

# MOVING UP FRONT

## A Study of Movement Options

By Rex A. Martin



Combat consists of, when reduced to its basics, two elements—firing/melee and moving. (You pessimists may add a third—ducking.) No game system so clearly displays this as that of *UP FRONT*. Other articles in this periodical (Greenwood's "Playing Your Cards Upfront" in Vol. 21, No. 1; Burnett's "Return to the Front" in Vol. 22, No. 2) have looked at doing as much damage to the other fellow as possible while avoiding it yourself. But you can't shoot them if you don't get close; and the best way to survive I know of remains running away. So let's take a few minutes to consider the various types of movement and their hazards in this most intriguing game.

In *UP FRONT*, there are three directions to go: forwards, backwards, sideways (and with this latter, we must include *Lateral Group Transfers* and *Individual Transfers*). Going forward is fairly obvious even to non-players; your men are closing the Relative Range. Going backwards increases the Relative Range. Going sideways is always intended to get one or more of your men into a position from which they can be more effective (out of a Marsh, to better terrain, into a *Flanking Fire* position, and so forth) without changing the Relative Range. And transfers, which seldom see use even by experienced players, allow you to realign your forces to take advantage of the changing combat situation.

To good players—the *really* good players—the following points all seem to come instinctively. For the rest of us, let's consider some of the finer points of movement.

### Advancing

Play a Movement card; exchange the range chit in front of your group for the next higher. Dodge any bullets. Jump in new terrain. Sounds simple? It is. But the pitfalls can be many, and some come from unexpected quarters.

Any Movement card can be used to get you closer to the enemy. Some Movement cards may be used only by specified nationalities, but even the movement-poor Americans have 24 available. However, the deck consists of 162 cards, so even the relatively movement-rich Russians and Japanese cannot afford to waste them. In *UP FRONT*, movement is not at the whim of the player as in most traditional boardgames. Like everything else in this game, it must be a carefully considered proposition

and all must be done to make it effective when you get the chance to move.

A single Movement card in your hand is really not all that useful, for it will not usually be all that effective in getting your men forward. Oh sure, there will be those instances when circumstances or frustration force you into playing it, usually against your better judgement. But some Smoke to hide your dash ahead, a Concealment card to duck with, and/or some Terrain with a negative modifier to get into all help your confidence in reaching the next chit. After all, you don't want your men shot up getting where they are going.

All Movement cards carry a positive modifier (+1), making any attack against them more effective. These are cumulative, up to a +2 modifier. The terrain you are leaving and any Smoke or Concealment cards you can play modify the enemy's incoming fire to your advantage. For example, your four-man group has just left some Woods after having played a Smoke card last turn. The enemy lays down a "Fire 4" attack against the moving men. You, when he shows his attack, play a "Concealed -2" card. Instead of an attack that could have been "5" (4, +1 for Movement), your group faces an attack of "0" (-2 for Woods, -1 for Smoke, -2 for Concealment). Even if a random Breeze blows away the smoke, it is easier to take an attack of "1" than of "5". It can never be stressed enough how valuable those Smoke and Concealment cards are for getting your troops forward.

Even without being fired on by the enemy, your jog across the *UP FRONT* battlefield is apt to be a bit rocky. You don't always get where you want. In lieu of his discard, the opposing player may drop any Terrain card (except Open Ground—a favorite of mine during playtest until Greenwood finally got tired of that ploy) on your moving group. Unless a Stream or Marsh card, you must decide if your fellows will plunge into that terrain, or dash around it. If the former looks inviting, play continues as normal (the Movement card is immediately replaced by the Terrain card). If not, the Terrain card is discarded, but your Movement card is turned to reflect a Sideways move and the Range chit returned to its previous value.

The play of such terrain "discards" is as important a judgement to make as any other you will be called upon for in the game. Dropping a Stream or Marsh card if you hold one is fairly obvious, unless

you want to hang on to it in hopes of the movement of a more vital group (usually the enemy firebase or an enemy group with victory within its grasp). For most, except those playing the Germans or elite troops, the only question lies in whether they wish to forego all action that turn in order to see the enemy stumble. In the case of Stream/Marsh cards, I will gladly pass up one turn to mire even a mediocre enemy two-man group—preferably at a range where I can destroy them. For the Japanese and Russians, it is absolutely imperative to use these cards at first opportunity, simply to open up the options in their four-card hands.

After having been kept from use of Open Terrain cards to befuddle opponents, I cast about for others. Obvious choices were the Gully, Brush and Wall cards—some 12 cards of the 162. These prove exceedingly useful, both offensively and defensively, and are a boon to the small-hand nationalities. (I try to retain multiple-use cards; it opens your options for action and reaction considerably in a game this fast-paced.) I always assume that if an enemy group moves, it has terrain superior to anything I'm going to give it. If I can, I'm going to disrupt his little trip to that building or hill.

Place an unwanted Gully card when the cover it provides will not benefit your opponent (if, say, you've no Fire cards—although he'll not know that) or when his lack of fire from the afflicted group looks to be a distinct advantage to you. One of my favorite ploys is to drop a moving enemy firebase into a Gully. It will be at least two turns before it can trouble you again. (Obviously, however, you should be wary of this if you've somebody crucial on a hilltop in range.) Lay a bit of Wire in that hole, and getting his firebase back into action again will be very costly in terms of Movement cards.

I rarely hesitate to drop Brush on a moving enemy group, assuming that wherever it's headed is likely better defensive terrain than a few weeds (refer to the Series Replay in Vol. 21, No. 1). In many instances it may make that safe forward move from a Gully or -3 Building less inviting for the enemy. In effect, the use of Brush has replaced the use of Open Terrain in my playing style. Play of the Wall card serves much the same purpose, and I use it as frequently unless the moving enemy is directly opposite my own firebase.

A Brush/Wall card is occasionally quite effective in flushing an enemy group forward into range for your devastating fire attack. Let me explain. Sup-

pose that an enemy group is moving to a range just short of the point where you can deliver an effective attack. You, it appears to your opponent, cannot shoot but instead only discard an annoyance—the Brush—to slow him down while you search for a useful Fire card. Many unsubtle and impatient players you will face would accept the Brush, even if they hold a better Terrain card, figuring they can immediately play another Movement card and get where they want at a closer range than they had planned; after all, the Brush you bestowed cancels the Movement modifier and you didn't fire last time. You promptly unveil that high Fire card when they move and shoot the hell out of his group. I've used this ploy, under favorable circumstances, several times against new opponents. Try it sometime.

The moving group may, of course, reject your kind offer of terrain and prefer to simply run sideways. Don't be distraught. You've lost nothing, and gained a new card (with all the optimism that implies) for your hand. Your opponent has wasted a valuable Movement card, and may well go into that terrain he was dashing for anyway, but now at the greater range. If he tempts fate and plays a second Movement card to get forward, he has just given you the best opportunity you are likely to get in this game; that -2 modifier makes his boys a prime target.

There is one special form of advance we must consider—the Japanese *Banzai*. Only the Japanese, with their 75% level for breaking, could contemplate such a suicidal charge. Any group under the direct command of a Japanese SL or ASL may have a Banzai declared as its sole action simply by playing a Movement card. All the men in that group, including those pinned who instantly and automatically rally, are committed to charging forward to engage in hand-to-hand combat. When (if) they reach the targeted enemy group, Infiltration and Morale Checks to enter CC are unnecessary.

The disadvantages of this play are, however, considerably more significant than the advantages. The Japanese player has narrowed his options for the group to a single course of action. The Banzai cannot be voluntarily cancelled; it must go in unless the defending group (the Japanese player must declare which enemy group—either ahead or adjacent to the Banzai-ers—the charge is aimed at when he announces it) is eliminated or retreats or moves laterally out of range. The Banzai group may take no action other than movement or Close Combat. Worse, no Movement card may be played on any other Japanese group unless and until a Movement card has been played on the Banzai-ers each turn. Any enemy fire is likely to be much more effective than usual (remember, the only terrain dropped on them will come from your opponent, and you can't play Concealment cards) since any result that would normally "pin" a Japanese character will instead eliminate him. Truly, a "do-or-die" course of action, the Banzai should end the scenario one way or the other.

The Banzai must be reserved for those game-winning situations where there is indeed no other option available (see the Series Replay in Vol. 22, No. 2 for an example). And launching a Banzai from greater than Relative Range 4 is simple foolishness. Unfortunately, many players, when taking on the Japanese role these days, purposely organize their men in such a manner as to create a Banzai-specialized group (high morale and high CC values) in anticipation of launching one. This inevitably narrows the player's options in any scenario, which in turn may lead to precisely the desperate situation demanding a Banzai. A sort of "Catch 22", death-or-glory cycle.

In only one case—Scenario R, the Paratroop Drop—do I anticipate using a Banzai when setting up my Japanese. I do like to create a Banzai-specific "B" group, with the expectation of an enemy group

being dropped nearby. As early as possible, a charge is declared against it. This early in the game, with the enemy hand less than perfect, there is a fair chance the Banzai can reach the target. Usually, either the targeted group will be overwhelmed, or it will retreat (pulling a Movement card from your opponent's hand and allowing you to cancel the charge). In either instance, your surviving members will be closer to the enemy, hopefully in better terrain than they began. At the very least, this play is sure to rattle your opponent—and it may even win the game for you by discouraging him to such a point that he is no longer able to make efficient, logical decisions.

### Retreating

Discretion is, in this as in many games, the better part of valor. There inevitably comes that moment in *UP FRONT* when you may want to run away. Indeed, in some scenarios (notably Rear Guard Action, Evacuation, Delaying Action) a judicious withdrawal is the key to victory for the defender. In other cases, one of your groups may be in a tactical stance where disaster looms (facing a Banzai without Fire cards, under Flanking Fire, in an exposed position far forward of supporting groups, infiltrated by superior CC-valued enemy men). The wise commander tries to avoid such predicaments, but even he will make a retrograde move when necessity dictates.

A *Retrograde* move may be made by taying any normal Movement card down reversed (i.e., so the circled "—" and the illustration of the backs of the two soldiers shows at the top). However, unless a red RNC shows on the Movement card, the retreating group may not go beyond Range chit "0". There are only 12 Movement cards with red RNC, so retreat to -2 or -3 Range chits will be unusual—and beyond that exceedingly rare.

However, most retreats won't be near so drastic; rather, they will be undertaken to avoid a temporary tactical unpleasantness. You've the same chances of retreating as you do of advancing. And you face the same dangers—although most opponents will not drop terrain (except those staggering Marshes and Streams at times) if you seem to be running back. The same methods of guarding yourself serve when retreating as when advancing, so hang on to those Concealment and Smoke cards.

At this point, it would be logical to mention another consideration—one that may arise whether advancing, retreating, or just shifting sideways. In *UP FRONT*, any group may move . . . assuming that you are willing to abandon any pinned men in that group. True, the rules prohibit placing a Movement card on a group with a pinned character; however, the rules also allow *Voluntary Panic* at any point in a player's turn, giving you the option of accepting elimination of those pinned men for the ability to move the survivors that turn. This is one of the toughest choices you will face. But, for a host of reasons (to save the several at the sacrifice of one, to advance into a winning position, to outflank an enemy position) you may want to consider leaving weaker characters behind. In the end, only the player can make this decision—and it must be an intuitive one, based on the worth of the character being abandoned as posed against the potential opportunities the movement represents. In your calculations, you should add in the surprise value of such a move. The accepted way to keep an enemy group down is to keep one or more members broken; such an unexpected move may catch your opponent unprepared to react. (I have won a game in precisely this manner, abandoning two men to move into the winning position while my opponent was moving forward with all groups.) The decision to abandon someone comes down to a "gut" reaction—as so much in this game can. I can offer no pat advice for you novices here.

There are other valid reasons besides imminent danger for a Retrograde move. Many of the scenarios demand that a certain number of unpinned men (usually four or five) reach a given range chit for the player to claim victory. It is an axiom that it is easier to move and protect one group than two—requiring fewer Movement cards, fewer Terrain cards, less of everything. If two adjacent groups can neither win the scenario alone, I have often retreated them to a similar, relatively safe distance and then transferred enough men to make a game-winning group. This comes to the fore most obviously when I take on the role of attacker in Scenario R; my forwardmost groups inevitably fall back to Range chit 3 or 2 to regroup for victory.

I have often been chastised for my willingness to retreat; expect your own opponents to have a few good chuckles. But the retrograde move is an important part of your tactical repertoire. It breaks Infiltration and Flanking Fire, increases the range (so lowering the enemy's Firepower), often ends a threatened Banzai. All too many players look upon a retreat as a waste of valuable Movement cards, and not at the long-term advantages it may bring.

### Fancy Footwork

Many, if not most, of the Movement cards you will play during a scenario are placed sideways. Forging a Stream, getting out of a Marsh, transfers of a single man or an entire group, slipping into a flank position. All demand the play of one of those precious Movement cards, and all greatly improve your tactical situation.

If you've been so unlucky as to have blundered into a Stream (or begun the game in one), you are—quite literally—up the creek. The afflicted group cannot change range until they ford it; any fire attack from the Stream is modified to your detriment; MMGs and mortars may not fire from a Stream, and LMGs must be fully crewed to fire (and still use their lower Firepower value); malfunctioned weapons cannot be repaired; infiltration of adjacent enemy groups is problematic; and there is no defensive bonus for being stuck in it. You want to walk over that water quickly so that you can get on with the business of winning. If you've managed to locate one of the six "Ford" Movement cards, and hung on to it, you can simply grin as your group skips across. But if you haven't, you will have to face the odds (see Jim Burnett's fine article "Up Front by the Numbers" in Vol. 21, No. 2 of *THE GENERAL*). To get across, you must play a Movement card sideways. But only if you immediately draw a black RNC from the Action Deck are you over the obstacle; otherwise your precious Movement card is discarded and your men remain mired in the Stream. Many a player has come to grief when Lady Luck turns against him and either no Movement cards or every red RNC in the deck comes his way. The opponent, between chortles, merrily shoots down the men in the water.

Being bogged in a Marsh is marginally better than being stuck in a Stream. It does modify any attack against the occupying group, and hence is a terrain type that can mean victory. The same penalties accrue for the play of Fire cards. But getting out of it is assured, provided you've two Movement cards to play in consecutive turns. If you don't, don't bother moving that group at all; playing one Movement card while hoping to draw another is wishful foolishness—you could get stuck in motion while the enemy snipes away with no modifier (the Movement card cancels the Marsh benefit). And the worse situation you may face due to being in a Marsh is to have one or more characters broken after having played that first Movement card sideways; why increase the odds of this happening? Personally, I counsel abandoning them, since you can't play a Terrain card, unless you hold Rally and Concealment cards sufficient to await a break in the enemy

fire. The damage is already done and you may as well be bold.

In the rare case when you've blundered into a Minefield (placed as a discard by the enemy), the firm rule is to attempt to remove (24.5) it. You risk a man, but lose no Movement cards. For the timid, the play of two Movement cards sideways can get you out of the Minefield without risk, but the coming enemy fire attack modified by -2 may be much worse. Tiptoeing through the teller mines is not healthy when it makes the soldiers such fine targets.

Enough of what a sideways move can get you out of—how about what it can get you into? At the forefront of any *UP FRONT* player's mind when he draws one of the four "Flank" Movement cards are his chances of doubling the firepower of his firebase. First, the player must determine which enemy group he can flank—it must be adjacent to the firebase and it must currently have another of his groups directly opposite. Next he must insure that the flanking group can actually move (no point in wasting it in a Stream or Marsh or on Wire) and survive to get into defensible terrain. Finally, he can only hope that the enemy group remains in place for a moment so that he can use that heavy Firepower (best when the flank is against a group with several pinned men). In actuality, Flanking Fire is rather fragile—it rarely comes about, and generally doesn't last long once attained. But it can be a game-winner.

The real worth of the Flank move is the implied threat. By unleashing such a bluff—declaring the flank move—it is highly likely that the enemy group threatened by it may move. If this is a particularly dangerous group, or one in good terrain, this can work to your advantage by flushing them from their cozy haven. If you've saved a Stream, Gully, Minefield or some other nasty surprise, this is the moment to use it. It may also be that one of your other groups now has a shot at the quarry; make it while they are moving to avoid the Flanking Fire. Few opponents have the intestinal fortitude to face doubled firepower; use this fact to upset his plans if you haven't the Fire cards to back up your threat.

There are, of course, some obvious times *not* to use a flank move. Never use it against an enemy group hung up on Wire; he will simultaneously clear the Wire (something he's probably planning on anyway) and end the flank threat. Never declare it against a group in a Marsh or Gully, they're going to move anyway; and any ford attempt will remove Flanking Fire on a group in a Stream. Never target a moving enemy group; it's rather pointless since the play of a Terrain card cancels your threat.

Note that there is a chance that Flanking Fire could occur naturally in the course of play. If a group has progressed to Relative Range 5, and passes beyond it to Relative Range 4—meaning that you have moved it *past* some adjacent enemy group and it is closer to the opponent's beginning line than the enemy group—Flanking Fire is possible. This form of Flanking Fire is much harder to break, necessitating a Lateral Group Transfer of the threatened group or the elimination of the enemy before it. And, from here, the flanking group may try to shift to create *Encirclement*.

Much more deadly than Flanking Fire, and much less likely, is the play of a Movement card sideways to claim *Encirclement*. In this instance, *all* fire against the beleaguered enemy group is doubled. But your group must be "behind" the enemy lines, meaning that you have had to be very lucky in acquiring Movement cards and dodging bullets simply to get this far. In all truth, the only times that this is a reasonable stance to strive for is when you've a significant number of spare characters to form one more group than the enemy and can expect to have the Movement cards to run it forward quickly; in other words, only when playing the Russians (against the Germans) or Japanese (against the Americans) do I even contemplate an *Encircle-*

ment when setting up at the beginning of the scenario.

Your initial organization of the troops prior to battle is crucial (as Don Greenwood highlighted in his article), and it is the only aspect of the game that a player has total control of (as Ken Whitesell pointed out in the first *UP FRONT* Series Replay). But your decisions are, thankfully, not immutable. As the scenario progresses, you may well find that unexpected situations make you wish to change the composition of a group—or even create a new group. This is accomplished through *Individual Transfer*.

Any unpinned character, which is otherwise free to move, may attempt to join an adjacent friendly group at the same range. A Movement card must be *discarded* for each such man seeking a transfer; place the character's card between the two involved groups, and put a "Transfer" counter on it. So long as he is between the groups, he will suffer all attacks made against either of the groups (and carries a +2 modifier to boot). If pinned during transfer, the character is returned to the group he left. If he survives unpinned, he may take any position among his new comrades. Of course, as in many other activities, an unpinned SL or ASL in one of the groups is necessary to direct the action.

The uses of Individual Transfers are endless and varied. In Scenario R it allows the attacker to build a firebase, or create the game-winning group (see the *BANZAI* Series Replay). In the Armored Advance, you may want to shift that bazooka, panzerfaust or ATTM to where it faces the enemy armor. In the instance where a crewman has been eliminated, I consider transferring a man to that group to keep it firing at full strength. If you've a couple of adjacent, ineffectual groups, use Individual Transfers to merge them together (you can eliminate a group through transfers, but not "beef" one up to more than ten men); or to get survivors out of the line of fire into better defensive terrain (say, if the receiving group is in a building, or under smoke cover, or entrenched on a hill). Remember that the only danger the transferee faces is fire from the enemy—no Marsh, Stream, Wire or other terrain "attacks" will stop him—but that, with the +2 modifier coupled with the fact that the enemy will fire on the most exposed of the two groups involved, is a considerable danger.

Now let's pose a hypothetical situation: you've a four-man Group C at Range chit 2 in a playing of Scenario A; the enemy firebase is his Group B, entrenched on a hill at Range chit 0. But you've just eliminated the enemy Group C. What now?

An expert player will instantly consider a *Lateral Group Transfer* of his Group C to position D. By playing a Movement card sideways on Group C and announcing the transfer, a strong bid to win the game has been made. Once a terrain card has been played on the group, the transfer is complete. The Relative Range to that enemy firebase has increased, your group is safe from infiltration, and your chances of victory have dramatically increased. Your opponent may himself initiate a LGT of his nearest group to meet the threat, but that can only be to your advantage.

The Group Transfer is a powerful tactical ploy, useful both offensively and defensively. You may be able to mount a threat from an unexpected quarter. You may be able to fill that sudden hole in your lines. Why . . . I've even played two Movement cards and announced simultaneous LGTs for adjacent groups, thus exchanging positions, to totally befuddle my opponent's carefully wrought initial set-up.

### Getting in Close

Once at Relative Range 5 to an enemy group, you've two methods to go about eliminating it. You can lay down some heavy fire, or you can "waltz

with the devil". I recommend the latter (meaning Infiltration and possible Close Combat) if your group has low firepower (few unpinned characters, malfunctioned weapons, facing a substantial negative modifier to a fire attack), or if one or more of your group has a high CCV. While Movement cards are not a pre-requisite for this hand-to-hand combat, they are a definite bonus in avoiding the *Morale Checks* each step to resolution demands.

Any unpinned man may attempt *Infiltration* of an enemy group at Relative Range 5. To do so, the controlling player merely announces it. In order to succeed however, the player must first draw a RNC less than his current "Morale" value. By displaying and discarding a Movement card, this test of will is waived and the actual Infiltration resolution is made (requiring yet another card draw). Obviously it is prudent to use Movement cards for low-Morale characters, since if they fail the MC they are pinned. Alternately, you may want to insure that a high-Morale man makes it into a game-winning enemy group (many of the scenarios demand a group be uninfiltrated to claim victory).

Once infiltrated into an enemy group, your man must pass another Morale Check before he can hit anybody on the head. Showing a Movement card, which is of course then discarded, makes entry in CC automatic. Personally, rather than risk failing the MC, I inevitably will use a Movement card to avoid the penalties for failure unless in dire straits. If your man should win the Close Combat by three or more, you can even keep him infiltrated in the group. And if the last enemy man in an infiltrated/CC group is eliminated (this combat is all or nothing—you either win or are KIA), you have the option of taking the terrain he occupied for your own without the use of any Movement cards. A nice bonus for valor.

Infiltration also brings some possibilities for esoteric offensive action besides mere Close Combat. The infiltrator may elect to set off a Demolition Charge he is carrying (with a particularly nasty effect on anybody in the group, attacking with a Fire Strength of 8). He may elect to fire normally, but his Firepower values are doubled. If an ATTM is held, the infiltrator may use it against any AFV (as his CC attack). If encircled, an infiltration of either encircling group ends that awkwardness.

When faced with infiltration, you can either accept the attack, try to stop it with some stiff fire (hoping to pin the infiltrators), or—of course—move away. By falling back to Relative Range 4 with a Retrograde move, no Close Combat is possible. The infiltrators still get doubled fire (although this breaks their infiltration), although now at a greater range. The next Movement card increasing the range or the next Terrain card dropped will end the infiltration in any case, unless the enemy group has elected to move to keep pace with you. The psychological edge of having infiltrated an enemy group is not to be denied; but if on the receiving end, comfort yourself with the fact that it is even more fragile than Flanking Fire since by the point in the game you will be facing it you should have either some high Fire cards or a Movement card.

### A Final Word

All of the above suggestions are posited on the assumption that you've the Movement cards available to undertake them. This is not always the case—don't base your entire strategy on the hopes of getting that key card just when you want. Likely as not, you'll riffle through the entire deck without drawing it. The best *UP FRONT* players are able to adapt to the vagaries of the deal and draw.

But the best players are also very aware of the potential of every card they hold in every situation they face. The above are only some of those for Movement cards. Bear them in mind.

