

GAJO Games Flames of War Mega-Game: Stalingrad

On February 28th, GAJO Games hosted a huge Stalingrad Flames of War Mega-Game as part of Battlefront USA's St. Valentine's Day Massacre events for the month. The intent was to get a large group of players together to fight an infantry-oriented action in a historical setting.

We fought the action over a 16 foot by 6 foot table, representing the city from the southern suburbs to the factory district in the north. All of the terrain was custom made by the store for the battle, including a massive number of ruined and shelled buildings, special pieces for all of the objectives, and the piles of rubble that littered the city during the actual battle.

FORCES / OBJECTIVES:

The Soviet forces were all Mid-War Infantry Companies, a total of four Strelkovy Batalons, a Shtraf Company and a Naval Strelkovy Batalon. Each had a normal assortment of support platoons, with a limit of no more than one vehicle unit per force for the Soviets.

In addition to their starting forces, as long as they could manage to hold the factory district the Soviet players had a chance of receiving a T-34 "fresh from the factory" each turn. The Soviet forces totaled roughly 11,000 Flames of War points, commanded by 8 players.

The German forces were more varied, primarily Grenadier Companies but including a Panzer Company and a Panzergrenadier Company (to represent the mix of forces available to 6th Army for the assault). A total of 7 players on the German side maneuvered a total of roughly 12,000 points toward the Volga.

Victory was based on control of seven objectives - the Tractor, Red October and Barrikady Factories, the GUM Department Store, the Central Train Station, Mamayev Kurgan, and the Russian HQ Bunker located near the Tsaritsa Gorge.

OPPOSING PLANS:

The German players planned to focus initially on clearing the Mamayev Kurgan, to remove the threat of the large Russian force deployed there and to free up their forces for maneuver. They would then shift to a concerted assault on the

northern and central areas, with large thrusts aimed at the factory district and the rail station.

The Russian plan was more simple, their mobility was limited so their troops planned to hold on stubbornly and inflict as much damage on the less robust German units as possible. They relied heavily on their artillery to slow and damage the assaulting German formations, and deployed their batteries using the Across the Volga special rule. Their reserve, the Naval Strelkovy, would deploy toward the most threatened sector at double time.

INITIAL ASSAULTS:

The German assault started slowly, as they tried to squeeze the Russian forces on the Mamayev Kurgan hill from both sides, while advancing in the northern and southern sectors. The Germans deliberately weighted their assault toward the northern sector - aiming at the 3 factories and department store objectives.

After the Mamayev Kurgan was softened up by the two flanking assaults, a fresh Grenadier company was committed in a head on assault. The fighting was intense and swayed back and forth, with assaults and counterassaults following each other in quick succession.

When the dust settled, the Germans had a solid hold on the Kurgan, but all three of their assaulting companies were decimated by the fierce resistance.

ACTION ON THE FLANKS:

Meanwhile, in the southern sector, the German forces kept just enough pressure on the defenders that they prevented any forces from redeploying to the north. Although the remaining southern objective, the command bunker, was never seriously threatened, the Russian forces were tied down and unable to assist their comrades in the north.

The northern sector saw the largest concentration of German power, and their forces ground slowly forward toward the factories that were the key objectives in the sector. Another supporting force pushed on the Department Store, seizing it after a heroic defense.

The action reached a climax as the German forces approached the Factory District and the Central Train Station. By this time, the defending Russians had been significantly reduced, but the German spearheads had also taken heavy losses.

THE PIVOTAL ASSAULTS:

In a series of brutal hand to hand combats, the Germans cleared the Barrikady and Red October factories, and the train station.

A heroic counterattack by the defenders cleared the Germans from the Red October factory, but could not recover the Barrikady or the train station. With both forces (and the players) exhausted, the Germans held the Kurgan, Department Store, train Station and Barrikady factory, earning them a well-deserved marginal victory.

SUMMARY:

Overall it turned out to be a very enjoyable game. The massive expanse of cityscape made a great battleground, and really rewarded good urban tactics - such as use of snipers, pioneer assaults (with Goliath support) and house to house fighting. The Soviets were allowed to roll to receive a "factory fresh" T-34 from the Tractor Factory each turn, a total of three were produced during the battle which really helped the outnumbered forces in that district to hang on as long as they did.

Feedback from the players (and a stream of onlookers) was uniformly positive. We are looking forward to our next Mega-Game (Mortain) scheduled for April 25th!