

DEFENSE OF THE REICH in Battle for Germany

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Battle for Germany, the game for split-personalities, is treated here from the viewpoint of German defense on both fronts.

Battle for Germany is a corps level simulation of the war in Europe from December 1944 to May 1945. The game is unique in that one Player controls the 'East' Germans and the Western Allies, while the other controls the 'West' Germans and the Soviets. There are also three- and four-Player versions. The game uses rigid Zones of Control and has a single Movement Phase, followed by combat, which is resolved on a probability CRT. Victory levels are determined by Victory Points, which are awarded for the control of cities. Most cities are worth one, or possibly two Points; however, Berlin is worth ten Victory Points and all German resistance ends once it falls.

The actual battle for Germany was little more than a delaying action which postponed the inevitable. In *Battle for Germany*, there is no doubt that Germany will be conquered, it's a question of how long it will take. That is not to say that the Germans can't put up a strong defense. Using the following strategies, a Player can often gain the extra month or two which will insure victory in the game.

Besides being outnumbered and outclassed, both German forces have the problem of reinforcements. All destroyed units from any army are placed in a replacement pool, and at the start of each Turn, the weakest units return at a prescribed rate. The Western Allies receive 18 replacement units in the course of the game and the Soviets receive thirteen. The East Germans receive nine and the West Germans receive only four.

The East German/Western Allied Player's position is the most difficult. While the advancing Western Allies face the stronger German force, the defending East Germans have a massive front descending from the Baltic to the Adriatic, which is under constant Soviet pressure at almost every point. Soviet forces are concentrated in the north with the powerful units attacking eastern Poland. To the south, the Soviet forces are somewhat fewer and less formidable.

Despite this poor strategic position, the East German/Western Allied Player can offer a good resistance to the Soviet attack. To do so

it's necessary to take advantage of the supply rules, or the lack of them. Actually, there are two rules which to some extent account for supply considerations: garrisoning and exiting the map. Both are of paramount importance in regard to German strategy.

Garrisoning affects only the Soviet units. Whenever Warsaw, Prague, Vienna or Berlin is occupied by a Soviet unit, a Soviet front unit must be placed in the city by the next Turn. The rules don't state what happens if a front isn't placed in the city after it's been occupied; presumably it would be considered still under German control.

The Germans can concentrate on holding up the advance of, or destroying, front units. Fronts have values of 8-20-3 [attack-defense-movement], which makes them the strongest unit on attack or defense, but they are also the slowest. Moreover, if the Germans can eliminate enough fronts, or slow them for long enough, it becomes impossible for the Soviets to capture Berlin. Obviously, with such a high Defense Strength, attacking a front is usually an exercise in futility; however, they are not entirely free from danger if exiting the map is a consideration.

Only German units have the ability to exit the map, either through the eastern, western or southern edges. It costs units an additional four Movement Points to exit the map. When a German unit exits the map, the two enemy units nearest the exiting hex are also permanently removed.

This tactic provides an excellent method of eliminating the otherwise indestructible fronts, and consequently, an important consideration in exiting units is to try to exit them so that fronts *must* be removed. Additionally, it's important to exit units so that the Soviet units removed will leave a larger hole in the lines.

Considering the numerical and qualitative advantage of the Soviets, it would seem difficult to accomplish the exiting. In the north, the Soviets can readily deal with any enemy threats, but in the south there are fewer Soviet units and they are spaced farther apart. Here, a limited German counter-attack can meet with some success.

The best plan is to attack those units that are two hexes from other enemy units. Attacking forces should be moved to both sides of the enemy unit so that, should a "Defender Retreat" be obtained, the enemy unit will be destroyed. Failing this, try to position attacking units in such a manner that if the enemy unit is forced to retreat, it must leave a hole in the lines. The optimum attacking odds are "1 to 2." Here, there is one chance in three of getting a *Dr* result, and two chances in

three of getting an *AR* result. Even with the *AR*, the attack is successful as the attacking units can retreat *behind* the line; but only if the enemy units are two hexes apart (in this case, they leave a hex just beyond their line free of Zones of Control).

Specifically, there are two units in the south that are especially vulnerable to this type of attack. The 2-5-4 two hexes northeast of Belgrad and the front three hexes northeast of Budapest. When you attack these units it's best to try to move your units so that other enemy forces can't shift around and attack or surround the units that break through. You must also position units that get through the lines very carefully, so replacements entering the map can't surround them.

A much easier and more obvious alternative to this method is to simply take advantage of Soviet mistakes. Unless the Soviet Player is very cautious, he is likely to leave a hex in his southern lines free of Zones of Control. This happens because the Soviet advance through Hungary and Czechoslovakia is usually an uneven affair, and rather than wait until all his units can move forward, the Soviet Player will often press on ahead leaving one or two holes in his line.

Breaking through enemy lines gives the East German Player the initiative. The Soviet Player must react to German threats and attacks rather than the reverse being the case. So, for a short time at least, the Soviet advance is slowed and the Soviets must assume a defensive posture.

There are a number of risks involved in exiting the map. You may leave holes in your *own* lines or those units which break through may be surrounded and destroyed. What's more, the opportunity to exit units from the map rarely exists beyond the Third or Fourth Turn. It's important to recognize that any counter-attack must be limited; unless it's exceptionally successful, the East Germans will have to return to a strategy of tenacious defense.

To pursue such a defensive strategy, there are two major considerations that must be recognized: maintaining a continuous line and holding your ground. These points apply to both East and West German strategy and are vitally important in defense.

To avoid disaster there must not be holes in the German lines. For the East Germans, this is almost impossible, as the Soviets can invariably break the German line. But the Germans must hold their positions as long as possible to slow the Soviet advance. Once these defensive positions become untenable they must be abandoned. There is no easy way

to determine when to withdraw; a German defense can function with some holes in the line, but only as long as there is no possibility of a major Soviet breakthrough. This is the burden of command for the East German Player—how long can he hold the line until he must retreat. The decisions the East German Player makes here will often decide the game.

Once a retreat is to be executed, the entire line should be withdrawn, not just individual units. The major defensive advantage of a continuous line is the mutual support that friendly units on either flank provide one another. Be wary of bulges in the line and of having units separated by more than one hex. Usually the actual retreat need be no more than one or two hexes, just enough so that a continuous line can be reestablished. Never relinquish more ground than you have to. Additionally, the Germans must use terrain, such as it is, to aid their defense. On the First Turn, the Soviets can usually make some crossings of the Vistula, so its defensive value is consequently diminished. However, the Oder is of great worth to the Germans in their eleventh hour defense of Berlin. The Baltic in the north and the Carpathian Mountains in the south make outflanking moves by the Soviets difficult, if not impossible, and the East Germans generally don't have to worry about the flanks.

Toward the Fifth or Sixth Turn, the East German Player is likely to have difficulty maintaining his line simply because he doesn't have the troops. One partial solution is the transfer of troops from the south to the north. This will help bolster the line in the north, but it leaves much of the south undefended. Fortunately, this is a sacrifice that can be made without too much ill effect. The principle targets for the Soviets in the south are Prague and Vienna, worth two Victory Points each. Soviet units in the south have low Movement Allowances and broken terrain to contend with, so while they can usually take Prague and Vienna if the German troops are pulled out, they can't press on and take Berlin.

The West Germans are almost evenly matched with the Western Allies. They have some of the best units in the game, though the Western Allies still enjoy a qualitative and quantitative edge. The West Germans have excellent defensive terrain, both broken terrain and fortified hexes and, additionally, the western front is by no means as vast as the eastern front. These factors make it a real struggle for the Western Allies to take Berlin.

At the start of the game, the West Germans are on the offensive. The rules dictate that they must make at least one attack, reflecting Hitler's insistence on an Ardennes Offensive, which was to divide the Allied forces. There is an optional rule which allows the Germans to forego this mandatory attack, but if they use it, all their replacements go to the East Germans. The best place for the attack is where it occurred historically, in hex 1904

northwest of Metz. The Western Allies have a 4-8-6 here and by massing armor against it, the Germans can usually drive it off. Counter-attacks against this bulge will negate the effect of the German attack, but it does succeed in slowing the Allied advance. Another area of attack is the 4-8-6 on the town of Strassbourg. Here, however, the attack is not weighted in favor of the Germans and the West German Player must be cautious lest he is forced to retreat. In both of these attacks, the objective is not to break the enemy line, but to force units back and slow the enemy advance. Unlike the eastern front, there is very little chance of a German unit being able to exit the map here.

Due to the strength of the West German units there are many occasions when they can counter-attack. Allied armor units, for example, are especially vulnerable. Of course, the West Germans have to be careful when they counter-attack, and even if these attacks are successful their aims may not be realized. Allied units that are destroyed will usually reappear on the next Turn as replacements and, with their high Movement Allowances, they can be back in battle as if they'd never been destroyed. It's necessary to limit your objectives. The best use of counter-attacks is to drive off enemy units and retake important defensive positions, and then only when the odds favor the attacker. Remember that your goal is to make the Allies fight for every hex, and getting an "Attacker Retreat" in a counter-attack only yields that much more ground to the enemy.

Terrain is definitely on the side of the Germans; they have broken terrain, rivers and fortified hexes to defend. The Allies will follow the line of least resistance, the hexes west of Antwerp where the broken terrain ends, and the hexes south of Strassbourg which are the last of the broken terrain and are held by weak German units. Historically, these are the places where the actual Allied breakthroughs occurred; by Montgomery's troops in the north and by Patton's forces in the south.

Because these two positions are the weakest, they should be reinforced early to make them less vulnerable. Troops should be shuffled around, with stronger units substituted for the 2-3-4's south of Strassbourg. Similarly, it's important to hold the two fortified hexes west of Antwerp with the most powerful units that can be spared. The 5-11-4 in the broken terrain north of Antwerp should maintain its position—its presence precludes any attempt by the Allies to outflank the West German lines.

Despite the excellent terrain advantage of the Germans, there will come a time when the Allies break the line and the Germans have to retreat. When this happens, reestablishing a continuous line is even more important than on the eastern front. If there is even one hole in the line through which Allied units can move, they can take Berlin by virtue of their high Movement Allowances. A line can

be held with breaks in it as long as the gaps are filled before the Allies can move, but once the major breakout occurs the West Germans will have to fall back some distance. One of the best places to reestablish a line is southeast from Bremen, using broken terrain for defense and ending the line at the theater boundary. This move forces the Germans to abandon most of western Germany, but they lack the troops to hold a longer line. When this second line collapses, a third stand can be made behind the Elbe, followed by a goal line defense in the three hexes around Berlin. The Germans are usually able to deny Berlin to the Western Allies.

The Germans hold superb defensive terrain in Italy and it will take the Allies a great many Turns before they are able to force the Germans from it. After the line does fall, there is little for the Germans to do. There are only three cities worth any Victory Points in northern Italy, and Germany lies through the Alps which take a minimum of four Turns to cross. Thus, German strategy in Italy is essentially that of holding your ground and letting the enemy attack. Following the collapse of the line, the German forces can be used to counter-attack or to try to exit the map. Unless the breakthrough comes early in the game, the Germans needn't worry about holding the passes through the Alps.

Battle for Germany is basically a Player's game and consequently complexity and some realism have been sacrificed at the altar of playability. This is particularly evident in the case of supply rules and these would undoubtedly change the nature of the game. Nevertheless, most of the defense points discussed would remain applicable; indeed, many of them apply to any battle or simulation at an army, corps or divisional level. *Battle for Germany* does give a fair representation of the last six months of the war, particularly the desperate situation of the Germans.

