

Commentary on the Game by Alex Kleanthous

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I played Martin's 1956 British Army wargame as the British divisional commander. The initial set up looked simple - almost abstract. The mission was clear - bash down the road and take the town. The layout was long and narrow - no room for any particular clever flanking movements or such, only the choice of going down the road over the hills through the narrow passes, or bypassing the hills through the flat open terrain. It did not take too long to work out a basic plan - phase 1 being probing attack down the road, and right hook with infantry up the spine of the hills to clear them and the road, and phase 2 being a similar approach to the main target.

The really interesting thing about the game was that the most important table in the rules was the one showing how long it would take to plan everything. You might have two brigades and masses of artillery available, but do you have enough time to co-ordinate them into a single attack? I was lucky - all my attacks worked with the help of some decent dice rolling by the brigade commanders and this was that very rare occasion when a plan did survive contact with the enemy. The timetable from Corps was fairly generous and there was no real pressure in meeting it.

I could see, however, what would have been likely to have happened if the initial attacks had been repulsed - a descending cycle of hasty attacks mounted through lack of time, being repulsed, leading to even hastier and weaker attacks, with the troops becoming progressively exhausted.