

## 'One Rule for you.....' (Part Two)

Comparing the results achieved using two popular sets of rules for the same scenarios.

By Barry Hilton

Part One of this article offered the rationale for writing it together with some comparisons between the different approaches used. This part deals solely with the first play test which is based on a scenario written by Richard Marsh.

### **Kamenewo, 6<sup>th</sup> October 1941** (adapted from Richard Marsh's Rapid Fire Supplement #3)

The combat at Kamenewo although relatively small compared to the epic tank battles of the Ost Front is very significant. This is because it was the first well documented occasion when the Soviets used their superior armour in conjunction with tactics which caused the Germans significant problems. This more than anything, provoked shock and a crisis of confidence in the panzer soldiers and generals.

I chose this battle because it has relatively open terrain and is predominantly armour based. I liked Richard Marsh's **Rapid Fire** scenario and had been fascinated by this action from the first reference I came across in Kenneth Macksey's *Tank v Tank* (Chancellor Press). Other information on Kamenewo has been rather difficult to find despite much surfing the web. A quick note on the alterations to Richard Marsh's scenario first. He allows fifteen turns for the Germans to reach Wion (see Map1). They start west of the Lizisa and have to overcome the first line of defence on the east bank before moving to the ridge and eastwards. I cut the first part of the game assuming that the Soviet line along the Lizisa has been dealt with. In 1941 it was overcome quickly and with minimal loss to the Germans. My version allows ten turns for the Germans to move from their form up position west of the Kamenewo ridge to take Wion. The reality is, they will get nowhere near it and spent a frantic ten turns holding their own position on or near the ridge against the 4<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade's counter attack. I left all infantry out of the play tests to concentrate on the contrasts between the rule sets when addressing the use of armour. In the third game I varied the position of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Soviet tank battalion by allowing it to deploy partly in the woods north of the Orel-Mtensk road. Richard's scenario classifies these woods as impassable to armour but Macksey refers to the Russians deploying in cover along this tree line and springing a trap on the initial German advance. To offset this seeming Russian advantage I also in this third game allowed the Germans to begin with their 88mm and 100mm guns deployed on the ridge as opposed to limbered and on the road west of the ridge. In games Four and Five I allowed only the 100mm to be in position as the game starts.

The first three play tests of this scenario were done in 1/285<sup>th</sup> scale using **GHQMTG** once and **Rapid Fire** twice. For the **Rapid Fire** games I halved all of the movement and fire rates although I probably should have divided them by three or four. The scenario is a very tough one and each side is hard pushed to get better than a draw. Although the Germans fought very well in the **GHQMTG** game (Play Test Game One) they were hugely ineffective against the Russian armour. They were actively contesting the Kamenewo ridge with their remaining two platoons of tanks by the close of the game (hanging on by the skin of their fingernails is probably nearer the mark) but one Russian light tank platoon had broken through to the Lizisa bridge where it still had the job of taking out the 105mm batteries deployed in the direct fire AT role. As the game time was up at this point I judge it a tactical draw but a clear Soviet points victory. The first of the **Rapid Fire** games gave a much better result for the Germans. Their ability to knock out heavier Russian armour was the biggest contributory factor. Taking into account the vagaries of the dice, the results were still significantly different to the game using **GHQMTG**. In Game One, the Germans knocked out only one T34/76 and a couple of BT7s. In the second game with the same moves the Germans took out all of the T34s and BT7s leaving only an HQ unit and a KV1 unmolested.

Game Three was a real carve up, with all German tanks knocked out but the ridge saved. Games 4 and 5 were both fought in 20mm with the **Rapid Fire** game (Number Four) using the rules as written and the **GHQMTG** rules (Game 5) doubling their ranges and movement. Again these should probably have been tripled or quadrupled but this would have offered enormous movement and fire distances. On a good road that distance would increase to 88 inches per move for a PzIII or T34, remember that's in 20mm scale. John Hernandez does specify how his movement has been calculated which is by halving available cross country movement rates over a three minute period (real time simulated by a game turn) using an M4 Sherman as his benchmark. Without a clear idea of the game turn length envisaged by Colin Rumford and Richard Marsh it is impossible to draw any serious conclusions from this huge difference. Again I have not gone for the extremes to create an impact here. I consulted the 'Medium Tracked Vehicle' category for **Rapid Fire** and compared a vehicle which fell into that category by checking its movement capability under both rule sets. A PzIII would move some 12 inches across country in any given move using **Rapid Fire** and if the **GHQMTG** rules were scaled up the same tank would move between 41 inches in any given turn across country. The only rational explanation I can see for this (assuming that both authors are factually correct) is that their game turns represent different periods of real time or the **Rapid Fire** ground scale is significantly smaller. If so, this may also account for some of the gun range differentials. Getting back to the results, Game Four employed the **Rapid Fire** ammo limitation rule for armour (very good I thought) resulting in hostilities ceasing at Turn 8. The Soviet assault was literally driven back to the start line (not possible under **GHQMTG** unless as a voluntary action by the player) with the loss of two T34s, two BT7s, one T60 and shockingly the KV1 plus the Katyusha battery. German losses were one PzII, two PzIIIs and one PzIV. Victory was largely due to the anti tank capabilities of the 88mm, 100mm and 105mm guns and not the panzers. Game 5 used **GHQMTG** with ranges and movement doubled. Again the Soviets were completely stopped with tanks losses at two T34s, three BT7s and one KV1 against two PzIIIs, one PzIV and the 105mm Howitzer (over run by a charging BT7!) The heavier Soviet tanks were all dispatched by the towed guns.

One thing that should be constant in any rule set is ground scale and therefore weapon ranges. I thought it wise to concentrate comparisons on the vehicles present at Kamenewo but felt it necessary to refer to scale anomalies where they were relevant. **Rapid Fire** offers three range bands for AT fire extending to a maximum of 48 inches (Extreme range). The maximum range specified for a PzIII (short 50) under **GHQMTG** is 12 inches if this is multiplied by a factor of 3.75 (multiplier between 1/285<sup>th</sup> and 1/76<sup>th</sup> scales) a figure of 45 inches is arrived at. More or less compatible. Early model T34s produce a similar figure. All ok so far. If however we look at some later war vehicles such as a PzV and refer to the **GHQMTG** ranges we find that the range for this tank is 25 inches. When multiplied by the up scaling factor this weighs in at a whopping 93.75 inches! This I cannot explain. It may however offer some rationale for my own reasoning when adapting the **GHQMTG** rules for 20mm and 28mm games. I chose to double the listed movement and ranges simply to prevent the games being over in three turns or so! The other reason for doing this was that Hernandez uses a ground scale of 100 yards/metres to one inch. This gives one inch square bases on which all but the largest 1/285<sup>th</sup> vehicle can be accommodated. Of course such a convenient system cannot be used with larger scales. For 28mm I employed a scale of 50 yards to one inch and mounted an infantry platoon (3 figures) on a two inch circular base. This is nice and neat for infantry but goes completely out of the window with vehicles which in some cases can be up to six inches long in 28mm scale. I admit my solution was neither scientific nor logical but it does produce a nice game with attractive large scale toys. I guess that may have been the kind of thinking behind some of the movement rates and fire ranges within **Rapid Fire**.

## The Devil's in the detail (Shooting comparison)

Although the act of shooting is no faster (both sets of rules requiring a 'to hit/to fire' roll followed by a 'damage' roll) the outcomes can be quite different. **Rapid Fire** uses broad categories to classify guns and vehicles whilst **GHQMTG** is more specific about individual weapon capability against particular vehicles. I enjoyed the feel of the **Rapid Fire** action and particularly the morale effects such as retire/ no offensive action but felt that some of the shooting was a little lacking in realism particularly the ability of PzIII (short 50s) to take out T34s frontally at long range.

Under **Rapid Fire**: whilst stationary, the odds of a PzIII (short 50mm) hitting a T34 at Extreme range are 16.6% (score 6 on a D6). If the hit is achieved then some damage will occur on a further 50% roll with heavy damage at 33% and a KO at 16.6% (score 4, 5 or 6 on a D6). When the range is shortened to Normal, the 'to hit' percentage is improved to 33%. If this is achieved then some damage is inevitable with a 66% chance of heavy damage and a 33% chance of a KO (5 or 6 on a D6). All damage accrued is cumulative.

Under **GHQMTG** the chance to hit is governed by the Cohesion value of the firer. For the Kamenewo scenario we allocated a *Cohesion* of 16 to the Germans. This means that to fire they have an 80% chance of success (16 or less scored on a D20). If this is achieved then the odds to damage at Extreme range are 50% with no possibility of a KO. The chance of a *Disorganised* result is approximately 20%. *Disorganised* is the nearest equivalent result to **Rapid Fire's** 'heavy damage'. A further difference is the ability of any element to recover from its depleted state by passing a modified Cohesion test. So, under **GHQMTG** things can get better for the victim! When the ranges are closed to the equivalent of Normal, then the odds to damage improve marginally (about 57%) but there is still no possibility to KO.

## The Results of Play Test 1 – Kamenewo

One could conclude that history will out; five play tests of which none resulted in a decisive Soviet victory however if Macksey's account of the action is to be believed, the reason the Germans were able to hold at Kamenewo was that the Soviets surrendered their gunnery advantages by moving to point blank range. This allowed their lead vehicles to be met on somewhat equal terms by the panzers and for the accompanying German infantry to petrol bomb the Soviet tanks back off the ridge. This was definitely not reflected in the **Rapid Fire** play tests where many Soviet tanks were KO'd at extreme range. Now I know this may all seem a little anally retentive but I believe it to be quite significant in wargaming terms. It means that using **Rapid Fire** will, generally speaking give a nice lift to under gunned tanks during Early-Mid period North African, 1940 Blitzkrieg and Barbarossa actions. Not to be sniffed at if you want to enjoy more than a Sportsman's chance against history.

Finally as a further contrast I found a scenario report on the Net placed by the North Hull Wargames Club who re fought the action using the **PanzerMarsch** rules. They used 20mm kit and the rules I believe, work on the one model equals one tank principle. Their result was considered a draw with the field described as a tank graveyard by the end of the game. This is a little more substantiation to the results achieved during our play tests.

Here are the details of the game if you wish to play it yourself.

### **Table set up**

I used a six foot by four foot table for the two 1/76<sup>th</sup> scale games giving more than adequate manoeuvre room. For the 1/285<sup>th</sup> games I used a three foot by four foot table (roughly). This was constructed from hexes. It obviously provides more room for the relatively small number of vehicles to use but I do not think that it unduly influenced the course of the games. Please refer to Map 1.

#### **Order of Battle 35<sup>th</sup> Panzer Regiment (Germans).**

HQ: 1 x PzIII (Short 50mm)

1<sup>st</sup> Company: 2 x PzIII (Short 50mm)

2<sup>nd</sup> Company: 2 x PzIII (Short 50mm)

3<sup>rd</sup> Company: 2 x PzIVe (Short 75mm)

4<sup>th</sup> Company: 1 x PzIII (37mm), 1 x PzII

5<sup>th</sup> Company: 2 x PzIII (Short 50mm)

#### **Supporting Artillery**

1 x 100mm Field gun & tractor

1 x 88mm Flak gun & tractor

1 x 105mm Field gun & tractor

1 x FOO & Jeep

#### **Order of Battle 4<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade (Soviets).**

HQ: 1 x T34a, 1 x T60

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion

HQ: 1 x BT7

3 x BT7

2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion

4 x T34a, 1 x KV1a

#### **Supporting Artillery**

1 x Katyusha 132mm battery

The game should be played over 10 turns. The Germans must hold the Kamenewo Ridge and if possible, move on towards Wion. The Soviets must retake the Kamenewo Ridge and press on toward the Lizisa bridge.

### **Deployment and arrival restrictions**

On Turn 1 the Soviet 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion arrives at point A. On Turn 2 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and the HQ Company arrive through player choice at A or B. On Turn 4 the Katyusha battery arrives.

The Germans may deploy their 100mm gun on the ridge with the Observer (unlikely to be needed as all fire will be direct). The tank regiment is deployed by company in order of seniority behind the ridge from north to south. They should be at least a move away from the foot of the ridge. The guns and tows should be on the road just beyond the east end of the bridge. I delayed the arrival of the 5<sup>th</sup> Company until Turn 3 as I assumed it to be 'mopping up' near the river.

As a variation the Soviets may deploy their 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion tanks in the woods to the north of the road at the beginning of the game. If this option is chosen then the Germans may deploy all towed guns on the ridge from Turn 1.

I would refer those interested to consult Richard Marsh's *Rapid Fire #3 Supplement* which is an excellent and inspiring read and also Kenneth Macksey's *Tank v Tank* book which is full of interesting and thought provoking points.

In the next article I'll explore a further scenario focusing more on infantry action and compare the results once more. I will also summarize my conclusions from the exercise. If anyone wishes to correspond about the above points our totally revamped website should be back up and live under [LeagueofAugsburg.com](http://LeagueofAugsburg.com) very shortly.