

PANZERGRUPPE GUDERIAN

A Dissenting Approach

by Bill Dunne, Mike Gunson, David Parish

Now I ask you, do I get the Nelson Noble Nomination or don't I? Here I go printing in my own magazine an article, by three men from the Mother Country, that *directly refutes* my own thesis on how to win in *Panzergruppe Guderian* (one of my favorite games)—and they make a convincing case. Luckily, there's 5000km of brine atwixt us.

—RAS

We read Mr. Simonsen's article on *Panzergruppe Guderian* (MOVES No. 29) with some interest since we play this game frequently and get a great deal of enjoyment from it. His description of tactics is comprehensive, however we disagree with the strategies outlined by him. A Russian defense imposing a greater delay on the German advance and making more use of the terrain is a tougher nut to crack. The deployment of such a defense alters the result of the game so that, under the old victory conditions, it becomes a contest as to whether the Russian or German obtains a marginal victory. Also this defense demands a different approach from the German. The combination of these two strategies makes for a close and demanding game.

THE RUSSIAN DEFENSE

The whole Russian defense will depend on his early game strategy as this constrains his later choices of action. The main objective of this strategy is to buy time for the Russian to deploy his major groups of resistance. Below is set out a series of techniques which should achieve this end.

1. The "Egg"

This is a forward enclave involving around twenty divisions and a leader with a four rating, all of whom are written-off as soon as they take up position. The first move in the formation of this "egg" can be defined exactly, whereas subsequent moves vary according to combat results and the German deployment. Initially the 20th Army deploys two armored divisions to hex 0711, two infantry divisions to hex 0512, one infantry division to hex 0513, three infantry divisions to hex 0515, two armored divisions to 0518 and Kurochkin to hex 0715. Meanwhile the 13th Army deploys one armored division to hex 0518, three infantry divisions to hex 0420, three infantry divisions to 0521, one infantry division to 0322, and Remezov to 0621.

This position has the effect of at least doubling the defensive strength of the Russian units and is impossible to effectively outflank on the first turn.

Should the 19th Army be able to move, it deploys two infantry divisions to hex 0912,

two infantry divisions to hex 1014 and Koniev to the Smolensk area. If the 16th Army can move, then it moves two infantry divisions from Smolensk to hex 0513; the 20th Army infantry division previously deployed at hex 0513 is moved to hex 0518 and one of the armor divisions that was originally deployed here now moves to strengthen hex 0711.

If the 19th and 16th Armies are free then the German should get not more than 2-1 in any first turn attack on this egg (assuming average strength stacks — an assumption that puts grey hairs on every Russian player).

Subsequent play depends on whether the German breaks into this formation. If he does not then the "egg" proper is formed. Any armor that is free, is removed to the Smolensk area and replaced by locally available infantry. The remaining infantry moves to the South and East of the egg to complete the formation, again using woods and rivers for defense. If the German breaks in, the Russian pins the German armor (still using terrain wherever possible), attempts to put it out of supply, and to delay any advance along the road to Smolensk. In short, one just makes everything as awkward as possible for the German! More units should be fed into this area only in exceptional circumstances since everything here is certain to die. If the Russian carries out these forward delaying tactics, the German should be delayed for three or, more probably, four turns.

2. The North Flank

In the North the Russian should form a straight line from hex 2002 to hex 2015, again making the best possible use of the terrain. This deployment should prevent any effective German outflanking moves to the North. The line should be formed by the end of Game-Turn Two or at the latest Game-Turn Three. Troops for this line come from the 22nd and 24th Armies (the latter having moved in by rail on Turn One). In the woods to the North most of the stacks only contain two units, but if these have average strengths (that dangerous assumption again!) the German will only be able to get 2-1 on any stack, until his infantry arrives. Most of the line has a stack every alternate hex, except in the open to the South and around Smolensk. Here triple stacks are deployed adjacent to each other (shoulder to shoulder in the true Socialist tradition). Behind this line the available armor should form a reserve so as to be able to reinforce dangerous situations or make sallies during the middle and end games.

3. Roslavl and the South-West Reinforcements

The Roslavl area can be strongly defended by using all the South-West reinforcements, the 21st Army, and Remezov who moved by train in Turn Two. The use of all the South-West reinforcements (and the 15 victory points this gives the German) means that the Russian cannot afford to be overrun by the German. However, the presence of these units can help to prevent this. The actual defense of Roslavl may be either a tight enclave centered around Roslavl, using the woods for defense or a line based on the southern edge of the map and hooking to the North and East of Roslavl.

4. The "Gap"

Until now nothing has been said about the deployment between Roslavl and Smolensk. This great expanse of clear terrain, with its poor East-West lines of communication and the need to deploy many treble stacks to form a defensible line, constitutes a death trap for the Russian player. This pitfall is avoided by not deploying in the area, forming the "gap." From Turn Three onwards part of the Russian reinforcements are directed South from the railway to form a line running East from Smolensk. Again, this uses rough terrain to ensure the German faces a tough defensive line.

5. Russian Air Interdiction Marker

This is perhaps the greatest single factor hindering the German advance in the middle stages of the game. Once the "egg" has been destroyed the German supply route along the roads can generally only be interrupted using this marker. It should be placed on the road as near to the edge (hex 0120) as possible. When this is done German supply will not reach much beyond the Smolensk-Roslavl line. If the German advances beyond his supply he is easily pinned since his mobility and strength are halved. Consequently the German is unable to exploit the "gap" left by the Russian player. The Air Interdiction Marker should be used all three times in the mid-game (probably soon after the "egg" has been broken) thus giving the Russian player more time to prepare for the showdown.

6. Summary of Russian Position

The combination of these techniques should result in delay of the German and growing Russian strength. The "egg" and the Air Interdiction Marker should prevent the German from effectively attacking the main Russian defenses until they are too strong for him. The straight Northern line prevents any outflanking in this direction. If attacked by the main bulk of German forces it should

hold long enough to be reinforced, making penetrations ineffective. The "gap" enables the Russian to concentrate on defending the major German objectives on defensible terrain. Also the presence of this feature in the defense attracts the German forces by offering the possibility of a deep penetration. However such a move is usually fruitless as few Russian units are killed and when unsupplied the German will not have the mobility and strength to take his geographical objectives. Furthermore should these be taken the Russian may well seal him off from the

Western edge of the board as his defenses are usually unscathed.

One should hope that the use of terrain will so decrease the German kill rate that large forces will be available to meet German end-game attacks, despite the fact that twenty units were written off initially.

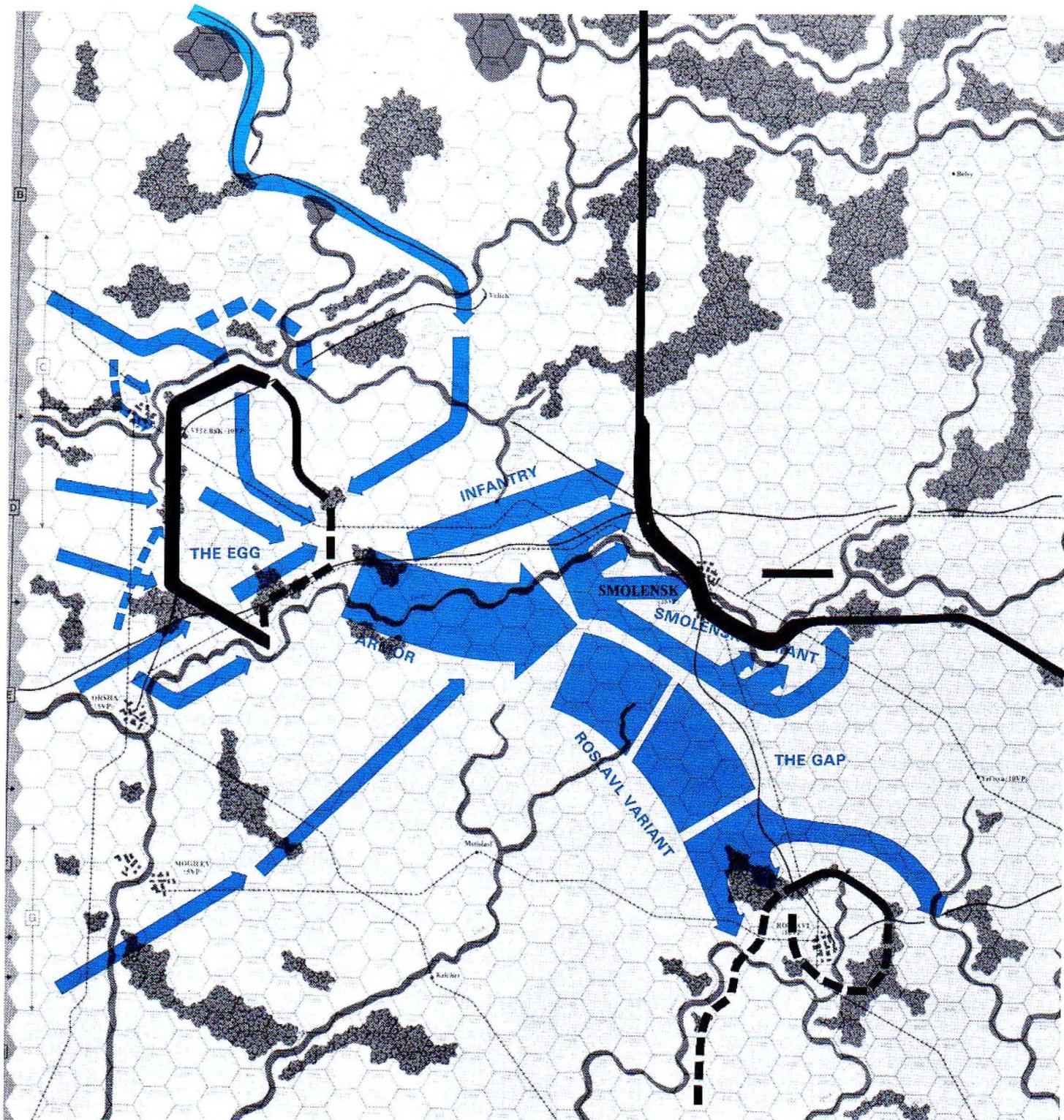
THE GERMAN ATTACK

Although we have described the Russian defense as though it were watertight, the German does in fact have a chance of making it

look as porous as a sieve. We now hope to show that to do this he must quickly concentrate his armor into clearing his supply route. Then using one vast concentration of armor, he must secure his next objective.

1. Initial Moves

At first the German is faced with three main alternatives which are to ignore and bypass the egg; to attack it; or to mix these two policies. Eventually, the Russian must be cleared from his forward positions so that subsequent major attacks can be supplied.



Any deep penetrations in the first two turns will result in the German units being pinned down and the forward Russian positions being unharmed. So, the German player will be caught between his two objectives of breaking the forward and the back positions without enough force to do either effectively. He is now committed and dispersed for the rest of the game and should lose. A mixed policy will achieve even less and probably disperse his forces more. So, the German must attack the egg which brings us to the basic precept of German play — concentration! In fact all the first three turns reinforcement should be used to break this forward enclave. These forces should ensure the demise of the enclave by the end of Turn Four, and possibly Turn Three.

The German's best chance of cracking the "egg" in the first two turns lies on its North side. If penetration is achieved the Russian commander should be overrun to unsupply the enclave. The German has to be careful not to be pinned by forces moving into adjacent wood hexes. Again, this will generally result from dispersion of German forces. On Game Turn Three the 46th and 47th Panzer Corps attack the South and West of the "egg." The 24th Panzer Corps moves to threaten both Smolensk and Roslavl, taking up a position so that it can move back if more force is needed to finish off the "egg."

2. The Middle Game

Having disposed of the "egg" the German is now faced with a decision; where should he go to get the greatest advantage. There are four possibilities for the German player to

choose from: he can move to the Northern Section, the "gap," Smolensk or Roslavl. Whichever he chooses must be attacked with the bulk of his forces, to the exclusion of any other attacks since he needs total armor concentration to gain victory.

If he goes North, there is no possibility of a direct outflanking maneuver. Also the terrain is such that it is difficult to dislodge the Russian, while the German can be pinned down. Furthermore, the terrain allows the Russian to form strong subsidiary lines of defense to prevent exploitation. One supplied division in the right place can stop a whole advance. Trying to overrun untried divisions in woods is a heart-stopping practice for the Germans (and should not strictly be attempted) since this is more than likely to be a 1-2 attack.

Should the German attack the gap, he is faced with the opposite problem in that there is nothing firm to grasp. If he is not careful he will flail around ineffectually and without supply. However, the gap does have the potential as a pathway for outflanking either Smolensk or Roslavl. The game will now depend on how the Russian has protected his flanks on each side of the gap. There are advantages to attacking either city. In the case of Smolensk the target is quickly accessible to the majority of the German forces, particularly the infantry which are his most effective combat units. The major disadvantage is that Smolensk is easily reinforced. On the other hand, Roslavl can be isolated from the rest of the Russian forces and may even be unsupplied. However, here the German

may become overextended (and unsupplied himself) which can lead to disaster.

We feel the choice of target depends on the exact situation which must be assessed separately for each game. Whichever the German chooses to do, he must protect himself from sallies from the other center of resistance. These will attempt to pin, encircle and perhaps destroy him. Remember a Panzer division in the open and surrounded is quite weak, although with all those steps it will be "an unconscionable time a-dying." The German protects himself by sheer weight of numbers and by using mechanized infantry divisions as a screen.

In the End Game it may be possible to secure Vyasma, Roslavl, or Yel'nya from Smolensk, while from Roslavl the German can take Yel'nya but should then turn back to take Smolensk. If he moves further East, there will inevitably be counterattacks from the side of the gap he has not attacked. These objectives will occupy him for the rest of the game.

CONCLUSION

Unlike the old victory conditions the fall of Smolensk or both Roslavl and Yel'nya should give the German a marginal victory (depending on how many divisions he has lost). We feel the game is so finely balanced that the old victory conditions are still applicable. Under the new conditions the best result the German can achieve is a draw. Like all the best board wargames this game brings out the three principles of Logistics, use of Terrain and, of course, timing. We feel it is bound to become a classic. ■

StarForce Scenario 10

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defenses of either the Rame stars or the L'Chal-Dah systems to the exclusive defense of the others. In option one you're trying to stop the PHH early and not let them get anything cheap, while in option two you should attempt to inflict losses and slow down the advance with the defending forces. Option three is not as strange or stupid as it might sound, for remember the victory conditions force the PHH to occupy systems in *both* of the respective league member holdings. I saw this done (to good advantage) in a game where the Rame StarForces headed for 61 Cygni at the outset. The PHH player, smelling a trap, advanced too slowly through the Rame stars, and didn't have adequate time to defend the combined units in the L'Chal-Dah system. If you do this however, don't be too obvious with your abandonment; bluff him a bit.

Probably the most important tactic the DL possess is to occasionally threaten Sol if things get a bit too hot for you elsewhere. Staging at 61 Cygni is excellent as you can be adjacent with one shift. He'll have to call his forces back, for if he loses Sol he loses the game. ■

War in Europe

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decisively; he can try to eke out a lesser victory by pulling their fangs and digging in to beat off their eventual counter attacks. He must decide on a strategy initially, and stick with it in broad terms or court disaster.

The Soviet and Western Allied players have little choice initially but to absorb the damage the German inflicts on them, hit him where it hurts at as little cost to themselves as possible, and when he is eventually weak enough, go for his jugular. In general terms, the campaign game *WIEu* should bear a family resemblance to WWII. However, the details will certainly change, and one of the most significant of these is the ultimate winner. ■



FEEDBACK RESULTS, MOVES 31

Rank	Article	Rating
1.	Designer's Notes	6.98
2.	Forward Observer	6.66
3.	Conquistador!	6.64
4.	Frederick the Great	6.54
5.	Trouble Areas in TSS	6.53
6.	We Love Them... We Love Them Not	6.53
7.	Napoleon's Last Battles	6.51
8.	Opening MOVES	6.31
9.	Torgau	6.31
10.	Footnotes	6.18
11.	FireFight	6.01
12.	Playback	5.83
13.	Dissecting a Combat Results Table	5.21
This Issue (overall)		6.75