

SCENARIO 10: FRANKFORCE AT ARRAS

The British 1st Army Tank Brigade has been immortalised by the battle of Arras where it clashed with the 7th Panzer Division and the SS Division Totenkopf. The brigade was short of tanks having motored over 100 miles on its tracks with the inevitable breakdowns.

The Arras attack was the only major British attack in the battle of France and was supposed to be conducted by two divisions. It was organised into two battle groups, each with a battalion of tanks and motorised infantry supported by towed artillery. The western group was based around the 7th Royal Tank Regiment and the 8th Durham Light Infantry, and the eastern group around the 4th RTR and 6th DLI. There was no reconnaissance or air support available and the tanks tended to become detached from their infantry, a pernicious British habit of the Blitzkrieg era. The battlegroup was named Frankforce after its commander, Major-General Harold Franklyn.

LEGENDS OF GERMANY

ERWIN ROMMEL (AT ARRAS)

Erwin Rommel, later to be known as the *Wüstenfuchs* – The Desert Fox – is best known for his exploits as the commander of the Deutsches Afrika Korps and later as the general responsible for the defence of the Atlantic coast of Europe against the expected Allied invasion. In 1940 he was commander of 7th Panzer, nicknamed the Ghost Division because it advanced so fast and so far that no one ever knew quite where it was: especially not the German command.

At Arras, Rommel's main contribution was to steady the line when Frankforce broke the German armour and their anti-tank defences proved inadequate. One of Frankforce's columns was stopped by 105mm howitzers and the other by 88mm flak guns; reputedly Rommel and his aide went from gun to gun giving fire directions.

Rommel's characteristics below reflect his role in the battle of Arras.

Cost: 180pts (Veteran)

Team: 1 officer and up to 2 other men

Weapons: Submachine gun, pistol or rifle as depicted on the models.

Options:

- Rommel may be accompanied by up to 2 men at a cost of +13pts per man (Veteran)

Special Rules:

- Rommel's Morale bonus is +4.
- Anti-tank specialist: Any anti-tank gun artillery unit within 6" of Rommel may reroll their rolls to hit when firing against tanks (i.e. any fully tracked vehicles for the purpose of this rule).

The eastern battle group overran Totenkopf units including 37mm light anti-tank guns towed by Hanomag half-tracks. The legend of the Matilda II was born in this battle with one Matilda II shrugging off 14 anti-tank hits. Stukas did rather better by destroying two Matilda Is from the air.

The western group wreaked havoc amongst 7th Panzer causing much destruction including enemy tanks. Eventually their progress was halted by a heavy artillery *pakfront* including 88mm flak guns organised by Rommel himself. A German armoured counter attack was stopped by infantry strongpoints in villages with anti-tank artillery.

FORCES

British units should be selected from the British 1st Army Tank Brigade selector (see page 68) and German from the 1940 Panzer Division selector (see page 70), with tank choices tailored to suit 7th Panzer. In addition, the German player may take Rommel as an officer, but he must start the game in reserve.

THE BATTLE

Use 'Scenario 2: Maximum Attrition' from the *Bolt Action* rulebook with the British as the attackers. The first wave of both Germans and British must be tanks (i.e. any fully tracked vehicles for the purpose of this scenario), without any towed artillery or transported infantry.

PLAYER NOTES

This is a straightforward demolition derby. The British seem to have had no particular geographic objective in mind. Frankforce was too weak and unsupported to advance far. Their aim seems to have been more reconnaissance in force with the vague hope of disrupting the supply corridor for the Panzer spearhead. The Germans were under the impression that they were the targets of a serious assault by something resembling a corps and fought like tigers, which gives an indication of the impact of a handful of decent British infantry tanks.

The German problem will be the usual one of handling Allied heavier tanks with their thick armour. Only heavy howitzers and 88mm flak guns will stop them. The German player should try to suppress the British armour by pinning them in the early turns using the better mobility of the Panzers until big guns can deliver the *coup de grâce*.

The British player should make hay while the sun shines and shoot up as many German vehicles as possible before their heavy guns arrive from reserve. When they do, the British player should try to put in a combined attack with his infantry in support.

FALL GELB, THE LOW COUNTRIES

VICTORY – CAMPAIGN POINTS

Keep track of destroyed enemy units. The player who destroys the highest number of enemy units wins. Otherwise it is a draw.

Players receive one Campaign Point for a draw, three for winning by a margin of three or more enemy units, and six Campaign Points for winning by a margin of six or more enemy units.