



Battle for the Foscani Gap

A 1946 Storm of Eagles© Battle
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The flame thrower roared for the last time, it engulfed the panicking Neu-Heer Cavalry Horses. They disappeared in its greedy black and red flame. The air filled with the screams of men and animals.

A moment later and the Red Army sapper relaxed his finger from the trigger, to reveal a mangled mess of blackened bodies and charred beyond recognition.

Introduction

This 1946 Storm of Eagles© scenario has been written for the wargamer in mind to re-create (using military miniatures) one of the first battles of 1946 WWII, the critical Soviet offensive against the Neu-Heer's Army Group Carpathian the Battle for the Foscani Gap in Romania.

The Creation of the Foscani Gap salient.

The German Armies in the Ukraine had finally been pushed across the Romanian-Ukraine border between September and October 1945 after six weeks of hard fighting. The Soviet Southern Command, (CC Marshal R. Malinowski) forces were finally halted in a line roughly following the Siret River - Foscani

fortress - Siret/Danube Delta on the Black sea.

With STAVKA and front planning complete by the 12th of December 1945, Army commanders drafted their individual operational plans and submitted them to their respective front commanders for evaluation. Their plans envision an advance through the Foscani gap, capture Bucharest and link up with their Bulgarian allies for an advance in to Hungary.

The most critical of these plans were those of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, (cc General Tolbukhin) whose five armies were expected to storm and take the heavily defended Foscani fortress position.

Though the Foscani operation was overshadowed by the offensive in the Baltic states, but was no less important to Stalin, who was still ambitious to control the Balkan states at the conclusion of the war.

Careful and detailed planning was required to carry out a successful penetration and exploitation phase in to the operation depths of the Axis defence.

Mortar Bombs from the German positions began to fall around the weary Guardsmen. Captain Vershinin knew why. The Germanski wanted to keep his men's heads down until their infantry could flush them out of the factory.

"Sergeant Bakanov to me" Doubled low the NCO zig-zagged through the falling shells, reaching his commander breathless, but unscathed!

"If we don't move now, we'll be trapped Bakanov, just like Tarnopol!" he continued: "I want you and your squad to attack the enemy on

the left flank, use grenades, don't fail me!"
Looking unflinchingly in to Vershinin's eyes,
Bakanov replied simply, "you can rely on me
commander" with that simple statement,
Bakanov crouched and re-entered the storm of
steel!

The Foscani Salient

The German and Romanian's defend the well prepared 30mile Foscani salient with a combined force of five German Gruppen and six Romanian Regiments: 'Festung Foscani' commanded by knights cross winner General Ziegler. Festung Foscani's is subordinate to the German 6th Army, (CC General Lammerding).

To the south lay the positions of the German 17th Army, (Sirat delta) to the north the German 8th Army, (Carpathian mountains). All under the command of Field marshal Mantueffel's Armee Gruppe Karpathien.

The second Ukrainian Front's planners do not have much room for manoeuvre, road communications are poor and the German/Romanian engineers have created a nightmare of interlocking fire positions/trench systems. They are painfully aware that there is no other way to crack the Foscani 'nut' except to batter their way to Foscani using Artillery and nerve gas.

The Axis Armee Gruppe reserve the 1st Sturm Armee, (General Hoth) with 11 Gruppen lies in reserve between Foscani and the vital oil wells of Ploesti.

Political Situation

The 'Conductor' Marshal Dumitrescu still leads the Romanian government. A respected field commander he knows only too well that the war is unpopular in his country and without German military help his government would be toppled by communists who favour peace with the allies.

His Army is much reduced and most of it defends Romania's southern borders against the Bulgarian Army, (allies of the Soviet Union) and their Hungarian 'allies'.

The Iron guard vie for more power in the country, but the Germans have little use for them except to use as a paramilitary police force for internal unrest and one combat Regiment for the front line.

The Battle for Romania will become the focus of the allies' attempts to weaken

Germany in preparation for the 1947 invasion of Western Europe. Knocking Romania out of the war will seriously hamper Germany's attempts to draw the war in to a stalemate. With this in mind the Soviet summer offensive using the second and third Ukrainian Fronts will be directed at capturing the capital city Bucharest and capturing the Plotesti oilfields.

It is vital for Germany that they hold on to the Romanian 13 Oil refineries and oil fields around Campina and Ploesti, without the oil wells, the war cannot continue, but can they rely on the Romanian forces in the Foscani Salient to hold when the expected Soviet assault comes?

The light snowfall gave little relief to the inky black night. The weary Neu-Heer Grenadiers huddled in their slit trenches drunkenly starred in the impenetrable darkness, straining to hear the approach of the enemy, many prayed for dawn, an end to the nights nervousness.

At 3 o'clock the listening posts reported to Hauptmann Schonder a familiar slithering noise: Soviet ski troops!

'Schonder calling to all fire points: Stand To men, they're coming!'

Operation 'Uregan' (Hurricane)

Marshall Koniev set February the 12th as the start date of General Tolbukhin's 2nd Ukrainian Fronts offensive during a specially convened wargames meeting during the 4th of January 1946. Operation Uregan or Hurricane commits six of his veteran armies, plus a tank Army and a Cavalry Mechanised group to break through the three line Axis defence around Foscani.

Clockwise north to south the 7 Guards Army, 52nd Army, 4th Guards Army, 40th Army and 27th Army are in the first echelon with 47 Rifle Divisions. In reserve is the 53rd Army with 5 Rifle Divisions. The main Armoured support comes from the 6th Guards Tank Army, (Gen Florovov). To be used once a hole has been 'punched' through the German defences?

Koniev's main assault is on the northern edge of the salient supported by a secondary assault by General Afonin's 4th Guards Army from the East. He knows that he must crack the Foscani defence before the German's can bring up re-enforcements from Ploesti.

The Helmut Line

The Foscani salient is defended by three interlocking defence lines, Helmut I-III, the third line being the last defence before Foscani bridge crossings over the River Siret.

Many interlocking FestungsHohne or fortified positions dot the defences, filled with anti-tank guns and missile units. The Axis forces defending the salient are as follows: General Shrieber's 42nd FeldKorps, commanding north to south the 154th Feldgruppen, 213rd Feldgruppen, 306th Feldgruppen and 357th Feldgruppen.

Corseted in to his defensive positions are the men of General Mikulich's Foscani Corp with the 1st Fortress Detachment, First and Fourth Rosiori Regiments, 4th Calarasi Regiment and the Second and sixth Infantry Regiments.

The Battlefield Scenario

This table top battlefield scenario pits two very different mixed infantry/armoured units against each other during the battle for the town of Foscani.

The battle has a minimum 20 turns and lasts until either side takes permanent possession of the factory

Neu Heer Brief

You command a Pz-Jg Sturm of the 1st Kavallrie Gruppen, (Gen Erasmus) supporting Infantry of the 213rd Feldgruppen, (3Km east of Foscani occupying the defence line Helmut III).

Your Panzerjager Sturm is equipped with Five excellent M0-6 Maresel self propelled guns and directly supports the 406th Feld Brigade's position in the critical Tarbuk industrial sector. A section of Romanian allies is on hand to offer support during the battle!

Failure to hold this section of the line will lead to the capture of Foscani, if Foscani falls then Bucharest will be threatened with capture and Romania and her precious oil wells will have been lost to the German war effort.

Hold on for 20 turns, after this it will be assumed that the Line will have been re-enforced by the guns and men of the 1st SturmArmee.

Soviet Brief

"Long live Stalin!" You command a breakthrough mixed arms unit, part of General

Pliev's Cavalry Mechanised Corp. Under your command is a Company of 8 JS-III tanks and an Infantry Battalion.

You have orders to capture the Tarbuk factory 3Km east of the town, its capture will allow the victorious Soviet armoured forces to smash the German front line and capture Foscani!

Special rules

Both players will receive one turn where they may deploy gas weapons against each other.

Both sides Re-enforcements arrive on the third turn of the battle. Artillery and Mortar support is considered off table for this battle.

Terrain

The terrain is flat and rural. Running through the centre of the battlefield is the main highway to Foscani. The German player occupies a medium sized factory complex, this has a few scattered farm houses near by.

The Tarbuk factory has many trenches, MG nests and two medium sized bunkers protecting it. The factory itself may be considered a bunker for attack tests.

Initial Deployment

Red Army deploys on turn one one up to 48" away from the north and eastern side of the Tarbuk factory.

Neu-Heer Forces

HQ Zug: Sturmofficer w StG45

Feldwebel w StG45

Gefreiter w MG42v

Ober-soldat w MG42v

Soldat w MG42v

Soldat w radio

Soldat w StG45 + Flammfaust

Soldat-Medic w StG45

Romanian guide w K98k rifle

2nd Zug: Unterzugofficer w StG45

Feldwebel w StG45

Gefreiter w StG45 and Flammfaust

Ober-soldat w MG42v

Soldat w MG42v

Soldat w MG42v

Soldat w StG45 and Gasfaust

Soldat w StG45

Romanian guide w Beretta SMG

3 rd Zug: Oberzugofficer w StG45 Feldweibel w StG45 Gefreiter w MG42v Ober-soldat w MG42V Soldat w MG42v Soldat w StG45 + Gasfaust Soldat w StG45 + Flammfaust Soldat w StG45		Radioman w pistol 3 rifleman w SMGs, Gunner w DP LMG No 2 w SMG
	SMG Squad:	NCO w SMG 2 rifleman w SMGs 2 Rifleman w MN rifles Rifleman w SMG
	+panzerfaust	Gunner w DP LMG No2 w SMG
4 th Zug: Unterzugofficer w StG45 Feldweibel w StG45 Gefreiter w MG42v Gefreiter w Stummelwerfer Ober-soldat w Luftfaust Ober-soldat w G43 sniper rifle Soldat w StG45 + Panzerfaust 250 Soldat w StG45 + panzerfaust 250		
	SMG Squad:	NCO w SMG 2 rifleman w SMGs 2 Rifleman w MN rifles Rifleman w SMG
	+panzerfaust	Gunner w DP LMG No2 w SMG
<i>Re-enforcements</i>		
5 Maresal self propelled guns		
Pz-J zug: NCO w zielgerat Soldat w x-7 missile Soldat w StG45 Soldat w StG45 Soldat w StG45 + Flammfaust		
	SMG Squad:	NCO w SMG 2 rifleman w SMGs 2 Rifleman w MN rifles Rifleman w SMG
	+panzerfaust	Gunner w DP LMG No2 w SMG
Inf Squad: Sublocotenent w MP28/11 Sergent w K98k rifle Soldat w K98k rifle Soldat w K98k rifle Soldat w K98k rifle Soldat w K98k rifle Soldat w panzerfaust Soldat w MP40 SMG		
	Straf Squad:	2 NKVD NCOs w SMGs, 14 men w MN Rifles
	<i>Additional forces:</i>	8 x JS-VII Tanks

Neu-Heer Victory Conditions

Hold on to the factory by the end of the game.

Red Army Order of Battle

Sapper Squad:	NCO w SMG 2 Rifleman w SMGs 2 Rifleman w MN rifles Gunner w DP LMG No 2 w SMG Rifleman w Flamethrower
HQ Squad:	Officer w SMG, NCO w SMG and panzerfaust

Soviet Victory Conditions

Occupy the Tarbuk factory by the end of the game.

Recommended Rules

For a 1:1 scale action we'd recommend our own in house fast paced 1946 Storm of Eagles© 'Rules of engagement', which contain rules for the use of chemical weapons ect..

For a moment nothing happened. Abruptly there was the sound of air being sucked in and a terrible tongue of mauve , oil tinged flame shot from the sappers flamethrower! On both sides the snow melted and turned charcoal black. Next moment its flame licked across the bunker wall and in to the firing slits. The heat was unbearable for the trapped Germans inside, the

*air being forcibly dragged from their lungs.
When the Russian sapper pressed the trigger for
the third time, the German's inside the
seemingly impregnable concrete structure could
take no more, screaming they opened the bunker
doors to escape the flames, waiting for them was
more death, a ragged volley of rifle fire from
the sappers comrades finished the tortured
German infantry.*

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Conclusion

After three days heavy fighting both Helmut II and II fell to the Red Army. The northern flank held by the 154th Feldgruppen collapsed under the weight of the 1st Guards Tank Army and 7th Guards attack and the Soviets were only prevented from taking Foscani by troops of the 547th FeldGruppen, (88th SturmKorp) occupying Helmut I and holding the last line of defence before the river Siret.

Supported by the 1st Cavalry Group General Ziegler was able to stabilise the situation after weeks fighting and hold the town. KVK authorised the use of nerve weapons on day 10 of the battle, causing serious losses amongst the storm troops of the 4th Guards Army, the 21st Guards Rifle Corp was terribly decimated in these deadly German nerve gas attacks.

The situation deteriorated so much by day 14 that STAVKA authorised the special NKVD Mortar units to counter attack with Nerve gas saturating the vulnerable Romanian troops of General Mikulich's Corp to the extent that they had to be withdrawn from the battle and replaced with German troops from the 8th Feld Armee.

The battle finally petered out from sheer exhaustion by the 3rd week of March 1946 after five weeks fighting.

Foscani held, but the position is obviously untenable for the Axis forces, Field marshal Manteuffel's Armee Gruppe Karpathien will have to either withdrawal from the salient or launch a count-attack before the Red Army can recover from the short and bloody offensive.

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