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GENERAL

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★ AVALON HILL

Volume 26, Number 2



★ ★ The AVALON HILL GENERAL

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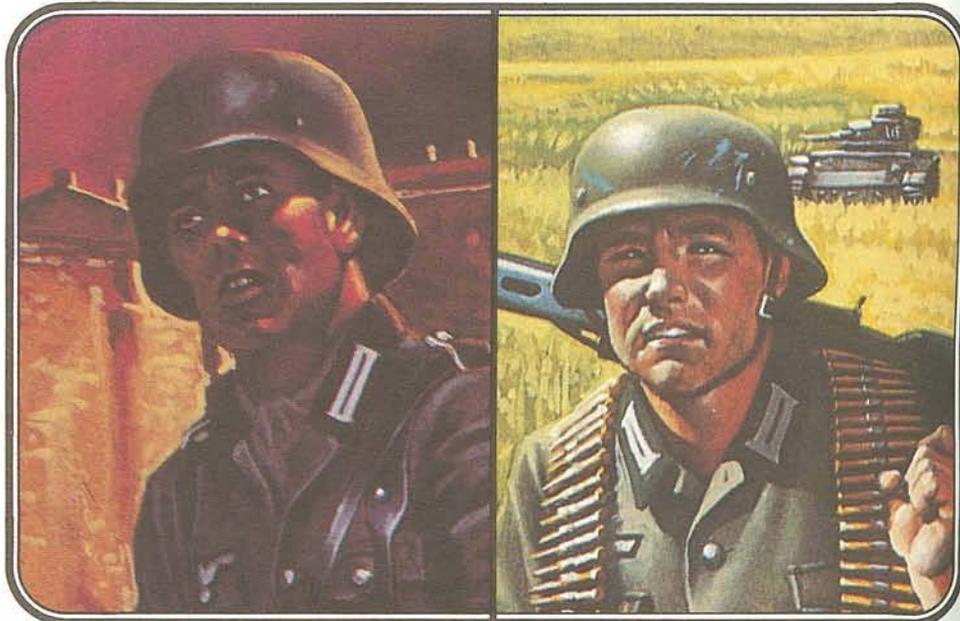
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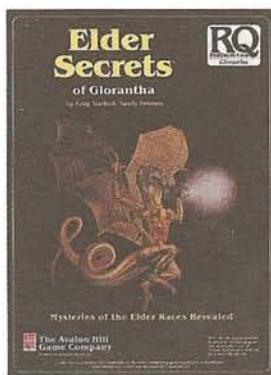
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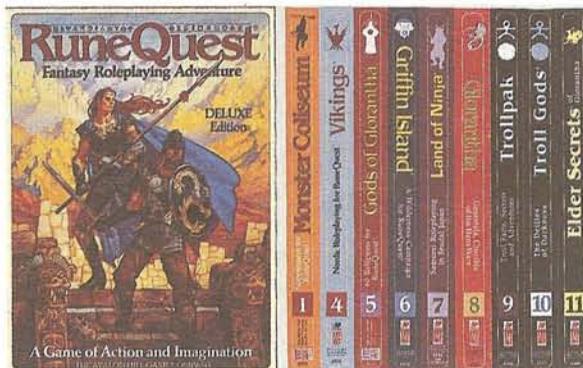
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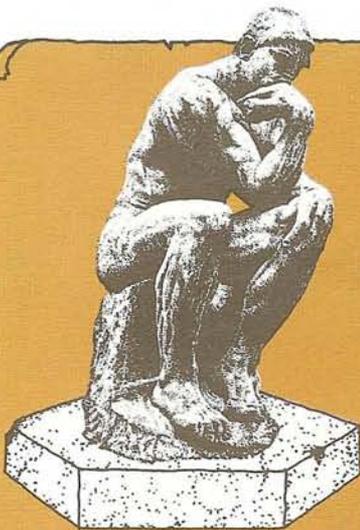
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THE AVALON HILL

Philosophy

Part 134

Without further ado, I turn over this column to one Albert Founner and our own Don Greenwood (for reasons that should be readily apparent):

Dear Avalon Hill,

Screw you, and all the buttheads that work for you, and that includes Don Greenwood. You jerks have gone too far, this time. I refer, of course, to your new game *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD*.

When I read about it in a recent issue of *The GENERAL*, I could hardly wait. This was for two reasons: one—Stalingrad has always been of interest to me, and two—I've got *THUNDER AT CASSINO* which I enjoy. These combined I felt would make for an excellent game. So I bought it; and, as I eagerly examined the contents and studied the rules, I felt sure I had made a good choice. Well, imagine my surprise as I was looking at the OOB for the extended game and noticed that it said that most of the units below were not included but could be purchased separately.

I was shocked, amazed, dumbfounded even. The box made no mention of this fact, and neither did the article in your magazine [*"Coming Attractions" in Vol. 25, No. 3*]. How could you do this to me? I've never before been so outraged by one of your products. You misled me. Even if the box had said something about this, I probably would have still bought it. But noooo! Instead you buttheads have to be devious and underhanded. You've destroyed my trust in your good name, and from now on I'll have to wonder what will be missing from the next Avalon Hill game I buy.

You may hear from the Better Business Bureau because I'm just irate enough to call. I also demand either a refund or the missing pieces for the extended game. Of course, the demands are not set in stone. Yes, you guys have just lost a loyal customer. I've probably bought just about every wargame you ever made. God! I can't believe it.

Albert Founner
Zion, Illinois

I should have known better. I got a similar letter years ago when we included variant counters for *STORM OVER ARNHEM* in the game and advised players that the variant rules would follow in *The GENERAL* featuring that game.

My logic was simple, or so I thought. The variant was just that—a different way to play the game which added considerably to its length. It had not yet been tested and inclusion in the game itself would have exceeded the 16-page format of the rulebook and required a price increase. But, there was room on the game's counter sheets, and by including the extra counters there I saw a way to give *GENERAL* readers a free set of die-cut coun-

ters for the feature article of that issue . . . and give myself some more time to test the variant rules and scenario. Although it was interesting, in my opinion, adding it to the game itself would have detracted from the overall effect of the simulation. I reasoned, "Why charge everyone more money for an untested variant which will increase the playing time of a game that is already too long?" I soon found out: "it was all a scheme to force people to buy *The GENERAL!*" Oooh . . . are we ever evil or what?

It did no good to reason with the writer then that the variant was an "extra"—a freebie that would not have existed at all were it not for the magazine. I had no intentions of ever including it in the game itself, and included it there only at the last instant because I saw a way to give *GENERAL* readers some die-cut counters. Had I left it out of the game entirely and printed the variant with paper counters in the magazine, the writer's sensibilities would not have been offended and no-one would have had die-cut counters. Instead, I chose the way of the "butthead".

I guess I'm still an evil butthead because I made a similar decision with *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD*. The game was originally designed to cover only the first three weeks of the battle for the city for three reasons:

1. The game was designed to be playable in an afternoon—any games extending past the three-week mark certainly couldn't be finished in a day.
2. The most interesting and mobile part of the battle took place at the outset. After three weeks, the Germans had chance for neither maneuver nor a realistic shot at victory.
3. Inclusion of the Order of Battle past Week 3 would require a third counter sheet—boosting the price of the game past the \$25 mark which spells slow death on the store shelf.

I put the question to my playtesters. Should we include the complete OB and increase the price (decreasing sales) or forego it altogether? Opinion was split. "No!" said the playability camp, "we never play past the third week anyway; virtually all our games are ended by the Sudden Death victory conditions in the first three weeks." "Yes!" said the simulation camp, "we want to fight the whole battle!" Betwixt and between as usual, I tried to please them both. We would prepare and test the complete OB but offer it in the game only as an extension—purchasable separately. So those who wanted to play the complete simulation would do so at a price, while those interested only in the game could play it at a lesser price. Each camp paying according to what it consumed was my reasoning.

Continued on Page 20, Column 3

CONVENTION CALENDAR

The *GENERAL* will list any gaming convention in this space free of charge on a space available basis provided that we are notified at least four months in advance of the convention date. Each listing must include the name, date, site, and contact address of the convention. Additional information of interest to our readership such as tournaments or events utilizing The Avalon Hill Game Company's games is solicited and will be printed if made available.

The Avalon Hill Game Company does not necessarily attend or endorse these gatherings, nor do we guarantee that events using The Avalon Hill Game Company's games will be held. Readers are urged to contact the listed sources for further information before making plans to attend.

MAY 25-27

2nd CIVIL WAR GAMING RETREAT, Middletown, Virginia

Contact: Volunteers, c/o Bill Koff, 146 Chimney Lane, Wilmington, NC 28409. (919) 392-5145.

Note: Along with the many historical simulation gaming activities, a highlight of the Retreat will be an exclusive tour of the Cedar Creek battlefield.

MAY 25-28

GAMECAUCUS II '90, Concord, California

Contact: Mike Wilson, P.O. Box 4867, Walnut Creek, CA 94520.

Note: Featured events include competitions in *SL* and *ASL, DIP, WS&IM, B-17* and *EIA*.

MAY 26

UP FRONT STATE CHAMPIONSHIP, Concord, California

Contact: Pat Cook, 1900 Scot Parkway #915, Vallejo, CA 94591. (707) 552-4269.

Note: This is the 2nd annual Championship meet.

JUNE 16-17

SL RALLY '90, Dallas, Texas

Contact: Terry Treadway, P.O. Box 265, Marshall, AR 72650.

JUNE 22-24

WORLD DIP-CON II, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Contact: David Hood, 15-F Estes Park, Carrboro, NC 27510.

Note: The international *DIPLOMACY* convention, combined with the national *DIPLOMACY* tournament this year.

JUNE 22-24

MICHICON GAMEFEST '90, Southfield, Michigan

Contact: Mike Bartnikowski, Metro Detroit Gamers, P.O. Box 656, Wyandotte, MI 48192. (313) 928-7744.

JUNE 28-JULY 1

ORIGINS '90, Atlanta, Georgia

Contact: Origins '90, P.O. Box 47696, Atlanta, GA 30362. (404) 457-2490.

Note: The National Strategy and Adventure Gaming Convention and Exposition.

JULY 13-15

ATLANTICON '90, Baltimore, Maryland

Contact: Dale Wetzelberger, P.O. Box 15405, Baltimore, MD 21220. (301) 574-5066.

Note: Among many other events, competition will be offered in *ASL, DIP, CM, KREMLIN, DUNE, 3R, B-17* and other Avalon Hill titles.

JULY 26-29

HISTORICON '90, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Contact: Robert Coggins, HMGS, P.O. Box 222, Annapolis, MD 21401.

Note: The NorthEast's premier miniatures gaming convention, with miniatures versions of some of Avalon Hill's best tactical boardgames (*MBT, FLIGHT LEADER, ADVANCED SL*) as well as *NAPOLEON'S BATTLES*.

AUGUST 4-5

CAPITOL-CON VI, Springfield, Illinois

Contact: Bill Wilson, Springfield Gamers Association, 99 Cottonwood Drive, Chatham, IL 62629. (217) 483-5797.

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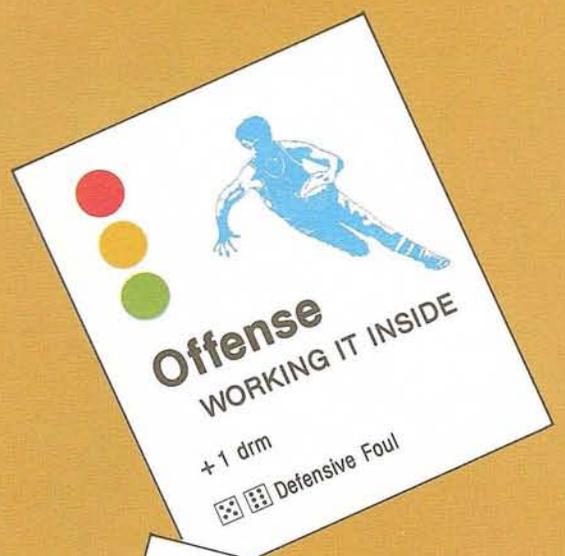
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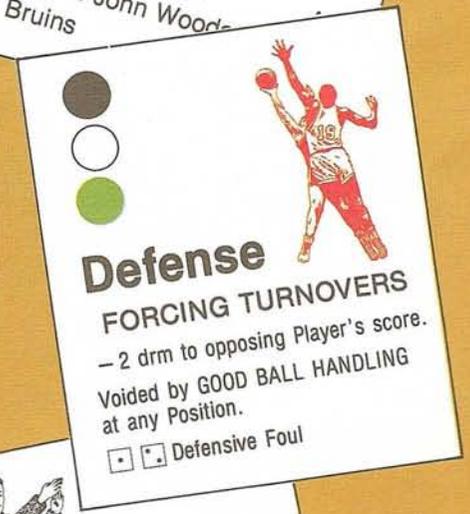


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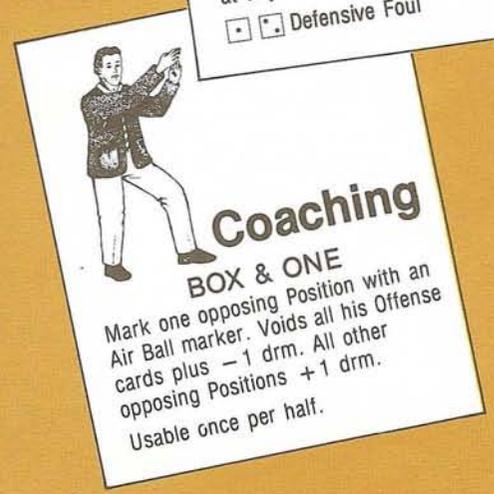
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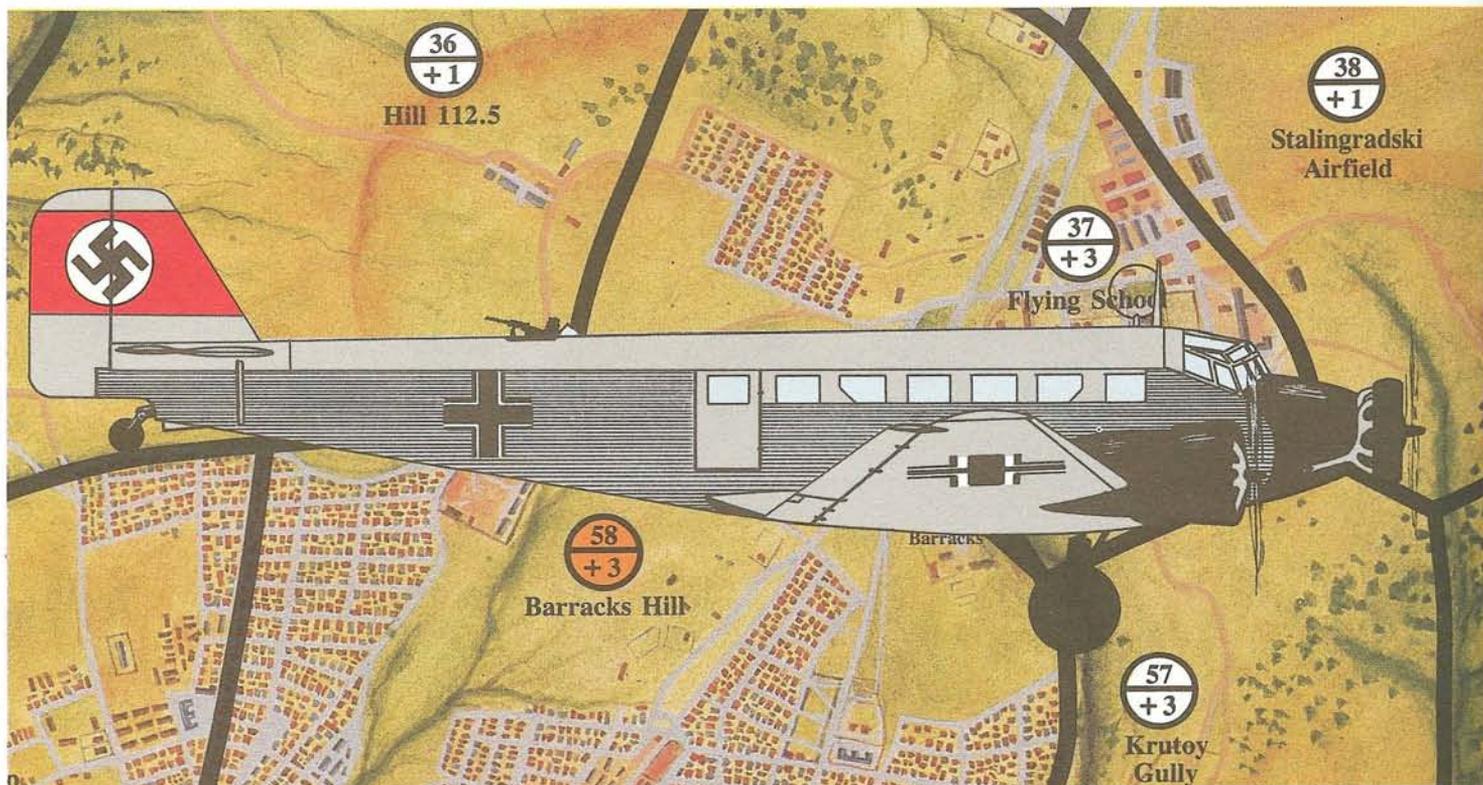
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TRAVELIN' TO THE TURNING POINT

A Look at Strategy for TP: STALINGRAD

By David Chapel

It's September 1942, and General Paulus has just left the Fuehrer's new headquarters at Vinnitsa with orders that Stalingrad must be taken as soon as possible. The general makes haste to board the flight bound eastward, where the decisions he makes will ultimately decide the fate of Germany. Stalingrad must fall quickly, and with modest cost to his already tired Sixth Army—for another Russian winter is on its way. But as he boards the plane, he finds his old nemesis, General Chuykov, pouring over a mint copy of *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD*. Chuykov looks up, smiles, and asks, "Ready for the dry run, Comrade?" General Paulus, a little shocked at seeing Chuykov on a Luftwaffe flight in the first place, can only nod in the affirmative.

This fanciful introduction serves to lay the foundation for my article on the play of this new title from the boys on the Hill. It is a demanding game, one which the player who best manages his forces and time will win. Every action taken has a price, paid in casualties and/or time. To make matters worse, the rising and setting of the sun—which so governs the pace of the action—takes place by the whim of a dice roll.

What follows is a fictional discourse between Generals Paulus and Chuykov (with some additional input from the pilot on occasion). Discussion begins with a tour of the Victory Point (VP) areas, and progresses through the initial set-up and opening moves. Rubble, Disruption, Stukas, artillery, reinforcements, infiltration and the Tactical Advantage all play important roles in this game, and will be mentioned as well. So, without further delay, let us return to the airstrip and eavesdrop on the two.

A GENERAL'S TOUR

As they settle in, General Paulus observes that one of the key elements in *TURNING POINT:*

STALINGRAD is that German victory conditions can be met in a multitude of ways. Assuming that a Sudden Death game is being played, the Germans need but another five VP more than the two they start with for Latashaka (Zone H). He brings out the map [the pilot observes that he uses this excellent work to fly by, since the ones provided by the Luftwaffe are inadequate and inaccurate] and unfolds a well-creased table listing all the VP areas, their value, and a subjective probability that each specific area can be taken by his troops in the first week. General Paulus, a man not usually known for rambling, continues by pointing out:

"A 'Very High' probability means that any German worth his salt should get, or hold onto, these areas. The German player has Zone H to start with, but if one is careless, then the Russians can cut supply by taking Vinnovka (G) or even Yertzovka (F)."

"Comrade Paulus, I'd like to note that there is certainly nothing more satisfying than cutting this supply line of yours during the night of September 19th, and so reducing your seven VP to five suddenly. Nothing must be more embarrassing."

"That's why, General, the Wehrmacht has Zone H and must plan on holding it at all costs."

"We'll see, Paulus. Go on."

"The second-most likely area for occupation by the Germans is Kuporosnoye (#30), which should fall on September 13th if using the normal set-up . . . in which Hill 120.0 (#1) is loaded with the majority of the 29th Motorized Division units. The limitations of the historical set-up might make taking this area more difficult, due to the 29th's two infantry regiments being split between Hill 120.0 (#1) and Beketovka (Zone A).

"The only area which I rate 'High' probability of falling to us is the Kuibyshev Sawmill (#31). This

area is the natural objective of the 29th after it has polished off the defenders at Kuporosnoye. The Sawmill will usually fall sometime during the first week, provided that the 29th has been given the task. And the area must be under German control by the end of the 16th if the 29th Motorized Division is to play an active part in the remainder of the fighting this first week. Elements of the 94th Infantry can be used on September 13th to gain a foothold in this area . . ."

"Yes, yes, Paulus. A foothold is essential if you plan to take the Sawmill in a reasonable span of time. But if you fail to get any units into the Sawmill on the first day, I can assure you that I will be bringing in the 1078th AA Regiment from the Brickworks (#69) . . . assuming the initial placement of rubble allows it. If so, when the sun rises over the Volga next, the Kuibyshev Sawmill will be the cornerstone of the Stalingrad fortress."

[At this point, the pilot shrieks in mirth at hearing Chuykov's rhetoric about the AA unit. He knows that it is a rare game indeed that the AA unit will ever make the trek from the northern reaches. Unbeknownst to the two generals, the pilot received his copy of *TPS* weeks before they did. And these long flights east have given him plenty of opportunity to learn some essential nuances of this game. He concentrates on his duties again as General Paulus continues.]

"These areas rated 'Medium' are all realistically obtainable during the first week if a concerted effort is made to take them as a primary objective. The Minina Gully (#32) is the third domino of the southern riverbank, and will usually be very strongly defended; some Russian 4-6-4s or *-6-5s should be occupying the area by the time the Germans can get a crack at it. Therefore, before trying to capture this area, it may be worth reviewing some other options

before getting bogged down in a protracted fight. The 29th Motorized is the best offensive and most mobile stack the Germans have in the opening order of battle. Losing them to a four-day disruption is obviously harmful to the German cause.

"As an alternative, for instance, the Mamayev Kurgan (#56) is the focal point of the whole game, and if the Germans manage to control it in the first week, the Russians are finished . . ."

"Paulus, may I point out that your Fuehrer said something to the same effect two months ago about Russia—and look where you are today!"

"Well, Chuykov, the three VP that it gives us, combined with the two we begin with for Latashanka and one for Kuporosnoye would guarantee us a six-point Draw condition. If the tie-breakers are being used, this will usually result in a German win, based on my experience of relative casualties. In addition, disruption of the Russian reinforcements crossing the Volga should jump to over 50% due to the five Interdiction Points the German player will have—two for control of a riverside area (Kuporosnoye) and three for having control of and an observer on the Mamayev Kurgan. Slowing down those Russian reinforcements will keep the German steamroller moving to the Volga."

"Paulus, let me take a moment here to give some suggestions to my comrades trying to hold onto this area. Early on the first day, I usually bring in the 2nd Motorized Brigade (5-4-4) and the 2nd Company of the 397th Tank Destroyer Battalion (*-2-5). Ideally these units have set up in the same "start" area. Additional support can be brought in in the form of the NKVD units which start in the Army Camp (#60) or on Barracks Hill (#58). The best time to move any units to Mamayev Kurgan (#56) is after the Stuka has flown its mission for the day. Ideally, and ultimately, Mamayev Kurgan should have at least five Russian units at all times. Also, the 42nd Battalion (6-7-4) which arrives on the 14th should be immediately moved there, and backed up with some other fresh infantry (4-6-4) when available, to provide double protection."

"Hah, if I thought you could manage that so easily Chuykov, I'd slit my wrists here and now. The key for the German is to maintain such pressure all along the front that you won't be able to afford the luxury of moving, or having, five units on Mamayev Kurgan . . . let alone a spare 4-6-4!"

"Moving on, Chuykov, we find the Oil Refinery (#65), which can be captured during the first week but would come at a high price. However, it is a very desirable area to control due to its strategic leverage. If the Russians are determined to hold Mamayev Kurgan, the Refinery often falls by default. However, this area will not usually be mine until September 18th or 19th—if at all—and therefore, splitting the Russian forces will only have a

major impact if the battle continues into the second week, or longer.

"The Red October Factory (#67) can fall in the first week when the Germans take a low-key approach to attacking the north-central area of the board. 'Low-key' implies not using so much force in the north-central area that the Russian purposely starts covering the region with strong (4-6-4) infantry units. A feint for Mamayev Kurgan (#56) can switch tracks and bypass it, heading northeast. The Russians are always hard-pressed for units. A direct consequence of this is that the northern riverbank areas, from the Red October Factory to the Dzerzhzinsky Tractor Factory (#70), will often be lightly defended. A breakthrough into this area can be devastating to the enemy. Unfortunately for the Germans, even their mechanized units will usually be only able to take one of the north-central riverbank areas when flooding through a breakthrough. The area that seems to fall most often is the Red October Factory, which is why I have given it a medium probability of capture.

"Rynok (#74) and the Skuchaya Mechetka gully (#72) are the northern Victory Point areas which I rate 'Medium'. They get this because, even though these areas can definitely be taken with a concentrated effort, this is usually not possible due to other commitments in the southern and central sectors of the map. A German player who is willing to forego the push on the Mamayev Kurgan (#56) can use the forces normally committed to that offensive in the northern reaches. Harassment attacks by the Stuka can open up an avenue of advance, for these areas are lightly defended. In a one-week game, the seven Victory Points could easily [?] come from taking these two areas, and Kuporosnoye (#30), the Kuibyshev Sawmill (#31), and retaining Latashanka (Zone H). This plan of action still requires that a central push be made; otherwise the Russians just pile their reinforcements into the northern and southern areas, forming two impenetrable walls of bodies. A central push keeps them busy and worried. Disguising your true intentions until the Russian commits the last of his reserves is essential.

"The two Low probability areas for me are the Tennis Racket (#66) and Spartakovka (#71). The Tennis Racket is hard to come by because it commands more attention, and the path to it is blocked by the Mamayev Kurgan (#56). The Red October Factory (#67) is just to the north, and offers two VP; the Kurgan, just to the west, offers three! The Oil Refinery (#65) may be worth only one point, but is adjacent to six areas—whereas the Tennis Racket is adjacent to but four. The more adjacent areas there are, the more options available to me to hit weak points."

"Ah, but General Paulus, that also means there can be more areas from which I can hit back."

"Perhaps. But the Tennis Racket is just not a good place to go for during the first week. As for Spartakovka (#71), I feel that this just takes too long to get to in the first week. However, it is an excellent place to visit during the second.

"My 'Very Low' areas include the Grain Elevator (#62), the Downtown Ferry Landing (#63), Red Square (#64), the Red Barricades Factory (#68), the Brickworks (#69) and the infamous Dzerzhzinsky Tractor Factory (#70). In a battle between equally experienced players, these areas should never fall to the Germans in the first week. However, 'never say never' applies here, so they are rated but 'Very Low'. Should these areas fall at all the first week, it is usually to a lone mechanized unit exploiting a breakthrough by moving into a vacant area. This situation is precarious, at best, and a Russian counterattack can usually dislodge the invader (or cut off his supply)."

"Nevertheless, Paulus, a wise Russian will strive to leave a hedgehog defense of one Fresh unit in every other area along the riverbank to prevent such a catastrophe."

"So, the Victory Point area tour is over. It is time to look at the combinations which will provide those additional five VP I need—assuming always that Latashanka (H) is held throughout the battle (or at least on September 19th when it counts). Most of my German victories have fallen into one of the configurations below:

1. Kuporosnoye (#30); Kuibyshev Sawmill (#31); plus two of the following three: Minina Gully (#32), Rynok (#74) or Skuchaya Mechetka Gully (#72).
2. Kuporosnoye (#30); the Mamayev Kurgan (#56); plus one of the following: Kuibyshev Sawmill (#31), Minina Gully (#32), Rynok (#74), Skuchaya Mechetka Gully (#72), or the Oil Refinery (#65).

"While it doesn't always happen this way; it's the basis for my strategy, Chuykov. What can you do to stop this manifest destiny?"

SETTING UP

Paulus seemed pleased with himself, and his smugness showed in his tone, "Well Chuykov, you get the honors of setting up first. Shall we use the historical set-up, or the normal set-up for the Basic Game?"

"My choice is obvious, Paulus—the historical set-up suits me fine."

[The pilot mutters something about the fact that the historical set-up should be reserved only for use with the red Victory Conditions . . . for the Simulation Game. But then, he prefers this with the Basic Game rules because it offers the most even contest between the two sides.]

"No, no, Chuykov. I think we should just go ahead and talk about the Basic Game set-up since we'll be in the real thing tomorrow."

"Oh very well, General; I will begin immediately. Options for the Russian set-up are limited, but I've the following recommendations.

"Cover key areas with the highest defense factors available. Each of these should have a four-defense factor unit and at least one scrub: Kuporosnoye (#30), Kuibyshev (#31), Rynok (#74), the Little Mushroom (#48) and the Big Mushroom (#73). My personal preference here is to put three units in Kuporosnoye, and six in the Sawmill (#31). In fact, the former can have as many as four units if desired, to improve the odds that your 29th Motorized Division will not succeed in an overrun on September 13th. But then, that leaves the Sawmill more vulnerable.

"Those Russians who are in an offensive frame of mind should note that if the elements of the 131st Division all set up in Kuibyshev Sawmill (#31), this will represent one of the strongest Russian forces

Table 1: TPS Victory Point Areas

Area	Name	VP Value	TEM	Chance of German Control on Sept 19
#30	Kuporosnoye	1VP	+3	Very High
#31	Kuibyshev Sawmill	2VP	+3	High
#32	Minina Gully	1VP	+3	Medium
#62	Grain Elevator	2VP	+4	Very Low
#63	Downtown Ferry	2VP	+3	Very Low
#64	Red Square	2VP	+3	Very Low
#65	Oil Refinery	1VP	+3	Medium
#66	Tennis Racket	1VP	+3	Low
#56	Mamayev Kurgan	3VP	+3	Medium
#67	Red October	2VP	+4	Medium
#68	Red Barricades	2VP	+4	Very Low
#69	Brickworks	1VP	+3	Very Low
#70	Dzerzhzinsky Tractor	2VP	+4	Very Low
#71	Spartakovka	2VP	+3	Low
#72	Skuchaya Mechetka	1VP	+2	Medium
#74	Rynok	1VP	+3	Medium
H	Latashanka	2VP	+2	Very High

possible at start which can attack the enemy. A total offensive value of nine is possible with the 131st Division's units when including artillery. But this offensive power is short-lived; it vanishes as soon as the area takes a casualty loss because the armor must take the first hit.

"My units which set up in the 'red' areas should be concentrated on Hill 109.4 (#19). Hill 108.3 (#12) should be protected by two units. The other same-colored areas need only one unit each. This placement allows the Mamayev Kurgan (#56) to be reinforced while using other units from Hill 109.4 to help fill in the void in the north in the same impulse. But this deployment can backfire if the German places all of his allowable 295th Infantry Division units on Hill 109.6 (#11) and then attacks Hill 109.4 early in the day, before the Russians can move to Mamayev Kurgan or elsewhere. This only happens, usually, when things are falling apart in the southern quadrant, when the Russian has to burn up his impulses covering holes in the line in the south; if so, it has the nasty effect of making a bad situation worse. Those comrades wishing to be conservative can just split the forces between Hill 109.4 and 108.3. But I am reminded of an old Russian saying: 'Those who will defend everything, defend nothing.'

"Those poor units which begin at the Hospital (#24) are going to be subjected to the biggest onslaught of the first week. Therefore, load it up with every available unit. Hill 153.7 (#8) should have two or three units to absorb the artillery bombardment, hopefully maintaining a fresh unit after the storm. Every day the central German stacks are slowed allows the Russian time to fortify Mamayev Kurgan and the surrounding areas.

"My 'purple' areas should each have roughly the same number of units, with the exception of the Tsaritsa Gorge (#26) which needs but one. A counterattack made up of elements of the 244th Armor Division can be located in the Tsaritsa Woods (#34). And this group can also be used for rapid deployment to any weakened areas which may need reinforcements."

Looking up from the map, Chuykov emphatically says, "There are a couple of other points which must be made at this point. First, the Russian player should learn to forget about the Regimental Integrity Bonus. This may be hard to swallow, considering that the Russians have more full-set regiments than do the Germans. But, they must be spread out to cover territory, and rarely will the Russians have the luxury of going on the offensive anyway. In addition, casualties will surely hinder the application of Regimental Integrity. A better option, I think, is to preserve the machinegun and tank destroyer units which offer mobility and can aid any strong (4-6-4) infantry units in attacking disrupted enemy units . . . without the different Parent Organization penalty which plagues the Germans."

"Well put, General. But now it's time for my Germans to set up. And it's fairly straightforward, since most of the units will be concentrated into great stacks. A total of five stacks, each with greater than a '10' in offensive power, can be put together at the start. Let me explain:

"Elements of the 29th Motorized Division should be placed on Hill 120.0 (#1) where they can muster an attack strength of '16'. The other three 'grey' start areas should only contain one unit apiece. The resultant stack should be able to take control of Kuporosnoye (#30) in the first day of the fighting.

"The units of the 94th Infantry Division can be combined into a respectable force in either Yelshanka (#28) or Sadovaya Station (#3). Personally, I prefer Yelshanka because it is closer to the Volga and can be used as a base for attack on either the Kuibyshev Sawmill (#31) or on the Leatherworks (#27) on the 13th. Even without armor, this group can muster a respectable attack strength of '13'!

Consider the Odds, Sir

Generals Paulus and Chuykov spend a lot of time rambling on about general strategies. But, as any gamer knows, the firm base upon which these must be built are the probabilities of certain events occurring. It's time to satisfy those who may desire a way to calculate the chances of success and failure.

Combat resolution is foremost on the list in considering probabilities in any wargame. Each attack will have some specific objective in mind. This may be disruption of a Fresh unit, or it could be the outright elimination of enemy units in a VP area. In *TP: STALINGRAD*, it all comes down to a consideration of needing some level of casualty points inflicted on the enemy. This can be three CP per unit, plus one to guarantee an Overrun—or it can be but one CP to get a Fresh unit to flip. Table 1 lists the odds of success for achieving some desired casualty point level, for a known offensive strength minus defensive strength (let's define this as the *attack modifier*). The CP required and the attack modifier values can be likewise combined, leaving the two dice rolls as the only unknown. Each dice roll has the standard probabilities of attaining a result from "2" to "12"; if we combine one dice roll with our desired CP and attack modifier then we can calculate the likelihood of achieving our desired result.

Table 1: Chance of Success to Obtain a Given CP Level

Attack Modifier Minus CP Required	Odds of Success
+10	100.0%
+9	99.9%
+8	99.6%
+7	98.8%
+6	97.3%
+5	94.6%
+4	90.3%
+3	84.1%
+2	76.1%
+1	66.4%
0	55.6%
-1	44.4%
-2	33.6%
-3	23.9%
-4	15.6%
-5	9.7%
-6	5.4%
-7	2.7%
-8	1.2%
-9	.4%
-10	.1%

Let's take a quick example. The Germans roll into Kuporosnoye (#30) with a "15" Offensive Strength; the Russians have two units defending with a value of "8". This gives an attack modifier of "7". It would be highly desirable for the Germans to achieve an Overrun, which means a total of seven CP are required. Therefore, the attack modifier minus the CP required is equal to "0". Checking this on the table shows that the German player has a 55.6% chance of succeeding in the Overrun. Not bad. The same attack has a 97.3% chance of generating one CP, which means that the German player can feel reasonably confident that the most likely disruption duration will be "2" or less. As can be seen, every positive modifier a player can gain or prevent changes the odds of success—in some cases by as much as 10%. Consideration of every applicable combat modifier is important to success; things like Russian artillery and German regimental integrity can and do make a difference.

Any attacks by Stuka, artillery or ranged attack run the risk of generating Rubble. Table 2 shows the likelihood of creating Rubble in the various TEM areas:

Table 2: Chance of Rubble Creation

TEM	Odds of Rubble
+1	2.8%
+2	8.3%
+3	16.7%
+4	27.8%

This table shows that there is over a 1-in-4 chance that rubble will be generated when attacking an area which has a TEM of "4". This should be considered when planning your attacks, especially if taking the role of the German player.

"The 24th Panzer units usually wind up on Gumrak Road (#6). I prefer to stack all of these units together at the start, but will not necessarily move them together. Splitting up this force into two offensive groups results in smaller independent offensive values—but provides more options. This stack could also be placed on Hill 133.4 (#5) if desired. It operates the same.

"My favorite force consists of the three full regiments available from the 71st Infantry Division. Top them off with a Pioneer (4-2-5) and this stack has a daylight offensive value of '17'. This monster should be placed on Hill 144.9 (#7) for maximum impact. I'll show you in a minute how to use this

powerhouse on the first day!

Once that Rubble has been created, it's time to worry about the effect it will have on movement. Level 1 Rubble requires a dice roll of greater than or equal to "7" to enter; Level 2 Rubble requires at least a "9" on the dice. Modifiers depend on Control of the area, presence of enemy units, and condition of those units. The chances of driving into a rubble area are displayed on Table 3.

Table 3: Chance of Entering Rubble

Modifier	Odds for Level 1	Odds for Level 2
0	58.3%	27.8%
+1	72.2%	41.7%
+2	83.3%	58.3%
+3	91.7%	72.2%

A review of the table shows that the modifiers for entrance into a rubble area play a major role in the odds of success. In addition, the difference between Level 1 and Level 2 can be readily seen. The odds of successfully entering a Level 1 Rubble is, however, always greater than 50%. This difference is what makes Level 2 Rubble so desirable for the Russian player in later weeks in the Campaign game. A stack of German mechanized units trying to enter a level 2 Rubble which is controlled and occupied by Fresh Russians can easily be brought to a halt.

A major concern for both players is the success of Russian reinforcements in crossing the Volga. German interdiction points are the controlling and modifying factor. Table 4 shows the odds of successfully getting a single Russian unit across the Volga in a non-disrupted state in the face of the number of German interdiction points:

Table 4: Chance of Crossing the Volga

German Interdiction Points	Odds of Crossing Undisrupted
0	97.2%
1	91.7%
2	83.3%
3	72.2%
4	58.3%
5	41.7%
6	27.8%
7	16.7%
8	8.3%

The Germans will always have, at the least, control of a river bank area (meaning they should have at least two interdiction points); this translates into an 83.3% chance of the Russian seeing his reinforcement. However, as soon as the German player gains addition interdiction from the Mamayev Kurgan, things start looking grim for the Russian. If it is German controlled and an observer is present, the odds of success in crossing drop below 50%.

One last item which can make a big difference between winning and losing the game is the number of day and night impulses available to you to work within. Every German impulse must see a dice roll, which will see whether sunset or sunrise arrives. Table 5 shows the likelihood that there will be another German impulse during the current day/night.

Table 5: Chance of Another German Impulse

Day/Night Impulse	Odds of Another German Impulse
1	100.0%
2	97.2%
3	91.7%
4	83.3%
5	72.2%
6	58.3%
7	41.7%
8	27.8%
9	16.7%
10	8.3%
11	2.8%

And that, according to the Generals, is the basis for success or failure in *TP: STALINGRAD*. So if you seek to blame luck for your poor showing, the above are ammunition for the contrary viewpoint.

powerhouse on the first day!

"The last stack consists of the men of the 295th Infantry Division, capable of a '15-factor' attack. My location of choice is Razgulyayevka Station (#9). However, as you've already pointed out Chuykov, the alternative for this group is to be placed on Hill 109.6 (#11). Placing these at the Station (#9), however, allows them more freedom in direction since both the central and north-central areas can be assaulted.

"Wasn't that simple? Efficient, as the Wehrmacht stresses. You shake your head and smile? Ok. OK! Let's roll for Rubble and I'll wipe that smile from your lips."

OPENING MOVES

As the pilot banks the plane to avoid a stately storm front, the generals are rolling dice. Both are grumbling; Paulus because he wanted less Rubble, and Chuykov because he wanted more than he got. But regardless of the state of disrepair in the "Queen of the Volga", the battle is ready to begin.

"Chuykov, let's begin the first day with . . . ah, an opening bombardment of Kuporosnoye (#30), the Sawmill (#31), the Hospital (#24), Hill 153.7 (#8) and either the Tartar Wall (#22), or perhaps the Vishnevaya Gully (#21). This will use up all but the 389th's artillery—which is saved for deployment on the Mamayev Kurgan (#56) if the Germans can contest it before the 17th. I feel that the benefit which can be gained by the mere threat of the 389th's artillery on Mamayev Kurgan for interdiction purposes outweighs any opening bombardment casualties it could induce. But the guns all fire. All this should wake you up. Of course, the artillery which fires today will be unable to move rapidly until the 17th when its disruption is removed.

"Note too that I do not unleash the Stuka in the opening bombardment. The 12 impulses of the 13th will be more than enough time for the German player to do what needs to be done on this first day. Saving the Stuka attack for later in the day allows it to be spent in more critical locations. For example, if the elements of my 29th Motorized Division there roll into Kuporosnoye (#30) and fail to dislodge all but one or two units, it may be worth using the Stuka—even risking the 'Mistaken Attack'—in order to gain control of the area. Another potential use of the Stuka this first day . . ." ["One I'm fond of," interjects the pilot.] ". . . is to attack any Russian reinforcements which have moved onto the Mamayev Kurgan (#56) while they are disrupted, and therefore are more susceptible to attack and less able to absorb the resulting casualties.

"My Stuka unit is one of Germany's best offensive weapons. The following should be considered when executing its attack. I always do.

1. The riskiest, yet most profitable, use is to use it to clear the enemy from a friendly-occupied VP area, leaving only friendly units and thereby securing control of the area.
2. It can be used to strike a lone, fresh enemy unit in the vicinity of a stack in hopes that it will suffer a casualty point and so become disrupted, thus reducing the movement costs for entering the area and/or circumventing it. Ideally, an area can be vacated completely, allowing a breakthrough in my next impulse—unless the Russians move into the gap. An attack of this type can also be used to disrupt a high-defense value unit, leaving lower valued units in its place to spearhead the enemy defense.
3. Early in the week, while many Russian forces are still in lower TEM areas, the Stuka can be used to effectively generate casualties. A steady attrition of Russian units can only improve the German chances of victory.
4. But the Stuka may best serve as a threat. Until it flies in any given day you, Chuykov, seem loath to make large-scale movements or fortification attempts for fear of providing the Luftwaffe with too juicy a target. Even targets of opportunity such as single Engineers or an AA unit moved onto Mamayev Kurgan may draw my Stuka. As long as it is overhead, the Russians operate—quite literally—under its shadow. Unfortunately, the longer I hold it back, the greater the chance of losing its sortie that day altogether with the passage of daylight. For that reason, the German commander must constantly balance the threat versus the danger of losing what is essentially a free 8-FP attack. One thing is certain . . . using it on the first impulse is criminal, and saving it past the fifth impulse of

any day (except the first) is foolhardy, unless one is prepared to spend the Advantage to reset the daylight. I . . ."

"General Paulus, we're only on the opening move and already you are rambling on. You have already indicated that you are saving it for later this day. So let's get back to the business at hand."

"But I've a few more things to explain about my opening bombardment. The results of it will play a major factor in how the game will proceed, as you well know. I've seen playings where the Russians lose more than ten units. Other times have seen the Russians go completely unscathed, which may lend some credence to those radicals advocating use of the optional chit-based combat resolution. The course of action the Germans will take must be decided after this initial bombardment. Notice there are two artillery strikes in the southern quadrant. If these are very successful, then the German should concentrate heavily on exploiting this success and seizing the three southernmost VP areas. Likewise, a successful strike on the central front may make a push for the Mamayev Kurgan (#56) or the north-central riverbank a more realistic goal. Failure everywhere will set a gloomy mood for the Germans, but there is the whole week left. Turning to this subject of 'time' . . ."

"General Paulus, you're getting sidetracked again. Are you done with your first impulse?"

"Yes, yes; but let me finish. I want you to understand, so you can appreciate my problems. Back to the subject of TIME. Every action here has a price, paid in time. Those artillery units which just fired are back to stockpiling ammunition for at least the next four days. If a unit just moves, even without entering an enemy-occupied area, it will be out for the rest of the day. Launching an attack which fails is most distressing to an already stressed German because the participating units will not be able to undertake any offensive action for four days. Attacks resulting in a stalemate will only achieve three days of disruption. Even achieving a victory, causing casualties to the enemy, brings a two-day disruption. An overrun is a victory so sweet that the enemy is wiped out and there are still casualty points to be absorbed by him. That allows the victorious units to keep on, fighting if they wish, if they have sufficient movement. Regardless of the number of attacks, however, any unit which ends its impulse immediately after achieving an overrun will not be Fresh until the sun rises the next day.

"Let's take a look at the differences in disruption duration and the impact on German plans. The most common result of a German attack is a Duration-2 disruption. This means that the units which participated will be unable to perform any offensive activity for the remainder of the current day, and all of the following day as well. This implies that in a one-week game, the German player might possibly get a total of four attacks with a particular unit, if they all resulted in Duration-2 disruption. This compares with but two attacks for a unit which fails (two Duration-4 losses). On the other hand, if a unit were to obtain an overrun every single time it attacked, it would be able to get in a minimum of seven attacks during the first week. Of course, an overrun a day also implies at least one Russian unit eliminated each day as well."

"General Paulus, you seem to forget the other side. Or don't you think my forces can ever achieve an overrun against the vaunted Wehrmacht?"

"Hell, Chuykov. During the first week you can hardly be contemplating overruns when you'll be lucky to attack with better than 50% chance of any sort of success. But, back to disruption. What it all leads to is the fact that the German must be very selective about which attacks he orders. He must be aggressive to win, but not blindly so. If being aggressive might keep key units out of action for four days, then waiting another day while additional

support is gathered is generally the proper choice. A classic example of this is when a German stack is subjected to a counterattack and suffers casualties, which are absorbed by retreating some quantity of units out of the area. The units which retreat will be placed under Duration-4 disruption, while those remaining will be under, let's say, Duration-2. After the Duration-2 disruption wears off, the original stack will not be as powerful as it once was, since it is missing those units which retreated. This is a case where holding this group of units back until its other elements can recover and rejoin might be profitable. Committing them early, and losing this force to a four-day disruption before being able to recombine it, will usually mean the entire force has been wasted—for the remaining elements when they recover will stand little chance of succeeding on their own. The bottom line will be two failed attacks with nothing to show, and the loss of those units for the majority of this first week. If, instead, all had been recombined after the retreated units had recovered from their initial Duration-4 disruption, the stack can then again assault an area with a reasonable chance of victory.

"On the first day, the German player does not have to worry about the sun setting before what needs to be done *can* be done. However, during the remainder of the week, the sunset will spell the end of major German offensives for the day. Therefore, the wise German player must decide with each new day what exactly he wishes to accomplish during it. Small skirmishes in unimportant regions of the map will only burn impulses, and will rarely contribute to any significant progress towards the Volga. After the first day, regions should be attacked with concentrated forces to avoid wasteful disruption. And this prevents the Russians from having the time to plug holes, and therefore the German troops have a better chance of creating a breakthrough.

"Russian artillery capabilities might also play a deciding factor in which areas I attack. If the Russian player has an artillery unit knocked out, and it is currently undergoing Refit rolls, then it might be worth attacking in the affected quadrant while it is non-operational. But usually, if time allows, not until operations in one region have been completed, do operations in another begin.

"The Stuka should be used every day; however, do not let it interfere with whatever objectives have been targeted unless it can contribute. When I first began study of the game, I would open each day with a blow by the Stuka. However, experience has taught me that this might well result in worse conditions for the units poised to move into the area on the next impulse. Since a Stuka cannot take control of an area, even if it wipes out the defenders, the Russian player will seize the opportunity to move more men into it. Or he may take the opportunity to roll for an artillery Refit. The Stuka attack could even generate or increase the amount of rubble in the area, thereby reducing the amount of armor support available, not to mention increasing the defense value of the position. Pausing to strike the Russian means giving him the chance to respond. Often it is better to push ahead with the ground attack instead of waiting for the Stuka (or artillery, for that matter) to soften up the target."

"Paulus, good grief, but they really lied when they said you were a quiet man. Enough of this rambling. I have moved to plug the holes which you so kindly generated with your artillery. Please proceed with your assault, or we will be landing before you have moved a piece!"

"Very well. The second German impulse should be used to attack either Kuporosnoye (#30) or the Kuibyshev Sawmill (#31). Do not be sidetracked. The opportunity created by the bombardment will not last forever. Kuporosnoye should be attacked by the elements of the 29th Motorized Division, and

ideally these units will get an overrun. This is by no means a guaranteed outcome. If the Russian player has placed more than three units in Kuporosnoye, the odds of achieving that overrun drop dramatically."

"General, some of my comrades are probably wondering why my preference is to put only three units in Kuporosnoye if adding more units can make such a difference. The primary reason is simply that any extra units placed there imply that less units will be available to hold the Sawmill (#31). The two VP for the Kuibyshev Sawmill are, of course, more important to me than the one for Kuporosnoye. If the Sawmill falls before Kuporosnoye, the remaining forces there will be cut off and will be easy prey for the Germans anyway. In addition, an early capture of the Sawmill by the Germans will allow them an opportunity to attack and likely control the Minina Gully (#32) by the end of the first week. Such would give them six victory points, almost assuring a German victory!"

"The Kuibyshev Sawmill (#31), my other option for the second impulse, can be attacked in order to get a foothold in the area and prevent reinforcements from reaching Kuporosnoye. If Kuporosnoye has not been occupied by German units, the Russian could transfer units from the Sawmill to it during the next Russian impulse. I would not consider this a wise maneuver, but anything is possible in Stalin-grad. The Sawmill itself will usually take a good four days to secure. In addition, the potential of Russian counterattack is higher in the Sawmill than in Kuporosnoye.

"My personal preference on the second German impulse is to go for Kuporosnoye (#30) first, and save the opening attack on the Sawmill for later in the day. This sequence can also result in neutralizing Russian artillery in the southern quadrant, and therefore improve the odds in my Sawmill assault. By saving the units of the 94th Infantry Division for later in the day, the Russian will have to remain in a defensive posture in the south. Committing the 94th early will leave no fresh German units capable of attacking in the southeast. And this allows the enemy to free some units that would have remained in place if a significant offensive threat existed . . . Your move, General Chuykov."

"Let's talk about some Russian options for this first day. Our artillery starts out in perfect order, so Refit die rolls are not necessary. My first piece of advice is to maintain your morale. It will be rough watching 15 to 25 units get eliminated . . . in the first day alone. Countless others will suffer four-day disruptions.

"The second thing the Russian player must do on every impulse is scan the city for any holes in his line. I have seen many a Russian defeat due to German units walking to the Volga with no opposition in their path. Most of your first day will be spent shuttling units to fill these holes. The north and north-central units should be pulled back when possible to fill the void. I usually try to create a two-deep line in the north. That defensive line closest to the enemy should have two units per area, and the second one should contain one unit per area. This allows my disrupted units to be retreated into the second row, allowing time to create a new second row. This set-up should keep the Germans from making any major breakthroughs in the north.

"But this sort of defense does not work in the southern or Kurgan (#56) regions because the room for an in-depth defensive line does not exist—at least not for long. I've already mentioned that Mamayev Kurgan should have at least five units on it. The two areas (#57 and #39) next to it are key breakthrough areas for the Germans and should be guarded by three to five units as well. The units in these areas can be used for counterattacks and infiltration into the Kurgan, once it is contested by the enemy. Obviously, some of these units must come from the reinforcements arriving later in the

week. Today's task is to begin building the lines of defense, while making sure that the Germans never get a breakthrough to an unoccupied river-bank area. So, when resolving casualty losses, my disrupted units which retreat are moved to locations that block German movement when possible, and allowed by retreat priorities.

"Let's backtrack a moment. If you, my dear Paulus, can ramble on about Stukas, I can talk about Rubble. The Rubble is the Russian's best friend. Rubble creation, the best way to slow down German mechanized units. Most of the major German powerhouse stacks rely on at least one mechanized unit. This means that a powerful stack can be reduced significantly in offensive value when entry to a Russian-controlled area is prevented by failure of the Rubble entrance dice roll. Another advantage is that the Rubble adds directly to the defensive value of the area. This will usually work in our favor. Rubble also makes infiltration easier for Russian units. The only drawback is that Rubble creation requires either three infantry units, or one rare engineer unit. Committing three infantry units to knocking down walls on the first day should not be attempted until after sunset, unless the Stuka has already flown and the units are well out of harm's way. Making a Rubble attempt early in the day will disrupt three units which may be needed to plug holes later.

"There are no engineering units at start. The first (and last) engineer of this week arrives the night of the 15th. It should be used whenever possible to create Rubble, including the impulse it lands. Personally, I like to land this unit in the Red October Factory (#67) and try a Rubble creation die roll immediately. Ultimately, the engineer can work its way south while, hopefully, creating Rubble in Banny Gully (#55), Mamayev Kurgan (#56) and Krutoy Gully (#57). Usually the engineer can safely operate in daylight hours, as few German commanders will waste a Stuka sortie to attack it, and its defensive value is minimal for plugging gaps. Conversely, it is too valuable to our cause, Comrades, to be used on the front lines. During the simulation game, where victory point pressures are not as severe, its survival is even more important, and one should be aware that the enemy may indeed use a sortie to pick it off.

"But let's go back to those Russian first-day options. I have left out one key alternative: the counterattack. The Russian player has a very limited counterattack capability. The best way for the Russians to use this is to use those units which provide maximum offensive value with the least number of units. The best choice is to use what little Russian armor is available. The 26th Tank Brigade (5-5-6) should be placed in the Ovrashnaya Woods (#39) at start, and will then be in an excellent position to counterattack in the central portion of the board. The tanks of the 244th Armor Division (3-2-5) can be used to make strikes in the two southern quadrants, but they have low firepower and will have to be combined to make an attack of serious nature. Consequently, they are usually used piecemeal in spoiling attacks to buy time rather than cause casualties. The two units of the 6th Guards Tank Brigade (4-4-6) can also be used in the central region for a counterthrust. When crucial, it may be worth throwing in a TD or MG unit to improve the offensive value of the attack. It is rarely wise to attack fresh German units. The primary target of choice should be disrupted units. Any casualty points generated will either take out (retreat/eliminate) a powerful mechanized unit or possibly ruin a regimental integrity bonus of the Germans. These attacks will generally be unsuccessful, so do not commit a unit unless you can live without it for four days (or forever).

"Harassment is a key tactic for succeeding as the Russian. I define 'harassment' attacks as those which

have little chance of eliminating German units, but will slow down the German assault. During night impulses, these attacks are generally made by 'scrub' infantry which have failed to infiltrate a given area. This type of attack can also be made during daylight impulses, but the odds of success are very slim. Never count on such a daylight attack to block a breakthrough by the Germans. The risk of getting routed is ever present, for these harassment attacks usually have a less-than-even chance of victory. Any Russian attack to prevent a breakthrough should be backed up by enough units (not participating in the attack) to plug any holes in the line; of course, these units must all begin their impulse in the same area.

"Any front-line area containing only disrupted Germans is a prime target for a counterattack, regardless of the odds. The presence of even a single disrupted Russian unit in the area will extract a three-MF penalty for any Germans trying to traverse it. Such attacks are especially effective when the enemy has already massed large forces in the area and are nearing its occupation limit. Areas with low TEM—such as the Leatherworks (#27), Hill 112.5 (#36), and Stalingradski Airfield (#38)—should never be defended by more than one unit, but should always be vigorously counterattacked if the enemy takes it. The idea is to make the Germans defend their line in lousy terrain, and in the process they may take a few losses from our delaying tactics."

"General, I believe it's time for my third impulse. Let us turn our attention to the central region, which can be a real thrill . . . or total disappointment for the us. Some German offensives in the central sector will result in the Mamayev Kurgan (#56) falling in a matter of days—five to seven. Other games will see my attack stall and never even contest control of the area in the first week. If one has followed my set-up recommendations and preferences, then one can see the German should proceed as follows: that beautiful stack of three full regiments of the 71st Infantry Division should be used on the third impulse in a ranged attack against Hill 153.7 (#8) and the Hospital (#24). The attack against Hill 153.7 can be made first, but only if there is one fresh unit in the area. This almost guarantees an overrun, allowing a second attack against the Hospital. Those too timid to take the 1% risk of not attaining the overrun can go straight for the Hospital. This powerhouse force has a daylight offensive value of '17'. If this same German stack were to move into the Hospital, the best offensive value would be '15'—assuming that someone has been left behind to protect Hill 144.9 (#7). The same odds will be achieved, since the ranged attack doubles the +2 TEM. Therefore, my reason for the ranged attack is to prevent clutter in the Hospital area. Leaving the 71st Infantry Division stack in its starting place allows elements of the 24th Panzer to attack or roll through the area in a future impulse without worrying about stacking limitations. The risk in this maneuver is, of course, that there is a small chance of creating Rubble in the Hospital which might end up stalling the 24th Panzer there. The other problem with a ranged attack, any ranged attack, is that even if the entire area is cleared of Russians, it can be reoccupied and defended.

"The fourth German impulse sees either the 24th Panzer jumping into action, or the men of the 295th Infantry Division beginning their push from the Razgulyayevka Gully (#9). Already by the fourth impulse, things are becoming too result-dependent to any longer present a cookbook approach to winning. What works this time may result in dismal failure the next. The options are many at this point in the game. My personal preference here is to attack whatever Russians are left in the Hospital with those elements of the 24th Panzer which will have a movement factor of six; the two units with seven factors of movement available can be saved for a later

impulse where they might be used to knife through the Hospital and attack the Airfield (#38). If the men of the 295th are available, I recommend going for either the Tartar Wall (#22) or the Vishnevaya Woods (#21). The key to the central thrust is to get both Stalingradski Airfield (#38) and Ovrashnaya Woods (#39), so that there are two locations from which to attack the Mamayev Kurgan (#56). The Krutoy Gully (#57) is also an excellent stepping-off point to the Kurgan, but will be harder to secure.

"The only group of German units left to discuss are the elements of the 389th Infantry Division which begin in Gratsky (Zone E). This reserve can be used in a multitude of ways. They can strategically redeploy to a northern zone—such as Vinnovka (Zone G)—and try to force their way to the river via the Little Mushroom (#48), while strengthening the German's precarious hold on Latashanka. Another option is a northern push to Hill 108.3 (#12) or Hill 108.2 (#13). The only advantage I see to this, however, is that it forces the enemy to maintain a stronger defense in the northern quadrant. It will rarely, if ever, generate any victory points.

"The men of the 389th could also move to the north-central region. This will put even more pressure on the Russian forces there. This option might allow the enemy to transfer units from the north to the central or southern sectors as needed." ["Force the Russian, is more likely," mutters the pilot, "since they will be stretched pretty thin in the central region if most of the German forces are attacking there."] "If done as a feint, this maneuver can potentially reduce Russian northern forces to a low level, and a powerful motorized stack—such as the 29th Motorized Infantry—can swiftly swing around from the south for the kill.

"Well, Chuykov, that about wraps up my thoughts on the opening moves. Do you have anything to add?"

"Of course I do, Paulus. But I can tell by your expression that you would much rather hear the sound of your own voice. This may be a good opportunity to speak on the 'Advantage'."

"Why, an excellent idea General. That thought just occurred to me too. The proper use of the Advantage is critical to a German victory. Let's consider it for a moment.

"First of all, the Advantage should never—and I mean *never*—be used on the first day. In fact, as far as I am concerned, there is not a single good reason to use it before September 18th."

"But what happens when that powerful stack of the 71st does not rise to the occasion on the 16th or 17th and becomes spent for the rest of the week?"

"That's war boy. If, by some chance, it makes a difference between getting some VP or not, it might—just might—be worth surrendering the Advantage, but that's unlikely. On September 18th, criteria for its use is limited to those cases where victory hangs in the balance. I personally feel that it should not even be used until the 19th, thereby assuring that the Russians will never have an opportunity to make use of the Advantage in a one-week game. If playing a longer game, I would only make use of it if it made the clear difference between losing the game and continuing into the next week. This may seem to rigid for some German commanders, but personal experience has shown that this method will improve the German odds of success. Following these guidelines will force a player to save that precious Advantage for something that really counts. It hurts to watch a powerful stack taken out of action for four days; but this is less painful than watching 'snake-eyes' appear on the second daylight impulse of September 19th and ending any chance of a German victory."

"Well, General Paulus, if you'll never give it up, there is nothing for me to discuss as I'll never have the Advantage anyway. However, when you do—

and you will, I assure you—the same advice applies for the Russian commander. The Advantage should never be surrendered for less than a game-saving move, and if possible should be hoarded for use on the 19th for two tries against Latashanka (Zone H)—snatching the victory from you."

AS THE SUN SETS

General Chuykov continued, "Speaking of last-minute victories, there is nothing to compare to racing reinforcements across the Volga and saving the day for Mother Russia. I await every nightfall with anticipation. As the sun sets, German offensive and defensive values drop by one as the Stuka flies home. This is complemented by an increase in the Russian defensive value of one, due to our skill and cunning in night fighting. Russian movement factors are increased by one. Infiltration by my infantry into enemy locations becomes possible. The east bank lifeline extends across the Volga as men and supplies are raced over the water under the cover of darkness. The only thing to stop these reinforcements are German interdiction points. Yes, night is a wonderful time for the Russians."

"But my Germans can use it to advantage also, taking care of unit movements in preparation for new daylight offensives, or even chance a major night attack breakthrough free of the restrictive effects of daylight ZOC."

"Yes, Paulus, the Germans are still dangerous—even at night. But the night is when we grow stronger. The first wave of Russian reinforcements arrive on the night of the 14th. Generally, at this stage of the battle, the Russian situation is at its bleakest. However, seven fresh units are ready to cross the river. The offensive capabilities of those new units are good, but it is their defensive values that are truly impressive. One (6-7-4) unit of the 13th Guards should come across in that first landing and proceed immediately to the Mamayev Kurgan (#56). The other infantry units should go to locations which are in immediate danger. Frequent destinations seem to be the suburbs of West Stalingrad (#61), the Southern Railway Station (#62), Minina Gully (#32), Krutoy Gully (#57), Banny Gully (#55) and the Little Mushroom (#48). The worst Russian nightmare is watching the German player roll a '2' or '3' during the first night impulse of September 14th, bringing it to a sudden end.

"The Red October Factory (#67) is my favorite crossing point, being the most centrally located ferry landing. Units arriving here can reach anywhere from Spartakovka (#71) to the Downtown Ferry Landing (#63), assuming a movement factor of five and no Germans in the way. The Red Square (#64) and the Downtown Ferry Landing (#63) are my preferences for making any crossings in the south.

"The proximity interdiction points should be avoided whenever possible. The Germans are almost guaranteed to have at least two interdiction points for control of a riverbank area—usually Kuporosnoye (#30). They may also have one or two interdiction points for being on the Mamayev Kurgan (#56) in some manner. Throwing in some more interdiction points for landing next to the enemy is akin to committing suicide. The only time the Russian should undertake such a desperate crossing is when there is no other possible way of getting units into an area. In the early stages of the game, every single unit needs to get across the Volga to its haven (not so safe, as it may be) on the west bank.

"Another source of Russian reinforcements is the Dzerzhizinsky Tractor Factory (#70). Each day the Russian player receives one point (worth one offensive factor) towards the point of shiny new tanks. This is an option that can be exercised so long as the Russians control the factory area, and it has not been reduced to a Rubble-2. There are two philosophies concerning the use of these 'reinforcement points'. The first is to collect as many units

as the points can buy. A total of three units (two 2-AF plus one 3-AF) can be had during the course of the first week. The advantage here is two-fold. It reduces the eliminated Russian total by three units, which might possibly make the difference in a tie-breaker; and it means that more holes in the line can be filled on an emergency basis. This assumes, of course, that one has the points accumulated when the hole needs to be plugged.

"The other line of thought is not really that much different, but offensive oriented rather than defensive. It involves acquiring two units rather than three, seeking maximum offensive power for use in counterattacks. If the 26th Tank Brigade (5-5-6) has been eliminated, then this is an excellent choice. Otherwise, there should be at least one four-factor armor unit available in the 'dead pool'. This does have the disadvantage that the counterattack potential will not be available until the fourth or fifth day. One last point to consider—this accumulated replacement capacity is lost if the German ever controls the area, no matter how briefly. Unless you have a defense in depth around it, it is best to always have a unit, no matter how weak, in the Tractor Factory to turn away a lone German armor unit exploiting an overrun.

"Infiltration is also another important night activity. After reinforcements have completed their crossings, attention can be focused on the potential for Russian counterattacks and infiltration. Infiltration requires some planning and can only be done by infantry adjacent to the area which is to be infiltrated. That area can contain only disrupted German units. During the first week, Russian forces are so thin that our infiltration is usually limited to one or two units which are trying to give additional support to a Russian-controlled position being contested by the Germans. The best areas to infiltrate are those which have Rubble, as well as a high terrain effect modifier. Failure of the infiltration die roll forces the unit to attack the spent German force—and often the result is frequently a four-day disruption for the infiltrating Russian unit. A successful infiltration, on the other hand, undergoes only a Duration-1 disruption. This means that, come sunrise, the unit will be fresh (if not disrupted further in the night by German activity). Once a Russian-controlled area is contested by the enemy, infiltration can be the best method of maintaining a Russian presence in the area."

"General Chuykov, I'd like to point out a very important point with respect to infiltration. The key factor which allows Russians to infiltrate is the absence of a fresh German unit in the area. A German commander must be constantly aware of this during daylight impulses, and should try to make sure that a fresh unit is left in each area where the Russians may have an opportunity to infiltrate during the coming night. Obviously, when moving into a Russian-controlled area which contains numerous combat units, the attack will bring some level of disruption. But once that wears off, any subsequent attacks against the enemy in that area (or any other area from there) should leave at least one German unit in good order. This totally eliminates any chance of infiltration, and also serves to fortify the German presence in the area. Any Russian counteroffensive there will have to generate casualty points against two groups before regaining control."

BLASTING ALONG

Paulus paused, "Well, General, we have spent a lot of time talking about options on where, and when, to move . . . but we have yet to discuss the act itself. My units all have movement factors ranging from '5' to '8'. This leads to only a few combinations of movement possible for my Germans when moving into an enemy area during the day. Moving into one containing a fresh Russian unit means that a full four movement factors will be spent; this

forces the German infantry to begin its impulse adjacent to such an enemy area if they wish to enter it. (If not adjacent, it would cost 6MF to move adjacent and then enter.) But if moving into an area containing only disrupted Russian units, this problem is alleviated.

"The Germans certainly have the advantage over the Russians when moving into an enemy-occupied area during the daylight. If the original attack against fresh units results in an overrun, the German infantry can still make a second attack, against any spent Russian units that may be in the area. Russian infantry, on the other hand, are unable to do so because they have a movement allowance of only '4' during daylight impulses."

[The pilot, in his pessimistic manner, reminds General Paulus that this point is moot, since the Russians aren't going to get many overruns anyway this first week.]

General Paulus, ignoring the comment, continues, "Moving into an area containing only disrupted units costs three. Therefore, it is possible to move a stack of German infantry into a friendly area, and then into an enemy-occupied area adjacent all in the same impulse. Ideally, the area being crossed will contain fresh friendly units. These units can then be used to launch a follow-up attack in a future impulse. The German player should try to use such leap-frog tactics whenever possible. This type of maneuver usually needs to be supported by mechanized units, which have higher movement allowances and are not restricted by the infantry's limitations. However, an all-infantry leap-frog attack can be made when attacking an area containing only spent Russian units.

"To help clarify what is meant by my leap-frog tactic, let's use an opening-day example. Look here Chuykov. Assume that the historical set-up is being used and the opening bombardment has achieved the disruption of the two units in Kuporosnoye (#30). The units of the 29th Motorized which begin in Beketovka (Zone A) can now move through Hill 120.0 (#1) to Kuporosnoye. If these succeed in taking control of it, then the units which began on Hill 120.0 will be free to attack some other area—such as Minina (#29). If the units from Beketovka fail completely to eliminate the enemy in Kuporosnoye, then the 29th's elements on Hill 120.0 can roll in to finish the job.

"The double-movement capabilities of mechanized and motorized German units should not be forgotten. This mobility will allow German units to strategically re-position themselves from one end of the map to the other efficiently. This is generally done to exploit sudden weaknesses in the Russian line of defense. The most common use I have made of this movement bonus is to bring units from the southern or central regions to the northern zones and areas. Ideally, such movement should be made just before dawn. This will minimize the Russian's opportunity to respond. Obviously, since dawn will come by calculable chance, the correct time to move is open to speculation. Move too soon and the enemy will be able to respond. Wait too long, and you'll have to sit out another day. The Russian player also has a wide variety of mechanized units which can claim the double-movement also. Their usual application of this is . . ."

"Plug those holes and provide support. Of course, General Paulus; why state the obvious?"

"Hmmm . . . Chuykov, remember I mentioned the use of a ranged attack as one of the options for the 71st Infantry Division stacked on Hill 144.9 (#7) on the 13th. There are many other occasions where ranged attacks can be successfully used. Ranged attacks lower the normal disruption penalties encountered by one for the attacker. This means that a successful ranged attack will only result in Duration-1 disruption. It costs one movement factor to make a ranged attack against a spent enemy unit,

and two to attack a fresh enemy unit. This means that a stack of units can conceivably attack numerous enemy occupied areas without ever changing their own location. This type of attack can be very beneficial for the Germans. And, anytime that a German commander halts the movement of a stack with movement factors remaining, the extra MP can bors remaining, the extra MP can be used to undertake a ranged attack. I do urge some caution since, unless the offensive value is greater than the defensive value by four or five, that attack has a fair chance of outright failure. But, if sufficient advantage exists, then these attacks can generate tremendous Russian casualties when used in the open outside the city. There may even be opportunities to use ranged attacks within the city limits. Many times the German player will be forced to make a ranged attack in the VP areas because of the ten-unit stacking limit.

"General Chuykov, you've become awfully quiet. Do you have anything more to add?"

"Yes, I think it's time for you to stop pontificating and for us to get on with this game. You do realize that we both have to be up bright and early tomorrow."

"You're right. Let's get down to business."

WRAPPING UP

Generals Paulus and Chuykov continued their game as the plane made it slow way across the plains of the Ukraine. The pilot, as he watched the monotonous landscape roll by below, reflected on the possible outcome of their game (really, he had little else to occupy his time). The generals were

playing a one-week game, using the basic set-up, and would use the tie-breaker conditions if necessary. So he had to put the odds that Paulus would win at a good 60 to 65 percent; the final VP total for the Germans would probably be seven or eight. (The highest he had ever seen in such a single-week game between experienced players was 12VP.) Russian casualties for the first week will traditionally be from 35 to 50 units.

The historical set-up dramatically alters the play balance, and German odds of success here are only 50% percent. (This still assumes a one-week game using the tie-breaker condition contrary to its legality in the rules.) The primary reason for this is that none of the powerful stacks exist in the historical set-up. There are still some good German offensive stacks, but nothing to compare with the 71st Infantry Division's 17 points. On the other hand, the Russians are also hurt when using the historical set-up because they are more spread out. For instance, Kuporosnoye (#30) will be defended by only two units, and the Kuibyshev Sawmill (#31) will have only three units at the beginning.

TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD is a game which offers an intensely competitive simulation, high playability, multiple ways to achieve—or prevent—victory, and all of this presented with some of the most attractive components to date. As the sun was setting over the city, as the pilot turned the nose of the plane towards where the sunset of the Third Reich would begin, he smiled briefly at the notes of anguish and glee from behind him. As soon as he unloaded these clowns, he'd be able to settle in for a playing of his own. ☆

CONTEST 150

Incredibly, it is the final Russian impulse (11th night) of September 19th in a game of **TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD**. The fighting has been confined largely to the south, where the Germans have secured five Victory Points as the initial week ends. Consequently, the Russians have stripped their northern front to shore up the south. Although successful in keeping the enemy off Mamayev Kurgan, their denuded northern front has tempted the German to risk a night attack in the north on the last day of the week which, by surrendering the Advantage chit, has captured Little Mushroom and Skuchaya Mechetka Gully (for the sixth Victory Point needed to prolong the game). Immediate Russian infiltration and counterattacks have failed to dislodge the German penetration.

Although the Germans presently have no available reserves with which to exploit their toehold, the Russian nonetheless is in desperate straits as dawn is about to break on the opening of the second week. Tomorrow will bring the Germans three new armor units (two 5-4-7 and a 6-5-7) as reinforcements, while the Russians have no scheduled reinforcements or units east of the Volga, nor any replacement armor factors accumulated. The German northern flank in Zones F, G and H is considered secure, and the only forces available to this sector for either side in the coming 24 hours are those listed below (and the alluded-to German reinforcements). What is worse, the Russian knows that his last two remaining chits in the Random Draw cup are less than the German's remaining two chits.

Area	Control	Units
41:	Russian	115X/II [Disrupt-2]; 389th I/544 & III/544, I/545, I/546 & III/546 [all Disrupt-1]
42:	Russian	149X/III
43:	Russian	149X/IV

44:	Russian	149X/I
45:	Russian	149X/II
48:	German	149X/21 [Disrupt-4]; 16th II/79 [Disrupt-2]
49:	Russian	10NKVD I/282 [Disrupt-1]
50:	Russian	
51:	Russian	196/863 [Disrupt-1]
52:	Russian	
53:	Russian	13Gds II/39 [Disrupt-3]
54:	Russian	137 TKX
55:	Russian	13Gds III/42
66:	Russian	13Gds II/42 [Disrupt-1]
67:	Russian	315 I/274 & II/274, II/397, 2 (-) [all Disrupt-1]
68:	Russian	
69:	Russian	
70:	Russian	
71:	Russian	124X/I
72:	German	115X/III [Disrupt-4]; 16th I/64 [Disrupt-2]
73:	Russian	124X/III, 10NKVD II/282 [Disrupt-1]
74:	Russian	124X/II

Units are as shown above: Disruption is indicated in brackets; nationalities are separated by semi-colons (Russian always listed first); if no units listed, area is vacant. Russian FAG is under Refit. Your task, as the Russian commander, is to take your final impulse of the week which will give you the best chance of relieving Rynok from isolation while inflicting casualties on the exploiting German armor.

The answer to this contest must be entered on the official entry form (or a facsimile) found on the insert of this issue. Ten winning entries will receive a merchandise credit from The Avalon Hill Game Company. To be valid, an entry must include a numerical listing for this issue as a whole and a listing of the three best articles in the judgment of the contestant. The solution to Contest 150 will appear in Vol. 26, No. 3 and the list of winners in Vol. 26, No. 4.

A NEW VIEW OF STALINGRAD

Designer's Notes for TURNING POINT

By Don Greenwood

Why Stalingrad? It is a question Hitler's generals must have angrily pondered many times in and after 1942. Despite one dazzling success after another, the German *blitzkrieg* had met its match in the limitless expanse of Russia. What the Red Army couldn't accomplish, the freezing cold of the Russian winter and the German logistical difficulties had. Their ranks thinned, the Wehrmacht nonetheless once again proved themselves the masters of the steppes with one resounding victory after another during the spring and summer offensives of '42. It made little difference. The combination of their mounting losses and the ever widening front and lengthening supply lines sapped the German strength. They no longer could attack everywhere. Faced by strong defences in the north and center before Leningrad and Moscow, Hitler turned south. If he could not attack everywhere, he would at least have the Caucasus oil fields to fuel his war machine. But that was not enough. He wanted more. Stalingrad—Stalin's city—beckoned from the Volga. The city's military value was significant but not all encompassing. Taking it would break a transport link in the flow of American lend-lease supplies and force more Russian industry behind the Urals, but contrary to Hitler's belief it would not bring Russia to her knees. The Russian bear was not yet in its death throes. It had been hurt, yes, but it had remarkable recuperative powers and like any wounded animal was still very dangerous. The bear fell back, luring the tiring and overconfident hunter deeper into Soviet Russia.

Emboldened, Hitler grasped for both prizes. He regularly asked miracles of his generals, and heretofore they had frequently delivered. The Caucasus drive was now weakened to strengthen Sixth Army's attempt on Stalingrad. Despite the inefficiencies of such shuffling, another in the seemingly endless series of victories ensued. The Russian armies before Stalingrad were battered and beaten. German forces were poised at the gateway to the Urals. Their heavy guns and airstrikes brought the city under siege and threatened river traffic. Surely one more push would topple this symbol of the Communist leadership completely. The city took on a political importance to Hitler that far exceeded its military value.

Stalin saw things differently. He was justly concerned about the deteriorating situation before Stalingrad, but unlike Hitler who still feared an invasion of France by the western Allies, he had strong reserves on the way as the Russians stripped their Far East defences facing Japan. Moreover, he saw a developing opportunity to deal the Germans a crushing blow not unlike the one he had dealt his opponents a generation earlier during the Russian Civil War not far from this very place. The flanks of the German front were now held by ill-equipped Rumanian and Italian Armies. If the Germans could be forced to expend their strength taking the city while the Russian reserves massed for a sudden pincers attack against the satellite armies, the German Sixth Army could be trapped in Stalingrad.

Hitler was only too happy to oblige. On September 13th, Paulus began the battle for the city. It has been argued with the advantage of hindsight that it was a battle the Germans couldn't win. Yet, they came exceedingly close to doing just that. The battle hung in the balance with the Russians teetering on their last ounce of strength on several occasions—only to be saved each time by the arrival of fresh troops rushed across the Volga under fire. For the Russians, beaten consistently by the precision of the German

application of "Combined Arms" on the open steppes, were now in their own element. Red Army soldiers who had melted away before panzers and stukas in the open field now took heart in the rubble of Stalingrad.

Not coincidentally with this sudden stiffening of Russian resolve came a change of command. General Lopatin, the previous commander of 62nd Army, had decided that Stalingrad could not be held and began to withdraw units behind the Volga without higher authority. Dismissal was swift. His replacement was 42-year old Lt. General Vasily Ivanovich Chuykov who immediately countermanded the withdrawal orders and set about fortifying the city with the remnants of 62nd Army. Simply put, Chuykov's plan for defeating the Germans was to stay as close to them as possible so as to hinder their use of artillery and aircraft to soften Russian defenses. The city's rubble streets became the obvious battlefield of choice. German armor, already at a disadvantage in an urban environment, would be further hindered in their movements by the rubble of the battered city. The German's greater mobility was neutralized somewhat by the same rubble which masked the movements of Russian units from the eyes of the ever present stukas. The precision movements of the German forces would be hindered by the communication problems posed by a battered city. The battle would become one of individual men and squads defending a room or taking a building, and in such close quarters the Russian soldier was rarely outclassed. The German infantry now found themselves engaged in bitter street fighting for which they were ill-prepared. Chuykov's mode of operation was simple. Maintain close contact with the enemy and launch limited counterattacks whenever and wherever practical to keep him close. Major forces would never be risked—only small groups. The object was not necessarily to take ground, but to cause casualties and remain at close quarters, much like a boxer with inferior reach who stays inside his opponent's range and flails at his adversary with body punches to wear him down while preventing him from extending his arms to land a knockout punch.

The battle for the city opened on 13 September with a two-pronged attack against the city from Gorodishche and Peschanka. The Germans quickly sliced through the outer defences. The next day found them threatening the Central Railway Station in the heart of the city. Only the arrival of the 13th Guards Division that evening prevented its loss. Rebuffed, the Germans shifted their attack on the 15th to a small hill (called Mamayev Kurgan) which dominated the river near the city. Again the hill was saved only by the timely arrival of the 42nd Regiment—the last of the 13th Guards Division to cross the river. The fighting switched back to the Central Railway Station which fell to the Germans on the 17th, only to be retaken and subsequently permanently lost on the 18th. It had changed hands 15 times in the preceding five days. To the south, Kuporosnoye fell, completing the isolation of 62nd Army which was now surrounded on three sides with the Volga to its back. A counterattack on the 19th by the Russian 64th Army towards Gumrak to regain contact with the Stalingraders failed. Chuykov's 62nd Army was alone and in desperate straits—but it had not given up. The most celebrated example of many such dogged defences was that posed by less than fifty Guardsmen and Marines stationed in a grain elevator on the southern out-

skirts who opposed a German battalion for five days—the position falling only when the few surviving defenders had run out of water and ammunition. On the 22nd, the Germans nonetheless took the Central Landing. It marked the end of the first phase of the battle for Stalingrad.

Such fighting took a heavy toll on the attackers, especially among the depleted ranks of the infantry who bore the burden of the assault. Paulus lacked the strength to attack everywhere. He had to pick his spots, and even with periods of rest and refit his units were being worn to the point at which they would soon lose their ability to attack altogether. Replacements were inadequate. Other service arms were stripped for personnel and given hurried infantry training. It was now obvious that Stalingrad would not fall quickly. Any chance for a precipitate collapse of the city had been lost in the ferocious defense of the Railway Station and Mamayev Kurgan.

The horrendous attrition inflicted on the attackers now called for an end to the battle. The Russian lines of communication had been severed. The job remaining was one for the artillery and the Luftwaffe. But Hitler wanted the city. The drive on the Caucasus oil fields had been stopped, and Hitler demanded a prize—a symbol of progress for the year's campaign. Here, at Stalingrad, was one within his reach. More divisions were fed into the city to renew the attack; units stripped from their buttressing role on the German flanks behind the Rumanian Armies. The spearhead grew increasingly heavy, the shaft ever weaker.

Meanwhile, Russian reserves were congregating near those exposed flanks. Reinforcements and ammunition were fed into the city only in sufficient quantity to keep 62nd Army in place—the bulk of both were husbanded for the planned counteroffensive. German leaders grew increasingly alarmed at the dangers posed by their weak flanks, but Hitler was adamant. "Take Stalingrad and you can winter there in relative comfort while withdrawing the necessary forces to back up the satellite armies." Thus reminded of the ravages of the approaching Russian winter, the Germans renewed their attack in earnest on October 14th with attacks led by elite combat engineers trained in street fighting techniques. It marked the beginning of a month of the most intense fighting of the war, with no quarter given by either side.

At this point, the fate of the German Sixth Army was largely decided. The Germans could "win" the battle of Stalingrad only if they did so quickly. They needed to clear the city with sufficient time to redeploy back into supporting positions on their flank. The longer the battle raged in the city, the weaker the "shaft" became and the more imposing the Russian battle-axe poised to shatter that shaft. When the blow finally fell on November 19th, it did so with colossal force. The IVth Rumanian Army broke and ran, as did the IIIrd the following day when the second prong of *Operation Uranus* was launched from the north. The collapse was complete.

It is not at all certain that this rout was inevitable. Only one German force of any appreciable size lay in the path of this rampage—the withdrawn 29th Motorized Division to the south of the city. They proved once again the superiority of German arms, given anything near equal odds, in open country when they momentarily halted the southern breakthrough by severely punishing the Soviet 57th

Army. But as the immensity of the calamity befalling them became realized, the Germans withdrew the 29th to form a defensive line facing west. The pocket had been formed. Some 330,000 German and allied troops were trapped inside. Only 91,000 would live to surrender in February. Of these, only 5,000 saw Germany again—the last being released in 1955. But what if the Germans had seen the folly of continuing to feed the meat grinder of Stalingrad? What if more German divisions had been in position to stop *Operation Uranus* instead of hurling themselves against prepared defenses in the Red Barricades? Could the catastrophe have been avoided?

No one will ever know. However, it is clear that the quicker the Germans finished their assaults in the city and moved to support their flanks, the less likely such a rout became. Stalingrad was not a battle that could not be won, but it was certainly a battle that should not have been waged to the degree that the Germans pursued it. Any hope for a German victory grew slimmer with each passing day.

So why *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD*? Several factors led to my decision to design this game. Avalon Hill's original *STALINGRAD* was one of my first wargames and a childhood favorite. So I had mixed emotions when the game was discontinued to make way for state-of-the-art replacements. I understood that Avalon Hill didn't need three strategic Eastern Front games and "Stalingrad" had always been a misnomer as a title anyway. After all, it was just a single hex on a map depicting all of European Russia and but one of three cities required for German victory. Here was my chance to salvage that great title—truly the most recognized turning point of World War II—with a design more in keeping with the great struggle that was waged there. However, I was determined that, in this case, state-of-the-art would not mean more complicated and I tried for a design as inherently simple as the original.

The battle itself required no excuses for the lack of "fog of war" mechanisms. Both sides had a pretty good idea throughout the battle of what they were up against. The Germans used prisoners, aerial reconnaissance and possession of the higher West Bank to give them a constant operational view of what to expect from the Russians. Unfortunately, this foresight did not apply itself to the grand strategic view, where Hitler continued to view the situation with blinders. Chuykov, for his part, was kept well informed after the opening days of confusion by a system of spies among the civilian population and by active patrols whose regular movements across the lines through the city's sewer system were never completely stopped.

I had always been an admirer of Courtney Allen's "impulse system" games, which use a high degree of player interaction in the form of action-reaction mini-turns to replace the need for written moves, thereby achieving a painless form of semi-simultaneous movement. Heretofore those games had always been associated with street fighting subjects, but in truth the fighting in those battles paled in comparison to the scale and ferocity of Stalingrad. As soon as I had seen *STORM OVER ARNHEM*, we talked about Stalingrad as a more exciting subject for a followup to his game system. *SOA* was great but limited by the situation. The British could only defend an ever-shrinking perimeter. What was needed was a battle where reinforcements allowed counterattacks of a more sweeping nature. However, there were major problems to overcome in the change of scale. The system was primarily a tactical one based on lines of sight. How would that correspond to the immensity of Stalingrad? Instead, Courtney opted for *CASSINO* and a smaller increase in unit size from squad to platoon level. "Poor box office" I moaned, instantly forgetting my own reservations about the sales prospects after playing it and falling in love with the modified system all over again.

Making the change from squad- to platoon-level wasn't that big a leap of faith, but jumping from platoon- to battalion-level gives one pause. Major changes would have to be made in the game system. The more I studied the battle, the more convinced I became that the design—while still owing allegiance to the *SOA/CASSINO* systems for its inspiration—would require an entirely different angle.

The larger scale would require that LOS play only a limited role. Ranged attacks into adjacent areas would be rare. The vast majority of combat would be conducted at close quarters—by actually entering an enemy-occupied area. More important, to mirror the German's early successes, the system must allow the possibility of achieving major breakthroughs and thereby isolating pockets of troops rather than simply shaving off the outer rim of defending areas each turn. Consequently, the Overrun system was devised to allow a unit to attack, succeed, and move/attack again until it is stopped by the defence or exhausts its MF for that impulse.

But what should the MF be? At this scale, with one-week turns, any unit depicted could realistically move from one end of the board to another. The "time bytes" had to be smaller, yet if we used *SOA*'s semi-daily turns in which all units could move, a game on a nine-week battle would last an eternity. So I decided upon daily turns with Sudden Death victory conditions every week. This allowed units to move the entire length of the board within a week's time but limited their capabilities during any one day to more realistic levels. More importantly, it led to the introduction of the day/night dichotomy which is the very essence of the new game system.

THUNDER AT CASSINO had night impulses too, but they only occurred for the balance of a turn after a player had spent the Advantage marker to declare the nightfall. As such, night impulses represented a special night offensive planned to take the enemy by surprise and not a regularly scheduled and occurring event as it is in both *SOA* and my game. I had no problem conceptualizing the other night hours not being depicted as such being used as periods of rest and inactivity, but I've talked to others for whom this posed a credibility problem. Consequently, I wanted night to be a regularly occurring event to rid the game of this conceptualization problem. There were other reasons as well. In my study of the battle I was constantly struck by the overwhelming effect of German air superiority. It totally dominated the manner in which the battle was fought. Stukas pounced on anything that moved. Thus, the Russian MF is less than their German counterparts during daylight hours to reflect the greater care they had to take in masking their movement, yet is fully restored at night. German attacks were usually preceded by tactical air strikes against enemy strongpoints while Russian daylight attacks of any size drew German air support. Consequently German attacks should be stronger in daylight hours, and Russian attacks during that time frame should be weaker. What the Germans took by day, the Russians infiltrated back into at night in countless local isolated counterattacks. The battlefield changed character instantly with each sunrise and sunset. It was said that the Germans held sway in the streets during the day but the Russians reigned supreme in the rubble, sewers and alleys at night. Equally important was the fact that the Russians could only bring reinforcements across the Volga at night. The timely arrival or non-arrival of those forces lends the situation much of its excitement. Obviously the game had to be broken down into alternating periods of day and night impulses.

This in turn led to the idea of limiting the number of impulses available to each player in each day. All accounts of the battle refer to Paulus's inability to attack in more than one area at a time. The

Germans simply lacked the strength to attack all along the front and had to pick their spots for what they hoped would be surgical strikes thrusting through to the river. Obviously, the *SOA* system wherein all units are encouraged to move or fire each "turn" didn't lend itself to this situation. By breaking that "turn" into seven daily turns (each limited in its number of impulses), the game better simulated the battle and was also shortened greatly. Suddenly, the emphasis of the system changed from one of outwitting your opponent so as to preserve resources with which to attack against limited response to one of needing to make every impulse count. Passes became rare. Each impulse now represents a precious opportunity measured against both the opponent's opportunity to respond and a ticking clock. The German can't fool around with petty impulses. He must force the action. The action-reaction ideology of the original system is not only preserved but enhanced by the change. I do miss the threat of the *SOA/CASSINO* double-pass ending a turn prematurely, but the alternating day/night periods is an equally interesting gaming mechanism and makes for a better simulation.

The next question to resolve was the number of impulses that would comprise each day. On September 13th, there were 12.5 hours of daylight. The days grew shorter by 20 minutes per week, until at game end the Germans are dealing with less than ten hours of light per day. The balance of day/night impulses should be inversely proportional to each other and subject to progressive change as the game goes on. I'm sure there are those who would prefer a set number of impulses for the passage of each 24-hour period, but I prefer the uncertainty of basing the number on current dice rolls—especially the German combat dice rolls. I don't view all impulses as being equal time increments. A lot can happen in a single impulse—perhaps a dozen or more attacks in an extreme example could capture five or six areas. On the other hand, a whole division could be stopped cold and lost for the week. The Germans controlled the tempo of the battle. When their attacks succeeded and breakthroughs were created, a whole series of hectic events were unleashed. When their attacks were stopped dead in their tracks, the entire German timetable was thrown offstride and the action stagnated. Thus, I viewed each impulse as being elastic—encompassing up to an entire day if the German rolled "snake eyes" or a mere hour when he rolled "boxcars". In other words, the success of that action determines its length. I've always thought that the more rigid a set of rules is, the easier it is to poke holes in its shroud of realism. Consequently, I've returned to the protective arms of abstraction whenever possible. I'm very comfortable with the abstract elasticity of an impulse's time frame. I can well imagine the plight of Paulus's staff when his second impulse comes up a "2". "Colonel Krumpen reports no progress at Spartakovka and heavy casualties; we'll have to delay the assault on Orlovka Gully until tomorrow." Moreover, I revel in the plight of the Russian who literally pleads for each daylight impulse to be the last so he can rush his reinforcements across the Volga and into line in time. Replacing this uncertainty with a predetermined number of impulses would be both less exciting and less reflective of the hotly contested nature of the battle where victory truly did sit astride the fence on numerous occasions. It also makes the game subject to sudden swings of fortune which I've always found enjoyable. On countless occasions during playtest, I swore my position was hopeless, only to be hearing the same protestations from my opponent several moves later.

There will be those who consider this a flaw—dismissing it as too luck dependent—the most common criticism I've heard of the *SOA/CASSINO* games. To each their own. For myself, I dismiss this criticism as the protestations of those too lazy

to master a new game system requiring a different type of skill. I've never considered myself a particularly lucky individual where dice are concerned. Indeed, I'm the butt of several standing jokes among local players when dice rolls are discussed. Yet, I've never lost at *CASSINO* and seldom at *ARNHEM*. That doesn't strike me as a game system that's too luck dependent. Of course, I have been known to insist on using chits rather than dice and I recommend that alternative to those who, like me, regularly curse "the bones". In point of fact, I would make a case for this system being less luck dominant than most wargames when employing the chit system instead of dice.

By now you've probably pegged me correctly as belonging to the playability camp as opposed to that school of wargamers for whom simulation is the thing. My approach to design has always been that wargames should *allow* you to recreate historical results, not *force* them upon you. I don't believe in saddling the armchair general with the same mistakes made by his historical counterpart. That type of thinking pervaded my decision not to include the German Withdrawals in the Basic Game. Who is to say whether such withdrawals would have been made were the situation different from the one that faced the commanders at the time? The player can choose to ignore his scheduled withdrawals if he's willing to pay the price of likely incursions by the 64th Army to the south—the most likely result of failing to bolster that flank with the withdrawn units. Forcing such withdrawals upon a player regardless of the circumstances at the time is more unrealistic to my mind than ignoring them altogether. I subscribe to the theory that you give the respective sides all the troops they had at the time, reflect their supply, tactics and terrain advantages and then let them make their own history. If it mirrors real life, fine. If not, so much the better because it shows the fascinating might-have-beens. Keep in mind that although you are getting reinforcements at the time they entered the battle historically, had the circumstances been different (as they doubtless will be when you start tinkering with the thousands of independent variables that make up a battle), they may well have arrived earlier or later. Most games using the timed arrival of reinforcements are artificial in this respect in that they impose historical events throughout a time table in a situation wherein the circumstances will have changed countless times during the natural progression of the game. Thus, we have to decide whether we are interested in replaying a historical event and watching it unfold like a movie with a predetermined ending, or recreating the circumstances of a historical event and seeing how our decisions and a different hand from fate could have affected the outcome. You can always count on finding me in the latter camp.

Playability also was the key factor in selecting the unit methodology used for the pieces. Rather than using standard NATO military symbology throughout, I opted for the usage of more "user friendly" terms like "ENG/PNR/TD" over the official designations because they are more readily recognizable. Unlike some wargames, the type of unit here is very important in determining what it can do. I wanted the units to be recognizable at a glance without having to memorize military symbols similar in appearance. Any silhouette is armor for game purposes; any "X" is infantry; and any special unit is clearly delineated by the symbol.

One of the major changes from the *SOA* system is that attacks are now made against the strongest unit in an area rather than the weakest. This was brought about again by the change of scale. Whereas the previous games had very precise limits as to what constituted a unit, here they represent anything from the remnants of an entire division to single platoons of tanks with several companies of support troops. Consequently, the Defence Factor of Combat units

varies from "1" to "9" (as opposed to a range of only "3" to "5" in *CASSINO*). If attacks were still allowed to be made against weaker units with that range of strength, reinforcing a strong unit with a weak one would actually weaken it. This change has several positive side effects. Obviously the addition of a strong unit in an area now greatly increases its defence, whereas in *CASSINO* it helps only as a matter of the additional casualty points that area can absorb—at least until all of the weaker units in the area have been removed. On the other side of the coin, the stronger units are now the first to take casualties as any attack must extract its first inflicted casualty point from the strongest defender first. No longer are the weakest units eliminated while the strong remain impervious to damage. The strong must pay a price for lending their strength to any defence. The question of which units to keep in reserve is now a much more anguishing one. The best counterattacking units are also usually the best defenders, but once committed to the line they are subject to losses that will ruin their counterattack potential.

One common theme in all these impulse games whose validity I've occasionally seen questioned is the concept of the "Groups" themselves. Why should a Group occupying the same Area with another Group be spared the effects of an Artillery barrage simply because they are a separate Group? The answer is that they don't occupy the same "area". In general, Areas encompass far more territory than traditional hex games on the same subject. Within such an expanse it is entirely possible and likely that positions would be set up in depth so that troops could be under fire in one section of the Area while those in another receive no attack at all. This strikes me as both reasonable and *more* realistic than if they were treated as one combined target. I've never read an account of any barrage—no matter how intense—completely eliminating the defending force. By allowing the defence the possibility of two separate Groups in an Area, such cataclysms can occur only by making two successful attacks. The Overrun concept allows breakthroughs to occur, but the two-tiered defences within an Area make it more difficult.

Others have questioned why it is the attacker who selects which Group is his target. Wouldn't the defender have his choice over which Group constituted his first line of defence? Again, my answer lies in the size of the Areas depicted. It is foolish to envision a layer of Fresh units across a front backed by a layer of disrupted units resting behind them. Indeed, it is the very act of moving into the line that turns a Fresh unit into a vulnerable Spent one. Each Group in an Area is assigned a certain frontage within that Area. By choosing which Group he will attack, the attacker is merely specifying a point along the Front of that Area at which he is making his attack.

Yet another seeming quirk of the system which may bear some explanation is the ability of units to move through a seemingly intact defence when a perimeter is not defended in depth. Consider what happens when a German armor unit manages to Overrun a Group in an Area and then ends its impulse with another Russian Group still intact in the same Area. On the surface, the perimeter seems to still be intact. However, if the Russian has not backed up that Area with another unit in a second line of defence, at Dawn when that German armor unit returns to Fresh status it may leave that Area and continue forward with a seemingly solid line of enemy units behind it. It will probably be out of supply, but if it is willing to take that risk a temporary breakthrough has occurred with the lines closing automatically behind it. This is not a rules anomaly, but an intended feature of the design. The Overrun pierced the Russian perimeter at the point of attack in that Area. When the Russian failed to

respond by moving another unit into the adjoining Area to block the German advance, he allowed the German to exploit his initial success the following morning. Although Russians still occupied the Area, they were not considered strung out in a continuous line in front of the German armor unit in that Area and therefore the perimeter had been pierced. The same logic is used when an attack is disrupted without an Overrun while attacking an already spent defence. When the attacking forces recover their Fresh status they will be able to push on past the still seemingly intact defence unless the defender has had the foresight to reinforce the point of attack with a unit in the next Area to prevent a direct move from an occupied Area to an occupied Area. The Impulse system allows the defender an opportunity to prevent such breakthroughs with the proper counter move, but if he fails to make it the system assumes that the in-Area fighting has continued in the interim and allowed the attacker to break the enemy line.

One of the biggest improvements of *CASSINO* over *SOA* was the use of MG units to give a semi-ZOC effect during daylight turns. The need for MG to slow enemy movement and for infantry to protect them in close combat gave the game a much better "combined arms" feel than that of its predecessor. This restraint of enemy movement was an effect that I wanted to preserve, but the different scale meant that it couldn't be accomplished with MG units. At battalion level, most of the units inherently contained that type of combined arms effect already. So I theorized that the greater combat readiness of fresh units in contrast to disrupted units could be used to achieve the same effect. In most games the only difference between a fresh unit and a disrupted one is that the latter has taken casualties. However, in all of the impulse system games disrupted units regularly return to fresh status unless they're eliminated first. In this game, the extent of their disruption is measured only in terms of the duration of time they remain disrupted. While casualties can certainly be viewed as the most likely part of the phenomenon that turns a fresh unit into a disrupted one, there are other factors to be considered too. Any unit which changes position is "disrupted" briefly—not because it has taken casualties but because it is vulnerable while in transit. Even upon arriving at its destination, it has not had time to entrench, camouflage, sight its guns, set its patrols, outposts, headquarters and observers, etc. So until sufficient time passes, the unit is just as vulnerable as the unit depleted by combat losses. The latter is viewed as a unit whose strength has been lessened to the point that it can no longer attack until it receives replacements. Moreover, its defence is far less aggressive also—consisting solely of defending in place as opposed to launching local counterattacks, patrolling adjacent areas (thus the ZOC effect of fresh units during daylight impulses) or infiltrating behind German lines at night.

This concept, in turn, led to yet another change from the *CASSINO* system. In the latter, casualty points were based on the type of unit, ranging from one to four apiece regardless of their status. Here, all fresh units are worth three casualty points and all disrupted units are worth two. Furthermore, casualty points may be paid by converting fresh units to disrupted status as well as by elimination and retreat. The rationale should be easy to follow. Disrupted units are worth less casualty points because they are already in a weakened condition by virtue of previous casualties inflicted or a more exposed position due to recent movement/attack.

Some may view the treatment of artillery as unrealistic. Admittedly the "shoot-every-fourth-day" rule for artillery is an abstraction, but where do you draw the line between abstraction and reality? The imposition of rules allowing the Germans to fire only on the days they actually

launched major bombardments would be the super realistic answer. However, it doesn't take much imagination to realize that such a restriction would create a very strange game with strategy dictated by history rather than the participating players. The "shoot-every-fourth-day" compromise seemed a reasonable method of rationing the German ammunition that also nicely fit into the existing game system and did away with the need for record-keeping.

Less obvious perhaps is my rationale for the Russian artillery, which some may view as too restrictive. For reasons already touched upon in the rules, the Russians had to exercise a rigid fire discipline that made the types of prolonged bombardments employed by the Germans impractical, if not impossible. Consequently, Russian artillery during the battle could be characterized as harassing rather than devastating—adding constantly to the mounting toll of German attrition, but seldom delivering a crippling blow. In truth, only once during the battle were the Russians able to mount a barrage into a German staging area that wiped out a battalion-sized force. Rather, units shrank in size as the Russians persisted in constant piecemeal attacks with small groups and harassing artillery fire—wiping out a squad here, decimating a platoon there. This sort of attrition is not appreciated in a game where wholesale elimination of German units is rare. Instead, attrition is represented by periods of disruption reflecting the need to pause and refit. Time is the German's real enemy. Each day lost without bringing the battle to a conclusion brings the Russians ever closer to their counter-offensive. Time is the real attrition agent here—not the removal of German units. Consequently, the Russian artillery system is intended to encourage those piecemeal attacks that Chuykov so favored and which are so difficult to simulate at this scale. The rules do not reflect the use of Russian artillery as a surgical instrument in close support of ground forces, although they may initially give that impression. Rather, their "harassment" value is added to the Russian attacks as a simple way of reflecting the attrition they inflicted on the defender while encouraging the Russian to mount small, local counterattacks. And late in the game when the Russian Artillery strength increases, the incidence of German units being eliminated outright will increase—further reflecting their weakened state as the battle drags on. This portrayal of Attrition will not be obvious to the player, but is definitely factored into the design. In fact, as the battle wound down in November, the 62nd Army's artillery resources actually declined as guns were siphoned off for the coming offensive. The increase in Russian Artillery strength in the game is intended to reflect the weakened state of the German units (as does Case F of the DV formula).

One of the more recent criticisms of the game, which has merit at least on the surface, is that it fails to portray the weakness of armor in an urban environment. John Berry (see his article following) and others have pointed out that it is the armor which carries the day in the game, while in reality it was the infantry that bore the brunt of the street-fighting. I'll concede that individual cases of unrealistic armor effectiveness can occur when the Russian defenses break down, but overall I feel the game amply hampers armor and keeps it in its place without the need for complicated special rules. Once the German encounters stiff enemy resistance along the riverbank in the heavily fortified/rubbed city areas, armor alone cannot carry the day. Here sledgehammer blows of enormous strength are needed to win areas. In the battle, the German infantry could not advance further until massive armor support was brought to bear on the Tractor Works. Likewise in the game, the German player who attacks without armor leading whole regiments of infantry has little

chance. And the German who attacks with armor alone has either broken through weak Russian defenses or is doomed to failure. Contrary to the good Major's conclusions, I feel the game portrays well the need for a combined arms approach, without handcuffing the players with specific rules requiring them to use it. Moreover, I feel not enough credit is given the rubble factor in downplaying the value of armor in the city. What critics so often forget is that the game is essentially one of time management. The game is structured in such a way that the Germans often take their casualties in the form of "time" rather than units. The German player is up against an unforgiving timetable; he must accomplish his tasks within a given span or he loses. Thus, his units—which in reality are being attrited dreadfully remain seemingly unaffected on the map while the Russians melt away. But he is paying a price; the Russian defenses get ever stronger, and in so allowing them to do so, the inherent weakening of his own relative force is reflected. Thus, the inability of the German player to ever know with certainty that he will be able to lead his assault into a rubbled city section that day plays incredible havoc with the German timetable. Fail a rubble entrance roll . . . Lastly, a factor that no critic seems to have considered on this subject is the vulnerability of armor to rubble once past it. German armor which advances out of a rubbled area and is forced to retreat takes a chance on outright elimination (where infantry could retreat freely). I feel this understated effect amply penalizes armor for any undue strength it may have for defending among the rubbled city.

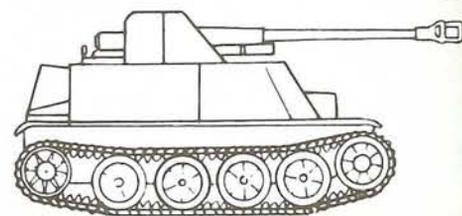
In most games, LOS is a two-way street. If A can see B, B can see A—or, to put it in *THUNDER AT CASSINO* terms, whatever the Monastery could see could also see the Monastery. Here, the ranged hilltops 126.3 and 102 are not subject to reversed ranged fire of the type they can dispense. The reason for this change is again one of scale. The map scale used here is six times that of *THUNDER AT CASSINO*. The latter's Area 66 represents only the Monastery. The surrounding slopes of the massif are broken down into seven adjacent Areas. Here, Area 56 represents the entire Mamayev Kurgan hill, including all of its slopes and the surrounding countryside as well. Many LOS to the hilltop would have no way of knowing what lay on the reverse slope or even the intervening lowlands. Therefore, occupation of these hilltops allows fire into non-adjacent Areas, but the reverse is not true.

To my mind, *THUNDER AT CASSINO* had only one flaw as a game—its length. Barring an early concession, players had to move at a brisk pace to finish a nine-turn game in a day. And if it ended in a tie after nine turns—well, then chalk up the weekend as gone while you played the remaining six. The length of the nine-week Stalingrad campaign was thus viewed as a problem from the outset. It is surprising then that this game does not suffer from this problem. The Basic Game ends in three to five hours—even quicker for players abiding by the reaction rule. The solution, believe it or not, was borrowed from *CASSINO* and expanded upon. The game is played in nine weekly intervals—each of which is divided into seven separate days. At the end of each week, the German player must exceed the Victory Point level for that week to win the game. If he scores less, the Russian wins and the game ends. If he scores exactly the required number of Victory Points, the game is undecided and play continues for another week, after which the process is repeated. This results in the majority of games ending quickly. Although we did have one game continue for five weeks using the Basic Game Victory Conditions, the vast majority were decided within three, which is why the Basic Game ends at that point. Some will see this as a drawback because they are more interested in simulating the battle in

its entirety than in playing a quick game that ends when the German's chances of a historical victory are gone. For them, I prepared an expansion set that contains the remainder of the OB for the last six weeks and a more lenient set of Victory Conditions in which the most likely occurrence at the end of each week is a draw and thus continuation of the game. Thus followed my attempt to have my cake and eat it too. In this way we were able to drop the price of the product for those most interested in the *game*, while also providing the complete OB/battle at a slightly higher price for those more interested in the *simulation* aspects. Hopefully, it is a solution that appeals to both camps.

Before ending this discourse, there is one important difference in the system crying out for explanation: the absence of close combat. "No close combat in a Stalingrad game . . . is he mad?" True, close combat was the very essence of the battle of Stalingrad, but I like to think that it is better represented by the system as a whole than by adding a specific phase of combat resolutions entitled "Close Combat". Sometimes the best rule in a game is the one you leave out. A specific Close Combat Phase posing the elimination of whole units on a daily basis is obviously less viable on the battalion level than at the squad level. The combat system already depicts close combat in the natural course of events. The bulk of combat is non-Ranged attacks by units entering an enemy-occupied area—this *is* close combat. The natural attrition of close combat is reflected both in the casualty points inflicted on the receiving end and in the disruption duration penalties for attacks both successful and otherwise. In addition to all of the above reasons, had I retained a separate Close Combat Phase in the game, the Russian would have lost the incentive to counterattack—preferring to let the Close Combat Phase do his work for him without any real effort or extended risk on his part. If anything, Stalingrad was a battle of constant local counterattacks and the combat system was designed to reflect and encourage just that. The fact that the game became shorter and simpler in the bargain was just icing on the cake.

The only real complaint I've heard about *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD* has come from those getting their first taste of the game. They complain that it's not much fun playing the Russians and watching your forces being slaughtered. The Russian player has to keep in mind that his objective—as it was in the battle—is not to destroy German units but to hold them in place by denying them the territory they sought. If he does that, the impending *Operation Uranus* will trap and eliminate the entire German Army. As such, Chuykov was given only enough force to keep the trap baited and the prey enticed—not enough to mount major counterattacks to retake the city. There is no denying that the Germans start play with a lot of momentum and control the initiative. Losses for the first week average a 6:1 ratio in the German's favor. The challenge for the Russian player is to survive that whirlwind start, shore up his defenses in time to bring the Germans to a halt, and then pick his spots for opportunities to reverse the pendulum. His growing artillery strength makes his counterattack potential ever greater as the game progresses, but he'll never get that far without skillful counterattacks at the right points in the early going. It is a challenge I find terribly exciting. I hope you do too. ☆



STALINGRADSKAIA BORBA

Critiquing TURNING POINT

By John H. Berry

John Berry was just one of an extremely proficient group of "blind" playtesters for TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD who contributed greatly to the final development of the game. As you'll come to realize while reading the article that follows, his forte is simulation. While Don's emphasis has always been on playability, he inevitably wants as much realism as he can get without compromising the elegant simplicity of the design. Time and again, Berry's criticisms drove Don back to the keyboard to send out updates to the playtesters. Apparently, he was not totally successful, as Major Berry found plenty to point to (as we knew he would) when asked to write upon the value of the wargame as a simulation. While I do not agree with all of his quibbles, we nevertheless thank him for pulling no punches. The art of simulation design has no rigid rules of right and wrong, but is instead a matter of individual perception. What "works" for me may be purest "hokum" to you, and vice versa (one reason why no one has yet designed a game that appeals to every wargamer). For Don's riposte to Mr. Berry's notes, see his preceding "A New View of Stalingrad" in this issue.

This article will attempt an examination of *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD (TPS)* and its contribution to (or failure in) realistic simulation of the battle. No boardgame can ever simulate the fear, the misery, and the confusion of actual combat. However, proceeding from this point, some boardgames have been more successful than others in simulating events and conditions of the actual battle or campaign being portrayed. The point being, of course, does the game inform as well as entertain? If so, is it correct in what it teaches? Perhaps this article will allow the reader some insight as to how *TPS* fares.

Invariably, *TPS* will be compared to two previous games by other publishers on the fighting along the Volga—*Streets of Stalingrad* and *Battle for Stalingrad*. Neither game is still in print, but most Eastern Front lovers have played at least one, if not both, of them. Fair or not, *TPS* will be measured against these games by experienced simulation enthusiasts. Even with their several flaws, until now they set the standards for simulating the battle. Thus, from time to time, comparisons with both games will creep into my judgements on *TPS*.

FAILURE?

Since *TPS* is based on the *SOA* system, simulation is greatly affected by the map and the use of "areas" for movement and combat. Area-versus-Hexagon maps have been an off-and-on controversy for many years in wargaming. Some early attempts at area movement games fared poorly with most of the wargaming public. Some jumped to the conclusion that the use of area movement was the sole reason for failure of the design. Given time and more reflection, it became clear that other problems in these games may have contributed more to their lack of success than did the use of area movement.

In theory, at least, area movement games come closer to simulating the reality of military operations than do hex-based games. A commander tends to think in terms of moving his unit within its assigned boundaries (an area) to seize an objective or defend (again an area of ground) it. When coupled with a well-designed system, area movement has proven to be very successful in a simulation.

Then the question becomes, "Are the areas apportioned correctly on the map board?" Some discrepancies appear to exist in this game. For example, some areas border on gullies. Yet movement costs for entering the area remains the same whether entering from the direction of the gully or from an open field. While this is somewhat disconcerting, over numerous playings it did not appear to have a major effect upon the outcome of the fighting. Interestingly enough, the approach is not uniform throughout the map. That portion of the *Minina* gully within the built-up area is actually treated as an area for movement purposes. A more accurate appraisal of terrain would have called for other gullies (such as the *Tsaritsa Gorge*) to be portrayed as a separate area as well.

Next, consider the Order of Battle. For the most part, the division level German OB appears to be correct. However, there are a number of German corps and army level units not present. The designer justified their absence by factoring such formations into the German divisional units. Such factoring takes the form of increasing the combat power of units—permanently assigning a corps or army level unit to a division. In terms of simulation, this was probably a poor choice. For example, the 635th Pioneer battalion begins the game assigned to the 24th Panzer Division, and will remain so throughout the game. While it is historically correct to place the 635th Pioneer with the 24th Panzer on 13 September, the unit was *attached*—not assigned. This presents an incorrect picture with regard to the organization of the German 6th Army.

Even worse, such a structure of the German OB fails to teach the gamer the reason for the existence of fire and maneuver assets above division level. Combat and combat support units at corps and army level allow the commander to lend "weight" to certain portions of the battlefield. At present, in *TPS* the German player can only weight the battlefield at divisional level or below. Even the use of generic "support points" would have been better.

The initial Soviet OB is a "no-win" situation. To this day, official Soviet writings on the battle do not fully agree as to both presence and location of the units of the 62nd Army on 13 September. One reason is due to the confusing state of affairs that existed in the 62nd Army—an army not so much falling back on Stalingrad as reeling back. The forced infusion of the male population of the city further served to increase confusion as to actual unit status. Another reason is political. The Soviet government will not openly admit that a unit could disintegrate and leave the field while participating in the defence of the Socialist Motherland. Or, even more strangely, that a penal unit (political "unreliables") could fight as well or better than a Guards unit.

"Official" Soviet sources (in the opening phases of the battle) tend to be written in terms of overall army strength and do not offer figures for individual brigades and regiments. For example, on 13 September, the 62nd Army is credited with 110 tanks; but there is no indication of tank strength of individual units. Even figures for overall tank strength don't tell us if the Soviets were counting in so-called "inoperable" tanks placed in strategic positions. Or how about the falsification of personnel reports in order to gain additional food and vodka rations? Under such limitations, the Soviet OB in *TPS* is about as accurate as it can be.

Possibly the weakest aspect of the game, in terms of simulation, concerns the effects of artillery. The

rigid disruption of German artillery is an overly simplistic way to simulate the ammunition shortage. Four days out of the battle each time a unit fires is much too predictable. The effects of ammunition shortages and German counter-battery fire are handled much better with regards to the Soviet artillery east of the Volga. Neither player knows for sure just when the Soviet artillery will become available, or for how long.

Worse than the rule on artillery disruption is the conduct of bombardments. The density of units (or targets) under attack has no influence on the effectiveness of barrages. Only terrain and the strongest unit in a group are considered in the resolution of the attack. Some will argue that placing a large number of units in an area still risks a greater number of casualties should the attacker come out way ahead on the dice. While this is true, it is a poor approach since it is purely luck-dependent and not related to unit density. Even unit differentiation has no real effect. A tank company can be just as lucrative a target as an infantry battalion.

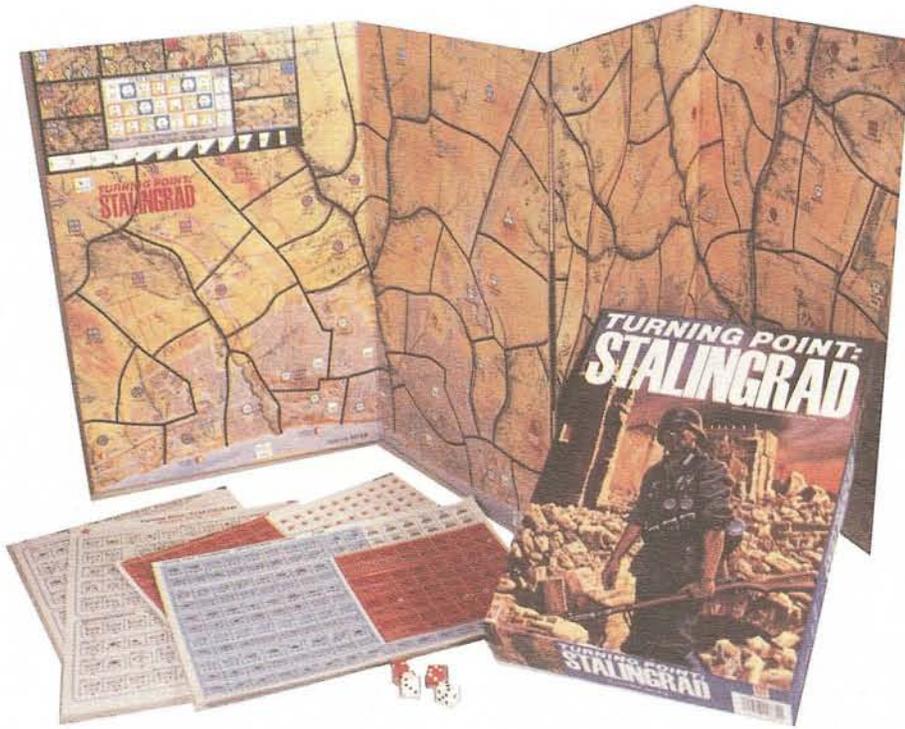
The use of artillery in *TPS* does not unhinge the game, however. Overall, it seems to work. Consider the effects of German artillery and air in the campaign version of the old *Battle for Stalingrad*. The power and accuracy of both made the game virtually unwinnable for the Soviet player. Unfortunately, *TPS* fails to teach players the correct lessons about artillery in general, and its use at Stalingrad in particular.

Somewhat related to artillery use is the use of the anti-aircraft units in the game. Once again, *TPS* falls short. AA units are not allowed to enter an area containing enemy units (even if accompanied by friendly infantry or armor). This is ahistorical. The Germans used vehicle-mounted AA guns to support assaults on Soviet positions. There is no doubt that an AA unit should not be allowed to enter an enemy-occupied area unsupported. However, when combined with infantry, there should be no such restriction.

One last complaint with regard to units and combat system relationships remains. With the exception of possibly being halted by rubble, tanks are too strong deep within the city itself. A player could easily come away from playing with the idea that in city streets, tanks were just as effective as they were on the steppes. *Streets of Stalingrad* handled this problem in an elegant, but realistic manner. Armor units inside the city received no terrain benefits when fired upon. Such an approach allows the firepower of the tanks, while increasing the risk of loss. In *TPS*, once past any rubble, armor is not vulnerable unless it happens to be the strongest unit in the group.

Finally, let us turn to the use of the "Advantage" rule. The side possessing the Advantage chit can extend the day (or night) phase, or force a re-roll of the dice in a particular battle. There is more to it than that, but that should convey the idea. Use of the Advantage is supposed to represent the application of large resources in a major offensive or of one side having a tactical edge over the other. The participants I have been associated with felt that this was a controversial rule. One player even refused to make use of the Advantage when he possessed it, condemning it as too "gamey". Even those who used it were uneasy with it.

On the surface, it is understandable that the designer wished to have something that would allow a player to overcome very bad luck (e.g., the Soviet player's worse fear—a one-impulse night). How-



ever, I would have to admit that this rule doesn't help in terms of simulation. Maybe it tries to cover too much ground. And then there is something odd about re-fighting a battle that you just lost (or won).

SUCCESS!

By now you're probably thinking, "So what if this guy nipsicks simulation problems; it's still a great game!" Well, I happen to believe it is more than just a great game. Even with its shortcomings, I feel that *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD* is the best simulation yet of the battle.

The alternating movement system in *TPS* is a simple and uncomplicated attempt to reproduce the "fog of war" and some degree of simultaneous movement. To reach for further simulation of reality would require the use of two maps, cumbersome rules, an umpire, etc. Well, the idea is to actually play the game and, at least in this case, the alternating movement system is much better than sequential or hidden ones. Thanks to the situation, complete hidden movement in the game would actually be inaccurate. Both sides tended to have fairly good intelligence about enemy units in contact. In addition, the Germans could rely on aerial recon, while the Soviets excelled at small unit patrolling behind German lines.

The real benefit of the movement system in *TPS* lies in the feeling both sides have of fighting the clock. The alternating movement system coupled with the uncertain length of day/night impulses can present the player with some frustration akin to that of planning and executing a military operation. Timing and sequencing of events is difficult and elusive. The successful commander realizes that it will be impossible to do everything. He sets his priorities and sees them through, all the while prepared to take advantage of any unexpected opportunity.

The movement system and its relationship to the day/night impulses of the game turn gives an accurate picture of how each side's operations evolved during the battle. The application of massive firepower meant that 6th Army would be most likely to achieve success during daylight hours. Concurrently, the Soviets learned to avoid German firepower and conduct their major offensive actions or movement under the cover of darkness. Regardless of Soviet actions, the German can run out of day-

light. An important Soviet move or attack may be delayed due to dawn. But, as in real life, the players are not forced to always operate in such a manner. The unexpected—a risky German attack at night or a bold Soviet move in broad daylight—can bring about a surprising victory. While far from perfect, the movement/turn sequencing utilized in *TPS* does an excellent job of depicting the environment peculiar to each side at Stalingrad. Suffice it to say that this is an approach to simulating the battle that is overdue.

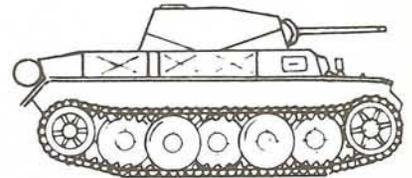
Couple the turn structure with Soviet infiltration, and it begins to become clear as to why the Germans could not simply blow their way through the city, even with their superior firepower and organization. The Infiltration rule does a nice job of demonstrating the difficulty the Germans had in *controlling* newly-won ground. While complicating the game very little, it presents a very important characteristic of the fighting in Stalingrad.

Finally, the disruption of an attacker or of moving units brings about the appropriate situation for counterattacks by the Soviet player. This alone is a significant design advance and sets *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD* apart from earlier efforts to simulate the battle. In both *Streets of Stalingrad* and *Battle for Stalingrad*, the prevailing strategy for the Soviet player was to let the German come to him, use defensive fire to attrite German units, and counterattack only under the most desperate (e.g., to take back a ferry landing) or advantageous (e.g., German units cut off with no hope of support) circumstances. Such simulations make it difficult to understand why Chuikov time and again ordered counterattacks right into the teeth of major German thrusts. *TPS* makes it painfully obvious why the 62nd Army sacrificed units to blunt German attacks and to keep elements of the 6th Army off-balance.

As a result of all the above, *TPS* achieves a level of simulation rarely seen in a wargame. What I am referring to here is the psychological struggle that ensues between the players. Time and again I have participated in, or witnessed, games where one (or even both sides) lost their nerve and failed to make a much needed move or attack for fear of leaving strong units vulnerable. In the title of this article I used the Russian word *borba*, which is sometimes translated as "battle" (as in "Battle of Stalingrad"). However, it can also be interpreted as "struggle". I feel that this is the more appropriate interpreta-

tion as it relates to this game. The ability of *TPS* to create in the minds of players a feeling of hopelessness is uncanny. Both players are slowly forced into a psychological struggle with each other and with themselves. Fear and uncertainty can make either player his own worst enemy. (Sounds a little like reality, doesn't it?)

Thus, as a simulation, *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD* does have its flaws. Fortunately, the problems do not appear to have affected play balance or the overall portrayal of the pivotal battle of this century. Unfortunately, they can give some players several wrong impressions about the historical situation, or about combat in general. As with any historical work, you must be objective and sort out the accurate from the inaccurate. In other words: learn the correct lessons and recognize the incorrect when playing the game. Once this is done, you will find *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD* to be an outstanding blend of game and simulation.



SO THAT'S WHAT YOU'VE BEEN PLAYING

Titles Listed: 99

Total Responses: 379

Rank:	Title	Rank Times			
		Pub	Last On	Time	Freq. Ratio
1.	Advanced SL	AH	2	22	11.6
2.	Up Front	AH	4	9	4.0
3.	Civilization	AH	9	2	3.7
4.	Diplomacy	AH	5	23	3.4
5.	Red Barricades	AH	—	1	3.1
6.	Third Reich	AH	7	2	3.0
7.	Gettysburg '88	AH	1	4	2.7
8.	Flat Top	AH	20	5	2.6
9.	MBT	AH	—	1	2.5
10.	Merchant of Venus	AH	—	1	2.3
11.	PanzerBlitz	AH	—	1	2.2
12.	TP: Stalingrad	AH	18	3	2.1
13.	Panzer Leader	AH	—	1	1.9
14.	Bulge '81	AH	—	1	1.8
15.	Hedgerow Hell	AH	—	1	1.7
16.	Squad Leader	AH	6	51	1.6
17.	Enemy in Sight	AH	3	3	1.4
18.	Kremlin	AH	12	3	1.3
19.	Siege of Jerusalem	AH	—	1	1.2
20.	Stat-Pro Baseball	AH	—	1	1.0

Quite a lot of movement among our twenty most-played games—and some surprises. The strength of ASL, following our recent feature of the system, shows yet again. *RED BARRICADES*, the newest and most unique module to date, is getting some play; rather obvious, given that its first printing has already sold out (it is being reprinted right now). Even the venerable *HEDGEROW HELL* got a boost onto the listing. Besides *RB*, several of the other new titles continue to show strong (*GE '88*, *EIS*, *TPS*) or appear for the first time (*MBT*, *MoV*, *SoJ*). And it would seem that Mr. Burnett's excellent column on sports is beginning to have some effect, for *STATIS-PRO BASEBALL* makes an appearance. Or perhaps fans of that sport, disenfranchised by the lockout, have simply turned to another way to pursue their peculiar tastes.

ALONE IN THE STREETS

Solitaire TURNING POINT

By David Chapel

The shelling has gone on for close to a day now. You and your men anxiously await the final order to proceed to win the city of Stalingrad for the Reich. You are Sgt. Krause of the 29th Motorized Division, and your unit is poised to launch an assault against the last Russian remnants in the Kuporosnoye area (#30). Little do you realize that it is here that you will be spending your Christmas—and not at home in Hamburg with the leave you've accumulated. The banks of the Volga beckon, but wait . . . your dual personality is setting in. You find yourself on a ferry in the middle of the cold river. The waters appear to be full of jumping fish, which you soon realize are only the impact of shrapnel and bullets on the water. Your comrade next to you slumps over without a sound as he takes a hit from the deluge of fire aimed at the landing point. You have been transformed into one Sgt. Tomochev (and under the circumstances, you'd much rather be Sgt. Krause)!

All of this may seem a little confusing, but if you're going to play *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD* solitaire, then you have to learn to view it from both the Russian and German points. The Germans are usually forced to apply brute force, just as in real life, while the Russians must improvise with what resources they have in the early stages. *TPS* is a highly competitive two-player game. However, it can be played solitaire with no rules changes or awkward artificial mechanics.

WHY SOLITAIRE?

Let's proceed into the cauldron and see what Sgts. Krause and Tomochev have to say about this newest game from Avalon Hill being played solitaire. It should be noted that Sgt. Krause's preference for solitaire play is to play the Simulation Game; this allows a player to experience the entire sweep of the battle for the city day-by-day. Sgt. Tomochev likes the Basic Game because it offers excellent solitaire opportunities for trying out new strategies during the first week of the fighting without having to worry about suffering a crushing defeat after long hours of play.

Sgt. Krause says the primary reason for playing the Simulation Game solitaire is that after the third week, the game becomes completely defensive for the Russian player. By this point, the Russian is simply trying to hold onto every single area he controls. Depending upon events up to this point, the majority of the Russian-controlled areas should have at least Level 1 rubble, and many should have Level 2 rubble. All this tends to keep the German gains to a minimal, house-to-house level—unlike the bounding slashes that prevail in the opening weeks. In addition, at this stage in the game, the Russian player is no longer receiving real powerful units, but only men which add support to existing positions. Even then, these are coming in at a much slower rate than during the first weeks. The net result is that the game remains a challenge to the German, but the Russian player tends to be limited to impulses that consist mainly of the four R's: refit, rubble creation, reinforcement, and redeployment. The key point is that the game is a challenge for the German player—and this is what makes the Simulation Game such an excellent solitaire candidate.

Sgt. Tomochev has already indicated that playing the Basic Game solitaire offers an excellent opportunity to explore new strategies. This is something that seems to be a never-ending process; as soon as the Germans come up with some innova-

tive offensive strategy (whether on purpose or due to some incredible luck), the Russian player must find some way to defend against it. As the fictional General Paulus has already noted earlier in this issue, a strategy that works during one game may not be so successful in the next. It is only by playing the game a multitude of times that a successful plan of action can be consistently implemented. The best way to get this experience is by playing the game solitaire . . . at least in Sgt. Tomochev's opinion.

Another obvious reason, less specific, for playing a game solitaire is simply the lack of an opponent. A quick look in the "Opponents Wanted" section proves this all too well. In addition, the increased availability of games designed specifically for solitaire shows that a market for such play is growing. So, how does *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD* measure up in solitaire? Actually, an excellent game can be enjoyed by the solitaire player by playing both sides to their maximum potential. Read on.

RANK AND FILE

TPS is the latest in the series of games using the highly playable impulse movement/combat system pioneered in *STORM OVER ARNHEM*. Both our sergeants agree that it includes all the key elements which make up an excellent game: a good subject; high playability; high excitement level; high quality components; reasonable historical accuracy; and solitaire capability.

The subject is, of course, the battle for Stalingrad, and it is presented in a time and size scale appropriate to such a monumental battle. Sgt. Tomochev feels that play balance is very good to excellent, depending upon which set-up conditions are used. Playability is inherently high because of the impulse system. In addition, since the number of impulses are limited in a given day/night turn, it forces each side to maximize their efforts in a short amount of time. As others have pointed out, *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD* is a game where both sides are always under the gun. It is not at all uncommon in a one-week game to see victory gained or lost on the last day, perhaps several times.

The game comes with one of the best mapboards ever produced to date. The map is a 16" by 44" masterpiece, an overhead view of the city and outlying steppes. The areas have color-coded identifications which aid in the initial placement of units. An inset section includes the Strategic Movement zones, day/night Impulse Track, and the Turn Record Track—all most helpful in playing the game. Russian and German forces are represented by the large 3/8" counters, and they include the usual combat information, plus setup, withdrawal and reinforcement information as required.

Surprisingly in such an interactive game, solitaire suitability is excellent (and that is the gist of this article, of course). It is not fair to compare this game with others such as *PATTON'S BEST*, *RAID ON ST. NAZAIRE* and *B-17*, since those were all specifically designed for solitaire play. However, no one ever claimed life is fair, and occasionally it is easier to describe something by listing what it is not as opposed to what it is. Fairness aside, it's worth the time to take a quick look at these three solitaire titles. *B-17* and *PATTON'S BEST* are of the same ilk since they both involve gathering your friends (unbeknownst to them) and loading them all in a piece of machinery, which then heads off into enemy

territory. These games stress the "personal" feel, and this can obviously generate a high excitement level (a strong streak of role-playing comes through). However, this is not the kind of challenge you'll find in *TPS*. In Stalingrad, you command regimental and battalion level forces which are no more personal than the cardboard they are mounted on. Excitement is instead generated by pushing these forces to their limit trying to gain (or hold onto) each precious area. Battles for these areas can literally drag on for days, and occasionally whole weeks. The moment of conquest (or the agony of defeat) is followed by the threat of counterattack while your forces are at risk recuperating. All this leads to a tense week of combat, which may bring one side victory—but it seems that each week ends with the all-too-common draw (in the Simulation Game). And the stress and excitement builds to new heights.

Another thing you won't find in *TPS* is great variation in game outcome. A design like *RAID ON ST. NAZAIRE* offers an interesting subject, but the outcome is very dependent on how much firepower the matchbox "fleet" has to absorb in the opening moves. The historical setup in *TPS* rarely, if ever, results in a blowout for one side or the other—especially if the alternate combat system is employed to minimize luck. It is amazing that a game which offers so many options for attaining (or preventing) a German victory can have such a tight band of outcomes which result. However, Sgt. Tomochev grimly notes that the Basic Game setup can definitely result in the Germans annihilating the Russian forces; but this is not a frequent occurrence.

Concealment, hidden units, true simultaneous movement, and record-keeping have also been left out of the game. These are the usual culprits hampering play of other two-player games solitaire. The semi-simultaneous movement system of *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD* eliminates the log-keeping generally required in si-move games. In fact, the only written record required is for the armor replacements coming from the Dzerzhzinsky Tractor factory (#70); and for the one-week game, that can be done in your head.

So, what compares with *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD*? In terms of solitaire play—nothing. The closest comparison in terms of excitement and playability would have to be *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER*. (This statement *does* imply high playability, in contrast to those who think that a game which has a 300-page rulebook cannot possibly be played.) The movement/combat mechanics of the game are similar to *STORM OVER ARNHEM* and *THUNDER AT CASSINO*. The primary differences are the removal of the Close Combat Phase (which actually enhances playability over the latter by an order of magnitude) and the obvious necessity to include special rules for such as artillery, Stukas, Russian armor replacements, and river crossing interdiction. The transition from one of these titles to *TPS* is minimal due to the fact that a good chunk of the rulebook is paralleled in those games.

Historical accuracy is very good if playing the Simulation Game for the entire nine-week period. The interpretation of historical accuracy is not necessarily a strict one. However, the bottom line is whether a game has all the key factors that were involved in determining the outcome of the actual battle. *TPS* fulfills this criteria because it emphasizes such factors as Russian infiltration, German superiority by day, Russian superiority by night, interdiction of river crossings, east bank artillery, air

power, rubble/fortifications, and Russian tank replacements from the Tractor Works. In addition, the fact that a solitaire player is omnipotent, knowing the location and strength of each sides' forces, is not out of line since in the historical battle both were able to keep good tabs on their opponents.

THE SIMULATION GAME

Playing the full-blown Simulation Game requires a tremendous amount of time, but it is time well spent. Sgt. Krause says the average solitaire playing time for this is about 20 hours. Therefore, plan on storing the game in a safe place (away from junior's projectiles) when those nasty constraints such as sleep, work and family interfere with your gaming session.

The Simulation Game uses the "red" Victory Point conditions at the end of each week to determine whether the game will continue for another week of play. This almost always assures a continuation of the game into the next week up to the sixth. From this point on, one side or the other stands a pretty fair chance of attaining that long-awaited victory.

The Simulation Game also demands the use of the historical setup and unit withdrawals. Using the historical setup results in a slower start for the German player due to the lack of large offensive values in a single stack at the start. German withdrawals do not have a large effect for the first three weeks. However, during the period from September 30th to October 11th, his withdrawals will have their biggest impact. The loss of the 29th Motorized Division can bring the German offensive potential to a halt. The units withdrawn during this time period will amount to almost 20% of the German force.

Sgt. Tomochev offers the following suggestions to his comrades. The Russian plan in the Simulation Game should be to minimize losses and hold onto VP areas. This is, of course, easier said than done. However, in the first week it is very important that losses be kept low. Traditionally, Russian losses will be in the range of 35 to 45 units when playing a one-week game. It is essential that the Russian player reduce this level by about ten units when playing the Simulation Game. This is not unreasonable, considering the fact that the Germans are more spread out (and less effective) at the start and that the Russian player (hopefully) will not have to make desperate moves on the last day of the week (September 19). Inasmuch as it is easier for the German to gain a draw (and continuation) in the Simulation Game, the Russian death grip on VP areas can be somewhat relaxed in favor of preventing casualties. Non-essential territory must be sacrificed to save men whenever possible. Try to absorb casualty points through the disruption and retreat of units as opposed to elimination—especially as it pertains to the irreplaceable six-factor units; never accept their elimination if they can retreat instead.

Fortifications are the Russian's best friend. This is especially true when fighting through the long Simulation Game. The Russian player should create fortifications whenever possible. This should not be done blindly, but organized in such a manner that a bubble of fortified areas springs from the river bank. Once the initial bubble is complete, it's time to do it all over again and increase the level of the rubble. A typical game should have a southern and a northern fortification bubble. This presupposes the fact that the Russians have split the Russian position.

Sgt. Krause chuckles as he notes that the German's task is to burst the Russians' bubble. The best long-term plan for the German player is to split the Russian forces in the Mamayev Kurgan (#56) river bank region. This means taking control of either the Red October Factory (#67), the Oil Refinery (#65), or the Tennis Racket (#66). Once this is accom-

plished, the elimination of one of the two Russian bubbles should be pursued to completion. Sgt. Krause in this case prefers to clear the northern sector of the city and then head south. (This is the opposite of what the Germans did in reality.) The reason for taking this approach is dictated by the fact that the northern section of the city will usually be weaker in terms of enemy units (but not terrain effect modifiers) than the other. In addition, the concentration of rubble in the north should be less. Leave taking the heavily rubble areas for the powerhouse reinforcements of the 305th Infantry Division which arrives on October 11th.

Another key reason for clearing the Russian units out of two quadrants is the fact that the Russian artillery in those will become essentially worthless. Russian artillery is limited in worth if there are no Russian units to help with its modifier. (By the time the Germans can clear out one of the bubbles, the Russian artillery should be increased to a +2 modifier.) It can't even be used to independently attack an area because the artillery requires the presence of a friendly unit in order to fire. Removal of this threat allows the German player to concentrate his own artillery in the remaining two quadrants and thereby improve the odds of taking out the enemy artillery there with counterbattery fire.

THE BASIC GAME

This is Sgt. Tomochev's favorite version of *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD*. Make no mistake about it; the strategy required varies considerably from one version to the next. The "anything goes" pace of the Basic Game may not be appropriate for the Simulation Game's less stringent Victory Conditions. In the Basic Game, the Russians are faced with a stiff challenge. German strategy is usually fairly consistent from game to game, since the assault will begin with a half-dozen powerhouse attacks. The Russian task is one of moving what limited units are available to locations where they are desperately needed. The tactics for the first week of the Basic Game have been thoroughly covered by the generals Paulus and Chuykov previously. However, the grunts on the line have a few salient points to make dealing with solitaire play.

The one problem that faces a solitaire player in any game designed for two is the fact that the strategy for each side is inherently known by the sole participant. But this problem is almost completely nullified in *TPS* for several reasons. One, there are no hidden units. Second, strategic redeployment of units from one end of the board to the other requires a unit's entire movement before leaving it disrupted; this allows the other side time to respond to that redeployment, although the Russians (being less mechanized and concentrated) can't match the Germans for pure swiftness. And third, holes in the Russian defensive line which are not plugged can only be exploited (by the Germans) to a small degree because of movement restrictions and supply concerns.

All of the previous items serve as damping factors to an unknown, as well as a known, strategy. The one thing that can not be successfully employed by a solitaire player is the selective use of feints. These are the kind that demand long planning. Moves such as pushing for Mamayev Kurgan and then switching to an all-out drive for the north-central river front is just one example. This statement has a "Catch-22" as well. Sometimes a solitaire player's knowledge of his "opponent's" impending plan can cause redirection of certain units—which then create entirely different opportunities for the enemy. And thereby making the original omnipotence faulty.

BRINGING UP THE REAR

Sgts. Krause and Tomochev ultimately had the chance to get it together. The reunion occurred in

the heart of Stalingrad where they were both lucky enough to preserve their skin(s) intact. They reached a consensus that playing *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD* solitaire can provide hours of enjoyment. In addition, the game is fresh and challenging each time it is played, and is presented in a format which generates high excitement while maintaining high playability.

They both would like to leave a final note to those who believe the game may be completely one-sided for any given setup. *TPS* takes a good ten playings to "get up to speed." The trend which seems to be prevalent is one of Russian wins fading into German wins as the experience of the players increase. In addition, the casualty rate of Russian units steadily increases as the German player becomes more effective in his application of force. All this leads to a lot of good solitaire or two-player gaming. If you consistently have the Russians winning, then you need some practice at mobilizing the German forces. If the Germans appear to have a lock on victory, it is time to play some solitaire games and find a Russian strategy which brings back the balance.



TP: STALINGRAD Expansion Kit

Those readers who have played and enjoyed *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD* will no doubt wish to pick up the Expansion Kit. The kit brings another sheet of counters, giving players the ability to extend the game beyond 3 October (the weeks of 4, 11, 18 & 25 October and 1 & 8 November). The new counter sheet provides additional disorganization counters, random number chits, and reduced daylight markers as well as the new German and Soviet combat units. Details of the arrival and withdrawal of these new units are already provided on the set-up cards found in the original game, so no additional rules or components are required. Readers are advised that extending the game to 14 November, while certainly increasing the simulation "value", will demand a greater commitment in terms of playing time. The Expansion Kit for *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD* is available for \$6.00 direct from The Avalon Hill Game Company (4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214). The usual 10% for shipping/handling applies (20% for Canadian orders; 30% for overseas). Maryland residents please add 5% state sales tax.

AH Philosophy . . . Cont'd from Page 4

Alas, I didn't count on offending Mr. Founer. What he doesn't realize is that there was never any other choice. Either we sold the game as originally designed to cover only the first three weeks of the battle, or we didn't do the game at all. The "simulation" version was only an add-on to placate those who wanted to fight out the entire battle. By designing the extension I was trying to please both camps, and place the extra expense only on those who would benefit from it. The game Mr. Founer has is complete in every respect. If he wishes more, he'll have to pay for it.

It is very easy for gamers to pontificate on what should be in a game. But, in this day of inflation and declining wargame sales, there are limits to what we can put in a box and still hope to keep it sellable at the retail level. I'd love to sell \$10 wargames again. I'd also like to buy fifteen-cent hamburgers and ten-cent sodas again, but I don't think I ever will. Sigh . . .

Don Greenwood
Chief Butthead, TAHGC



SERIES REPLAY

TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD

Russian Player: Jared Roach
 German Player: Ken Bender
 Neutral Commentator: Don Greenwood



Jared Roach and Ken Bender are officers of the Cornell Strategic Simulations Society and have played one another numerous times, although Jared has considerably more experience with this particular game system. The introductory scenario ("Kuibyshev Sawmill") was chosen for the replay due to its brevity, even though it lacks the movement and overall scope of the main game. Our commentator is the designer of the game and, as you'll see, a demanding taskmaster. His victims are volunteers from one of his "blind" playtest groups and therefore are expected to furnish some stiff competition. If Mr. Greenwood seems overly harsh in his criticisms, forgive him for he is driven by an unending love of his game, and lacks patience to deal with those who don't treat it with the same studied respect. His comments, in case you can't identify them by tone, are in italics.

INTRODUCTION:

Russian: *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD* is a wonderfully addictive game. The impulse system forces players to be constantly on their toes. The Russian must make the all-important decisions of how to respond economically and effectively to a German move and when to pass to conserve his strength. The German must attack quickly, overwhelmingly, and successfully before the Russian can build impenetrable defenses. Above all, luck, in the form of a throw of the dice, can dramatically change the strategic situation. Overcaution can be as fatal as a botched assault.

I really dislike playing the historical setup—both in this scenario and in the main game—because it leaves the Kuibyshev Sawmill much too weak. This area is the key to victory in both versions. By taking the Sawmill, the Germans can cut off Areas 29 and 30 and deal with them at his leisure. I will try to pull my units out of these areas as quickly as possible to shore up the Kuibyshev defenses.

The German needs to take two riverside Areas besides Kuporosnoye to win. There is no way I can hold both Kuporosnoye and Kuibyshev. By trying to hold both, I will just be throwing away units, probably to an Overrun attack. I will give it up willingly. Two Interdiction Points and one Victory Point are no big deal. I will concentrate my defense in Area 31 and make a last ditch stand in 32 if need be. It will be hard for him to break through from the west to Areas 62 and 63; he has too far to go. A week can go by very quickly.

My opponent is unpredictable. He usually tries bizarre strategies, and occasionally gets away with them. The options for sweeping movement are limited in this scenario though, so I am prepared for a slugging match. If I keep in mind that casualties don't determine victory, I'll win. My troops may not love me, but Stalin will.

German: My "grand plan" is to sweep along the Volga from the south, bypassing Area 32 if the Russian defends it strongly. I'll mass my forces to crush Kuibyshev and then sweep around Minina Gully to isolate the Russian forces to the north. Meanwhile I'll keep those forces occupied with my armor from Areas 3 and 4.

I know from extensive experience that Jared is an excellent player. If I am to have a chance at taking the number of riverside areas necessary to win, I can only hope to roll well and perhaps execute a bizarre move or two to confuse him. He usually doesn't like it when I do that sort of thing—which is exactly why it's so much fun to do. I need not conserve troop strength since time is short; all-out assault will be the order of the day.

The introductory scenario is like riding a carousel in an amusement park full of roller coasters. It's OK, but it pales in comparison to the surroundings. By restricting play to just one of the four map sections, the overall scope and movement of the game suffers. The opportunity for strategic feints and quick movement of forces behind the front is lost, and the battle becomes more of a set-piece shooting match (which is far less interesting than the battle of maneuver offered by the overall game). Nevertheless, brevity is the most important factor in a Series Replay and therefore we've chosen the Sawmill scenario to give you a taste of what TPS is like.

My other pre-game concern revolves around the players. Both were active in the "blind", pre-publication playtest and should be experienced with the game system. However, Jared's reports were often so lop-sided in his own favor that they had to be dismissed lest they upset the curve. He won every game with either side and dominated play in his group—a veritable shark among the tuna. Such a mismatch does not bode well for an interesting replay, but at least the tuna got a break at start with four failed rubble rolls.

Each move will be listed in abbreviated form as:

[German/Russian Impulse] Units moved [area moved from] area move to [odds—attacker: defender, attacker roll/defender roll] [Casualty Points: units Killed or Retreated (Disruption Level)]. Any independent Impulse dice rolls are listed in parentheses.

DAY, SEPTEMBER 13:

[G1] 29th Div. Art. [1] vs 29 [8:7, 11/9] [3CP: R: 4-4-6, 1-2-4 (D4) to 31; voluntary R: 2-2-4, 1-2-4 (D1) to 31; attack rubbles 29]
 94th Div. Art. [28] vs 27 [9:5, 7/5] [7CP: K: 1-2-4; R: 1-3-4, 1-2-4 (D4) to 33]

I'm taking advantage of the Opening Bombardment rule (20.4) to squeeze two artillery attacks into one impulse. This is a low risk way to flatten as many Russians as possible before committing troops. Unfortunately, I also flattened the buildings in Minina.

[R3] Both units [30] to 31

In accordance with my operational plans, I'm pulling in my outer defenses to strengthen Kuibyshev Sawmill. If I had left them there, you can bet they would have become mincemeat. The German attack actually helped my plans because I was able to voluntarily retreat units from Minina without using an impulse. As a bonus, he now has rubble to con-

tend with on his perimeter. That makes up in small measure for my failure to get any pre-game rubble.

Our inexperienced German betrays his lack of expertise immediately. Wasting a bombardment on Minina is foolish while so many better targets abound. Aside from the daylight "ZOC" it inflicts on Areas 1 and 28, Minina has little value and its terrain (+3) is too strong to use as a killing ground for Russian troops. Apparently the Russian agrees, because he forsakes the rubble it created and uses the attack as a form of free impulse to retreat all four of his units into the Sawmill while the three casualties inflicted required only one to exit. Kuporosnoye would have been a better target for the 29th's Artillery as it would have softened the opposition in an Area the Germans need both for Interdiction and Victory Points.

Attacking the Leatherworks with the 94th Artillery is a more reasonable tactic. Although the Sawmill is definitely the key to the scenario—and often the whole game as well—maximizing Russian casualties with bombardments in the +1 TEM Areas is a viable strategy—especially inasmuch as it lessens the chances of creating rubble. Holding back the Stukas for later use is also the correct choice as it should hinder Russian movement and is in no danger of being phased out by an early nightfall.

If the opening German move is less than inspired, the Russian riposte is at best curious. Using voluntary retreats as a form of semi-free impulse is a vital Russian tactic, but here it is overused. Although the Russian is correct to reinforce the Sawmill (which is the key in his house of cards), doing so by completely stripping the buffer between it and the German power in Area 1 is a mistake. At least one Fresh unit should be left behind to man the rubble in Minina and force the Germans to attack it again to remove its ZOC. Instead, he neutralizes the German mistake by handing him the very rubble his error created without opposition.

If the Russian retreat was foolish, his opening move is more so. Abandoning Kuporosnoye without a shot fired is highly questionable. Sure, Area 30 can't be held against a determined assault; but the idea is to make the Huns pay a price for their first Victory and Interdiction Points—in time, if not in men. By handing over Areas 29 and 30, the Sawmill has no buffer between it and the German power in Area 1. The withdrawing Russians now defend the Sawmill with a disrupted strength of 5 instead of defending the buffer with a Fresh strength of 6 and 7. And in the process of this pre-mature withdrawal, he has offered the Stukas a prime target at massed moving units. A far better move would have been a simple Pass to defend in place. If he had to reinforce the Sawmill now, better it come from the killing fields of the Leatherworks +1 TEM than the +3 and +4 TEM of Areas 30 and 29.

Advantage: German, due to a terrible Russian strategy.

[G3] All four units [A] to 1

I'm concentrating my 29th Division for a push up the river. With my division together, I can get the maximum advantage from the Regimental Integrity bonus.

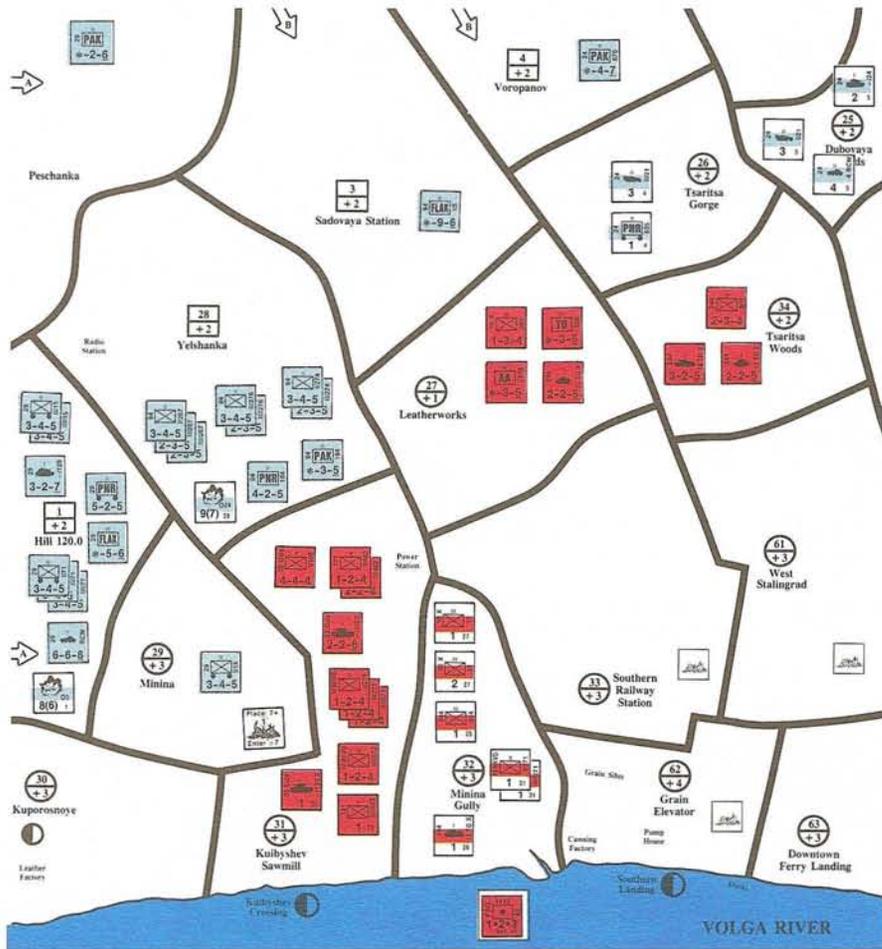


Figure 1: The Situation at Dawn, 14 September

[R5] 1-2-4 [60] to 31
Two 1-2-4 [60] to 32

This beefs up the defenses of Kuibyshev to the maximum ten units, and starts a second line of defense at Minina Gully in the same impulse.

The German response to being handed the keys to the city is to picnic on Hill 120. The opening day is not the time for consolidating troop movements—that is best done at night. Never waste daylight and the opportunity to attack with air support. If you must think in terms of consolidation, at least move into Kuporosnoye. You can then consolidate the 29th on the next impulse and make a Ranged attack from 30 at 13:8. By consolidating in Area 1, the German ensures that the 29th Division—his strongest force—will strike no blows on the opening day and have to pay at least two MF before even coming into contact with the enemy when he does move. Almost anything would have been a better move.

The Russian move is better, but flawed. Ten units in the Sawmill may be an over-reaction. If he's not careful, the German will bypass it altogether and catch him with a shortage of troops. The defense-in-depth is a good idea, but two units in 32 is wasteful. The Russian cause would be better served if one of those fresh units were to appear in 33 or 61 in the morning. Two units exert no more ZOC than one.

The Russian wins this exchange, but the German still enjoys the edge if he cares to use it.

[G5] 7-6-6, 5-2-5 [4] vs 26 [9:5, 6/4] [6CP: K: 2-3-4, 3-2-5]

This diversionary attack, quite successful in its own right, should keep the Ivans guessing as to where my real thrust will occur. If I had rolled one higher, it would have been an Overrun.

[R7] Pass

Any action I take now would disrupt more of my units and weaken my defenses. Disrupted units are easier to eliminate. I see no need for unnecessary sacrifices. I have retreated into a nice tight defensive circle easily. Three dead units is no problem at this point and reinforcements loom big tomorrow.

Although the Russian lost two units, I rate this move a toss-up and the German owes that to winning his third straight dice roll. Why attack 26 which the Russians will have to withdraw from anyway if the Germans can penetrate 27? The 7-6-6 could have hit the Leatherworks at 8:4, which matches the casualty potential of the 9:5 vs 26, and the 5-2-5 could still have hit 26 at 6:5 to shorten the line and cause more casualties. With ten units already in the Sawmill, the German should be flexing his muscles in the Leatherworks and looking to bypass 31.

There is nothing wrong with the Russian "Pass", although it shows how pre-mature was his commitment of the 272nd Regt. last impulse. He has very little left in the way of a mobile reserve. I'd have attacked into 26 just to keep the 24th's Armor at arm's length.

The Russian won the move, but the German still holds an overall edge due to an 8:6 average Dice Roll advantage.

[G7] All three units [5] vs 25 [10:5, 7:11] [ICP: R: 2-3-4 (D4) to 34]

This continues my diversion but exhausts my resources in this area of the board.

[R9] 3-2-5 [25] to 32

This unit was in danger of being cut off, so I pulled it back into a reserve position. By concentrating my disrupted units I can take more Casualty Points as retreats instead of eliminations. Disrupted units can still hold an Area; dead ones can't. I have been using voluntary retreats (8.3554) to contract my lines.

Another unimaginative frontal attack . . . was this guy in charge at Verdun? The German continues

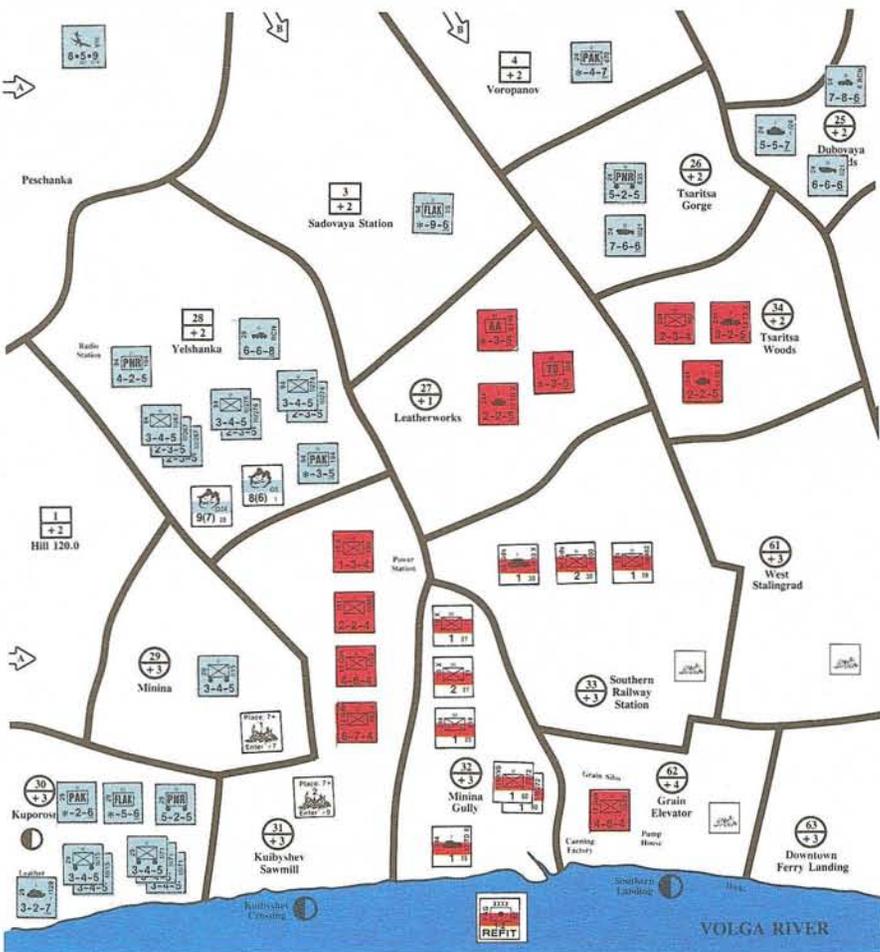


Figure 2: The Situation at Dawn, 15 September

to apply his superior force inefficiently—a mistake which will have to be paid for in the days ahead when Russian reserves arrive. Given the questionable strategy of attacking the Western areas, a more lethal blow could have been struck with the same force by attacking three Areas at once: 27 at 8:4, 34 at 7:5, and 25 at 6:5. Such a move would also tie down all of the Russian's remaining mobile reserves.

The Russian demonstrates why the German strategy is so poor—withdrawing from 25 before a strike into 34 can cut him off. But why to Area 32 where he already has two units which will be fresh in the morning? Surely a Fresh unit in 61 or 33 would be more useful. I'd also have been tempted to use the Russian Artillery to prevent an Overrun. The Russian must do a lot of passing in this scenario, and therefore Refit opportunities are not as scarce as in the overall game. The German dice roll makes it a moot point.

Two poor moves, but the Russian finally wins a dice roll and makes the German error more glaring.

[G9] Stuka vs 32 [8:4, 6/7] [3CP: all three units (D4) to 33]

Since the Stuka can attack only in daylight, I will use it against Minina Gully in the hopes of scoring some kills against the disrupted units there.

[R11] Fortify 31 (3) [Attempt fails]

I could have used the extra fortifications at the Sawmill, but the dice aren't co-operating. The attempt also disrupts my last fresh units in Kuibyshev, thereby presenting Ken with only one defensive group should he decide to attack in his last daylight impulse.

Given the current situation, the Stuka attack and target was probably the best move. Rubble in 32 is less of a problem than in 31 and the expected casualties there are about as good as anywhere else. A strike in 27 in preparation for a possible night attack into 33 might have been my choice.

The Russian move is either cocky, inspired, or foolish—maybe all three. By all normal standards of play, the fortification attempt is an impulse too soon as it removes the ZOC that prevents the 29th Division from entering the Sawmill in the fading daylight. Now, if I want to credit him with military genius I could convince myself that the Russian realizes he is too strong in the Sawmill and, fearing being bypassed there, seeks to lure the German into committing the 29th into a battle for the Sawmill. Naaugh . . .

Chalk this move up for the German.

[G11] 3-4-5 [28] to 29 [Day ends]

Grabbing control on Minina will make future Rubble entrance attempts easier (14.4), and will allow me to leave Hill 120 safely without creating holes in my line.

NIGHT, SEPTEMBER 13:

[R3] Regroup D4 2-3-4 [34] 33

This unit was a sitting duck where it was. By concentrating my disrupted units in the same Area, I can Regroup them (8.27) all in the same impulse.

Aargh! The last daylight opportunity is wasted by the meekest of moves. An attack into the Sawmill by the 29th at 13:5 would have an expected kill of four Russian units. Having waited this long to consolidate the 29th, I suppose he might as well wait for tomorrow—provided he plans to bypass the Sawmill. Attacking 31 in the morning when those eight disrupted Russian units will be Fresh would be grounds for court martial. It is hard for me to believe that the sun has set and no Germans are on the river, despite being handed Kuporosnoye on a platter. Two precious daylight impulses have been squandered with petty movements. I hope consolidating the 29th gratifies the German because there will be blood

to pay for the lost opportunities this day. Not only is the German strategy wrong, the occupation of Minina isn't even handled efficiently. Why break up a 9-factor attack force in Yelshanka when the flak unit in B, the PAK unit in 2, and the PAK unit in 4 are all idle? A horrendous move!

The Russian regrouping is fine, but another one exists. With night falling, I'd return units in the Sawmill to Kuporosnoye before the German sleepwalks and takes it accidentally.

The turn—and the day—belong to the Russians.

[G3] *9-6 [B] to 3 (8)

This move allows me to shift my entire 94th Division to Yelshanka without leaving a hole through Sadovaya Station.

[R5] Regroup all six units [33] to 32

Now I have an excellent second line of defense should Kuibyshev fall.

Night doesn't bring any better moves.

The German move just undoes part of the damage done by his last move. Moving that flak unit into 29 last time would have saved an impulse and left a 9-factor attack force intact. The "entire 94th" won't be at Yelshanka because one of its infantry battalions is off guarding Minina. If he had been hammering 27, he wouldn't have to worry about any hole at Sadovaya Station. This scenario is supposed to be Custer versus Sitting Bull, and here we are seeing the spectacle of Sitting Bull circling his own wagons. Attack before it's too late! There are plenty of round eyes across the river. A better move—need I say it—would be to finally take Kuporosnoye with that Flak unit.

The Russian regrouping is even worse. Given the Russian strength in Kuibyshev, the German's best chance to win now is to bypass both 31 and 32 and try for the Grain Elevator and Downtown Ferry Landing. Such a win is very possible with a good dice roll in 27 and a pinning attack in 31. The Russians would then have a mere handful of mobile units with which to respond. This game is still very winnable with some luck, a long day, and the right moves.

The Russian move was worse than the German's—and on potential alone—I give the edge back to the German . . . if only he'll use it.

[G5] All three fresh units [3] to 28 (4) [Night ends]

With two full-strength Divisions in position, I am now prepared to crush Kuibyshev Sawmill. I will launch my attack at dawn.

DAY, SEPTEMBER 14:

Dawn: Russian Reinforcements see two 4-6-4, 6-7-4 allocated to this sector.

[R1] Pass

I'm prepared. Let him come.

Uh-oh! The German's comments reveal he is sticking to his original plan of attack. Having finally assembled his sledge-hammer force, he fully intends to break it on the anvil of Kuibyshev. A better move would have been to regroup the 94th in Area 3 and then hope to do the same with the 29th into 28 next time so as to pound 27 and better threaten the Sawmill. As it is, the 29th's infantry can't even reach the Sawmill in the morning. Tsk, tsk.

Given the arrival of dawn, the Russian "Pass" is appropriate. However, if he were facing me, this Russian would have wished he'd moved some of those sitting ducks in 27 back to 33 and 61 where they'd be fresh now.

Give the turn to the Russian by default—and now that I know the German's intent, the game as well. Fortunately for the Germans, only three of the seven Russian reinforcements are allocated to this sector of the front.

[G1] 6-6-8 [1] to 28

all other eight fresh units [1] to 30
all nine units Range attack vs 31 [18:8, 11/9]
[12CP: K: 4-4-6, 1-2-4; Rubble area; Overrun]

all nine units now Range attack vs 31 [18:11, 10/3]
[14CP: K: four 1-2-4; R: 4-4-4 (D4) to 32; increase Rubble level] Counter-battery D Art

Pretty good push by the 29th, eh? A total of 18 Russian Casualty Points. The Recon unit is pretty good on its own; it will slip around to the west when it recovers its Fresh status. A distasteful side effect of my successful attacks on the Sawmill is the rubble I made of it—but you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. I'll have to send the engineers in to clear out the rubble before the armor rolls in.

[R3] Pass

Gulp. The long-awaited attack on Kuibyshev was rather painful. I held my artillery back on his first attack because I expected an Overrun anyway, but committed it to the second to save a Casualty Point even though it cost me my artillery. Fortunately I had plenty of blood to spill. Now I know why they call us "Reds".

In case you are wondering why I keep passing, imagine how much worse that last attack would have been if I had disrupted more of my units through unnecessary movement. I considered reinforcing Kuibyshev from the Leatherworks, but this would only lead to another Disrupted group tempting an Overrun. The Leatherworks is none too strong as it is with the 94th Division sitting on its doorstep.

Aided by some great dice rolls, the German has had his fun with the assembled might of the 29th—killing six units in one impulse. Yet, this "won" battle may cost him the war. It is interesting to note that the first thing the German did with his consolidated 29th was split it up! Nevertheless, the 29th's Recon will be almost as effective spearheading the 94th and one must admire the results, if not the technique by which they were achieved. Imagine the Russian's plight had that sledgehammer blow originated from 28 and been delivered to 27 at 17:4 odds after pinning the Sawmill defenders with an infantry attack. The entire Russian rear would have been laid bare with but four units to defend it. Equally important, there would be no rubble to slow down the German advance.

The Russian non-response at this juncture is the correct move. Adding disrupted units to Kuibyshev now would just give the Germans a better target.

Fate now favors the Germans 8.3:6.9 in the dice roll department and consequently has given them renewed hope. I remain skeptical because the German is now committed to attacking the Russian stronghold in Minina Gully for his fourth VP.

[G3] All eight Fresh units in 28 Range attack vs 31 [13:8, 6/7] [4CP: R: 2-2-6, 1-2-4 (D4) to 32]

Kuibyshev is almost clear, but I have little left with which to take it before night brings the Russian reinforcements.

[R5] Pass

One defender left in the Sawmill! At least Ken was nice enough to make a Ranged attack. This leaves Kuibyshev open so I can slip reinforcements in without having to attack him. However, I am still worried that he will send his last infantry battalion into Kuibyshev to accomplish this interdiction attack. If he does, I will attack it with my 13th Guards arrivals. If I were to send a unit to Kuibyshev now it would be disrupted and thus easier prey for the last eligible German attacker. The three other remaining German units are incapable of entering an enemy-occupied area. Therefore I pass.

The German has played his last ace and now lies spent, unable to take advantage of the destruction

he has wrought. The Russian dilemma is illusory and can be made good by the arrival of his reinforcements. Making a Ranged attack into the Sawmill instead of a 12:8 infantry assault was probably the right decision—provided he follows it up with an infantry attack from Minina next impulse to force the Russian reinforcements to attack if they enter the Sawmill. Keeping the 94th intact in Yelshanka will allow it to combine with the 29th's armor for another potent blow. Moving it into 31 would have forced the Russian to fall back into 33 where he should have been all along. Why force him to make the right move?

The Russian "Pass" is acceptable, but given the German's exhaustion a better move would be to finally abandon 27 for the superior defense of the Southern Railway Station. The first night impulse will have to be used to land reinforcements.

This dice roll discrepancy bears watching. Let's call it the "Fate Gauge". Currently, it reads 8:6.9 for the Germans. As for the game, it is too close to call now.

[G5] *2-6 [2] to 30 (3) [Day ends]

Move a 29th Division unit to Kuporosnoye in order to bring the forces along the river to the maximum allowed here and further concentrate my division. The day was short but sweet. At least I got my two big attacks in during daylight hours.

NIGHT, SEPTEMBER 14:

[R3] All three Reinforcements land safely in 62; 4-6-4, 6-7-4 [62] to 31

My reinforcements make life bearable. The 4-6-4 at the Grain Elevator remains in reserve.

No wonder Hitler had migraines. Area 31 had to be occupied this time—thus forcing the Russians to win a 7:7 attack with his reinforcements. Now the Sawmill will defend with 12 in the morning instead of 8. He's even allowing the Russians the option to regroup there from Minina Gully. All of this could have been avoided by attacking with the III/276 from 29 at 4:7. Hell, with his luck, he might have even taken the area.

As for the Russian move, the last 4-6-4 could have served his reserve role better in 33 than in 62.

Turn to the Russian, and with it he recaptures the edge in the game.

[G3] Regroup 29th Artillery [1] to 28 (10)

When this unit recovers its Fresh status, it will be in position for a bombardment.

[R5] 1-3-4 [27] to 31

Beefing up the Sawmill is more important than defending the Leatherworks.

Having already made the mistake, the German seems determined to make it fatal. Moving the 276th into 31 now has far less benefits, but it still beats letting the Russians further reinforce the Sawmill unless . . . it is still not too late to bypass 31. Regroup the 29th into Minina and hope for a long night.

The Russian move is a good one except that he still refuses to see that he should abandon the Leatherworks save for one unit and fall back into the Southern Railway Station.

Give the turn to the Russian and with it a tighter grip on the game.

[G5] Pass (11)

Nothing to do but wait for morning.

[R7] Regroup 4-4-4, 2-2-6, 1-2-4 D4 [32] 33

Now if the Leatherworks falls, I will have a defense to fall back on at the Southern Railway Station.

PASS!!! Just when I thought he couldn't do any worse . . . Time is a precious commodity in this game. There is almost always something worthwhile

to do with your impulse that improves your situation—especially as the German. What's wrong with moving the PAK in 4 to Minina to free that infantry unit to rejoin the 94th, inasmuch as you refuse to attack with it?

As for the Russian; a round of applause for finally realizing that 33 should be occupied—even if he still refuses to do it with a fresh unit from 27.

A strong turn for the Russian, a weak one for the German. The game continues to slip away from him.

[G7] Pass (6) [Night ends]

His regrouping will make things tougher in the morning, but I am powerless to stop it. Hurry up daylight!

DAY, SEPTEMBER 15:

Dawn: All three Russian reinforcements are allocated to this sector; two 4-6-4 and a 0-1-4 arrive on East Bank. Neither German reinforcement is allocated to this sector.

[R1] Refit Artillery attempt fails

I think the only reason for the Refit Artillery rule (15.34) is to give the Russian an alternative to passing.

"Pass" again . . . so little imagination. He could have moved the 276th to rejoin the 94th if he had moved the PAK last time. Or regrouped the 29th into Minina where it has more options. And now even his luck abandons him; all Russian reinforcements and none of the German's are allocated to the south.

The Russian's Refit attempt is correct. As he points out, Refit rolls are very prevalent in this scenario where the Russians have so few movement options. In the overall game, however, the Russian often wishes he had the opportunity for more Refit attempts.

Turn and advantage to the Russian.

[G1] Stuka vs 27 [8:4, 8/7] [5CP: K: 2-2-5; R: *-3-5 (D4) to 33]

This is a good opportunity to use my Stuka so that I do not miss the chance should night fall quickly. Jared now has a weak spot in his defenses that I should exploit soon.

[R3] Refit Artillery Attempt fails

Same comments as previously.

The Stuka never has to fly before the second impulse in any day, but at least he's turning to the Leatherworks. That "weak spot" has been there all along, only it was a lot weaker before. Could it be that our German now pales at the thought of attacking the Sawmill's stout defenses at 8:10? He could have attacked there at 8:6 had he moved the 276th into 31 to contest the Russian reinforcements. Coulda, woulda, shoulda . . .

The Fate Gauge holds steady at 8:6.9 for the German; and with it some hope for victory.

[G3] 7-6-6 [26] vs 27 [8:4, 8/12] Advantage [10/7] [7CP; K: *-3-5 AA; Overrun]

Following up the Stuka attack to clear out this area and allow the 94th Division to turn the corner at Kuibyshev. The success of this attack, and the continued heavy resistance in Kuibyshev have led me to consider abandoning my original plan of attack along the river, and instead, come in from the west.

[R5] 3-2-5 [34] vs 27 [3:5, 10/10] [0CP: attacker (D4)]

I threw a unit into 27 to keep the 94th Division from demolishing the Southern Railway Station. Now, even if he overruns my delaying unit in the Leatherworks he will not have enough movement to get into the Station.

The German finally sees the light, but it may be too late. He compounds his earlier errors by throw-

ing away the Advantage on a non-critical attack for a reroll. Now, when he does need it he won't have it.

The Russian response is both dangerous and necessary. The Leatherworks should be a scene of many battles, but not major Russian defenses. This is where the Russian armor should counterattack in piecemeal fashion to buy time for the stouter defenses in the Southern Railway Station. The Russian is now in danger of paying for his folly in not strengthening 61 and 33 earlier. Area 34 is now the weak spot in the Russian lines, and although the Germans don't have a lot to exploit it, an Overrun there is very possible and would bring them nearly to the water's edge. A window of opportunity is again being left open for the Germans.

Call the turn a draw. The German waste of the Advantage is balanced by the Russian gaffe of moving out of 34 without a prepared defense in 61. The Fate Gauge now reads 8.3:7.6 for the German.

[G5] All three units [25] vs 34 [10:5, 11/8] [8CP: K: 2-3-4, 2-2-5; Overrun] all three units [34] continue to 61

Exploit the weak spot while hemming the enemy in. Now I have more freedom in choosing where to make my next main assault with the 94th Division. Two more riverside areas are now vulnerable.

[R7] 1-3-4 [31] to 63

Had Ken not overrun Area 34 (he had only a 34% chance), my last move would have been an effective delaying tactic. I made a mistake in not parking a couple of Disrupted units in West Stalingrad earlier. I was hoping that I would have some remnant of my force from 34 to retreat there and prevent just the kind of penetration he has made. You may wonder why I do not move a unit into Tsaritsa Woods to isolate the Germans who broke into West Stalingrad and prevent a further thrust into the Downtown Ferry Landing. Unfortunately, I have only five Fresh units left. At least three of them have to stay at Kuibyshev Sawmill if I want to have a chance of keeping it. The 13th Guards unit at the Grain Elevator slows movement into Area 61. As things stand, the only unit capable of reaching the Downtown Ferry Landing is his 6-6-8 Recon unit. By sending my 1-3-4 there first he has only a 55% chance of gaining control with such an attack. A move into the Tsaritsa Woods could be easily crushed by units of the 94th, and then I would no longer have a unit to move into the Ferry Landing if he manages another daylight turn.

BINGO! Lady Luck continues to smile on the German and he responds with the perfect attack at the right time. Although I normally dislike using two armor units in the same attack, it's getting kind of late in the day to hope for two attacks into 34. The Overrun is needed before nightfall, so the combined armor attack in this case is the right choice. I'd have felt a lot better about it though if the German still had the Advantage for a second shot at it. This was a spot worthy of its sacrifice. However, having made the perfect attack, our German now gets carried away and neglects to leave a unit behind in 34 to guard his rear. His thrust to the river can be cut off without even making an attack. It is a foolish error.

But the Russian is intimidated by the presence of the 94th Division poised to swat any counterattack and rushes to occupy the Downtown Ferry Landing instead. If he doesn't cut off that breakthrough now he will have three Fresh German armor units poised to attack 62 and 63 in the morning. On the other hand, if he takes back and holds 34, they are harmless and will require extrication rather than pushing on to the Volga. "He who defends everything defends nothing." The Sawmill can spare two units. To attack the Sawmill with enough force to take it, the German would probably have to abandon

the 24th Armor—he can't do both at once with any prospect of success. So what if the 94th retakes the Tsaritsa Woods? That leaves that much less to attack Kuibyshev and the Russian can still move his 1-3-4 to the Downtown Ferry Landing on the next impulse if the day continues. Need I say that all of this could have been avoided if any of the Russian hordes wasted in 32 had been left in 61 to prepare a defense in depth?

The turn is overwhelmingly German, fortified further by an 8.6:7.6 reading on the Fate Gauge. The game is now the German's to lose.

[G7] 5-2-5 [26] vs 27 [6:2, 6/7] [3CP: K: 3-2-5; Overrun] (Day ends)

This is a good opportunity to destroy a helpless unit.

NIGHT, SEPTEMBER 15:

[R3] All three reinforcements to 63 [one 4-6-4 and the 0-1-4 (D2)]

That plugs that gap—although not as well as I had hoped. I wish the Germans would stop blowing my boats out of the water.

And lose it he shall with moves like this. Attacking the Leatherworks does absolutely nothing to safeguard the rear of the 24th's penetration. An open highway through the Southern Railway Station to 34 still exists. The German should attack 33 with the Pioneers at 6:5 to plug that gap, or at least move his rear FLAK/PAK units to 34. And what's wrong with moving that 6-6-8 into 63 and taking that 55% chance to win the area that the Russian offered? Even if it fails, it will further interdict the arrival of Russian reinforcements. The name of this game for the German is get to the river.

The Russian landing site choice is perfect, although I'm sure he wished two of them hadn't been disrupted in the process. The German continues to enjoy more luck than his play deserves.

The turn goes to the Russian—although he is hanging on by his fingernails.

[G3] 4-2-5 [28] 31 vs rubble [4:5, 10/6] [Clears one level of rubble]

Always use engineers at night to clear rubble in preparation for the next day's attack.

[R5] Refit Artillery Attempt succeeds

Finally! I need that artillery to stiffen my defense. Ken still has a gap in his lines, but I can't spare any units to exploit it. I'm really getting clobbered, and for the first time doubt whether I can win. My attrition is too high. Kuibyshev may fall at dawn. The only thing saving me is Ken's errors. He doesn't seem to be willing to risk losing a battle. Everything has to be perfect before he will risk committing his big divisions. This works to my advantage. In a game that lasts only a week, each hesitation buys precious time. He uses Ranged attacks so he won't risk being disrupted for an extra turn by entering the attacked area, which allows me to reinforce the area cheaply. Lastly, he used the Advantage unnecessarily and now it's mine.

The rubble clearance attack in 31 is an interesting choice, but not the best I fear. The German is relying too much on favorable dice rolls; although he's getting them, that can't last forever. As the Russian points out, his play is too conservative—at least for my tastes. In waiting to prepare an optimum attack, he gives the defense time to recover. I'd have preferred a night attack into 33 from 28 at 13:6 which—with even dice—would have cleared 33 and left the Germans poised to strike into any of the four riverside areas.

With the Pioneers in 31, the Russian no longer has freedom of movement in the Sawmill. To isolate the 24th, he must move the 4-6-4 from the Grain Elevator and through 33. To do that, he must first regroup from 63 into 62. That would be my move.

Figure 3: The Situation at Dawn, 16 September

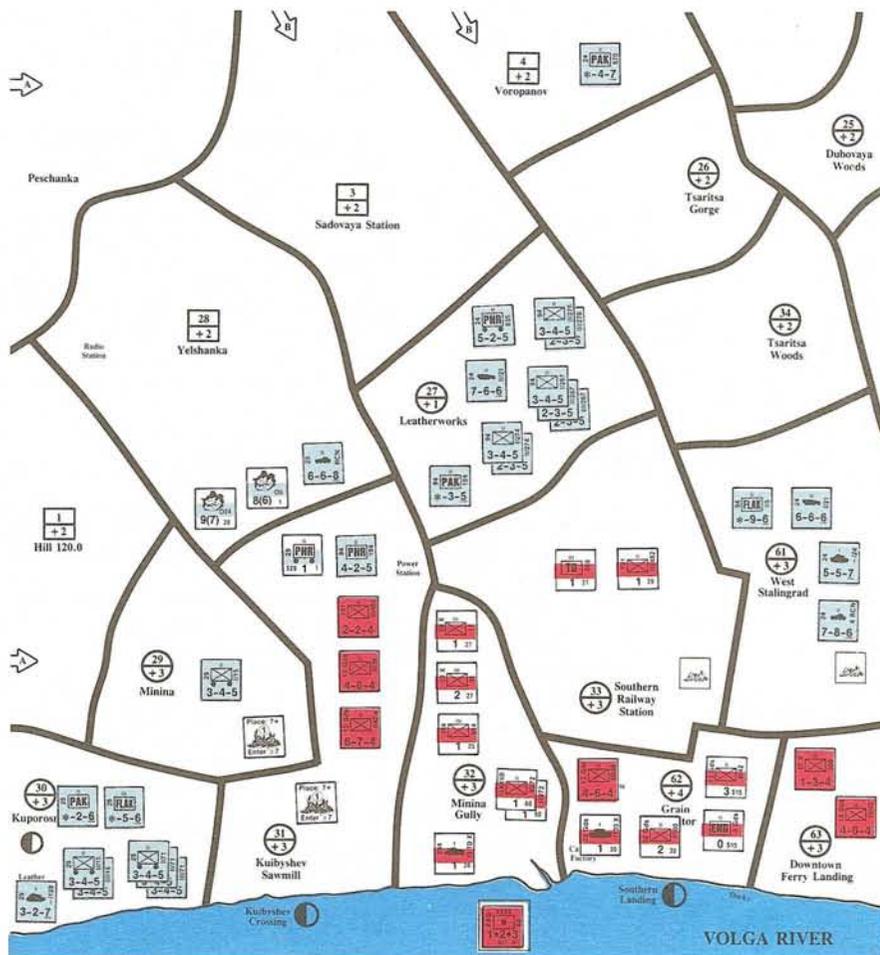
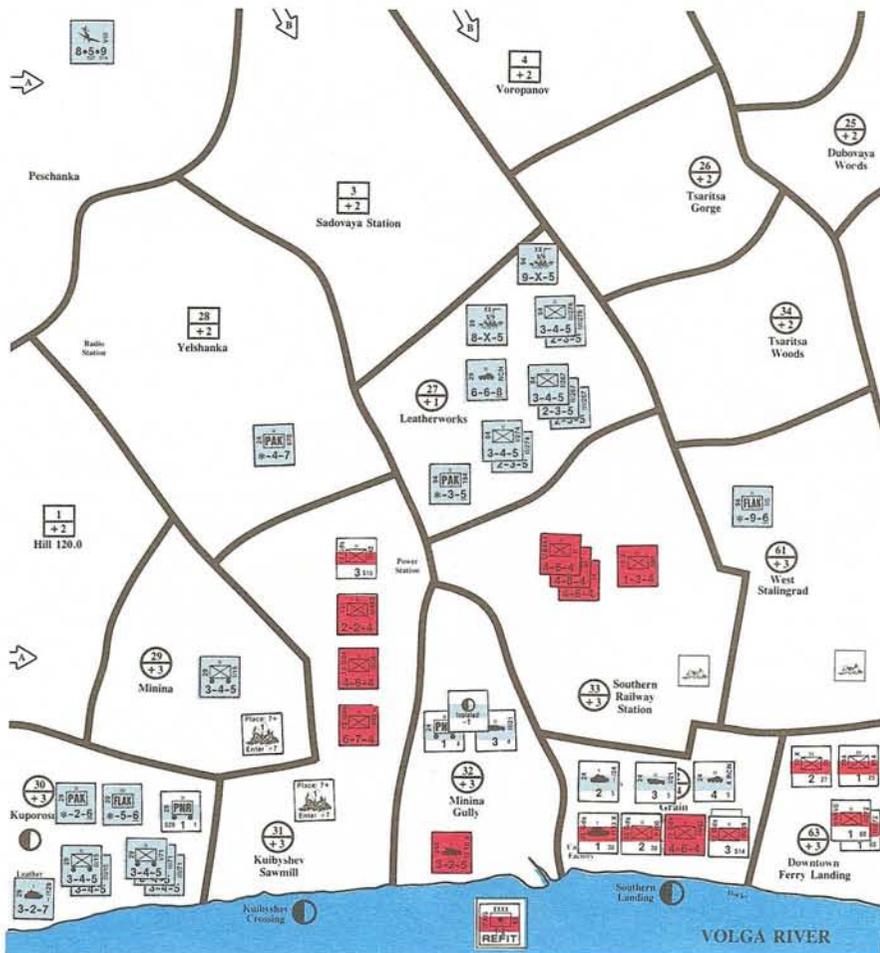


Figure 4: The Situation at Dawn, 17 September



If dawn breaks soon after the Russian move into 34, it might hold long enough to cut off the 24th.

The Fate Gauge climbs to 8.5:7.5, and with it a stronger hold on the game.

[G5] All seven battalions of the 94th Division [28] to 27 (9)

These units are preparing for a big assault in the morning while the Russians are still disrupted. I've abandoned my original plan to move up the Volga from the south since it seems to have stalled. If we can't go through the Sawmill, we will go around it.

[R7] Regroup 4-4-4, 2-2-6 (D3) [33] 62
Regroup *-3-5 [33] 32

The defense of the Southern Railway Station is no longer important. Ken has won other avenues to attack all of my riverfront property. I left a unit behind just to inconvenience him since it was disrupted for the duration anyway.

At least he's moving in the right direction, but I question the German's reluctance to attack at night. I'd have moved all the PAK unit from 28 to 33 for a 12:6 attack. Even without an Overrun, they would still most likely have two more attack opportunities this week against their choice of VP areas. The German failure to block 33 while temporarily expending so many resources with a single move leaves the Russian with a glaring counterattack opportunity.

As bad as the German move is, the Russian move is worse. Rather than stripping 33 to reinforce 32, I'd be doing just the opposite. As long as 31 and 33 stand, 32 is safe and the units there wasted. More importantly, had the Russian regrouped into 62 last time, he could now send the 4-6-4 from the Grain Elevator to 34 to isolate the 24th's penetration. The German counterattack potential would be limited to a 6:6 by the Recon in 28—which would leave a hole in the German lines at Yelshanka. It may still not be too late. Regroup now into 62 and if the German rolls > 8 the night will continue long enough to make the move next time. Instead he falls back to the river. What a lost opportunity!

Two terrible moves negate each other. The edge still belongs to the German but the game can be won by either side with a bold move . . . if only they'll take it.

[G7] 5-2-5 [30] 31 vs rubble [5:4, 10/11] [OCP: attacker (D3)]

Unfortunately the other half of my one-two Engineer punch failed to clear their rubble.

[R9] Regroup 4-6-4, 0-1-4 (D2) [63] 62

This consolidates my disrupted defensive groups. I can now spare the 13th Guards at the Grain Elevator as a Reserve for next turn.

The attempt to clear the rubble from the Sawmill is fine but doesn't go far enough. Why not take advantage of the impulse to also consolidate the 29th Division in 28 for both increased striking power and greater mobility. The failure of his attack highlights the weakness of the strategy—relying on two low-odds attacks to open the way for so many units really smacks of putting all of your eggs in one basket. More importantly, the 24th is still being left out in the cold. Area 33 should be occupied before the Russian wakes up.

The Russian move is perfect—although probably too late. Now if night hangs on just a little longer, the isolation of the 24th is at hand.

The Russian wins the move and even improves his lot on the Fate Gauge at 8.6:7.7. The German retains the edge, but he keeps asking for his hat to be handed to him.

[G9] Pass (10)

Hopefully the night will end soon.

[R11] 4-6-4 [62] to 62 via 34

This frivolous move, taking control of Tsaritsa Woods without changing my defensive setup and threatening to isolate Ken's armor in West Stalin-grad, will force him to respond with a frivolous move to break the encirclement.

Incredible! Simply unbelievable. A "Pass"? What are the FLAK/PAK units in the rear doing? Are they on leave? Move them into 34 to save the 24th for crying out loud! Or into 30 or 27, or 61, to free their occupants to move forward. Anything but this. Sheesh!

Be still my beating heart. Not only does the German hand the Russian the game on a platter, but the Russian hands it back to him after showing the German he could do it by moving into 34 and returning to the Grain Elevator! Maybe he thinks the German won't bother to move a unit into 34 to free his armor. I'm beginning to doubt it myself. Had the Russian had the balls to remain in 34 while also regrouping into 33, the German would be hurting. Next impulse is definitely the last night turn. The German would have no choice but to attack 34 at 6:6 and in so doing leave Yelshanka unguarded.

Both moves are terrible. The German's is worse because it is so obvious. It is easy to miss a good move in this game and such oversights can be forgiven—especially in the full game where the scope of play is so much larger. That's why it takes balls to volunteer for a replay and let someone take potshots at you with the advantage of hindsight.

[G11] *-9-6 [3] to 61 via 34 [Night ends]

I need to retake the Tsaritsa Woods that the Russians are too afraid to hold.

DAY, SEPTEMBER 16:

Dawn: Three of four Russian 4-6-4 Marines are given to the sector. Meanwhile, the German 3-2-7 reinforcement arrives in B.

[R1] Pass

Just waiting for the ax to fall.

At least he retook 34. He still didn't bother to prevent the same thing from happening again, although the opportunity will never be as ripe as the one just squandered by his opponent.

The Russian "Pass" is the best move taken in quite some time. The allocation of three of the four Marines to this sector bodes ill for the Germans.

[G1] 3-2-7 [B] vs 33 [4:4, 12/6] [6CP: K: 1-2-4; Overrun]

Another opportunity to kill a helpless Russian and get my reinforcements into the fray.

[R3] Pass

Ken's luck continues unabated and the storm is just starting.

Well, at least I can stop ranting about blocking 33 to protect the 24th. A long overdue move; but the German will have to get bolder than that. Time is on the Russian's side now. Three potent reserves will cross at night and eight disrupted units are due to return to Fresh status in the morning. The German strength is at its zenith. He must strike today—hard and often. A four-factor attack is not my idea of striking hard. He can't afford to wait for his Artillery and Stuka on the 17th—but it looks like that is exactly what he is doing.

The Russian move is the better move (or non-move) of the two, but the Fate Gauge continues to climb: 8.8:7.6. How long can his luck hold? Give me chits anyway.

[G3] 7-6-6, 5-2-5 [27] vs 32 [9:5, 9/7] [6CP: K: 1-2-4; R: 1-3-4, 2-3-4, two 1-2-4 (D4) to 62]

The enemy has suffered another crushing defeat and permitted the occupation of a riverside area. Soon Minina Gully will be mine

[R5] 4-6-4 [62] vs 33 [4:5, 8/7] [OCP: attacker (D3)]

Note the advantage of consolidating disrupted units. I absorbed four Casualty Points from his last attack by retreating units that were already disrupted. And they can do it again if the need arises. Even a disrupted Guards unit can be a potent defense. After my last move, Ken will have to fight to bring home his attack on Minina Gully. I was hoping to get lucky and clear out the wimpy German presence in the Southern Railway Station and actually isolate the Germans in Minina Gully!

Area 32 is a good target choice lest all those disrupted units come back fresh tomorrow, but why only a two-unit attack? Committing the 94th Division's infantry would have added another five Casualty Points. The 94th's PAK should be dropped off in 33 to guard against a Russian counterattack.

Apparently the Russian agrees because that's just what he does—but without conviction. If 33 is a good enough target to attack with a Guard unit, it's important enough to win. The Russian should have thrown in his Artillery for an even-odds attack. The Russian should not be so smug about his consolidated disrupted units. Those retreated units were due to become fresh in the morning. In addition, if one of them had been in 61 yesterday he wouldn't be in his present fix.

The Russian move is the better of the two but can't compete with the German luck, which holds the Fate Gauge steady at 8.7:7.6. The game is still the German's to lose.

[G5] *-4-7 [4] to 28 (5) [Day ends]

It is senseless to leave this unit where it is. Moving it to Yelshanka will free the 29th Recon for more important, aggressive action elsewhere.

NIGHT, SEPTEMBER 16:

[R3] Reinforcements to 63 safely; all three 4-6-4 [63] vs 33 [8:4, 7/8] [3CP: K: 3-2-7; Overrun] Counterbattery disrupts artillery

Thank God for the night. Getting all of my reinforcements ashore intact allowed me to attack with them in unison and preserved the Regimental Integrity bonus, which was just enough to score the Overrun. This not only isolates the Germans in Minina Gully but reopens a path to reinforce Kuibyshev.

This Von Paulus should be a private in the Fuhrer's Honor Guard. The Russian demonstrated last time how precarious his supply line was to Minina Gully, and yet he wastes precious daylight making a frivolous move that could have been done during any of his previous passes and leaves the Southern Railway Station fully exposed to a Russian counterattack. Does he think he'll never lose a dice roll?

The Russian is not blind after all. He makes the perfect response and hands Jerry his walking papers. The German does not deserve to win—and this move probably ensures that he won't.

The Fate Gauge holds steady at 8.7:7.6—but the turn belongs overwhelmingly to the Russian, and with it he reclaims the edge in the game.

[G3] 6-6-8 [28] to 27 (10)

The Minina Gully force is isolated and must be rescued before attrition sets in. However, the relief force will have to wait for daylight. The 29th Recon is in a position to attack with the 94th on the next day, is closer to the action, and the option of a two-pronged attack sometime in the future is available. The only Fresh Russian units that would be able to achieve the Tsaritsa Woods are busy defending the Downtown Ferry Landing, so there is no pressing need to place a defensive unit there.

[R5] Regroup 4-6-4 (D4) [33] 62

This consolidates my disrupted groups for next turn as the Marines will be Fresh in the morning.

Given the self-inflicted noose his neck now occupies, the German move is fine, although he continues to underestimate the Russian capacity to counterattack through 33 to Tsaritsa Woods to isolate the 24th.

The Russian move is likewise satisfactory—but a better one exists. By regrouping one of the Marines to 62 also, he could then regroup it to 63, and if the night continues he could then retake Tsaritsa Woods with the 4-6-4 in 63 (or least threaten doing so). Isolating the 24th now when it is Fresh is not nearly as effective as when it was briefly disrupted, but it is still worth considering because it will buy time and that commodity is running out for the German.

[G5] Regroup both Artillery [28] 27 (9)

The Artillery is now safer and in position to bombard either the Sawmill or the Railway Station.

[R7] Regroup all four (D4) units; 4-6-4 (D3) [62] to 63

Now my two Fresh units at the Downtown Ferry Landing are free to leave should I need them as a reserve.

Again no complaint about the German preparations—standard fare for so conservative a player—other than that I find it ironic that he now contemplates bombarding 33 with his precious Artillery when the area was his for the keeping a few impulses ago but he couldn't be bothered to reinforce it. Lost opportunities always come back to haunt you. A night attack into 62 and 33 with a pair of infantry units would have been better. The goal was not to produce casualties, but to pin the Russian Marines in 33, and gain an Interdiction Point for proximity to hamper the arrival of further Russian reinforcements.

The Russian move is fine, but my previously mentioned plan to regroup one of the Marines twice would have been better, as it would leave a fresh 4-6-4 in 63 should he get rambunctious. It is always best to have at least one Fresh unit in an Area to cut down opposing movement options.

[G7] Pass (9)

Night is for resting.

[R9] 1-3-4 [63] to 33

4-6-4 [63] vs 31 [4:5, 10/6] [3CP: K: 4-2-5; R: 5-2-5 (D4) to 30]

I sent the 1-3-4 to the Railway Station in anticipation of moving the Marines there to Kuibyshev. I finally get some luck and clear out Kuibyshev. If Ken doesn't react I'll be able to slip the Marines in there tomorrow and he'll never take it. I again think I can win now.

No, "night is for doing the frivolous movements you do in the day". You'll have plenty of time to rest in a POW camp.

The attack on 31 bears unexpected fruit. Could fate be changing her mind? The German will have to abandon his conservative ways and make a night attack to prevent the Sawmill's reinforcement if he still plans to take it.

[G9] 7-8-6, 5-5-7, 6-6-6 [61] vs 62 [9:8, 8:3] Russian uses Advantage [3/7] [0CP: attacker (D4)] (Night ends)

Lady Luck lured me on, then slapped me. I have a foothold in another riverside property, but this may not be enough to hold it.

DAY, SEPTEMBER 17:

Dawn: Isolation — 1 marker placed on Germans in 32. Only one of four Russian reinforcements is allocated to the sector; the 3-3-4.

[R1] Refit Artillery Attempt fails

I had to use the Advantage Chit to force a reroll or be left with only one disrupted unit in the Grain Elevator. Fortunately, the reroll went my way or I'd be in trouble. Let's hope it has changed my luck. As usual, I refrain from disrupting my units in daylight so I try to refit the Artillery.

Consider the possibilities had the German interdicted 33 and 62 last time as I suggested. In this impulse, in all probability the last night opportunity of the 16th, two Regiments of the 29th could have moved to 61 where they would add eight factors to the ten of the 24th. The Downtown Ferry Landing could have been attacked at dawn at 17:6. An even exchange of dice rolls would have overrun the area and left this massive force free to repeat the blow on the Grain Elevator the next day. An 11-factor blow from the 94th and three artillery/Stuka barges would also be available. As long as the German pinning units remained in 33 and 32, the Grain Elevator could be reinforced only from across the Volga and in the face of five I.P. This game could still have been won.

The Russian decision to return the Advantage was certainly correct given the outcome. The reroll should win him the game, although he is not entirely out of the woods if his lucky opponent can summon a few more big dice rolls. The Fate Gauge still registers an 8.3:7.4 German edge.

[G1] 94th Artillery vs 31 [9:10, 11/11] [0CP: increases rubble]

And me without any Engineers left to clear the rubble . . .

[R3] Successfully refits Artillery

This success brings my Refit rolls up to an average performance. My defenses are looking real good. I should be able to sit tight and hold on to what I have. The Germans are even helping me dig.

The German has made his bed. He is now reduced to negative attacks and hopes of a big dice roll differential. He's already been luckier than he deserves to be. Russian inactivity is all that is needed. All he has to do now is avoid shooting himself in the foot. God knows there are enough German toes lying around.

[G3] Stuka vs 31 [8:6, 7/5] [4CP: K: 4-6-4]

Since the use of the Stuka is limited to daylight hours, I need to use it now before I lose the chance.

[R5] Pass.

Is that the best you can do?

Kuibyshev is the wrong target. It is still not too late to win. Put a pinning unit in 33, use the Stuka against 62's Disrupted units at 8:6, and move everything possible to 61 to hit the Downtown Ferry Landing tomorrow.

The Russian Pass is adequate versus this German.

[G5] 29th Division Artillery vs 31 [8:10, 7/9] [0CP]

I guess it's time to give up on the Sawmill. Lousy dice!

[R7] Pass

What happened to that vaunted German luck?

The German has no gripe about his luck. He has rolled 226 in 27 tries for an 8.4 average (1.4 above normal) while the Russians rolled 208 for a 7.7 average. The problem is not the dice—it is the guy throwing them.

[G7] 6-6-8, two 3-4-5, four 2-3-5 [27] vs 33 [14:10, 7/10] German employs Advantage [7,7] [4CP: R: 4-6-4, 1-3-4 (D4) to 62] Counterbattery fails (Day ends)

What happened to my luck? Actually, I can't complain too loudly. But I did need one last good throw to give me a chance at victory tomorrow. That's why I sacrificed the Tactical Advantage chit.

NIGHT, SEPTEMBER 17:

[R3] Reinforcement to 31 returns to East Bank (D2)

Lady Luck has abandoned you for a more worthy master. This is a fitting move on which to close this little tragedy. Of the five areas still in Russian hands, the German elects to use his last dwindling strength attacking the only one that won't yield Victory Points. It is the worst of the available choices and gets the fate it deserves.

EPILOGUE:

In the remaining two days the German is unable to take another Area and loses one of his isolated units in Minina Gully to starvation.

This replay was certainly entertaining in that it showed us a little of everything the game has to offer: breakthroughs, isolation, even rubble clearance. However, the level of play was what I'd expect from relative newcomers—not blooded playtesters. The German's play was overly conservative and grossly inefficient. He allowed his strongest and most mobile force (the 29th Division) to lie idle most of the time staring at the defenses in the Sawmill—totally isolated from the rest of the battlefield. Just as bad, he showed us nothing of what can be accomplished by German use of pinning attacks to restrict Russian movement. Instead, he blundered slowly ahead with massive frontal attacks against prepared defenses.

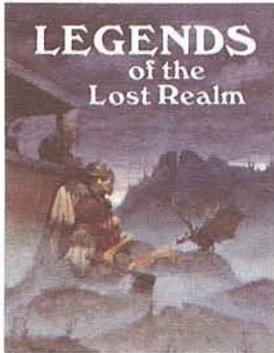
The Russian play, although considerably better, displayed numerous errors that the German failed to take advantage of, and therefore was able to prevail despite a significant shortfall in the luck category.

Nonetheless, this replay has provided us with an excellent vehicle to discuss the strategy and tactics of the game while witnessing the many changes of fortune which so typifies its play. It also demonstrates why game developers have to rely principally on their own instincts when judging "blind" play-test reports. The level of play varies remarkably from group to group; if the majority of test results reveal that side X is kicking butt while I am winning handily with side Y, I have to question the level of expertise of the testers. A game that appears imbalanced the first time may prove to be balanced (or even favoring the other side) with improved play. ☆

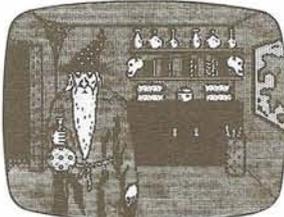
GENERAL INDEX 1964-1989

Updating the previous effort at listing every article and author in these pages, the new 16-page Index of The GENERAL brings 25 years of continuous publication into sharp focus. From the AH Philosophy to the contests, from our Series Replays to those excellent gamers featured in the "Meet the Fifty", every important facet of wargaming's oldest periodical is divided for ready reference by those interested in a specific game. The major portion of this new index is devoted to a game-by-game listing of every article that has appeared in these pages since the early enthusiasm of this hobby flared in the 1960s. Whether for the aficionado of a particular Avalon Hill or Victory Game seeking every word printed on it by the experts, or for the collector looking to insure that his AH collection is complete, or simply for the gamer wanting a new (though old) idea for winning, the GENERAL Index is a must. The GENERAL Index is available now for \$5.00 direct from The Avalon Hill Game Company (4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214). Please add the usual 10% shipping and handling to your payment (20% for Canadian; 30% for overseas). Maryland residents please add 5% state sales tax.

FIND THE HIDDEN STAFF AND SAVE THE KINGDOM



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The
Latest News
In
Competitive
Gaming

Area News

For Today ...
and Tomorrow

BY DONALD S. BURDICK

In my last column, I mentioned some of the advantages of play-by-electronic-mail as a means of conducting AREA matches. This time I would like to expand on that topic by including some information that may help you get started with PBEM. The first two things you will need are a computer and a modem. That's it for the hardware. Next, you must subscribe to a service that has an electronic mail facility. Two commercially available services are GENIE and Compuserve. Finally, you need an opponent. That could be a problem, for they will need the above also, but it will get easier as electronic mail becomes more commonplace. In the meantime, feel free to contact me at my GENIE address (D.S. BURDICK). I'll be glad to serve as a clearinghouse until better arrangements can be made.

There is an alternative to the commercial services which may be more convenient for some of you, especially if you have academic connections. Universities and research organizations around the world are linked together in a series of e-mail networks. Don Piro (DPIROT@UALTVM.BITNET) has utilized this linkage to PBEM several wargames—including *LEE VS. GRANT*. Don serves the clearinghouse role for members of AHIKS who want to use Bitnet to play, but he welcomes contact from non-AHIKS gamers also. You can also reach me on this system (DSBURD@DUKEMVS.BITNET).

On other fronts, there has been progress in the preparation for ladder tournaments in *WATERLOO* and *ANZIO*. The *WATERLOO* ladder is almost ready to go and could be underway by the time you read this. The *ANZIO* ladder is not quite as far along, but it too could be started. Rules for the *D-DAY* ladder are in place, so it can begin as soon as my final-round match with Kevin McCarthy is settled. Initial response to the announcement of a *STALINGRAD* ladder tournament have been encouraging, but it's still too early to say how many will participate; I should have the Round 1 pairings for you in my next installment. The games of that match are currently in Weeks 14 and 16. Counting *BATTLE OF THE BULGE*, that makes five ladders open to AREA members looking for a challenge. It is still a bit too early to apply for inclusion in the *D-DAY* ladder, but members can apply right now for any of the other four by writing Don Greenwood at Avalon Hill.

In the personal sketch department, my plan was to start with the current AREA champions. That of David Kopp, the *STALINGRAD* champion appeared last time, and I have requested information from some of the others. Unfortunately, it hasn't arrived yet and the deadline for this installment is imminent—so I'll just have to tell you something about myself. I teach statistics at Duke University. I have three grown children, and a wife who

has learned to tolerate my wargaming hobby. I am 53 years old and have been gaming for 24 of them. Other interests include singing in a choir and fooling around with my home computer. The games I most enjoy are *D-DAY*, *1776*, *STALINGRAD*, *BULGE '81*, *AFRIKA KORPS*, *ANZIO* and *WATERLOO*. I also have some AREA experience in *RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN*.

I entered the AREA tournaments in both *BULGE* and *D-DAY*. I would have liked to enter more, but two was all I could comfortably manage. I won all of my preliminary round games in both tournaments. The *BULGE* tournament had a full five sections in the preliminary round, but three of the winners had to withdraw from competition in the final round, leaving the crown to be settled by a one-game match with Frank Peterson—which I won. The preliminary round of the *D-DAY* tournament had only two sections. The section won by Kevin McCarthy took a long time to finish, and consequently the final round two-game match between us is still in progress.

On the whole, the tournaments were a positive experience for me, but they also had their problems. The most serious was the length of time it took (and is still taking) to complete the matches. It was clear to me that the time-control system had not functioned as intended and could stand some improvement. That is why the chess clock system was incorporated into the rules for the *BULGE* and *STALINGRAD* ladders. Based on experience so far in the *BULGE* competition, it seems to be working fine.

Again, I'll encourage all members of the AREA to pass along news of their gaming to me for inclusion in this column. The "AREA News" is what you make of it.



AREA MEMBERSHIP

AREA is an acronym for the "Avalon Reliability, Experience and Ability" player rating service. It draws its name from The Avalon Hill Game Company which originated it, maintains it, and whose games form the medium of its competition. The system, after a dozen years of operation and a recent overhaul, is quite simple in concept—winners and losers in postal matches (or, less commonly, face-to-face games) exchange points based upon their relative standings. The AREA Code of Conduct governs all possible realms of conflict (other than that upon the cardboard battlefield). One-time membership dues are \$6.00. For those interested in learning more about the AREA, a flyer containing copies of the several articles that appeared in Vol. 25, No. 2 offers in-depth information on the ratings system and its regulations. This is available free upon request from Don Greenwood, c/o Avalon Hill.

THE FORGOTTEN YEAR

PANZERBLITZ Situations for 1942

By David Howery

No doubt about it, 1942 was an exciting year. And a turning point in the history of the world. Rommel was stopped at El Alamein; Japan lost the initiative in the Pacific at Midway. And, central to the cause of the Allies was Stalingrad, where the Wehrmacht lost the best part of an army and their Russian front was torn asunder.

The year began with the German army fighting for survival in front of Moscow. The Russian winter offensive was taking a heavy toll of their men and horses. The Wehrmacht had to cope with partisans, as well as the fresh reinforcements pouring in from the Far East. But as spring came, the Russian attacks faltered; and the Germans launched their own massive offensives in the summer. Striking in the south, the German forces charged over the River Don, grabbing at both Stalingrad and the Caucasus. In the end, they held neither. In late fall, the Russians launched the pincer attack which trapped the 6th Army in the ruined city. As 1943 began, the German army was again fighting for survival—but this time there would be no resurgence. The war had turned against Germany in the East.

Although the battles of 1942 can provide many interesting tactical situations, *PANZERBLITZ* alone is not sufficient to recreate them; thus the period has been mainly ignored by scenario designers. However, with the counters given in the game, and the counters originally provided with Ramiro Cruz's "*PANZERBLITZ 1941*" (hereafter, *PB 1941*, found in Vol. 13, No. 3 of the *GENERAL*), and a few odd counters as described, actions from this pivotal year can be simulated. The following is a brief overview of the counters necessary:

Infantry: All counters given in the game are used, including cavalry forces and CPs.

Towed Guns and Mortars: The Russians may use all units except the 57mm anti-tank gun (not in service until 1944). The 152mm howitzer from *PB 1941* is also needed. The German player may make use of all types given in the game. The 37mm anti-tank gun from *PB 1941* was discontinued in early 1942 in the Wehrmacht, but was still in use in some minor Axis units. New counters in this category are the 75mm, 105mm and 150mm howitzers; these are not found in this game, but may be adopted from *PANZER LEADER* where they appear in German colors.

Transport: Both sides may make use of all the types provided in the game. However, the Russian half-track was so rare, it should be restricted to Recon battalions (as noted in the "Designer's Notes").

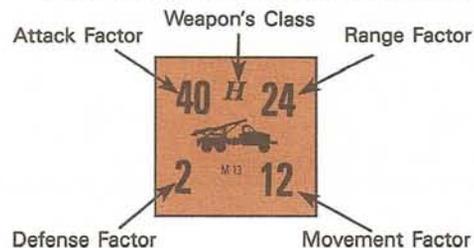
Self-Propelled Artillery: The Russian player has one new unit available not found in any countermeix heretofore: the M-13 Katyuska rocket launcher. The M-13 has the same movement penalties as a truck. The German Wespe first entered service in late 1942, and should be so restricted. No other SPA are available.

Armored Cars: The German 234/1 in the game can be used to represent the 231 model extant in 1942; both were very similar. No other AC are available.

Assault Guns: Only the German player will have these. The SG III from *PB 1941* will be needed for any early-year situations. The StuH 42 from the game is available in the latter half of the year. No other Assault Guns are available, since the Russian KV2 (from *PL 1941*) was discontinued in 1941.

Tank Destroyers: The Russian SU 76 is available in the second half of the year. The German Pzjg 47 from *PB 1941* was in service through the winter months of early 1942. By summer, though, they were replaced by the Marder and STG III75 present in the published game.

Tanks: Some say that 1942 was the year of "transition" for the tank. The Russians did away with the BT5, BT8, T60, T28 and T26B; all of these were available only in the first months of the year. The KV1 (from *PB 1941*) and T34c are available all year long. The Germans have the Lynx (Pzkw II) available throughout. For the early winter, the Pzkw IIIh and Pzkw IVd (*PB 1941*) are present. Beginning with the summer offensive, the Pzkw IIIj Special and Pzkw IV Special become available; the IIIj and IV are both found in *PANZER LEADER* (although only two of the former are provided therein, so players may have to craft more). The minor Axis powers made use of the obsolete PzKw 38, which was very similar to the PzKw III from *PL 1941*, so that counter may be substituted. Finally, the ever popular Tiger I is available in the final months of the year. No other tanks are available.



As for the situations themselves, a word on the history of each action should serve to give players some basis for play. I don't claim that these are exact simulations of the specific battles; but they are representative of the given time and place. These situations have been designed for fun and balance, rather than slavishly copying history:

Situation 1: By January 1941, the German Army was clearly on the defensive. Russian counterattacks threatened to encircle Army Group Centre. Hundreds on both sides were dying in the bitter cold. The road from Roslavl to Yuhknov was a vital supply route for the German 4th Army. The 10th Motorized Division had drawn the responsibility of securing the road southeast from Yuhknov. Throughout January, disjointed Russian forces tried to cut the road. Partisans came out in droves. Russian cavalry, ski troops, paratroopers and even regular infantry units attacked—often in cooperation with the partisans—small German detachments. The fighting was as savage and bitter as any. Eventually, German convoys could only move with heavy escorts. In spite of the heroic efforts of the 10th Motorized, Russian troops did manage to cut the road in several places. On 3-5 March, the 10th finally had to retreat across the River Urga. Their position was a poor one, and the Germans barely held it. Eventually, however, the thaw arrived and doomed the Russian supply system of sledges and skis.

Situation 2: The German summer offensive opened with both tactical and strategic surprise paralyzing the Russians. The Russian command had expected the Wehrmacht to attack towards Moscow again, not to the south. Even worse, the Russian armies

in the Ukraine had been weakened by an abortive attack on Kharkov in May. The Germans simply rolled over the enemy in their path, tearing open a huge gap between Kursk and Kharkov, and drove to the Don with little to slow the advance. Russian counterattacks at this stage were piecemeal affairs, badly coordinated and easily brushed aside. But, once STAVKA realized fully what the German intentions were, they deployed massive reserves to blunt and stop the summer advance.

Situation 3: As the panzers thundered on toward Stalingrad, the infantry of the German 2nd Army protected the exposed northern flank between Orel and Voronezh. The Red Army tried several times to penetrate this line, but their attacks were disorganized and ultimately failed. The Russian attacks, however, did cause some concern among the German High Command, which was tempted to hold back the armor to support the infantry formations. But in the end, the attacking Russian 5th Tank Army was nearly destroyed due to fuel shortages, poor communications, internal disorganization and German attacks.

Situation 4: As the savage street-fighting continued in Stalingrad, the 14th Panzer Corps took up positions on the hills north of the city. The Russians quickly moved the 1st Guards Army onto heights across from them, leaving an expanse of flat, open fields between. The Guards were then launched in a series of disastrous attacks, all of which failed. Finally, the 66th and 24th armies were joined with the Guards and all three hit the corridor, covered by heavy artillery barrages. But the 14th, though pressed, was saved by its own artillery which broke up the massed Russian formations with accurate fire.

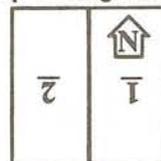
Situation 5: What need be said? The famous Russian counterattack around Stalingrad was brilliantly executed. Not only did it take the German High Command by surprise, but the initial blows on both flanks fell upon Rumanian armies, badly-led and poorly-equipped. North of the city, Rokossovsky's 5th Army stormed out of their positions around Kremenskaya and smashed into the thin lines of the Rumanian 3rd Army. The Rumanians put up stiff resistance at first, but were simply overwhelmed. Some formations fled the debacle at midday (even leaving their artillery intact for the Russians to capture). In truth, the Rumanians had little chance against the powerful forces massed against them, and saving men from capture was more important to their commanders than futile last stands. [*The German equipment given in the situation was not what the Rumanians actually had, but it is inferior enough to represent them adequately.*]

Situation 6: With the German 6th Army trapped at Stalingrad, the 4th Panzer Army was given the task of opening a corridor to it. In fact, it was planned for the rescuers to drive within twenty miles of the 6th's lines, due to the severe fuel shortages inside the Russian ring. The 4th attacked in the Kotelnikovskiy sector and fought their way 30 miles to the River Askay. But at this point the Russians launched several spoiling attacks in other areas, forcing the German command to divert troops from the 4th Panzer to block these thrusts. After a series of intense struggles along the Askay, the Germans were forced to retreat. The rescuers had come within 35 miles of the trapped 6th Army, but it was all in vain. One month later, the 6th was gone. The year 1943 opened with a retreat from which the Wehrmacht never recovered.

1942 Situation #5

SOVIET BLITZ OF RUMANIAN FORCES (19/11/42). Three brigades of the Russian 65th Army attack a regiment of the Rumanian 3rd Army near Kremenskaya.

Map Configuration



★ RUSSIAN FORCES



Elements of 252nd Rifle Division, enter anywhere on the north edge of board 2 and/or 1 on Turn 1.

5 I 4	3 I 1	3 I 2	6 I 6	7 A 3	12 A 5	3 M 12	12 A 6
16 RIFLE 144 1	4 RECON 134 1	8 111 1	2 12.7 mm 0	3 45 mm 13 0	2 76.2 mm 31 0	3 87 mm 89 1	9 134 C 938 11
x 9	x 2	x 1	x 2	x 2	x 2	x 2	x 12

40 H 24	0 C 0
2 TRUCK 424 12	1 TRUCK 424 12
x 2	x 8

VICTORY CONDITIONS:

The Russian player receives one point for each Russian unit exited off the south edge of the mapboard and one point for each German unit destroyed at the end of play.

- Marginal = gain 20 points.
- Tactical = gain 35 points.
- Decisive = gain 50 points.

✚ GERMAN FORCES



Elements of the 5th Infantry Division, set up anywhere on either board between rows W and O, inclusive. Trucks and Wagons may not set up loaded. The PzKw III may not transport any unit.

3 I 6	2 I 4	5 A 2	4 H 10	2 H 12	3 M 12	5 A 2	0 C 0
8 RIFLE 152 1	5 SECURITY 123 1	3 37 mm 0	1 20 mm 61 0	2 75 mm 0413 0	3 81 mm 81 1	6 PzKw III 8	1 TRUCK 432 12
x 12	x 3	x 2	x 2	x 2	x 2	x 1	x 4

0 C 0
1 WAGON 412 3
x 4

VICTORY CONDITIONS:

The German player receives one point for each German unit exited off the south edge of the mapboard and one point for each Russian unit destroyed or remaining on the mapboard at the end of play.

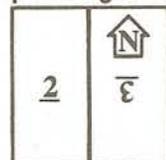
- Marginal = gain 20 points.
- Tactical = gain 35 points.
- Decisive = gain 50 points.

Russian moves first													
TURN													
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	END					

1942 Situation #6

GERMAN RELIEF ATTEMPT AT STALINGRAD (19/12/42). Two regiments of the 57th Panzer Corps strike a Russian brigade of Trufanov's army, charged with protecting the southern flank of the encirclement, at Kotelnikovo.

Map Configuration



★ RUSSIAN FORCES



Elements of 96th Rifle Division, set up anywhere on board 2 and/or 3 north of row Q, inclusive.

5 I 4	8 I 1	3 I 1	3 I 2	6 I 6	7 A 3	12 A 5	2 M 12
16 RIFLE 148 1	12 SMG 184 1	4 RECON 135 1	8 112 1	2 12.7 mm 1 0	3 45 mm 14 0	2 76.2 mm 32 0	3 87 mm 82 1
x 9	x 2	x 4	x 1	x 1	x 3	x 3	x 3

3 M 12	24 M 20	0 - 0	12 A 6
3 87 mm 87 1	2 120 mm 93 0	1 CP 201 0	13 10
x 1	x 1	x 1	x 4

VICTORY CONDITIONS:

- Marginal = destroy 12 German units.
- Tactical = destroy 25 German units.
- Decisive = destroy 35 German units.

✚ GERMAN FORCES



Elements of the 6th Panzer Division, enter on the southern edge of either single mapboard on Turn 1.

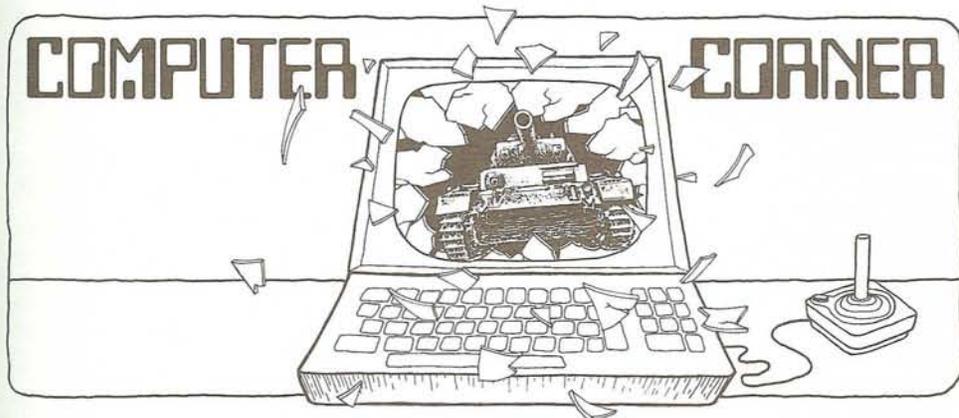
3 I 6	3 M 12	15 M 20	8 A 6	14 A 8	15 A 12	12 A 8	40 H 32
8 RIFLE 144 1	3 81 mm 83 1	2 120 mm 94 0	7 PzKw III 7302 9	8 PzKw IV 936 8	12 TIGER I 8	7 MARDER B12 8	5 WESPE 623 8
x 18	x 2	x 2	x 4	x 3	x 2	x 2	x 1

2 C(I) 4	0 C 0
4 HALF TRK 447 10	1 TRUCK 435 12
x 11	x 11

VICTORY CONDITIONS:

The German player wins a Decisive Victory if, by the end of the play, he has established a north-south corridor (from edge to edge) at least three hexes wide and free of all Russian units. Any other result is a Russian victory.

German moves first													
TURN													
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	END	



Strategies and Solutions

By John Huff

Before I get started, we [the staff of *Microcomputer Games*] wish to extend our thanks to those 350 or so readers of *The GENERAL* who responded to our plea for playtesters. All of you have been installed on our new database and will be contacted as soon as we have suitable products available for the testing. Because of the number of responses, we can expand the test base for each product. Also, the quality of the responses was (on the average) far above that for any previous calls we had put out. This not only speaks well for our readers, but gives us great hope for the future.

Winning Strategies for COMBOTS

Many *COMBOTS* players by now may have noticed that it is somewhat difficult to destroy an alien machine. This is especially true in the beginning, when you are operating a 10- (or at most 20-) ton machine. In addition, if you have been pounding away at the wrong sections, you will ruin the salvage value of the target even if you do take it down.

There are a few simple tactics you can employ to give yourself an edge over the computer. One such strategy is to try to locate the power plant of the target machine. This is done by keeping track of and working over one section of the machine at a time and, while doing this, take note if the power output of the TVD reflects any power loss. Once you have found the proper location, devote all your efforts to destroying the power plant. You cannot salvage it anyway, and destroying it will minimize damage to the devices which can be salvaged.

A second tactic involves timing. Keep in mind that close combat is resolved first, then missile strikes, then ground movement, and finally normal combat. If the target is not jumping, you can get in two strikes *before* he gets to move. If you elect to remain stationary, your normal ranged weapons (lasers, autocannons, tractor beams) will get to go off first. If you make good use of terrain, you can get in three or four shots first.

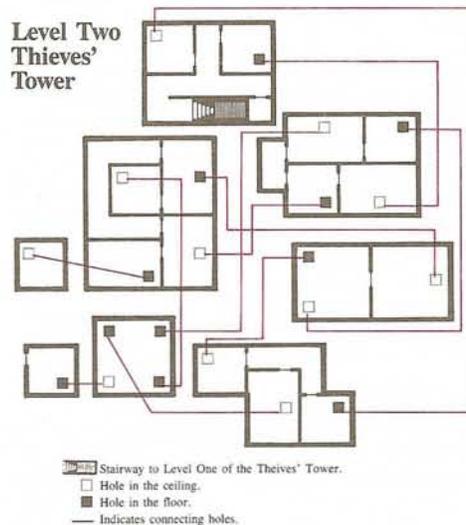
With energy weapons, make use of the shield data on the target. If the target is showing a 40KW shield and your energy weapon is damaged to where its maximum output is less than 20KW, you cannot penetrate his shield under any circumstances. Remember also that energy weapons attenuate at a rate of 1KW per hex. Simple mathematics will keep you from wasting shots.

When designing missiles, if you don't have a lot of credits, build small armor-piercing rockets. If you have some credit to burn, a magazine with a few large area-effect rounds will give you the ability to reduce the target's armor. When you find an opponent with no shields but seemingly impervious to your weapons, this is a way to weaken him. Remem-

ber, area-effect energy weapons will not damage the armor. They are used to overload shields and do some damage (through feedback) to the power plant. Once you weaken the armor on a given section, it eventually becomes possible to penetrate that armor.

When constructing your fighting machines, one approach is the "hit-and-run". Put a lot of firepower and speed into your machine and then try to pick your best time to attack. A good hit-and-run machine also makes a good scout or forward observer as well. However, always team it with a slower, more heavily protected machine with lots of teeth. By itself, it is too easy to disable.

One final bit of advice. In *COMBOTS*, it is very easy to get into a toe-to-toe slugfest. This can even be a winning strategy upon occasion. But using a more elegant strategy will (in the long run) give you more victories and reduce material losses. Like anything else, this takes practice.



Solutions to LOLR

Some of you may have been stumped by the three-dimensional maze on the 2nd level of the Thieves' Tower in *LEGENDS OF THE LOST REALM*. Here is the map. Remember to bring an adequate supply of rope before you start, and to check out *all* of the rooms. Once you enter the trapped maze (it's through one of the doors you will find), you're on your own.



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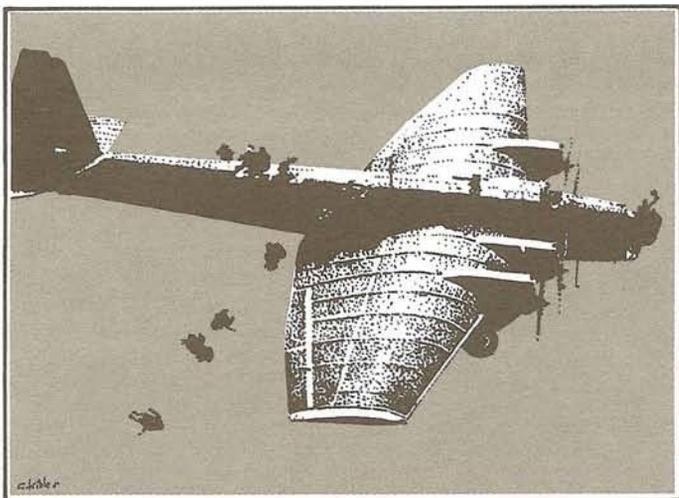
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DESANTNIKI

Reference Notes for ASL

By Steven C. Swann

It is one of the strange paradoxes of military history that the country which first developed the use of military parachute forces suffered from a marked inability to properly employ them. This nation was, of course, the Soviet Union. At the end of World War I, two of the defeated nations began researching new ways of employing their treaty-limited military strength. These two countries were Germany, and Soviet Russia. They both looked at the carnage that had been caused by positional warfare, and both independently decided that another war could be governed by the use of maneuver elements to prevent the staggering losses that were common during the war past.

Germany's research and military theories led their high command to adopt combined arms elements of armor, motorized infantry and artillery to exploit the breaches made by conventional infantry divisions. The use of the air force, especially in the ground support role, was developed to augment the ground forces. Late in the '30s, the Wehrmacht decided to develop a parachute force after witnessing a military demonstration hosted by the Soviet Union. The early history of World War II has shown how well Germany learned its lessons.

After the Russian Revolution, there arose in the Soviet power structure men that had the ability and foresight to plan and implement a combined-arms organization for their fledgling Red Army. They also realized that airborne forces could play a significant role in any war of maneuver. The Soviet theories of maneuver warfare were, in part, laid down in the writings of Mikhail Frunze during the early 1920s. In these, he rejected the entire concept of defensive positional war and presented bold new approaches involving maneuver, constant activity and offense. Even though Frunze died in 1925, his work led other Soviet military leaders in their efforts to modernize and develop a new Soviet army and air force.

In 1929, the Soviet military establishment embraced the theory of the "Deep Battle", which proposed that a battle should encompass not only the tactical and operational areas of an opponent, but the rear elements also. This "rear battle" would disrupt communications, command and logistical operations as an aid to the defeat of forward enemy combat units. What was needed to implement these theories, however, was a technological base. This lack of technology was the primary weak point in Soviet military plans (and was one of the main objectives of the five-year plan of the early 1930s). So it was that an effort to develop unique, "low-tech" efforts of carrying the war into the "rear" of the enemy came about.

Research and experimentation conducted in 1929-30 resulted in indications that large-scale dropping of troops behind enemy lines from the air was

feasible. During the same period, other military agencies had begun development of equipment adaptable to airborne use (including domestic-produced parachutes in April 1930). The proponents of the "Deep Battle" seized upon these and lobbied for concentration on this revolutionary tactic. On 2 August 1930, an airborne operation was conducted to test landing techniques during maneuvers in the Moscow Military District. During the operation, two detachments of 12 men were paraded in the rear of the opposing forces to perform a diversionary operation by attacking its headquarters. The exercise was repeated in September by an 11-man detachment who were to seize documents from a divisional headquarters. Both tests were highly successful, and a mandate to conduct more extensive tests in 1931 was given by the Red Army command.

The first "motorized airdropping" detachment was actually created in the Leningrad Military District in March 1931. This early detachment comprised a rifle company (with attached sapper, communications and light vehicle platoons) and a heavy bomber aviation squadron. Equipment included two 76mm guns, two T-27 tankettes, and numerous light and heavy machineguns. In June, a 46-man parachute detachment was added to the TO&E. The 1st Aviation Brigade was born, and began practicing the concepts of a combined-arms airborne force. During August and September, the brigade trained in both the Leningrad and Ukraine regions, making several successful airdrops and airdroppings.

Based on these, the *Revoensovet* (Revolutionary Military Soviet) ordered the creation of four aviation landing detachments in January 1932. There was to be one landing detachment in each of the Leningrad, Belorussian, Ukrainian and Moscow military districts. It was at this point in the progress that the limitations of Russian industry raised its ugly head. The Red Army just did not have the aircraft and equipment to raise these four forces. Only the 3rd Motorized Airborne Landing Detachment (Leningrad District) was actually filled out and equipped. The detachment had one parachute battalion of two companies and an airdropping group of one rifle company and one artillery battery. A parachute platoon of 30 men was raised by the Ukrainian District.

During 1932, three important directives were issued for airborne operations. First, Tukhachevsky stressed that the operational and tactical mission of an airborne operation must be deep enough in an enemy's rear to affect operations of the entire corps or army under attack. Second, the Chief of Airborne Forces also argued that separate airborne forces should be created that could operate in close coordination with other aviation units in attacks on enemy rear areas. The third decision was that an aviation park of aircraft suited for airborne operations would have to be developed and built. It was

decreed that some TB-1 and TB-3 bombers could be converted for airborne use immediately, but these aircraft were already in short supply and only a few would actually be converted.

On 11 December 1932, the *Revoensovet* once again ordered the creation of new airborne units; but these were to be brigade-sized. The Volga Military District was added to the list of districts that were to have airborne forces. The 3rd Motorized Airborne Landing Detachment at Leningrad was transformed into the 3rd Airborne Brigade, a combined-arms unit of one parachute battalion, one mechanized battalion, and one artillery battalion. The other military districts established landing detachments similar in organization to the original Leningrad detachment. Also, each rifle corps and division was authorized a parachute battalion in its own TO&E for use as special purpose troops. By the beginning of 1934, the Soviet Airborne Forces numbered some 10000 men; the structure included one airborne brigade, four airdropping detachments, and some 29 independent parachute battalions.

This airborne structure was to remain the same until 1936. The major cause of the slowdown in Soviet development of airborne forces was the lack of equipment, notably aircraft. Also, radios were found to be unreliable, and caused command problems in the control of units spread wide over the countryside. The manpower was available, but technology would not catch up before Hitler invaded. Two types of theoretical airborne assault were studied by the Soviet High Command during this period. One was carried out on the tactical level, and consisted of a company or battalion drop. The other was operational, and involved either regiments or full brigades. The Soviets were to excel in the tactical, but fail in the operational use, of airborne forces.

The Red Army maneuvers of 1935 were held in the Kiev Military District, and observers from Germany and several other nations were invited. The successful wargame was operational in size and included two parachute and two airdropping rifle regiments. The German observers were so impressed that the Luftwaffe immediately began an airborne program. Like the Russians, they were looking at maneuver warfare as the successor to positional warfare. By 1938, the Germans had developed an airborne force in secret under the command of Kurt Student. As we know, German airborne tactics and techniques were to be wildly successful in a number of theaters.

On the other hand, British observers were not greatly impressed and saw little future for airborne forces (until they saw them in action in the invasions of the Low Countries in 1940 and Crete in 1941). Like the British, the Americans saw nothing in this revolutionary weapon, and did not even begin to

study the possibilities seriously until 1940. The French would come to create two parachute companies, and this small force was overwhelmed during the 1940 debacle. Italy's military establishment had experimented with airborne units in 1928, and even had a company of trained parachutists, but then let its interest fade until the opening days of World War 2.

The years 1938 through 1940 were the years of crisis for the Soviet military establishment. For this was the period of Stalin's infamous purges, which caught many who had developed the Red Army. The final result was to limit the abilities of the Red Army by pushing politically reliable officers into command positions at the expense of the innovative and daring. Unfortunately, these political creatures did not have the experience nor knowledge necessary for high command. So it was that, during this period, the Red Army—along with the airborne units—continued to grow in quantity, but decline in quality.

In 1938, the existing airborne units were used as the core in development of six airborne brigades of 3000 men each. The 3rd Airborne Brigade at Leningrad became the 201st Airborne Brigade. During 1939, an additional three airlanding regiments were formed in the Moscow Military District. And in 1939, the airborne was committed to battle—albeit, they walked into combat. In the 1939 conflict with Japan at Khalkhin-Gol, the 212th (Far East) Airborne Brigade was used in a ground assault role in the battle for Mount Fui. With the outbreak of the 1939 Soviet-Finnish War (the so-called "Winter War"), two other airborne brigades received their initiation into combat. The 201st (Leningrad) Airborne Brigade operated under the 15th Army, while the 204th (Kiev) was placed in 15th Army reserve until the final stages of the war.

The first real airdrop of Soviet paratroopers came during the Soviet occupation of Rumanian Bessarabia in 1940. Here the 201st, 204th and 214th (Belorussian) brigades dropped well in advance of the Soviet ground forces. While there was no combat to speak of, their mission was to prevent destruction of strategic locations and materials and to secure the cities of Bolgrad and Izmail. The airborne units succeeded in all aspects, and were viewed highly by the Soviet high command and by Stalin after the operation.

In 1940, taking lessons learned by their experiences of 1939 and 1940 to heart, the airborne units were again reorganized. With all eyes turned toward the storm clouds over Europe, the expansion was to be made to upgrade to a wartime footing. Each airborne brigade would include two parachute battalions, two glider battalions, and an airlanding contingent of two battalions, plus tanks and artillery. Each brigade had 3000 men, 11 AFVs and four field guns, as well as attached recon, sapper, medical and support platoons for each. The airborne forces grew again in March/April 1941 with the creation of five airborne corps (see Table 1), using the brigades as a core. Each corps was to field 10419 men, 50 AFVs, 18 artillery guns and 18 heavy mortars. As always, the specter of deficient technology visited the Soviet efforts. The planned radio signals companies were never fielded because of a lack of radio equipment. The tank battalions that should have had 50 T-37s never were at full strength (later the tank battalions would be reduced to a TO&E of 32 AFVs). Numbering over 100000 men in five corps, the Soviet airborne forces could have been a force to be reckoned with; but without planes to transport them, they would soon sink down to being but well-trained infantrymen.

22 June 1941: the day that the dictators had been steered to by events. German infantry divisions crossed the Soviet Union's western borders. Panzer formations and motorized infantry moved forward to encircle massive Soviet pockets. The two proponents of maneuver warfare had clashed at last. Ironically, the Soviet command was caught by sur-

prise and paralysed in the first few days of the German offensive. Red Army units were ordered forward into untenable positions; others were sent forward in piecemeal fashion. Even the airborne units were thrown into the fighting to act as motorized infantry. Every theory for a war of maneuver was seemingly forgotten.

The first Soviet airborne unit to join combat was the 5th Airborne Corps of the Baltic District. This formation had been in the field for training exercises and joined with the 21st Mechanized Corps, transferring later to the 27th Army. After taking heavy casualties south of Daugavpils, the corps was ordered back to Moscow on 15 August 1941. Meanwhile, the 4th Airborne Corps was thrown in in an attempt to hold back the German AG Centre advance along the Berezina River. When the Germans forced this line, the corps joined the Soviet 13th Army in the defense of Smolensk. Meanwhile, the 214th Brigade of the 4th Airborne Corps was separated and eliminated as a fighting formation in the cauldron at Minsk.

In the south, the 1st Airborne Corps attempted to stand before the German AG South during its drive to Kiev. Here the Soviet 5th and 6th armies were reinforced by the 2nd and 3rd Airborne corps, which were thrown into the futile defense of Kiev. The 1st and 2nd brigades were completely destroyed and written off. The 3rd Airborne, encircled at Konotop, managed to fight its way out to the east, with great casualties. (In November, the 3rd would be reorganized as the 87th Rifle Division; later it was designated as the 13th Guards, earning its battle honors in the defense of Stalingrad.)

By August, only the 4th and 5th Airborne corps retained any semblance of fighting order. In September, all airborne forces were pulled from the front lines and placed directly under the command of STAVKA. At this time, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Airborne were reconstituted, and five new airborne corps (6th through 10th) were created. The battalion TO&E for all parachute units were strengthened from 458 to 678 men. But, due to the number of Soviet aircraft caught on the ground by the Germans, the Red Air Force was sadly depleted. STAVKA set about collecting and protecting all the suitable aircraft that could be located; it was realized that to be deployed as intended, these aircraft would be vital in the future.

On the night of 14 December 1941, Soviet airborne forces finally gave the Germans a taste of what they had been dropping on other countries since April 1940. STAVKA ordered the Soviet 30th Army and 1st Shock Army to drive the German 3rd and 4th Panzer divisions back from the northern approaches to Moscow. Should they retreat, the Germans would have to pass through the village of Teryaeva Sloboda. One battalion of the 214th Airborne Brigade (4th Corps) dropped behind the German lines at the village west of Moscow. Their mission was tactical—destroy bridges, interdict the road, and generally create confusion along the German route of retreat. For 15 days, the Soviet paratroopers harassed the Germans before joining up with advancing Soviet forces.

Encouraged by the success of the mid-December drop, another was planned for the Medyn area in January. This drop was to occur along the junction of the German 20th and 57th armies, and added a new twist to Soviet techniques. Here one battalion of the 201st Brigade was to parachute into the area and secure a landing site for an airlanding rifle regiment. This they did successfully, and one battalion of the 250th Rifle Regiment landed before winter weather closed in to prevent further reinforcement. And, on the nights of 18 through 22 January, the rest of the 201st Airborne made several drops in the Zhelan'ye area west of Moscow along the Moscow-Warsaw highway. Their goal was to reinforce the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps, operating west of the main German defensive lines. Together,

the paratroopers and cavalry were to assist the Soviet 43rd and 49th armies in their westward push. Tactically, the airdrop was a complete success and the two formations operated together for the next several months.

Most of the combat history related thus far centers around the Moscow area because of the size of the airborne units employed. But there were airborne operations along the southern fronts as well. On 13 December, STAVKA ordered the 44th Army and Black Sea fleet to reoccupy the Kerch Peninsula of the Crimea. As part of this operation, a small group from the 2nd Airborne Corps was to drop onto the area known as the Arabat Spit, a narrow neck of land across from Feodosia. Under extreme weather conditions, the paratroopers jumped in on the night of 31 December. In heavy winds, the small battalion was scattered across several kilometers. After spending several hours reassembling, the paratroopers began their long trek towards their target, the small town of Ak Monai. By early on 1 January, the battalion had occupied the town and set up defensive positions. Meanwhile, the Soviet 44th Army made its landing at Feodosia, and the 51st landed at Kerch. With enemy units on three sides, the German commander pulled his Rumanian and German units back, allowing the paratroopers to be relieved without combat occurring.

Even more common were the raids, conducted independent of any offensive or counterattack, designed to keep the enemy off balance. More than ten small airdrops were made by the 204th Brigade in July 1941. Here in the Ukraine these paratroopers were used to raid behind the German lines. Small units were dropped to strike at headquarters and logistical facilities. In one such, on 22 September, a 23-man unit staged an airborne raid on a German communications center near Odessa. This raid disrupted enemy communications to such an extent that two Rumanian divisions were pulled back from the siege of Sevastopol and Odessa to secure the area. This reduction gave the Soviets time for the evacuation of the Odessa garrison.

Airdrops were being made also to partisan units organizing behind the German lines, and often included Soviet paratroopers who were to lead or create new partisan bands. Against extensive German air patrols, courageous Russian pilots in inferior aircraft would fly on dark nights to reinforce and resupply the paratroopers and partisans behind enemy lines. Tactically, the Soviets were teaching the world a new airborne lesson—how to use airborne forces to support resistance behind the lines. One lesson, however, would apply to both the Soviets and the Germans: the Russian winter. The same first winter which caused such German misery prevented many of the Soviet airborne operations from being as successful as they might.

STAVKA was ambitious in its planning for the February counteroffensive. Without taking into account the fatigue of its units, the state of equipment and supplies, and the lack of suitable aircraft, the high command prepared plans for a major assault, with the objective being no less than the envelopment of an entire German army corps. As part of this grand scheme, the entire 4th Airborne Corps was to drop behind enemy lines to shut the "back door" in the encirclement. Due to the lack of enough suitable aircraft, the corps had to be dropped piecemeal over several nights. The inexperienced pilots and the weather caused the troops that were eventually dropped to be scattered over a 20-kilometer area of frozen ground. After the initial drop, surprise was lost for those units transported on later nights. Worse, the paratroopers had been assigned too many missions. The counteroffensive was a disaster, with only some of those paratroopers dropped managing to escape to the Russian lines.

From this beginning, the next six months saw the Soviet paratroopers become a constant thorn in the

German rear areas. From company-sized drops up to a drop by two airborne brigades, the *Desantniki* were to make numerous attacks deep in German territory. In a strategic or operational sense, these drops by the reconstituted 4th Airborne were not a success; but in the tactical sense, a few thousand Soviet paratroopers managed to tie down five enemy infantry divisions and two panzer divisions for four months. Survivors of these drops either made their way back to Russian lines, or joined local bands of partisans.

In the summer of 1942, the Germans made a major offensive effort in southern Russia. To aid in this critical situation, STAVKA ordered all ten airborne corps converted in Guards rifle divisions. That this help was sorely needed is shown by the fact that nine of the former airborne formations fought in Stalingrad as Guards. Still, Stalin and the Soviet high command foresaw the utility of paratrooper formations to replace those chewed up at Stalingrad, and another eight airborne corps were authorized in the fall of 1942. In December 1942, these airborne corps were increased in size and labeled Guards Airborne Divisions.

In what was becoming standard practice, STAVKA deployed all ten of the new Guards Airborne divisions on the northwestern front in February 1943. Here they fought in a ground role with the 1st Shock Army and the 68th Army at Staraya Russia and Demyansk, with only limited airdrops employed. Next, during April and May, all of the airborne divisions were transferred south in response to the German threat in the Kursk region. Seven of the divisions went to the Central Front, while the remaining three (the 1st, 7th and 10th) divisions joined the 37th and 52nd armies at Kharkov. Two of the airborne divisions made notable contributions in the battle. The 4th Guards Airborne conducted a successful defense against the panzer elements of

the German 9th Army at Ponyri; and the 8th Guards Airborne assisted in the victory over the 4th Panzer Army at Prokhorovka.

Following the German defeat at Kursk, the Guards Airborne divisions remained in a ground role when ordered to join in the pursuit of the retreating enemy to the Dneipr River. Meanwhile, behind the lines of combat, STAVKA raised an additional 20 airborne brigades and began their training. Most of the brigades were used to form six new Guards Airborne divisions (11th through 16th) in September 1943. Three of the new brigades, those not so used, were earmarked as assault forces for the next operational jump.

By 22 September, units of the Soviet 40th Army had secured small bridgeheads across the Dneipr. To strengthen these, elements of the 1st, 3rd and 5th Guards Airborne brigades were ordered to drop behind German defenses along the Dneipr River bend. By attacking from the rear simultaneously with units forcing the river from the east, it was hoped that Soviet armor could be ferried across rapidly after the bridgehead had been expanded. As before, this operational airdrop failed. Beyond repeating the mistakes made in early 1942, Soviet intelligence had failed to note that the Germans had strengthened the defenses in the area with various panzer and infantry formations. This increase in the defenses was not discovered by the Russians until after the staged airdrops had begun.

A preview of what would happen to the US 82nd and 101st in Normandy occurred. Lead elements of the 3rd Airborne Brigade dropped directly over elements of the 19th Panzer Division. Most of the small parachute units were not able to reassemble enough men to accomplish their mission; and the ones that did were soon under attack by the Germans. Some of the scattered paratroopers simply faded into the hills and forests to join partisan bands

and continue to harass the Germans. Most were killed or captured. Without the element of surprise, and in the face of strong ground formations, the Soviet paratroopers had been doomed to failure. It was the second and last attempt by the Russians to employ airborne forces in a mass operation.

Following the failure at the Dneipr River, the original ten Guards Airborne divisions all fought in the Ukraine during 1944. These ten became part of the 4th Guards Army and the 5th Army. The 4th Guards Army defeated the Rumanian forces facing them and pushed into Hungary during the summer and autumn of 1944. Meanwhile, in January 1944, the 11th through 16th Guards Airborne were redesignated as Guards rifle divisions and formed the 37th Guards Corps. The 37th took part in the battles to liberate Karelia from the Finns in 1944.

In the late summer of 1944, STAVKA again authorized creation of airborne units to replace those now serving as ground infantry. This year would see the largest levy to date. In August Stalin approved the raising of the 37th, 38th and 39th Guards Airborne corps. With these three corps, the first Soviet airborne army was created in October 1944. As always, the pressing need for fresh ground troops would destroy this airborne formation before it could be used in any airdrop. In December 1944, the separate Airborne Army was reorganized into the 9th Guards Army. In deference to its elite nature, the 9th Guards Army was not committed to a defensive line, but was held back for use in an offensive exploitation role.

Even though there would not be any further large airborne units created during the remainder of the war, creation of brigade-sized parachute units continued. These brigades totaled 3345 men each, with six 76mm guns, eight 45mm guns, 28 37mm AT guns, and numerous machineguns and antitank rifles. While wartime realities demanded that the

**TABLE 1: Table of Organization—
Soviet Airborne Corps, 1941**

Unit	ASL Equivalent
3 Brigades (each)	
HQ Company	
Brigade Artillery	6×76mm ART 12×45mm ART 6×82mm MTR
Recon Company	113 Bicycles
AA Company	various 6mm, 7mm and 12mm AA Guns
Signal Company	4×Radio (never formed)
Mobile Equip Company	15×Motorcycle
Tank Battalion	50×T-37 (later reduced to 32)
Long Range Recon Platoon	4×RSB
4×Parachute Battalion	(see Table 2 below)

**TABLE 3: Table of Organization—
Soviet Parachute Battalion, 1940**

Unit	Manpower	ASL Equivalent
HQ Company		
HQ Staff & Starting Co.	123	9-1 SMC 8-0 SMC 6×4-5-8 MMC LMG MMG 50mm MTR
3 Rifle Cos. (each)	141	
HQ Platoon		8-1 SMC 8-0 SMC 2×LMG
Control Squad	12	6-2-8 MMC
3 Rifle Platoons (each)	38	3×4-5-8 MMC 2×2-2-8 Crew 2×50mm MTR

**TABLE 2: Table of Organization—
Soviet Parachute Battalion, 1941**

Unit	Manpower	ASL Equivalent
HQ Company		
HQ Staff	37	9-1 SMC 8-0 SMC 3×4-5-8 MMC Radio (never implemented)
Signal Platoon		
Mortar Company	22	4×2-2-8 Crew 4×82mm MTR
Weapons Company		8-1 SMC
Demo Platoon	34	3×4-5-8 MMC 6×DC
MG Platoon	25	4×2-4-8 HS 4×HMG
FT Platoon	32	3×4-5-8 MMC 3×FT
3 Rifle Cos. (each)	176	
HQ Platoon		8-1 SMC 8-0 SMC 4-5-8 MMC 2×LMG 2×ATR 50mm MTR
MG Section		2×2-4-8 HS 2×MMG
3 Rifle Platoons (each)		3×4-5-8

major airborne units be used in ground roles, several small tactical and diversionary airborne operations were performed during the long months of 1945.

Fitting the Desantniki into ASL

The Soviet airborne forces were the Soviet elite. These men, usually volunteers, received better training, equipment, pay and leadership. Because of their training and leadership, the morale of the paratroopers was uniformly high. The leadership was particularly noteworthy. Even though the purges of the late 1930s stifled many of the lower-echelon officers of the rifle units, some small amount of initiative remained and was encouraged among the airborne units. It was this independence that would allow small numbers of men to inflict such confusion in the German rear during raids and larger operations. While the airborne forces never had much in the way of heavy weapons, the Soviet command did outfit them with more light infantry weapons than the normal Red Army squad had.

Because Soviet paratroopers were elite troops, I have chosen the 4-5-8 MMC as a good representation for the squad. Since these troops were trained to operate independently and in small groups on a regular basis, these should have the ability to deploy (A1.31) under the guidance of a leader in the Rally Phase. The morale of these exceptionally well-trained (for the Soviets) troops does not fit in the ELR Chart (as given in H1.28). Like their brothers the world over, the Soviet paratroopers were high in courage and eager to fight. Combined with their training, I would recommend that for the 7/41 through 6/42 columns the Russian paratroopers be given an ELR of "4", and given "5" ELR for the remainder of the war. For the 7/44 and 1945 columns, it should also be noted that their morale should be underlined.

Two Tables of Organization have been included with this article. The first, showing the 1941 Parachute Battalion, should be used for any scenario involving normal Soviet parachute forces. The second, the 1940 Parachute Battalion, would serve as a guide in establishing any of the 29 independent parachute battalions and brigades that were assigned to various divisions and fronts during the war. (As in my previous articles, SMCs of each unit are listed in the battalion and company HQ sections; exact assignment will have to be made after reference to your historical sources for the scenario being designed.)

As can be seen, the organization of the 1941 Parachute Battalion (Table 2) is much more complex than that of the 1940 battalion (Table 3). After the fighting in Mongolia and Finland, the Soviet High Command reorganized and strengthened the parachute battalions. More squad weapons and men were added to each battalion. The HQ Company now included the staff, medical, supply and clerical personnel that are associated with any headquarters. The staff officers are represented by the 9-1 and 8-0 SMCs; and as all personnel were trained for combat, three 4-5-8s have been included in the HQ Company. In 1941, the mortars were taken from the parachute companies and reformed into a mortar company under the direct control of the battalion CO. As the mortar calibre was also increased, four 82mm mortars and four 2-2-8 crews make up the 1941 Mortar Company.

In 1941 too, a Weapons Company makes its appearance with additional squad weapons. Actually, this is not a regular Weapons Company as the U.S. or British Army would think of such. Instead, there were three separate platoons, all under the battalion CO's direct control. For simplicity's sake, since this is confusing, we will label these three separate units the "Weapons Company". It includes machinegun, demolitions, and flamethrower platoons, and the company commander is represented as an 8-1 SMC. The demolitions platoon is outfitted with three 4-5-8

MMC and six DCs (two per squad). The MG platoon will encompass four HMGs with HS to man them. The FT platoon consists of three 4-5-8 and three flamethrowers.

Each of the three parachute rifle companies included a MG section in 1941. The company leadership is an 8-1 and an 8-0, with a 4-5-8 to show the HQ personnel. A company weapons pool of two LMGs, two ATRs and one 50mm MTR is shown in the HQ platoon as well. These weapons would be distributed as the company commander saw fit. Where the battalion CO controlled the HMGs, the company CO had at his disposal two MMGs and their crews.

The 1940 Parachute Battalion was a smaller unit, having a manpower of 546 men. It had what was known as a "starting unit" and a headquarters company at the battalion level. The "starting unit" is similar to a combat HQ that would drop into an area ahead of the main HQ staff. (It may be easier for those used to the American paratrooper history to think of it as a "temporary HQ".) For the Soviet paratroopers of this period, I have selected a 9-1 SMC as battalion commander, with an 8-0 SMC assistant. Each of the three rifle companies includes a Company HQ, a mortar platoon, and a "Control" squad. The mortar platoon is equipped with two 50mm MTRs and has two 2-4-8 HS to man them. The Control squad would be a politically reliable squad that would act much as American MPs would, with the added duty of assisting the company commander in the direction of his platoons. These men were equipped with sub-machineguns exclusively; therefore, a 6-2-8 MMC will be used to represent these political troops. Each of the three parachute platoons will be composed of three 4-5-8 squad counters still.

The Parachute Corps TO&E (Table 1) should be used in any situation where an airborne force fought as part of a ground army or front. This would be the only instance where the parachute motorized and mechanized elements would be able to fight with its own infantry. In any scenario dealing with airdropped Soviet paratroopers, use Table 2 or Table 3 as a reference. Remember that only two actions, that at Zhealan'ye and at the Dneipr River, were of operational level. All other scenarios featuring Soviet paratroopers should have Russian forces of no more than battalion size.

For any scenario set during the 1941-42 Winter Counter-offensive, players should incorporate the weather into their design. For December 1941, Ground Snow (E3.72) and Extreme Winter (E3.74) rules should be in effect. For scenarios in January and February, institute Deep Snow (E3.73) and Snow Drifts (E3.75) should be placed. For any other scenario, players should determine the weather as per the usual procedure (E3.) for the appropriate month. As the vast majority of Soviet airdrops were made at night, invoke the Night (E1.) rules.

As a final note for scenario designers, the Soviet paratroopers committed to the Dneipr River battle were lightly armed and equipped with limited supplies. In any action depicting this operation, the Soviet paratroopers should not receive the -1 Entrenching DRM. Any scenario dated after the initial day of the airdrop should also force the Soviet units to be governed by Ammo Shortage (A19.131).

The use of Soviet parachute formations in ASL has not before been considered. In fact, I hadn't realized until recently that the Soviet Union even conducted combat airdrops, much less pioneered the military use of parachute forces. Even in a world built around wargames, the possibility of learning something new will always be with we players. As with my other articles on light infantry forces, a scenario has been provided. Readers are urged to try the accompanying scenario highlighting one of the many successful tactical drops, this one at night in the depth of winter, made by the *Desantniki*.

PRICES DROP

Those fans of ASL who have yet to experience the joys of the *Deluxe* version of this popular game system might be interested to learn that the retail price of each of these modules—*STREETS OF FIRE* and *HEDGEROW HELL*—have been dropped to \$20.00. Given all the challenge of the scenarios, the beauty of the mapboards, and the information found on the AFV cards in these titles, this is a rare bargain. After three printings, no more are planned for these ASL modules; once current stocks are depleted, you won't be able to find either again. If your local store doesn't have these, they may be ordered direct from The Avalon Hill Game Company (4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214) at the price quoted above. Please add 10% shipping and handling (20% for Canadian orders; 30% for overseas orders); Maryland residents please add 5% state sales tax. For faster service, with use of a major credit card, you may wish to take advantage of our toll-free number [1-800-999-3222] in placing your order.

'90 ANNUAL

By the time you read this, the '90 ASL Annual will likely be in the final stages of production. The '89 Annual was an unqualified success—in terms of both sales and compliments. It is hoped that this year's effort will surpass it.

As before, the centerpiece of this issue of the ASL Annual is the scenarios—three for SL, three for DASL, and some 13 for ASL. These were culled from the couple of hundred or so that came our way over the past year. We think them an interesting mix, ranging from a Greek-Italian action in the Albanian hills to a German-American clash in the desert. The fact that these encompass a wide range of nationalities, boards, rules, and game lengths means that there is something for every player within these pages. Indeed, where else might one find a DASL scenario featuring the Japanese?

But don't overlook the articles. I've badgered some of our best writers to contribute their efforts to my tender mercies. Together, these articles offer some insights for play and much food for thought—maybe even a chuckle or two. Mr. Posey presents a look at the Italian army, in the same format as his pieces on the Americans and the Russians in last year's Annual. Steven Swann, in similar vein with his recent articles in The GENERAL, offers up "Reference Notes" for the First Special Service Force. My own "Commando Campaign" for SL has been laying around for years, but never seen print; this should give fans of the original system some hours of engaging play. The Series Replay ("Kahmsin" from WEST OF ALAMEIN) lets Mr. Nixon and company pontificate on expert play. And Mr. Stahler labored long hours on the "Programmed Instruction", designed to ease the transition of players from SQUAD LEADER to ADVANCED SL. Along with the regular columns and other odd bits, all these make for an informative and interesting package for the dedicated players of SL/ASL.

The '90 ASL Annual will see release at ORIGINS '90 in Atlanta. As last year, it will be 64 pages, full of color, and retail for \$12.

ELITE CLUB

Members of the club earn a 10% discount for LIFE on mail order purchases of any product from The Avalon Hill Game Company, Micro-computer Games, or Victory Games. This includes games, play-by-mail kits, parts, magazines . . . everything. This 10% discount will apply to any single order each year—a true savings for the buyer in these days when every penny is important. The best just got more affordable than ever.

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When you receive your order, an ELITE CLUB Coupon Ticket will be enclosed. The coupons, if attached to the order form, will allow you a 10% discount on everything listed on your order. Note that this can be applied to any *single* order each year. Obviously, it pays to make a multi-item order to obtain the maximum savings possible. And, upon use of the last coupon (1989), another ticket—good for an additional five years of savings—will be sent with your last shipment.

The scheme brings you the best in gaming pleasure—your favorite games, The *GENERAL* with its in-depth coverage of them, and the pbm kits and replacement parts to insure the fun never ends—at a tremendous savings. Any \$90.00 order directly from the company (even at our booth at ORIGINS) will qualify you.

FAME & FORTUNE

Well, maybe not much fortune . . . but certainly a little fame. We want you to write for The *GENERAL*. If you can string words together, and are knowledgeable about our games, there's a good chance you're just the person we're looking for. You can supplement our literary staff with articles on strategy and tactics, game analyses, Series Replays, historical commentaries, new scenarios or variants for any of our extensive list of titles. If you've ever had the urge to see your name in print, and feel competent to write on your favorite game, consider submitting your efforts for the consideration of our editors. The *GENERAL* was founded on the efforts of gamers themselves, and for over 25 years has relied on their good works. We encourage all such free-lance submissions.

The *GENERAL* will pay \$6.00 per running ten-inch column of edited text upon publication. (Letters to the Editor are not subject to remuneration.) Alternatively, authors may elect to take their remuneration in the form of our products, paid at the rate of 150% of the cash remuneration. At the end of each volume year, an EDITOR'S CHOICE article is selected by the readership. The author of this best article of the year will receive a \$100.00 bonus and a lifetime subscription to The *GENERAL*.

If this whets your appetite, set pen to paper. But first, write requesting a copy of our "Guidelines for Submissions" detailing the format and procedures for submitting articles. This may be obtained by writing to Rex A. Martin, Managing Editor. The "Guidelines" may save you some wasted time and effort.

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Two countersheets provide (for the first time) markers for Fortified Building Locations. A-T Ditches, Cellars, Guttled Factories and Hand-to-Hand Melee. Included as well are Perimeter, Location Control and Burnt-Out-Wreck markers for the Campaign Game, plus extra Russian and German infantry and SW. Two new weapons also make their debut: the Russian "Molotov Projector" and the German StulG 33B assault gun. Seven action-packed standard scenarios (in addition to those for the Campaign Game) are offered, most of which utilize only a small portion of the map. Also included is Chapter O, which contains the rules for several new terrain types (debris, railway embankments, interior factory walls, storage tanks, single-hex two-story buildings and culverts), all colorfully detailed in the standard ASL fashion.

Red Barricades features three separate Campaign Games which are designed for play exclusively on the new map, enabling the ASL gamer to create an ongoing series of interrelated scenarios.

Rated the highest on the complexity scale, **Red Barricades** boasts a "medium" rating for solitaire play. However, **Red Barricades** is not a complete game — ownership of ASL, *Beyond Valor*, and *Yanks* is required for play.

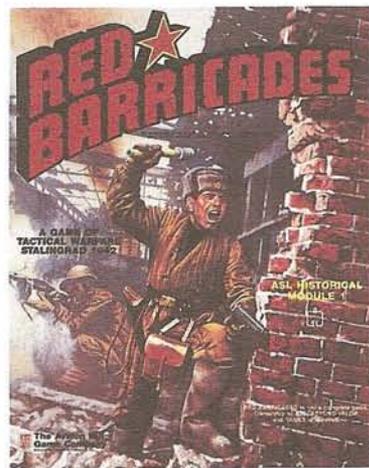
Red Barricades retails for \$25 in most hobby and game stores. If not available locally, feel free to order direct. Add postage and handling: \$4 USA; \$8 Canada, Mexico; \$12 foreign.

For quick credit card purchasing, call TOLL FREE 1-800-999-3222.



The Avalon Hill Game Company

DIVISION OF MONARCH AVALON, INC.
4517 Harford Road ★ Baltimore, MD 21214



Squad Leader Clinic

MASSED ARMOR ASSAULT

By Jon Mishcon

We feel that the best possible use of *ASL* is the ability of the system to recreate, on a very small scale, many of the problems that beset the commanders of World War II. Not to say this game system is a "simulation" (players have much too much knowledge and control), but rather an "artful copy".

The bitter lesson of World War I was that massed infantry assaults could not prevail against defending machine guns. Many of the weapons and tactics of World War II were in direct response to the failure of World War I armies. One of the best new weapons to arise was the "tank". This article, and scenario, reviews early World War II armored assault tactics and makes some suggestions for their use in play. A rather good test of *ASL*'s ability to force players into reviewing armor play.

There were essentially two schools of thought about armor tactics in the 1930s. The first treated armor as if it were high-tech Napoleonic cavalry. Light, fast tanks (Hussars, if you will) for scouting and screening; heavy, slower vehicles (Life Guards) for assisting infantry assaults. Given the indelible lessons of World War I, special consideration was given to crossing trenches and breaching fortifications. Many United Kingdom tacticians were strong proponents of this concept. This group did not consider the natural outgrowth of the technology of World War I as applied to armor—that is, the rapid-firing anti-tank gun. Small numbers of tanks were easy prey to hidden guns. While examples of these infantry-support tanks were to be found throughout World War II, the concept quickly fell into disrepute.

The second group of armor theoreticians proposed the massed armor assault. Large groups of tanks, acting with the support of dive bombers, would be able to overcome isolated anti-tank weapons and create breakthroughs. This, in fact, was the basis for the early German successes. Only as the war progressed did the vulnerability of the tank, without supporting infantry, become evident. As the infantry gained effective light AT weapons, and overcame "tank fright", unsupported tanks were to become as vulnerable as had been the earlier waves of infantry during WWI. Expensive lessons that led to the concept of "combined arms".

The tactical deployment of these early massed tank attacks tended to follow along different lines, depending upon the country of origin. The Germans tried to divide the assault into three waves. The first wave was normally composed of the medium tanks, usually in battalion strength. Their mission was to crash into and through the front-line defenses. In addition to exposing defenders, the initial tank "wedge" was to penetrate to the artillery positions behind the front line. The second wave was often made up of the heavier or support tanks. Often this second wave was the second battalion of the same panzer regiment. This wave, which often was accompanied by the mission commander, gave covering fire for the first wave, destroyed exposed AT guns, and hoped to open a hole wide enough for the safe passage of the third-wave troops. The third wave was usually infantry, whose job was to advance to positions to hold open the breakthrough and mop up any remaining defenders.

The Russians, given the limited independence of

their subordinate commanders, often simply pointed a tank unit in a given direction, named an objective, and off the tanks went. Early tank units were frequently mixes of various AFVs and, so it was hoped, they all supported one another as they drove on. One positive aspect of the Russian approach was the reduced dependence on leadership. No thought was required by the local commanders. One could assume that either the assault would drive to its objective, or be destroyed in the attempt.

However, this simple approach had the unfortunate effect of slowly separating the faster tanks from the slower on a long approach run. One element, rarely considered in board games, is that the small "fast" tanks often had poor cross-country performance. Bouncing along in a light tank tended to muddle your brains, while the heavier tank's ride was much smoother. In fact, after a trek across open terrain, the T-34s tended to arrive on the battlefield first, followed by the light tanks, and only later did the heavy tanks show up. On the combat field, or on roads, light tanks were still "faster", but mixing of vehicle types was such a problem that the Russians were later to use only "pure" tank formations. Note that in this case, "pure" refers to tank chassis; the armament could still differ from tank to tank, although this was still unusual because of Soviet supply difficulties. Additionally, the early Russian tanks, and those of many Western countries other than the Germans, were handcuffed together by the lack of radios.

Beyond consideration of the type of massed tank assault organization lies the tactical approach. German commanders recognized five different kinds



of attack: a frontal assault, essentially running head-on into the foe; the wing attack, which sought to strike one side of the defenders' front line; the flank attack, which hoped to take the front-line defenders from the side; an envelopment assault, which looked to strike at the rear of the defense; and finally, the encirclement, which hoped to avoid the defenders altogether and drive into the rear areas.

The scenario, "Land Leviathans", included with this clinic will give one player the joy, and pain, of controlling a powerful pure armor task force whose composition is that of the early Russian tactic and whose mission is, hopefully, to attempt to encircle the defenders. You have a number of tough early choices.

First you must decide if you want to accept the Russian model of mixed tank types, or try to force the troops into a semblance of the German model of tank "waves". If you decide to mix tank types, the tanks will be able to support one another. This can be critical as some of the tanks are very vulnerable to deliberate immobilization fire and infantry assault. Regretfully, you will find that your speed of assault will be quite slow. If you instead decide to keep the fast and slow tanks in separate groups, then your slow elements will be no slower than before. However, similar tank types do tend to have the same weaknesses and the various elements may become isolated.

Second, you must decide how to conduct your attack. Your mission might be encirclement, but the likelihood of avoiding the defender entirely in this scenario is nil. So, first consider the frontal assault. You can drive straight down the road on Board 3. The advantage of so doing is that you can come to grips with the defender while he is still spread out. Additionally, this is the fastest route. The disadvantage is that the narrow frontage means that your units may be spread out in a line. You could find yourself beset from both flanks.

Next is the wing, or flank, assault. On the ASL scale these two tend to blend together. By advancing in strength across either Board 4 (open terrain) or Board 2 (hills and a road), while leaving a small support/feint group behind on Board 3 to insure the defender stays spread out, you can try to expose his flanks while covering your own. This is not as fast as a frontal assault, but can develop rather quickly and is much less vulnerable. The disadvantages are the difficulty in insuring that the two groups are mutually supportive and in deciding who belongs to which group.

Lastly, you could try for the envelopment. This tends to require that one group moves down Board 4 while the other advances along Board 2. While it is unlikely that either group will reach the board edge in sufficient strength to win the scenario, the group that gets there first can turn and attack the remaining defenders in the rear. Naturally, this is the slowest attack of all and always isolates one assault group from the other.

Our recommendations?

Well, to tell the truth, we think that each has its own merits if executed properly. Which brings us to the heart of this article. If you decide to accept the Russian model of mixed tank types, then a frontal assault can be quite acceptable. As your tank formations tend to be slow, you must be careful not just to string along the road. Use bypass movement to pass through the town. You have the time to use your heavier weapons to blow away any exposed defenders. Further, by staying bunched together, you will tend to have multiple shots on any unit that attempts to close upon your flank. What we try to accomplish is to "leapfrog" forward by keeping the rear platoons in motion and stopping the advanced troops. This minimizes the risk of throwing a track and gives you lots of time to shoot. The groups then switch roles. We have tried to channel the frontal assault onto one of the other boards, but there never

seems to be enough time to exit. The KV-2 should always be in the middle of the formation to minimize any possible incoming Immobilization fire. As much as possible, everyone should initially be in platoons of three vehicles so that if one tank is lost, the rest may continue to move without a die roll.

If you prefer the German method, then go for the flank/wing or envelopment attack.

If we choose the flanking maneuver, we like to throw the T-34 plus a BT, perhaps followed later by the KV, onto the ridge line of hill 522. The rest of the tanks go forward in platoons of similar units down either Board 2 or 4. The fire from the ridge line suppresses German movement and prevents the defender from shifting everything over to the threatened flank. The advancing troops can't take a lot of time to shoot, but your guys on the ridge can shoot all day. Keeping the maneuver element close to the edge of the board insures that one flank is secure. The trick here is knowing when, or if, to move the support team off the ridge. We recommend that the support platoon be two vehicles; that the KV operate independently (since it has a radio), and that the advancing elements be three tank troops—for the reasons stated above.

The envelopment is surely the most difficult tactic. We select the vehicles with the best cross-country movement for advancing across Board 4. The slower AFVs, plus your armored car, move along the road and ridge line of Board 2. What you want to happen is to have the BTs and T-34 get into position to strike at the rear of hills 534 and 547, thus allowing your vehicles on Board 2 a chance to exit. Your best bet is to mix two- and three-tank troops, for you will surely need to roll for independent movement.

Our testers found this scenario to be well balanced. The likelihood of success depends more on skill of execution than on luck. Albeit a heavy dose of bad luck can sink any plan, the Russians in GEN-Q have more powerful guns, units with almost invulnerable armor, and the ability to take notable losses and still win. We hope you enjoy the accompanying scenario.

These notes continue the series of commentaries in the Clinic pertaining to the scenarios published with the previous installment of this column (in this case, with Vol. 26, No. 1). The intent is to provide the ASL player with one of the numerous possibilities for defensive setup, attacker initial placement and basic tactical approaches for both. Having had several months to examine your own approaches to our Clinic scenarios, the reader can now compare his findings with our summation.

After Action Report— The St. Goar Assault

GERMAN: Place Wire in 2X5, 2V5, 2U6, 2R6, 3P9 and 3E10. In the 2nd floor of 1E4 goes an 8-1, a 4-6-7, one 4-4-7, a HMG and MMG. In 1C1 the StuG III facing 1B1/1C2. In 1F6 goes two 4-4-7s and two LMGs. 1CC5 has the 81mm MTR with crew, a foxhole, and an Opel Blitz. In the 2nd floor of 1BB4, 8-1, 4-6-7, 4-4-7, 2-3-7, HMG and MMG. Two LMGs manned by a 8-3-8 and a 4-4-7 in 1Y8. A 4-4-7 and foxhole in each of 3M10, 3L9, 3K10 and 3J9. A 4-6-7 and foxhole in each: 3N9, 3I10, 3H9 and 3G10. In 3F9 place a 4-6-7 and a LMG. On the 2nd floor of 3N2, place the 9-1, two 4-6-7 and a MMG and LMG. In 3O1, 2-3-7 with 50mm MTR. In 3N1, the 6+1 and a 2-4-7. In 3N1, 2nd floor, the last 2-4-7.

ATTACKER'S TACTICS: Obviously, boards 2 and 3 are the easiest to assault as you only have to seal off one edge. Nonetheless, I prefer to land on Board 1. If you decide to go for the end boards, I suggest that on Turn 1 you land three squads at

the junction of boards 1 and 2, and three squads at the junction of boards 4 and 3 so as to leave the German in doubt as to your final intention. If you decide to go for Board 1, go for either end of it with everybody. Flamethrower and HS always lands first. Time is incredibly short, so go . . . go . . . go!

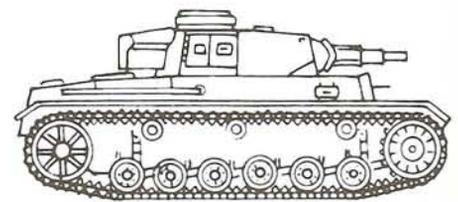
DEFENDER'S TACTICS: You must decide on Turn 2 where you will reinforce. Move units toward the edge of the board you think the U.S. player will try for. If it looks like the U.S. player is gunning for Board 1, use the Advance Phase of Turn 2 to link up some of the squads at the water's edge so that more guys can move out on Turn 3. When you see the American is getting stronger, pull back. Remember, he has to come to you. Don't forget that fire lanes work great through Smoke and fog.

The Road to Wiltz

AMERICAN: Set up one AT mine in each of 2S8, 2S1, 2Q1, 2O2, 2K2, 2I2 and 2E3. Then place Wire in 2U2 and 2O1. An M7 goes in 2O8, facing P7/P8; the M10 in 2O5 (VCA O6/N7; TCA P5/P4). With the M10 place 8-1, 6-6-6, DC and Baz. In 2O1, under the Wire, place 9-1, two 6-6-6, Baz and MMG and ?. In 2L1, the roadblock faces hexside M2. In 2J6, put four ?. In 2H0, 105 ART (H1/I1) with 2-2-7. In 3T4, one ?, 7-0 with two 7-4-7s, 3-3-7, two DC and the FT. In 3R5, put an ATG (facing S6/S5) with crew. In 3P2, another ATG (Q3/Q2) with crew. In hex 3O1 goes an 81mm MTR (P1/P0) with two 2-2-7s. In 3N2, one ? over 9-2, 6-6-6, two MMG. In the 2nd floor of 3N1, put an 8-0 under a ?. In 3N0, the other 81mm MTR (O1/O0) with 2-2-7. 3M1: ? over 8-1 and 3-3-7. In 3J2 facing K3/K2, an 105mm ART with crew.

ATTACKER'S TACTICS: The road may look enticing, but the U.S. player can bottle you up in a long column for turn after turn. You must immediately advance some MGs onto the heights of Hill 538 while your StuGs maneuver to go around Hill 621 away from the road. You are so strong that you can easily afford to throw away a bunch of HS, and even a tank or two, in recce. When possible, go behind the defenders. Your goal is to have tanks and infantry on Board 3 by Turn 7. The only way to do this is to stay mounted and roll AFVs through the 2M8 gap. However, at least two or three AFVs are needed to help clear the road so that your trucks can drive forward. Consider putting one JgdPz IV up onto the third level for long-range fire support (at the very least, the U.S. player will have to use some mortar fire to smoke it).

DEFENDER'S TACTICS: You'd like to hold all the Germans on Board 2 for seven turns. Against an aggressive German player, this is unlikely. You can hope to prevent the German infantry, trucks, and any supporting AFVs that advance along the road from reaching Board 3 before Turn 9. The German force is so strong that even if you play the fallback defense, he'll be able to swamp any defensive position. Keep falling back so that the German must come onto your guns. Carefully tape out the LOS from the second story building. Use your mortars to protect your Board 2 defensive positions. Figure on losing everything that sets up on Board 2 if that lets your reinforcing armor get into position. If the German does throw his unsupported armor onto Board 3 before your armor arrives, use your engineers to counterattack.



Letters to the Editor . . .

Dear Mr. Martin:

Really enjoyed the *WEST OF ALAMEIN* issue of *THE GENERAL*. All but the part I was looking forward to most—the "Infiltrator's Report". I thank you for mentioning my *Game Collector's Guide—Wargames*, but unfortunately a wrong address was listed and anyone inquiring or ordering the book from there will have their letter returned as "Undeliverable". The correct address is:

PANZER PRESS
11530 West 84th Place
Arvada, CO 80005

If you get any calls or inquiries regarding this, please pass along this information.

Tom Slizewski
Arvada, Colorado

★★★★★

Dear Mr. Martin,

After wargaming for nearly 25 years and never having written Avalon Hill, this missive is long overdue. Allow me to express my appreciation to all those concerned for several of AH's recent releases, namely: *THUNDER AT CASSINO*, *TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD*, and *SIEGE OF JERUSALEM*. These games are easily learned, fun to play, and have plenty of heart-rending excitement. These qualities have rocketed these to the top of my "favorites" list (up there with *TLD* and *ANZIO*).

What I find irksome is that there are many gamers who will not purchase or play any of these new releases—two of them don't have hexagons and have unusual mechanics of play, and *SIEGE OF JERUSALEM* doesn't have panzers or take place in the 20th Century. These guys don't know what they're missing. Thank you, Avalon Hill, for continuing to put out the innovative and unusual, for continuing to go where other companies fear to tread, for 35 years of great wargames.

Richard Edelblute
Virginia Beach, Virginia

★★★★★

Dear Sir,

I want to thank everyone at Avalon Hill for their fine work and dedication. In particular, Don Greenwood because, after all these years, one can see that his opinions and analysis of the state of our hobby was always right. He was the first to point out that the flood of new games in the Seventies was not a blessing. He said that the industry would suffer from it in the long run. And right he was. While this period brought us perhaps 25 or 30 outstanding game designs, the majority of those games were merely pulp. Then he warned us that people with computers would use them mainly as toys. I fully agree. A computer game is "fun" and a passing of time. But everytime I play my 12-year old copy of *TRC I* do not have to worry about compatibility, disrupted disks, viruses and—most of all—lazy programming and bugged AI.

I think PacMania did far more damage to our hobby than fantasy or family boardgames. Even the most recently published computer wargames can not convince me. And I have been working and playing with them over the past 11 years! Perhaps the computer-toy is now finally back into proportion with the Atari hand-held Lynx! Fine to kill aliens on the bus or in the back seat of your car. But please do not try to put Napoleon on your fuzzy-looking micro color screen. Worst of all are those who believe computers will help in the number-crunching department. Nothing could be further from the truth. Try to craft this sort of program for *THE LONGEST DAY* and you end up typing in endless lists of numbers, full of errors and no pleasure.

Still, all this hasn't helped the kind people of Avalon Hill; they have been led to make the biggest mistake they ever made—the worst influence of a media-consumption society: simplicity. Be it computer games or video-news, people tend to prefer "fun", "easy" time-passing. And all this is killing, slowly but surely, our beloved wargame industry.

As a reaction to *THE GENERAL*, Vol. 25, #4, I have to say that in 12 years, this is the first time I fully disagree with the statements of the editor. Indeed *ENEMY IN SIGHT* is NOT a simulation, and it is NOT worth an article in *THE GENERAL*. Furthermore, it was not very polite to call Mr. Wawrzyniak "narrow-minded".

If we wargamers liked wargames just for the "fun" or strategy elements, we would all be

involved in playing MB or Parker games, which are so much more easy to come by. We would long ago have been calling for AH to publish tactics articles for Tic-Tac-Toe and other "fun" games. But those desires were NEVER expressed by your loyal buying and devoted readers. Imagine, on pure and great wargames like *GUNS OF AUGUST* or *FREDERICK THE GREAT* only two or three articles were ever published in *THE GENERAL*. Those games are even on the discontinued parts-list now, while *THE GENERAL* could have been the ideal tool to teach their rich and engrossing play.

Still, I am convinced that you see those dangers ahead and efforts should be made to preserve all those treasures we had after all these years. Surely Mr. Greenwood shows once more the way by re-designing the memorial *JERUSALEM*. I consider three out of four *GENERALS* in a row without a real wargame (25, #4-6 and 26, #1) as a feature a very dangerous attitude to your opinion-leader public. And I am afraid that I am far from the only one to write this kind of letter in the months to come. Look at me: I have all the great AH wargames (except the *ASL* series); where do I stand in the following year as a loyal fan of my favorite company?

Bosmans Benny
Mechelen, Belgium

I would imagine that you stand with most of us still. But, as I've said before, I think that the span of our hobby is wide enough to encompass games as diverse as ENEMY IN SIGHT, GETTYSBURG '88, ASL and MERCHANT OF VENUS. (By the way, which of these four issues featured the "real wargame"?) I would be one of the first to grant that games that simulate history, with all their complexity, can be engaging and enjoyable; indeed, part of the enjoyment lies in that complexity. But I would hope that most readers are broad-minded enough to grant that simple games, ones whose historical basis consists of a wink and a nod, have their place too; and that part of the enjoyment lies in their simplicity. Both GUNS OF AUGUST and FREDERICK THE GREAT were featured in issues in days past; I'll not deny that same exposure to the four listed above. It remains to be seen if further articles arrive on these or if, like GOA and FRED, your compatriots fail to supply us with suitable further material. And that, for my purposes, is the best way to judge how "pure and great" a game may be.

★★★★★

Dear Readers:

Support. That's the name of the game. Support through your local store and you.

How many of you are familiar with the inner workings of the gaming industry? I am a small game store owner who would like to explain this to you. Our industry works on what is known as the "three-tier system", consisting of manufacturer, distributor and retailer. The manufacturer's job is to produce an entertaining, high-quality game. A distributor acts as a warehouse for both manufacturers and retailers. Through the distributor, the manufacturer is able to sell large quantities of games, which are then sold in smaller numbers to retailers. Retailers then sell these products to you. Beyond just selling games, the retailers provide other services as well. We offer a place for you, the consumer, to physically look at the game you are interested in—beyond just reading about it in a catalogue or magazine. We also provide a place for you to meet others who share your interests.

I have a simple question: from where is your next game purchase coming? In recent years, I have seen ever more advertisements from manufacturers providing ways for you to order games directly from them. As a general rule, manufacturers support retailers. They would prefer not to have to deal on an individual basis with the consumer. Why then would they provide a direct means for selling their games, thereby bypassing both the distributor and the retailer? The answer is simple: these direct sales were primarily created for those of you who do not have easy access to a game store. For that purpose, this type of advertising is good for the industry. However, it is not good for the industry if sales are taken from local stores.

The majority of people do not realize the small margin of profit inherent in this type of business. This means that I, my employees, and all the people who are employed by our distributors rely on you. It also means that you are the driving force behind the industry. You will make the decision as to how it is structured in the future. Will there be enough sales for specialty games stores to thrive and for new ones to open? Or will they slowly die out? Remember, every purchase you make makes a difference. From the newest game to that old classic to that current issue of a magazine.

Finally, it must be remembered that without retail stores, our hobby will wither and die. Stores are a necessity if our hobby is to have growth. It is a must for new people to have a place where they may see games for the first time and meet others to play. Please support us so we may continue to support you.

Jerry Dickerson
San Luis Obispo, California

★★★★★

Dear Sirs:

Although I have had an article published in *THE GENERAL*, I have never written a so-called letter to the Editor. However, experiences over the last couple of years have prompted this communication. In order that the readership understand the significance of this letter, I will take just a line or two to summarize my wargaming background and my experiences with Avalon Hill.

I first started wargaming in 1963 (*GETTYSBURG*). I have been a subscriber to *THE GENERAL* since the early '70s. An article I wrote was published in the magazine in the late '70s. And I have dispatched over 300 questions regarding the rules to Avalon Hill. I maintain two complete sets of *ASL* (including rulebook, modules and boards). You can see my experience ("relationship" is perhaps the better word) with the company is something other than miniscule. The products have always been first class; my questions have always been answered; and I have always been courteously treated. But, it is this last that I wish to expand on.

I do 90% of my purchasing through the Order Department at the end of your Toll-Free telephone number. I have never had an order screwed up and have always received prompt and courteous service therefrom. In particular, I had been becoming wildly impatient regarding the *1989 ASL Errata* (as you can probably imagine). Your Marlene Sorrentino has dealt with me numerous times on the phone when I've placed orders, and has certainly taken extra effort to be helpful as I've inquired about the shipping of the errata (to include finding out when my copies were shipped and verifying that it was a quantity of two). Marlene—working in the particular department that she does—represents Avalon Hill to the purchasing public, and does so in a manner that Avalon Hill should be proud of and commend/recognize her for. I sincerely hope this letter is brought to her attention.

Ed Caswell
Knob Noster, Missouri

★★★★★

Dear Rex,

I am glad to hear that there are 15-year old wargamers entering our hobby, such as Aaron Schwobel (Letters to the Editor, Vol. 25, No. 6). I am sorry to hear that he considers himself a victim of age discrimination. In my experience, wargamers as a whole are an extremely tolerant group of people, willing to trounce anyone on a mapboard, regardless of race, religion, age, sex, appearance, or (in the latter stages of a convention) smell. The informal group in which I regularly play welcomes anyone. It is normal for me to have opponents half my age, although they are still a bit older than Mr. Schwobel.

I have done a lot to encourage new people in the hobby, especially in *ASL*. I wrote the "Squad Leader Training Manual" included in *PARATROOPER*, and a "Programmed Instruction" approach to learning *ASL* for the unprac-

ing 1990 *ASL Annual*. I would hate someone to get turned off from *ASL* and the hobby in general because some thoughtless, "mature" gamer refused an opponent because of his age.

I am proud to say that I have playtested all the *SL/ASL* modules and gamettes since the very beginning, in 1977. I can't speak for Bob McNamara, but I suspect that he wants to keep on playtesters who make valuable contributions. I also suspect that a number of playtest groups peter out and have disappointing performances, and that there are new playtest groups added for each module. If Mr. Schwobel wants to be a playtester, I suggest that he gets Mr. McNamara's attention; for example, write a good article on some aspect of *ASL* for *THE GENERAL*. Meanwhile, even though I am over 40, I am not as old as Mr. Schwobel seems to think; I am hardly in need of a "break from playtesting" quite yet.

Jim Stahler
Falls Church, Virginia

★★★★★

Dear Mr. Martin:

I have a couple of issues worth of comments here, so in no particular order, here they are: Re: "Let Us Cross Over the River"

I was very sorry to see that you had the "luxury" to publish this piece of fiction. Since when has *THE GENERAL* become a speculative fiction magazine? Don't misunderstand me here; "What If" is the greatest appeal of wargames, and an article on Jackson's possible presence at Gettysburg or the addition of Ransom's and Corse's brigades (as was done in *GETTYSBURG '77*) would have been most welcome. But 17 linear columns of this ridiculous narrative and its absurd premise is a waste of time, space and ink. If this is to become a regular feature of *THE GENERAL*, I will definitely have to find a different magazine.

Re: Younger Gamers

I sympathize with the plight of younger gamers (I started playing at the tender age of 9) and our group (Interest Group Milwaukee) encourages younger gamers to attend. However, we are limited by practical and legal concerns, vis: transportation and alcohol.

Transportation for those gamers without a car is very difficult for our group, which draws its members from over a 50-mile radius. If you are not on the way of some farther flung member, most of us barely have time to get home from work, grab a bite to eat, and rush off to the games. Consequently, our nine regulars require seven cars to get them together. A younger member living outside the bus lines is at a grave disadvantage.

Legal concerns are specifically alcohol-related. Our group has a serious social bent, and several members have been known to have a beer whilst gaming. Unless their parent or legal guardian is around (or they are 21), we are technically liable for contributing to the delinquency of a minor. While the possibility is remote, all it takes is one irate parent and our members would be in deep doo-doo. However, we already have one successful father-son team and are always willing to adopt more.

Re: Large Conventions

Yes, I agree that the three biggies can be overwhelming (as for quiet, have you tried the bar at GenCon; highly recommended). I do feel that you present the wrong impression by stereotyping Origins as a boardgame convention, GenCon as a fantasy convention, and HistoriCon as a solely miniatures convention. By far the most common games played at both Origins and GenCon are role-playing events. However, these are not exclusive of other kinds of gaming. Indeed, there were over 100 miniatures events and over 80 boardgame events at GenCon last year. Stereotyping hurts conventions, leading to a "Catch-22" situation of people who won't attend because the games they want to play aren't available, and judges who won't run events because no one signs up. Speaking from personal experience, boardgame and miniature gamers who run events at GenCon will receive a warm welcome from the staff.

Jayson Gralewicz
Kansassville, Wisconsin

To take issue with but one of Mr. Gralewicz's points, I don't feel Mr. Moore's piece of fiction to have been a "waste of time, space and ink." Nor, it seems, do others—if the individual article ratings for Vol. 25, No. 5 (reported in the "Infiltrator's Report" last issue) are taken as representative.

THE BULGARIAN GAMBIT

The Balkan Key to THIRD REICH

By Don Spitz

In his article, "Axis Southern Yearnings" (Vol. 24, No. 6), Mark Nixon's strategy for the conquest of the Mediterranean is feasible, but full of dangers and potential delays—as he readily admits. Conquering all the Western and Mediterranean Front minor countries and enemy colonies by the Spring of '42 is ambitious, to say the least, and even possible; but in practical terms, it is not as easy as it sounds. Although he is certainly free to make assumptions, which he believes to be true, there's still those precarious Axis positions in the Fall of 1941 to consider.

At that point, most of the Axis armor is either in Spain or spread throughout the Med Front, along with the entire Luftwaffe poised to strike at Gibraltar. A crucial period, which I call "The Custer Syndrome", as there exists too many opportunities for Russia and Britain to spring nasty surprises on the over-extended Axis. This is especially prevalent along the Eastern Front, where German infantry, along with Hungarian and Rumanian troops, guard the "back door" in the Fall of '41. Of these minor forces, half may not even be activated, since Mark's preference lies in not sending Foreign Aid in 1939, but instead waiting until late 1940. In my opinion, a miscalculation, for a determined Allied response can send around 70 BRPs (36 British and 34 Russian) of Foreign Aid in 1939-41 compared to approximately 53 German BRPs during 1940-41. The table below illustrates some possible consequences:

	BRPs	Finland	Rumania	Hungary	Bulgaria	
1939 German	0	—	—	—	—	BRP
1939 Allies	21	—	12	9	—	
1940 German	23	—	12	11	—	BRP
1940 Allies	23	—	12	11	—	
1941 German	30	—	12	18	—	BRP
1941 Allies	26	6	—	14	6	
German Total	0		24	29	0	
Allied Total	6		24	34	6	

Note: Although only an example, Allied Foreign Aid can be allocated at the end of the Winter turns in 1939-40, whereas Germany could not counter it until the following year. In the Spring 1941, Allied aid is distributed after the German allotment, thereby preventing Summer activation of up to three-fourths of Germany's minor allies. Of course, this fraction can be lower, dependent on when/how Germany attacks Turkey.

Therefore, instead of Bulgaria being active in 1941 (as Mark shows), it is more realistic to believe it (and other minors as well) will remain inactive in the Summer of '41. But the problem doesn't end here, as all inactive minors will be saddled with an additional handicap since Germany is due to declare war on Spain on the following turn. Thus, instead of rolling a "1" or higher to activate the remaining minors in the future, Germany must then roll a "6" or better (46.3). In essence, this equates to having five more Allied BRPs to overcome for each inactive minor. Because of this, Germany would not gain the inactive minor's BRPs in the Summer, nor carry them over into the 1942 YSS.

As the examples show, Germany must overcome the Allied Foreign Aid lead, the imposed penalty for attacking Spain, plus counter potential British Spring 1942 Aid. But even this effort won't be able to activate any minors in the Spring, since activation takes place at the start of a turn before any Foreign Aid

expenditure. Because of this, Britain need not counter with any Spring Foreign Aid of her own, in order to delay their activation until the Summer of 1942—one year late! Additionally, there's the lost revenue from inactive minors to consider (e.g., Summer '41, BRP carryover, and their basic value in each YSS). Combined with the Foreign Aid already expended by Germany, this can reach a staggering total, a burden Germany must bear alone. Conversely, since the Allies approximately split their 1939-41 Foreign Aid costs, Britain's share is but a mere 12 BRPs per year.

Beyond the problems of activation, there are other pitfalls for Mark's strategy. In the section on the Greece-Turkey campaign, Mark devotes extensive coverage to how Germany can mass enough firepower to quickly overrun Turkey. The problem is that no more than a total of 20 ground/air factors can be placed in inactive German Minors. One strategy Mark proposed was to eliminate the German infantry garrison in Finland just prior to attacking Turkey. In this way, three additional factors could be placed in Rumania or Bulgaria. Although Mark states that this ploy is not required, in-depth examination is necessary to inform beginning players of the hazard of such a move.

An astute Russian player might simply ignore Finland, not attack, and bide his time. Why? Because the German may well have removed the restriction barring Russia from declaring war prior to the Fall of 1941. Normally, 20-21 German factors are re-

be SRred into Turkey.

The accumulative economic effect is immediate in the 1941 YSS. By carrying over Turkey's 30 BRPs (30-.4=12) and some British BRPs (8×.4=3), Britain achieves a new BRP base of 140. Adding Greece's and Turkey's BRP values, Britain's 1941 allowance increases to 180 BRPs. This allows Britain to build six ASW units and to increase Foreign Aid to 18 BRPs—a 50% increase above standard game levels in both areas. Some might think Britain would suffer economically through such action, but this is not the case. In gaining the above advantages, Britain spends zero BRPs to intervene in Greece and Turkey. And even the replacements can be saved by SRing them out on the turn after intervention. So, even though Britain might spend more on Foreign Aid/ASW units yet lose Turkey, Greece, Egypt and Gibraltar in 1941, her economy would still be in better shape than if she had done nothing at all. This is because gaining the Turkish and Greek 40 BRPs for free and then losing them equates to a zero-sum loss. And Egypt/Gibraltar's 50 BRP loss would be offset by the 12 BRP carry-over from Turkey in the YSS.

Ironically, this carryover gives Britain the minimum number of BRPs necessary for its 1941 Foreign Aid program. One should remember that all eventual BRP losses will be subtracted from Britain's new 180 BRP allowance, rather than from a much lesser normal amount. Note also, that such losses would not affect Britain's new BRP base, ASW, or Foreign Aid totals. With these thoughts in mind, an experienced German player might adjust his time frame for the attack so as to avoid giving Britain such a windfall. This decision, of course, rests with your own particular timetable. The key though, lies in the timeframe of the French surrender. If France succumbs in the Fall of 1940, Winter will be needed to SR the elite airborne and air units into the Balkans in order to blitz across the Turkish Straits by Spring. Although Britain could still intervene, her economic gains would be significantly reduced.

Although my comments concerning the "Mediterranean Power Play" may seem censorious in nature, they are meant only as constructive criticism. I have enjoyed Mark's many fine articles in *THE GENERAL*; so, with all due respect, the following is intended to polish a few rough facets off Mark's otherwise "diamond" strategy.

And so, how can one sidestep a potential "Custer's" fate when using the "Mediterranean Power Play" concept? Mark discusses flexibility, adaptability, and the opportunity to divert back to a standard game strategy. An analysis into which my "Bulgarian Gambit" fits right in, allowing Axis players to:

- 1) Place unlimited firepower (more than 20 factors—25.6) in Bulgaria prior to blitzing Turkey.
- 2) Slash British Foreign Aid to Hungary and Rumania (33.6).
- 3) Launch an attack on Spain prior to the Fall of 1941, without being overly concerned about prestige (46.3).
- 4) Avoid the "Custer Syndrome".

State Funeral

Just how does one amass enough firepower to rend Turkey apart on an initial blitz? In Mark's "Base Greece", the additional northern Greek hexes

tained on the Eastern Front; but by removing the infantry garrison in Finland, if not careful Germany could then default on the 20-factor minimum requirement. Building or SRing a new unit to the Eastern Front is too late, since the requirement must also be met at the end of the Movement Phase. Furthermore, this breach lifts the ban permanently (43.2), so Russia needs only await an opportune time to launch a surprise attack. This is not to say a German player couldn't avoid this situation, but how many of us have ever played a faultless game?

In his recommended invasion of Turkey, the Italians are to first secure northern Greece as a staging area, as this effectively doubles the German's assault strength. A viable strategy, which works very well. Mark also mentions that Britain's intervention in Greece could tie up one or two British units; in Turkey, it's better to face and maul them there rather than in Egypt. This military assessment could be true, but on the other side of the coin, there are the economic factors to consider. Although chances are good for a German Winter attack on Turkey, there are reasons for not doing so. With Italian troops in Greece and the Germans across the Turkish Straits, what might the British do? One answer is to intervene in Greece by SRing a replacement into mainland Greece, or to one of the Greek islands (i.e., Andros). Meanwhile, another unit can



Figure 1: Because Yugoslavia and Bulgaria are no longer neutral, British Foreign Aid routes to the Balkans are cut.

alleviate the 20-factor limit allowed in inactive minor neutrals. A viable military solution, but I feel there's a better way (there always is it seems), where one can have unlimited factors available to slice and dice Turkey. My solution is straightforward—bash Bulgaria. Yes, that insignificant German Minor Ally, lying at the crossroads of destiny can be sacrificed for the greater good of the Third Reich.

The reasons are obvious. Once attacked, Bulgaria is no longer a neutral minor ally, but simply a minor country. Therefore, the 20-factor restriction no longer applies. Naturally, Bulgaria's army is then no more, but considering that it is only good for garrisoning Yugoslavia, Greece or European Turkey, and that the Slav/Greek partisans outnumber its tiny army anyway, the end result is worth the loss. Militarily, the loss of five Bulgarian factors can easily be made up by other Axis forces in combating future partisans. A minor adjustment considering the significant strategic impact on the Mediterranean Front.

So, who's to do the deed? Germany might offensively crush Bulgaria in the Fall of 1939, but such action definitely overstretches the Reich's manpower and treasury this early in the war. A less costly method is to conduct several attritions between 1939 and the Fall of 1940, until Bulgaria's army literally disappears. The negative aspect of this is that Germany does not then receive Bulgaria's BRP value in 1940. (However, there is a positive side, which will be discussed shortly.)

Another method might be to first let Italy conquer Yugoslavia in the traditional method (attrition, then offense), and then have three Italian infantry factors from Belgrade march against Sophia in the Spring of 1940. Air staged in from Italy supports the attack, and it's "goodbye Bulgaria". Neat, clean, simple; plus, being neutral, Italy will receive

Bulgaria's BRPs on the following YSS. With Bulgaria knocked out, Italy is then free to join the Axis coalition in the Summer of 1940. Although Italy still receives Bulgarian BRPs, this will not occur until the 1941 YSS. Therefore, the overall economic gain in conquering Bulgaria is, in reality, no greater than if the minor were activated normally in Summer '41.

However, my point is not concerned with economic gains or losses, but lies in removing Bulgaria as a stumbling block from southern Axis actions. Basing Axis strength in Bulgaria eliminates the need for Italy to attack Greece and avoids tying down Italian troops in the Balkans when they are of more use in North Africa. Additionally, I feel it's more advantageous to leave Greece as a buffer zone, for now, in order to prevent any possible British intervention. And once the Mediterranean becomes a

backwater area, Greece can then meet its destined fate.

"Nice," one might respond, "but is the Bulgarian Gambit really necessary for attacking Turkey?" In this single aspect, no it's not. If this was the gambit's only value, I'd go along with Mark's proposal of limited factors based in the minors. However, the gambit is not just a one result affair, but its worth is composed of several levels, each acting as a catalyst for the next event. Enhancing the Turkish attack is only the first.

Foreign Aid

The gambit's second primary effect is to eliminate all British Foreign Aid to Hungary and Rumania when Germany declares war on Bulgaria in the Fall of 1939, or significantly reduce the amount when Italy declares war in the Spring of 1940. In order for Allied aid to reach the Balkans, a legal SR path must exist through controlled hexes. And, for this purpose only, such BRPs can also transit neutral countries and inactive Axis Minor Allies hexes. But, when the Axis attacks Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, a diplomatic wall surrounds Hungary and Rumania (see Figure 1), through which British aid cannot penetrate. Note also that British aid cannot cross over any Russian-controlled hexes until Russia and Germany are at war (33.62). The cumulative effect locks Britain out of the Balkans and limits Russian aid to Hungary. The latter being the sole recipient for, once Russia occupies the province of Bessarabia, no Russian aid can be sent to Rumania.

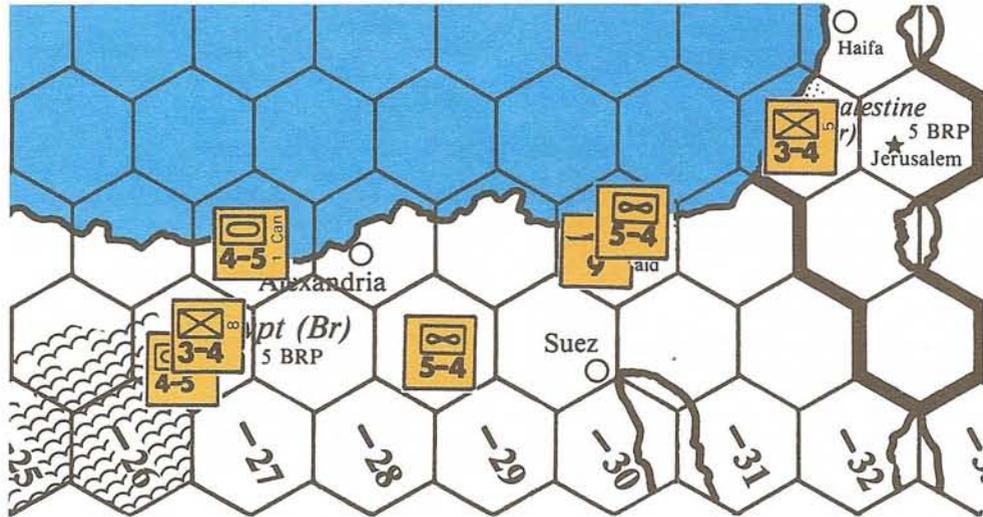
Naturally, the gambit doesn't reduce Britain's total Foreign Aid grants; it just diverts them elsewhere. But at least it ensures that Hungarian and Rumanian troops will be manning the Eastern Front's defenses in 1941. Much safer than the potential hazardous situation lurking within the "Mediterranean Power Play". So, by having alleviated the Foreign Aid threat, we now move on to the gambit's third effect.

The Plains of Spain

Instead of attacking Turkey after the fall of France, why not attack Spain immediately? After all, the Wehrmacht's already concentrated in France so it shouldn't be a problem to move the armor and stage air down to the border. In this way, sufficient SRs are available to bring in Axis infantry, airbases and the airborne units. But some players might be adverse to this early invasion, due to 46.3 (in which Axis variants 1, 3, 5 and 7 are cancelled) and that Germany must then roll a "6" or higher to activate each minor ally.

Concerning the variants, there's a 60% chance that you won't draw one anyway, and this increases

Figure 2: Upon the fall of Gibraltar, Britain's desert army is significantly reduced. (Not shown is one fleet based in Malta.)



to 70% if the Allies draw one of the variant numbers first. But even assuming that you have one, what is its true value? Having Iraq become a German Minor Ally is nice, but not essential for either Mark's or my strategy. Having Vichy France as a Minor Ally is more practical and, dependent on its size, will determine whether or not it's worth leaving Spain alone for now. Luckily, a decision like this you'll only have to make once out of ten games. Activating all German Minor Allies by Variant #5 is, of course, negated in my strategy, but it is also nullified in Mark's as Spain is attacked before Germany is at war with Russia. Lastly, the Turkish variant is useless, since Turkey's fate is to be conquered anyway.

This brings us back to the point of where Foreign Aid must be sent in order to activate the remaining German Minor Allies. Using Mark's Foreign Aid preferences for 1940-41, we've seen how it's possible that only Rumania would be activated, leaving Hungary, Bulgaria and Finland needing an additional 15 BRPs over that of the Allied amount. Coincidentally, this is the same additional amount Germany must spend in order to activate its minors under the gambit. Since there's no difference in cost, is the gambit worth it? Let us look forward.

The Eagle versus the Lion

Basically unaffected by the loss of prestige, Germany could rule Spain by the Spring of 1941 (or earlier). The actual assault tactics on Gibraltar are so well documented in Mark's article that I see no reason to duplicate them here. Suffice to say, "The Rock" will fall, closing off the Mediterranean approximately one-half year earlier than in Mark's plans.

However, a question might arise regarding British-controlled airbases in North Africa which could be used to defend Gibraltar. Mark illustrates these colonies as being Free French, and therefore allowed an entire year to overrun them. Of course, there's always a 50% chance of these colonies becoming Vichy, so the whole point would then be moot. But for the sake of argument, does the gambit allow the Axis sufficient time to dash west in Africa? If Germany bashes Bulgaria and Italy enters the war by Spring, there are then five turns to accomplish this task. Of if Italy conquers Bulgaria first, there's still four turns to reach Oran in conjunction with Germany's Spring '41 conquest of Spain.

An important difference between the "Mediterranean Power Play" and the "Bulgarian Gambit" is the timeframe in conquering North Africa. In the former, British and Free French forces are available for defense; but in the latter, French and British reserves would still be engaged in the battle for France itself. Therefore, if only one French unit is defending all of North Africa (i.e., Tunis), an Axis armored assault incurs no resistance. One German and two Lent Italian armored units, using the exploitation method (14.4), would simply sweep across Tunisia, overrun Algiers, and be adjacent to Oran within a single turn. Conquering the port of Tunis could then be left up to other forces on the following turn.

Another factor, which may or may not be helpful during the trek through North Africa, is exactly when Paris becomes Axis-occupied. At this point, the French are restricted to a Mediterranean Front Pass option (26.815), meaning any unit(s) adjacent to Axis forces are frozen in place. Unable to move or SR, none could retreat further west. And after Vichy determination, if Free French they are exposed to attack. If Vichy, Axis forces could move/SR through the French position on the following turn, possibly catching the British offguard.

In marching west, there's no need to advance farther than Oran whenever Morocco is Free French; once Oran is controlled, all Allied supply routes to

the west are cut. Although British air would still be in supply, any *airbase* would not be (and therefore must be returned to London). This then leaves but one 5-4 air (in Casablanca) within DAS of Gibraltar. So, even with this air unit, along with the 5-4 in the fortress, all eight Axis air units are sufficient to counter/intercept all British air and still support a 1-1 attack against Gibraltar. And, in the event of an exchange, the airborne is still in control of "The Rock".

So, in the end analysis, there's still time for the Panzerwaffe and Luftwaffe to deploy east to deter the "Custer Syndrome". Besides allowing Axis sailors shore leave, Gibraltar's loss reduces the British lion's roar to that of a cough due to the supply restrictions in Egypt (37.3). Britain is forced to pare its military strength down to four ground units (not counting Free French) and four naval/air counters. In the resulting scramble to evacuate excess units, several could end up buried in the Egyptian sands. Thus, by the end of Britain's turn, the canal's defense might look something like that in Figure 2. Now only a shell of its former self, the British Desert Army is no longer a threat in the Mediterranean and is certainly in no position to impede the Axis advance through Turkey. In fact, because the Italian navy now rules the Med, Axis seaborne invasions, loaded with armor, combined with unlimited forces in Bulgaria, would make short work of Turkey.

After Turkey's demise, there is no need to send massive panzer forces rolling towards Egypt. Instead, a few Italians can pick off Persia and the British colonies through cheap attritions, while Germany unleashes *Barbarossa* against Russia. Mark's strategy serves, except for a few Italian fleets in Istanbul and Costanta to further stretch Russian defenses along the Black Sea coast for a turn or two. Such multiple threats can quickly collapse Russia's initial defenses, allowing some rapid early Axis gains.

What of the British in Egypt? The answer is to let them hang out on the proverbial tree limb by using the "Phinx Ploy". Simply contain the British there with light units who sit and stare across the sands. The idea is to keep British attention on the canal, the three objectives (including Malta), and the 25 BRP loss that threatens. In this way, British fleets, air and ground forces might remain in the Mediterranean and not be around to support the Allied invasion of Europe. Such forces being out of the picture might even delay the Allied landings in France for a turn or two. Every little bit helps to run out the game clock.

However, if the British start withdrawing strong units and replacing them with weak 1-3 infantry units, then the ploy is no longer valid. At this point, a quick surgical strike is needed to finish off Egypt, leaving surviving British fleets and ground units trapped and out of the action for three turns. Any remaining British air forces can be contained in Egypt forever (or until they self-destruct)—a nice touch.

The reader might ask, "While the British are in Egypt, won't Axis forces be tied down defending all the Mediterranean beaches?" In answer, study Figure 2 again. Although only an example, it is unrealistic to expect that any British seaborne invasion would be successful. Of course, the point of invasion is premature, especially since only one fleet is based in Egypt. However, by dispatching both air units back to England and bringing in two fleets, a two 4-5 invasion force could be assembled. Naturally, this will take half a year to set up. And, before sailing on the following turn, Italian troops could outflank British infantry defenses from the east and the west, finishing off Britain's plans, Egypt and eventually Malta.

If British armor were to guard the east-west approaches to Egypt, a two-infantry invasion force

might land somewhere—but to what end? Occupying a bit of beach would hardly be sufficient cause to excite Britain's Parliament and people. In countering, only one Axis armor need be SRed near the Allied beachhead to prevent any Allied units from marching inland. Doing so would only endanger their own supply line. Meanwhile, with Egypt's defensive garrison cut in half, it would not survive long. So, the end result is that not one Mediterranean beach need be defended against seaborne invasion from Egypt.

The Eagle versus the Bear

Whether Russia is attacked after Gibraltar falls, or immediately after Turkey is conquered, pushing the Russians back is fairly easy; but it is almost impossible to force a Russian surrender, due to several reasons:

- 1) *Barbarossa* is launched too late in the war.
- 2) Russia possesses vast areas into which to retreat. Therefore, loss of territory is a minor inconvenience.
- 3) Its recuperative powers allows Russia's army to take a licking and still function.
- 4) Massive reinforcements arrive from Siberia in the Spring of '42.

Russia doesn't need to match Germany's quality in firepower, as the sheer quantity of Russian force has a quality all its own. If you believe, otherwise, then "good luck", because a fully-mobilized Russia possesses more ground combat units than the combined might of Britain, France and the U.S. (discounting replacement units). Therefore, I wholeheartedly agree with Mark's assessment of pushing the Russians as far back as possible, before their inevitable counteroffensive takes place.

Once the Russian bear rises up to its full height and the Allied invasion of *Festung Europa* is imminent, you'll have to direct your efforts towards organizing some effective withdrawals. Like the Roman Fabius against Hannibal, you must become known as the "Delayer". Initial conquest is easy; being skillful in defense, that's an altogether different matter.

In Other Words

The "Bulgarian Gambit" can enhance, but not guarantee, an Axis victory in *THIRD REICH*. No strategy can promise that, as for every new idea that comes along to you, your opponents will eventually work out a counter-strategy. This is what makes the game endlessly interesting—all the variables that constantly alter the tide of war and the eventual outcome. Thus, I feel, both sides can never have enough options to consider in this ever-changing game. I hope to have demonstrated the gambit's value in a "Mediterranean Power Play". Or if it fits your style of play.



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COUNTERING THE BLITZKREIG

Soviet Strategy in HITLER'S WAR

By Tim Kitchen

Commanding the Soviet Union in *HITLER'S WAR* can be a rather thankless job. In most games you're taking the brunt of a massive German offensive while the Allied player is comfortably sitting behind the Atlantic building bombers and amphibious points. Oh, he may be playing cat-and-mouse with Rommel in the deserts of North Africa; but that is child's play compared with what you are facing. Ever wonder why Stalin was so adamant about the Allies launching a second front as early as 1942? Play the Russians in *HITLER'S WAR* and find out. This article will consider some strategic concerns for the Soviet Union, both before and immediately after an expected German invasion, as well as some general defensive tactics to counter that invasion. As later game situations are much more complex and varied, it would be difficult to accurately present a late-game analysis.

As with any proposed strategy, some assumptions need to be made regarding the German plans for winning the game. Most successful German strategies I've seen follow one basic path. First, an invasion of France (usually falling in Turn 1 or 2) and the Low Countries, followed by a march through Spain and the taking of Gibraltar. This is followed by an invasion of Poland, projected into Soviet territory in Spring 1941. This is not straying far from the historical path, although the order of things is somewhat different. There is little reason in this game for Germany to invade Norway, Greece or Yugoslavia, though Denmark will be picked off at some point, and at least a token force will be sent to North Africa as most Axis players seem to like seeing the PZAA counter used historically. The German will be spending most of his production effort on mechanized SP while researching infantry, mechanized, tac air and U-boats. Air defense and bombers may also rate some research too, though this will largely depend upon Allied production expenditures. The outcome of the game will be decided in the Soviet Union, as was the outcome of World War II.

Pre-Invasion Production

Assuming that the German player does take this approach, how should the Soviets respond during the non-aggression period? I'd like to present what I consider to be a sound, if rather conservative, production schedule to keep those panzers out of your capital. For the production aspect of the pre-invasion turns, consider the following "One-Year Plan":

Turn 1: Conquer the Baltic States. In the production phase, rebuild the devastated Baltic States production and build one fort in Moscow.

Turn 2: No attacks. In the production phase, buy one infantry point, one fort in Leningrad, and research infantry.

Turn 3: No attacks. In the production phase, buy one infantry point, one fort in Moscow, and research infantry again.

Turn 4: No attacks. In the production phase, but one infantry point, one fort in Leningrad, and research infantry. If the German cost for infantry at this time is only one production point, then roll for cost reduction for infantry (an 83% chance for at least partial success).

The explanation of the production expenditures for the above plan is very straightforward. The first turn of the game will see the Soviets with eight production points and limited options. The only place to attack that won't cost you production points is the

Baltic States, so attack them. Take that production point and rebuild it in your own production phase. Actually, the rebuilding of the Baltic States' production is an even bet as far as payback goes; you will probably only have the production for three turns before the Germans take it. Rebuilding the point, however, will make the German more likely to feel obligated to attack the Baltic Front during the invasion and, since rebuilding is at least an even proposition, I like to have a healthy production point to entice the Germans. Who knows, you may actually get to keep it an extra turn or two. Rebuilding the Baltic production will cost you three of your eight points.

With the rest of your production, build a fort in Moscow. The best defense is a good offense—but you don't yet have a good offense, and forts are the best alternative in this game. That concludes Turn 1 for the Soviets. The next turns will be completely quiet as far as the war goes for you. Your production phase is the only means of response, and should be taken very seriously.

On Turn 2 (Spring 1940), you will have nine production points to work with. You will have enough for one infantry (three points), one fort (five points) and one payment for infantry research. In the next turn (Summer 1940), the Germans should be heavily involved elsewhere and not really trouble you. Again you have nine points to spend. And again, purchase a fort and an infantry SP. Spend the other for infantry research. This will put your infantry research on Track Two on the chart.

The Winter 1940 turn will probably be the last turn before the invasion, so the Soviets must arrange their defenses. In the production phase—a fort, an infantry point, and a space on the research track for infantry. My building that fort in Leningrad is simply to balance the fortifications between the two most important Soviet cities. An alternative would be to place all of the fort points in Moscow and leave Leningrad to the dogs since control of any one of the three "capitals" (Leningrad, Moscow, or Stalin-grad) allows the Soviet player to survive. It may be wise to select only one of these three to defend if the Germans have an overwhelming army built up, but I tend to like the dispersed set-up. The Germans can undoubtedly concentrate and take at least one of the capitals. The effort, however, is greatly complicated when both Leningrad and Moscow are fortified because it causes the Germans to disperse his forces even more to provide enough support to take both. As illustrated below, fortifications can be a tough nut to crack.

The research track is really the roulette wheel in *HITLER'S WAR*. Success here very often equals success in the game. For the most part, the Soviets are restricted to an unglamorous life on the wheel—especially in the early game. Deciding when to attempt cost reductions, however, is critical to a successful defense. Although each game will be different, I would like to give some basic advice.

First, it is generally not a good idea to roll to reduce your infantry cost to "2" until the German has reduced his to "1". By reducing your cost for infantry, you will simply help the German build up his reserves for invasion. You will help yourself only marginally, because you still can afford but one infantry point per turn while buying a fort and researching infantry costs (although you would now have two points per turn for research spending). Also, a research failure at this time will seriously hinder your defensive efforts later. In this case,

although this is one of the few, I think a conservative research schedule is the best plan.

Second, you should never research mechanized costs until your own infantry costs are at one point, unless you happen to have a spare production point "left over" that you can't spend on anything else.

Third, always keep both your infantry and mechanized costs one tech level above the German player's until the German cost is at the lowest level, or until you can switch over to the offensive and start the march on Berlin.

Finally, you *must* convince the Allied player to follow this same strategy. If the Allied player researches and lowers the cost of his infantry or mechanized points too early (and usually for no good reason), you may have little hope of defending the Motherland. As ludicrous as it sounds, staying behind the Germans in these key technologies is vital to winning the game. The reason is simple. Typically, the German player will need many more mechanized and infantry SP to successfully invade the Soviet Union than you will need to defend it. Since the Germans will have close to double your production output, any research successes that you make that bring your tech level equal to his is actually helping him for starting with the next turn the German will be able to spend *two* points per turn for research on that item. Staying behind him, will keep the German research expenditures high (and also slow them down) since he can only spend one point per turn on any technology in which he has the edge.

Stopping Barbarossa

The Winter 1940 turn will be a critical one for the Soviets, because it will be the last time you can move before the *blitzkrieg* is unleashed. The Soviets should have some 18 infantry points (two in Siberia), nine mech points (three in Siberia) and two tac air points. The infantry strength point built during the Winter 1940 production phase must be built on a production point and cannot move before the invasion comes, so it should go in either Leningrad or Moscow. The Soviets will also have two fort points in Moscow and two in Leningrad (one under construction). The placement of these forces will determine your chances of survival. Historically, the Soviet Union tried to man the borders and the Red Army was crushed in the first few weeks of the campaign; but they then traded land for time and were ultimately victorious. In *HITLER'S WAR*, the Soviets must also trade territory for time, but there's no political reason to defend the borders here. A typical placement of Soviet forces would include:

Front	Hex	Inf	Mech	Tac Air	Fort
Baltic	S14	4	—	—	—
West	Q15	3	—	—	—
SouthWest	N15	3	—	—	—
Leningrad	T15	5	—	1	1 (+1)
Moscow	Q17	1	6	1	2
Siberia	Sib	2	3	—	—

Admittedly, I use many variations on this set-up depending on what the Germans can muster against me. Sometimes I'll abandon everything west of Moscow and protect my capitals. This is usually only called for if the Germans have had unusual luck in their research die rolls and have built up their mechanized forces.

More likely the German can field two large panzer groups consisting of 8-10 mech points, and another of 4-6 mech points. There will usually be at least one infantry army group, and the panzer army

groups will be filled out with infantry SP. The German will usually have between two and six tac air points. If the German army is much stronger than this, the Soviets are in serious trouble and I'd recommend guarding the capitals with everything you've got. Otherwise, I like to use the above placement. The Baltic, West and Southwest Fronts are kept on production centers in the western USSR simply to give the German player something to think about as he drives east. Placing them on production hexes denies the points to the German until he forces you off of them. Second, you can't be surrounded, and so unsupplied, when on a production point. Third, your armies can be built up quickly to slice through the German rear if the opportunity presents itself. These latter considerations are the main reason I try to put up at least a token resistance in the western USSR.

Some would say that it's a waste of infantry points to assign them as "suicide troops", but consider the situation from the German viewpoint. The production points need to be taken and rebuilt both to keep his army groups supplied and to aid his own economy. Allowing the Soviets to control these production points ultimately aids the Soviet production, and could place a threat in the German rear. Bypassing the Soviet fronts invites some nasty responses by the Russians (partisan attacks in coordination with bypassed fronts can unsupply the German player's entire mechanized force, for instance). Why run the risk?

Consider the following situation: The German player has invaded in Spring 1941 and ignored all Soviet fronts except the Southwest in N15, which has been destroyed, the hex occupied, devastated, and rebuilt. The Germans have now occupied Q14, R14, R15, R16, O15, P15, P16, N14, N15 and M15. The two main panzer army groups occupy R16 and P16. In the German attack phase they have assaulted Moscow and caused a five-SP loss for the Moscow Front (four mech and one infantry), but have failed to advance into the capital because of the unfavorable die roll modifier. It looks pretty bleak for the USSR and the German sees *lebensraum* opening up before his eyes. But in the Soviet movement phase, instead of pulling back his nearly surrounded fronts in S14 and Q15 to reinforce besieged Moscow, the Soviet player reinforces the fronts to contain six infantry points each and attempts to assault and advance into hexes R14 and P15. The two mechanized SP left will not help either advance so they are left in Moscow. The assaults automatically succeed and both advances together have a 44% chance of succeeding. At least one of the advances will succeed 88% of the time. Also, consider the fact that you can attempt to take either or both hexes with partisan attacks in your production phase. With this "ace-in-the-hole", your chances of cutting off the majority of the Wehrmacht's mechanized forces rises to a cool 60%, and this is enough to make the German player take notice of those "suicidal" forces in S14 and Q15. The German will surely rescue his army groups in his turn, but he will have lost a full turn that could have been spent mopping up Moscow and possibly Leningrad. The Soviets will have come away from the first two turns of the invasion with all three capitals intact, and their production virtually untouched with winter approaching fast. This is but one example of the usefulness of those westernmost fronts.

If the Germans elect to finish off the Soviet fronts in S14, Q15 and N15, then the Soviet player should feel glad that their mission was accomplished. They will have delayed the Germans and probably taken some of the enemy with them. They will have bought the time necessary to research infantry down to a cost of one per point spent, and allowed the build up of defenses at Moscow and Leningrad—which are always prime targets of the invasion.

As explained above, the placement of the fortifications in Leningrad and Moscow is used simply

to cause the German player to divide his forces in order to take both capitals. Consider the following situation, showing the "power" of fortifications. A typical German assault on an unfortified Leningrad will see the Germans with a ten-point infantry army and a ten-point mechanized army adjacent to a Soviet force of ten infantry points in Leningrad. Assume that the German has placed a leader with the ten-point mech army. The German player chooses to assault Leningrad with both his armies. The Soviet player defensive assaults, causing an average loss of three German strength points. The German player will remove these three points from the infantry army of course, leaving seven. Next the Germans assault with 17 strength points, causing an average loss of five Soviet points. Now the mechanized army alone tries to advance and finds that a die roll of "1-5" is sufficient for success; but the -1 modifier for the leader makes the roll unnecessary, and the advance automatically succeeds. Now assume that the Soviets have a force composed of two fort points and eight infantry. All the attacks go as described above, except that the Soviets are left with seven SP because of the two-point "soak-off" of the fort. The German advance succeeds only on a die roll of "1-3" with the same -1 leader modifier. This gives the German only a 60% chance of success with a highly concentrated commitment of 20 SP! Assuming that the Germans can attack both Leningrad and Moscow with the same type of attack in Summer 1941 (an unlikely occurrence), he will have only a 36% chance of taking both capitals. If the German player has only one (or no) leader to commit, the odds drop to 30% or 25% respectively.

If the Germans do manage to take both capitals, there is still Stalingrad to defend—which is even further away. The Soviet player must build up fortifications in his last capital and so force the Germans to commit heavily to taking it. At the same time, the German must guard Leningrad and Moscow to keep the Soviets from recapturing one of them. By the time the Germans reach Stalingrad, the Western Allies should be causing some real headaches for them.

Now assume that the German player has instead managed to destroy the "suicide troops" and formed a line based on occupation of the production points at S14, Q15 and N17 at the end of the German Summer 1941 player turn; what can the Soviet player do to punish them? Without mechanized forces, he is limited in his response during the Summer 1941/Winter 1941 turns. Always remember, however, that summer is the ideal time to advance and attempt to isolate German army groups, and winter is the ideal time to assault and destroy as many German strength points as possible. The reasoning is simple. Advance in the Summer of 1941 because the German will be hampered by the +4 modifier for assaults and advances during his Winter 1941 turn when trying to extricate surrounded forces. Assault in the Winter of 1941 because the +4 modifier will swing the kill ratio in your favor even when outnumbered. Advancing during the Winter 1941 turn, however, can be disastrous, as the Germans will be able to react quite strongly with their own drives in the following Spring 1942 turn.

My advice therefore is to use whatever means possible to attempt to cut off German army groups during the Summer 1941 turn. This could include all of your mechanized forces, partisan attacks, and one-hex assault/advance attempts by all the infantry fronts. During the Winter 1941 turn, attempt to destroy German mechanized forces with assaults by your infantry fronts. Withdraw your own mechanized force so you can have a reserve come spring. This reserve should be held over the head of the German player through the Spring and Summer 1942 turns. I've found that the threat of a lightning thrust by mech forces deep into the German rear will keep

many players very concerned about their flanks. This in turn forces the enemy player to watch carefully the end-of-turn positioning of his armies, taking his attention from his more immediate concerns of conquest. It will also force the German to take fortified capitals by bashing at them with infantry armies and attempting to advance with mechanized armies. Always save your defensive assault for the mechanized advance. Destroying even one mech point at this stage of the game can be the difference in winning or losing. Do not use your mechanized reserve unless a golden opportunity presents itself, or your situation threatens to become hopeless. Your mech "hammer" is a much more imposing threat when never swung. This is because the reserve will surely be wiped out in the next turn after its use by hastily mobilized infantry points, or cut off with no hope of escape by supplied mech armies. Be sure to finish your Winter 1941 attack phase in good defensive positions. The Germans will be back with a vengeance in the Summer of 1942. This should be your number one priority. Remember that in your own Soviet production phase you can build armies on production points to fill in gaps in your line.

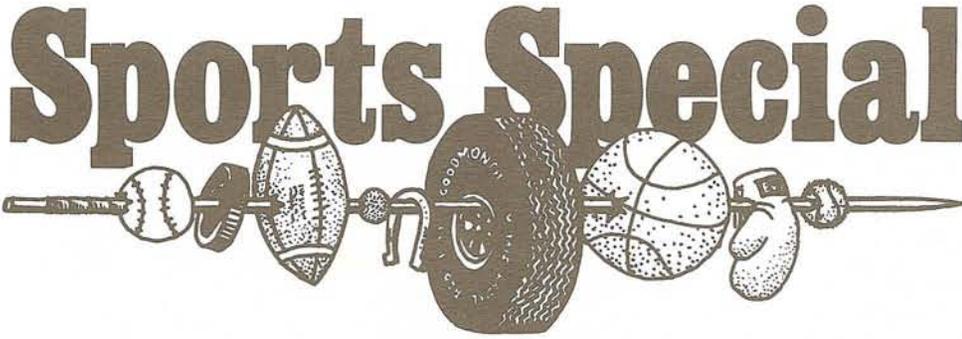
War-Time Economy

Production during the first three game turns of the invasion is varied with each game, depending on your research success and the state of your fronts in the field. Usually the Soviets must concentrate on infantry production and research through all of 1942, with maybe five or ten production points spent for a fort or two. I like to consider Lend Lease gifts from the Allies as additional points to be allocated to research. Roll for research for infantry as early as the Spring 1941 production phase. This will bring the cost down to two per strength point. Spend two production points on research every turn thereafter, and roll every turn until your cost is down to one per SP. At this point, it will be critical to build up your infantry points in key spots to prevent the Germans from holding all three capitals. Research can then begin on the tools for offense—tac air, mech points, and even a bomber or two if you're well off.

Although the Soviets historically launched offensives as early as 1942, most major offensives in *HITLER'S WAR* must wait until 1943. Attrition is your real ally through the 1944 turns, when the Germans will usually be preoccupied with the Allies in France, Italy or Spain. This dispersion of German forces will provide the Soviets with some great opportunities for isolating and destroying large enemy concentrations, as the German does not have enough armies to guard everything. The key is to smash the enemy mechanized armies with assaults, and bypass and surround the infantry armies. Even if on a production point, they will not be able to effectively break out, and can be mopped up on the next turn. The Germans will not be able to build up such isolated armies if the production point they occupy is not in Germany. The general pattern is for the Soviets to use a two-turn process of attack, smash, consolidate, and attack again. By this stage of the game, Germany will hopefully be on the defensive in every phase of the play. The tide will have turned, and the Soviet and Allied players will be racing for Berlin.

I hope that I have given players of *HITLER'S WAR* at least an alternative for successful completion of a game in the Soviet role—admittedly a sometimes dreary undertaking when compared with the "glamour" of bombers, U-boats, amphibious points, and paratroopers. Taking on the role of the Soviets, however, can make a player appreciate the task which Stalin and the Soviet Red Army faced in The Great Patriotic War. I find myself drawn to *HITLER'S WAR* time after time because of its simple rules and complex strategic decisions.





STATIS-PRO BASEBALL

Part One

By Jim Burnett

In spite of the disclaimers of the aficionados of the summer sport, baseball seems to have been surpassed by football as the "Great American Game". One thing is sure, however. Baseball, despite all attempts by other sports promoters, is still the great American statistical game. The media have discovered that we love comparative numbers in sports, and baseball succeeds as no other at generating raw data. It seems that TV announcers spend half of each broadcast dredging up percentages that appear to have, in the main, questionable relevancy. (The other half of each broadcast is commercials.) In a sports boardgame, however, numbers make the thing. It is the duty of the designer to see that the use of relevant stats recreates the action necessary to accurately portray the sport at its best. This said, we proceed with our own analysis of the game numbers derived from the heart of *STATIS-PRO BASEBALL*: the "Fast Action Cards".

Due to space limitations, I will present this data in two separate installments, one concentrating on the more common aspects of the game (hitting and pitching) and the other will delve into fielding, base running, and other slightly more esoteric topics. The information presented here is not intended to provide a detailed analysis of individual players. The numbers generated on their cards was a reflection of their performance in a particular season. It is, rather, for you as "manager" to have some basis in fact in selecting and positioning the players you have. While baseball is not quite the game of matchups as basketball, there are definite decisions to be made based on the expectations of your own team performance, that of the opposition, and the vagaries of the game itself as presented through the Fast Action Cards (FAC). Perhaps a warning is necessary that these are only percentages. The data which will fill the player cards is generated over a 162-game schedule. The FAC come from information obtained for the past 80 years. Absolute certainties in one single game are ridiculous. It is possible to be wrong for the right reasons, and vice versa. The numbers given in this article can be used to provide the small edge which will assist you to victory.

There are 389 separate card faces within the FAC deck. In a single game, you can expect to use about 300. As each batter will use an average of three cards per time at the plate, an individual card has only a 25% chance of appearing for a given type of draw during a game. While it is obviously impossible to cover every situation possible in a game, I hope that enough data can be presented to assist in the managerial decisions in any given circumstance. To do this, every piece of data present on a card and in the playing tables has been compiled. While this may seem to be a bit of overkill, it is necessary to give a full look at the game.

The expected frequency of Random Numbers is given in Table 1. A list of cumulative percentages is included to give the manager additional assistance. To find the percentage between two numbers, subtract the percent value for a number one lower than called for from the higher. For example, if your batter hits HRs 28-33, the result is 29.05 (33)-23.14 (27)=5.91%. Some of the numbers in the table gain importance in some options (particularly the Right vs. Left). Since the Random Numbers are the heart of the game, a study of a few of the small differences will be worthwhile.

Table 1: Random Numbers with Cumulative Percentages. The "individual" percentages are: 5=1.29%, 6=1.54%, 7=1.80%, and 8=2.06%.

RN #	%	RN #	%	RN #	%	RN #	%	
11	6	1.54	31	6	26.22	51	6	50.94
12	7	3.34	32	5	27.52	52	6	52.91
13	5	4.63	33	6	29.05	53	6	53.73
14	6	6.70	34	6	30.60	54	6	55.27
15	6	7.71	35	6	32.13	55	6	56.81
16	6	9.25	36	6	33.68	56	6	58.35
17	6	10.80	37	6	35.22	57	6	59.90
18	6	12.34	38	6	36.76	58	6	61.44
19	6	13.88	39	6	38.30	59	6	62.98
20	6	15.42	40	6	39.85	60	6	64.52
21	6	16.97	41	6	41.39	61	6	66.07
22	6	18.51	42	6	42.93	62	6	67.61
23	6	19.75	43	6	44.47	63	6	69.15
24	6	21.29	44	6	46.02	64	6	70.69
25	6	22.83	45	6	47.56	65	6	72.24
26	6	24.37	46	6	49.10	66	6	73.78
27	6	25.91	47	6	50.64	67	6	75.32
28	6	27.45	48	6	52.18	68	6	76.86
29	6	28.99	49	6	53.72	69	6	78.40
30	6	30.53	50	6	55.26	70	6	79.94
31	6	32.07	51	6	56.80	71	6	81.48
32	6	33.61	52	6	58.34	72	6	83.02
33	6	35.15	53	6	59.88	73	6	84.56
34	6	36.69	54	6	61.42	74	6	86.10
35	6	38.23	55	6	62.96	75	6	87.64
36	6	39.77	56	6	64.50	76	6	89.18
37	6	41.31	57	6	66.04	77	6	90.72
38	6	42.85	58	6	67.58	78	6	92.26
39	6	44.39	59	6	69.12	79	6	93.80
40	6	45.93	60	6	70.66	80	6	95.34
41	6	47.47	61	6	72.20	81	6	96.88
42	6	49.01	62	6	73.74	82	6	98.42
43	6	50.55	63	6	75.28	83	6	99.96
44	6	52.09	64	6	76.82	84	6	100.00
45	6	53.63	65	6	78.36	85	6	100.00
46	6	55.17	66	6	79.90	86	6	100.00
47	6	56.71	67	6	81.44	87	6	100.00
48	6	58.25	68	6	82.98	88	6	100.00
49	6	59.79	69	6	84.52	89	6	100.00
50	6	61.33	70	6	86.06	90	6	100.00
51	6	62.87	71	6	87.60	91	6	100.00
52	6	64.41	72	6	89.14	92	6	100.00
53	6	65.95	73	6	90.68	93	6	100.00
54	6	67.49	74	6	92.22	94	6	100.00
55	6	69.03	75	6	93.76	95	6	100.00
56	6	70.57	76	6	95.30	96	6	100.00
57	6	72.11	77	6	96.84	97	6	100.00
58	6	73.65	78	6	98.38	98	6	100.00
59	6	75.19	79	6	99.92	99	6	100.00
60	6	76.73	80	6	100.00	100	6	100.00

Table 2 gives a list of the expected occurrences of PB numbers and their associated percentages. The right-hand column contains the summed percentages for the numbers only. This column should give you an idea of the chance for your pitcher being "in control" since the occurrences of BD, CD and Z are really separate from the odds between pitcher and batter. Those familiar with dice odds will note a similarity with the results of 2D6. The general range of pitchers is from five to nine (discounting the "stuff" option). A 9-rated pitcher is effective 83% of the time, while a "5" will only control 28%. What is not shown is that the 5-rated pitcher against poor batters is often better off not being in control. There are more chances for him to put runners on than for a bad hitter to advance himself.

Table 2: Distribution of PB Numbers with the Percentage for each card drawn and Cumulative Percentage for the Number Cards.

PB #	%	Cumulative
2	10	2.57
3	20	5.14
4	29	7.46
5	39	10.03
6	48	12.34
7	61	15.68
8	47	12.08
9	39	10.03
10	29	7.64
11	20	5.14
12	9	2.31
BD	17	4.37
CD	17	4.37
Z	4	1.03

Of prime importance for the offensive team is Table 3, a matrix of batter type versus hit location. Each possible result on a card has been listed here. These results have been totaled and condensed as percentages in Table 3a as to expectations for types of hits and defensive chances. In checking the results of this chart, we can see that the best bet for a "deep fly" to advance a runner from third on the sacrifice is a SN hitter. RN batters stay out of double-plays better than others; and pitchers are more likely to hit into an error than others. Some of these differentials may seem small, but over the course of several games, they can add up. As stated before, percentages are just that and no more, but any player who ignores them will end up a loser in the long run.

Table 3: Type of Play hit into versus Type of Hitter.

Play	P	LN	LP	SN	SP	RN	RP
G1	14	28	11	12	22	23	11
GX1	6	4	11		7	7	12
G1A	5	6		6	6	5	1
L1		6		6	6		6
F1		1		6			
G2	8	6	8	6	6	6	6
GX2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2
G2A	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
F2	20	20	19	8	8	23	19
G3	41	21	29	25	30	18	18
GX3	6			1		1	6
G3A	7	9	7	7	9	7	7
G3-1A		2	3	1	3		
L3		6	6		2	6	
F3	15	13	15	13	8	12	12
G4	19	30	31	29	32	19	22
GX4	7	17	10	16	12	6	5
G4A	15	6	11	3		13	8
L4		8	5		12		
F4	23	9	16	9	12	9	13
G5	39	29	29	41	34	33	41
GX5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
G5A	1	5	1	4	2	2	2
L5	6	6	6	10	1	6	14
F5	15	7	12	19	18	16	13
G6	33	22	28	20	22	23	29
GX6	18	19	21	21	28	29	14
G6A	10	17	9	16	11	13	11
L6		6				12	5
F6	6	11	6	14	11	13	18
F7	18	12	19	18	12	24	20
FD7						7	11
F8	23	23	17	26	23	25	26
FD8			2	5	14		2
F9	17	30	24	39	20	17	20
FD9		11	17		7		

Table 3a: Percentage of Chances to hit a Particular Position, Type of Hit or other Result versus Batter Type. (A=A chance; X=X chance; E=errors; DP=double-play)

Hit To	P	LN	LP	SN	SP	RN	RP
P	6.43	11.57	5.66	7.71	9.00	9.00	7.71
C	8.48	7.97	8.48	4.88	4.88	8.74	7.71
1B	17.74	13.11	15.42	12.08	13.37	11.31	11.05
2B	16.45	17.99	18.77	14.65	16.79	12.08	12.34
3B	17.22	12.34	14.91	19.79	16.19	16.19	19.54
SS	18.76	17.73	16.45	18.25	18.51	23.14	19.97
LF	4.63	3.08	4.88	4.63	4.88	9.00	9.77
CF	5.91	5.91	4.88	7.97	9.51	6.43	7.20
RF	4.37	10.54	10.54	10.03	6.94	4.37	5.14
G	61.70	58.10	55.27	55.53	59.13	55.27	52.19
L	3.08	6.68	4.37	4.11	5.40	6.17	6.43
F	35.22	35.22	40.36	40.36	35.48	38.56	41.39
FD	0.00	2.83	4.88	1.29	7.20	2.83	5.14
A	10.54	11.05	9.77	9.51	7.71	11.05	8.23
X	11.57	12.34	13.11	11.83	14.14	13.11	11.57
E	65.66	61.44	61.70	54.76	60.41	58.61	56.56
DP	39.59	43.96	34.96	34.19	37.53	31.36	32.65

Table 4 gives the spread of cards for CD. From this table, we see that four players (short, second, third and center field) will make 70% of the clutch defensive plays. While Table 2 indicates that you can only expect two CD results per game, these results will always be in your favor and can get you out of some bad situations with a clutch double-play. You should cross-reference Table 5 to properly judge your chances. The near guarantee if an Out from a CD2 player certainly makes late-game defensive substitutions worthwhile.

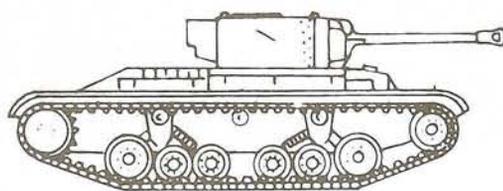
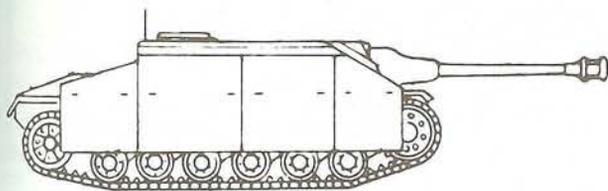
Table 4: CD Chances by Position

Position:	P	C	1B	2B	3B	SS	LF	CF	RF
Number:	26	17	19	23	81	93	27	46	27
Percent:	6.68	4.37	4.88	13.62	20.82	23.91	6.94	11.83	6.94

COLD FRONT

The Winter War for UP FRONT

By Jim Burnett



Thus far, the different guises of *UP FRONT* have presented themselves in temperate and tropical climates. This ignores the other extreme of warfare in World War II—the fight for the frigid north. Numerous books and articles have been written concerning Arctic combat, the German woes in their invasion of the Soviet Union being frequently mentioned. We will, then, skip over any detailed description of these actions and, instead, attempt to add the necessary rules to the *UP FRONT* system to make it applicable to the final frontier of the Second World War.

1.0 THE WINTER WAR

The following rules for winter warfare are presented as modifications to the rules already found in the *UP FRONT* series. The only basic assumptions made are that the temperature is well below freezing, that there is snow on the ground (ice in wet areas), and that the weather is not otherwise prohibitive of combat.

2.0 TERRAIN

The terrain cards are modified to reflect the presence of snow and ice. Unless listed below, all other cards retain their effect and use.

2.1 STREAM: Stream cards are treated as impassable terrain. Any Stream card discarded on a group will remove the Movement card in place. A Stream is a break in the snow/ice surface sufficient to expose open water which would require a crossing. Icy waters would quickly freeze, and were to be avoided. Removal of the Stream card will require the play of *two* Movement cards sideways. A player may place terrain after the first card is played however, but the Stream remains in place until the second Movement card has also had terrain played upon it. Semi-frozen water is a very strong deterrent to movement.

2.2 MARSH: Marsh cards are treated as Open Ground but may be *discarded* on any friendly or opposing moving group. Marsh is here considered equivalent to tundra.

2.3 MINEFIELDS: Minefield cards are discarded from all scenarios except where used as Booby Traps. The extreme cold and damp climate often resulted in frozen detonators, not to mention the difficulty of burying them in frozen ground and the muffling effects of heavy snow on their blast

3.0 ACTIONS

Many of the normal actions used in combat were very different when performed in bitter cold against a snowy backdrop. These few changes are summarized here.

3.1 CONCEALMENT: Concealment for units which are assumed not to possess winter camouflage gear is reduced by one. These will typically include all German units of the first two winters in any East Front (i.e., versus Russian units) scenario. Thus, a “-2” Concealment for them would be “-1”, or “-1” be read as “0”.

3.2 ENTRENCH: Effective entrenchment was difficult in the frozen expanses. Entrenchment is only successful if a black “0” is drawn.

3.3 SKI TROOPS: Ski troops are always considered to be Elite. A forward or backward Movement card played on Ski Troops which occupy a Hill will allow them to increase/decrease their range by one during their turn, and by one more at the end of the immediately following opponent’s turn. This additional movement is at the option of the controlling player, of course.

4.0 WEAPONS

All types of weapons were more difficult to maintain and supply in the frozen North. However, some troops were supplied with weapons more suitable to the weather conditions, while others simply made do with what they had or devised makeshift methods to avoid the worst problems.

4.1 MALFUNCTION: All weapons are subject to malfunction on a number one less than listed on their card. For example, a weapon which has a breakdown of “5-6” now has a breakdown value of “4-6”. Finnish weapons, Soviet weapons after 1940, and weapons for Elite troops (including Ski Troops) are exempt from this penalty.

4.2 REPAIR: Repair is only successful on a draw of one greater than that listed on its card. Exceptions should be made for certain troops as listed in 4.1 above.

4.3 HE: All attacks by HE, except those against vehicles, will be resolved at one less firepower than listed due to the muffling effects of deep snow.

5.0 VEHICLES

Vehicles were particularly affected by cold temperatures and conditions. They became difficult to start, move and service.

5.1 MOVEMENT: A vehicle requires a black RNC Movement card to be played in cold conditions for movement of any sort. Exceptions are made for the Finns, Russians after 1940 and Germans after 1942.

5.2 A vehicle must make a Bog check for each terrain card entered. This check will be modified from its normal Bog as follows: A Bog in Gully or Woods is resolved with a RPC number two less than listed; all other Bog checks are resolved at a RPC two greater. Note that the Bog RPC number may never be less than “1”.

5.3 REMOVAL: Bogs and Immobilization may be removed by the play of a Movement card and the draw of a black RNC greater than “0”.

6.0 THE FINNS

The Finns were some of the most valiant warriors of the period when in defense of their homeland or liberating the parts occupied by others. Their tactical actions in both the Winter War and Continuation War are worthy of recognition. The following rules apply to them:

6.1 MANPOWER: The Finns use the German Personality cards. All cards will be modified by raising the Morale and Panic numbers by one. This is a reflection of their familiarity with the land being fought over, and their individual love of Finland.

6.11 SQUAD SIZE: The Finnish squad will, in all scenarios, have two less members than listed. The cards with the two lowest Morale values should be removed. Specific choice will be left to the controlling player, however.

6.12 MORALE BREAK: The Finnish squad will break at 60% losses.

6.2 HAND: The Finns will use the German card hand. Provisions for Elite, Line and Green troops are as per the German practice. The Finns should, however, have a greater likelihood of possessing Elite (Ski) or Line troops.

6.21 SPLIT ACTIONS: The Finns may make use of either side of a split-action card which contains Concealment or Movement and any other action, regardless of nationality markings. This is a reflection of their adaptability to the tundra and the trackless forests of the north. Cards which contain neither are Cover cards for the Finns.

6.22 RADIO: The Finns use the Soviet radio cards. The Finns consistently lacked much artillery support.

6.3 VEHICLES: The Finns use only German Vehicles 30, 31, 37, 42 and 43. They never maintained a large fleet of AFVs.

6.4 LEADERS: The Finns are not subject to the leadership restrictions of Rules Section 15. Finnish leadership was not called upon to furnish the morale support or guidance to their troops that was required by the soldiers of other nations.

OTHER NATIONALITIES

I will also use this occasion to present the other minor powers which were combatants in the world war. The reader will note that only the Finns get special treatment as far as new and revised rules are concerned. This is because of their very special nature in the war. The other minor powers can be fairly easily assimilated into the ranks of their co-combatant great powers. This is in no way intended to lessen their own efforts or accomplishments, but merely recognizes the similarities in their own weapons, tactics and effectiveness. As is usual, it will be possible to find many instances where they over- or under-performed the nations with which they are equivalenced. In these cases, the reader should feel free to make his own interpretations concerning the use of Elite or Green troops.

These other nationalities are given as additions to the game system as a whole. The listed minor power will use the cards and hands of their equivalent major power. Also listed is the complement of AFVs which each nation possesses. Note that these are not intended to reflect actual vehicles in most cases, but AFVs which were similar in performance to those in the minor country’s arsenal.

The following changes should be considered when generating scenarios for the countries listed. Most Commonwealth nations had above-average troops. Their usage should lean toward the Elite or Line versions of British cards/hands. The Gurkhas are always Elite, and their AFVs represent other specialized support units. Minor nations against Germany in 1939-40 should subtract one from their Morale/Panic numbers. Any nationality which does not use all of its major power equivalent's armor should be used only as the defender in armor scenarios unless the exact AFV(s) listed are in the scenario. Armored forces of some nations were non-existent, rare or seldom saw action.

The listings for the Chinese are, admittedly, a bit odd. Any time the Red Chinese are fighting the Japanese, equal sides will be fighting. Using the Italians as Nationalist Chinese is also a very rough approximation. Both of these minor "nations" were included solely to give those who like to play the Japanese a few more options. It is suggested that for both types of Chinese, the trend be toward Line or Green troops. Inadequacies in leadership and the lack of supplies and training is reflected by lower quality troops. The only concession is the use of the Banzai rule to represent Communist fanaticism.

Major Power

Equivalent	Minor Power	AFVs
Russia	Poland	31, 32
	Yugoslavia	32
	Tito's Partisans	None
United States	Free French	All
Britain	Australia	All
	Canada	All
	New Zealand	All
	South Africa	All
	Gurkha [Elite]	All
France	Belgium	35
	Greece	None
	Netherlands	35
	Norway	None
Italy	Hungary	31, 35
	Rumania	31, 33, 35
	Slovakia	35
	Bulgaria	35
	National China	None
Germany	Finland	30, 31, 37, 42, 43
Japan	Red China	None



Sports Special . . . Cont'd from Page 48

While not applicable on any card after the first drawn, the expectations of BD showing up are the same as CD. Again, your chances from the board of getting any value out of your two expected BD cards are the same. The percentages of obtaining a positive result on a CD or BD draw by their different ratings is fairly easy to calculate. For a rating of "0", CD gives 27.51% and BD 23.14% positive results; for "1", CD: 56.81% and BD: 35.22%; for "2", CD: 85.86 and BD: 49.10%. So, your hopes to gain even with a team loaded with BD2 hitters are only one occurrence per game. This drops even more if you add the chances of men on base at that time. While BD draws are great at the proper time, don't factor your offense in anticipation. They will not be that common. Be grateful for what you get.

Lastly, let's look at the number of "Yes" and "No" results for pitch situations: a "Yes" pitch 154 times (39.59%) and a "No" pitch 235 times (60.41%) This shows that even if a pitcher has a chance at a "Wild" pitch, "Hit by Pitcher" or "Balk", the odds are only 40% or so that it will actually be called.

This concludes the first step of our look at *STATIS-PRO BASEBALL*. In the next installment (Vol. 26, No. 3), we will discuss some of the more detailed aspects of the game.



Coming Attractions

NEW WORLD

NEW WORLD is the beginner's version of the long-discontinued *CONQUISTADOR*. Simulation enthusiasts will find nothing here that Richard Berg's game didn't cover in greater detail; but *game* players will find it a much quicker, more playable, and more enjoyable game. It is a multi-player game for two-to-six players based on the discovery, exploration and colonization of the Americas. Each player assumes the role of a European power exploring and exploiting the New World. As such, it is a pleasing blend of economics and discovery, with just enough military overtones to keep wargamers interested. By wargame standards this is not a complicated game, coming closest to *Risk* in scope. It has purposely been kept simple to appeal to social gamers—but it is far from simplistic.

The game is played on a 16"×22" mounted map-board depicting the Americas, which has been divided into 26 hexagonal areas. Each area is rated for climate, native population, resources, and gold. At the outset, players bid for the right to an exclusive anchorage in the area of their choice. Thereafter, whenever players co-habit the same area there is usually combat. Each turn players must plot the number of Colonists they will take to the New World and where they will land. In addition, players must purchase or maintain Ships and buy any Soldiers they will bring to the New World. Each player then rolls for losses sustained in the crossing (those furthest away chancing the greatest losses) and lands the survivors where previously allocated. Colonists occupying mine sites roll to discover gold. Those on working mines roll to see if the gold is depleted.

At this point, chits are drawn to determine order of movement and players may move their forces one hex overland. After each has moved, the same order is used to resolve combat versus other players or natives in the same area. Natives are attacked to prevent their rising, or in the case of the Incas or Aztecs, to loot their cities. All players then undergo an Attrition die roll which is influenced by the climate of the area occupied. Those with sufficient colonists left (as well as a majority of both colonists and soldiers) in their area may claim Political Control of that area, which in turn translates to money in the bank.

The turn ends as each player returns his fleet to Europe packed with the gold and resources of the New World to turn into cash for the coming turns. The player with the most cash on Turn 10 wins, unless another player gains political control over five areas in the interim. This Sudden Death VC keeps the players balancing precariously at all times between the need for peace to maximize profit and war to prevent a political victory. The resulting blend of diplomatic, military and economic skills needed to succeed is truly unique.

That would be entertainment enough for many, but *NEW WORLD* contains much more when players move beyond the basic game. In the Exploration version, each hex in the New World is covered by a tile masking its contents. Only by actually entering an area can a player see what that tile holds in store. This version better captures the spirit of the great explorers moving into the unknown. For the

more military-minded, an advanced rule allows Naval Wars or Piracy to occur with raids on fleets and ports that can be as devastating as the English ravages of the Spanish Treasure Fleets. *NEW WORLD* should be available this summer.

The same designer, Derek Carver, is responsible for another new Avalon Hill offering called *SHOWBIZ*, and I should give at least passing mention to it here (for those among you interested in great games regardless of subject). Derek, an Englishman, is highly thought of in Europe as a designer of simple, yet challenging, social games; *SHOWBIZ* may be his best. For lack of a better description, I'd peg *SHOWBIZ* as a cross between *MasterMind* and *ACQUIRE*. Each player takes the role of a talent agent who must weight future demand and sign various types of performers. There are six types, ranging from six ventriloquists to 21 singers. Due to their rarity the ventriloquists would seem more valuable, but because the potential demand for each type is equal, there is no certainty that a ventriloquist will be worth more than, or even as much as, a singer on any given turn. Each turn a market forecast for the types of performers in demand is dealt out and given a reliability rating ranging from poor (16% accurate) to foolproof (100%). Based on this forecast, each player bids on the services of available performers—hoping to secure as many of the right type as possible. If he signs them, he must then decide the length of their contract (one to five years). A long contract saves resources in avoiding bidding wars for future performers but ties a player to that performer even when fickle public demand no longer is interested in him. Breaking contracts is expensive, but often necessary when you have a slew of outmoded talent. At ten turns, *SHOWBIZ* is a great evening's family entertainment for 2-6 competitive gamers.



PLAYTESTERS WANTED

The Avalon Hill Game Company is again seeking playtesters for two games currently in the throes of development. *Seahawks* is a proposed game dealing with the Age of Piracy for one to four players. Also on line is *Sub Hunt*, a card game from Courtney Allen very much in the mold of *UP FRONT* dealing with modern undersea combat. Playtest volunteers must be willing to spend some 20 hours per month in the testing, for a period of three months, and to send in regular written reports of their findings. Both solitary and multi-player testing is needed, so gamers able to enjoy either are sought. Applicants are cautioned that the playtest materials are pre-production quality and may involve some effort to assemble. Remuneration is limited to a free copy of the published game for each group coordinator. If interested in playtesting either of these games, applicants should send a short letter of introduction to Don Greenwood, c/o Avalon Hill. Please be sure to mention which game you are interested in testing. We regret that, due to the volume of mail such playtest invitations usually generate, we will be unable to reply to any but those actually accepted.

EAST RUBBLE

Shattering the Wall in the East

By John Hyler

RUSSIAN FRONT is a game that demands and rewards excellence in both strategic and tactical planning. For both Axis and Soviet players in the Campaign Game, the overall strategic ebb and flow will be roughly similar from game to game. Within this strategic framework, countless tactical permutations and options can be explored and utilized, particularly for the Axis player in the early turns. The Soviet player, faced with an overwhelming qualitative superiority, must seek first to thwart the Axis threat with the means at his disposal. Later, when enough reinforcements arrive to establish strategic parity, Soviet tactical options will increase commensurately.

The tone of each Campaign Game is established by the end of Turn 2, at the latest. By this time, the relative success of the initial Axis blitz will be apparent. In his article "East Wall" (Vol. 24, No. 1 of *THE GENERAL*), as amended later in his letter to the editor (published in Vol. 24, No. 5), Rich Miller explored a possible set-up of the Soviet forces in the Campaign Game. His set-up reflects his initial tactical goal of preventing Axis capture of Vitebsk, Odessa and Vinnitsa on the Axis first turn. As far as Vitebsk and Odessa are concerned, he does succeed. Distance and lack of German airpower make it impossible to take these cities without totally gutting any advancing units with hit points for excessive movement and/or unfavorable attack ratios. However, Vinnitsa falls with ease on Turn 1 (as will be shown later).

Throughout his article, Mr. Miller demonstrates a solid understanding of the rules, as well as of the potential of the different specialized units in the Soviet force pool. However, a Soviet player who uses this set-up, when faced by an astute Axis player, will find himself facing disaster. Only with tremendous skill and fortune will he be able to prevent an Axis Decisive Victory by November 1941 (1942 at the latest). This article will show to what extent the Axis player can totally compromise this Soviet deployment—and so turn the East Wall into rubble.

Armor in the Swamp

Reviewing his initial deployment, one finds that Mr. Miller has placed the 13th Armor in CC5 and the 17th Armor in EE12—both marsh hexes. The 17th is safe from attack on Turn 1, so it can be moved out later. However, the 13th is a sitting duck. Wallowing in the muck, it has a net defensive factor of "1" due to the negative modifier for armor in marsh hexes. With the +1 modifier for Axis First Turn Surprise, this gives the Axis no worse than a +3 advantage with its weakest infantry unit!

Needing speed, the Axis player may not voluntarily even send units through marsh hexes for flanking movements because of the prohibitive movement costs. This, plus the weakness of armor in the marsh makes me wonder about the Russian's rationale behind this placement. The 13th Armor could be better used as a line-backer for the main defensive line to hamper Axis blitz movement and exploitation.

While we are on the subject of units and their proper roles, in justifying the infantry placement, Mr. Miller wrote, "... this infantry is put to better use defending key objectives the panzers are unlikely to attack." The essence of the German *blitzkrieg* was for armor to make rapid penetrations of enemy defenses on narrow fronts, bypassing the strong points in favor of creating confusion in the enemy rear. The infantry then had the task of mopping up the strong points. By placing his strongest infantry units in places like Bialystok, Brest-Litovsk and Grodno,

Mr. Miller insures that the German infantry will nail them down on Turn 1 as the panzers rumble on, making their chances of survival to the end of Turn 2 very slim.

Geometric Strategy

"The main objective for your Baltic Forces is to prevent the capture of Vitebsk in June . . . Army Group Center armor, starting at HH4, proceeds to blitz KK6 . . . By sitting right on the boundary, they force back the placement of any reserve units."

These three sentences from "East Wall" reveal the flaw in Mr. Miller's strategic and tactical planning. He repeats a mistake made by generals over the ages. His planning and deployment is based on the belief that the enemy will do exactly as anticipated, with little thought for contingencies. What if the Axis' main objective is *not* capturing Vitebsk on Turn 1? What if AG Centre's armor does not blitz KK6, or even start in HH4? (Hex KK6 is a rather inauspicious place for AG Centre's armor to blitz anyway, since they will have to use four movement factors to move there and engage in a round of combat—leaving only two movement factors for blitz/pursuit movement. They would also then be in a blind alley, with the Soviet 11th Infantry in KK7, and would have no choice but to follow AG North's armor, assuming a blitz of LL6. Even then, they will have eight, and not seven, hexes before reaching JJ12.) What if the Axis player has other plans which preclude the use of Reserve counters?

"Geometric strategy" requires the analysis of all aspects of the situation, avenues of approach, possible strategies and counterstrategies, tactics, etc., and then to allocate forces to permit maximum flexibility of response. Learning to think geometrically, as opposed to linear or planar thought, is one of the most important things that Avalon Hill games require us to do. By basing his defense on only one Axis strategy, Mr. Miller leaves himself dangerously vulnerable in ways that can be easily exploited.

Freeing the Luftwaffe

Before proceeding further, a few words on Axis tactics are in order. Tactical success for the Axis is best measured by how many options for use are available for the air "armies". The German air armies are easily the most versatile, and hence the most valuable, units in the Axis force pool. They can provide supply during the Special Movement/Combat Phase, defensive air support during the Special and Normal Combat Phases, ground support and air interdiction and attacks on naval and air bases, and even strategic bombing of railroad and replacement point cities.

If Axis success on the ground is extensive enough, the air armies will have great freedom of choice in these options. Being forced to provide ground support exclusively from turn to turn at the expense of other possibilities deprives the Axis player of much versatility when attacking. This may result in victory eluding him. For example, German failure to strategically bomb the railroads in a given turn results in the Soviet player moving a factory unit away from a threatened city; in the next Victory Level Phase, the Axis player finds that he is one VP shy of a Decisive Victory.

As a corollary, if the Luftwaffe is freed from having to provide only ground support, this is a good indication that the ground forces are also freed from necessarily having to directly attack the enemy every

turn. This freedom of action opens a multiplicity of options. Therefore, the Axis first turn strategy must be calculated to decisively blow open the front so that many options for use are possible for the air armies, and hence for the ground forces as well.

The Magical +3

The +3 attack is the benchmark attack advantage (every game seems to have such a point). Less than +3, and the attacker can roll a retreat result. From +3 on, the attacker will never face a required retreat, enabling him to continue to attack in subsequent rounds until the enemy unit is eliminated, retreats or the attacker *voluntarily* retreats his own forces. At +3, the attacker has only a one-sixth chance of sustaining two hits in one combat round. At +4 advantage and above, the attacker can never suffer more than one hit per combat round. Clearly, if possible, and most definitely during the first Axis turn, attacks should be made at +3 advantage to insure success.

The key then, to my response to Mr. Miller's "East Wall", lies in Rule 15.5: "All Axis but Finns are +1 attacking." Just as the Soviet player must ruthlessly exploit the benefits of the Axis First Winter, so too must the Axis player take advantage of Axis First Turn Surprise to attack and destroy as many Russian units as possible.

Figure 1 shows my initial placement of the Finnish Army. Contrary to Dan Thompson's assessment in "Before the Snow Flies" (Vol. 22, No. 4), Hango is a dangerous open back door to the Finnish defenses. Failure to eliminate the Hango garrison on Turn 1 can result in the Soviets transporting a much better unit to man the defenses there, making any future capture a bloody prospect. This compromises the Finnish defenses, inhibits their drive to Leningrad, and keeps another valuable port available for the Soviet fleets. So the 4th Finn is positioned to attack Hango. Alone, this is but a +1 attack—but it gives the Finns an 83.3% chance of eliminating it with one shot. Helsinki is garrisoned with the 7th Finn, and remains so until the threat of amphibious or paratroop assault is ended. The remainder of the Finnish Army are deployed to satisfy deployment requirements.

Figure 3 shows placement of Axis forces on the Central Front. The initial set-up is fairly standard. However, to take advantage of weaknesses in Mr. Miller's set-up, most of AG North is positioned in Memel (MM5). The armor of AGs North, Centre and South are positioned adjacent to the hexes that they will blitz to maximize pursuit and blitz capability. Finally, Figure 2 shows the deployment of Axis forces on the Southern Front. Since Mr. Miller left M6 open, this is where the main Axis thrust will occur, with units poised to shoot through the hole.

It is during the Movement Phase that the true focus of the Axis attack becomes apparent. The first Battle Location is in Hango. This seals the harbor and prevents the Soviet fleet from evacuating to Hango when threatened. Next, the 6th Finn attacks the 10th Armor in WW20. The remainder of the Finnish Army moves to block any approach to Helsinki that the Soviets may contemplate.

Along the Central Front, a mixing of units into adjacent Army Group areas is required to maximize the invasion. First, the armor of AG North, plus the 38th Infantry, enters MM6; a Battle Location and a Blitz marker are placed there. Then the 5th Infantry of AG Centre is moved from HH4 to KK6,

followed by the 2nd Infantry moving to LL6. With the Soviet zones-of-control on their right flank neutralized, the remainder of AG North boils around the open flank.

The 28th Infantry moves to Riga, forcing the evacuation of the Soviet flotilla to Tallinn. The 1st Infantry moves to KK7, absorbing one hit to convert the rail line as it enters the hex. This will leave them with three hits remaining when it battles the Soviet 11th Infantry. The 26th Infantry moves to MM7, the 23rd to NN5, the 10th to MM5 and the 6th Infantry (from AG Center) to LL5. This will funnel any retreats of the enemy 12th Armor to NN6, away from the coast and woods. This leaves KK5 open for retreat by the Soviet 3rd Armor, but this attack will be at a +4 advantage, with a 66.7% chance of eliminating it after one round of combat.

Along the rest of the line, units are moved to salient and isolated hexes in the Soviet lines. The first of these is at EE4—Bialystok. Due to the river, the 21st Infantry there will have a defensive strength of four. Even with the First Turn Surprise bonus, a 5-4-6 infantry would have an attack strength of "6", for a net +2 advantage. This is unacceptable in my scheme. Yet hex EE4 is a crucial rail and airbase hex and must be taken. Therefore, the 4th Infantry of AG South moves to EE4. The base attack strength of six, plus one for the surprise, allows a net +3 attack and a guarantee that the hex will be controlled after combat.

The following hexes then have units moved into them: Y4, AA4, HH6 and JJ6. Once these hexes are marked with Battle Location counters, the remainder of the Wehrmacht, with a bit of care, can be advanced to engage the Soviets without fear of an untimely response move that would pin them down for the turn. The armor of AG Center, plus the 13th Infantry, enter GG7, placing a Blitz marker. The armor plus the 52nd Infantry from AG South enters X3, using the last Blitz counter. The 42nd Infantry occupied EE5 to deprive the enemy 21st of that hex for retreat; this will leave it only FF4 or DD4 open for retreat. With EE4 and EE5 occupied by Germans, supply can pass through for use during exploitation.

Along the Southern Front, it is much the same. The 30th Infantry moves to N6 via M6 to avoid response movement by the enemy. The 1st Romanian

enters L6. With the Soviet ZOC neutralized, the path through the gap is open. The 11th Infantry shoots through and moves to K10, sealing the port of Odessa off from the rest of the front. The 54th Infantry follows and enters Vinnitsa, absorbing a hit of damage for the extra movement taken. The Romanian Cavalry and 2nd Armor occupy M7 and N7. The 4th Romanian retreats to garrison Constanta until Odessa is taken and the threat of amphibious or paratroop assault passes.

In all applicable hexes entered (except those on the Southern Front and at Riga), the rails are converted either enroute to another hex or as an enemy hex is entered so that upon completion of combat, the rail will be converted. After combat is complete, the rail net will be converted right up to the front lines. No reserve counters are used. The focus and goal of the Axis is destruction of Soviet units in this first turn. No Axis unit will stand idly by on Turn 1, when their attack strength will never be greater.

After all ground movement is complete, the naval, then air, units move. The only naval movement is to move the German Baltic Fleet to Riga to sweep mines. The powerful Soviet Baltic Fleet may attempt intervention, but this would be suicidal. With help from the Luftwaffe, a +7 attack could be mounted against the Soviet fleet, with a 50% chance of inflicting three hits of damage. For the Soviets, discretion will be the better part of valor on the high seas.

The Finnish air force flies to Leningrad to make an airbase attack on the Soviet air there. This is a -1 attack, but it pins the enemy airforce and prevents them from being rude elsewhere. The air of AG North flies to Pskov and makes a railroad attack. The Soviet 3rd Air may fly to intervene, but it would be subject to a +3 attack, with a 50% chance of elimination on the first shot. As with the Baltic Fleet, the Soviets will likely opt for discretion. AG Centre's air moves to JJ7 for an air interdiction mission and to II7 for ground support. AG South's air flies to BB4 (Brest-Litovsk) and to X4 to provide ground support. The Romanian air wing goes to L6 (ground support).

Liquidation

The accompanying chart shows the 26 Battle Locations of the first turn and the units involved.

BATTLE LOCATIONS:

Combat	Hex	Axis Units	Soviet Units
1	UII	4th Finn	Hango Inf
2	WW20	6th Finn	10th Armor
3	MM6	41st & 56th Armor; 38th inf	29th inf
4	KK6	5th Inf	3rd Armor
5	LL6	2nd Inf	12th Armor
6	KK7	1st Inf	11th Inf
7	EE4	4th Inf	21st Inf
8	Y4	44th Inf	8th Inf
9	AA4	49th Inf	17th Inf
10	JJ6	7th Inf	10th Inf
11	HH6	9th Inf	11th Armor
12	II7	8th Inf; 8th Air	16th Inf
13	BB4	53rd Inf; 5th Air	28th Inf
14	CC5	29th Inf	13th Armor
15	DD5	20th Inf	6th Armor
16	EE6	43rd Inf	12th Inf
17	FF6	12th Inf	14th Armor
18	GG7	39th, 24th, 46th, 47th & 57th Armor; 13th Inf	5th Inf
19	X3	3rd, 14th & 48th Armor; 52nd Inf	13th Inf
20	W3	17th Inf	8th Armor
21	N6	30th Inf	2nd Armor
22	L6	1st Rumanian; Rumanian Air	18th Armor
23	NN9	Baltic Flt	Mines
24	RR18	Finn Air	1st Air
25	MM15	1st Air	Railroad
26	JJ7	2nd Air	Interdiction

A bit more detail on some of these might be in order, however.

Commencing the Combat Phase, the Finnish airforce fights one round and retreats. The railroad attack at Pskov and the air interdiction in JJ7 are resolved. The German fleet sweeps the mines at Riga. With Riga occupied by friendly troops and the Soviet mines gone, it now becomes a source of supply—something to remember during the Return and Transfer and Exploitation phases.

With the preliminaries completed, the Axis player now turns to the Blitz attacks. The hapless Soviet 29th, facing a +7 attack from AG North's armor in MM6, will last no longer than two combat rounds. Assuming the worst die rolls possible for the Axis, after the first round it retreats to NN6. The 41st Armor pursues it while the 56th Armor blitz moves to KK8, converting the railline in LL7 enroute. After eliminating the 29th Infantry, the 41st Armor then blitz moves to LL7.

The armor of AG Center, blitzing GG7, has as its objectives after blitz movement hexes HH7, II8, FF7, EE7 and DD6. Getting there may be a problem, due to the Soviet 3rd Infantry in GG8. One of the weaknesses of Mr. Miller's set-up is the lack of any units in the immediate rear to act as line-backers. True, the Soviets suffer a paucity of extra units for use in this role, but those that are available should be carefully conserved and positioned. The line-backers have a triple function: they can harass blitz movement by enemy armor, inhibit exploitation, and serve as safe "islands" for adjacent units attacked by non-blitzing ground units to retreat to. The 3rd Infantry at GG8 illustrates the potential effect that a few units in the rear can have. The attack of AG Centre's armor is conducted at +5, requiring not less than two combat rounds to eliminate the 5th Infantry. Unless a retreat back to Vilna is contemplated, the worst possible retreat path for this unit is to GG8 since an armored unit will pursue into that hex, effectively negating any benefits of having a line-backer. A retreat to HH7 or FF7 frees the 3rd Infantry for possible response movement against the blitzing armor.

This said, if the 5th retreats to HH7, then two armored units pursue since response movement by the 3rd into HH7 will not prevent occupation of II8. With the 3rd Infantry staying put, the remaining three armored units must then negotiate their way through the gap at FF7. Only one unit at a time should move. The first converts the rail at FF7. If the 3rd Infantry does not respond, the panzers are then free to move on to DD6. Then the second armor unit follows, and so forth. If the Soviet 3rd does respond into FF7, the remaining German armor will have to blitz around FF7 through GG8. These units will have to move one at a time, since the last armored unit will have to absorb a hit of damage to reach DD6 (as per 19.2).

Regardless of if, when and/or where the 3rd Infantry responds, the panzers of AG Centre can still attain their objective hexes. A price in hit points for extra movement may have to be paid, but it is necessary for all that is to follow. The preceding discussion, however, illustrates how units in the rear can harass blitzing armor. It is seldom that either the Axis or the Soviets can afford a true "double-line" defense (ala *THIRD REICH*), but with a few units in the rear as line-backers carefully placed, an armored thrust in that sector can be severely stymied. This also nicely sums up the weakness of Mr. Miller's set-up: strong units on the front lines or isolated, inappropriate units in swamp hexes, precious few units in the immediate rear as reserves.

AG South's blitz attack in X3 is on the +7 column, with a 50% chance of eliminating the 13th Infantry in one shot. The objective hexes for this thrust are X4, Y5 and V6. If the 13th Infantry survives the first round of combat and retreats to X4, an advance to V6 will not be possible unless hits

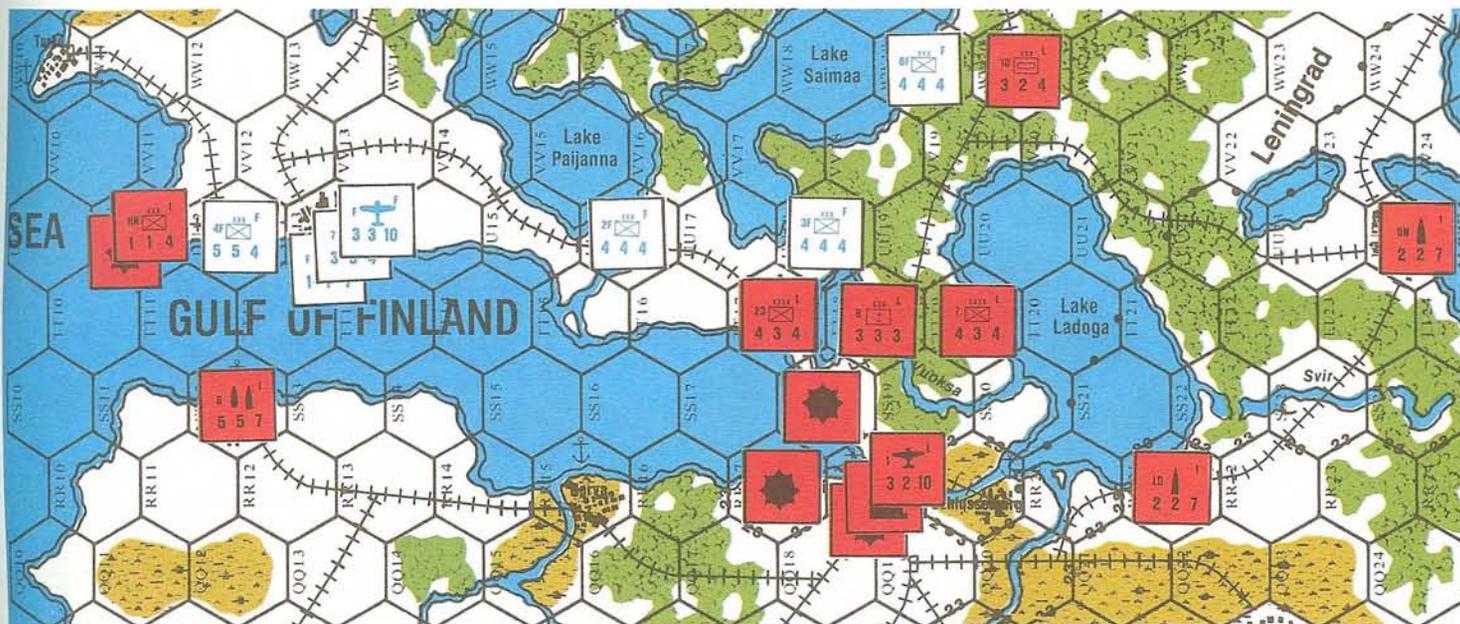


Figure 1: The Finnish Front.

for extra movement are taken. In any case, all the armor (plus air support) pursues into X4. A retreat into the woods in W4 by the 13th demands that one armored unit plus the air support pursue to prevent the 13th from response moving back into X4 and so halting further blitz movement as the panzers roar through the hole in the line (11.7.2.4). To assure unimpeded exploitation, the pursuing armor and air must make sure that W4 and X4 are clear of Soviet units. Hits for extra movement during pursuit may have to be sustained to insure this. However, since all attacks will be at +7, the odds greatly favor an easy elimination of any Soviet resistance.

Figure 4 graphically shows the situation at the completion of the resolution of the blitz movement. As can be seen, most of the Soviet forces north of the Pripet Marsh are caught between a rock and a hard place. That is to say, caught by German infantry with a wall of armor and air interdiction behind them to prevent retreat. The conclusion of the Combat Phase should see the virtual annihilation of the Soviet front line north of the marsh, and gaping rents torn in the lines south of the marsh.

A few of the regular combats merit attention. The battle in KK7 should be delayed until all combat in adjacent hexes are resolved. By absorbing a hit during movement to convert the rail, the 1st Infantry is vulnerable to elimination. If this occurred, there would then be an open hex for other Soviet units to retreat to. The 49th Mountain, attacking AA4, must force the Russian 17th Infantry to retreat to totally secure Brest-Litovsk from counterattack. Attacking on the +2 column and being able to absorb five hits of damage before elimination, the odds favor the mountain troops. The 1st Romanian in L6 should retreat after combat to M6 to keep the supply line open for the Romanian armor to exploit.

After the Return and Transfer phases, the armor heads east. The panzers of AG North moves to OO12 and LL13 to inhibit movement of reserves south from Pskov and to be in position to shoot through the bottleneck at Narva on Turn 2. AG Centre's armor exploits to DD10 to freeze the factory and cut the rail line; and elements go to II13, II12 and GG12—to partially trap the Soviet 22nd Infantry—and either to Vilna, if unoccupied by the enemy, or to HH11, if it is. AG South armor exploits to T8, U10 and S10, taking extra hits if necessary. This will partially trap the enemy 5th Armor and insure that the rails from Vinnitsa to Kiev will remain cut. The Romanian armor exploits to O10.

Figure 2: The Rumanian Front.

Aftermath

Clearly, the Russians are in deep doo-doo. With no reinforcements due until Turn 2, they must attempt to form a new defensive line with the meager forces remaining. No rail movement is possible because of the air attack on Pskov's railyard, so the Soviet Army can move only as far as their inherent movement factors permit.

What has not been eliminated by the Axis south of the Pripet Marshes is now largely out of supply. The Soviets can supply some of these forces by air south of hexrow R without running afoul of the Luftwaffe, now stationed in Brest-Litovsk, so the trap

is not complete. Some units will be able to escape and establish a new defensive line. Ultimately, though, this line will be too shallow and have too few units to prevent yet another breakthrough on Turn 2. Except, possibly, for those units able to move out of Lvov, any other Soviet forces out of supply at the end of the Soviet Combat Phase on the first turn will probably disappear, or sustain so many hits during the "Remove Out of Supply" Segment that they will be overrun during the Axis combat of the coming turn.

With the front ripped as completely as it is, the Luftwaffe can devote its energies to more esoteric pursuits. Railroad attacks are particularly effective.



Figure 3: The Central Front.

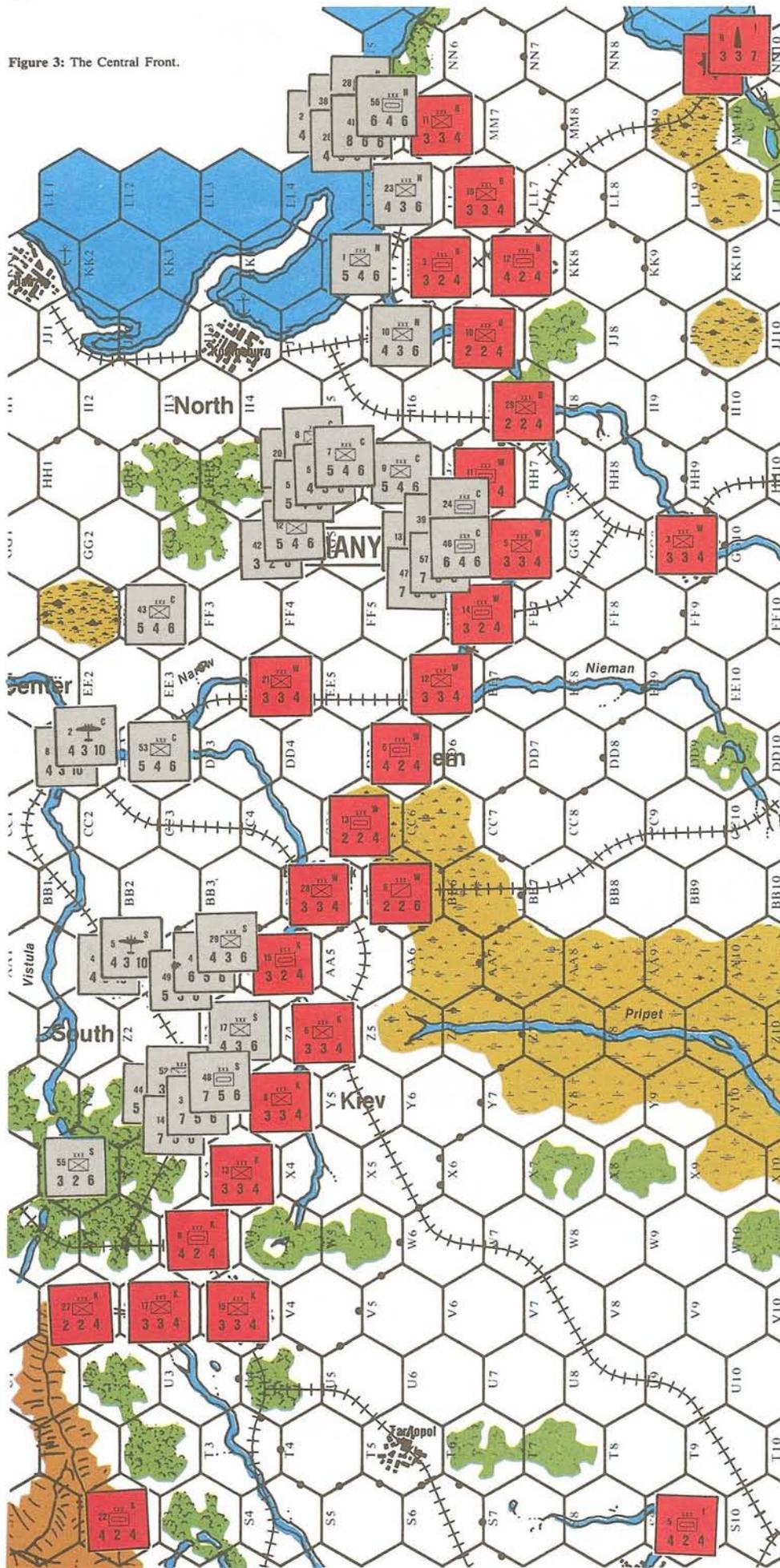
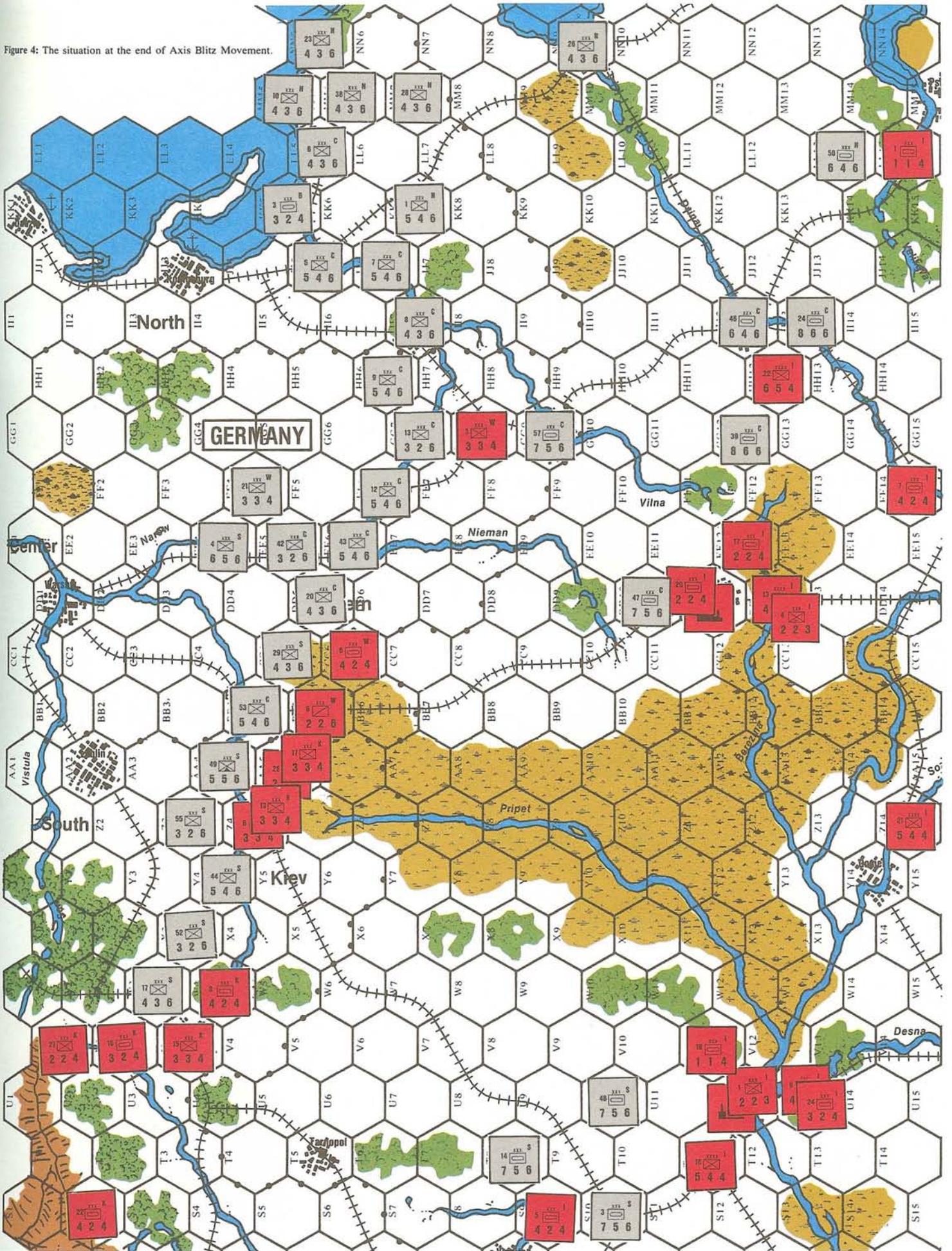
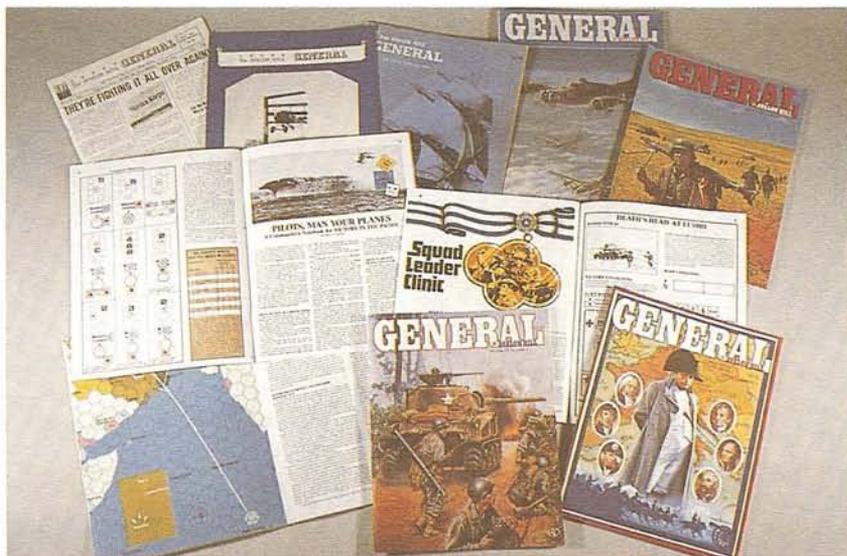


Figure 4: The situation at the end of Axis Blitz Movement.



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Mr. Greg Smith is 41, married, father of two, holds a MS in Math, is a doctoral candidate and resides in Sewickley, Pennsylvania.

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Interested in pbm FE, FR40 TRC. AREA Rated 1500. International play welcome; only AREA competition. Your system or mine. Edward Czosnyrowski, 33 McCleary Ave., Amsterdam, NY 12010, (518) 843-4868.

Seeking mature ftf opponents in or near Herborn or Giessen, West Germany. 3R, CM, ASL any module. Will try others. 15 years gaming experience. Aaron J. Derrick, 96th ORD CO, Box 42, APO, NY 09169, 02772-41044.

Ftf Newburgh/Poughkeepsie area; I play numerous titles. Come challenge me to combat. William Sanders, 102 Orchard Rd., Gardiner, NY 12525, (914) 883-5279.

3R fanatics in NY area are forming group for regular multi-player games, help playtest 5th edition rules. Joe Brophy, 16 Beachfront Lane, New Rochelle, NY 10805, (914) 636-6317, 683-1135.

Wanted pbm or ftf opponents for AK, BB, FE, FT, DIP, EIA, GE, GOA, SC, VITP, WSIM, BR, CIVIL WAR. Roberto Sanchez, 2402 Cherry Hill Drive, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603, (914) 485-5166.

Adult gamers new to RTP area interested in joining FRP group for RuneQuest, etc., weekends only. Willing to travel. Dick Jesser, Rt. #3, Box 256-A, Creedmoor, NC 27522, (919) 528-3768.

I'm new to the triangle area and am seeking ftf play: GOA, RF, CIV, BB, GE, SST, TP:STAL., FITW, TRC. Jim Falling, 2102 F Duck Pond Circle, Morrisville, NC 27560, (919) 467-6666.

ASL players wanted to form an association in southeastern North Carolina, Steve Treatman, 101 Dundee Ln., Spring Lake, NC 28390, (919) 497-1225.

Gamer seeks ftf opponents for CIV, AF, STARSHIP TROOPERS. Will try others. Mike Rahmes, P.O. Box 383, South Euclid, OH 44121.

Midwest City resident seeks irregular 3R ftf play. John Michalski, Box 60665, Okla City, OK 73146.

Sgt. DeBraul has transferred from Dutch front to Oregon. Looking for any ASL enthusiasts in Eugene/Springfield area. Jeff DeBraul, P.O. Box 3855, Eugene, OR 97403, (503) 746-7842.

AREA 1502 verified seeks Rated pbm for BB, FR, TRC, STAL, WAT. Must be willing to play 2 games, once each side. R. G. Robinson, 83 Greenwood Dr., New Cumberland, PA 17070, (717) 938-4505.

The Emperor of ETNA wishes to meet more local wargamers for some fun or serious ftf gaming. Tom Semian, 219 1/2 Kittanning St., Pittsburgh, PA 15215, 781-2147.

Looking for opponents for a 4 player pbm game of BRIT. Have pbm referee already lined up. Also looking for other ftf or pbm competition. Jeffrey M. George, 40 High St., Apt. #18, Pottstown, PA 19644, (215) 970-9431.

Pbm opponents wanted for GE'88, AF/DL, FITW, DEV, WAS, WAT and PAA. Rated or Non-Rated. Ed Snarski, 111 Swanson Road., Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702, (717) 825-2323.

Any ftf wargamers in Reading, PA? Large collection; possible club formation? I'm intermediate level but a fast learner. Miniatures also. Keith Eshelman, 49 Seltzer Ave., Womelsdorf, PA 19567, (215) 589-5528.

Looking for wargamers in Puerto Rico, ftf; forming club. Continental USA pbm opponents welcomed. Any game. Carlos H. Benitez, 174 Cataluna, Vista Mar, Carolina, PR 00630, (809) 768-8265.

26 year old gamer, new to the area, looking to play anything, 3R, SL, CIV, etc. Tim Francis, 24 Chestnut Street, Cranston, RI 02910, (401) 781-9106.

1500 Prov. seeks same for pbm or ftf MID, SC, PIAY, AK, LW, 3R, RF, TRC, STAL, TP:STAL, PB, WAS. Pat Hall, 1007 N. Edisto Rd., Leesville, SC 29070, (803) 657-5685.

Wanted: Opponents for SUPERSTAR BASEBALL. Also will GM/pbm: Dune, CIV, FREE, BRIT; GE'88, STAL, ALEX. AREA 1800, Roger Cox, 57 Coastline Drive, Inman, SC 29349, (803) 592-1249.

Anything but ASL or SL!!! Opponents wanted for SST, PGG, any U.S. CIVIL WAR games. Also Gamemaster TT, CIV, 3R, W&P, RB. Rated for not. "MOJO", c/o F.W. Cox, 5108 Borman St., Spartanburg, SC 29301.

1500 Prov. seeks Rated pbm, SL; ftf Rated or not UF, EIA, TA, ASL, FP, CIV in Knoxville area. Charles Hawkins, P.O. Box 110, Coryton, TN 37721.

Attention! East Tennessee Tacticians need ASL'ers of all levels. Meeting on the second Sunday, each month. Playing micro and macro, ASL only. For all ASL'ers. Tim Deane, 720 Carolyn Dr., Jefferson City, TN 37760, (615) 475-9286.

Attn: D/FW area wargamers! The Texas War Dept. meets once each month to play all types of historical conflict games. For more info., please contact: Greg Clayton, 3550 Timbergreen Rd., #302, Dallas, TX 75252, (214) 306-1451.

Wanted: players for si-move EIA campaign. Strict deadlines. Reliable only need reply. All letters answered. David Holmes, 7301B Alma Dr., #627, Plano, TX 75025, (214) 517-4265.

Wanted: experienced player for umpire pbm TA. Already have one player and umpire. Send SASE. Scott Ransom, 1507 Meadow Glen, Richardson, TX 75081, (214) 235-6647.

A pbm multi-player umpired game of MBT is now forming. Send a SASE for details. Steve Desrosiers, 15927 Eastcape Drive, Webster, TX 77598, (713) 480-1813.

Adult gamer looking for opponents in Sandy/Salt Lake City area. I am equally interested in history, competition and fun. Tim Hall, 9782 Winterwood Dr., Sandy, UT 84092, (801) 571-2506.

Ftf TT, CIV, SC, others in Washington, D.C. area. Do any TT gamemasters need a pbm player? Ed Wrobel, 3932 Forestdale Ave., Dale City, VA 22193, (703) 670-3489.

24-year old seeks opponents for BB, ASL, FE and others. Willing to drive 30 miles. Alex Medeiros, 11714 237th Ave., CT. E, Buckley, WA 98321, 897-8234.

Adults playing for history and fun. Ftf most anything; pbm BB'81, TRC, FE, PL, others. Steve Layton, 768 Bellevue Ave., E. #11, Seattle, WA 98102, (206) 324-7505.

Gamers in North VA for FT, BIS, VITP, SL, and more. Ftf wanted. Can travel weekends; can play here too! Robert Bloom, 707 Maryland Avenue., Shenandoah, VA 22849, (703) 652-8680.

Need players for umpired TA, FL. Will also accept any openings in your own umpired game. J. Thomson, 4140 14th South, Seattle, WA 98108.

Playing wargames 20+ year. Now want to get serious! Pbm MD, WAS, VITP, LW. Wish to learn others, but not ASL. Ftf almost anything. Michael Knautz, 1826 W. Kamps Ave., Appleton, WI 54914, (414) 731-3375.

Interest Group Milwaukee wants you! 12 year old group looking for new blood. Regular meetings, many games including most multi-player. No Dues! Contact: Jayson Galewicz, 1413 240th Ave., Kansasville, WI 53139, (414) 878-0618.

Cheyenne Armchair Generals meets each Sunday. Twenty members and growing. SL, TRC, EIA, CM, DIP, many others and various miniature systems. Larry Sturgeon, 3508 Amherst, Cheyenne, WY 82001, (307) 635-0512.

Wanted pbm players to play following games: AIW, DD, DIP, FT, FE, GOA, TRC, 3R. I am AREA Rated (1500). Corey Masson, 2407 17th St., S.W., Apt. 5, Calgary, AB, Canada T2T 4M9, (403) 245-8126.

Looking for ftf opponents in the Sudbury Region. Play SL thru GI, FT, AF, SUB and others. Any clubs or groups I should know about? Shaughn Haines, General Delivery, Espanola, Ont., Canada POP 1C0, (705) 869-5682.

Adult solitaire ASL players seeks mature opponents of any age; for ftf play. Michael Rodgers, 5187 Beamish, Pierrefonds, Que., Canada H8Z 3G4, (514) 620-5757.

ASL opponent wanted. R.K.B. Hanker, 1302 E. 37 Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V5W-1G5, 322-6698.

ASL Enthusiast in BC-Canada, looking for experienced opponent, will try pbm. Ken K.B. Hanker, #1302 E. 37 Ave., Vancouver, BC V5W 1G5, 322-6698.

Ftf opponents wanted for AIW, PB, PL, CASS. Will also pbm. Robert Hickman, 75 Hazelglen Dr., Kitchener, Ontario N2M 1E2, (519) 576-9259.

New to AREA would like to pbm FE, HW, PGG, CM; 3R will take on any age, any rating (non-rated also). Ron Garrow, 11815 Guertin, Montreal, Que H4J 1V4, (514) 332-0294.

Experienced gamer age 27 seeks ftf opponents in Montreal region. Also seeking non-AREA pbm for TRC, AK, BB'81, VITP, FE, ALEX. Open to new titles. Carl Paradis, 1409 Mont-Royal Blvd., Outremont, Canada-Que H2V 2J5, (514) 272-3219.

Pbm or ftf opponents wanted for 3R or SL. All letters answered. Valter Pirttila, Ja'a'ra'marmarkatu 16, 20200 Turku Country, Finland, 358-21-308887.

UK Wargamer seeks mature adults for pbm with Pacific War or Vietnam. Multi-player options likely on good response. All letters answered. Ian Hayes, 12 Lightfoot Road, London, N8, UK.

Any pbm gamers in Italy? In Europe? In U.S.A.? If Italy is not too far write me. MD, RW, FT, AIW; will answer all letters. Paolo Rubino, Viale Unità' of Italia 13, Formia, Italy 04023.

Norwegian pbm gamer seeks opponent for Rated pbm games. Will play TRC, FE, BB. Stein Surland, Svalveien 24, 3030 Drammen, Norway, (03) 884746.

Wargamers in Frankfurt/Wiesbaden area, boardgames and miniatures of all kinds played at weekly club meetings. Theo Bierschenk, USA VEO (West Germany), APO, NY 09757, 06190-1535.

Wargamers wanted in the FRG. To join DA Wargamers; write Patrick Fennessey, CMR 594, APO, NY 09175, 06151-314125.

THE QUESTION BOX

TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD Clarifications & Errata

Russian Setup Card: There are two 2-2-5's (not one) among the five armor units of the 244 Division, 13 TD Brigade.

German Setup Card: The 389th Division Artillery may set up in any German-controlled green Area as well as Zone E. The reduced depictions of German withdrawals on the front of the German Setup card should have been printed red.

6.1 There is no Russian 1st daylight impulse on September 13th. The Russian's first impulse is the second daylight impulse. Thus, the order of play is German Day 1, Russian Day 2, German Day 2, Russian Day 3, etc.

6.32 "Remove all Duration markers matching that day's color" unless under an isolation marker.

8.21 None of these restrictions apply to retreats.

8.28 "Infiltration allows a unit in a Russian-controlled Area starting its impulse adjacent to an Area (not a Zone) containing no Fresh German Combat units to enter that adjacent Area directly without attacking any Spent German units and therefore suffer only Duration 1 Disruption."

8.31 "Any attack into an adjacent Area by units remaining in their own Area (whether or not they start that impulse in that Area) is a Ranged Attack." The doubled TEM applicable to a Ranged Attack does not apply to the creation of Rubble.

OPTIONAL: Players who find Play Balance favoring the Germans should consider tripling the TEM for Ranged Attacks instead of doubling.

8.36 Air and Artillery attacks do not qualify for Overrun status.

8.37 Units may not Rout voluntarily.

12.21 Isolation reduction effects can reduce a unit's combat factors to a negative number.

14.41 "A Regrouping Mechanized unit which falls a Rubble Entrance DR must remain in its present Area during that impulse."

14.8 Addendum: Rubble never increases the DV of Armor. (EXAMPLE: If an armor "3" and an Infantry "2" are in a +3 TEM Area with Rubble 2, the Infantry would be the prime defender with a total DV of "7".)

15.3 Prior to combat resolution "Russian Artillery can add its Attack Factor to the OV of Russian Attacks . . ."

15.31 The South FAG may not fire into Zone C.

15.32 The German always gets a Counter-Battery opportunity—whether or not he has any Counter-Battery units in that quadrant.

16.5 "Spent units may move during night impulses, but their movement is limited to one Free Area per impulse."

18.3 No other units in the landing Area may move or fire during a Ferry attempt.

Kuibyshev Sawmill Scenario 1: "The German should roll for initial Rubble placement in Areas 33, 61, 62, and 63."

Kuibyshev Sawmill Scenario 3: "The Germans win if at the end of one week they have gained control of four Victory Points within the playing area."

THIRD REICH

29.414 When are bombarding fleets eliminated in an "EX" combat result?

A. This rule is badly worded. What was intended was that bombarding fleets are never eliminated after a combat result unless the attacking player voluntarily eliminates them in order to preserve other units. This applies to all combat results. The second sentence of 29.414 refers to the only time when any rational player would wish to eliminate fleets. The example following the rule should be extended—if the defender had a 3-3 infantry unit instead of a 2-5 armor unit, the attacker would still only lose his two invading 3-4 infantry units on an EX . . . unless he chooses to remove enough fleets to preserve one or both of them. The defender's losses are not reduced, however, to reflect the attacker's decision.

HITLER'S WAR

Q. Is there an *inherent* Garrison in a hex that contains only under-construction Fort SP? Only Missile SP? Only Ship SP?
A. Yes in all three cases.

Q. In the "Fall of Germany" scenario, suppose the closed devastated production point to an out-of-supply Soviet hex is an Allied one; do the Allies take control of the Soviet hex?
A. Yes.

Q. If the Axis player announces strategic bombing of Soviet territory only, does that mean that his bomber force cannot be attacked by Allied air defense?
A. Of course.

Q. For National Morale, can the "Loss of Gibraltar" or "Loss of Suez" modifier be applied to Britain more than once (i.e., if Britain recaptures and then loses one of these again)?
A. No.

READERS BUYER'S GUIDE

The following games are ranked by their reader-generated overall Value rating. Further aspects of reader response to our titles are indicated by the ratings in other categories. By breaking down a game's ratings into these individual categories, the gamer is able to discern for himself where the title's strengths and weaknesses lie in the qualities he values highly. Readers are reminded that ratings take the form of a numerical value ranging from 1 to 9 (with "1" equalling "excellent" and "9" equalling "terrible"). However, the Game Length category is measured in multiples of ten minutes (thus, a rating of "18" equates to three hours). A "+" following the Year of release indicates that the game is continued or complemented by additional modules in successive years (for instance, the ratings for SL reflect the entire system—original game plus add-on modules). Game Type is broken down into three broad categories: SO=Solitaire; MP=Multi-Player; 2P=Two Player. Finally, it should be noted that a minimum requirement of 50 responses (see the "Sample Base") was judged necessary for a valid representation; additional titles that garner such will be added to the RBG in the future.

WARGAME RBG

Title	Overall Value	Components	Complexity	Completeness	Playability	Authenticity	Game Length	Year	Type	Sample Base
ADVANCED SL	1.80	1.77	9.25	2.11	3.44	2.04	33.02	1985+	2P	172
1830	1.85	2.00	3.88	2.72	2.04	3.20	24.52	1986	MP	50
CIVILIZATION	1.97	2.60	3.20	2.03	1.72	4.09	32.08	1982	MP	152
FLATOP	2.00	2.47	3.61	3.12	3.56	1.76	43.96	1981	2P	95
EMPIRES IN ARMS	2.08	2.45	8.08	2.94	3.84	2.11	156.86	1986	MP	71
UP FRONT	2.11	2.24	4.36	2.83	2.38	3.56	10.16	1983+	2P	126
RUSSIAN FRONT	2.12	2.33	5.32	2.88	2.67	2.40	40.16	1985	2P	113
KREMLIN	2.28	2.51	3.64	3.33	1.81	5.24	11.94	1988	MP	63
BRITANNIA	2.31	3.08	2.93	2.89	2.07	3.52	23.72	1987	MP	77
TAC AIR	2.38	2.39	5.02	2.91	2.77	2.72	33.65	1988	2P	88
GETTYSBURG	2.42	2.61	1.79	3.32	1.64	4.43	9.11	1988	2P	86
VITP	2.55	3.12	2.56	3.32	1.91	5.56	21.09	1977	2P	183
RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN	2.60	3.35	3.85	3.10	2.28	4.22	35.44	1976	2P	220
ENEMY IN SIGHT	2.61	2.88	2.30	2.63	1.87	5.76	7.73	1988	MP	88
CASSINO	2.68	2.71	4.43	2.75	2.32	2.63	23.67	1988	2P	52
DIPLOMACY	2.71	3.36	3.00	2.69	2.92	5.16	33.26	1976	MP	169
ST. NAZAIRE	2.72	2.56	4.01	3.12	2.80	2.52	18.92	1987	SO	98
FIREPOWER	2.76	3.03	6.42	3.63	3.76	2.88	15.48	1985	2P	94
STORM OVER ARNHEM	2.78	2.68	3.84	2.84	2.32	3.49	24.35	1981	2P	87
FLIGHT LEADER	2.79	2.20	4.62	3.00	2.77	3.20	10.18	1986	2P	76
BULL RUN	2.80	2.67	3.80	2.95	2.96	2.93	23.76	1983	2P	62
DEVILS DEN	2.81	2.85	5.04	2.99	3.52	2.61	24.58	1985	2P	60
B-17	2.83	2.87	2.93	2.83	2.00	3.33	8.82	1983	SO	192
SQUAD LEADER	2.84	2.11	8.05	3.68	4.27	3.00	21.37	1977+	2P	231
2nd Fleet	2.89	3.35	5.27	3.44	3.28	3.55	32.23	1986	2P	55
WS&M	2.92	3.24	5.64	3.00	3.04	2.60	20.07	1975	2P	172
THIRD REICH	2.95	3.56	8.83	3.70	4.00	3.51	45.83	1981	MP	227
BULGE '81	2.96	3.11	4.21	3.24	2.92	3.19	28.02	1981	2P	155
PANZER LEADER	3.12	2.79	5.63	3.72	3.32	3.82	19.47	1974	2P	210
WAR & PEACE	3.13	3.44	4.55	3.68	2.95	3.15	36.80	1980	2P	138
TTAN	3.16	2.68	3.48	2.66	2.47	4.48	29.08	1982	MP	65
Civil War	3.20	3.69	6.95	3.22	4.17	3.58	46.96	1983	2P	112
DUNE	3.21	2.48	3.29	2.93	2.88	4.28	15.84	1979+	MP	87
MAGIC REALM	3.29	2.44	8.41	4.08	4.20	3.79	20.76	1979	MP	75
Battle Hymn	3.32	3.33	5.24	4.32	3.48	3.89	21.26	1986+	SO	51
NAVAL WAR	3.35	4.20	1.12	3.40	1.60	6.72	6.00	1983	MP	81
STARSHIP TROPPERS	3.36	3.12	4.84	3.32	3.20	3.12	16.37	1976	2P	110
KINGMAKER	3.39	3.21	5.65	4.48	3.49	4.63	27.98	1976	MP	141
PG GUDERIAN	3.40	3.24	5.44	3.20	3.28	3.32	22.87	1984	2P	90
PATTON'S BEST	3.43	3.22	4.16	4.23	3.25	3.87	14.13	1987	SO	109
GLADIATOR	3.44	3.36	3.89	3.32	2.56	3.20	8.89	1981	2P	58
CIRCUS MAXIMUS	3.47	3.60	3.28	3.39	2.64	3.36	11.70	1980	2P	91
6th Fleet	3.48	3.04	5.64	3.73	3.88	3.64	47.67	1985	2P	59
AIR FORCE	3.48	4.27	5.36	3.64	3.61	3.12	12.90	1980+	2P	76
ARAB-ISRAELI WARS	3.49	3.25	6.93	3.72	3.52	3.72	16.37	1977	2P	123
PANZERBLITZ	3.56	3.55	4.92	4.16	3.26	4.50	18.25	1970	2P	215
PA AFRICA	3.63	3.68	4.23	3.36	3.19	3.88	25.14	1981	2P	80
Pacific War	3.64	3.57	7.98	4.32	5.28	3.19	120.63	1986	2P	66
Pax Britannia	3.64	3.60	4.85	3.91	4.25	4.61	52.14	1985	MP	50
MIDWAY	3.65	4.48	2.80	3.16	2.43	4.52	21.10	1964	2P	130
DWTK	3.68	3.56	4.88	4.28	3.85	3.89	22.82	1981	MP	52
Ambush	3.68	4.08	4.94	4.40	3.91	4.61	19.69	1983+	SO	121
FORTRESS EUROPA	3.73	3.23	5.36	3.78	3.88	3.57	42.44	1980	2P	157
AFRIKA KORPS	3.77	4.43	2.20	2.84	1.88	5.40	21.44	1964	2P	167
HITLER'S WAR	3.80	3.89	4.20	4.25	3.44	4.68	34.79	1984	2P	78
WIZARD'S QUEST	3.82	3.07	2.11	2.94	2.15	4.92	20.92	1979	MP	85
Vietnam	3.89	3.35	8.60	3.83	5.26	3.75	90.86	1984	2P	60
WAR AT SEA	4.04	3.94	1.40	3.40	1.87	6.72	12.80	1976	2P	155
BLITZKRIEG	4.19	4.36	5.84	3.87	3.60	5.57	33.76	1965	2P	136
1776	4.25	3.64	5.28	3.88	3.24	4.40	26.30	1974	2P	154
D-DAY	4.32	4.73	3.56	3.45	2.91	5.08	27.16	1977	2P	125
RICHTHOFEN'S WAR	4.33	3.78	3.99	3.50	3.24	4.87	8.23	1983	2P	53
PANZERKRIEG	4.35	4.02	5.11	3.84	3.83	3.28	24.49	1973	2P	137
GUNS OF AUGUST	4.41	4.00	5.32	4.56	4.51	3.83	44.72	1981	2P	139
WATERLOO	4.44	4.48	2.24	3.08	2.21	5.55	17.99	1962	2P	104
Mosby's Raid	4.53	4.55	4.63	4.36	4.42	5.13	20.85	1985	SO	60
LUFTWAFFE	4.80	4.27	4.16	4.08	3.91	5.33	20.08	1971	2P	170
Nato	4.96	4.16	6.28	5.24	4.76	4.63	33.70	1983	2P	73
TACTICS II	5.88	6.22	1.52	3.89	2.96	6.80	14.87	1961	2P	108

TOKYO EXPRESS

Solitaire Game of The Guadalcanal Naval Campaign: 1942

\$35.00

The first of the Victory Games titles to be rated independently did not show well, although this small number of responses to our regular survey of a new design obviates almost any possible conclusions. However, certain of the number below are not far off the mark I suspect, and have some validity for those who may be contemplating a purchase of TOKYO EXPRESS.

Certainly, the "Complexity" rating seems in line with that assigned by the gnomes of VG. And the "Game Length" is likely fairly accurate, since this tends to more an objective evaluation than a subjective one. If you are looking for an engaging solitaire challenge that will occupy an evening's play, the game seems to be tailor-made. And, if the small sample base is taken into account, the component quality is about what one has come to expect from Victory Games. Of the other values—keeping in mind that these represent the collective opinion of but 16 of your fellows—several are better than the average found on the RBG. In summation, while it is yet perhaps a bit early to judge this latest solitaire offering, if interested in the subject matter, it would appear that the prospective buyer won't be disappointed.

Drawing less than 50 responses, the abbreviated ratings for TOKYO EXPRESS will not appear on future installments of the RBG. However, listed below are all the ratings for those potential buyers of this newest solitaire offering:

Overall Value: 3.06

Components: 2.81

Map: 3.59

Counters: 2.83

Rulebook: 3.68

Complexity: 7.75

Completeness of Rules: 3.25

Playability: 3.78

Excitement Level: 3.93

Play Balance: 3.68

Authenticity: 3.37

Game Length (average): 19.15

Shortest: 1 hr., 37 mins.

Longest: 4 hrs., 46 mins.

Year: 1988

Type: SO

Sample Base: 16

The always loud voices of the ASL fraternity made themselves heard in response to our featuring *WEST OF ALAMEIN* in Vol. 25, No. 6—bringing it, in the process, an Overall Rating of 2.85. There also seems to have been enough material on other topics to keep the rest of the readership mollified as well. Seemingly, Mr. Markuss' excellent article on the British Army in World War II pleased both camps, leading it to dominate the polling of reader reaction to the articles. Based on a random sampling of 200 responses to Vol. 25, #6 (with three points awarded for a first place vote, two for a second, and one for a third), the ranking is as follows:

TOMMY ATKINS AT WAR	340
DESERT WINDS	222
SQUAD LEADER CLINIC	155
SPECIAL AIR SERVICE	93
BROKEN SWORDS	88
UP ON THE AFRICAN FRONT	60
WITH ROMMEL IN THE DESERT	52
COMING ATTRACTIONS	38
SPORTS SPECIAL	35
AH PHILOSOPHY	33
PAX DISCORDIA	30
AREA NEWS	27
COMPUTER CORNER	17
BUT NOT ALONE	10

Canadian customers might be interested to know that our new Toll-Free Number (1-800-999-3222) works equally well for them. According to the staff of our Order Department, we are receiving still a number of regular long-distance phone orders from Canada. This is now an unnecessary expense for those who look to our games to keep "cabin-fever" at bay. Canadians with a major credit card wishing to avail themselves of by-phone direct ordering may now do so unhindered.

Landing on our desk recently was another new 'zine—*Pirates*—a relatively new effort by Chuck Lietz. Although it does carry PBM games of that old standard *DIPLOMACY*, Mr. Lietz is also offering moderated postal games of some other, less common Avalon Hill multi-player titles. At the moment, he is looking for players for matches of *GUNSLINGER*, *MAGIC REALM*, *BRITANNIA*, *WAR & PEACE* and has just commenced a game of *KREMLIN*. Costs are nominal—a \$3.00 game fee and a \$6.00 annual subscription to his 'zine. If you are looking for something different in the way of postal gaming, contact Mr. Lietz for more details (P.O. Box 221, Stevenson, WA 98648).

The Avalon Hill Football Strategy League recently completed its 17th consecutive year of play when second-year player Jim Grant won his first Super

Infiltrator's Report

Bowl (17-3 over the Green Bay Packers of Don Greenwood). The 28-member league then capped off their season by losing a challenge match with a rival league from Philadelphia (five games to four). Players wishing to join either league, or to challenge the AHFSL to a match, should contact Don Greenwood (c/o Avalon Hill).

For fans of *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER*, there is now available a computer program (devised by Mr. Tim Kitchen of Rochester, New York) that will generate DYO scenarios for them. The program is loosely based upon the system introduced by Greg Schmittgens and Charlie Kibler back some time ago in *The GENERAL* (Vol. 24, No. 1); it was written for the IBM PC and should run on any true compatible with any memory configuration greater than 64K. Basically, the program generates a scenario using various charts; it randomly determines nationalities, date, initiative, board configuration, total point values, victory conditions, ELR ratings, weather, etc. In effect, it gives the players all the data necessary to play an ASL scenario (except the actual purchase of forces, which of course is left to them). The program is being distributed free of charge by Mr. Kitchen, so ASL players can look for it on local electronic bulletin boards, or they can call The Data Comm BBS in Rochester (716-271-6592) or the Plutonium Mines BBS (716-334-2305).

Subscribers will have noticed something different when this issue arrives—gone is the mailing envelope, replaced with a one-color warp-around mailing cover. This is something of an experiment for us, another in our series of efforts to both cut costs and expand our coverage. The savings for us in simply binding the magazine within its mailing cover are obvious; and the extra pages provided can be used for material that would otherwise demand space within the pages of the magazine (surveys, awards ballots, advertising, etc.). However, there are also some rather obvious drawbacks. Obviously too, this cannot cover all our needs, since it will be necessary to occasionally make use of an envelope when enclosing loose material within these pages—such as the annual bonus variant counter sheet (for instance, our next issue). As this is an experiment, we'd like to hear your opinions. Just drop a line to me—Rex A. Martin, Managing Editor, c/o Avalon Hill—to voice your views on our proposed use of a mailing cover for *The GENERAL*.

Our questions (Contest #148) designed to test your grasp of the esoterica of ASL brought the usual large number of entries—mostly wrong. When the dust on our desk had settled, we were left with a random drawing to determine the winners, each to receive a merchandise voucher from Avalon Hill. Not surprisingly, there were a number of recognizable names from our various ASL playtests among the final group, happily assuring us that the published scenarios are getting the best testing possible. The ten winners are: Michael Black, Fairfax, VA; Darryl Burk, Ravenna, OH; Richard Crowe Jr., Shirley, MA; Andy Daglish, Cheshire, UK; Jeffrey Gross, Cambridge, MA; Thomas McCorry, Sterling, VA; Robert Orf, San Bernardino, CA; Paul Rosengrant, Peoria, IL; Tom Slizewski, Arvada, CO; David van Steenburgh, Litchfield, CT. I must also make mention of one entry which, while certainly not a prize winner, deserves some sort of "honesty" award. Perry Cocke of Baltimore submitted the following in answer to the two questions:

- 1) I never roll low enough to get Critical Hits!
- 2) Are you telling me that even if I could manage to roll snake-eyes I might not get a Critical Hit? I hate this game!

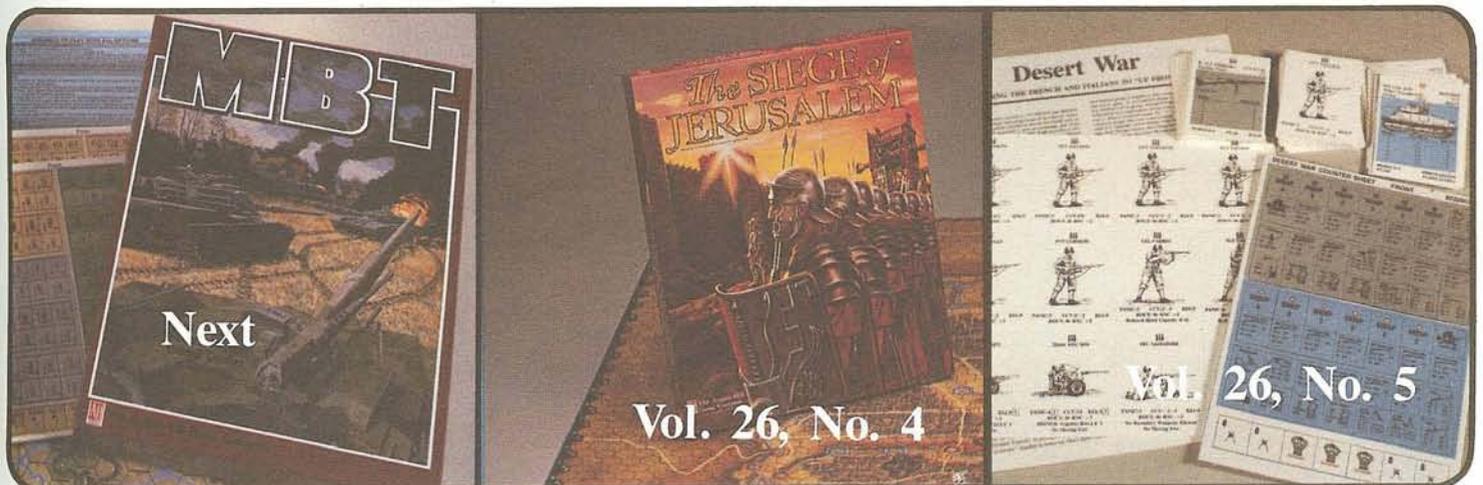
Contest #149 pitted the entrant against the wealthy Whynoms in a playing of the final turns of *MERCHANT OF VENUS*. To snatch victory from them was not so much a matter of movement, but rather one of astute trading. Asked to show the Human actions of the next two turns, the correct response would read as follows:

First Turn: Move to the Nik port at Wet Landing to trade with 10 (the Qossuth). There sell one Servo-mechanism and one Pedigree Bolts; buy a port, factory, one Psychotic Sculpture, and one Infinite Puzzle.

Second Turn, if the Whynom moves to Cholos and buys a factory: Move to your own port at Paintfall to trade with 1b (Volois). There sell the Psychotic Sculpture and the Infinite Puzzle and your Shield; turn in your Volois IOU and buy a port and a factory.

Second Turn, if Whynom takes any other action: Move to your port at the Inhabited Moon (Graw); sell the Psychotic Sculpture, Infinite Puzzle and Shield. You buy the other port and the factory, and you load the Fare to 10.

With this, your next move should be obvious—flying back to the Qossuth to deliver the fare. From there, if need be, you can return to Base with the fare waiting on the Water World. With the bonuses you gain for trading at your own port on the second turn described, you have just enough to claim the victory . . . before the Whynom player can do so.





КРЕМЛИН®

The very name conjures up images of power and intrigue beneath the onion-shaped spires of the world's most austere, yet powerful, capital. He who controls the governing body therein has his finger on the pulse of the world. Who is this man who holds the destiny of mankind in his hands? What is his power base? How did he become head of one of the strongest nations on earth?

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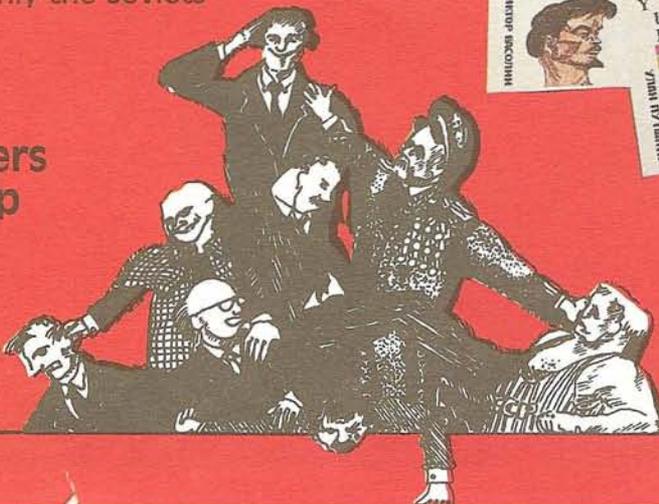


CONTENTS:

- 1 16" x 22" mounted Gameboard
- 260 die-cut 2-sided laminated Playing Pieces
- 24 Politician Cards
- 36 Intrigue Cards
- 1 Easy Basic Game Rules Folder
- 1 Advanced Rules Folder
- 1 20-sided Die

TIME SCALE: 1 Turn = 1 Year
UNIT SCALE: individual Politicians
PLAYERS: 3-6 devious people, ages 12 and up
PLAYING TIME: 1-2 hours

3 to 6 Players
Ages 12 Up



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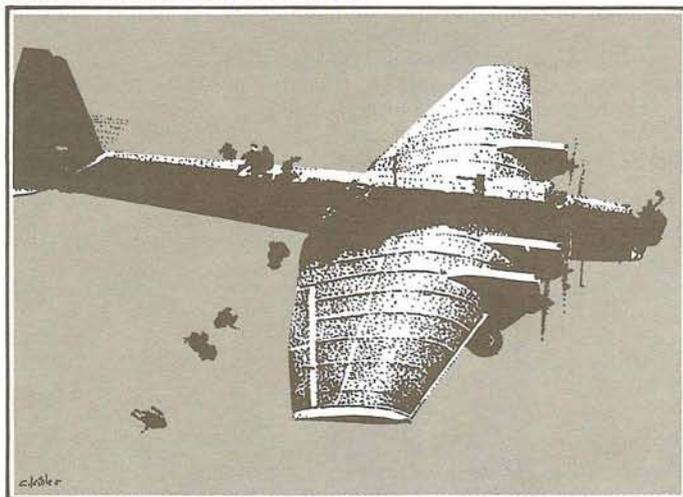
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GRAB AT GRIBOVO



ASL SCENARIO G10



GRIBOVO, RUSSIA, 3 January 1942: In late December, while the battles for Moscow were still boiling cauldrons, STAVKA ordered four Soviet armies to attack and destroy the German 4th Army. To assist in the action, a tactical airdrop by Soviet paratroopers was planned to disrupt German command, communications and logistical systems deep in the rear. The 1st Battalion of the 201st Airborne Brigade was directed to take and hold as long as possible the villages of Gribovo and Maslova astride the main road. They were also to blow up bridges over the river Shayna in order to prevent German supplies and reinforcements from arriving at the front. Making the airdrop at night, Captain Surzhik led part of his command directly in its fall on the village of Gribovo.

BOARD CONFIGURATION:

	18
	12
	4



BALANCE:

- ✚ Add a Hero to the German OB.
- ★ Delete the 7-0 from the German OB.

VICTORY CONDITIONS: The Russians win if they Control all buildings on/between hexrows M and V on board 12 at game end.

TURN RECORD CHART

✚ GERMAN Sets Up First [100]	★	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	END
★ RUSSIAN Moves First [165]										



Elements of Infanterie Division 276 [ELR: 3] set up on board 12 on/between hexrows M and V [EXC: Hidden German units (with accompanying SMC/SW) may be set up in any woods/building hex of the playing area]: {SAN: 2}



1 4'-6-7	1 2-4-7	1-8	0-8	0-7	2 5-12	1 3-8	3 50'-12-13
-------------	------------	-----	-----	-----	-----------	----------	----------------

10

2



Elements of the 1st Battalion, 201st Airborne Brigade [ELR: 4] enter by Air Drop (E9.) on Turn 1: {SAN: 2}



1 4-5-8	2	2	2 4-10	1 2-8	1 50mm	1 30-1
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15

2

2

4

2

SPECIAL RULES:

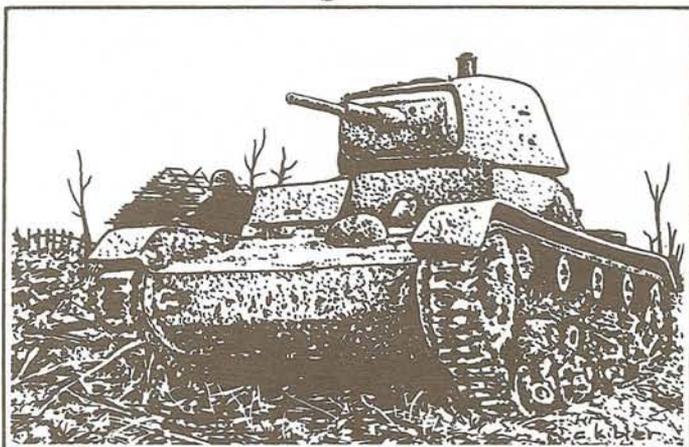
1. EC are Deep Snow (E3.73) with no Wind at start. Extreme Winter (E3.74) is in effect.
2. Night Rules are in effect. The initial Base NVR is five hexes with no Cloud Cover and no Moon. The German is the Scenario Defender (E1.2); the Russian is the Scenario Attacker. The Majority Squad Type for the German is Lax; for the Russian, Stealthy. Note that the Russians may not use Cloaking counters (E1.41 & E9.11).
3. All buildings on all boards are wooden. All paved roads are plowed; unpaved roads are *not* plowed.
4. The German Sniper counter is placed onboard just before the Russian parachutes land (E9.4). The Russian Sniper counter is placed onboard immediately after the first Russian Player Turn is completed.

AFTERMATH: After assembling as many men as possible, Captain Surzhik led his force in driving the surprised German troops out of the village in a sharp firefight. Deploying about half of his men around the village, Surzhik sent another group out to destroy the nearby bridge over the Shanya. During the next few hours, the Soviet paratroopers repulsed several attempts by the Germans to reoccupy the village. As dawn came, stronger counterattacks were mounted by the Germans, but the *Desantniki* kept the road closed between Medyn and Gribovo for several days. At last, running low on ammunition, the paratroopers began a fighting withdrawal toward the advancing Soviet 43rd Army. On 11 January, after some costly skirmishing, the cold but cheerful paratroopers linked up with friendly forces near Kremenskoye.

LAND LEVIATHANS

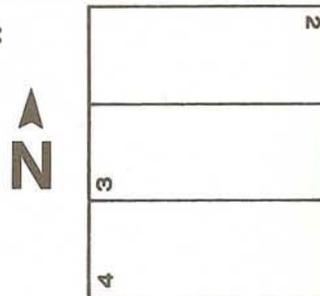


ASL SCENARIO Q



LIPKI, RUSSIA, 3 July 1941: Under pressure from Stalin to hold Smolensk, Yeremenko was desperate to halt the German offensive. On 1 July, he committed his sole armored reserve: the 1st Moscow Motorized Rifle Division under Major-General I.G. Kreyzer. It was a crack unit, the pride of STAVKA. Equipped with the new T-34 and KV-2 tanks, the division moved off to meet and defeat the 18th Panzer Division, the spearhead of Guderian's 2nd Panzergruppe. On 3 July at Lipki, six miles east of Borisov, contact was made.

BOARD CONFIGURATION:



BALANCE:

♣ Add one MMG to the German OB.

★ Substitute a 9-2 armor leader for the 9-1 in the Russian OB.

VICTORY CONDITIONS: The Russians win immediately if they have Exited \geq three AFV (with functioning MA) off the west edge.

TURN RECORD CHART

♣ GERMAN Sets Up First	★ 1	2 ♣	3	4	5	6	7	END
★ RUSSIAN Moves First								



Elements of Panzer Regiment 18 [ELR: 4] set up on board 3 on/west-of hexrow I {SAN: 3}



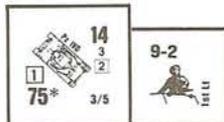
6

2

3



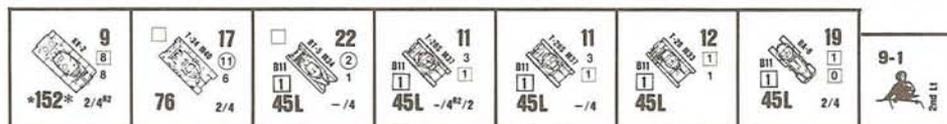
Enter on hex 2GG5 on Turn 2:



2



Elements of the 1st Moscow Motorized Rifle Division enter on hex 3GG5 on Turn 1: {SAN: 0}



3

2

2



SPECIAL RULES:

1. EC are Moderate, with no Wind at start.
2. All buildings are wooden. All 3rd-level hill hexes are considered 2nd-level.
3. All *Inherent* Russian crews have a morale of "9".

AFTERMATH: A number of light Russian AFVs, supported by a single KV-2 and a single T-34, advanced on the lead elements of the 18th Panzer Regiment. Stunned by the appearance of the two armored monsters not encountered before on the Army Group Center front, the German infantry scattered. A handful of German tanks were all that stood in the path of the Soviet advance. The T26 and BT tanks were routed by the Pz IIIs. The German 37mm shells were unable, however, to affect the KV or T-34. Two panzers were quickly destroyed. At that point, several Pz IVs arrived to engage the KV-2, while the remaining Pz IIIs concentrated on the T-34's vulnerable tracks. Soon both Russian heavy tanks were out of action, the KV bogged on soft ground and the T-34 with its treads shot away. Without the threat of the KV or T-34, the infantry were able to hold their position. This incident reveals the cardinal sin of the Russian command: employment of their superior T-34 and KV types not in formation, but individually among light and medium tanks, or as support for the infantry. It was a mistake Soviet Russia was to pay dearly for.

TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD
\$25.00
 Battalion-Level, Area Movement Game
 of the Pivotal Eastern Front Battle

INSTRUCTIONS:

Rate each category by placing a number ranging from 1 through 9 in the appropriate space to the right ("1" equating to excellent; "5", average; "9", terrible). EXCEPTION: Rate items 7a and 7b in terms of minutes necessary to play the game, in ten-minute increments. (Example: If you've found it takes two and a half hours to play the basic scenario of *HITLER'S WAR*, enter "15" for category 7a.) For an explanation of the categories, refer to the AH Philosophy of Vol. 24, No. 5. Enter ratings only for those categories relevant to the game in question. Note that AH's ratings for Complexity, Year of Publication and Type (2P=two player; MP=multi-player; SO=solitaire) have been provided for your information.

- 1. Overall Value _____
- 2. Components _____
- 2a. Mapboard _____
- 2b. Counters _____
- 2c. Rulebook _____
- 3. Complexity _____
- 3a. Avalon Hill Complexity 3
- 4. Completeness _____
- 5. Playability _____
- 5a. Excitement Level _____
- 5b. Play Balance _____
- 6. Authenticity _____
- 7. Game Length _____
- 7a. Shortest _____
- 7b. Longest _____
- 8. Year of Publication 1989
- 9. Type 2P

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WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN PLAYING?

Top ten lists are always in vogue—be the subject books, television, shows, movies or even games. The public seems never to tire of seeing how its favorite way of spending their leisure time stacks up against the competition. So, to cater further to your whims (and to satisfy our own curiosity), this is The GENERAL's version of the gamer's top ten. From the responses to this form the editors produce the regular column "So That's What You've Been Playing" found elsewhere in this issue.

We aren't asking you to subjectively rate any game. That sort of thing is already done in these pages and elsewhere. Instead, we ask that you merely list the three (or fewer) games which you've spent the most time playing since you received your last issue of The GENERAL. With the collation of these responses, we can generate a consensus list of what's being played by our readership. This list can serve both as a guide for us (for coverage in these pages) and others (convention organizers spring instantly to mind). The degree of correlation between this listing, the Best Sellers Lists, and the RBG should prove extremely interesting.

Feel free to list any game of any sort regardless of manufacturer. There will be, of course, a built-in bias to the survey since the readers all play Avalon Hill games to some extent; but it should be no more prevalent than similar projects undertaken by other periodicals with special-interest based circulation. The amount to which this bias affects the final outcome will be left to the individual's own discretion.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Opponent Wanted

50¢

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- 4. Please PRINT. If your ad is illegible, it will not be printed.
- 5. So that as many ads as possible can be printed within our limited space, we request that you use official state and game abbreviations. Don't list your entire collection, list only those you are most interested in locating opponents for.

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NAME _____ PHONE _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

CONTEST #150

As described on Page 12, the Russian player in this game of *TP: STALINGRAD* should perform the following:

Impulse Area

Actions Taken

44:



45:



42:



43:



54:



55:



71:



74:



73:



Issue as a whole _____ (Rate from 1 to 10, with "1" equating excellent and "10" terrible). To be valid for consideration, your contest entry must also include the three best articles, in your view:

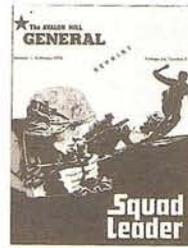
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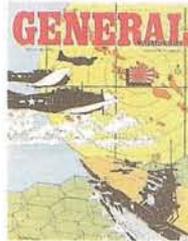
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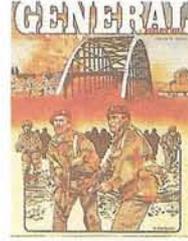
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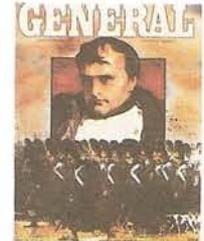
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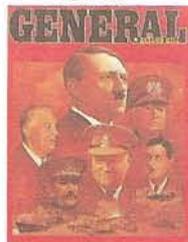
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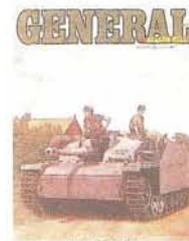
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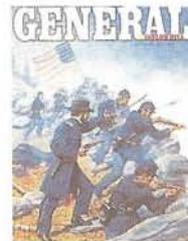
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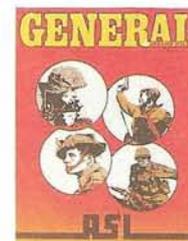
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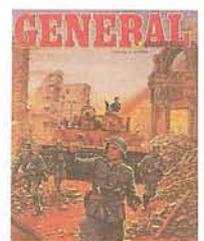
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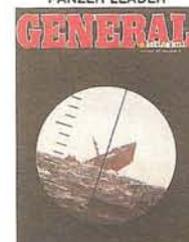
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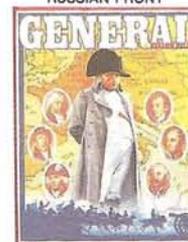
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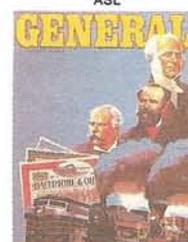
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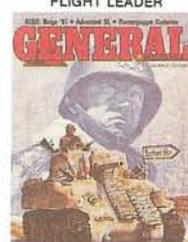
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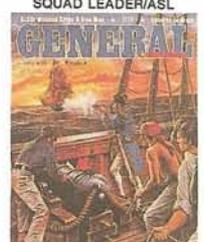
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Final Ballot for the
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1. **Best Historical Figure Series, 1989**
 - ___ American Civil War, 15 mm, Stone Mountain Miniatures, Inc.
 - ___ American Civil War, 25 mm, Connoisseur, USA.
 - ___ Aztecs, 25 mm, Falcon Miniatures
 - ___ Republican Romans, 15 mm, Frontier Miniatures
 - ___ Seven Years War, Hungarians & Russians, 25 mm, RSM Ltd.
2. **Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Figure Series, 1989**
 - ___ Dragonlance AD&D Figures, Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.
 - ___ Fantasy Adventurers, Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.
 - ___ Official AD&D Monsters, Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.
 - ___ Ork Horde, Warhammer 40K, Games Workshop, Inc.
 - ___ Shadowrunners, Shadowrun, Grenadier Models, Inc.
 - ___ Skeleton Army, Games Workshop, Inc.
 - ___ Star Wars Series, Grenadier Models, Inc.
3. **Best Vehicular Miniatures Series, 1989**
 - ___ Battle Titans, Games Workshop, Inc.
 - ___ BattleTech Mechs and Vehicles, Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.
 - ___ Dwarf War Machine, Games Workshop, Inc.
 - ___ Harpoon Miniatures, GHQ
 - ___ Renegade Legion: Centurion Line, FASA Corp.
4. **Best Accessory Figure Series, 1989**
 - ___ Cities of Mystery, TSR, Inc.
 - ___ Colonial Guns and Machine Guns, 25 mm, Lyzard's Grin
 - ___ Hovels, Medieval and Northern European Buildings, Stone Mountain Miniatures, Inc.
 - ___ Warhammer Mighty Fortress, Games Workshop, Inc.
5. **Best Miniatures Rules, 1989**
 - ___ BattleSystem Miniatures Rules, TSR, Inc.
 - ___ Napoleon's Battles, The Avalon Hill Game Company, Inc.
 - ___ Soldier's Companion, Space:1889, Game Designers' Workshop, Inc.
 - ___ Tactica, Arty Conliffe
 - ___ Warhammer 40K Compendium, Games Workshop, Inc.
6. **Best Role-Playing Rules, 1989**
 - ___ AD & D -2nd Edition, TSR, Inc.
 - ___ Champions (hardback), Iron Crown Enterprises, Inc.
 - ___ Ghostbusters II, West End Games, Inc.
 - ___ Shadowrun, FASA Corp.
 - ___ Space:1889, Game Designers' Workshop, Inc.
7. **Best Role-Playing Adventure, 1989**
 - ___ Alice Through the Mirrorshades, Paranoia, West End Games, Inc.
 - ___ Curse of the Azure Bonds, Forgotten Realms, TSR, Inc.
 - ___ Empire of the Witch-king, Middle-earth Roleplaying, Iron Crown Enterprises, Inc.
 - ___ The Great Old Ones, Chaosium, Inc.
 - ___ The Ice Man Returneth, Paranoia, West End Games, Inc.
 - ___ In Search of Dragons, Dragonlance, TSR, Inc.
 - ___ Waterdeep, Forgotten Realms, TSR, Inc.
8. **Best Role-Playing Supplement, 1989**
 - ___ Creatures of the Dreamlands, Call of Cthulhu, Chaosium, Inc.
 - ___ Imperial Sourcebook, Star Wars, West End Games, Inc.
 - ___ Monstrous Compendium, AD&D 2nd Ed., TSR, Inc.
 - ___ Shadow World: Master Atlas, Rolemaster & Fantasy Hero, Iron Crown Enterprises, Inc.
 - ___ Spelljammer, AD&D, TSR, Inc.
9. **Best Graphic Presentation of a Role-Playing Game, Adventure or Supplement, 1989**
 - ___ AD & D -2nd Edition, TSR, Inc.
 - ___ Creatures of the Dreamlands, Call of Cthulhu, Chaosium Inc.
 - ___ Imperial Sourcebook, Star Wars, West End Games, Inc.
 - ___ Lace & Steel, The Australian Games Group
 - ___ Shadowrun, FASA Corp
 - ___ Spelljammer, AD&D, TSR, Inc.
10. **Best Pre-20th Century Boardgame, 1989**
 - ___ A House Divided, Game Designers' Workshop, Inc.
 - ___ Guns of Cedar Creek, Simulation Design Inc.
 - ___ Napoleon at Leipzig, Clash of Arms Games, Inc.
 - ___ Rise and Fall, Engelman Military Simulations
 - ___ Siege of Jerusalem, The Avalon Hill Game Company Inc.
11. **Best Modern Day Boardgame, 1989**
 - ___ 5th Fleet, Victory Games, Inc.
 - ___ Desert Steel, West End Games, Inc.
 - ___ Europe Aflame, TSR/SPi.
 - ___ Modern Naval Battles, 3W
 - ___ Red Storm Rising, TSR, Inc.
12. **Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Boardgame, 1989**
 - ___ Battle for Endor, West End Games, Inc.
 - ___ Dungeon!, TSR, Inc.
 - ___ The Great Khan Game, TSR, Inc.
 - ___ Space Hulk, Games Workshop, Inc.
 - ___ Web of Gold, TSR, Inc.
13. **Best Graphic Presentation of a Boardgame, 1989**
 - ___ 5th Fleet, Victory Games, Inc.
 - ___ Battle for Endor, West End Games, Inc.
 - ___ Red Storm Rising, TSR, Inc.
 - ___ Space Hulk, Games Workshop, Inc.
 - ___ Web of Gold, TSR, Inc.
14. **Best Play-By-Mail Game, 1989**
 - ___ Family Wars, Andon Games
 - ___ Illuminati, Flying Buffalo, Inc.
 - ___ It's A Crime, Adventures by Mail
 - ___ Kings & Things, Andon Games
 - ___ Mobius I, Flying Buffalo, Inc.
15. **Best New Play-By-Mail Game, 1989**
 - ___ Beyond the Stellar Empire-The New System, Adventures by Mail
 - ___ Orion Nebula, Orpheus Publishing Corp
 - ___ Space Combat, Twin Engine Gaming
 - ___ Supremacy, Andon Games
16. **Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Computer Game, 1989**
 - ___ Curse of the Azure Bonds, Strategic Simulations, Inc.
 - ___ Dragon Wars, Interplay Productions
 - ___ MechWarrior, Activision
 - ___ Sword of the Samurai, Microprose, Inc.
 - ___ War of the Lance, Strategic Simulations, Inc.
17. **Best Military or Strategy Computer Game, 1989**
 - ___ Battles of Napoleon, Strategic Simulations, Inc.
 - ___ F-15 Strike Eagle II, Microprose, Inc.
 - ___ M-1 Tank Platoon, Microprose Software, Inc.
 - ___ Sim City, Maxis
 - ___ Their Finest Hour, Lucasfilm
18. **Best Professional Adventure Gaming Magazine, 1989**
 - ___ Challenge, Game Designers' Workshop, Inc.
 - ___ Computer Gaming World, Golden Empire Publications
 - ___ Dungeon Magazine, TSR, Inc.
 - ___ GM, Croftwood, Publishing
 - ___ Strategy & Tactics, 3W
 - ___ White Wolf, White Wolf Publishing
19. **Best Amateur Adventure Gaming Magazine, 1989**
 - ___ The Canadian Wargamers Journal, The Canadian Wargamers Group
 - ___ ETO, Bill Stone
 - ___ Savage & Soldier, Lynn Bodin
 - ___ Volunteers, The Newsletter of Civil War Gaming
 - ___ The Zouave, ACW Society

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These are the final nominees for the Origins Awards for 1989. Vote for only one nominee per category by checking or marking the line preceding your choice. Fill in your address and sign your ballot. Mail the completed ballot to: Origins Awards Final Ballot, PO Box 3727, Hayward, CA 94544.

The deadline for return of the ballot is June 8, 1990. Ballots post-marked after the deadline will not be counted. The Origins Awards will be presented at Origins '90 in Atlanta, June 28-July 1, 1989. The awards ceremony will be Friday, June 29th. Members of the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design will receive a final ballot in the mail. If you have any questions concerning the ballot or the Academy, please write: Origins Awards, PO Box 3727, Hayward, CA 94544.