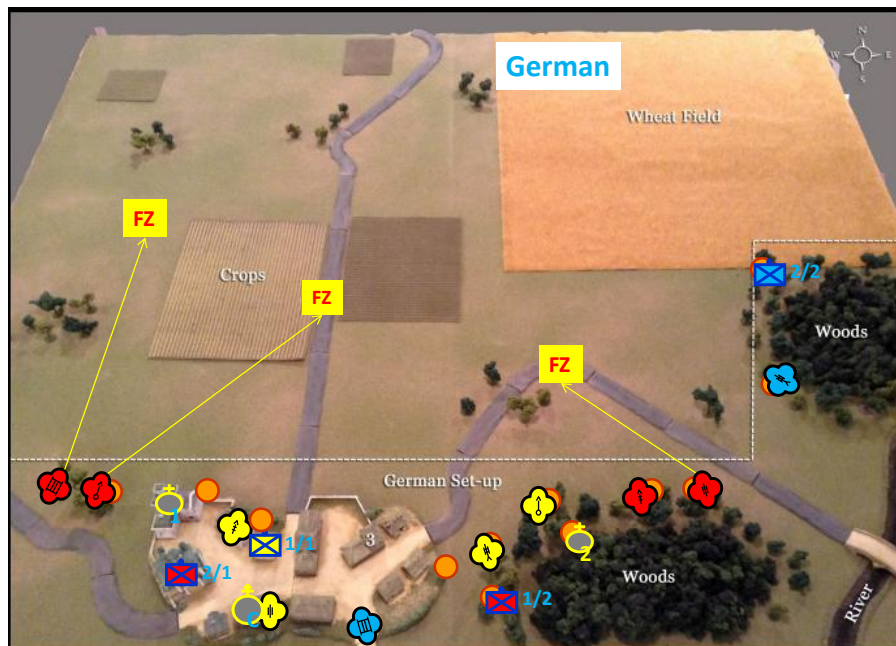
Yes Sir, the forward German positions are fully manned.

1 Kompanie, 3rd Panzer Army was charged with defending a small town outside Vitebsk. We knew the Russians were coming so we dug in deep and built sturdy overhead protections of logs and dirt, because the Russians always preceded attacks with an intensive artillery barrage. I hoped they don't use those damn rockets. I lost half my previous company to them.

I positioned 1st platoon and one of the StuG IIIs on the left (west) side. 2nd platoon was on the right (east) in the woods. I placed my best squad and ATG in the northeast woods to spot advancing Russians and get flank shots at anything coming south down the road. The second StuG III was positioned on the southeast corner of town and was my reserve ATG. The second ATG was on the northwest corner of the woods, just outside of town covering the road approach to town and the northwest quadrant of the board. The western StuG III would cover the northeast quadrant and cross fire on the road in the open middle board.

1st platoon was predominately positioned in the stone buildings in the south part of the town about 1 per building to help spot the Russians. 2nd platoon was spread in the woods, just east of town. Everyone avoided the wooden buildings in the east part of town. My HQ, with a Panzerschreck team, was in the center 2-story stone building on the south side of town, although most of the field in front was blocked from view, both road approaches from the north had usable view. My platoon leaders are good observers, just as the veteran squad I positioned forward. The Kompanie built several bunkers just outside the town walls as deceptions to draw fire or to reposition to if the buildings in town became untenable.

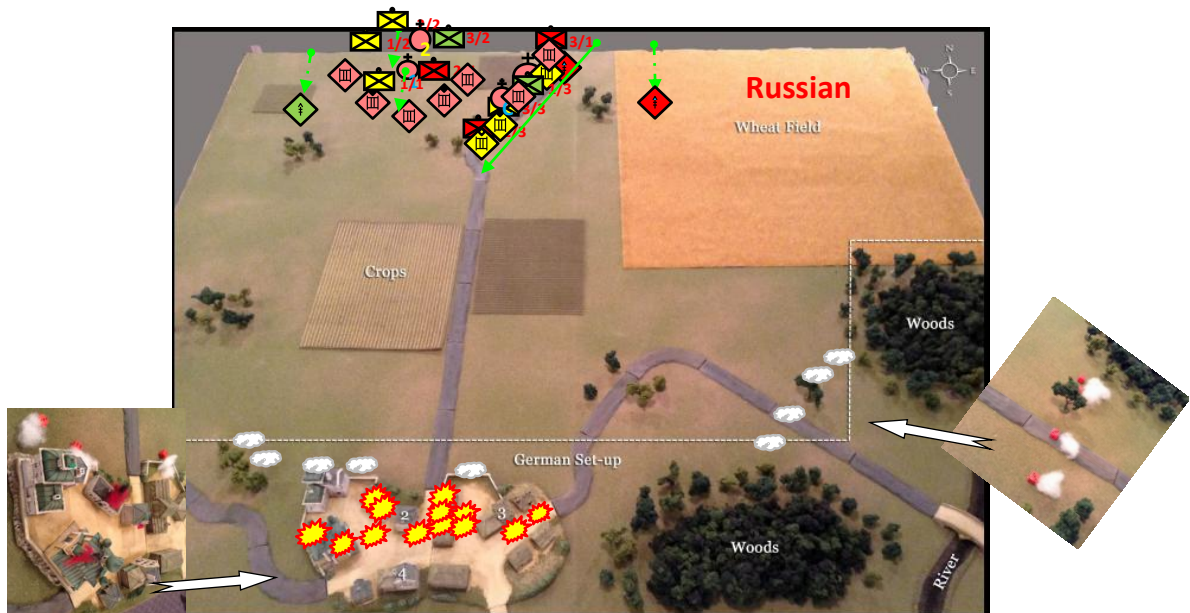
We sighted in the weapons and then we waited – it didn't take long!



Lt Calmakov's command consisted of 10 tanks (5xT-34/76 and 5xT-34/85), 4xtubes of 82mm mortars (OBA), and his company of (3xplatoons – 9 squads) infantry supported by 3x Maxim MMGs. Lt Calmakov was ordered to recon forward German positions and determine if they could be exploited or needed to be neutralize with artillery before the 43rd Army would advance into Vitebsk.

The first wedge of 5 tanks rolled onto the board and stopped. About a platoon of infantry walked on behind them with a couple of teams spread far to the sides. The Germans successfully spotted almost all of the tanks and some of the infantry, before the tanks fired the first volley of smoke rounds blocking all observation on the west side of town and the gap between the two large woods and any observation from the bridge area.

Most of German 2nd platoon (with the ATGs) continued to observe the wedge and the second Russian platoon that followed. The two far flung teams continued south. Lt Calmakov called in the OBA, and it was quickly on its way - 2 volleys of 8 rounds in line from west to east through the center of town. Three buildings in town were hit (2 stone and 1 wooden). Both of the stone buildings caught fire, forcing 1st platoon MMG and one squad to make their way out of the buildings. The MMG was suppressed for 6 APs and dashed across the center of town to take cover behind a small stone building



The squad in the other burning building moved to the first floor and out the door to the building with the platoon commander, who was trying to find a window to see out of as one of the smoke rounds from the second round of smoke from the stationary tanks landed at the base of the building. The other smoke rounds landed near the two walled openings between the buildings facing north. After that, no further smoke rounds fell. Perhaps the Russians were out of smoke, for the smoke was not reseeded. The second volley of artillery impacted in town hitting both of the burning stone buildings again. The wood building, hit with the first round, was hit again with two rounds and quickly became engulfed in fire. Another wood building, just to the east was also hit. The rest of the volley fell in and about the town without

consequence. The Russians paused the barrage to consider switching aimpoints or hitting the town again.

The German mortar, attached to 2nd platoon, fired at the infantry near the Russian wedge of tanks. Two of the tanks moved out from under the barrage and so did the troops in the area. Minimal casualties and all the Russian tanks buttoned up. The 3



remaining stationary tanks prepared to move out, while some of the infantry started mounting up. The two tanks that had moved closed up on the road with more infantry aboard. The mortars adjusted fire for another round.

The second platoon of tanks dashed onto the board on the road and lined up like a carnival shooting gallery, and each tank looked like it carried a squad of infantry. The near ATG opened up on the first 2 tanks, brewing up the first tank and hitting the second tank. Failing to penetrate, it spalled the interior and caused the crew to bailout. Both of the squads on the tanks disembarked and used the tanks for cover as the second round of mortars impacted, again with modest casualties to the squads mounting up on the remaining wedge tanks. The mortars managed to immobilize one of these tanks with a close aboard hit. The far ATG opened up on the back 3 tanks on the road, immobilizing the third tank in the row of five and missing the last two. In that one AP both German ATGs and a lucky mortar had taken 4 tanks out of the fight and put a third of the infantry off their tanks.



The smoke finally cleared the gap and the grove on the west side of town. The back two tanks on the road maneuvered around the disabled tanks and advanced on the town and turned to present their fronts to the

suspected German ATG position. Looking closely they thought they had it identified and fired their machine guns at the suspected location. It was the veteran 2/2 squad moving to its fallback position. Both ATGs fired again at the two tanks, managing to disable both and one of the crew bailed out to join the two dismounted squads in the middle distance between the town and the bend in the north-south road with fields on both sides. The other tank continued to spray the woods with machine gun fire. Another suspected area of the ATG was identified. The infantry that dismounted the disabled tanks were spotted by the western mortar team as they prepared to fire through the clearing smoke.

The western StuG III commander did not see anything in his fire zone, so he shifted the gun to bring the far wedge of tanks (some of which were starting to move) under fire. The veteran ATG fired at the immobile, but still dangerous tank in the middle of the board. That tank blind fired at the suspected ATG area. Both were destroyed. The western mortar team got off two shots and hit both of the dismounted squads in the open field, again with modest damage.

At this point Lt Calmakov called for a general retreat, although the town was not taken the recon of the town and areas surrounding was successful. In his report to the Regiment Commander, "Yes Sir, I can confirm that the forward German positions are fully manned."

Lessons Learned:

Save some smoke rounds for reseed to continue to blind your opponent so you are not caught in the open.

A broad defense line is thin, but produces crossfire and flank fire opportunities.

Even stone buildings catch on fire quickly – just a bad dice roll away.

Use all your assets for identifying your opponent early and win the recon war.

Improved / reinforced defenses are worth the effort.

It is worth the effort to split fire on closely grouped opponents.