

## **The Battle For Budapest (Part 2)**

**By Darren Makepeace and Richard Marsh**

### **Background**

Following the encirclement of Budapest the German high command launched three major counter attacks, not to assist a breakout of the garrison, but to retake the city and push back the front line. These counter offensives were called 'Operation Konrad I, II and III'. For this purpose the German high command used all its reserves on the Eastern Front and half of all the panzer divisions.

By this time the oil fields of western Hungary were Germany's last remaining source of fuel and as such vitally important. The Fuhrer was more concerned about the situation there than the fact that Soviet tanks were parked up about 60 kilometres from Berlin, and demanded the reports from that sector first at his daily briefings.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> December 1944 the allocated units of IV SS Panzer Corps began to move into Hungary. These were the 5<sup>th</sup> SS Panzer Division 'Wiking', the 3<sup>rd</sup> SS Panzer Division 'Totenkopf', the 96<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and the 711<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1945 they were launched straight into battle, even though they were only able to deploy 50% of their forces as the rest had not arrived. Included in their number were two battalions of the Hungarian 'Ney SS combat group' who were attached as anti-tank grenadiers.

SS Obersturmbannführer Károly Ney was a curious individual who was degraded and dismissed from the Hungarian army for disobeying orders, but was subsequently recruited by the SS as part of the combat group, which he went on to lead. After the war he was recruited by the CIA, where he worked as an agent behind the Iron Curtain.

The counter attack – Operation Konrad I - at first made good progress, but was then brought to an abrupt halt around the area of Bicske, West of Budapest on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January, when it ran straight into the Soviet 18<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps, which was up to full strength. Here the offensive stalled and Guderian switched the angle of attack further South with 'Operation Konrad II', which also failed to make the breakthrough.

Finally, during 'Konrad III', the German forces did reach the river Danube south of the capital, but as they were stuck out on a limb it was decided to withdraw them before they in turn were cut off. Thus the offensive petered out and with the fall of Budapest itself on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1945, there was now nothing left to relieve. It had cost the German forces dearly, not only in men and machines but also in fuel reserves. Indeed, Guderian's original preferred plan was called 'Operation Paula', but as it would have cost more fuel to carry it out it was decided to go for the cheap option with predictable consequences.

## Game 2: Konrad I - 'Combat Group Ney' Strike For The Capital

### Objective

This is an encounter game so the forces need to be reasonably balanced. The German objective is to get off the other end of the table with at least 40% of their forces intact. The Soviets have to inflict as many casualties as possible and bleed the Germans dry so they are not able to advance on the capital and relieve their comrades! You may add points values (see the new Rapid Fire 'points cost of forces' on the website, or alternatively use those in the *Rapid Fire! 2<sup>nd</sup> Supplement*) to all the elements involved and see who can inflict the greatest points loss on their opponent. See the scenario map for further information.

### The Forces

#### German

**Kampfgruppe 'Ney':** Morale status Elite

2 x battalions of Panzer Grenadiers. Use the German Panzer Grenadier (1944-45) organisation table in the *Rapid Fire!* rule book, or the one on page 9 of the *Rapid Fire! 2<sup>nd</sup> Supplement*. One company in one battalion may be carried in an Sdkfz 251 APC.

**5<sup>th</sup> SS Panzer Division 'Wiking':** Morale status Regular

1 x company of 3 Panthers

1 x company of 3 Panzer Mk IV's

1 x AT company of 2 Hetzer's

Plus 3 x companies of Panzer Grenadiers from the 'Westland' Regiment (+ Battalion HQ) as tank riders. No heavy weapons. Maximum 4 tank riders per AFV.

#### Soviet

**18<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps (elements)**

**Soviet Guards Motorised Rifle Brigade.** For all three battalions of this brigade use the 'Soviet Motorised Rifle Battalion' organisation table on page 54 in the *Rapid Fire! 2<sup>nd</sup> Supplement* with all additions and Guards status. Add a Brigade HQ of 6 figures.

**Soviet Heavy Tank Regiment (IS 2's).** Use the table on page 64 of the *Rapid Fire! 2<sup>nd</sup> Supplement* with all additions.

**Soviet Light SP Regiment x 2 (SU76's).** Use the table on page 67 of the *Rapid Fire! 2<sup>nd</sup> Supplement* with all additions.

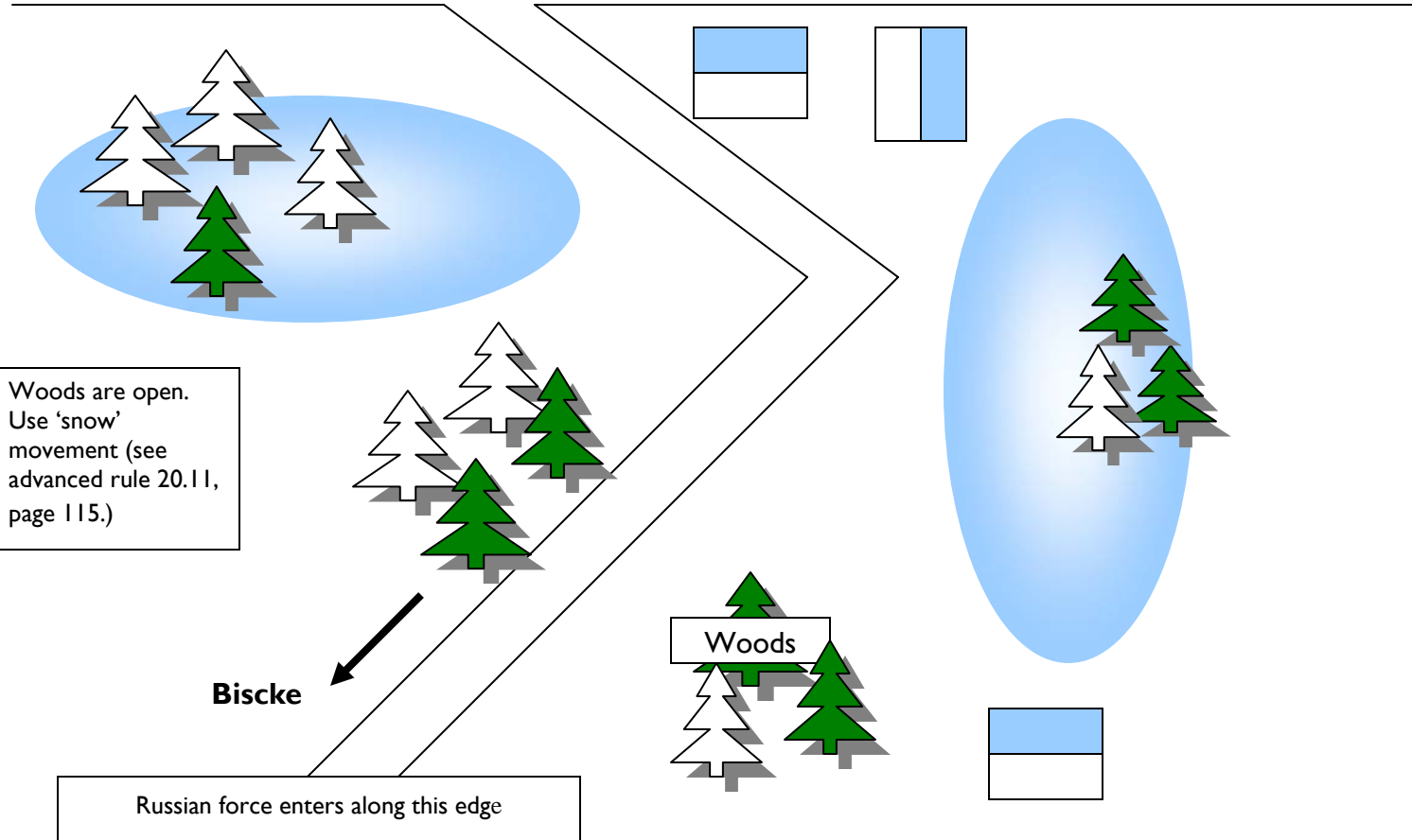
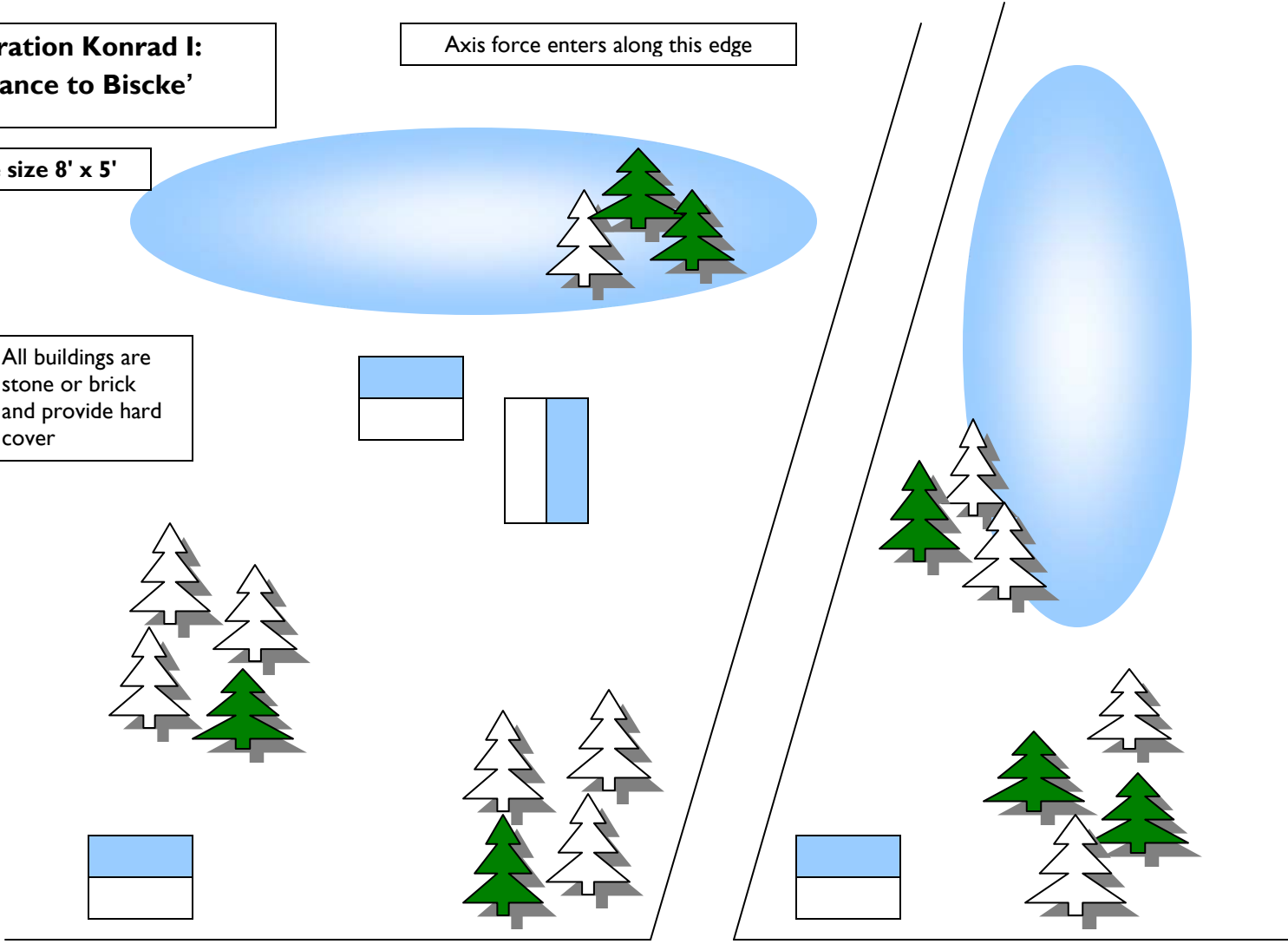
**Soviet Guards Mortar Battalion (2 x Katyusha multiple rocket launchers).** Use the table on page 64 of the *Rapid Fire! 2<sup>nd</sup> Supplement* with all additions.

**Operation Konrad I:  
'Advance to Biske'**

Axis force enters along this edge

Table size 8' x 5'

All buildings are  
stone or brick  
and provide hard  
cover



Woods are open.  
Use 'snow'  
movement (see  
advanced rule 20.11,  
page 115.)

**Biske**

Woods

Russian force enters along this edge