

The Battle for Budapest (Part 3) - The Breakout

By Darren Makepeace and Richard Marsh

Background

The German command in Budapest made repeated plans to break out of the encircled city to rejoin their forces farther West, and this undertaking would have been entirely feasible during either the beginning of January, or when the relief efforts were being made. One obstacle stood in the way of the commander, SS Obergruppenführer Karl Pfeffer-Wildenbruch: Adolf Hitler. Hitler expressly forbade any breakout attempt and insisted with his usual gusto that the place be held until they were relieved by Guderian's counter offensive, or the last bullet, whichever came first!

Despite holding out for weeks and rebuffing any attempt at negotiation with the Red army, eventually, on the 11th February, with the city virtually overrun, a last broadcast was made to army headquarters saying that all ammo had been used up and orders were given to the troops to use 'freedom of action' to make their way back to friendly lines. Upon relaying this info the radios were destroyed, making the order irreversible. At 8.00pm that day the breakout began.

The defenders managed, using underground sewerage pipes and drainage culverts, guided by loyal Hungarians, to work themselves through most of the Soviet lines until they reached the edge of the city. Here they formed up into two arms to punch their way through the outer city defences. On the left wing were the remnants of the 13th Panzer Division and on the right the remnants of the 8th SS Cavalry Division 'Florian Geyer'.

A second wave was to comprise of the tattered remnants of the Feldherrnhalle Panzer Grenadier Division and the 22nd SS Cavalry Division 'Maria Theresa' along with the still loyal Hungarian units. A third wave consisted of the wounded, baggage train and thousands of civilians.

The Soviets for their part had been expecting a break out attempt for weeks and heavily reinforced the ring around the city. There was also some possibility that the Germans had been betrayed, as a tremendous barrage fell on the area of forming up just prior to the start which caused a lot of casualties, especially among the civilians.

The first troops ran straight into the dug-in infantry and T34 tanks of the 18th Guards Rifle Division and were decimated. The result was that the groups splintered into smaller and smaller units as they battled to find a way through.

Most were killed or captured and of the 43,900 troops involved in the break out attempt only 700 of all nationalities made it to their own lines. 2 5,350 were taken prisoner, 17,000 killed. Thus ended the bloody siege of Budapest.

The Game

Objectives

The German objective is to punch a hole through the Soviet lines and get as many men off the far end of the table as possible, including at least one of the trucks carrying wounded. If 40% or more of the German force successfully escapes it is a German victory; between 30% and 39% is a draw and anything less than 30% is a loss. The Soviet objective is simple: stop them! See the scenario map for more information.

The Forces

Axis (All troops are Elite for morale purposes to represent their desire to escape, but fire as Regular)

Left Wing: 13th Panzer Division

2 x Panthers, 1 x Stug III

1 x Panzer Grenadier Lorried Battalion minus heavy weapons and transport. Use the unit organisation table on page 9 of the *Rapid Fire! 2nd Supplement*.

2 x companies of Hungarian Infantry. Use company organizations from the 'Hungarian Infantry Battalion' organization table on page 34 of the *Rapid Fire! 2nd Supplement*.

Right Wing: 8th SS Cavalry

2 x Hetzers, 1 x Stug III

1 x SS Cavalry Battalion. Only one company still has its horses. Use the 'SS Cavalry Battalion' table on page 13 of the *Rapid Fire! 2nd Supplement* minus all heavy weapons.

2 x companies of Hungarian Infantry (see above)

Baggage & Wounded (no fighting capability)

These are loaded into 6 trucks of any sort and can be assigned to either wing or split in any order. They are escorted by 1 x SdKfz 222 A/C and 1 x Squadron of 22nd SS Cavalry.

Soviet: Morale status of all units Regular

Elements of 180th Guards Rifle Division

Soviet Rifle Regiment. Use the 'Soviet Rifle Regiment' table on page 55 of the *Rapid Fire! 2nd Supplement* with all additions.

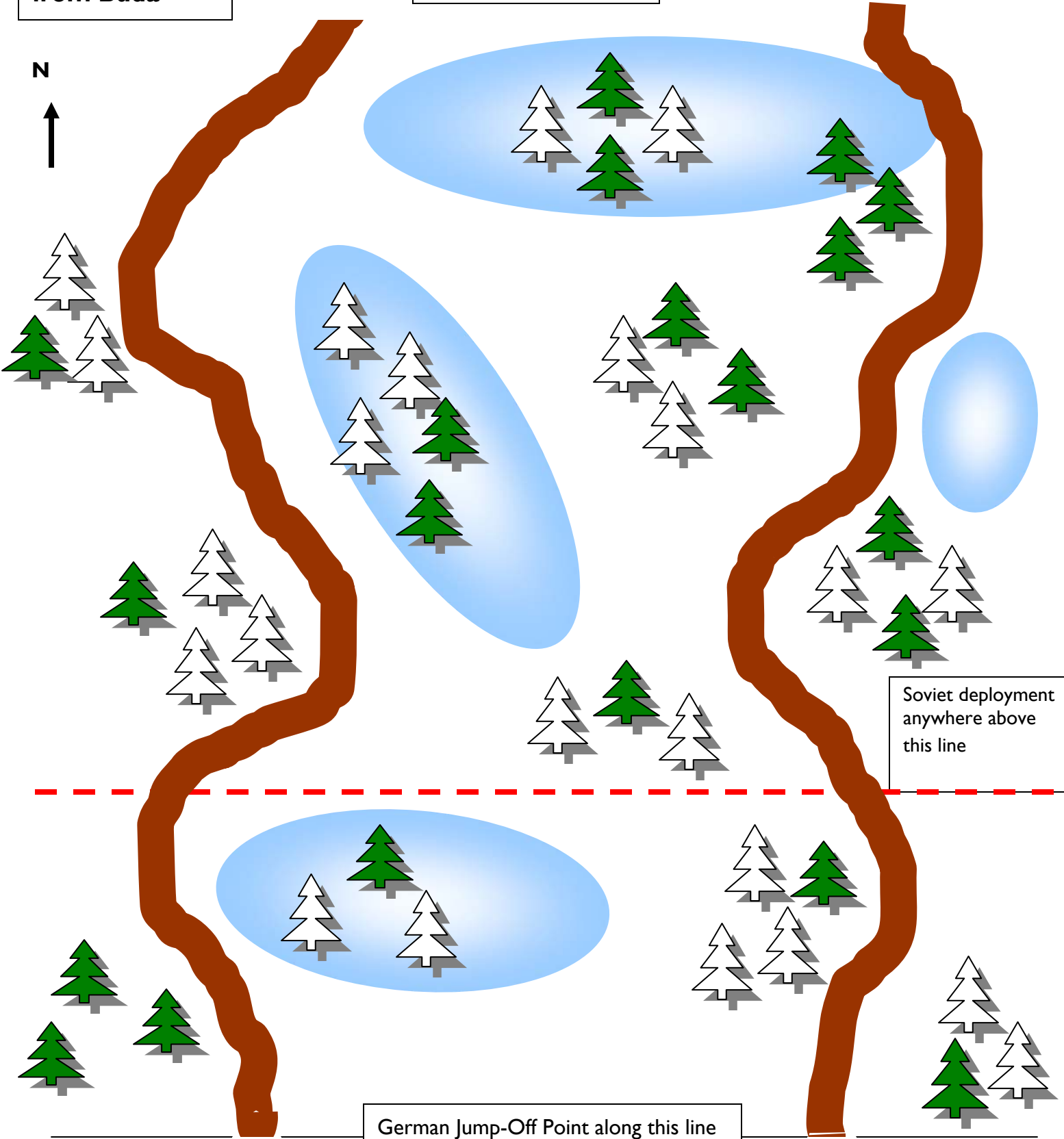
Soviet Separate Tank Regiment. Use the 'Soviet Separate Tank Regiment' table on page 64 of the *Rapid Fire! 2nd Supplement* with all 1944 additions and T34/85's. Tanks start the game dug in.

Soviet Rifle Division Field Artillery: Use the Soviet Rifle Division Artillery Regiment on page 69 of the *Rapid Fire! 2nd Supplement* with all additions except Guards status.

Break-out from Buda

All woods are open

N



Soviet deployment anywhere above this line

German Jump-Off Point along this line

Outskirts of Buda

