



The Sherman in action, with infantry support, and 'John Wayne' on board to give encouragement.

BATTLE

by

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PART XXXII—Something different

THE OBJECT of this particular exercise was really a twofold one—to take advantage of a little unaccustomed sunshine and to prove that wargaming need not necessarily be carried out within the confines of four walls and on a comparatively small wargames table. Of course, it must be conceded that the whole thing was carried out in a fairly light-hearted manner, and it certainly took some time before the eyebrows of neighbours—elevated as high as they could be at the sight of sundry individuals crawling about on a lawn—returned to their normal position. Still, it was all good fun and thoroughly enjoyed by the participants—indeed their cheers and loud vocal encouragement of their respective troops might have been heard many hundreds of yards away.

Naturally, when considering a move into the outside world, certain considerations had to be looked at with some little care. Obviously, to begin with, the normal 20 mm figures used heretofore were of no use at all. However many times the mower was pushed across



One of the German half-tracks in a spot of bother—the inmate not too happy, either!

the lawn, the grass, short though it might have been, was as an impenetrable jungle to the men of the 20 mm units we have been using all along. The rules, too, necessitated examination, for—playing on a stretch of grass some 40 feet by 15—instead of the normal nine by seven feet table—the game, if the normal move rules had been adhered to (infantry move 3 inch and so on), would have given the contenders hours of labour before the opposing troops even came in sight of each other. In this predicament, it seemed that only larger troops, and correspondingly larger vehicles, would do the trick, and we were fortunate enough to be in receipt of some very generous latter-day "lease-lend" from the well known firm of Richard Kohnstam ('RIKO'), who most magnanimously supplied the requisite larger scale vehicles and troops for us to carry out our little experiment, the former being of Tamiya manufacture, and the troops the large scale Airfix ones. The fact that the vehicles were 1/35 scale and the troops 1/32 did not really matter very much, the scales being close enough not to make the men look over-large.

It was decided that the game should be as basic as possible and to this end only simple forces were used, the infantry group described already in "Battle", but carried in two instead of three half-tracks, while each force was supported by one tank of the appropriate nationality. In the case of the German force it was the inevitable Panther, while the Americans were provided with a Sherman. Somewhere along the line the U.S. force added an armoured car to their array (I never did find out just how this occurred!). There was strong temptation about to allocate names and identities to each of the troops involved, and indeed the 'American' player was, from time to time, heard to mutter instructions and encouragement to "John Wayne" and "Henry Fonda" while, the Germans being uniformed as Waffen S.S., their general seemed to regard their officer as "Obersturmbannführer Lutzig" or some such.

Then there was the question of moves and ranges

of the various weapons. This involved but a simple calculation, the multiplication by 3 of each required move and range. Thus, the infantry move became one of 9 inch—the dismounted move, that is—while those for the tanks became 24 inch and 18 inch for the Panther and Sherman respectively. (We assumed that there were no roads and all moves were therefore considered to be 'cross country' ones). Ranges were increased in the same proportion, rifle range becoming 27 inch, the bazooka's becoming 24 inch, for instance, while the tank gun ranges shot up to something like an incredible twelve feet! Everything else, the deflection stick and so on, were as used for the ordinary table game, and although no specific cones of fire were constructed for the outdoor ranges for Machine gun and sub-machine gun, the effect of these weapons was quite successfully estimated. When dispute arose, an independent umpire was called in to arbitrate.

And so we began, the 'American' player advancing from the south end of the lawn (i.e. the battlefield), and the 'German' from the north end. It was at once decided—in order not to complicate things too much—that there should be no restriction on visibility, wargame-wise, and the players therefore had an uninterrupted view of many 'miles' of territory. The first 'sightings' did not take long in coming, and both opposing tanks opened fire simultaneously. Forthwith, there was an immediate halt to the proceedings when the dice were thrown and one promptly disappeared from sight in the grass. It was discovered after a prolonged 'cordon and search' operation, and to avoid further mishaps of this nature, a small table was procured and set up nearby for dice-throwing purposes. The game then proceeded, both infantry groups coming up as fast as they could in support of their armour, and deploying—I daresay somewhat to their surprise—in the lush undergrowth. The comment was heard that 'a course at the Jungle Fighting School would do them a power of good'.

However, to the deep chagrin of the 'American', his Sherman soon became a victim of the formidable Panther, and the latter went charging on dealing out mayhem and destruction in all directions, the American armoured car being its next victim. The bazooka team was lurking about in a small copse (for this read 'tuft of long grass') and let fly a round at the triumphant Panther. As ill-luck would have it, this was a clean miss and before another round could be fired, the bazooka men were under fire from the S.S. riflemen, which did them no good at all. Putting paid to them meant the end of the fight for the Americans, their 'general' being led away quietly, protesting about his 'rotten dice luck', and that it was the last time he'd fight in the garden. That remains to be seen.



Waffen S.S. in action—pretty hard going in such a jungle!

Anyway, although it was lots of fun—one character dug little pits near the tanks, filled them with paraffin-soaked rags and set light to them, providing a realistic simulation of a tank 'brewing-up'—it could be seen that there were indeed quite considerable possibilities in this outdoor game. The room for manoeuvre, the extended moves, and so on were surprising, and with some more serious preparation, such as the construction of a few houses (or merely ruins) in the proper scale, the presence of a few trees (old wallflower plants are just the job), then a really intriguing and realistic game could be had.

Why not try it next summer?

American assembly point—the Sherman about to move away from the other vehicles.



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