

“I don't want a second Verdun, and prefer instead to do the job with small assault groups.” Adolf Hitler, speaking at the Munich rally to commemorate the 1923 Beerhall Putsch, 8th November 1942.

Operation Hubertus - The Assault on the “Red House” 11th November 1942

Historical Overview

The German Sixth Army had driven the Soviet 62nd Army back through the streets of Stalingrad, and by the start of November 1942 was in sight of the Volga. One more push in the factory area would see the end of the Russian resistance in the city. Unfortunately, German casualties in reaching this point had been heavy, with many units reduced to 25% of their summer strength. Von Paulus asked for another Infantry Division to finish the job, what he got was five battalions of Pioneers and some non too subtle pressure from Hitler to get on with it.

On the Russian side things are even worse, with the defending regiments in reality having the strength of companies, holding on to a thin strip of land on the West bank of the Volga.

The new German plan of attack was designated Operation Hubertus, and called for the Pioneer to assault a series of Soviet strong points and then push on to the Volga.

The first stage objective for the 50th Panzer Pioneer Battalion was the Administration Building of the Barrikady gun factory, known to the Germans as “The Red House”.

German Briefing

Hauptman Erwin Gast, O\C 50th Panzer-Pioneer Battalion

Objective

Seize the building known as the Red House and secure it against enemy counter attack.

Forces available

Your troops consist of 2nd & 3rd Kompanies of your Panzer-Pioneer Battalion. The 1st Kompany has been detached and remains with the battalion spws. To make up for this reduction in strength you also command part of Sturm Kompanie 44, an assault unit formed from experienced street fighters of the infantry.

All your troops are exceedingly well trained and equipped, and you are confident that you can achieve your objective. You have declined the support of the line infantry in your area as they are not assault specialists like your men, and would only get in the way, especially as this attack is to be launched at night.

The infantry holding your jump off positions report the objective is held by NKVD troops, and that there is a mortar battery positioned in the trenches between the Red House and House 81.

The attack is scheduled to start at 03.30 am with a bombardment, and your troops will infiltrate forward as soon as it lifts.

Weather is cold and clear

Victory Conditions

German Victory

Seize and hold the Red House and House 81 with no more than 50% casualties on any ME.

Soviet Victory

Soviets still hold Red House at game end.

Any other result is a draw

Game Length

Soviets have the first turn.

Game ends at end of turn 10.

Panzer-Pionier Bataillon 50

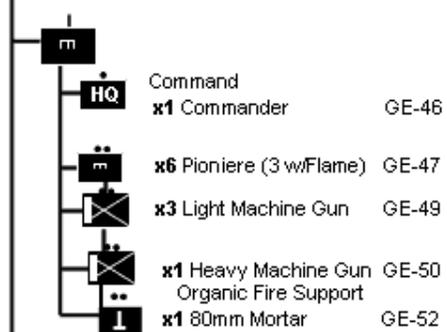
Hauptman Erwin Karl Ernst Gast

HEADQUARTERS ELEMENT (Vet)



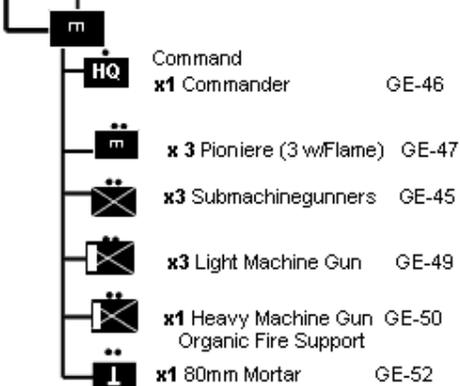
2nd Kompanie (Vet)

Oberleutnant Hardekopf



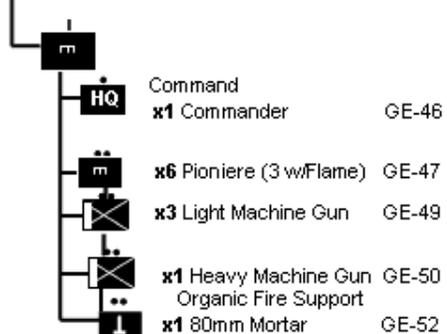
1st Kompanie, Sturm Kompanie 44 (Vet)

Oberleutnant Kindler



3rd Kompanie (Vet)

Oberleutnant Rindermann



Sturmgeschutz-Abteilung 245 (Trn)

Oberleutnant Beckmann



Deployment

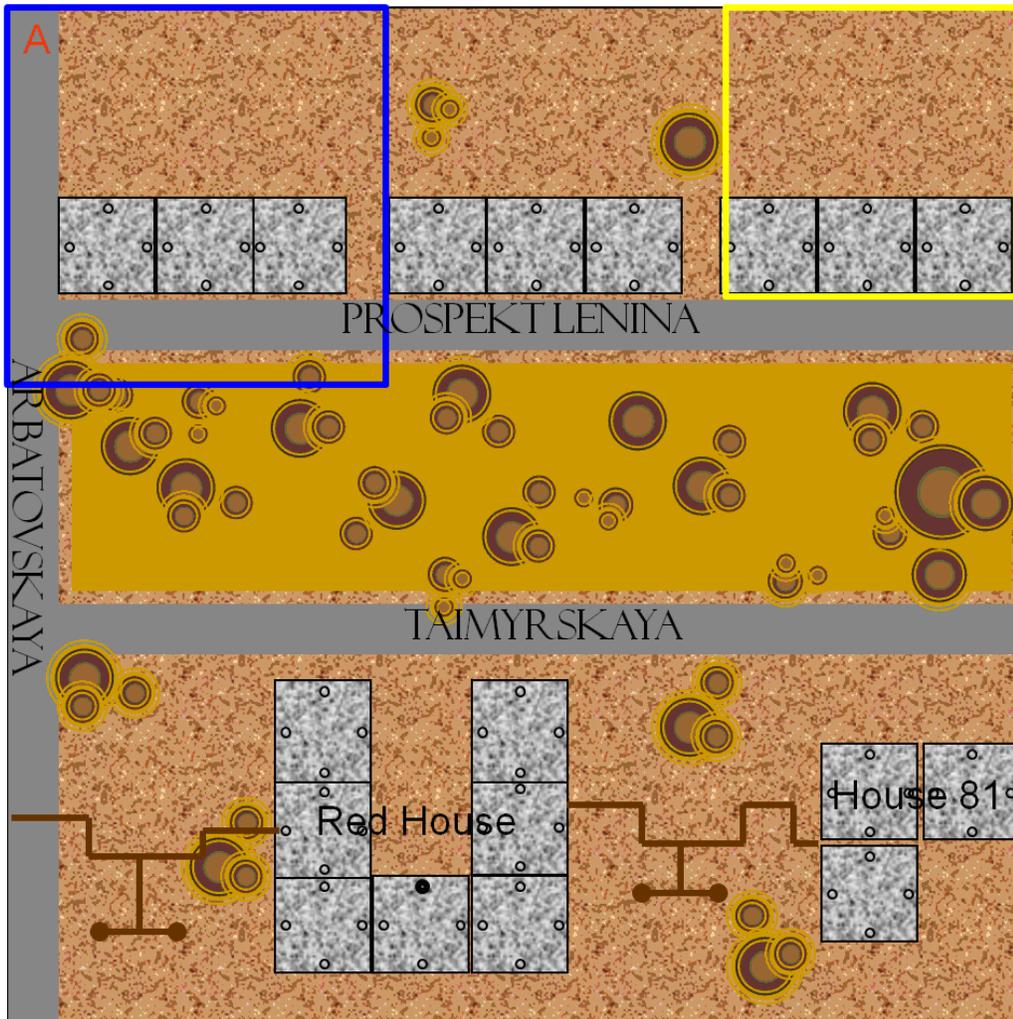
The map is 24 inches by 24 inches

The location of all Soviet units is hidden until they move or fire.

Pz Pio 50 Deploys anywhere inside the blue line on the map

SturmKompanie 44 deploys inside the yellow line.

If Stug Abt 245 becomes available it enters at the end of Arbatovskaya at the point marked **A**



Terrain

All BUAs have been extensively fortified and offer -2 to the defender in both direct and indirect fire. Any spotting from BUAs is assumed to be from higher than the surrounding ground.

The area between Taimyrskaya and Prospekt Lenina was once a tree lined public park and cinema, however it has been extensively damaged and shell torn. From dawn onwards treat it as rocky ground, prior to that it has no additional effect. The roads are still usable.

Scenario Special rules

Ground scale is 20mm – ie increase all 15mm scale ranges & movement by 50% and use the larger IDF templates

Darkness

The first three turns are at night and the following special rules are in place.

- No rapid advance.
- All MEs count as 1 quality class worse, ie Vets count as Experienced, Experienced as Trained.
- Command range is limited to 1”
- All spotting and shooting is down 2 shifts
- Soviet spotting is down 3 shifts until the turn **after** any enemy is spotted or suspected.
- Turn length at night is variable and can be assumed to be anything up to an hour.

Turn 4 is dawn – normal rules for troop quality and command apply, spotting & shooting is now down 1 shift

Turn 5 normal daylight rules applies.

Snipers

As dawn rose, the German forces around the Red House came under incessant and accurate sniper fire. All German manoeuvre tests from turn 4 onwards suffer a -1 modifier.

StuG Abt 245

StuG Abt 245 is released to the German Commander at the start of any turn after dawn (turn 4) if any Pio Btn 50 ME has suffered 50% losses or all three on table MEs lose 25%. It enters the table from point **A**. The unit is rated as Trained due to the limited time it has had to familiarise itself with its new equipment, and the poor state of the StuIG33s.

StuIG 33s suffer an additional -1 to any bog down checks due to the worn out condition of their chassis and transmission.

Fire from above

Any fire from troops in BUAs against V type targets is assumed to be able to hit the thinner top armour. Use the side \ rear armour values.

Smoke

All German mortars are assumed to have stockpiled smoke ammunition and can therefore fire 2 rounds of smoke in the game. The StuIG33s have one turns worth of smoke available

Cellars

The Red House had extensive cellars and a tunnel linking it to the rear area. Any Soviet defenders forced to fall back as a result of CC or morale may instead retire to the cellars. They may move from the cellars to any unoccupied sector of the building. Troops cannot fire or assault into or out of the cellars, however troops in the cellars do not count as holding the building for victory conditions.

Soviet Briefing

Major Fedor Iosifich Pechenyuk, O\C 650th Rifle Regiment

Objective

Hold the line. The Volga is a mere 200 yards to your rear. You must prevent the Germans from breaking through at all costs.

Key to the position in this sector is the old Barrikady factory Administration Building. This large building has been specially fortified by its defenders. The walls are a meter thick in places, and the lower entrances and windows except one have been bricked up or blocked. The building provides an excellent vantage point for our forward observers and snipers, and dominates the area.

Forces available

The defenders of this sector of the front are a mix of troops from various units, including your own 650th Rifles, the Barrikady Workers Militia and the NKVD. These units are now just the shattered remains of their full strength, having suffered 90% or more casualties in the preceding weeks. They are however all experienced, well motivated and reasonably well equipped, and have an intimate knowledge of their local surroundings.

Enemy

The enemy hold the apartments on the other side of the park along Prospekt Lenina.

Weather is cold and clear

Victory Conditions

Soviet Victory

Soviets still hold the Administration Building at game end.

German Victory

Germans occupy the Administration Building and Dom 63 with no more than 50% casualties on any ME.

Any other result is a draw

Game Length

Soviets have the first turn.

Game ends at end of turn 10.

Soviet Forces



Barrikady Workers Militia (Vet)

Jnr Lt A.P Fedotov



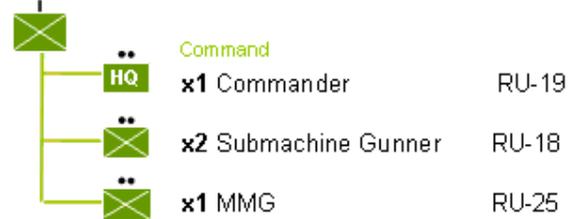
Remnants 2nd & 3rd Battalion, 650th Rifle Regt (Vet)

Cpt T V Piven



NKVD Blocking Detachment (Exp)

Jnr Lt M I Senchkovsky



Mortar Company 344th Rifle Regt (Vet)

Lt Bechaykin



Deployment

The map is 24 inches by 24 inches

The location of all Soviet units is hidden until they move or fire.

The Barrikady Militia can deploy anywhere inside the Administration Building

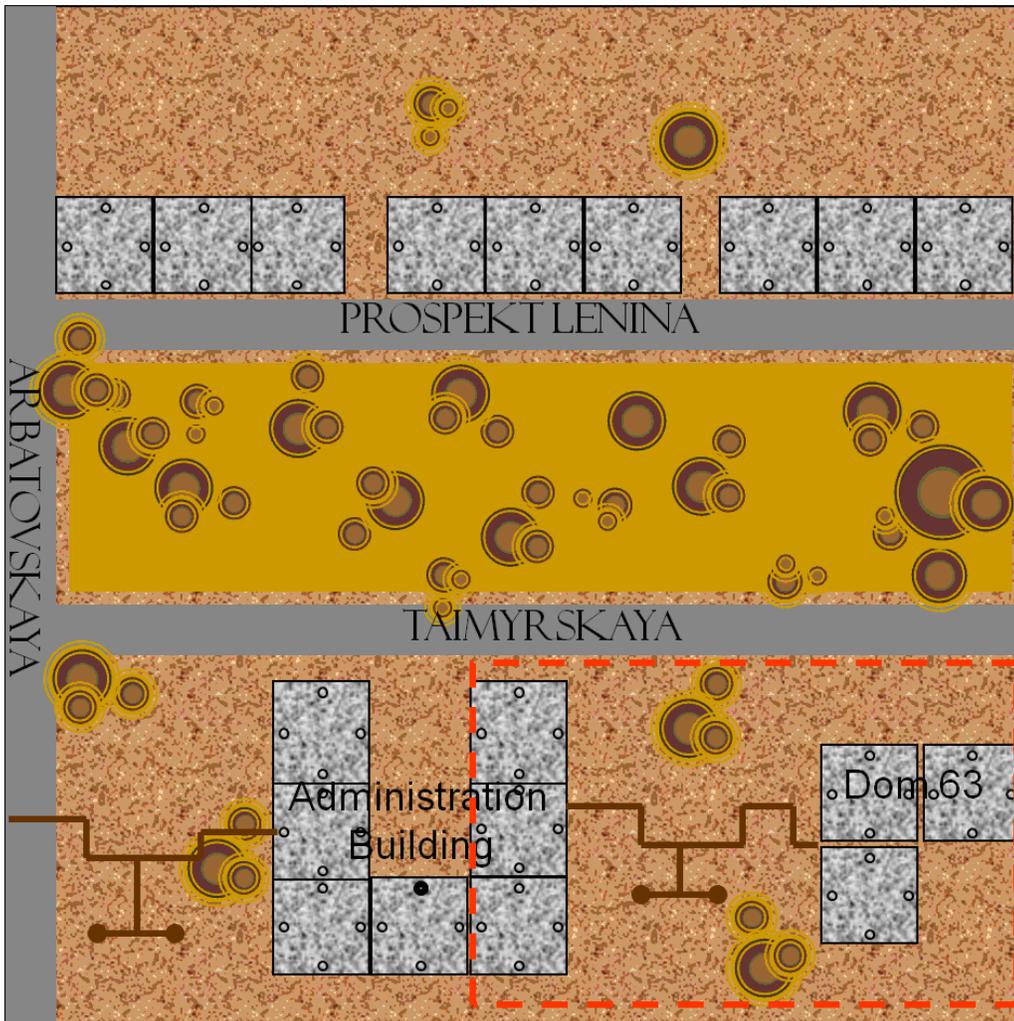
The Mortar Detachment begin in the trenches between the Administration Building and Dom 63

The NKVD begin in the trenches to the left of the Administration Building

650th Rifles can be deployed anywhere inside the area bounded by the red dotted line.

Pechenyuk's HQ is deployed in Dom 63.

All trench positions are improved hard cover and are assumed to be in two lines with a second line to which defenders can fall back to.



Terrain

All BUAs have been extensively fortified and offer -2 to the defender in both direct and indirect fire. Any spotting from BUAs is assumed to be from higher than the surrounding ground.

The area between Taimyrskaya and Prospekt Lenina was once a tree lined public park and cinema, however it has been extensively damaged and shell torn. From dawn onwards treat it as rocky ground, prior to that it has no additional effect. The roads are still usable.

Scenario Special rules

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Darkness

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- No rapid advance.
- All MEs count as 1 quality class worse, ie Vets count as Experienced, Experienced as Trained.
- Command range is limited to 1" or adjacent sectors of BUA
- All spotting and shooting is down 2 shifts
- Soviet spotting is down 3 shifts until the turn **after** any enemy is spotted or suspected.
- Turn length at night is variable and can be assumed to be anything up to an hour.

Turn 4 is dawn – normal rules for troop quality and command apply, spotting & shooting is now down 1 shift

Turn 5 normal daylight rules applies.

Fire from above

Any fire from troops in BUAs against V type targets is assumed to be able to hit the thinner top armour. Use the side \ rear armour values.

Snipers

As dawn rose, the German forces around the Red House came under incessant and accurate sniper fire. All German manoeuvre tests from turn 4 onwards suffer a -1 modifier.

Fear the FOO!

The FOO attached to the Barrikady Militia is actually part of the Army level artillery. He cannot call for fire in this scenario, although he can still fight in the defence of the building.

Mortar crews

The Mortar Detachment may replace all their mortars with Rifle squads at the start of any manoeuvre phase. Any mortar team that is forced to abandon their position is replaced with a rifle squad. Once they have converted to rifle squads they remain so for the remainder of the scenario.

The Administration Building

The building is very stout, with walls over a meter thick in places, and has been extensively prepared for defence. All entries on the ground floor have been bricked up, with the exception of the main door shown on the map as a solid dot. Assaults launched from anywhere outside the building other than against troops holding the door sector can not follow up. Similarly troops inside the building can launch assaults against troops outside, but can only follow up through the door. Inside the building assaults can be launched between adjacent sectors as normal.

Cellars

The Administration Building had extensive cellars and a tunnel linking it to the rear area. Any Soviet defenders forced to fall back as a result of CC or morale may instead retire to the cellars. They may move from the cellars to any unoccupied sector of the building. Troops cannot fire or assault into or out of the cellars, however troops in the cellars do not count as holding the building for victory conditions.

Umpires Briefing

The scenario is written with the use of an umpire in mind. If no umpire is available the Soviet player should be given the Umpires Briefing.

No way in

If the Germans reach the Red House before turn 4 the umpire (or Soviet player if no umpire is available) should tell the German player the following:-

“A message has reached your HQ from your assault troops. They report they are unable to find anywhere to place their charges or gain entry. They are unable to launch an assault until dawn” German forces may not attempt to close assault the Red House until turn 4.

At the start of turn 4 (dawn), the Umpire (or Soviet player if no umpire is available) should tell the German player that his troops have located an entry point in the Red House as marked on the map.

They should also be told the following.

The Administration Building (Red House)

The building is very stout, with walls over a meter thick in places, and has been extensively prepared for defence. All entries on the ground floor have been bricked up, with the exception of the main door shown on the map as a solid dot. Assaults launched from anywhere outside the building other than against troops holding the door sector can not follow up. Similarly troops inside the building can launch assaults against troops outside, but can only follow up through the door. Inside the building assaults can be launched between adjacent sectors as normal.

Scenario Design & Historical Notes

Names

The Administrative Building has at least six other recorded names. The Soviets called it “The P Shaped Building” or “U Shaped Building” because on a map it resembled the Cyrillic letter U, and also “Dom 60” (House 60) because all the buildings were given numbers to help reporting. The Germans called it “The Red House” or the “Kommisar House” because they misinterpreted the information gained by interrogating a prisoner who said it was defended by the NKVD, and assumed it was the NKVD Headquarters. I have tried to stick with one naming convention for both sides.

Role of the NKVD

Much is written about the NKVD Blocking Detachments and Order 227, machine gunning their own troops if they took a “step back”, coming a close second to duelling snipers in the list of things everyone knows about Stalingrad. What is not usually mentioned is that Chuikov took the NKVD under Army control on 14th September 1942, and two days later the NKVD was fighting alongside the line infantry. Although there were undoubtedly many field executions for desertion or cowardice, these were not the actions of the NKVD. As survivors pointed out, they didn't need any more encouragement to fight, they knew that this was the last chance to stop the Germans, and they knew what the Germans had done in the lands they occupied. The NKVD records report that of 1218 soldiers held for attempting to leave the city, 21 were shot and 10 arrested, the rest were sent back, which under the circumstances can be said to have been harsh enough!

Rating the Soviets

Soviet infantry are rarely rated above trained. It may come as a surprise to see even Workers Militia rated as veteran in this scenario. The reason for this is simply that these troops, while undoubtedly poorly trained, are all products of the Stalingrad Academy of Street-Fighting. They have not only “Seen the Elephant”, they have trapped it, killed it and stripped its carcass bare. In fact there are no records of any elephants surviving in Stalingrad at this time. To put it into perspective, if the 650th Rifle Regiment had an actual strength 167 soldiers (reduced to 98 by the end of the day) from paper strength 2517 and still fights on, the remaining 6% are something special.

Dramatis Personae

Where possible I have given the actual unit commanders names, although in a few instances I have made an assumption or “borrowed” an officer from nearby when I was unsure of who was commanding what. Along with the unit commanders I have named a couple of Workers Militia stands worthy of special mention. Danilin commanded the Anti tank rifle squad and Fedin & Piturin were noted as making a gallant counter attack against the Pioneers, with Fedin assaulting with a bag of grenades while Piturin gave covering fire with his SMG. In both cases assume there are some comrades along as well to bulk the stand out.

Hope you enjoy it.

Historical Outcome

Gast's Pioneers found it impossible to break in to the Red House in the dark, and decided to take shelter in the shell craters until dawn. They then came under attack from the defenders, including a one man grenade frenzy from Militiaman Fedin, and were pinned down, unable to advance or retreat. When it became obvious that they were in trouble, Stug Abt 245 was tasked with providing smoke & covering fire, and assaulting the Soviet mortar positions. They lost three vehicles trying to do so, all close to the Red House.

The Soviets held the position here, but attacks on either side succeeded in their initial objectives but still failed to throw the Russians back to the river. Losses among the Pioneers were heavy, and they were later amalgamated into a single unit.

The Red House fell to a surprise assault by SturmKompanie 44 two days later.

Hubertus was the last major German attack in the city.

On the 19th November 1942 the Soviets launched their encirclement of the Sixth Army, Operation Uranus.

Bibliography

Island of Fire – Jason D Mark (excellent)

Stalingrad, How the Red Army Triumphed - Michael K Jones

Red Army Handbook – Stephen J Zaloga & Leyland S Ness

For a bit of flavour, the 1993 film Stalingrad by Joseph Vilsmaier depicts the Pioneers and their assault on the Barrikady, and Enemy at the Gates is rather Hollywood but still watchable.