

Springtime on the Oder

8th Guards Army on the Road to Berlin

March 1945

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Introduction

March 1945: The death throes of the 'Thousand Year Reich' are being enacted on the banks of the river Oder. The Soviet Winter Offensive partially carried the Oder line off the march at the beginning of February, although the German defenders have been successful in stabilising their position and preventing the 'Fortress' city of Kustrin from becoming encircled. Whilst the Red Army has brought up reinforcements of men and equipment the Wehrmacht has rushed reinforcements to the sector and formed a number of new units, notably the Panzer Division "Muencheberg", with the intention of preventing the loss of the Kustrin garrison. Whilst the newly installed Gotthard Heinrici, commander of Army Group Vistula, ponders exactly when and where the next Soviet thrust will fall, the 8th Guards Army of Lieut-General V.I. Chuikov, and the 5th Shock Army of Col-General N.E. Berzarin are preparing to assault the defences to the west of Kustrin with the intention of consolidating their bridgeheads, and breaking through to Seelow, leaving SS General Friedrich Rienefarth and his beleaguered garrison cut off in the city.....

German Briefing

Situation

Command Post, Panzer Regiment Muenchberg, 7am, 23 March 1945.

Things are going from bad to worse. Having taken command of the sector 48 hours ago, you have spent the time since reassuring and cajoling the hastily thrown together troops of the Doeberitz Infantry Division stationed to your front. Both the general situation and the increase in Soviet patrolling activity suggest that an attack is imminent, although you have assumed until now that the moment of crisis would be preceded by the usual heavy artillery preparation.

In the meantime you have also been attempting to co-ordinate newly arrived elements of 20th Panzer-Grenadier Division and the Tigers of 502 SS Heavy Tank Battalion with your own forces with the intention of striking the Soviets' southern bridgehead, and widening the "Pipeleine" down which all men and materiel must pass to enter the Kustrin Garrison.

Yesterday was spent with Maj. Benno Weber, commanding officer of Grenadier-Regiment 302, agreeing with him the defensive plan for the area. You noted his *Landseers* to be a worrying mix of boys and elderly men, with only a smattering of experienced officers and NCOs. On top of that there is insufficient wire (or mines) to adequately screen the 302nd trenches, and the high water table is causing havoc with the less than perfect physical condition of the troops. They have, however, had over a month to improve their positions and have been able to develop a reasonable defensive network in that time.

Artillery shells are in short supply, and whilst it should be possible to respond to any Soviet thrust, any sustained counter fire will be all but impossible. Likewise, the Pak fronts of former years are just a fond memory, although there are sufficient Pak40s that it should be possible to slow down, if not stop, any armoured thrust.

On the bright side, the 302nd is well equipped with *panzerfauste* and MG42s, and in your own regiment you have one of the last remaining crack armoured units on the entire Eastern Front, indeed in the entire Wehrmacht. Equipped as you are with Tigers, Panthers, Jadgpanzers and Stugs you are confident that you can stop any initial assault and indeed carry the limited offensive objectives you have been set once your reinforcements arrive.

Then, 30 minutes ago a surprisingly modest barrage fell on the front line 3000 metres in front of your own positions. Assuming this to be the opening bars of a longer recital you continued with your breakfast, but now, right on 7am, the shells have begun falling on your command post and you and your crews are now dashing to their vehicles to take cover from the shelling. As you leap onto the hull of your Tiger you pause and peer through your field glasses towards the village of Gorgast where the assault guns of your 1st Company are located. Through the dust and flames in the early morning light you can make out the outlines of numerous large vehicles on the move. Not only the familiar outline of the T34s, but also the ominous low slung presence of JSIIs, no doubt with the ubiquitous tank riders clinging stubbornly to their sides. Ivan is on the move. You clamber into the turret and pull the hatch down after you, feeling the vehicle begin to move off under you even as you give the order to take up a firing position on the edge of the village.....

Timing

The game is played over 15 Turns.

German Set up

The German player should set up the elements of Doeberitz (including the Gorgast Volksturm) not closer than 10" and not further than 24" away from the Russian front line (with the exception of Gorgast). All stands occupy trenches or improved positions, at the discretion of the German player. In Gorgast the Russian occupies a line of BUS on the southern fringe of the town (see the map), and the German only need leave one empty BUS between himself and the Russian positions. Otherwise, any BUS can be occupied, regardless of distance from the Russian front line. The Golzow Volksturm should be deployed in Golzow.

The detached elements of Muenchberg should be deployed east of a line 10" west of the western edge of Gorgast. These vehicles are dug into improved positions and start the game hull down and with a -1 spotting modifier for dug in.

German Reinforcements

Turn 6 – The Elements of 502SS and II/90th PG Regt are set up in an area 24” deep and 36” wide (ie towards Golzow) from the SW corner of the map (all vehicles must be set up in the area 24” x 24”). These become active on the earlier of:

1. Any element coming under any kind of fire from the enemy
2. Any Russian Unit coming within 10” of any part of these MEs
3. Turn 6.

There is no line of sight from these initial positions in excess of 10” from the area of deployment (ie these units can not see or be seen by Russian units beyond this range). There is, however, a LOS from the upper stories of the Old Soldiers Settlement. These units are not dug in – they are preparing a counter attack to widen the Kustrin Corridor.

Any time beginning on turn 6 - I/90th Panzer-Grenadier Regt enter the playing area anywhere along the Western Map edge, or the road NW of Golzow.

II/90th Panzer-Grenadier Regt. lacks organic transport. The German player may choose to send the half tracks from I/90th back to collect these troops. For this to be allowable the German player must avoid voluntarily approaching closer than 8” to the enemy, and must return directly to II/90th once I/90th has been deployed (ie it needs to have been planned in advance).

The un-detached units of Muenchberg are dug into concealed positions marked on the map by the German player. One company must be placed within 4” of Golzow (and is considered on the edge of a built up area for spotting purposes), the other not less than 20” and not more than 30” from the Old Soldiers Settlement anywhere in an Arc from NW to NE. The units may engage in fire combat at any time, with spotting performed by the Soviet player as normal and any spotted units placed on the board. Units may not move closer to the enemy until activated. Activation will occur when either (i) a soviet armoured vehicle advances to within 20” of any part of either manoeuvre element or (ii) A vehicle of 502SS moves further east than the eastern most part of either element.

Victory conditions

Draw	Germans partially hold their initial positions
German Minor Victory	Germans hold any part of their frontline positions
German Major Victory	Germans hold not less than half their frontline positions (at the umpires discretion as to what constitutes half).

Losses / kills are disregarded from the victory conditions of both sides.

Boggy Ground

Areas of marshy ground should be randomly placed on the board by the umpire. Vehicles that touch any part of such an area during their movement phase must take one bog down check for each movement action they make during the turn. If failed the vehicle is considered to be bogged down at the point at which it entered the boggy terrain.

In all other off road / track areas any vehicle that makes a rapid advance must make one bog down check. If failed, the vehicle is considered to be bogged down at the end of its first move action.

Hull down

All vehicles apply a negative modifier of “1” to hull down attempts.

Buildings & Trenches

All buildings on the table are considered to be of two stories. The buildings in this area were historically of solid construction. Troops in buildings therefore get a -2 fire modifier from both direct and indirect fire. In addition, troops and guns that occupy prepared positions that exist at the start of the game receive a -2 modifier to all direct and indirect fire. Any improved positions created during the game will provide a -1 modifier to both types of fire.

Troops in trenches may move at normal speed. Such troops do not receive a +1 modifier on the spotting table.

Hedges LOS impact

Each of the tracks running roughly North-South on the map has a hedgerow running along its east side. These were bare at the time of the battle, have no impact on LOS, and do not require a breach action to cross. Troops/guns attempting to improve position whilst conformed to the base of these hedgerows receive an additional +1 modifier.

Gorgast starting positions

The Soviets begin the game with a foothold in Gorgast (see the front line marked on the map). All the adjacent built up areas are vacant and can not be set up as occupied by the German player.

Suspected positions and first fire modifier

The front lines had been stable for around 1 month and the Soviet forces had had plenty of time to reconnoitre the German defences, including mine fields, wire, and the trenches themselves. All German and Soviet positions (but not units – ie) to a depth of 20" are considered suspected for the purposes of direct and indirect fire. German first fire modifiers, however, still apply.

Command Posts

All commanders are considered to be dug in at the start of the games, and until moved have a command radius of 10".

Mines & Wire

The German Player may place 12 square inches of mixed AT/AP mines and 20 inches of barbed wire anywhere on the board.

German Artillery

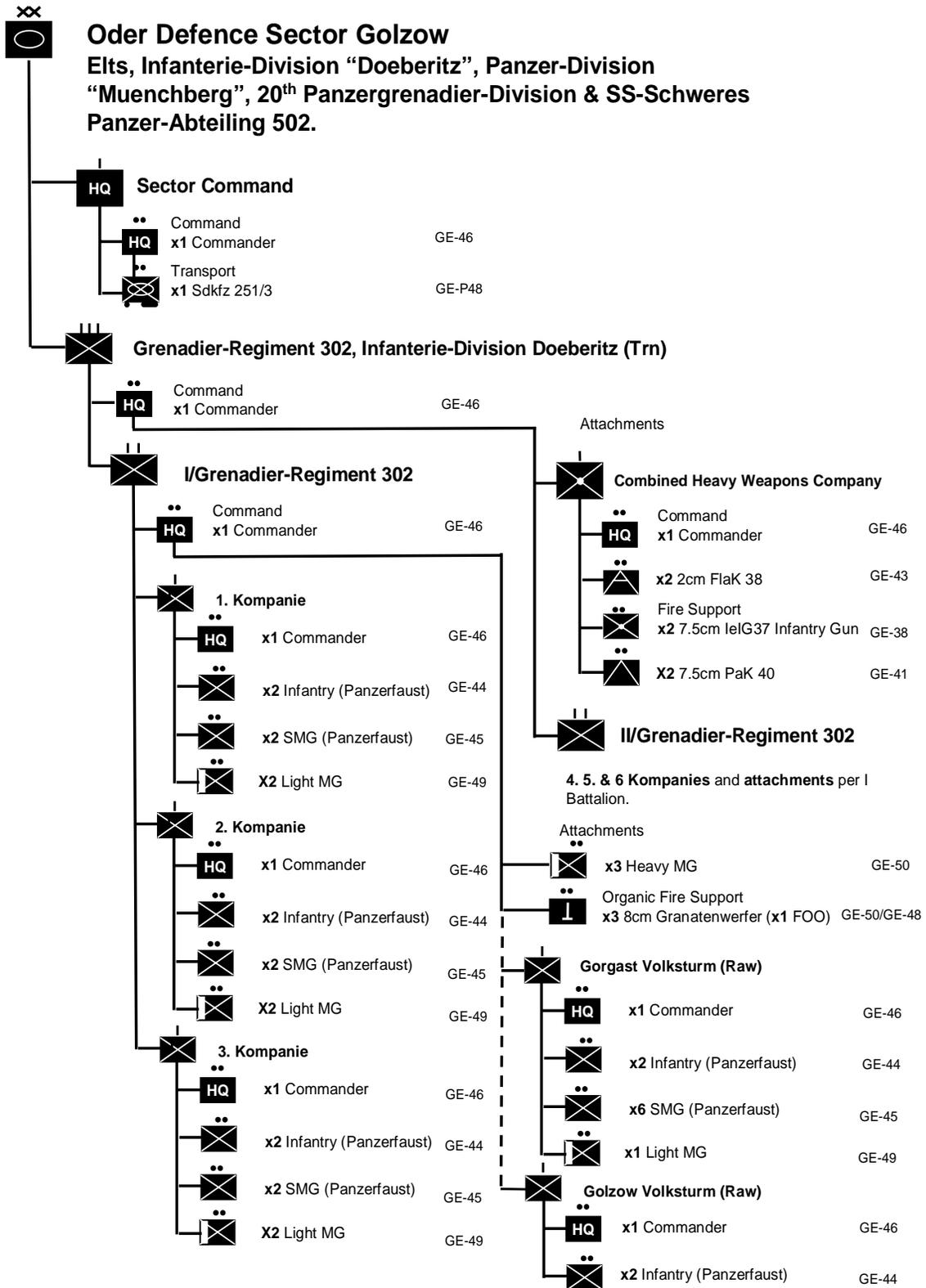
German artillery fire is orientated on a West to East axis.

The Germans are short of ammunition. All calls for fire from off-board artillery or mortars receive a +1 modifier to the dice roll.

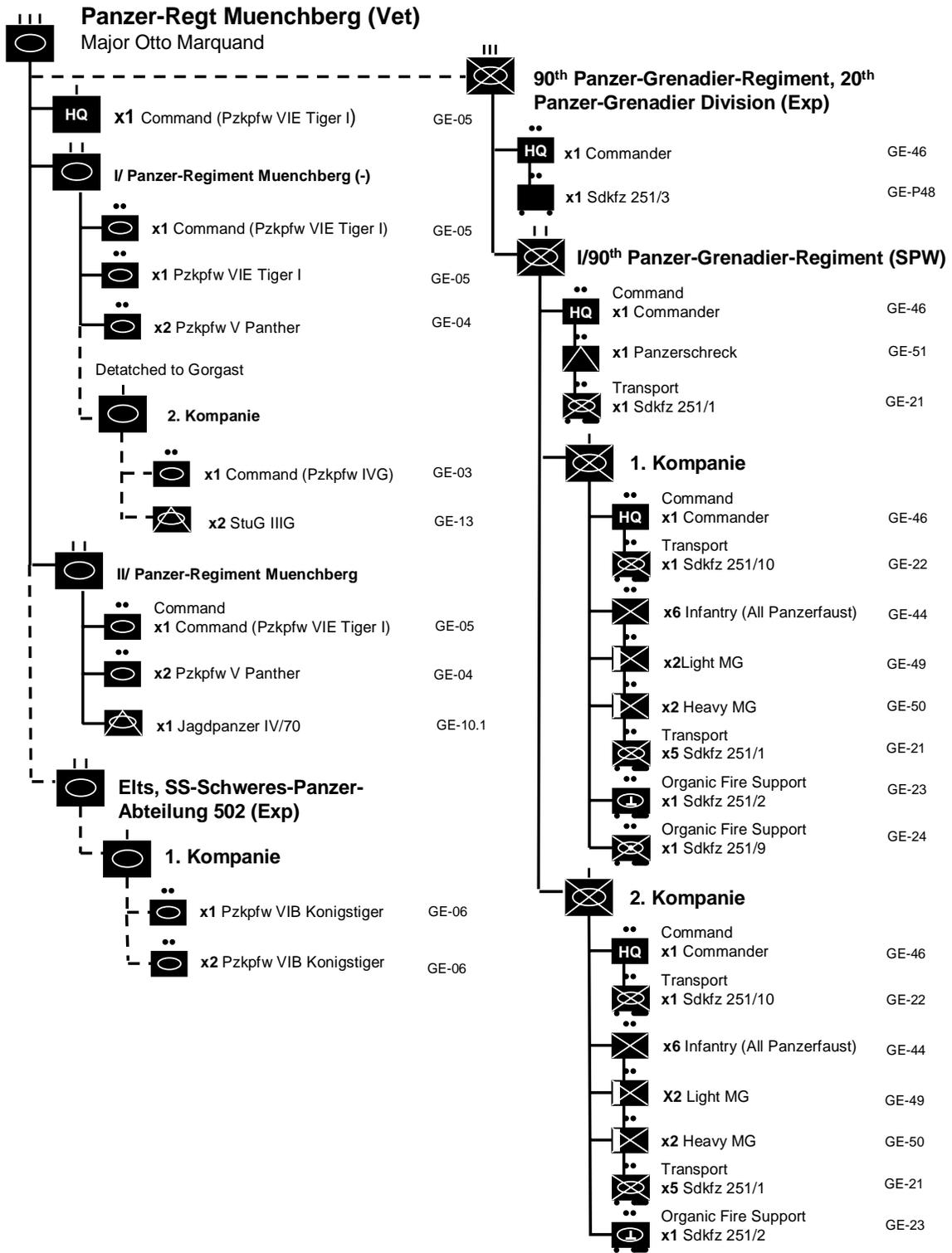
Volksturm

The Gorgast Volksturm receive a +2 manoeuvre roll modifier and a +1 close combat modifier as long as they are within the Gorgast built up area. Any Volksturm unit which is no longer within the Gorgast boundary immediately loses the benefit of this modifier. The Golzow Volksturm is simply Raw.

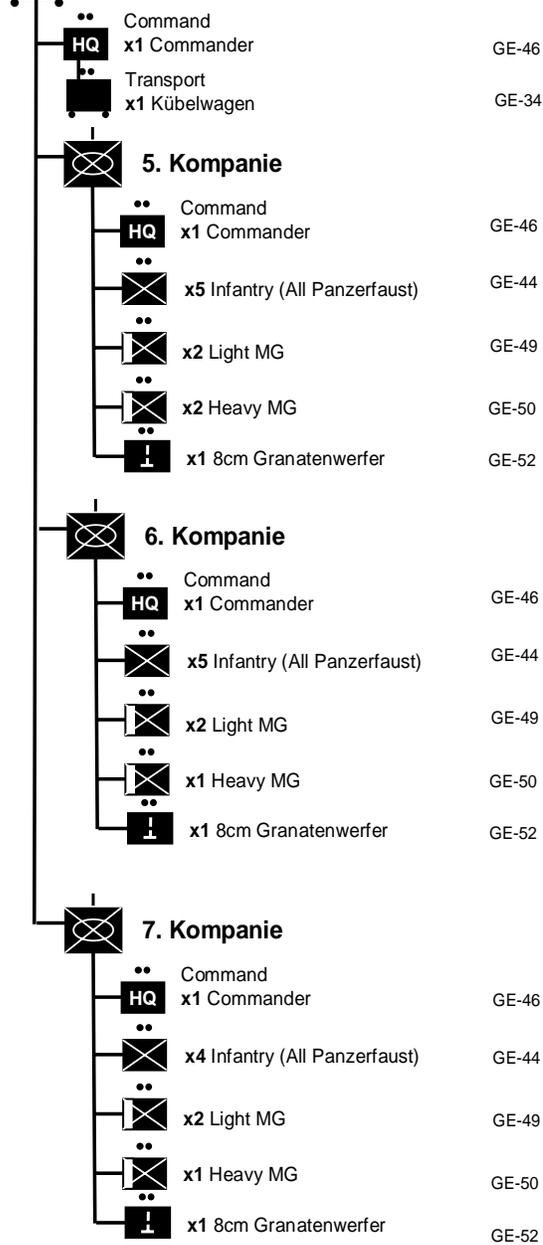
German Order of Battle



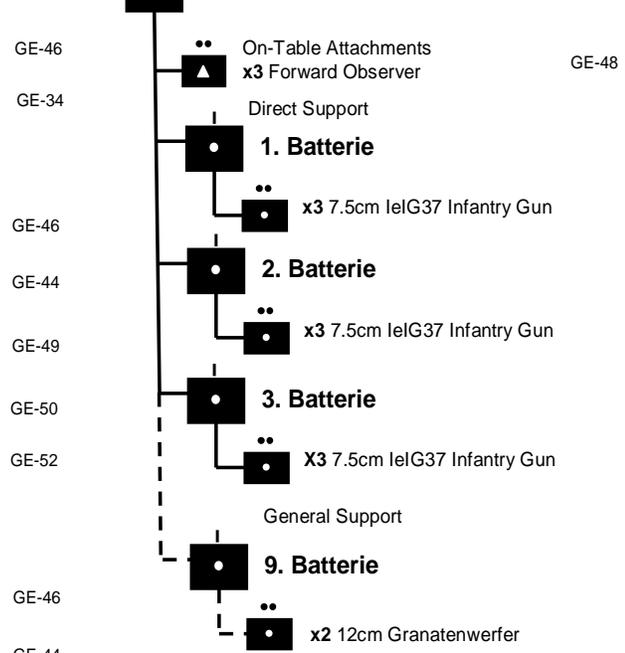
NB – For SMG with P'faust use GE44 vs Vehicles



II/90th Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment (Mot.)



I/Artillery Regiment 303 (Exp)



Springtime on the Oder - Map

One Foot



- Key**
- | | | |
|---|---|---|
|  Metalled Road |  Contour |  Built up area |
|  Farm Track |  Soviet Front Line |  Woods |
|  Railway |  Alte Oder | |