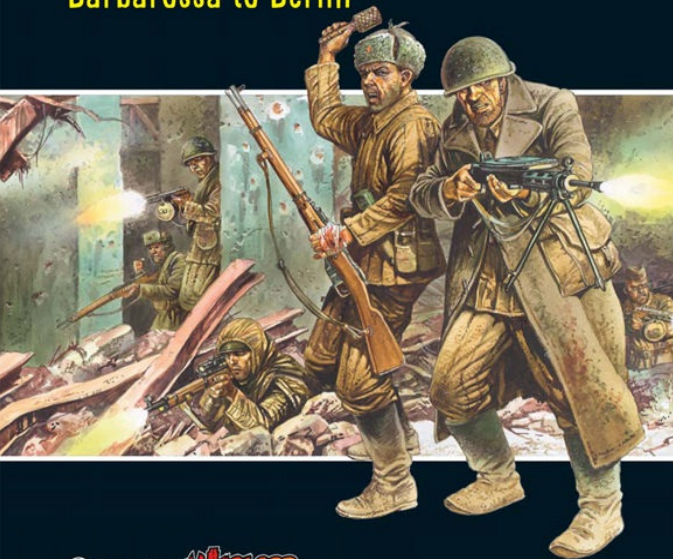


World War II Wargames Rules
BOLT ACTION

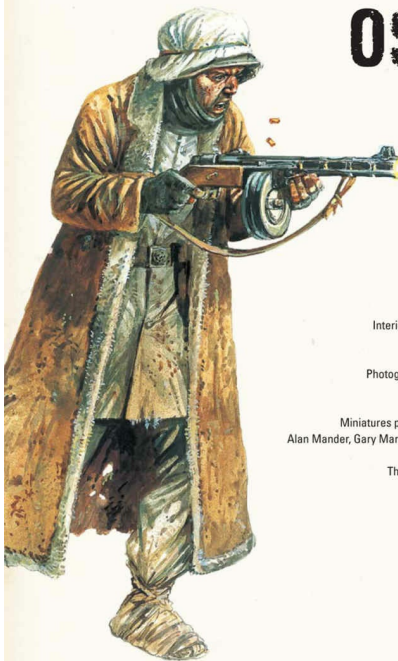
OSTFRONT

Barbarossa to Berlin



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WHAT IS THIS BOOK?



Tatsinskaya, 1942, by Mark Stacey © Osprey Publishing Ltd. Taken from *Raid 30: Red Christmas*.

BATTLES OF THE EASTERN FRONT

This is a supplement to the tabletop wargame *Bolt Action*. It deals with the sprawling Eastern Front conflicts between the Soviet Union and its neighbours between 1939 and 1945. We begin with two conflicts, Khalkyn Gol and the Winter War, which did much to shape military and political thinking prior to the outbreak of The Great Patriotic War in 1941 when Nazi Germany and its Axis satellites invaded Soviet territory.



Winston Churchill, in his masterful *The Second World War*, bemoans the fact that the 'battles' of his period are no longer the clear-cut, single-day affairs of his illustrious forebears, but complex operations extending over broad swathes of territory for weeks or months. Nowhere is this more true than on the Eastern Front. The scale and intensity of the battles fought in that conflict – Leningrad, Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk and a thousand others – almost beggar belief in Western eyes. Tens of millions died in fighting that raged virtually without pause for four years across thousands of miles of territory.

The staggering scale of the Great Patriotic War means this lone book cannot hope to be a definitive account of it all. The size and sheer anarchy imposed by the fighting means that records of it are often poor or non-existent. Fortunately, we do have many anecdotal accounts left to us by the men that survived the fighting in the east and this book draws heavily on these wherever possible. The military history of World War II is a fascinating topic and if anything you read about here intrigues you, there are many resources to find out more. Imagine this book as your pointer towards some areas of potential interest, there's much more to be found.



T-34/76 and tank riders

Our hope is to provide some useful context for games of *Bolt Action* set on the Eastern Front because even across such a vast battlefield the Great Patriotic War was ultimately decided by small groups of soldiers fighting at the 'sharp end' to clear a wood, hold onto a single house or to take a bridge. Even now we remember the actions of a few brave men and women who made all the difference in the midst of armies that could be counted in the millions.

In that spirit you'll find several *Bolt Action* scenarios within this book. Some depict events from historical battles, while others are representatives of typical actions to illustrate the sort of fighting commonly found in the east. For the benefit of collectors and historians we've included details of various units that allow you to construct armies from specific time periods and areas of the Eastern Front. On the other hand, this book also allows for lots of 'what if' battles to be fought out, using equipment that was on hand at the time. Where appropriate, *Bolt Action* game rules for unusual units, vehicles and weapons used in the east are produced here, although in this regard this book should be considered as supplemental to the appropriate '*Armies of...*' books for that theatre. The scenarios in this book are written with the assumption you will be using reinforced platoons from either the rulebook or the relevant historical Theatre Selector from an appropriate '*Armies of...*' book. However, feel free to use armoured platoons from the *Tank War* supplement where you feel it appropriate – this will allow you to play the same scenario using either reinforced or armoured platoons (or a mix of both!), with a resulting great variety of feel and balance to the scenarios played.

Have fun!



The Southern Task Force's offensive, by Adam Hook © Osprey Publishing Ltd. Taken from Command 22: Georgy Zhukov.

PRELUDE

The battle of Khalkyn Gol (English: Khalkyn River) took place in 1939 on the border between Manchuria and Mongolia. The Japanese empire occupied Manchuria in 1931 and ran it as a puppet state named Manchukuo. Mongolia, on the other hand, had become the second communist country in the world in 1936 by signing a treaty with the Soviet Union. The border between these two satellite states was hotly contested and armed clashes were not uncommon between them. A long-running border dispute existed over precisely where Mongolia ended and Manchuria began.

The powerful Japanese Kwantung Army ruled Manchukuo as its virtual fiefdom, and its leaders were strong advocates for a 'northern' expansion of the empire deeper into Mongolian and Soviet territory as far Lake Baikal. While the Kwantung Army was nominally under the command of Imperial General Headquarters in Tokyo, it frequently acted independently, and had created unsanctioned border incidents with Manchuria to justify its invasion in 1931.

A small battle had already occurred in 1938 near Lake Khasan when Japanese forces were defeated after they tried to evict Soviet units that were fortifying high ground close to the border. According to the Japanese the border itself lay along the bank of the Khalkyn River, while according to the Soviets it lay almost ten miles east of the river, just to the east of a village called Nomonhan. To the Japanese the events that followed would become known as the 'Nomonhan Incident'.

FIRST CLASHES

On 11 May 1939, a detachment of Mongol cavalry moved into the disputed zone east of the river to graze their horses just as they had been doing for hundreds of years. On this occasion a stronger force of Manchukuo cavalry arrived and drove them back across the Khalkyn Gol. On 13 May the Mongolians returned in greater numbers and this time the Manchukuo forces in the area were unable to dislodge them.

Both sides appealed for help from their powerful allies. Japanese and Soviet forces were soon mobilised as the fighting began to escalate. Two regiments of the Japanese 23rd Infantry Division arrived in the area on 14 May, a reconnaissance regiment led by LtCol Yaozo Azuma and an infantry regiment led by Colonel Takemitsu Yamagata. Azuma's force pushed forward into the disputed territory and the Mongolians once again withdrew.



The Mongolians returned, however, and this time they were reinforced by Soviet units from the 57th Special Corps under *Comandarm* (General) Grigori Schtern. Azuma moved forward to evict the Mongolians again, but ran into serious resistance for the first time. On 28 May Azuma's reconnaissance unit was surrounded and destroyed by the combined communist forces. Azuma's force suffered eight officers and 97 men killed plus one officer and 33 men wounded.

Both sides started moving up larger forces and the Japanese soon had 30,000 men in the area. On the Soviet side powerful mechanised and armoured forces arrived in the shape of the I Army Group under their new corps commander, a certain Georgi Zhukov. Zhukov would go on to win great fame in the Great Patriotic War, but at this time in his life the Far East assignment had arrived in the nick of time to save him from being imprisoned and most likely executed in Stalin's purges of the Red Army officer corps.

Skirmishing intensified through June 1939 as the opposing armies built up their forces. Soviet and Mongolian units were reported to be active on both sides of the river near Nomonhan and there were small-scale attacks on isolated Manchukuo units. Imperial Japanese Army units retaliated with expertly executed night assaults and ambushes, capitalising on their fierce *bushido* spirit to overrun terrified Red Army conscripts with bayonet charges led by sword-wielding officers.

On 27 June, the Imperial Japanese Army Air Force decided to take a hand by making a daring raid on the Soviet air base at Tamsak-Bulak in Mongolia. A large number of Soviet planes were destroyed on the ground before a fierce battle developed when the surprised Soviets managed to get airborne. Despite the Soviet flyers' best efforts the Japanese could still claim a glorious victory afterwards as the Soviets lost twice as many planes in the day's fighting.

The Imperial General Headquarters in Tokyo, however, was furious. They had not been informed of the planned raid, and Emperor Hirohito was still angry about the unsanctioned fighting at Lake Khasan in the previous year. The Imperial Japanese Army Air Force was given strict orders to make no more raids on Soviet air bases in an effort to prevent a further escalation of the conflict. In the event this only served to ensure that Japanese troops would be fighting with weakened air cover in the battles to come.

THE FIRST JAPANESE ATTACK

Despite the embargo on air attacks, the Japanese commander of the 23rd Infantry division, Lt. Gen. Michitaro Komatsubara, received approval to undertake a land-based assault to 'expel the invaders'. He planned a two-pronged attack to cross the Khalkyn River at north and south, clearing the hills before turning inwards to meet in the vicinity of the Kawatama Bridge.

Both thrusts were powerful ones. In the north, three infantry regiments plus a battalion from a fourth made the attack. They succeeded in crossing the river and clearing Soviet forces from Bain-Tsagan Mountain before turning south along the west bank of the river. To the south, the attack was undertaken on 2 July by LtGen Yasuoka Masaomi in command of the 1st Tank Corps supported by infantry, engineers and a battalion of field artillery.

The 'Yasuoka detachment', as it was known, made a night attack to avoid bombardment by Soviet guns situated in the hills. Their approach on the Soviet positions was further masked by a thunderstorm that broke out at around midnight. As Yasuoka's tanks closed in they could see the Soviet gun pits and trenches illuminated by flashes of lightning while they remained in darkness, but at the last moment their tanks were lit up by a flash and a furious firefight broke out.

Yasuoka's tanks were already below the minimum elevation of the Soviet artillery and many of them broke through. A dozen Soviet guns were destroyed, but the Yasuoka detachment could not breach the Soviet defence lines and get to Kawatama Bridge. Tanks, infantry and artillery had become separated in the night fight, and even the two tank regiments had entirely lost contact with one another. Over the days that followed no further advance could be made and a Soviet counter-attack on the 9th pushed the exhausted detachment back from the river. Yasuoka had lost over half of his tanks in the fighting. He was dismissed and the detachment was dissolved.

The infantry regiments in the north had fared little better. Zhukov, perceiving the advance there to be the greatest threat hurled his newly arrived reinforcements against the Japanese forces fortifying Bain-Tsagan Mountain. A force of some 450 tanks and armoured cars counterattacked and, despite having no infantry support of their own, the Soviet armour succeeded in hemming the Japanese infantry in from three sides. By 5 July, the northern force had to be pulled back across the river before it was destroyed.



Type 97 Chi-Ha medium tank

THE YASUOKA DETACHMENT

While the Yasuoka detachment sounded impressive on paper – a hundred armoured vehicles in two regiments under a single commander – the reality was that a substantial portion of its strength was made up of tankettes and vintage Type 89 I-Go ‘medium’ tanks with short-barrelled, low-velocity 57mm guns and 15mm frontal armour. The more modern Type 95 Ha-Go light tanks of the 4th regiment were better designs, but their 37mm guns were critically outranged by the 45mm guns of the Soviet BT-5 and BT-7 types. Although the cavalry-like charge of Yasuoka’s tanks carried them a thousand metres into the Soviet defences at Khalkyn Gol, they were unable to capitalise on it and make a breakthrough.

At full strength at the start of July the Yasuoka Detachment comprised:

**Lt. Gen. Yasuoka Masaomi, Imperial Japanese Army, Commanding Officer, 1st Tank Corps
3rd Tank Regiment**

- Type 89 I-Go medium tanks x26
- Type 97 Chi-Ha medium tanks x4
- Type 94 tankettes x7
- Type 97 Te-Ke tankettes x4

4th Tank Regiment

- Type 95 Ha-Go light tanks x35
- Type 89 I-Go medium tanks x8
- Type 94 tankettes x3

THE SECOND JAPANESE ATTACK

Komatsubara was not to be so easily beaten and he immediately began preparing for a second assault. Finesse and manoeuvre had failed in the first attempt, this time he would rely on brute force to achieve his objective. The Japanese forces rested, resupplied and stockpiled their munitions for two weeks while they readied themselves. The period was marked by frequent skirmishes, but overall the front remained quiet until, on 23 July, the Japanese attacked again in force.

Two regiments of Japanese infantry advanced on Nomonhan under the cover of a massive artillery bombardment, which exhausted half of their stockpile of shells in two days. The attack initially made good progress, but despite fierce fighting, it once again it failed to breakthrough the Soviet lines and reach Kawatama Bridge. Faced with mounting casualties and depleted ammunition stores, the Japanese attack was called off on 25 July.

The second attack had cost 5,000 casualties, but some 75,000 Japanese troops supported by a hundred warplanes still remained available with 45–50,000 already in the area. Planning immediately began for a third assault to break the stalemate and push the Soviet–Mongolian forces back once and for all. 24 August was set as the start date for the next attack, but it was not to be. At 5.45am on 20 August, the Red Army counterattacked in overwhelming force.

ZHUKOV COUNTERATTACKS

Zhukov had grasped the fundamental strategic realities of fighting at Khalkyn Gol better than his opponents. His army was fighting 748 kilometres (465 miles) from its supply base; every bullet, every shell, every drop of fuel had to be carried to the front by trucks undertaking close to a thousand-mile round trip from the railhead. It was over twice the distance Japanese supplies and reinforcements had to come and they were encountering severe difficulties keeping their stockpiles filled.

AIRPOWER AT KHALKYN GOL

Both sides brought in hundreds of modern combat aircraft for the fighting around Khalkyn Gol. Consistently good flying conditions, long summer days and open terrain made airpower a force to be reckoned with during the fighting. Although the Japanese pilots were often heavily outnumbered, they gave a very good account of themselves. Ultimately they couldn't prevent the Soviets gaining air superiority at the height of the battle. The battle represented the first time that huge quantities of airpower was used tactically during a high intensity battle, particularly with Zhukov's treatment of his bombers as a form of 'flying artillery' in the later stages. A more deadly form of this doctrine would be unleashed against the Polish Army by Luftwaffe Stukas just a few months later.

While the Japanese had struggled with poor supply and burned up what they had in fruitless attacks, Zhukov assembled a fleet of 2,600 trucks of various types to solve his logistical difficulties.

He jealously hoarded up his reserves and his supplies until the time was right. Previously he had only committed his main forces when he perceived a true threat developing as from the northern advance in the first Japanese attack. Now, however, events in faraway Europe were rapidly coming to a head and there was a virtual certainty of war breaking out in the West. With the Japanese drained by their latest attack, Zhukov judged it to be the correct moment to strike.

The forces he had amassed were impressive. The Japanese 23rd Infantry Division and its supporting units (the equivalent of two light infantry divisions in total) faced a Red Army force of three rifle divisions, two motorised rifle divisions, two tank divisions and two more tank brigades (for a total of 498 mostly BT-5 and BT-7 tanks), plus two divisions of Mongolian cavalry. He also had a considerable trump card in the shape of 550 fighters and bombers flying in support. Japanese intelligence services had completely failed to detect the build-up, perhaps unsurprisingly as the 23rd Infantry Division headquarters was situated over ninety miles behind the front lines.

The Soviets struck at dawn with a massive artillery and air bombardment as three rifle divisions and a tank brigade attacked the Japanese centre. Pinned in place by the fighting and the relentless air and artillery attacks, the Japanese could do little to prevent the Red Army's armoured forces stationed on the flanks from sweeping around and enveloping them. On 25 August, after five days of hard fighting, the two armoured pincers met at Nomonhan and Zhukov's trap snapped shut.

Japanese efforts on 26 August to break through the encirclement and reach the trapped division were to no avail. On 27 August the 23rd Infantry Division tried to break out but they were beaten back. An offer of surrender was refused, so Zhukov used artillery and air strikes to annihilate what was left. By 31 August no Japanese forces remained in the disputed territory and Zhukov informed Moscow that his orders had been fulfilled. On the other side Komatsubara refused to accept defeat and began immediate preparations for a counteroffensive. This was cancelled when a ceasefire was signed between Tokyo and Moscow.

AFTERMATH

Both sides released casualty figures that were heavily doctored for propaganda purposes. Official Japanese reports from the period state 8,440 killed and 8,766 wounded, while the Soviets claimed they suffered 9,284 total casualties (killed and wounded). Later studies and battlefield excavations have placed Japanese fatalities as high as 45,000 or more, with total Soviet casualties of at least 17,000. A GRU colonel at the time, Vasiliy Novobranets, claimed that Zhukov deliberately altered the casualty figures to magnify his victory, a victory that had been won arguably by numerical superiority and not through any tactical brilliance – a viewpoint that was shared by the Japanese.

Whatever Stalin may have believed, he made Zhukov and the other two Red Army generals involved, Grigoriy Schtern and Yakov Smushkevich, Heroes of the Soviet Union. Zhukov would go on to win even greater laurels in the Great Patriotic War while Schtern and Smushkevich would later be arrested and executed in the purges of 1941. Stalin's confidence was certainly buoyed by the events in the Far East and the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact was announced on 24 August, securing a non-aggression treaty between Germany and the Soviet Union. A formal ceasefire agreement was signed with the Japanese on 15 September. With his Far Eastern borders secured, Stalin sent the Red Army into Poland on 17 September to carve up the Soviet Union's share of the spoils with Nazi Germany.

Although little attention was paid to the battle at Khalkyn Gol in the west, it did much to shape Japanese strategic thinking prior to that nation's entry into World War II. Within the Imperial Japanese Army the 'northern strike group' was discredited and the 'southern strike group' and the Imperial Navy rose in favour. These advocated a policy of taking resources from the colonial powers in the Pacific instead of pursuing a war with the Soviet Union.

Even when the Axis powers invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, no serious consideration was given by Imperial General Headquarters to opening a second front on the Manchurian border. The Japanese passivity allowed Stalin to reduce the defending forces in the Far East at a critical moment, bringing well-equipped divisions of Siberian veterans to his defence just as German Panzers stood virtually at the gates of Moscow in December 1941.

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITH *BOLT ACTION*

Khalkyn Gol offers a unique opportunity to pit Red Army and IJA forces against one another at a time when the outcome won't be a foregone conclusion due to the overwhelming power of the 1944–45 Red Army. The Red Army still has an edge when it comes to armour in 1939, but the vastly superior infantry forces of the IJA count for much more in *Bolt Action* so a tense battle is assured.

SCENARIOS

GENERAL SCENARIOS

The following scenarios from the *Bolt Action* rulebook are particularly well-suited to the kind of actions that took place around Khalkyn Gol.

- Scenario 1: Envelopment
- Scenario 2: Maximum Attrition
- Scenario 3: Point Defence
- Scenario 4: Hold Until Relieved



KHALKYN GOL SCENARIOS

The following two scenarios, 'Cavalry Clash' and 'Stormy, Stormy Night', are designed specifically to recreate actions at Khalkyn Gol, but players should feel free to adapt them to other times and places as desired.

TERRAIN

The area around the Khalkyn River is predominantly rolling steppes, an arid semi-desert cut by numerous seasonal water courses that are little more than grassy gullies and ravines in summer. Ranges of hills and sand dunes on either side of the river dominated the river valley and surrounding terrain. Cover was sparse, with trees and buildings something of a rarity, so most defences were dug in – gun pits, trenches and foxholes – although the relatively short duration and often high mobility of the battle precluded any really elaborate defensive works developing. The Khalkyn River itself is wide but shallow enough to be forded by tanks and cavalry in several places although apparently pontoon bridges were necessary to reliably get supplies across to the

far bank. Japanese attacks by the northern group in the first week of July faltered in part due to having only one bridge built across the river.



Japanese forces at Nomonhan (L-R): Sergeant, 28th Infantry Regiment; 2nd Lieutenant, tank regiment; Captain, Engineers, by Stephen Andrew © Osprey Publishing Ltd. Taken from Men-at-Arms 362: The Japanese Army 1931-45 (1).

SCENARIO 1: CAVALRY CLASH

The opening weeks of the battle in May were marked by frequent skirmishes between Mongolian and Manchukuo forces. In keeping with the traditions of their forebears the units on both sides were overwhelmingly made up of cavalry with only light horse-drawn artillery in support. They fought well, although it was noted that for all their great mobility, both sides often lacked enough heavy support to score a substantial victory over the other. ‘Cavalry Clash’ recreates one of these lightning-quick engagements.

FORCES

This scenario is designed to be played with equal points values on both sides. Japanese and Red Army reinforced platoons are chosen from the appropriate Khalkyn Gol Theatre Selectors (see p 15–16) with the following restrictions:

- Only officers, cavalry squads, MMGs, light mortars and horse drawn artillery may be selected for a Cavalry Clash. Red Army forces may include Tachanka, and both sides may use Horse-drawn limbers (see p 17) otherwise vehicles may only be selected by mutual consent and must be either transports/tows or have the ‘recce’ rule. All soldiers and weapon teams, including officers, must be mounted on horses at a cost of +2 pts each – in this scenario all forces start mounted and all guns must start limbered.

SET-UP

Three pieces of hill terrain will be necessary for this scenario. Both players roll a die. The highest scorer picks a side of the table and places one hill more than 18” from their chosen table edge. The other player then places the other two hills more than 18” from his own table edge. Hills can’t be placed on top of each other (no ‘mountains’) or within 6” of each other, so units have some flat ground to get around on.

DEPLOYMENT

No units are set-up on the table at the start of the game. Both sides must nominate at least half of their force to form their first wave. This can be the entire army if desired. Any units not included in the first wave are left in reserve (see Reserves in the Bolt Action rulebook page 119).

OBJECTIVE

Both sides must try and capture the three hilltops – or at least gain more of them than their enemies do. Casualties are important, however, as suffering too many losses can render territorial gains immaterial.

FIRST TURN

During Turn 1 both players must bring their first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on their side's table edge, and must be given either a *run* or *advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of the first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2 or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5 or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. If one side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

- Players score 1 victory point for every enemy unit destroyed.
- Players score 3 victory points for each hilltop captured.

To capture a hilltop there must be a model from one of your infantry or artillery units within 3" of the centre of the hill (or its highest point if that makes more sense for the terrain piece being used) at the end of the turn, and there must be no enemy infantry or artillery models within 3" of it.

SCENARIO 2: STORMY, STORMY NIGHT

This scenario is designed to recreate the midnight charge by the Yasuoka detachment on 2 July and so is particularly suitable for an IJA tank platoon. There were numerous other night attacks executed by Japanese forces during the battle and this scenario is equally well-suited to representing any of them.

FORCES

This scenario is designed to be played with equal points values on both sides. Japanese and Red Army reinforced platoons are chosen from the appropriate Khalkyn Gol Theatre Selectors (see p 15–16) with no additional restrictions. This scenario works particularly well if the German player forms his forces from the Armoured Platoon selector from the *Tank War* supplement.

SET-UP

The terrain for the battle is mostly open, with hills on both of the long sides of the table. A few areas of rough ground, bushes, low dunes and dried-up water courses can be used to relieve the general monotony of rolling semi-desert.

DEPLOYMENT

The Red Army player picks a side of the table and sets up at least half of their units in the set-up area (as per the Envelopment scenario on page 109 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). These units can use the hidden set-up rules (see Hidden Set-up, page 117 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook) and may be Dug In at the option of the Red Army player (See Scenario Special Rules on page 102 of this book). Units that are not set-up to start with are left in reserve (see Reserves page 119 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook).

The Japanese player's units are not set-up on the table at the start of the game. The Japanese player must nominate at least half of their force to form his first wave. This can be the entire force if desired. Any units not included in the first wave are left in reserve.

SPECIAL RULES

REDUCED VISIBILITY

The attack is being made by night so we use the Night Fighting rules (See Scenario Special Rules on page 104 of this book). In the actual battle a thunderstorm helped to conceal the attack until the last moment when a flash of lightning revealed the attackers. To represent this we will use the Flare! game rules so at the start of each turn roll a D6 and on a 4, 5 or 6 visibility is normal for that turn.

OBJECTIVE

The Japanese player must try to move as many of their units as possible into the Red Army player's set-up zone or off the opposing side's table edge in order to attack artillery positioned on the hills beyond. The Red Army player must try and stop the Japanese succeeding. Note that in this scenario, Japanese units are allowed to deliberately move off the table from the Red Army player's table edge to reach their objective.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During Turn 1, the Japanese player must move their entire first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on the Japanese player's table edge, and must be given either a *run* or *advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of the first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2 or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5 or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up **victory points** as follows. If one side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

The Japanese player scores 1 victory point for every enemy unit destroyed. He also scores 2 victory points for each of his own units that is inside the Red Army player's set-up area (even if only partially), and 3 victory points for each of his own units that has moved off the enemy table edge before the end of the game.

The Red Army player scores 2 victory points for every enemy unit destroyed.

THEATRE SELECTORS

IMPERIAL JAPANESE KWANTUNG ARMY

The Kwantung Army was tough and experienced from having been in almost constant combat in mainland China since the early 1930s. The Japanese infantry forces at Nomonhan enjoyed considerable success in small unit actions until overwhelming Soviet reinforcements of air, armour and artillery critically tipped the balance against them – a bitter scenario that would repeated many times for the IJA in the years to come.

IMPERIAL JAPANESE KWANTUNG ARMY REINFORCED PLATOON

1 Second Lieutenant

2 IJA Infantry squads

plus:

Headquarters

0–1 First Lieutenant or Captain

0–1 Medic

0–1 Forward Observer (either Artillery or Air)



*Type 95 Ha-Go light tank, by Peter Dennis © Osprey Publishing Ltd.
Taken from Elite 169: World War II Japanese Tank Tactics.*

Infantry

- 0-4 Infantry squads: IJA Infantry, a maximum of 2 IJA Veteran Infantry squads, Japanese/Manchukuo Cavalry squads
- 0-2 MMG teams
- 0-2 Mortar teams: light or medium
- 0-1 Anti-tank team: anti-tank rifle team

Artillery

- 0-1 gun from:
- Anti-tank gun: Type 11 37mm (use the Type 94/Type 1 37mm anti-tank gun entry to represent these)
- Artillery gun: Type 4 heavy howitzer, Type 91 105mm field gun, 75mm field gun (Type 38), Type 41 75mm mountain gun

Armoured Cars and Tankettes

- 0-1 Armoured car or Recce vehicle: Type 87 armoured car, Armoured railroad cars, Vickers Crossley or Wolseley armoured car (use the Type 87 armoured car entry to represent these), Type 92 tankette, Type 94 tankette, Type 97 Te-Ke tankette

Tanks, Assault Guns, Tank Destroyers and Anti-aircraft Vehicles

0–1 vehicle from: Type 89 Yi-Go medium tank, Type 95 Ha-Go light tank, Type 97 Chi-Ha medium tank, Type 97 Shi-Ki command tank

Transports and Tows

0–2 vehicles from: General purpose truck, Light truck, Horse-drawn limber

SOVIET TRANS-BAIKAL MILITARY DISTRICT

It's clear that large numbers of 'fast' tanks like the BT-5 and BT-7 plus armoured cars were used at Khalkyn Gol, but there are few indications that many heavy tanks were involved presumably due to the distances involved in reaching the front lines. It's assumed that while some of the troops in this theatre have gained some experience in previous border skirmishes many more are recently arrived conscripts so the average soldier tends towards Inexperienced.

SOVIET TRANS-BAIKAL MILITARY DISTRICT REINFORCED PLATOON

1 (Inexperienced) Lieutenant – Junior or Senior

2 (Inexperienced) LMG squads

plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain

0–1 Commissar

0–1 Medic Team

0–1 Forward Artillery Observer or Forward Air Observer

Infantry

0–4 Infantry Squads: LMG squads, Siberian squads, Cavalry squads

0–3 MMG teams

0–1 HMG team

0–1 Light mortar team

Artillery

0–1 Mortar team: Medium or Heavy

0–1 Gun from:

Anti-tank gun: 45mm Model 1937

Artillery gun: Light, Medium or Heavy

Armoured Cars

0–1 Armoured car or Recce vehicle: BA-6, BA-10, BA-20, FAI, D-8

Tanks, Tank Destroyers, Self-propelled artillery and Anti-aircraft vehicles

0–1 Vehicle from: T-26 (any variant), T-28, BT-5/7, T-37, T-40, Tachanka, Tokarev 4M Quad Maxim

Transports and Tows

Transport vehicle **per** infantry unit in the reinforced platoon from: Truck

0–1 Tow from: Truck, half-track truck, Komsomolets, artillery tractor, Horse-drawn limber

SPECIAL RULES

- **Border Guards:** No units in this reinforced platoon may be Veteran.

ADDITIONAL UNITS

IMPERIAL JAPANESE UNITS

JAPANESE/MANCHUKUO CAVALRY SQUAD

Japanese cavalry was not used in the jungle and island campaigns, but it played a role in the fighting on mainland China, especially in the north. The Kwantung Army included the IJA Cavalry Group, a formation comprising the 1st and the 3rd Cavalry Brigades. The Cavalry Group was expanded to include a third brigade (the 4th) in October 1937, but it had reduced down to two brigades again by 1939 when it was assigned as part of the Mongolia Garrison Army. At the end of 1942 the Cavalry Group was disbanded and converted into the 3rd Tank Division. The Manchukuo Army was also mainly comprised of cavalry divisions made up of Mongol irregulars trained and often commanded by Japanese officers.

Cost: Regular Infantry 50 pts

Composition: 1 NCO and 4 men

Weapons: Cavalry Carbines (see below)

Options:

- Add up to 5 additional men with carbines at +10 pts each
- One soldier may have a light machine gun for +20 pts. Another soldier becomes the loader
- The entire squad may be mounted upon horses for +2 pts per man
- Cavalry Squads can be Tough Fighters at +1 pts per man

Special Rules:

- Cavalry Squads can be *Tough Fighters*.
- A mounted squad uses the *Cavalry* rules.
- Cavalry Carbines: These short-barrelled rifles count as pistols when used from horseback, and rifles when used on foot.

SOVIET UNITS

BA-3/6 HEAVY ARMoured CAR

The BA-3/6 was a precursor to the BA-10 which mounted a T-26 tank turret on armoured Ford-Timken (BA-3) or GAZ-AAA (BA-6) six-wheeled truck chassis, the latter using sponge-rubber tyres that made it more resistant to small arms fire. Some 566 BA-3/6s were built in total between 1931 and 1938, before the design was superseded by the BA-10. Several captured examples of BA-6s were used by the Finnish, and the Germans used a few copies of the design supplied by the Spanish after the vehicle's participation in the Spanish Civil War.

At Khalkyn Gol the Soviet BA armoured cars were notable for the fact that they seriously outranged the IJA tanks. Their 45mm guns could penetrate the thin armour of their opponents at

up to 1000 meters, while the low velocity 37mm and 57mm Japanese tank guns needed to be within 300 meters to effectively hit back. Serious overheating issues kept 10% of the BA-6s out of combat, which along with their thin hull armour, prompted the subsequent redesign efforts for the BA-10. Like the BA-10, the BA-3/6 was classified as a heavy armoured car as it weighed in at more than 5 tons, but also like the BA-10, its armour was no thicker than 15mm (only 9mm on the hull). In *Bolt Action* terms a BA-3/6 is identical to a BA-10 so it has the same damage value of 7+ as a 'light' armoured car. Principal service: 1931–41. Numbers manufactured: 566 all types.

Cost: 96pts (Inexperienced), 120pts (Regular), 144pts (Veteran)

Weapons: 1 turret-mounted light anti-tank gun with co-axial LMG and 1 forward-facing LMG

Damage Value: 7+ (armoured car)

Special Rules:

- Recce



BA-6 heavy armoured car

GENERIC UNIT OPTIONS

FLAGS

Japanese and Soviet infantry squads (not teams!) in all theatres and periods have the following equipment option:

Options:

- One man can replace all of his weapons with a flag for +25pts, gaining the *Rally to the Colours!* special rule below.

Special Rules:

- *Rally to the Colours!* All friendly infantry and artillery units within 12" of the flag-bearing model can re-roll failed Order tests when ordered to Rally. In addition, if the Rally Order is successfully issued, the unit rolls two dice to determine how many pin markers are discarded and chooses the highest result. However, while the unit carrying the flag has a Down or Ambush order dice on it, the flag is kept hidden and has no effect.



HORSE-DRAWN LIMBER

In the 1930s mechanisation had begun to take hold in Western armies (with Great Britain at the forefront), but for most of the world's armies artillery was still being moved by horse-drawn limbers largely unchanged since Napoleon's day. Horse-drawn limbers are available as Tow choices for any army using any Theatre Selector. They are treated as wheeled vehicles, except as noted below.

Cost: 8pts (Inexperienced), 10pts (Regular), 12pts (Veteran)

Weapons: None

Damage Value: 3+ (literally soft-skinned)

Tow: Any gun or howitzer

Special Rules:

- Slow (only when towing)

THE WINTER WAR



Red Army ski troops, by Peter Dennis © Osprey Publishing Ltd.
Taken from Elite 156: World War II Combat Reconnaissance
Tactics.

PRELUDE

The brief 'Winter War' was fought between Finland and the Soviet Union in the winter of 1939–40. Even though the Finns were critically outnumbered and outgunned by the Red Army, they inflicted a string of costly defeats on the invading Soviet forces.

Finland was a part of Imperial Russia until the October Revolution and then won its independence just after the Russian Civil War, following a brief civil war of its own between secessionist 'White' Finns and Bolshevik-leaning 'Reds'. The Whites gained the upper hand and the newly created Soviet Union was in no state to raise objections when Finland left the fold.

Several peace treaties were signed between the two countries in the years that followed, but relations remained strained. Both of them accused the other of failing to stop 'volunteers' slipping across the border and supporting dissension on the other side during the 1920s. In 1932 an attempted uprising by Finnish Communists was crushed and by the late 1930s less than 1% of Finland's trade was with the Soviet Union, despite its close proximity. By this time Soviet propaganda was portraying the Finnish leadership as 'a vicious and reactionary fascist clique' while ordinary Finns viewed the forced collectivisation and mass purges occurring in the Soviet Union with growing apprehension.

The Finnish border lay only 60km from Leningrad (as Saint Petersburg was then called) and in 1938 the Soviets first suggested and then demanded that Finland disassemble its defences and cede some of its territory so that the border could be moved back. Finland's refusal with repeated assurances of its neutrality in any coming war did nothing to alleviate Stalin's paranoia.



Soviet forces on the hunt for Finns.

With the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact and the partitioning of Poland in September 1939, the Baltic States came under pressure from an increasingly expansionist Soviet Union. Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were forced to agree to having military bases and Red Army troops stationed within their borders. Matters came to a head with Finland in October after the Soviet Union made its territorial

demands public and Finnish attempts at a compromise were rebuffed.

On 26 November 1939 a Soviet border post close to the village of Mainila was shelled by an unknown party. Four border guards were killed and nine more were injured. Claims and counter-claims were made by both sides as to who really bore responsibility for the attack. The Soviet Union declared the Finnish response to be hostile and voided the non-aggression pacts between the two countries. On 30 November Red Army forces crossed the border into Finland in strength.

The Red Army outnumbered the Finns three-to-one in men, thirty-to-one in aircraft, and a hundred-to-one in tanks. The anticipation was that the campaign would be over in two or three weeks, and that the advance would be so quick that the troops were warned against accidentally straying across the border into Sweden. The reality would turn out very different.

THE MANNERHEIM LINE

The Finnish border with the Soviet Union was some 1,000km in length, but the majority of it was thick forest split by swamps or lakes with just a handful of unpaved roads. On the Karelian Isthmus the terrain was generally more open and it was also the closest area to Leningrad itself. It was the obvious route of attack.

Field defences had been built across the isthmus in the 1920s and were successively reinforced during the 1930s. These mostly comprised conventional trenches and log bunkers protected by barbed wire and mines, with an average of only one concrete bunker per kilometre. The defences were laid out to take best advantage of the existing terrain, using the strips of land between several small lakes as natural choke points and resting its flanks on Lake Ladoga and the Gulf of Vilpuri. The resulting fortified zone was dubbed 'The Mannerheim Line' in honour of the Finnish Commander-in-Chief and national icon Carl Gustaf Mannerheim.

Pre-war Finnish planning anticipated as many as seven Soviet divisions attacking the Mannerheim line. This proved to be an underestimate. Twelve divisions were actually deployed, placing 250,000 Red Army troops against 130,000 Finns. A screening force of 21,000 Finnish troops were sent out to delay and damage the Soviet forces before they reached the line even though the more open terrain meant they could not employ the guerrilla tactics that would prove so effective later.

In the first clashes the lightly equipped Finns had to resort to inventive measures to prevent the numerous Soviet tanks from simply overrunning them. Small teams would use logs or metal bars to jam the treads of a tank and then use petrol-filled bottles – Molotov cocktails as they have become universally known – to set it on fire. Petrol-fuelled types like the BT series and the T-26 proved to be quite vulnerable to firebombing and Soviet armour casualties began to mount. In all, 80 Soviet tanks were destroyed in the fighting before the main defence line was even reached.

As the screening forces fell back to the Mannerheim Line, the handful of artillery pieces and anti-tank guns stationed there also took a toll, but the Finns were constantly bedevilled by a need to conserve ammunition. By 6 December the Finns had withdrawn all of their forces and subsequent fighting took on aspects reminiscent of World War I. The first major Soviet assault was preceded by a 40-hour artillery bombardment and a mass attack across open ground near the frozen Taipale River at the eastern end of the line. Finnish artillery, limited as it was, had the areas in front of the defences pre-registered and exacted a fearful toll. The attack was repelled with heavy losses.

Soviet attacks around Taipale continued for a week with one Soviet division after another fed into the grinder for no gain. The dogged Finnish defence combined with rigid, verging on moronic, Red Army tactics caused crippling losses. As an example, a single attack lasting just an hour resulted in the loss of a thousand Soviet dead and 27 wrecked tanks strewn across the ice. The state of Red Army morale can be judged by the fact that in renewed attacks on 14 December an entire division panicked when it came under artillery fire.

The Red Army achieved some limited successes, but failed to coordinate well enough to exploit them. On 16 December Soviet forces began attacking the Velikan bunker complex near the village of Summa at the western end of the line. On 19 December a force of 20 Soviet tanks

succeeded in breaching the line, but the Finns successfully held off the main assault so the tanks were left stranded without infantry support. The tanks were reduced to randomly attacking Finnish strong points until they were picked off, one by one, by Finnish tank hunters. By 22 December all 20 tanks had been destroyed. The effects of Stalin's purges of the Red Army officers was being keenly felt.

By 23 December, Soviet attacks had petered out due to low morale and lack of supplies. The Finns decided the time was ripe for a counterattack and attempted to encircle three Soviet divisions near Vilpuri. The attempt failed and cost over a thousand Finnish casualties with the Red Army suffering a similar number – something of a minor victory given their recent experiences. In the Soviet Union the propaganda machine was by now attempting to excuse the Red Army's appalling performance by claiming the humble Mannerheim Line with its log bunkers was more heavily fortified than the famous Maginot Line in France. The Red Army regrouped, licked its wounds and pounded the line with artillery for over a month before attacking again with truly overwhelming forces and better tactics from 1 February.

THE LADOGA KARELIA FRONT

The Finns had not anticipated an attack along their eastern border due to the wildness of terrain and the scarcity of roads. In the event the Soviets attempted a flanking hook through the Ladoga Karelia region with three entire armies, the 8th, 9th and 14th, with a total of 160,000 men. A whole Soviet division was allocated to virtually every forest path heading west in a drive aimed at cutting Finland in half.

The thinly-spread defenders were severely outnumbered, so had little choice but to fall back and resort to guerrilla tactics against the mass of men and machines moving against them. The Finns rallied and formed a defensive line along low ridges beside the tiny, frozen Kollaa River. Throughout the rest of the Winter War the phrase 'Kollaa holds' became a motto for the defenders.



LEGENDS OF THE OSTFRONT

SIMO HÄYHÄ – ‘THE WHITE DEATH’

Simo Häyhä holds the record for the most confirmed kills of any sniper in history: 505 enemy combatants over 100 days. He became a living embodiment of the guts and fighting spirit (or to use the Finnish idiom: *Sisu*) of his countrymen.

Häyhä was born in the agricultural town of Rautajärvi in 1905 or 1906 according to different accounts. After Finland gained its independence in the wake of the October Revolution, Rautajärvi found itself close to the borders of the newly formed Soviet Union. Häyhä grew up farming and hunting in the wilderness of forests and lakes that make up the Karelian Isthmus, becoming toughened against the harsh winters of his homeland. In 1925 Häyhä served his mandatory one year in the Finnish Army and mustered out at the rank of corporal. Subsequently he joined the Finnish Civil Guard, a volunteer militia organisation equivalent to the American National Guard or the British Territorial Army. He became closely acquainted with the Russian-made Mosin-Nagant rifle and exhibited a passion for target shooting, spending virtually every spare moment honing his skill. When later asked what brought him such great success as a sniper on the battlefield he laconically replied ‘practice’.

When the Soviet Union invaded, Häyhä was called up for service in the 6th company of JR 34 and stationed near the Kollaa River. Only skirmishing had been anticipated in the Ladoga Karelia, so only two Finnish divisions, supported by three brigades, were covering an enormous stretch of the border. Eight Soviet divisions were sent against them and plunged into the dense forests of the area along the few roads available. The Finns at first retreated, but as the Red Army columns struggled further and further into Finnish territory in dreadful conditions they were blocked and became fractured into pockets unable to support one another. In this environment Häyhä found his calling.

Häyhä would go out carrying only a day’s worth of supplies and hide in the snow, enduring the sub-zero temperatures as he picked off one Russian after another. Incredibly Häyhä did not use a telescopic sight on his rifle, preferring to use simple iron sights instead. Häyhä explained this as being for three reasons; firstly, a scope would fog up easily in the -20°C to -40°C temperatures he operated in. Secondly, a scope could reflect the winter sunlight and reveal his position. Thirdly, using a scope would force him to raise his head higher and put him at more risk from return fire. At close quarters Häyhä was equally lethal with a 9mm Suomi submachine gun.



Häyhä became known as ‘The White Death’ and his fame spread on both sides of the conflict. The Soviets brought in snipers to hunt him, they called down artillery barrages to try and kill him, all to no avail. For 100 days Häyhä killed an average of five men per day. Finally, on 6 March 1940, Häyhä’s luck ran out. He was struck in the face by an explosive bullet from a Soviet sniper, his cheek blown away and his jaw pulped. Häyhä’s comrades at first thought he was dead when they found him but then discovered he was in a coma.

Häyhä regained consciousness on 13 March, the day that peace was declared between Finland and the Soviet Union. His full recovery took years and he played no part in the ‘Continuation War’ that began in 1941. In recognition of his contribution Häyhä was given numerous awards and promoted to 2nd Lieutenant by Field Marshal Carl Gustaf Mannerheim, the biggest jump in rank ever awarded by the Finnish army. After the war, Häyhä became a renowned dog breeder and moose hunter, and lived in the municipality of Ruokolahti in his final years. He reached the age of 97, an elusive target for the grim reaper right to the end.

Cost: 75 pts (Veteran)

Team: 1 – sniper

Weapons: Rifle and submachine gun

Special Rules:

- Sniper
- Skis: Häyhä ignores movement penalties for snow and other winter conditions
- Trained Huntsman: As long as Häyhä has an Ambush order die next to him he can re-roll Morale checks. Also, when he opens fire from Ambush, he gains an additional +1 to-hit bonus, cumulative with the +1 for being a sniper
- Master of the Hunt: As an experienced hunter Häyhä can move into an Ambush position. He is allowed to make an Advance move and if he does not take a fire action then he can turn his dice to Ambush mode
- The White Death: if he fails to cause damage on his target, Simo may re-roll the dice – the



A Finnish patrol advances cautiously

Finnish ski troops, dressed entirely in white snow camouflage and operating in the trackless forests on the flanks of the road-bound Soviet columns, began to exact a terrible toll. The Finns quickly learned how to break up the strung-out Red Army formations into pockets (*Motti* in Finnish) and defeat them in detail. To their surprise, the Finns found that the Soviets didn't try to break out and retreat to the east when they were encircled. Instead they dug-in and waited for reinforcements and resupply by air that often did not arrive.

LEGENDS OF THE OSTFRONT

LIEUTENANT LAURI TÖRNI (A.K.A. LARRY THORNE)

Lauri Törni was one of the most decorated Finnish soldiers in World War II. He fought first in the Winter War, where he caught the eye of his superiors as a superb soldier and rose through the ranks to become a 2nd Lieutenant by the end of the Winter War. He was then sent to Germany to train with the Waffen-SS and returned to Finland to fight the Soviets again in the Continuation War.

It was during this conflict that his legend was established. His command skill, as well as his ferocious combat ability, meant further promotion (to Captain), more decorations and even the creation of a unit named after him specialising in behind-the-lines operations and unconventional warfare. 'Detachment Törni' became so famous on both sides for the massive amount of mayhem and damage they caused that the Soviet put a huge reward on his head.

After the war, Törni grew disaffected with the current regime and embarked in subversive

activities, for which was imprisoned on several occasions, but no prison seemed able to hold him for long – he kept escaping with nonchalant ease! He started a life on the run between Finland, Sweden and several other nations, finally ending up in the USA. There, Törni changed his name to Larry Thorne and joined the US Army's special forces as an instructor, but then saw combat again, extensively, as a Green Beret in the Vietnam War.

In 1965 he finally met his end when his helicopter was shot down deep behind enemy lines. His remains were found in 1999 – in his career Törni had received seven Finnish decorations (including the Mannerheim Cross), the German Iron Cross, and thirteen US decorations (including two Purple Hearts).

Cost: 200pts (Veteran HQ unit)

Team: Törni and up to 2 further men

Weapons: Submachine gun and anti-tank grenades (mines/explosives)

Options:

- Törni may be accompanied by up to 2 men at a cost of +25 pts each

Special Rules:

- Lead by example. Törni's Morale bonus is +4.
- Skis: Törni and his men ignore movement penalties for snow and other winter conditions
- Tank Hunters
- Fanatics
- Medics: Each man carries field surgery kit and is a skilled medic. Therefore the unit always acts exactly in the same way as if a medic was within 6" of the unit.
- Behind Enemy Lines: When outflanking as described on p 119 of the Bolt Action rulebook, the unit may enter from either the left/right table edge as normal, or even from the enemy own table edge!
- Move unseen: Törni and his men are masters of unconventional warfare and stealth, therefore whenever they are in cover from the fire of an enemy unit, they count as Hidden, as described on page 117 of the rulebook

As well as the Finns the Red Army soldiers had to contend with one of the coldest winters on record in a region known for its harsh conditions. As Soviet troops shivered in makeshift shelters (suitable winter tents were not available) outside temperatures of -30°C to -40°C were commonplace. Soviet frostbite casualties were already at 10% before they had even crossed the border. The long hours of darkness and freezing mists of the forests gave the Finns, many of whom were experienced hunters and cross-country skiers, plentiful opportunities to wreak havoc, none more so than the legendary sniper, Simo Häyhä, who became known as 'The White Death'.

On 13 December the commander of the Soviet 8th Army that was attacking north of Lake Ladoga was replaced by one of the Heroes of Khalkyn Gol, Grigoriy Schtern. However, fresh leadership did nothing to change the grim facts as casualties continued to mount. On 19 December the Finns reduced their direct attacks on the encircled Red Army troops in order to rest their exhausted troops and let the cold do its work. From 6 to 16 January the battle was renewed, including Finnish specialists like Major Matti Armas Aarnio, known as 'Motti-Matti' who favoured

storming the pockets in night attacks from close range.

The fighting is epitomised by the month-long battle in front of the town of Suomussalmi and the Raate road leading to it. Two Soviet Rifle Divisions, the 163rd followed by the 44th, attacked along the narrow forest road. The 163rd was soon blocked and found itself being broken into smaller and smaller pieces by flank attacks. When the 163rd's commander asked for permission to retreat he was instead sent reinforcements from the 44th Division, followed by the 44th itself which became caught in the same trap. In all the Soviets lost 7–9,000 casualties against Finnish losses of just 400 and both divisions were all but annihilated as fighting forces. The Finns captured dozens of Soviet tanks, artillery pieces, anti-tank guns, hundreds of trucks, nearly 2,000 horses, plus thousands of rifles as well as much-needed ammunition and medical supplies.

THE RED ARMY REGROUPS

By January 1940 even the dimmest Red Army general could see that the Ladoga Karelia thrust was doomed to failure and the frontal assaults on the Karelian Isthmus were a tragic farce. Soviet forces were reshuffled to put new commanders in place at the top and bring all available reinforcements to bear against the Mannerheim Line. By February almost half a million Red Army troops were facing 150,000 Finnish defenders.

By this time the Finns had suffered 3,000 casualties from incessant bombardments and raids by one or two Soviet companies at a time against the trench lines. Weapons were wearing out and artillery ammunition so limited that it could only fire on the most threatening attacks. Mass infantry attacks resumed in February, supported by smaller, better-integrated groups of tanks and covered by heavy artillery barrages and smoke.

Casualties were still high, but the Red Army could afford a battle of attrition whereas the Finns could not. After ten days of continuous bombardments and attacks, the Soviets achieved a breakthrough near Summa. On 15 February Mannerheim authorised a general withdrawal to the intermediate line at the western side of the isthmus, although around Taipale in the east Finnish resistance continued unabated. Even so the writing was clearly on the wall.

The Finnish government had been seeking peace terms ever since hostilities had broken out, but they had been rebuffed by Soviets at every step. In mid-February their efforts became increasingly desperate and Moscow, humiliated by the whole affair on the international stage and facing the prospect of a Franco-British intervention, finally began to listen. Negotiations dragged on into mid-March before an agreement was reached, giving the Red Army time to salve some of its wounded pride by breaching the Mannerheim Line and advancing on Vilpuri. By 12 March 1940 the Winter War was over.



Soviet KV-1 heavy tank

AFTERMATH

The Pyrrhic victory of the Winter War came at an appalling cost for the Soviet Union; 126,875 dead or missing, 264,908 wounded, and 5,600 captured. In addition they lost around 2,268 tanks and armoured cars and 900 aircraft. Casualties on the Finnish side numbered 26,662 dead and 39,886 wounded.

As with Khalkyn Gol, the Winter War had far reaching effects on World War II. The Soviets expanded their demands from the territory they had originally wanted. They took the whole Karelian Isthmus including Vilpuri, Finland's second largest city, and a large area north of Lake Ladoga. In all, Finland had to give up 11% of its territory and 30% of its prewar economic assets, almost half a million Finns were displaced from their former homes.

Despite vociferous plaudits in the foreign press, Finland had been let down by the promises of support from the Western Allies. The Finnish government felt compelled to join forces with Germany when it invaded the Soviet Union 15 months later, in what became known as the 'Continuation War', to regain its lost territory. To Mannerheim's credit he successfully resisted Hitler's attempts to draw Finland further into the war by limiting Finnish participation in the horrific three-year siege of Leningrad.

On the other side, the Winter War revealed critical failings in the Red Army and taught it some important lessons about fighting a modern war in winter time. As hard as it seems to believe, Red Army troops and tanks lacked even basic snow camouflage at the start of the Winter War, Soviet tanks were painted olive drab and soldiers dressed in khaki. The Red Army also had absolutely no ski troops at this time and the effectiveness of the Finnish ones made a deep impression on Soviet thinking, as did the utility of submachine guns, anti-tank rifles and Molotov cocktails at a tactical level.

The Red Army's shamolic system of dual control with political commissars having a veto over an officer's commands was rescinded for a time, only to return in the dark days of *Barbarossa* a year and a half later. Old-fashioned ranks, insignia and forms of discipline were re-introduced, armoured units were re-organised into smaller, more agile formations and new tank designs like the KV-1 went into full production. These reforms were still underway when the Axis invaded, but there can be little doubt they made a critical difference in the battles that would follow during the Great Patriotic War.

From Germany's perspective the Winter War revealed that the vast, modern-looking Red Army was in fact an inept, cumbersome giant incapable of beating an enemy a fraction of its size in a timely fashion. All too soon Hitler's dreams of destroying Bolshevism and enslaving the Slavic races in the east would shape themselves into a fearsome reality

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITH BOLT ACTION

The Winter War offers plentiful opportunities to test the mettle of small, motivated Finnish forces against the Soviet steamroller. The terrain and weather conditions gave a substantial boost to the Finn's chances of success, so some care must be exercised in ensuring the game table reflects that as detailed below.

SCENARIOS

GENERAL SCENARIOS

All of the scenarios from the *Bolt Action* rulebook are good ones to use for the Winter War, as the wide-ranging nature of the fighting means anything works well.

- Scenario 1: Envelopment
- Scenario 2: Maximum Attrition
- Scenario 3: Point Defence
- Scenario 4: Hold Until Relieved
- Scenario 5: Top Secret
- Scenario 6: Demolition

WINTER WAR SCENARIOS

The following two scenarios, 'Assault on the Mannerheim Line' and 'Pocketed', are designed specifically to recreate fighting conditions common to the Winter War.

TERRAIN

The untamed terrain of Ladoga Karelia dominated the fighting there as the Red Army struggled to push its way through thick, snow-bound forest along narrow, primitive roads. The Karelian Isthmus was somewhat more open in places, particularly across its many frozen lakes, rivers and marshes, but it was still quite rugged with heavy forest, rocky outcrops and low ridges in between. Players recreating the Winter War will be well served by having a large number of coniferous tree models at their disposal to truly capture the right feel. Roads, wooden cabins and log bunkers can be used add a touch of human habitation. For the fighting on the Karelian Isthmus, field fortifications such as barbed wire and trenches are a must.

ICE AND SNOW

One of the biggest challenges to creating Winter War scenarios is depicting the thick snow that should be covering everything. On the Ladoga Karelia front, virtually the entire tabletop with the exception of roads and buildings will be covered in deep snow. On the Karelian Isthmus, frozen water will provide some areas of open ground balanced by obstacles being more commonplace –

both man-made and natural. However the dominant terrain type in either area will be large stretches of ice and snow.

Setting aside the rather extreme solutions of coating one's gaming table with baking flour (bleached, of course) or talcum powder (odourless, please), passable results can be achieved with a humble white bed sheet or even irregularly cut sheets of white paper overlaid onto normal gaming terrain. Naturally for real aficionados nothing less than custom built winter-themed scenery will suffice, which will also come in very handy for many of the greatest battles of the Great Patriotic War.

Scenario special rules for ice and snow can be found on [page 99](#) of this book

WINTER WAR THEATRE SELECTORS

A Finnish Theatre Selector for the Winter War can be found in the *Armies of Italy and the Axis* book, but it may also add to its Tow options the horse-drawn limber found in the Khalkyn Gol section of this volume. A dedicated Soviet Winter War Theatre Selector may be found on [page 29](#).

SCENARIO 3: ASSAULT ON THE MANNERHEIM LINE

Throughout the Winter War, the Red Army kept the Mannerheim Line under continuous pressure with air and artillery bombardments plus everything from divisional to company-sized assaults. Their attacks in December were disastrous failures incurring huge losses. It was not until the Soviets regrouped, reinforced and re-invented their tactics in February that they managed to drag the Finns into the kind of battle of attrition that they could only lose in the long run. This scenario is representative of the fighting on the Karelian Isthmus through this period, with entrenched Finnish forces resisting a Red Army assault.

FORCES

This scenario pitches a larger Soviet force against Finnish defenders that, although outnumbered, are dug in to a well-prepared defence line consisting of trenches, bunkers with other obstacles and fortifications. Forces are chosen from the appropriate Winter War Theatre Selectors (see [page 29](#)) – the Finnish player picks a force to an agreed points, the Red Army player picks a force total of three times that amount (e.g. 1,500pts if the Finnish player has 500pts).

In addition to his force, the Finnish player receives three bunkers, nine ‘hard cover’ linear obstacles and two minefields.

Each linear obstacle must be up to 6” long and 1” tall, and should provide hard cover (so use trenches, low walls, earth embankments, sandbags and the like). You can replace any number of ‘hard cover’ linear obstacles with ‘soft cover’ ones (barbed wire etc.) and if you do so, you get two ‘soft cover’ obstacles for each ‘hard cover’ one you surrender. However, if you replace too many obstacles in this way, you can alter the game balance pretty badly, so try to stick to nine pieces of hard cover as much as you can.

Bunkers should be large enough to accommodate a single unit of infantry or artillery. The rules for bunkers are on page 104 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook. Minefields are approximately 6” x 6” and may be marked or unmarked at the option of the Finnish player.



Finnish T-26E light tank

SET-UP

The Finnish player sets up one of his bunkers and three linear obstacles in each of the areas highlighted in grey on the map – the first, second and third defence lines. Both minefields must be placed so that they are between the first and second defence lines, they may be combined into a single mixed minefield if desired.

All of the area between the Attacker's edge and the first defence line counts as ice – the edge of a frozen lake, marsh or river. Scenario special rules for ice and snow can be found on [page 99](#) of this book.

The rest of the table should have reasonably sparse terrain like copses of trees, hillocks or rock outcroppings along with plentiful areas of snow deep enough to impede movement. As it represents a prepared defence, anything likely to provide much cover to an attacker will have been removed to leave a good field of fire to the troops in the bunkers and behind the fortifications.

The last strip of table between the third defence line and the Defender's edge of the table can include heavier terrain, like woodland, or even some buildings.

It is important that the Finnish player sets up the terrain cleverly, making sure that as much as possible the bunkers' lines of fire are clear and that the fortifications make life as difficult as possible for the advancing Red Army forces. Keep in mind that the enemy is likely to take cover behind your defences as he captures them, and that firing over obstacles, unless your troops are leaning against them, will offer cover to the attacking soldiers as well... so place your defences cunningly.

DEPLOYMENT

The Finnish player divides the number of units in their army by three. The result is the number of units that must be deployed within each defence line. Of course, unless the total number of units in your army is a multiple of three, you'll end up with one or two spare units – these can be placed in any defence line or left in Reserve (they can even outflank!). For example, if you have seven units, you must place two in each defence line and you end up with a spare one, which you can add to any defence line or leave in reserve. Defending units can (and should!) use the Dug In and Hidden set-up Rules (see Hidden Set-up on page 117 of the Bolt Action rulebook and the Dug In rules on [page 102](#) of this book).

FINNISH TABLE EDGE

6"

6"

18"

6"

18"

6"

12"

SOVIET TABLE EDGE

The Red Army units are not set-up on the table at the start of the game. The Red Army player must nominate half of his force (rounding up) to form his first wave. Any units not included in the first wave are left in reserve. Units in reserve cannot outflank in this scenario, and similarly units with special deployment rules, like snipers, observers and spotters, cannot use their special deployment.

SPECIAL RULES

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

The Red Army player rolls a die: on a 2+, a preparatory bombardment strikes the enemy positions (see Preparatory Bombardment on page 118 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). On a result of 1, the barrage fails to appear, but the Red Army player has their orders and the attack must go ahead as planned!

LARGER OR SMALLER GAMES

You might of course play this type of game on smaller or larger tables, in which case you should reduce/increase the number of terrain pieces in proportion with the size of the table. On much larger tables, you may even want to increase the number of bunkers and/or defence lines, but remember to adjust the number of turns played as well, otherwise you risk running out of time before you can even reach your objectives!

OBJECTIVE

The Red Army player must try to capture the three bunkers – the Finnish player must try to stop them.

FIRST TURN

Once the battle begins, the attacker must move his first wave onto the table during Turn 1. These units can enter the table from any point on the attacker's table edge, and must be given either a run or advance order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of the first wave, and remember that they cannot assault on the turn they enter the table.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 10, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2 or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5 or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game, if the Red Army player has captured all three bunkers they win. If the

Red Army player has captured two bunkers the game is a draw. If the Red Army player has captured one bunker (or none!) then the Finnish player wins.

All bunkers are held by the Finnish player at the start of the game regardless of where his troops are positioned. If a bunker changes hands during the game then it remains under the control of that side until it is taken back.

To capture a bunker there must be no enemy in it and you must move one of your infantry units inside it.



KV-2 heavy tank

SCENARIO 4: POCKETED

Soviet forces pushing into the Ladoga Karelia region along Finland's eastern border enjoyed early successes and easily drove back the outnumbered Finns. However as the long, road-bound columns of the Red Army pushed deeper into Finnish territory they came under attack from the trackless forests on both flanks. Entire divisions became trapped in pockets, 'Motti' to the Finns, and broken up into smaller and smaller pieces as the Finns used their superior fieldcraft and mobility to smash one section of the column at a time.

FORCES

This scenario is designed to be played with equal points values on both sides. Finnish and Red Army reinforced platoons are chosen from the appropriate Winter War Theatre Selectors (see [page 29](#)) with the following restrictions.

The Red Army platoon must include its full allocation of transport and towing vehicles.

The Finnish force may not include any vehicles, nor any artillery units except for light anti-tank guns and light howitzers.

SET-UP

This scenario is designed to be played along the length of a six by four feet gaming surface. A 6"-wide road stretches from the east (short) table edge to the west (short) table edge, roughly bisecting the table into two equal halves. This road, being not much more than a trail, simply counts as open ground and not as the rulebook definition of 'road'.

Place a road block, like a large tree trunk, deep crater or wrecked vehicle, in the middle of the table cutting the road in two – this counts as an obstacle that is impassable to vehicles of any kind.

The rest of the table should be covered by a very high density of thick wooded and broken terrain, representing the snow-covered forest and rough going surrounding the road. If possible place at least one hill to each side of the road close to the road block. All of the area outside the road counts as rough ground.

DEPLOYMENT

The Red Army player must deploy first. Half of their force (rounding down) is deployed on the road west of the road block, the other half of their force is deployed on the road east of the roadblock. Red Army units must be more than 6" from the road block and more than 6" from the edge of the table.

The Finnish player may then deploy their units anywhere on the table that is more than 6" from the road. All Finnish units can use the hidden set-up rules (see Hidden Set-up page 117 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook), and of course can start the game in Ambush.

OBJECTIVE

The Red Army player must try to reunite the two halves of his force. The Finnish player must try

to stop him and inflict maximum damage in the process.

‘MOTTI-MATTI’

To represent a Finnish assault to reduce an established Red Army pocket, apply the following modifications using the Scenario Special Rules:

- The battle uses the Night Fight Scenario Special Rules.
- Red Army forces can be deployed anywhere on the road or within 6” of it and may be Dug In.
- Red Army units roll for Frostbite (see [page 101](#)) at the beginning of the game.
- Finnish forces can be deployed anywhere that is more than 12” from the road.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 6, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2 or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5 or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. If one side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

The Red Army player scores 1 victory point for every enemy unit destroyed. He also scores 6 additional victory points if one or more Red Army units are within 3” of the road block at the end of the game.

The Finnish player scores 3 victory points for every enemy unit destroyed.

THEATRE SELECTOR

RED ARMY WINTER WAR FORCES

The huge force gathered by the Red Army for the invasion of Finland was made up of conscripts drawn from all over the Soviet Union. Their training was basic and their equipment often unsuitable for the harsh conditions.

RED ARMY WINTER WAR REINFORCED PLATOON

1 (Inexperienced) Lieutenant – Junior or Senior

1 (Inexperienced) Commissar

2 (Inexperienced) LMG squads or NKVD squads

plus:

Headquarters

0–1 Captain

0–1 Medic Team

0–1 Forward Artillery Observer (field telephone only)

Infantry

0–4 Infantry Squads: (Inexperienced) LMG squads, NKVD squads

0–1 MMG teams

0–1 HMG team

0–1 Anti-tank rifle team

0–1 Light mortar team

Artillery

0–1 Mortar team: Medium or Heavy

0–1 Gun from:

Anti-tank gun: 45mm Model 1937

Artillery gun: light, medium or heavy

Anti-aircraft gun: 37mm 61-K Model 1939



Finnish anti-tank rifle team

Armoured Car

0–1 Armoured car or Recce vehicle: D-8/D-12, FAI, BA-3/6, BA-10, BA-20.

Tanks, Tank Destroyers, Self-propelled artillery and Anti-aircraft vehicles

0–1 Vehicle from: T-26 (any variant), OT-130, BT-5/7, T-37, T-40, T-28, T-34, T-35, SMK/T-100, KV-1*, KV-2*, Tokarev 4M Quad Maxim. *(KV-1 and KV-2 are both subject to the 'experimental tank' rule as detailed for the SMK/T-100 below)

Transports and Tows

0–1 Transport vehicle **per** infantry unit in the reinforced platoon from: Truck

0–1 Tow from: Truck, half-track truck, Komsomolets, artillery tractor, Horse-drawn limber

SPECIAL RULES

- No units in this reinforced platoon may be Veteran.



GAZ AAA radio truck

ADDITIONAL UNITS

SOVIET UNITS

D-8 LIGHT ARMoured CAR

Fighting during the Civil War had convinced the Soviets of the utility of armoured cars and they produced them in large numbers in the inter-war period. Soviet designers viewed armoured cars as having two categories based on armament, 'heavy' cars carried a 37mm or 45mm gun on a truck chassis, while 'light' ones were built on commercial car chassis and only carried light machine guns. The D-8 was based on the Ford Model A or its equivalent built under licence, the GAZ-A. It had a somewhat curious arrangement of two crew sitting back to back to operate the car's two hull mounted machine guns, a cumbersome arrangement that was soon dropped in favour of the modified D-12 and FAI types. At least one D-8 was captured by Finnish forces in the Winter War and was subsequently used by them. Principal service: 1931–42. Numbers manufactured: Approximately 25.

Cost: 56 pts (Inexperienced), 70 pts (Regular), 84 pts (Veteran)

Weapons: 1 forward-facing LMG, 1 rear-facing LMG

Damage Value: 7+ (armoured car)

Options:

- D-12: Built alongside the D-8, the D-12 replaced the rear mounted LMG with an open turret mounting the LMG instead. This option may be taken at no additional cost although it does make the armoured car count as being open-topped.

Special Rules:

- Recce

FAI LIGHT ARMoured CAR

The FAI (Ford-A *Izhorskiy*) was a 30s-era armoured car design and like the D-8 it was based on the Ford Model A chassis with the addition of armoured plates and this time with a rotating turret. Although the FAI had better armour than its predecessors, it was still thin-skinned even by standards of the day and quickly replaced in service by the BA-20 light armoured car which it is commonly mistaken for. Like all light armoured cars, commercial car engines and chassis were strained by the weight of armour and armament so they were generally road-bound. Principal service: 1932–42. Numbers manufactured: Unknown.

Cost: 52 pts (Inexperienced), 65 pts (Regular), 78 pts (Veteran)

Weapons: 1 turret-mounted LMG

Damage Value: 7+ (armoured car)

Special Rules:

- Recce

SMK/T-100 EXPERIMENTAL HEAVY TANKS

The Winter War was used for field-testing prototypes of several new Soviet heavy tank designs intended to replace the T-35: the SMK (named after *Sergei Mironovich Kirov* – a recently assassinated party official), the T-100 and the KV-1. The latter was included only because Leningrad's Kirov design bureau had pleaded for an opportunity to test a more modern, single-turreted design to replace multi-turreted monstrosities like the SMK and T-100.

The SMK and T-100 were quite similar multi-turreted tanks with a main armament of a 76.2mm gun in one turret and a 45mm gun mounted in a lower secondary turret just in front. The performance of both designs in combat was predictably disappointing. The single SMK prototype was immobilised by a large mine near Summa and proved unrecoverable for the next two months due to its great weight. The two T-100 prototypes fared little better and revealed the same issues of over-complexity, lack of armour and lack of motive power suffered by the T-35.

The single-turreted KV-1, on the other hand, performed so exceptionally well that Stalin ordered production to begin immediately. A single prototype KV-2 'bunker-buster' with a 152mm howitzer armament was rushed to the front in time to see combat in February 1940. In *Bolt Action* terms we treat both the SMK and T-100 experimental heavy tanks as having the same characteristics. They lacked the formidably thick armour that would become the trademark of the KV-1 so they are rated as having a damage value only equivalent to a medium tank. Principal service: 1939 Numbers manufactured: one SMK, and two T-100 prototypes were built.

Cost: 168 pts (Inexperienced)

Weapons: 1 turret-mounted light howitzer with co-axial MMG, 1 turret mounted rear-facing MMG, 1 turret-mounted light anti-tank gun with co-axial MMG covering the front arc, 1 hull-mounted forward-facing MMG

Damage Value: 9+ (medium tank)

Special Rules:

- Slow
- Experimental: Unfamiliarity and teething problems mean that experimental tanks must pass an order test whenever they are given an order – even when they have no Pin markers on them!

OT-130 LIGHT FLAMETHROWER TANK

The first Soviet light flamethrower tanks were based on the T-26 chassis utilising the twin-turret T-26A with one turret removed. The OT-130 was produced later by converting single-turreted T-26Bs and replacing their 45mm gun with a flamethrower. The OT-133 was introduced in 1939 with improvements like moving the turret to the right hand side of the hull to make space for a larger fuel tank. All of the T-26 variant flamethrowers suffered from having weak armour, no secondary armament and a short-ranged flamethrower, although the latter issue was somewhat mitigated by the introduction of a special compressor. The entry below is for versions without the compressor upgrade. Interestingly this flamethrower tank design was also utilised for remotely-controlled 'Teletanks' designated as the TT-26. These were unmanned and operated by radio signals from a nearby command tank. Teletanks certainly operated on the Karelian Isthmus during the Winter War and at least two battalions of them existed at the start of the Great Patriotic War. Principal service: 1933–41. Numbers manufactured: Unknown but quite low.

Cost: 72 pts (Inexperienced)

Weapons: 1 turret-mounted light flamethrower

Damage Value: 7+ (Armoured Carrier)

Options:

- Co-axial MMG: Add a co-axial MMG for +5pts

Special Rules:

- Small vehicle flamethrower: The OT-130 flamethrower is somewhat less powerful than those mounted on larger vehicles, so the range of the weapon is limited to 12” and the number of shots is always reduced by one (i.e. it's 2D6-1).
- Internal, volatile fuel tanks makes each tank a potential fireball. Flame-throwing vehicles are more likely to be destroyed by damage, as explained on page 51 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook
- Teletank: An OT-130 may be upgraded to a Teletank for free. Although 1930s-era radio control was of dubious reliability, the TT-26 clearly worked after a fashion. A Teletank ignores Pin markers, but must pass an order test whenever it is given an order – even when it has no Pin markers on it. In addition, it takes order tests by rolling 3D6 and selecting the two highest die results. Designate a command vehicle for the TT-26 (historically this was a modified T-26B), if the command vehicle is destroyed the Teletank is also lost.



Finnish sniper team on the hunt

OPERATION *BARBAROSSA*



The defence of Brest, by Peter Dennis © Osprey Publishing Ltd.
Taken from Campaign 186: Operation Barbarossa 1941 (3).

PRELUDE

Hitler firmly believed the quest for *lebensraum* (living space) for Greater Germany would bring an inevitable confrontation with Russia and its population of 'Untermensch' Slavs, ruled by 'Jewish Bolshevik' masters. As early as 1925 Hitler had detailed his beliefs in his polemic *Mein Kampf*, stating that the future of Germany 'has to lie in the acquisition of land in the east at the expense of Russia'. In June 1940, with France defeated and Britain at bay, the Führer informed one of his generals that victory in the west had finally freed his hands for his real task the showdown with Bolshevism.

Despite this inherently hostile and highly publicised viewpoint Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union maintained surprisingly close diplomatic and economic relations with one another until 1941. They signed trade and border agreements, Germany exchanged technology for Soviet raw materials and access to secret training facilities to ready its armed forces for war in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles. With breath-taking cynicism the two rival nations divided up Poland and the Baltic States into 'spheres of influence' through the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact signed in November 1939. In November 1940 negotiations were underway and written proposals were being exchanged for the entry of the Soviet Union into the Axis alongside Italy and Japan.

However Stalin and Hitler both knew the other's type well enough to understand this was all just window-dressing. War was coming and it was only a matter of when. Stalin believed that Hitler thought the Red Army was four years away from full readiness and therefore the blow would fall sometime in 1942. Stalin and his spymasters were wrong – in December 1940 Hitler was drawing up the first military orders for an invasion of the Soviet Union, Operation *Barbarossa*, with plans for the Panzers to roll no later than May of the following year.



Racism, elitism and overconfidence on the part of Hitler and his cronies was buoyed up by

military leaders flush with their incredible successes in the west. The invasion was planned from the outset to be no simple occupation like in Western Europe, the war in the east was intended to be a war of annihilation. The 'sub-human' Slavs were to be murdered, deported and enslaved so that their empty lands could be repopulated by German colonists.

Hitler believed that if the Red Army could be decisively defeated west of the Dneipr and Dvina rivers, the entire Soviet Union would collapse beneath its own inherent corruption and inferiority – 'you have only to kick in the door' he told Field Marshal von Rundstedt 'and the whole rotten structure will come crashing down'. The war in the east would be over in six to eight weeks.

As we now know it was a fatal miscalculation on Hitler's part. The *Ostfront* plunged Germany into a nightmarish war of attrition that would cost the Soviet Union tens of millions of dead, inflict 95% of all the wartime casualties suffered by the German Heer, and bring about the ultimate downfall of the Third Reich – and Hitler's own suicide – in less than four years. For now, however, that momentous day lay far into an uncertain future.

THE BIGGEST INVASION IN HISTORY

The Axis forces took longer to assemble than had been planned, mainly because they were unbelievably vast. World history has not seen a larger invasion force before or since – 3.2 million German and around 500,000 Axis troops, 600,000 vehicles, over 4,000 aircraft and three quarters of a million horses ranged along a 2500km front. Fighting in the Balkans and inevitable logistical difficulties delayed the start of the invasion until 22 June 1941.

Stalin refused to believe the evidence growing before his eyes. Despite the obvious stockpiling of ammunition and weapons, massive troop movements, constant reconnaissance flights by the Luftwaffe, and information from deserters and spies – Stalin disregarded it all. He suspected his spy reports were British disinformation and the Nazi build-up was an attempt to draw him into starting a war he wasn't prepared for. Even as the bombs and shells began falling on NKVD border detachments they were still being warned by their superiors to do nothing that might 'provoke' the Germans.

The Axis units that crossed the border were many times more powerful than those that had humbled France in the previous year. The Panzer divisions had been modernised with increased numbers of PzKpfw IIIs plus reliable little Czech-built 38(t)s. Vast quantities of captured British and French trucks, carriers and half-tracks had been used to mechanise a greater proportion of the Heer than ever before.



Barbed wire proves no match for the invading Panzers.

This great mass of men and machines were split between three Army Groups: North, Centre and South. Four enormously powerful *Panzergruppen* had been formed under dynamic commanders – leading veterans of the Battle for France and the Low Countries, Poland, Greece and the Balkans. As the invasion began these fast-moving armoured forces punched through the front lines before turning to the sides to isolate the Red Army forces engaged by the slower-moving infantry. Within a few hours the first detachments of armoured cars, tanks, motorcyclists and mechanised infantry were in blocking positions and the slaughter could begin in earnest.

The Soviet forces ranged along the frontier were more powerful than had been anticipated, but they were still in disarray after moving forward to occupy the territories seized in eastern Poland and the Baltic states. The huge mass of tanks and planes that gave the Red Army and Air Force such an impressive paper strength were largely outdated models in a parlous mechanical condition, with relatively few of them being the excellent new T-34 and KV-1 types that would give the Germans so much trouble later on. Ammunition and fuel were scarce, and the Red Army leadership was terrified and disorientated. The heavy hand of Stalin's purges lay across the thinking of every officer. Some had already lost their lives for arguing too strenuously that Stalin was courting disaster by ignoring the Nazi build-up, now more would be executed for failing to

stop it.

On 22 June the Luftwaffe and the Heer punished their inept Soviet opponents unmercifully. Thousands of Soviet aircraft were destroyed on the ground, Red Army tank columns rushing to the front were decimated before they even saw a German soldier. The pitiful remnants hurled themselves into battle in an attempt to cut off the Panzer spearheads and were duly shredded by them. The Red Army soldiers fought stubbornly even when surrounded, but without ammunition or support their fighting power began to simply melt away in the furnace heat of battle.

THE FORTRESS AT BREST-LITOVSK

The fortress at Brest-Litovsk was a 19th-century relic that had been captured by the Germans in 1939 and then ceded to the Soviet Union along with Eastern Poland in accordance with the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. On 22 June the Germans faced the prospect of taking it for a second time. The Soviet garrison at Brest-Litovsk numbered some 9,000 Red Army troops and NKVD border guards plus their families and hospital staff. The German high command had no reason to believe it would resist a modern assault for long, so they allocated 20,000 men and 12 hours for its capture in their time tables.

The fighting that followed was reproduced many times in smaller scale all along the frontier. The first thing the Soviet garrison knew about the invasion was coming under an intense artillery barrage with the German attack starting thirty minutes later. The Soviet garrison initially suffered heavy casualties, but clung on desperately to its positions, fighting off successive assaults and inflicting casualties as their supplies and manpower dwindled. In the case of Brest-Litovsk, the men there hung on for a week and had to be bombed, burned and blasted out of every fort and bunker in the complex before the fortress could be declared secured.

Despite the bitter fighting, within five days the Panzers had covered almost a third of the distance from the frontier to Moscow. Two *Panzergruppen* converged east of the city of Minsk and the Red Army lost 425,000 out of the 620,000 personnel trapped inside two pockets there. The Dnepr River was crossed on 11 July and the city of Smolensk key to an approach on the Soviet capital, fell next on the 17th. Bitter fighting ensued as the Panzers fought off suicidal Soviet counterattacks and the Smolensk encirclement was finally closed east of that city ten days later, with another 760,000 Red Army casualties incurred. Heavy resistance continued in the area until early September, but the road to Moscow was now open.



The numbers and the scale of the victories were fantastical, legendary, but Soviet resistance was unabated and Axis casualties were rising. In keeping with his pre-invasion thinking Hitler attached little importance to the Soviet cities – the destruction of their armed forces was the all-important goal. By Mid-July it was clear that Army Groups North and South were struggling to maintain the pace set by Army Group Centre in its drive towards Moscow. In the north the thick forests and swamps around Leningrad prevented a clean breakthrough. To the south there was by far the largest concentration of Red Army forces resisting Axis efforts to seize the vast agricultural and industrial wealth represented by the Ukraine.

Führer Directive 33 issued on 14 July ordered Army Group Centre to swing its *Panzergruppen* to the right to link up with Army Group South in a massive encirclement operation that would pocket the Red Army forces fighting around Kiev. The frontline Panzer commanders and the German High Command both decried this decision to stall the drive on Moscow in order to ‘mop up’ the Red Army, but Hitler ignored their complaints. The Führer reiterated that seizure of Russia’s economic assets and the destruction of the Red Army had been the plan from the outset, not the capture of Moscow.

Ongoing Soviet counterattacks and the leadership wrangling had eaten up precious time so the Panzers did not strike south until early September. However once the Kiev operation was put into motion it made rapid progress. The pincers closed at the town of Lohvitsa, 180km east of Kiev, on 16 September trapping more than 40 Soviet divisions. A further ten days of savage fighting was necessary to liquidate the encircled formations with continuous bombardments by tanks, planes and artillery, but the outcome was never in doubt. It was another unmitigated disaster for the Red Army, exceeding even those at Minsk and Smolensk. Another 700,000 casualties were lost, the bulk of them captured and sent to Germany to work as slave labour until they dropped dead of exhaustion and starvation.

SIEGES IN THE SOUTH

ODESSA, SEVASTOPOL AND THE BLACK SEA FLEET

Despite attacking across more favourable terrain than in the Northern and Central zones, the advance of Army Group South was hindered by a number of factors. Pre-war Soviet planning had envisaged any invasion being centred on eastern Poland and the Baltic states so the southern districts were allocated a massive amount of manpower to enable a counter-offensive to be undertaken to the north and west in order to cut off the invaders. Army Group South instead had to fight these large reserves head-on. The presence of the powerful Soviet Black Sea Fleet also meant that lengthy sieges were necessary to capture coastal cities that were being constantly resupplied by sea.



Light it up! Pioniers knock out a Soviet bunker.

The port of Odessa, close the Romanian border, had a triple ring of pillboxes, trenches and anti-tank ditches starting 25–30km outside the city. These were guarded by 34,500 men and over two hundred artillery pieces. Odessa resisted Romanian army attacks in early August and a slow battle of attrition followed. The Romanians were gradually supplemented by increasing amounts of German reinforcements until 15 September when the remaining Red Army garrison at Odessa was finally evacuated to Sevastopol.

Sevastopol on the Crimean Peninsula was an entirely tougher nut to crack. The home of the Black Sea fleet and a superb natural fortress, it was protected by coastal artillery and a large number of aircraft as well as warships and a strong garrison. Air raids launched from the Crimea against the Romanian airfields prompted Hitler to insist this 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' be taken sooner rather than later and offensive operations began there in November 1941.

The German Heer struggled with a lack of artillery and naval forces and had to call on help

from the Luftwaffe, as well as the Romanian and Italian naval forces to help capture the fortified peninsula. Even then it was a gruelling process enlivened by a full-scale Soviet amphibious landing at Kerch on the Crimea's eastern tip in late December. Sevastopol finally fell on 4 July the following year and, even then, resistance continued for another week from scattered bands of Red Army soldiers and Black Sea fleet sailors dug in to shattered bunkers and forts. The delays and casualties incurred by operations in the Crimea are thought to have directly contributed to the difficulties the Germans experienced in their offensive towards Stalingrad and the Caucasus during the summer of 1942.



T-34-76 and tank riders

OPERATION *TYPHOON*

With the rich prize of the Ukraine in hand and the flanks of Army Group Centre secured with another crippling defeat for the Red Army, Hitler was satisfied. The advance on Moscow was resumed with his blessing in the form of Operation *Typhoon*, starting on 2 October. Three of the four *Panzergruppen* lunged forward once again. Hastily constructed Red Army defence lines were overrun and the arms of a vast pincer snapped shut at Vyazama on 10 October, trapping four Soviet armies west of the city. In the south, Orel and then Bryansk fell to the advancing Panzers on 3 and 6 October respectively, encircling two more Soviet armies in the process.

This time, however, the encircled Red Army formations could not be easily crushed. Exhaustion was setting in on both sides after months of hard fighting. Infantry divisions were reporting between one third and one half of their strength remaining, some Panzer divisions had only a third of their vehicles still running. German supply lines were stretched thin and, on 7 October, the first snows of winter began to fall. These initial flurries soon melted away, but they heralded the beginning of the *Raputista* 'quagmire season' when Russia's unpaved roads turn into muddy swamps. Just as ominously, on 10 December Marshal Zhukov, the victor and surviving Hero of Khalkyn Gol, was recalled from the siege of Leningrad to organise the defences around Moscow with his customary vigour.

The trapped Soviet formations defied the Panzers and struggled their way out of the encirclements. Everything from platoons to whole rifle divisions escaped to join the multiple defensive rings forming around Moscow, they were ragged, demoralised and lacking heavy equipment, but they were alive and able to keep fighting. The Germans were also not having things go entirely to plan. The 4th Panzer Division was ambushed by a force of 50 T-34s of the 4th Armoured Brigade as it struggled forward through the mud near Mtsensk and suffered such a shocking defeat that a special investigation was undertaken about it. It's perhaps telling that the conclusions drawn constituted the first official admission that the guns of German tanks at the time could only reliably destroy a T-34 from the rear.



A Panzer commander scours the horizon for targets.

On 13 October the Germans reached the new-formed Mozhaisk defence line running from Kalinin towards Volokolamsk and Kaluga. Initially they moved to outflank the defences, taking Kalinin and Kaluga, but were sufficiently encouraged by the weakness of Soviet opposition to make frontal assaults. Zhukov was forced to withdraw the defenders before they were outflanked again and he reformed them behind the Nara River, the last natural obstacle in front of Moscow. The dreadful conditions, however, continued to put shackles on the Panzer's freedom of movement. The city of Tula was intended to form the hinge of one half of a final pincer movement to isolate Moscow, but Tula was not reached until 26 October and the first effort to push beyond it was hurled back by Red Army troops and civilian militias in a desperate fight on the 29th.



*Street-fighting in Kholm, by Peter Dennis © Osprey Publishing Ltd.
Taken from Campaign 245: Demyansk 1942–43.*

On 31 October the German High Command called a temporary halt to offensive operations in order to resupply and ready their battered formations for the final push. On the Soviet side, reinforcements were being rushed from the Far East to bolster Moscow's sagging defences. With their arrival Stalin felt confident enough to march some through Moscow itself for the traditional 7 November parade to calm the shattered nerves of the civilian populace with the sight of well-fed, well-equipped Siberians moving up to the front.

By 15 November the temperatures had dropped to -7°C to -10°C and the mud froze hard enough for the Panzers to be free to roam. The arms of the pincer strained to exert themselves at Klin in the north and, three days later, Tula in the south. Klin was captured on 24 November after a ferocious struggle and the 7th Panzer Division crossed the Moscow-Volga canal on 28 November. Their foothold did not last long as a powerful Soviet counterattack by the newly-arrived Siberians soon drove them back. Attempts to flank around Tula were also frustrated, with progress down to a bare 5–9 kilometres per day with every kilometre covered making the German forces ever more vulnerable to flank attacks from the undefeated Soviet formations around them.

The pincers strained, but they could not close. Red Army resistance and the deadly Russian winter were worsening by the day. By December 1st temperatures were dropping as low as -45°C . German frostbite casualties were being reported at 130,000 men; vehicles could only be started by warming them with fires underneath their engines for hours, shells had to be scraped with a bayonet to remove the frozen packing grease from them before they could be fired. Proper winter weather gear and equipment was available, but priority had been given to getting fuel and ammunition to the men at the front. The ordinary soldiers were reduced to packing their summer uniforms with straw, rags and old newspapers in a futile effort to keep out the cold.

On 2 December a German reconnaissance battalion reached the town of Khimki just 8km

from Moscow. From there they swore that they could see the spires of the Kremlin through their field glasses. This, however, was the closest German forces would ever come to the Soviet capital. On 5 December Hitler acknowledged reality by signing Führer Directive 39 ordering his forces to assume a defensive stance along the entire Ostfront. A wide-ranging Red Army counteroffensive had begun on the very same day.

AFTERMATH

The Soviet counteroffensive was launched with forces only slightly outnumbering the Germans, but its impact on the exhausted, frozen troops in front of Moscow was devastating. Red Army ski troops, cavalry and T-34s plunged through gaps in the fragmented German front lines and wreaked havoc among their supply echelons to the rear. The retreat that followed was dreadful for the common soldiers; vehicles and heavy equipment had to be abandoned as the men struggled back along snow-choked roads. The retreat could very easily have turned into a complete rout, but bizarrely it was Hitler that saved them.

Hitler, just as Stalin had done in the preceding months, insisted that his troops hold on to every scrap of ground and fight every position 'to the last bullet'. When the chief of the army protested Hitler sacked him and took direct control. Many other senior generals took a stance contrary to the Führer's views and they too were relieved of command. 'No retreat' became Hitler's clarion call and an order that had been a death sentence for far too many Red Army soldiers in the Summer proved to be the Heer's salvation in winter.

The German Heer was a superb fighting force held together by consummately skilled and experienced officers. When given the order to dig in and hold they did just that and by so doing avoided the kind of savaging Napoleon's armies had suffered in the retreat from Moscow in 1812. Russian villages which had survived the fighting so far became vital strong points in a chaotic jigsaw puzzle of fortified 'hedgehogs' that gave an all-round defence. Red Army forces could range around and between these points almost at will, but they lacked the supplies, manpower and artillery to destroy them in detail. What had started as a triumphant pursuit of a defeated enemy became another grinding battle of attrition.



Soviet 45mm anti-tank gun

Many of these hedgehogs were cut off and surrounded, but these were resupplied by air or relieved by the handful of mobile Panzers still fighting. The largest such pocket was at Demyansk with over 100,000 Germans (an entire Corps) trapped inside it. Increasingly desperate attempts by the Red Army failed to conquer the Rzhev salient, and they suffered massive casualties in the attempt. In fact the salient remained in existence until 1943, long after the main fighting had moved off elsewhere. The Heer survived the winter secure in the villages although every German soldier that fought in front of Moscow learned to dread the Russian winters still to come.

Barbarossa had succeeded in its stated aims many times over. Over three quarters of a million square kilometres of territory had been seized and the Red Army had been smashed in battle time after time. Historians are still arguing about the precise casualty figures on both sides, but it's clear that the Axis lost hundreds of thousands in the fighting, while the Soviets sacrificed millions with a profligacy that at first elated and then terrified the Germans.

However, for all the fearful destruction unleashed by Operation *Barbarossa*, it failed to destroy the Soviet Union. Despite defeat after defeat the Red Army simply refused to break. Never again would the Axis armies be powerful enough to conduct offensive operations along the entire front. Hitler's first and best opportunity to destroy Bolshevism had slipped away.

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITH *BOLT ACTION*

In terms of gaming, *Barbarossa* is truly ‘the big one’ with action taking place along the entirety of a 2500km front in extremely varied circumstances, breakthroughs, encounters and defensive battles. Axis forces of all kinds clash with a Red Army that has not yet been forced into the almost brutal levels of standardisation found in later years. It’s a marvellous setting for a mini-campaign where attrition is taken into account, providing that the Red Army player(s) doesn’t mind getting crushed time and again until finally getting some sweet, sweet revenge come winter.

SCENARIOS

GENERAL SCENARIOS

The sheer scale of the conflict means that all of the scenarios from the *Bolt Action* rulebook are appropriate for *Barbarossa*. There were frequent Soviet counter-attacks both large and small throughout the campaign so the Red Army player needn’t always be acting as the defender.

- Scenario 1: Envelopment
- Scenario 2: Maximum Attrition
- Scenario 3: Point Defence
- Scenario 4: Hold Until Relieved
- Scenario 5: Top Secret
- Scenario 6: Demolition

In addition, the following scenarios from this book can also be used, and are particularly appropriate for the northern front. Generally the Red Army player will be taking on the role of the Finns in these scenarios, but once again *Barbarossa* is so big that it would be a mistake to rule anything out.

- Scenario 3: Assault on the Mannerheim Line on [page 26](#) (with or without snow and ice)
- Scenario 4: Pocketed on [page 28](#) (likewise with or without snow and ice)

BARBAROSSA SPECIAL SCENARIOS

The following scenarios, ‘Bridgehead’ and ‘Hedgehog’ are representative of the sort of vital small unit actions that were commonplace in Operation *Barbarossa* and Operation *Typhoon*.

TERRAIN

Continental Russia encompasses a huge swathe of territory so just about any sort of terrain is appropriate for games set there, from the sunflower and wheat fields of the Ukraine in the south, to the vast marshes of Pripyet in the centre to the thick forests of Karelia in the north. Russian

villages of the period tended to be built of wood rather than brick, concrete or stone, although public buildings like schoolhouses and railway stations, were typically built of more durable materials as were the collective farms and factories hurriedly constructed as part of Stalin's five-year modernisation plan in the 30s. A distinctive onion-domed Eastern Orthodox church was a feature of many villages, but by no means all of them. In general, German commentators remarked on the fact that all Russian villages tended to be 'linear' in arrangement, i.e. a row of houses and other buildings extending for a kilometre or more on either side of what passed as a road in the area.

AN UNEQUAL STRUGGLE

In contrast to the images we see of hordes of Red Army troops assailing small bands of Germans later in the war, in 1941 the reverse was often true. Operation *Barbarossa* featured many battles where the Germans had overwhelming local superiority, just as Soviet counterattacks could see lone German units facing off against many times their own number until help arrived.

Such asymmetric battles, in terms of numbers and/or points values, are very much a feature of the Eastern Front and players are strongly encouraged to experiment with them. The following ideas are suggested as ways of balancing out these kinds of games to make sure both players have fun!

INCREASE VICTORY POINTS

The outnumbered player earns double or triple victory points from the scenario in line with how outnumbered they are. For example if you play with **half** the points of the opponent in a maximum attrition scenario, then **double** all the points you score for destroyed enemy units.

TURN LIMITS

Reduce the turn limit on the scenario being played so the more numerous player is really working against the clock with their forces. If the outnumbered player can prevent their opponent achieving victory within the allotted time it's a win for them. Once again, double the amount of points – half the number of turns, and so on and so forth...



Panzer IV Ausf. D

LIMITED VISIBILITY

Use the limited visibility Scenario Special Rules found on [page 104](#) of this book. Limited visibility is a great leveller against a numerically superior foe.

COMMAND ISSUES

Allow the more numerous player to use multiple reinforced platoons, but each platoon's units are represented by different coloured dice in the orders cup. When a dice is drawn it can only be used to give orders to the appropriate platoon. This one is particularly appropriate for Soviet forces, as their command often broke down in combat and their attacks were frequently uncoordinated.

SUPPLY ISSUES

Roll a die for each outnumbering unit at the beginning of the game and make a note of the result. The unit may only shoot and/or move this many times during the game. Or, if you prefer less book-keeping, simply roll a die every time a unit shoots – on a 1 it has run out of ammunition and cannot shoot for the rest of the game. And/or roll a die every time a vehicle moves – on a 1 it has run out of fuel and cannot move for the rest of the game.

PICK YOUR GROUND

Allow the outnumbered player to adjust the terrain how they wish to create the optimum environment for their outnumbered forces. Add in a bunker or two, some sections of barbed wire and one or two minefields.

***BARBAROSSA* THEATRE SELECTORS**

Theatre Selectors for Operation *Barbarossa* can be found in the *Armies of Germany*, *Armies of Italy and the Axis* and the *Armies of the Soviet Union* books. The additional Soviet units already shown in the Khalkyn Gol and Winter War sections may be included in their appropriate categories for Operation *Barbarossa* as desired.

SCENARIO 5: BRIDGEHEAD

During the rapid advance of Axis forces in the summer of 1941 a series of rivers formed formidable natural obstacles to be overcome. One of the primary objectives for the Panzers lunging deep into Soviet territory was to seize river crossings and hold a bridgehead on both banks until the slower-moving infantry forces could catch up. The holding force could find themselves temporarily cut off and under attack from all sides as the Red Army attempted to re-take the crossing point, usually in a frantic effort to break out of encirclement. This scenario recreates one such engagement.

FORCES

This scenario is designed to be played with equal points values on both sides. Axis and Red Army reinforced platoons are chosen from the appropriate *Barbarossa* Theatre Selectors with the following restrictions:

- The Axis platoon must include its full allocation of vehicles including transport and towing vehicles. It may not include artillery units except for light anti-aircraft guns, light anti-tank guns and light howitzers.
- The Red Army platoon must include at least one NKVD squad and a Commissar to act as bridge guards.



Cross of Iron – a German armoured column crosses an iron bridge.

SET-UP

This scenario is played across the width of a six by four feet gaming surface. The primary feature is a river stretching from one short table edge to the opposite short table edge. The river must be at least 6" wide, and roughly bisect the table into two equal halves although it can meander as much or a little as desired. This river counts as deep water and may not be forded or otherwise crossed by any unit during the game except at the river crossing.

Place a river crossing at the centre of the table, this can be a fording point or a bridge if one is available. If possible, a road should be included that connects the long (east and west) table edges to the river crossing.

The rest of the table should be covered by a medium density of other types of terrain representing the area close to the river. Woodland, crop fields and buildings are all appropriate 'other' terrain to use; hills and even cliffs may be used to help define the river's course. Marshy ground is often found close to a river although care must be taken not to impede unit movement too much by making half of the table into a swamp, a few patches here and there is sufficient.

DEPLOYMENT

The Red Army player must deploy first. Half of their force (rounding down) is deployed within

12" of the river crossing and more than 12" from the edge of the table. The Red Army units deployed must include the NKVD squad and the Commissar. These units may be Dug In at the option of the Red Army player (See Scenario Special Rules on [page 102](#) of this book), but may not use hidden set-up. Units that are not set-up to start with are left in reserve (see Reserves page 119 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook).

The Axis player's units are not set-up on the table at the start of the game. The Axis player must nominate up to half of their force (rounding up) to form the first wave. Any units included in the first wave must either be vehicles, units transported/towed by vehicles, cavalry or motorcycle squads. All other Axis units are left in reserve.

SPECIAL RULES

RESERVES

Both sides have reserves in this battle but their deployment varies slightly from the standard rules. Axis reserves enter play from the west long table edge and may not outflank. All Red Army reserves automatically count as outflanking (i.e. they only start to arrive on turn 3), but they may enter play from the north, south and east table edges and they are not restricted to deploying just within 24" of the east table edge.

OBJECTIVE

The Axis player must capture the river crossing and hold it. The Red Army player must try to stop him and must retake the crossing at all costs if it is lost.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During turn 1, the Axis player must move their entire first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on the 'west' long table edge, and must be given either a *run* or *advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of the first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 10, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2 or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5 or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game the winner is the player in control of the river crossing. To capture the crossing there must one of your units within 6" of the centre of the crossing at the end of the final turn, and there must be no enemy units within 6" of it. Any other result is a draw.



Heer covered wagon

SCENARIO 6: HEDGEHOG

In December 1941, exhausted Heer units retreating from Moscow dug in and held at Russian villages where they could find some shelter from the deadly cold and constant Soviet harassment. As more survivors arrived, these villages became strongpoints, 'hedgehogs' as they became known, in a patchwork defence line. The hedgehogs had to mount an all-round defence against Red Army attacks that could come from any direction, day or night.

FORCES

This scenario is designed to be played with equal points values on both sides. Axis and Red Army reinforced platoons are chosen from the appropriate Barbarossa Theatre Selectors with the following restrictions:

- The Red Army force may include a maximum of one artillery piece (this is in addition to any mortars). Also, due to the poor road conditions, no wheeled vehicles may be chosen.
- The Axis force may not include artillery units except for light antiaircraft guns, light anti-tank guns and light howitzers.

SET-UP

This scenario is played on a six by four feet gaming surface. A 6"-wide road stretches from the east long table edge to the west long table edge, roughly bisecting the table into two equal halves. A second road, running north-south, may be included if desired, forming a crossroad at the middle of the table. The roads, being not much more than hard-packed snow, simply counts as open ground in this scenario and not as the rulebook definition of 'road'.

A village follows the road running east-west, anywhere up to a dozen buildings can be used if they are available. If you aren't blessed with as many buildings in your available terrain collection then ruins can be substituted instead. Ideally no more than one or two buildings should be brick or stone built, the rest wooden. Place the buildings 3-6" apart on either or both sides of the road to create a long, thin village. However big the village gets, ensure that no buildings are within 12" of the table edges.

The rest of the table should be covered by a very high density of thick wooded and broken terrain, representing the snow-covered forest and rough going surrounding the village. All of the area outside the road counts as deep snow so it is rough ground for movement purposes.

DEPLOYMENT

The Axis player must deploy first. At least half of their force (rounding up) is deployed inside or within 6" of the village buildings. The entire Axis force may be deployed in the village if desired, but be careful of overcrowding as being deployed outside buildings is detrimental to a unit's health, as we'll see. Any Axis units not deployed at the start of the game are in reserve (see reserves page 119 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook).

The Red Army player may then deploy their units anywhere on the table that is more than 18"

from the village buildings.

SPECIAL RULES

FROSTBITE

All Axis units (i.e. including reserves) are subject to the rules for frostbite (See Scenario Special Rules on [page 101](#) of this book). Axis units on the tabletop that are not deployed inside a building at the start of the game must roll twice for frostbite.

OBJECTIVE

The Red Army player must try to destroy the Axis force, and/or the village buildings they are sheltering inside. The Axis player must try to stop him and inflict maximum damage in the process.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 8, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2 or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5 or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows.

The Red Army player scores 2 victory points for every enemy unit destroyed and 1 victory point for every building destroyed or set on fire (see pages 103–104 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook)

The Axis player scores 2 victory points for every enemy unit destroyed.

If one side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

ADDITIONAL UNITS

GERMAN UNITS

GOLIATH DEMOLITION TEAM (ANTI-TANK TEAM)

The Goliath was used by the German engineer units in a variety of roles. It was essentially a radio-controlled tracked bomb, carrying a big charge of high explosives direct to where it was needed – commonly a pillbox, minefield or disabled enemy tank. The controller steered the robot tank by using a wire connected to a simple control box. The Goliath was fairly successful and used on many fronts, and though slow and vulnerable to small arms fire would be a frightening sight as it rumbled towards you with its deadly payload!

Cost: 60pts (Regular), 78pts (Veteran)

Team: 3 (NCO and 2 men)

Weapons: Each man has a rifle and anti-tank grenades

Options:

- The NCO may have a submachine gun instead of a rifle for +3pts

Special Rules:

- Tank hunters
- Remote-operated mine: The Goliath model itself is just a marker, and it is treated as a one-shot weapon with a range of 18". Goliaths can only target stationary targets, either a stationary vehicle (i.e. any vehicle that is not sporting an order dice showing a Run or Advance order) or a unit inside a building. Goliaths are fired as normal, except that instead of rolling to hit, roll one die: **1–4** - the Goliath breaks down, or is damaged or prematurely detonated by enemy fire. The Goliath model is removed and has no effect. Note that if a Recce vehicle reacts to the Goliath attack by moving, the mine automatically scores a result of 1–4. **5–6** - the Goliath reaches the target and is detonated. If the target is a vehicle, it suffers a hit with a Pen of +7 (no Pen modifiers apply). If the target is a unit inside a building, the unit is hit by the equivalent of a heavy howitzer – remember that if this explosion scores 12 or more hits, it brings down the entire building, killing everyone inside!

SELECTORS

The Goliath counts as an anti-tank team for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. Alternatively, 0–1 Goliath teams can be added to forces from the following theatre selectors of the *Armies of Germany* book: Operation *Blue*; Stalingrad, Death on the Volga; Rommel's Defeat; Operation *Citadel*; Anti-Partisan Security Patrol; Defence of the East; Defence of Italy; Atlantic Wall Resistance Nest; Normandy; Operation *Watch on the Rhine*; Holding the West Wall; Operation *Spring Awakening*; Last Levy.



First in, last out! A German assault engineer cuts a path.

STURMPIONIERS – ASSAULT ENGINEERS SQ UAD

Germany's assault engineers were skilled at building all manner of fortifications, communications lines, tank traps and minefields. In addition to building useful structures, they were adept at the destruction of similar enemy positions, blowing railway lines and making roads unsafe for the enemy to travel along. As the German quest for global superiority stalled and finally crashed down around them, the assault engineers were tasked with the vital job of slowing the Allied advance, be it by booby trap, minefield, blown bridges, or taking the fight directly to the enemy. Often overlooked in favour of the dashing Panzers or elite Waffen-SS troops, the *pioniere* were the unsung heroes of the German military machine.

Cost: Veteran infantry 65pts.

Composition: 1 NCO and 4 men

Weapons: Rifles

Options:

- Add up to 5 additional men with rifles at +13pts each.
- The NCO and up to 6 men can have submachine guns instead of rifles for +3pts each
- Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20pts – another man becomes the loader

- Up to 1 man can have a flamethrower instead of a rifle for +20pts – another man becomes the assistant
- Up to 1 man can have a sturmpistole instead of a rifle for +5pts
- Up to 1 man can have a GrB-39 grenade launcher instead of a rifle for +30pts – another man becomes the loader
- Up to 4 men can have a Panzerfaust in addition to other weapons for +5pts each
- The squad can be given anti-tank grenades for +2pts per man

Special Rules:

- Tank hunters (if anti-tank grenades taken)
- Sturmpistole. This weapon is treated like a Panzerfaust, except that it only has a range of 6" and a Pen value of +3. It can however, be fired normally once a turn and not just once per game
- GrB-39 grenade launcher. Every time the model fires this weapon, you can choose either of the two profiles below:

Type	Range	Shots	Pen	Special Rules
Anti-personnel	6–24"	1	HE	Team, Indirect Fire, HE (D2)
Anti-tank	24"	1	+3	Team, Shaped Charge

SELECTORS

The Sturmpioniere count as an infantry squad for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. Alternatively, 0–1 Sturmpioniere squad can be added to platoons from all selectors in the *Armies of Germany* book: Defence of the East; Defence of Italy; Normandy; Operation *Watch on the Rhine*; Holding the West Wall; Operation *Spring Awakening*; Last Levy.

BRANDENBURGERS – GERMAN SPECIAL FORCES SQUAD

Like the Allies, Germany too had units of special forces trained in unconventional warfare – specializing in infiltration, covert operations, commando raids, disrupting small-unit missions deep behind enemy lines. The training facility for these men was in the Brandenburg area and this gave the unit its name. The Brandenburgers were recruited amongst men of many ethnic background and nationalities, as an important requisite for their missions was to be fluent in different languages. The unit grew in size from that of a battalion to a regiment and then a division, and its men were used in all roles on every front where Germany was engaged. Many times they took part in the highly specialized small-unit missions they were trained for, but often they ended up being deployed as elite combat troops when the need arose.

On the Eastern Front they were active from the very start of the war, where they seized vital bridges, crossroads and are key tactical objectives during the invasion of Poland and later during Operation *Barbarossa*. In general, they embarked in larger scale operations than on the Western Front. Their long-range penetration missions lasted considerably longer and went far further into Soviet territory. Their achievements were also more spectacular – perhaps the most outstanding one was the infiltration operation led by Baron Adrian von Fölkersam. Disguised as officers and troops of the dreaded NKVD, they reached the oilfields of Maikop. On their way there, they ran

into a group of Soviet deserters and, remaining in character, they forced these deserters to go back and re-join the fight for the motherland – the perfect tactic to pass as actual NKVD. In Maikop, von Fölkersam gathered information and even managed to speak with the Soviet officer in charge of the defences, from which he was given a full tour of the defensive positions! When the German forces were approaching the oilfields, the Brandenburgers created havoc among the defenders and von Fölkersam managed to convince them that they had been ordered to retreat, allowing the advancing Wehrmacht to seize the important objective intact.

This entry can also be used to represent the men of other German special forces active during World War II, like the SS equivalent of the Brandenburgers – the SS Jagdverband.

Cost: Veteran infantry 95pts

Composition: 1 NCO and 4 men

Weapons: Pistol and rifle

Options:

- Add up to 5 additional men with pistol and rifle for +19pts each
- Any man can replace his rifle with a submachine gun for +2pts, or an assault rifle for +4pts
- Up to two men may have a light machine gun for +20pts. For each LMG, another man becomes the loader
- The squad can be given anti-tank grenades for +2pts per man
- Up to 3 men can have a Panzerfaust in addition to other weapons for +5pts each

Special Rules:

- Elite of the elite! To represent their special training and motivation, Brandenburg units have the Fanatics special rule
- Behind enemy lines. When Outflanking as described on page 119 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook, Brandenburg units ignore the -1 modifier to the Order test for coming onto the table
- Sabotage! Enemy units in Reserve suffer an additional -1 modifier on the test to come on to the table. In addition, outflanking enemy units must take another test when they become available (still with an additional -1 modifier), and if they fail it, they can only be deployed up to 12" from their table edge along the chosen short table edge
- Paranoia. When the enemy rolls on the Fubar chart, they suffer a -2 modifier to the roll, such is the paranoia induced in the enemy by the Brandenburgers' irregular activities
- Tank hunters (if anti-tank grenades taken)

SELECTORS

The Brandenburgers count as an infantry squad for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. Alternatively, 0-1 Brandenburg squad can be added to platoons from all selectors in the *Armies of Germany* book except for the Atlantic Wall Resistance Nest selector.

BRANDENBURGERS' UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE TACTICS

With your opponent's approval, you can make use of the rules below, which represent some

of the unconventional tactics in the Brandenburgers' arsenal. For each unit of Brandenburgers you include in your army, you can pick one of the following rules:

Enemy uniforms: instead of picking the unit from the Brandenburgers entry, pick it from any Allied Veteran unit in a book relevant to the scenario played (American Veteran squad in the Battle of the Bulge, for example), to represent the Brandenburgers wearing enemy uniforms. Pay the points as normal – the unit has the same rules as the enemy unit, but it does not get the enemy army-level special rules, retaining the German ones instead. The enemy cannot shoot or assault the Brandenburgers until they reveal themselves by opening fire, after which they can be targeted as normal. If an enemy unit comes to within 6" of the Brandenburgers, it can take a Morale check, and if it passes it, the Brandenburgers are revealed and can be targeted as normal from now on, just as if they had opened fire.

Disguised Tanks: a German vehicle in your force can be disguised as Allied. This means that when an enemy air strike is called in, the vehicle counts as an enemy vehicle rather than a German one (so it can only be attacked by the enemy aeroplane if the air strike goes wrong and the enemy rolls a one!). In addition, any enemy unit wishing to target the disguised vehicle from more than 12" away must first take a Morale check. If the test is failed, the enemy must choose a different target instead. Once a unit recognizes the disguised tank as German, by either passing the test or being within 12" of the disguised tank, the tank can be targeted as normal by all enemy ground forces (but the air strike advantage remains in effect!).

Captured vehicles: instead of picking the unit from the Brandenburgers entry, pick any Allied vehicle from a book relevant to the scenario played (a jeep or an M10 tank destroyer in the Battle of the Bulge, for example), to represent the Brandenburgers using a captured enemy vehicle. Pay the points as normal, but note that the vehicle cannot be taken as Veteran. The vehicle has the same rules as the enemy vehicle, but it does not get the enemy army-level special rules, retaining the German ones instead. The enemy cannot shoot or assault the vehicle until it reveals itself by opening fire, after which it can be targeted as normal. If an enemy unit comes to within 1" of the vehicle, it can take a Morale check (with an additional -1 modifier), and if it passes it, the vehicle is revealed and can be targeted as normal from now on, just as if it had opened fire.

LEGENDS OF THE OSTFRONT

OTTO SKORZENY

Otto Skorzeny began his career as a commissioned officer in the Waffen-SS and saw action in Holland, France, the Balkans and the Eastern Front, where he was wounded. During his recuperation period, he intensively studied unconventional warfare methods and became a vociferous supporter of special force actions behind enemy lines. He was put in charge of training and developing such units, which he also personally led in several operations on all fronts, earning many decorations like the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves. The most famous of his exploits are arguably the airborne liberation of deposed fascist

dictator Benito Mussolini from his mountain prison, and the special English-speaking units that were deployed in US uniform during the Battle of the Bulge. After the war, he remained in character by escaping from the military prison that was holding him and working with Nazi underground movements for years, finally switching to a more 'normal' career training international mercenaries until the 1970s, when he died of cancer at age 67.



Cost: 195pts (Veteran)

Team: 1 officer and up to 2 other men

Weapons: Submachine gun, pistol or rifle/carbine as depicted on the model

Options:

- Skorzeny may be accompanied by up to 2 men at a cost of +13pts per man

Special Rules:

- The most dangerous man in Europe: Skorzeny's Morale bonus is +4 and the range of his ability is 12"
- Long Jumper: if Skorzeny is in your force, half of your Brandenburgers (or any other German special forces units), rounding up, can deploy by 'Long Jump' unconventional techniques. These units are left in Reserve and must Outflank. However, when they become available, they can enter the battlefield from either the declared short edge or any point along the enemy's table edge.



Disguised Brandenburgers en route to the Maikop Oilfields, 1942, by Mark Stacey © Osprey Publishing Ltd. Taken from Raid 47: Behind Soviet Lines.

The German Wehrmacht captured many French tanks with the capitulation of the French army in 1940. Early in 1941 an order was made to convert the Char B1 bis into a flamethrowing tank – the aim to have them ready to take part in Operation *Barbarossa* on the Russian Front. Replacing the original hull-mounted 75mm gun with a flamethrower on a ball mount and the addition of a large fuel tank at the rear of the hull gave the Wehrmacht the vehicle they needed. Overall around 60 Char B1 bis tanks were converted into the Flammpanzer – these flamethrowing tanks saw action in Russia, the Balkans, Normandy and during Operation *Market Garden*.

Cost: 204pts (Inexperienced), 255pts (Regular), 306pts (Veteran)

Weapons: 1 turret-mounted medium anti-tank gun with coaxial MMG, 1 forward-facing hull mounted flamethrower.

Damage Value: 9+ (medium tank)

Special Rules:

- Slow
- One-man turret: Combining the roles of commander, gunner and loader into together and squeezing the man responsible into a tiny one-man turret means it's hard to do different things at once! To represent this it is always necessary to make an order test when issuing an Advance order, even if the tank is not pinned.
- Armoured all round: The Char B1 was almost as heavily armoured at the sides and rear as at the front – so no modifiers apply for penetration when shooting at the sides, rear or from above. All shots count the full armour value.
- Flammpanzer: Flamethrowing vehicles are more likely to be destroyed by damage, as explained on page 51 of the rulebook

SELECTORS

The Flammpanzer B2(f) is a Tank for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. It is also a Tank for the following theatre selectors of the *Armies of Germany* book: Operation *Barbarossa*; Operation *Blue*; Stalingrad, Death on the Volga; Operation *Citadel*; Anti-partisan Security Patrol; Defence of the East; Defence of Italy; Atlantic Wall Resistance Nest; Normandy; Watch on the Rhine; Holding the West Wall; Operation *Spring Awakening*; Last Levy.

3.7CM PAK 35/36 FAHRGESTELLBREN (E)

The Germans captured numerous examples of the British Universal or 'Bren' carrier in Norway and at Dunkirk. As well as pressing them into service as tracked light towing vehicles and ammunition carriers, a number of captured Brens were converted to mount a 3.7cm PaK 35/36 anti-tank gun in the open fighting compartment to serve as a light tank hunter. Although these saw service in *Barbarossa*, it was found that the little 3.7cm anti-tank was entirely ineffective against modern Soviet tanks like the T-34 and the KV-1. The survivors were eventually withdrawn to fight in Italy and Western Europe instead. Later in the war, an airfield defence vehicle was created by mounting a Flak 38 2cm automatic cannon on the back of a Bren.

Cost: 84pts (Inexperienced), 105pts (Regular), 126pts (Veteran)

Weapons: 1 forward-facing, hull-mounted light anti-tank gun, 1 forward-facing hull mounted LMG

Damage Value: 7+ (armoured carrier)

Options:

- Convert to Fahrgestell Bren 731 (e): replace the light anti-tank gun with a platform-mounted light automatic cannon capable of all-round fire and gain the Flak special rule for -15pts

Special Rules:

- Open topped
- Turn on the spot: the universal carrier can turn on the spot enabling it to execute a full speed run rate 'reverse' finishing the move facing in direction of travel

SELECTORS

The Fahrgestell Bren (e) is a Tank Destroyer for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. It is also Tank Destroyer for all of the Theatre Selectors of the *Armies of Germany* book except for The September Campaign, The Battle of France and Operation *Mercury*, where they cannot be used.

The Fahrgestell Bren 731 (e) is an Anti-aircraft vehicle for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. It is also Anti-aircraft vehicle for all of the Theatre Selectors of the *Armies of Germany* book after Operation *Citadel*.

OPEL BLITZ WITH FLAK 38

Opel Blitz trucks could be fitted with a single 20mm Flak 38 gun on the back, forming a relatively inexpensive mobile anti-aircraft platform.

Cost: 40pts (Inexperienced), 50pts (Regular), 60pts (Veteran)

Weapons: 1 platform-mounted light automatic cannon with 360-degree arc of fire

Damage Value: 6+ (soft-skin)

Special Rules:

- Flak

SELECTORS

The Opel Blitz with Flak 38 is an Anti-aircraft vehicle for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. It is also an Anti-aircraft vehicle for all of the Theatre Selectors of the *Armies of Germany* book (except for Operation *Mercury*, where they cannot be used).

MOTORCYCLE WITH MACHINE-GUN SIDECAR (BMW R75, ZÜNDAPP KS 750 ETC.)

This type of very mobile and handy infantry support vehicle was in use throughout the conflict and in all theatres, including Russia and North Africa, where the protruding cylinders of the flat-twin engine and shaft drives performed very well. The BMW was used by various forces including the Wehrmacht, Luftwaffe (and Fallschirmjäger) and Waffen-SS. Numbers

manufactured: around 40,000 of all types.

Cost: 32pts (Inexperienced), 40pts (Regular), 48pts (Veteran)

Weapons: 1 forward-facing MMG covering the front arc

Damage Value: 6+ (soft-skin)

Special Rules:

- Recce
- Turn on the spot: These motorbikes are so small and agile that they can turn on the spot enabling them to execute a full speed run rate 'reverse', finishing the move facing in the direction of travel.

SELECTORS

These motorcycles count as an Armoured Car for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. They also count as Armoured Cars/Recce Vehicles for all of the Theatre Selectors of the *Armies of Germany* book (including Operation Mercury)



German infantry hunting T-34s, by Peter Dennis © Osprey Publishing Ltd. Taken from Campaign 148: Barbarossa 1941 (2).

ARTILLERIE SCHLEPPER VA 601 (B)

As the German war machine stormed across Europe, the forces of the Third Reich made good use of captured equipment and vehicles. One such acquisition from the fall of Belgium is the Vickers Utility tractor, which was pressed into German service as the Artillerie Schlepper VA 601 (b). Principal service: 1940–45. Numbers: Around 50 tractors were converted from captured Belgian vehicles.

Cost: 46pts (Inexperienced), 57pts (Regular), 68pts (Veteran)

Weapons: none

Damage Value: 7+ (armoured carrier)

Transport: Up to 6 men

Tow: Light, medium or heavy anti-tank gun, light or medium howitzer, light or heavy anti-aircraft gun

Special Rules:

- Open topped

SELECTORS

The Artillerie Schlepper VA 601 (b) is a Tow for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. It also is a Tow for all of the Theatre Selectors of the *Armies of Germany* book (except for The September Campaign and Operation *Mercury*, where they cannot be used).



Assault on the Red October steel plant, by Peter Dennis © Osprey Publishing Ltd. Taken from Campaign 184: Stalingrad 1942.

PRELUDE

The wide-ranging Soviet counter-offensives of winter 1941–42 initially enjoyed great success, but they failed to drive out the ‘fascist invaders’. The Red Army was still inexperienced in conducting offensive operations, and it showed. Their tanks, ski-troops and cavalry could overcome the difficult winter conditions and remain mobile, but their supplies still had to come from somewhere, and raiding Heer depots could only carry them so far. The great mass of infantry and artillery that made up the bulk of the Red Army were little better off than the Axis units facing them when it came to mobility and they were soon just as desperately short on supplies.



Soviet forces ambush a German patrol in the foothills of the Caucasus, by Peter Dennis © Osprey Publishing Ltd. Taken from Campaign 184: Stalingrad 1942.

Stalin insisted on the counter-offensives continuing when they no longer had any chance of success and repeatedly threw more troops into areas where defeat was certain. Despite initial signs of collapse, the Heer proved to be very far from being defeated. Attempts to lift the siege of Leningrad and eliminate the Rzhev pocket near Moscow were costly disasters on a par with the summer fighting of 1941. By the time the spring rains returned the battlefields to *Raputista* conditions in March, both sides had been bled white by the winter fighting. They staggered back from the conflict to rest and refit for a while with an almost palpable sense of relief, albeit mixed with dread at what was to come. The prospect of another summer campaign was already looming on the horizon.



Stalin believed that the next offensive would be aimed straight at Moscow and kept the reserves that had been painstakingly accumulated close at hand to repel it. Several spoiling attacks were planned with available Red Army forces in the south to keep the Axis off-balance and tie up their forces there. The most important of these would be aimed at liberating the great city of Kharkov with fresh Red Army forces jumping off from a salient into German lines south of the city that had been captured in the spring fighting. Simultaneously Hitler was ordering the relatively intact forces of Army Group South to make plans for a fresh offensive, '*Case Blue*' (*Fall Blau*), to push through to the Caucasus region and seize its vast oilfields to fuel the Axis war effort. A secondary objective would be to reach the city of Stalingrad and cut river traffic moving on the Volga.

The second battle of Kharkov began on 12 May 1942. It involved much of the Red Army's available strength in armour and proved to be another disaster for the Soviet Union. The first three days of the offensive went passably well, particularly in the south where Romanian, Hungarian and Italian units found themselves in the Red Army's crosshairs. However confusion, muddling and stubborn German defences limited the speed of advance. Casualties were high on both sides, but the desired breakthrough was not achieved by the time powerful Luftwaffe air support arrived on the scene. German bombers scattered Red Army reserves and smashed supply convoys as well as supporting their frontlines troops with deadly effect.

On the 17 May the 1st Panzer Division began a major counterattack to cut off the Soviet spearheads. A week later the encirclement was complete and a week after that the Red Army was counting the cost of another quarter of a million casualties at Kharkov. Little had they known it, but the Soviet offensive had run straight between two arms of a pincer being created to nip off the salient near Kharkov as a pre-cursor to beginning *Case Blue*. Thanks to Stalin's bungling, Axis casualties in the fighting were less than 10% of those suffered by the Soviets.

THE RACE ACROSS THE STEPPES

The German offensive got underway on 28 June with a thrust towards the city of Voronezh. With their reserves and armour burned up in the Kharkov battles, the Red Army could do little but retreat, often headlong, to avoid falling into encirclements again. The Panzer columns found themselves racing across the parching steppes and pushing against an open door most of the time. Wherever defences stiffened, a formidable number of Luftwaffe bombers were on hand to swiftly crush it before the Panzers had even arrived. The blazing summer heat and choking dust were the worst enemies for the advancing Axis forces as they lunged onward towards Asia.

By 5 July, the Panzers had reached the Don river near Voronezh and a battle began for control of that city. Stalin and Stavka – the Soviet high command – believed there was danger of the Germans swinging north from Voronezh to threaten Moscow, so Soviet reinforcements were rushed to the area to contest it, including the 5th Tank Army which counterattacked fiercely on 6 July before being hurled back to its start line ten days later with half of its tanks destroyed.

Within a few days it was apparent that the battle of Voronezh was being won by the Axis, but it was not happening fast enough for Hitler's timetable. On 9 July Hitler signed Führer Directive 45 and made the fateful decision to divide Army Group South into two: Army Group A and Army Group B. Army Group A would continue the drive to capture the vital oilfields in the Caucasus while Army Group B mopped up at Voronezh and then struck for Stalingrad. Von Bock, the commander of Army Group South quarrelled with the Führer over this dangerous dispersion of his fighting power and he was summarily dismissed.

Initially Army Group A was considerably the stronger of the two groups, as befit its task of capturing of the primary objective of the oilfields around Baku. It struck south and east, pushing back the pliant Red Army lines with little trouble, ably assisted by swarms of Luftwaffe bombers circling overhead like carrion birds. Army Group B made slower progress but by 11 July both groups were finding themselves delayed more by logistical problems than enemy action. By now both Army Groups were operating hundreds of kilometres from their supply bases and the splitting of their forces had strained available transport resources to their limit.

The Luftwaffe pitched in by flying hundreds of tons of supplies to stranded units as a temporary solution and, as Army Group A seized the Black Sea ports, they were also supplied by convoys from Romania and the Crimean Peninsula. But even with these emergency measures, fuel gauges constantly trembled near zero and the advance slowed when Soviet resistance stiffened as the fighting moved into the Caucasus Mountains. Army Group A ultimately failed in its objective and ground to a halt short of the oilfields Hitler had wanted. Army Group A had been defeated primarily by the sheer distance they had to travel, but their strength and more importantly their air support was siphoned away to the battle now raging at Stalingrad on the Volga.

THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD

The leading elements of Army Group B reached the northern suburbs of Stalingrad on 23 August, but fierce fighting outside the city prevented its direct assault until the 12th of September. In the intervening time the Luftwaffe busied itself bombing much of Stalingrad into ruins, especially the southern suburbs which were mostly wooden-built houses and thus highly vulnerable to fire-bombing. River traffic was also attacked and dozens of ships were sunk.

When it came, the assault was undertaken by the core component of Army Group B, the Sixth Army under *General der Panzertruppen* Friedrich Paulus. Sixth Army was a massive, well-equipped and veteran Heer formation with a total strength of over 300,000 men. The only non-German component of it was a Croatian Infantry regiment attached to the 100th Jäger Division. Italian, Hungarian and Romanian troops were relegated to holding the flanks of the huge salient created by Sixth Army's advance. By this time the gap between Army Group A and Army group B had widened into a yawning gulf patrolled by a handful of armoured units.



Stalingrad itself was a long, narrow city hugging the west side of the Volga for a stretch of approximately 24km, thus necessitating an attack on a wide front. On 12 September three divisions went in with heavy Panzer, Luftwaffe and artillery support; one division heading for the Mamayev Kurgan, a prominent Tartar burial mound to the west of the city centre, a second division moving to secure the central railway station and a third driving to the Volga landing stages to cut off any further Soviet reinforcement of the city from the east bank.

The Germans initially made rapid progress into the ruined city, seizing the railway station and

Mamayev Kurgan from the demoralised defenders – a mixture of civilian militias, NKVD troops and Red Army soldiers that had been pushed back into the city over the preceding days. The German leading platoons got with machinegun range of the Volga landing stages and brought them under fire before nightfall. However things were rapidly becoming unstuck for the Germans. That night Red Army reinforcements in the shape of the 13th Guards Rifle Division struggled across the fire-swept Volga and counterattacked with suicidal bravery. They recaptured the lost ground in vicious hand-to-hand combats in the railway yards and on the slopes of Mamayev Kurgan. Near the landing stages the leading German platoons were cut off by Red Army troops infiltrating back into the city blocks that had been ‘secured’ during the day.

LEGENDS OF THE OSTFRONT

VASILY ZAITZEV – LEGENDARY SNIPER

‘For us there was no land beyond the Volga.’

Hero of the Soviet Union Vasily Zaitzev first distinguished himself during the battle of Stalingrad as a superb sniper. He killed 225 Axis officers and men over a five-week period of the battle, including 11 enemy snipers. Between October 1942 and January 1943 it's been estimated he scored as many as 400 kills, although more conservative estimates place the figure at around 300. All this was achieved despite taking the time to train other Red Army men and women in specialist sniping techniques that are still in use to this day.



Zaitsev was born on 23 March 1915 to an ethnic Russian family living in Yelininskoye in the Chelyabinsk region of the Ural Mountains. He showed great aptitude for hunting while growing up and brought home his first trophy at the age of 12 – a wolf, brought down with Zaitsev's single-shot Berden rifle. This hefty predecessor to the Mosin-Nagant Zaitsev would use at Stalingrad was so big and heavy that, at age 12, the small-framed Zaitsev could barely carry it on his back. Zaitsev said later that his successes in sniping all came from the patience he had learned in stalking and concealing himself until he could take animals down with a single shot. Zaitsev was recruited in 1937 and he served as a clerk with the Soviet Far East

fleet stationed near Vladivostok, eventually reaching the rank of Chief Petty Officer. When the Soviet Union was invaded Zaitsev along with many of his comrades volunteered for frontline service and he entered the ranks of the Red Army as a Senior Warrant Officer. He arrived at Stalingrad on the eve of 22nd September 1942, crossing the Volga to join the 1047th Rifle Regiment of the 284th Siberian Rifle Division of the 62nd Army.

Even equipped with a standard Mosin-Nagant, Zaitsev quickly earned a reputation as a crack shot able to take down targets at over 800 meters. Medals and a scoped rifle quickly followed and from there Zaitsev's rise became meteoric. NKVD *politruks* ensured that Zaitsev's successes were well-publicised and his techniques were taught to others. In cellars beneath the Lazur chemical plant trainee snipers practised constantly and Zaitsev's hand-picked class of students proudly called themselves his '*zaichata*' (leverets – baby hares). The culture of 'sniperism' was increasingly promoted throughout the Red Army to the great discomfort of Axis soldiers that found themselves on the receiving end of it. The Zaichata alone are credited with over 6,000 kills in the Great Patriotic War. Zaitsev taught his students to conceal themselves carefully in the innumerable hiding places offered by the rubble of Stalingrad – high up in ruined buildings, inside culverts and water pipes, in basements and under rubble. He had his snipers operate in pairs, with one acting as a spotter, and schooled them to only shoot once before changing positions. A special tactic he developed called 'sixes' that deployed three pairs of snipers to cover the same general area from different angles is still in use by modern snipers.

In January 1943 Zaitsev was blinded by an exploding mortar bomb. His sight was restored under the care of world-renowned Ophthalmologist Professor *Vladimir Filatov* and Zaitsev was made a Hero of the Soviet Union on 22 February 1943. He returned in time to fight in the Ukraine, at Odessa, on the Dnepr and the Dniestr rivers and at Seelöwe Heights on the road to Berlin. He commanded a mortar platoon and was promoted the rank of Captain although he was hospitalised again on Victory Day, 9 May 1945. After the war Zaitsev settled in Kiev, studied at university and eventually became director of a textile factory. He died in 1991 at the age of 76 just ten days before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In 2006, in accordance with his final wishes, he was reburied with full military honours alongside his comrades at the Mamayev Kurgan monument in Volgograd as Stalingrad had been renamed. The monument bears his famous words 'For us there was no land beyond the Volga'. Vasily Zaitsev's awards include: Hero of the Soviet Union, Order of Lenin, Order of the Red Banner (twice), Order of the Patriotic War (First Class), Medal for the Defense of Stalingrad and the Medal for the Victory Over Germany.

Cost: 75 pts (Veteran)

Team: 2 – sniper and assistant

Weapons: 1 rifle

Special Rules:

- Team weapon
- Sniper
- Kill-shot: Zaitsev's uncanny ability means that any shot he takes against infantry, artillery

and soft skin vehicles will inflict damage on a roll of 2+ regardless of the target's experience level.

- Hide and sting: In accordance with his doctrine on the turn after using a *Fire* or *Ambush* order to shoot Zaitsev must be given a *Run* or *Advance* order and change positions on the battlefield. If he makes an *Advance* move and does not take a fire action then he can turn his dice to *Ambush* mode.

As the Sixth Army committed more reinforcements frontlines swayed back and forth across their objectives, fracturing and reforming into a flickering mosaic of firefights and assaults. Mamayev Kurgan was fought over again and again, the railway station changed hands fourteen times in six hours. Casualties were horrific, the 13th Guards Rifle Division lost 30% of its strength in 24 hours and out of its 10,000 men just 320 would survive the battle. The German infantry divisions suffered just as badly trying to drive out fanatical Soviet defenders from every basement and ruin.



It took five days to capture a giant concrete grain elevator that dominated the southern part of the city. Inside they found the bodies of just forty men that had resisted the onslaught of battalions of Germans with Panzer support. It was a sobering demonstration of what a handful of determined defenders could withstand. In central Stalingrad a four-storey apartment building dubbed 'Pavlov's House' would be occupied for months by a scratch Red Army platoon led by the eponymous Sergeant Javkov Pavlov. The advance on the landing stages became completely stalled as the frontline became the different floors in multilevel buildings, hallways, stairwells, corridors and even sewers. Opposing squads were often close enough to hear their enemies' breathing, deadly close quarter battles were fought with grenades, submachine guns and bayonets.

The Germans dubbed the fighting *Rattenkrieg* – 'Rat war' – and found it a gruelling experience. The Soviet commander, Lieutenant General Vasily Chuikov, had issued orders to his troops to hug

the enemy positions as closely as possible to stop them from gaining full benefit from their superior firepower. This meant that the German's superb coordination between aircraft, artillery and tanks counted for little in the tight confines of the ruined city, and that there was plenty of the kind of close quarter fighting and stubborn defence that suited the typical Red Army soldier very well indeed. Soviet artillery batteries supporting from the east bank refused to be silenced by Luftwaffe raids and each night a thin but steady trickle of supplies and reinforcements came across the Volga to keep the defenders of Stalingrad fighting.

In the weeks that followed, the guns on both sides thundered night and day, and Red Army soldiers arriving in the city had an average life expectancy of less than 24 hours.

After the failure of their initial attempt to rush the city the Germans reverted to making slow, but steady progress with a more methodical approach. In two weeks they had cleared the southern areas of Stalingrad and in early October they turned to attack the factory district in the north. This area was dominated by three huge manufacturing complexes – Red October, Barrikady and the Tractor Factory. The Red Army troops there were deeply entrenched in the ruins with dug-in tanks acting as strong points, minefields and camouflaged anti-tank guns. The Sixth Army attacked with two hundred Panzers and succeeded in breaking into the machine shops and assembly sheds, but their advance soon slowed to a crawl. Massive air and artillery bombardments were called down to plough the ruins into a crater-pocked wasteland and the defenders were pushed back, but they could not be shaken loose from their positions closest to the Volga. Some German squads got as far as the river bank but they were quickly cutoff and few made it back alive.

Paulus called for more reinforcements for Sixth Army to finish the job and take Stalingrad. After months of continuous combat replacements failed to keep pace with losses, his divisions were fast becoming skeletons with platoons the size of squads and regiments reduced to the size of battalions. Fresh units were pulled from Army Group A and sent north to help Sixth Army, a clear indication that Stalingrad had somehow mutated into the primary objective of *Case Blue*. In truth, both Hitler and Stalin had become obsessed by the battle on the Volga for the city that bore Stalin's name. German soldiers fighting there also clung to the idea that if they could just capture it Soviet power would be broken and the whole war would be over.

The Germans needed to believe in something, although the incessant fires and bombardments had prevented too much snow settling yet, winter had arrived and the temperatures were plummeting. The Axis allies holding the flanks of the giant salient behind the Sixth Army were making ever more frantic requests for additional support. As expected the Red Army was building up for a winter counteroffensive and the thinly-stretched Romanians, Italians and Hungarians believed they needed help to stop it. Their concerns were noted and ignored, victory in Stalingrad was too close to ease the pressure off now.

Specialists including five battalions of Sturmpanziers were flown in from Germany to finally purge the factory district and capture Stalingrad. In early November the Sixth Army went onto the offensive again for what it hoped would be the last time. The Soviet defences buckled beneath the fresh onslaught and they were driven out of the tractor factory, their forces split in two and now down to holding a 1,000-metre wide strip along the bank of the Volga. The Germans now owned 90% of the city and the Volga was filling up with grinding ice floes that would make resupply impossible until it froze solid. Once again an Axis victory looked certain.

At 6.30am on 19 November the northern horizon was lit by gun flashes of Soviet artillery barrages opening their offensive, Operation *Uranus*. The next day the same scene was repeated to the south. Terrified reports flooded in of massed tank and infantry attacks shattering the Axis forces on the open steppe. The two victorious Soviet armies raced west to meet at the bridge across the Don at Kalach, 60km from Stalingrad, on 23 November. It was a manoeuvre that was all too familiar to German commanders, the Sixth Army was trapped.

AFTERMATH

The battle of Stalingrad would rage on until February 1943 but it was the last spasms of a dying behemoth. Well over a quarter of a million German and Axis troops were caught inside the Red Army encirclement, the largest concentration of forces anywhere in the Third Reich. Hitler ordered them to stand their ground in the ruins of Stalingrad and reassured them that they would be resupplied by air as had happened at Demyansk in the previous winter. However the Luftwaffe was incapable of fulfilling that promise for so many in the depths of the Russian winter and against increasing resistance from the Soviet Air Force, and the Sixth Army began to starve both figuratively and literally.

Operation *Winter Storm* was begun in an attempt to break through the encirclement. *Winter Storm* enjoyed stunning success at first, but lost momentum in the face of Soviet resistance while still thirty miles from the city. Already weakened by its tenuous supplies and mindful of Hitler's orders to hold fast, the Sixth Army was unwilling and unable to break out and link up with their would-be saviours. Further Soviet offensives in the west forced the breakthrough force to withdraw and from then on the Sixth Army's fate was sealed.

One of the primary architects of the Sixth Army's doom was Georgi Zhukov, the Hero of Khalkyn Gol. By pinning the Germans in place while he built up overwhelming forces on the flanks he had engineered the same defeat that he had inflicted on the Japanese only on a vastly larger scale. A further series of Soviet offensives called Operation *Little Saturn* reclaimed all of the territory lost during *Case Blue* and forced Army Group A to beat a hasty retreat out of the Caucasus before it became trapped too.



German Heer SiG33 150mm howitzer

The high water mark of the Red Army's winter campaign was Operation *Star* which reached all the way to Kharkov and briefly retook the city before a finely-judged German counter-offensive hit the exhausted Soviet armies and hurled them back. The Red Army still lacked the skills and logistics to conduct extended deep operations, but Ivan was learning fast.

Due to the Soviet offensives over the next eleven weeks the Sixth Army found itself further and further from the front lines and beyond all hope of rescue. The beleaguered German forces withered away as much due to starvation, disease and desertions as Soviet bombs and shells. Much to Hitler's disgust, Paulus surrendered at the end of January and his surviving 91,000 men went with him in to captivity. Barely 6,000 would survive to see their homes again. 10,000 chose to fight to the death among the ruins rather than be captured.

It was the greatest defeat suffered by the Axis to date; a quarter of a million seasoned veterans along with 2,000 tanks gone forever, entire formations that had fought together since the invasion of Poland wiped out of existence. German replacement rates had already been falling behind losses, now with such a catastrophic defeat the balance of power on the Ostfront had shifted decisively towards the Soviet Union.



FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITH *BOLT ACTION*

Case Blue began as disastrously as the previous year's fighting for the Red Army, but it also featured some intensive defensive battles for the Axis in May around Kharkov. Without a doubt the real draw for gaming in this period of the Eastern Front has to be the turning of the tide at Stalingrad and the months of gruelling urban combat associated with it.

SCENARIOS

GENERAL SCENARIOS

Case Blue was marked by a long series of retreats and holding actions for Soviet forces until Voronezh was reached. After that, and later at Stalingrad, Soviet counterattacks became more frequent and escalated massively during the winter counteroffensive. The following scenarios from the *Bolt Action* rulebook work well for *Case Blue*:

- Scenario 1: Envelopment
- Scenario 3: Point Defence
- Scenario 4: Hold Until Relieved
- Scenario 5: Top Secret

In addition, the following scenarios from this book can be used with more open terrain suitable for the southern steppes. Disregard any references to ice, snow and frostbite in these scenarios as they are occurring in high summer, although limited visibility rules can be substituted to restore some balance. Axis and Red Army forces might be used in roles as either attackers or defenders during this wide-ranging campaign.

- Scenario 4: Pocketed on [page 28](#)
- Scenario 5: Bridgehead on [page 42](#)
- Scenario 6: Hedgehog on [page 44](#)

In addition the modifications noted for An Unequal Struggle on [page 41](#) for *Barbarossa* can be applied to many battles during *Case Blue*. The numerical advantage swung alarmingly back and forth for both sides many times during operations.

CASE BLUE SPECIAL SCENARIOS

The following scenarios, 'The Volga Crossings' and 'Block Busting', are intended for use with the City Fighting Scenario Special Rules on [page 108](#) to recreate actions during the battle for Stalingrad.



TERRAIN

The terrain in the southern parts of Russia and the Ukraine is less dominated by forests and swamps than in the more northerly regions. However around Kharkov there are plentiful wooded hills and valleys, plus a large number of villages and towns connected by an extensive network of highways and dirt roads. Several large rivers and innumerable water courses dominate the region, in particular the meandering River Don which paid a key role in the campaign as a defensive bulwark for both sides at different times. Moving further east the terrain flattens out more into low rolling hills, valleys and wadi-like ravines known locally as *balkas*. The grassy steppes are broken by an occasional rectangle of farmland and long, straight roads that vanish over the horizon and made perfect territory for tanks.

STALINGRAD

Stalingrad (renamed Volgograd in modern times) was a modern city that was built up from the trading town of Tsaritsyn that Stalin himself had fought over during the revolution. Huge factories and manufacturing plants dominated the northern section of the city along with modern apartment complexes for the workers, some up to six storeys high. Downtown Stalingrad was a collection of over one hundred brick and concrete stores, offices and apartment buildings including a theatre (the Gorki) and the hulking Univermag department store.

Southern Stalingrad comprised white wooden houses with picket fences as well as a sugar mill and the tall concrete grain elevator. Public parks and plazas were dotted through the city as befit its status as a model of the benefits of progressive Communism. The devastation wrought by the intensive fighting that occurred there transformed the city into a moonscape of gutted buildings, twisted ruins, trenches, bomb craters and rubble. There is plentiful photographic reference for Stalingrad before, during and after the battle, it's highly recommended to take a look at it for inspiration when it comes to creating a tabletop battlefield.

***CASE BLUE* THEATRE SELECTORS**

Theatre Selectors suitable for Operation *Case Blue* and the battle of Stalingrad can be found in the *Armies of Germany*, *Armies of Italy and the Axis*, and the *Armies of the Soviet Union* books. The additional units already shown in the previous sections of this book may be included in their appropriate categories for Operation *Case Blue* as desired.



German forces at Stalingrad (L-R): Gefreiter, Grenadier-Regiment 544; Generaloberst Friedrich Paulus; Panzergrenadier, Panzergrenadier-Regiment 79, by Stephen Andrew © Osprey Publishing Ltd. Taken from Men-at-Arms 326: The German Army 1939-45 (3).

SCENARIO 7: THE VOLGA CROSSINGS

One of the biggest crisis points for the defenders of Stalingrad was in the first days when the Germans managed to push forward and bring the main Volga landing stages under fire. The reinforcements and supplies coming across from the east bank were vital and if the landing stages had remained at risk in the days that followed it is doubtful Stalingrad would have remained in Soviet hands.

FORCES

This scenario pitches a larger Axis force against Red Army defenders who are outnumbered but dug in to the ruins of Stalingrad with fresh reserves constantly arriving from across the Volga. The Red Army player picks a force to an agreed points, the Axis player picks a force total of three times that amount (e.g. 1,500pts if the Soviet player has 500pts).



In addition to his force the Red Army player receives two bunkers, three 'hard cover' linear obstacles and two minefields.

Each linear obstacle must be up to 6" long and 1" tall, and should provide hard cover (so use trenches, low walls, earth embankments, sandbags and the like). You can replace any number of 'hard cover' linear obstacles with 'soft cover' ones (barbed wire etc.) and if you do so, you get two 'soft cover' obstacles for each 'hard cover' one you surrender.

Bunkers should be large enough to accommodate a single unit of infantry or artillery. The rules for bunkers are on page 104 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook. Minefields are approximately 6" x 6" and may be marked or unmarked at the option of the Red Army player.

SET-UP

This scenario is played along the length of a six by four feet gaming surface. An area of deep water representing the Volga River extends 6" onto the table from one of the short table edges. Place a dock or landing stage at the halfway point on the short table edge that forms the river bank. The landing stage should be approximately 2" wide and 6" long.

The rest of the table needs to be covered by a high density of buildings, ruins and rubble. Place at least one 6"-wide road connecting the landing stage to the halfway point of the opposite short table edge, ideally the whole tabletop should be crisscrossed by additional roads and smaller connecting side-streets.

The Red Army player places their bunkers and obstacles, and marks or notes the location of minefields next. It's important to set these up to slow down the attackers so that they won't reach the landing stage too quickly. In the real battle the Red Army used mines and obstacles to block direct lines of advance and channel attackers into kill zones covered by heavy weapons and entrenched infantry.

DEPLOYMENT

The Red Army player must deploy first anywhere on the table that is more than 12" from the 'west' short table edge. Their units may be Dug In at the option of the Red Army player (See Scenario Special Rules on [page 102](#) of this book) and may use hidden set-up (see Hidden Set-up on page 117 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). One unit must be placed in each of the bunkers that were placed during set-up.

The Axis player's units are not set-up on the table at the start of the game. The Axis player must nominate up to half of their force (rounding up) to form the first wave. All other Axis units are left in reserve (see reserves page 119 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook).

SPECIAL RULES

CITY FIGHTING

The Volga Crossings scenario uses the City Fighting rules which can be found on [page 108](#) of this book.

REINFORCEMENTS

Red Army reinforcements are trying to get across the river and deploy into the city on a variety of launches, barges and other craft under relentless Luftwaffe bombing and strafing. At the end of each turn including the first roll a die to see what units, if any, arrive on the landing stage:

- 6: 1x M37 45mm anti-tank gun or light howitzer, and crew.
- 5: 1x MMG or medium mortar team.
- 4: 1x Rifle, Submachine gun or LMG squad.
- 3: 3x Anti-tank teams (May be AT Rifle or Tank Hunters).
- 1–2: Nothing. Luftwaffe attacks sank the reinforcements this turn.

All reinforcements count as Inexperienced and land with one Pin marker on them from their

harrowing trip across the Volga, meaning they will need an orders test to move off the landing stage with an *advance* or *run* order in the next turn. If models are not available for the reinforcements rolled the Red Army player is allowed to default down to any lower numbered result. Casualties incurred during the battle can be recycled as extra reinforcements as required.

If an Axis unit is within 6" of the landing stage or if a unit is still on the landing stage at the end of a turn no reinforcements are rolled for that turn (they go to another landing stage somewhere off-table that isn't blocked and don't participate in this battle). Because of this rule it's a very good idea to keep a Commissar by the landing stage to 'greet' the new arrivals and get them moving!

OBJECTIVE

The Axis player must capture the landing stage and hold it, or failing that bring it under fire. The Red Army player must try to stop the Axis and must recapture the landing stage at all costs if it is lost.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During Turn 1, the Axis player must move their entire first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on the 'west' short table edge, and must be given either a *run* or *advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of the first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 10, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2 or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5 or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game the winner is the player in control of the landing stage. To capture the landing stage there must be one of your units within 3" of the landing stage at the end of the final turn, and there must be no enemy units within 6" of it. If the Red Army still holds the landing stage, but it is *under fire*, the game results in a draw. For the landing stage to be under fire, an Axis unit must end the game in a position where it would be able to hit Soviet units on the landing stage if the unit received a Fire order. Any other result is a victory for the Red Army.

SCENARIO 8: BLOCK BUSTING

Fighting in the heavily urbanised environment of Stalingrad soon fell into a deadly pattern: intense artillery barrages and aerial attack followed by bloody advances to capture a prominent building or road junction, vicious close combats to secure the objective, and then digging in to defend it against the almost immediate counter-attacks by the opposing side. Advancing troops would often find themselves cut-off and surrounded by attacks coming from areas that had already been thought cleared. The Block Busting scenario recreates one of these tangled engagements.



FORCES

This scenario is designed to be played with equal points values on both sides. Axis and Red Army reinforced platoons are chosen from the appropriate Theatre Selectors.

SET-UP

This scenario is played across the length or width of a six by four feet gaming surface. A 6"-wide road runs from the middle of one long table edge to the middle of the other long table edge, roughly bisecting the table into two equal halves. A second road runs between the mid-points of the short table edges to form a crossroad at the middle of the table and dividing it into roughly equal quarters. The rest of the table needs to be covered by a high density of buildings, ruins and rubble, you can also include additional smaller roads and connecting side-streets to ease manoeuvring during the game.

DEPLOYMENT

Both players roll a die and the high scorer picks a half of the table to deploy in. At least half of their force (rounding up) is deployed on their chosen half of the table and their entire force may

be deployed if desired.

Once the winner of the die roll has deployed, the loser of the roll deploys their units in the other half of the table. There are no restrictions on exactly how close they may be to opposing units except that each side may only deploy units in their own half of the table. Note that this means that snipers and observers have no special set-up bonus in this scenario.

Units may be Dug In at the option of the owning player (See Scenario Special Rules on [page 102](#) of this book) and may use hidden set-up (see Hidden Set-up on page 117 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). Units that are not set-up to start with are left in reserve (see Reserves page 119 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook).

SPECIAL RULES

CITY FIGHTING

This scenario uses the City Fighting rules which can be found on [page 108](#) of this book.

RESERVES

Reserves may enter the table along any of the table edges on their owning player's half of the table. Reserves that are used to outflank may enter up to 24" further along their nominated flanking table edge if they enter on turn 3. If they enter on a subsequent turn outflankers may be deployed another 12" along the table edge per additional turn, so 36" on turn 4, 48" on turn 4 and so on.

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

The guns never ceased at Stalingrad and any attack was liable to be heralded by artillery barrages from both attackers and defenders. Roll on the preparatory bombardment chart (see page 118 of the *Bolt Action* rules) for every unit in the battle, including those in reserve. This is quite likely to interfere with the arrival of reserves due to the pin markers accrued, which is fine because that is precisely what happened in the real battle!



German 88 deployed

OBJECTIVE

Both sides are fighting to control a larger portion of the city by occupying the areas held by the enemy as defined by the table quarters ('blocks') formed by the main roads. Care must also be

taken to guard the 'home' table quarters against being taken by the enemy. Attrition is a big factor too so destroying enemy units is also important for winning.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 10, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2 or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5 or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. If one side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

- Players score 1 victory point for every enemy unit destroyed.
- Players score 1 victory point for each table quarter contested.
- Players score 5 victory points for each table quarter controlled.

To contest a table quarter you need only have some of your models in it at the end of the final turn. To control a table quarter there must one of your units in it at the end of the final turn, and there must be no enemy units in it. Victory points for a table quarter are not cumulative, it can be either controlled or contested, not both.

ADDITIONAL UNITS

SOVIET UNITS

SU-76 SELF-PROPELLED GUN (EARLY PRODUCTION MODEL)

The earliest version of the SU-76 self-propelled gun first appeared late in 1942. It had a fully enclosed, very cramped fighting compartment and a highly unreliable power train. The latter was due to having a two GAZ-202 automobile engines in parallel so one was driving each track. In practice the arrangement was deeply inferior to the tandem engine arrangements used for T-70 tanks. After 320 SU-76s had been built, production was halted and the engine layout altered, as part of the same redesign the armoured roof was removed to improve access to the gun and increase rate of fire. The resulting vehicle was called the SU-76M but after production resumed it became so ubiquitous that it was generally known as the SU-76. Interestingly in the intervening period while the SU-76 was being revamped around 1200 Pz IIIs and StuG IIIs captured at Stalingrad were converted into 'SU-76i', a rather more reliable close topped self-propelled gun. Principal service: 1942. Numbers manufactured: 320.

Cost: 72 pts (Inexperienced), 90 pts (Regular), 108 pts (Veteran)

Weapons: 1 forward-facing light howitzer.

Damage Value: 8+ (light tank)

Special Rules:

- Unreliable: If the SU-76 suffers one or more pin markers as a result of an enemy attack it automatically suffers one further pin marker in addition – such is its extreme operational unreliability
- Versatile: The SU-76 can be equipped with armour piercing ammunition allowing it to fire its light howitzer as a medium antitank gun for +10 pts

SELECTORS

The Su-76 is a Self-Propelled Gun for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. The SU-76 is a Self-Propelled Gun option for the following Theatre Selectors of the *Armies of the Soviet Union* book; Battle of Stalingrad; Operation *Uranus*; Operation *Star*.

M-30

The Red Army used a variety of different rockets for their multiple launchers. The largest of these was the M-30 rocket introduced in 1942, a 300mm projectile with a payload almost six times that of the standard 132mm 'Katyusha' rocket. M-30s were not mounted on trucks until much later, instead they were launched from a simple wooden frame towed on a trailer or sledge. The original M-30 had a very short range – less than 3,000 meters – so an improved version with a longer range called the M-31 was soon developed. Even so, the M-30 and M-31 still had the shortest ranges of all the Katyusha-type rockets.

Cost: 42 pts (Inexperienced), 60 pts (Regular), 78 pts (Veteran)

Team: 5 men

Weapon: 1 multiple launcher

Options:

- May add Spotter for +10 points

Special Rules:

- Team weapon
- Fixed
- Multiple launcher
- Heavy Rocket Launcher: this heavy rocket launcher fires HE (3D6) rockets rather than the usual HE (2D6) rockets. However, to represent the fact that it is so slow to reload, when it fires it immediately suffers D3 pin markers. It must then be given a successful Rally order to reload it before it can be ordered to Fire again.

SELECTORS

The M-30 is Field Artillery for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the Bolt Action rulebook. It also is a Field Artillery option for the following Theatre Selectors of the Armies of the Soviet Union book; Battle of Voronezh; Battle of Stalingrad; Operation Uranus; Operation Star; Battle of Kursk; Leningrad-Novgorod Offensive; Operation Bagration; Vistula-Oder Offensive; Seelow heights; Berlin.



The Teploye Heights, by Steve Noon © Osprey Publishing Ltd.
Taken from Campaign 272: Kursk 1943.

PRELUDE

What's in the mind of a soldier
when he is riding to war
Saying farewell to his loved ones
He might not see any more
Evil and blind is his courage
precious but worthless his life
Maybe he'll meet with his black crow
The ultimate end of his strife
Polyushka Polye (Song of the Plains)

In the winter of 1942–43 the Axis forces in southern Russia teetered on the verge of collapse. The loss of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad had torn a gaping hole in the front that was only closed by much hard fighting and giving up all of the gains made in the previous summer. As the spring *Raputista* enforced a temporary halt to offensive operations, both sides took stock of the situation and drew up their plans for the coming summer campaign.

From the Axis side the key thought was to drain some of the fury out of the Red Army's next offensives before they struck. Although the Heer's Panzer forces had been badly mauled, they were still operational and already re-equipping. Deadly new tanks like the PzKpfw VI Tiger and soon the PzKpfw V Panther would, for the first time in the east, give them tanks that were markedly superior to the T-34 and the KV1. The Tiger had already made its debut in limited numbers during the winter and it showed great promise as a T-34 killer par excellence.



Za Rodinu! Za Stalina!

New self-propelled guns and tank destroyers were available too, everything from the *Hummel* (bumble bee) and *Brummbär* (grizzly bear) based on the Pz IV chassis equipping a 15cm howitzer to the massive Ferdinand with its long 8.8cm anti-tank gun. New weapons and aircraft would also enable the Luftwaffe to keep the resurgent hordes of the Red air force at bay and strike with even more lethality against enemies on the ground.

If the Soviets could be brought to battle on Hitler's terms he believed that the professionalism of his armed forces mated to the power of the new wonder weapons would inflict a severe defeat on them. Severe enough, perhaps, to take away Soviet Union's ability to unleash a major offensive for another year. Such a coup would also bring in much-needed slave labour to keep the Reich's industry running and give his wavering Axis partners hope that final victory was yet within their grasp. A big enough win could still turn the war around, the only question was where such an offensive should take place. The choice for that was obvious.

The Soviet winter campaign had failed to hold on to Kharkov, but it had liberated the city of Kursk to the north, some 450km southwest of Moscow. In the process it had created a dangerous-looking bulge in the middle of the German lines. The outer edge of this bulge was almost 400km long, but the base of it was only 100km wide (i.e. its total area was equivalent to half the size of England). It was clearly an ideal place for the Red Army to concentrate its forces to use this 'Kursk Salient' as a springboard for fresh offensives.

As early as February, plans were being considered to pinch off the bulge with two armoured pincers driving in from the northern and southern shoulders to meet at Kursk. Hitler embraced and expanded on these plans, giving the operation the portentous epithet of *Zitadelle* (*Citadel*). The Red Army would be once again trapped and suffer another defeat on the scale of those it had suffered at Smolensk, Kharkov and Kiev. At the very least, victory at Kursk would mean that the frontlines could be straightened out and the Germans would be able to concentrate on stabilising their positions in anticipation of the coming winter from a weakened foe.



A Panther advances through the mist.

From the opposing side the direction of the German's summer offensive was just as obvious. Allied intelligence confirmed Stavka's suspicions and fed them precise details of the build-up taking place, the Ostheer's plans and even the projected starting date. Stalin, chastened by his experiences in 1941 and 1942, trusted Zhukov and his other marshals to come up with a suitable counter-plan. This time when the Germans attacked, the Red Army would be ready and waiting for them.

THE NORTHERN FACE

The months slipped past with alarming rapidity while Hitler vacillated about finally committing to the attack and the Germans gathered their forces. Extra training for inexperienced recruits, delays for the hotly anticipated new Panthers and intense partisan activity behind the front turned weeks into months while the Red Army dug itself in ever deeper around the Kursk bulge. There was certainly an impressive weight of men, tanks, planes and artillery to be hurled against the Soviet defences when the time came. The northern face of the Kursk bulge was allocated to the Ninth Army under Colonel-General Walther Model comprising a third of a million men with almost a thousand tanks and self-propelled guns.

Finally all was deemed ready and Operation *Citadel* scheduled to commence at 3.30am on 5 July with an opening bombardment on a scale seldom seen before. The first sign of trouble was the Red Army artillery starting its own bombardment at 2.20am against the German concentration points. The whirlwind of shells and Katyusha rockets marched across the front for thirty minutes before subsiding and although the damage was relatively slight, the disruption forced a delay. The German bombardment began at 4.30am and the 9th Army attacked thirty minutes later on a 45km wide front. Model led primarily with his infantry, followed by Panzers nosing forward along lanes cleared through the first belt of the Soviet minefields by Sturmtruppen during the night.

Almost immediately the attack ran into difficulties. More minefields lay beyond the outer belts and the entire area was thick with entrenched Soviet infantry, tank destroyers and anti-tank emplacements. Of the 45 Ferdinands committed to the fighting only 12 made it through the minefields and these found themselves mired in the Soviet infantry positions without support. As the German spearheads pushed deeper, it became apparent that the defences were not simple lines but a maze of strongpoints sited in depth along the most likely avenues of advance. The Luftwaffe (the beneficiaries of a stunning early victory in the south after knocking down over a hundred Soviet planes that morning) and German heavy artillery co-operated closely to smash the positions stalling the attack, but each position that was overrun revealed two more behind it.

Red Army soldiers went to ground until the Panzers had passed before emerging to engage the German infantry following behind in vicious hand-to-hand fighting. Throughout the day Red Army artillery poured shells and rockets down on the advancing Panzers in an unbroken torrent. Tank hunter teams relentlessly stalked Panzers that had been disabled or caught without infantry support in the midst of foxholes and rifle pits. Strong counterattacks made in the afternoon by T-34s and T-70s were torn apart by the Tigers and Ferdinands leading the armoured wedges, but each attack took its toll. By the end of the first day an advance of barely 8km had been made at a cost of over 7,000 casualties and, if anything, Soviet resistance was getting stronger as reinforcements were rushed to the area.

***MASKIROVKA*: THE ART OF MILITARY DECEPTION**

The Germans were unprepared for the depth and complexity of the Soviet defences at Kursk despite spending months monitoring the bulge and training to breach it. They were aware that the Red Army had dug in, of course, but they had little inkling that the defences extended some 150km to the rear, or that they incorporated 750km of barbed wire and over a million mines. Most crucially of all the contents of the Kursk bulge did not comprise mainly of tanks and infantry preparing for an offensive as the Germans had supposed, but artillery regiments in a ratio of 3:2 to the infantry and dug-in behind anti-tank ditches and obstacles laid out for all-round defence against tanks. Even the Katyusha positions featured earth ramps so that the trucks could be reversed up them to use direct fire against the attacking Panzers.



Tigers Marsch!

The Red Army had conducted an expert program of *maskirovka* in the months leading up to the battle. This went beyond simply camouflaging their positions and extended to creating dummy positions as well, bringing in their reinforcement only at night and ensuring they were hidden by morning, setting up fake radio nets for non-existent tank armies, concealing HQ bunkers and forbidding visitors or the use of staff cars or other obvious officer transport vehicles that would give away their positions. The Luftwaffe's attempts at aerial reconnaissance were blocked except at carefully chosen spots at certain times. *Maskirovka* was used not to hide the presence of the Red Army as such a thing would be impossible, but rather to misdirect the Germans into thinking that what they believed was true.

The next day opened with another counterattack by T-34s meeting its demise beneath the 8.8cm guns of the Tigers and Ferdinands leaving 69 burnt-out wrecks scattered through the forward area. The Germans narrowed their advance to a 40km front and thrust deeper into the Soviet entrenchments, but progress continued to be slow and bloody. On 7 July, Ninth Army limited its attack frontage to 15km in an effort to breakthrough. The 8th and 9th were taken up with fighting around the village of Ponyri and the hills surrounding it as the frontage of the German attack narrowed down to just 2km. Ponyri and the high ground around it was a keystone of the defences guarded by an average of 70 Soviet anti-tank guns per kilometre. German infantry had captured Ponyri in bitter house-to-house fighting on the 7th, but they had been forced to withdraw in the face of heavy Red Army counterattacks. Now a see-saw battle developed with German gains being recaptured by Soviet counter-attacks. The bucolic little village of Ponyri took on the dimensions of a mini-Stalingrad with the intensity of the fighting there.

By late on 9 July Colonel-General Model could sense that he lacked the strength to make a

breakthrough in the deeply echeloned Soviet defences. Nonetheless, in an effort to keep the Red Army tied down, he committed more of his Panzers to the fighting with additional air support on the 10th. These clashed with fresh Soviet reinforcements that were being poured into the region and the battle became one of sheer attrition. On 12 July a Soviet counter-offensive, Operation *Kutuzov*, was launched into the Orel salient behind Ninth Army by over a million men supported by 2,409 tanks and 26,379 guns. The deep penetrations threatened the Ninth Army with encirclement and on 14 July Model was given direct command of the Second Panzer Army who were trying and failing to hold the breach closed. Model had little choice but to withdraw his own battered units and shore up the positions of Second Panzer Army behind him. By 18 July he had given up all of the ground gained at terrible cost in the previous two weeks of fighting.

THE SOUTHERN FACE

The Soviets had estimated that the strongest attack would come against the northern shoulder of the bulge and deployed their forces accordingly. It was a miscalculation on their part, in fact the southern attack was considerably stronger. It comprised two Armies, the Fourth Panzer Army and Army Detachment 'Kempf'. The list of divisions in the south reads like a roll call of elite fighting formations, including Panzergrenadier Division *Grossdeutschland* plus the 1st (*Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*), 2nd (*Das Reich*), and the 3rd (*Totenkopf*) SS Panzergrenadier Divisions. The two Armies had an equivalent number of men to the northern force but a total of 1,377 tanks and assault guns – 30% more than fielded by the Ninth Army and including all 200 of the newly arrived Panther tanks.

Operations in the south began on the evening of 4 July with the seizure of important ground and forward outposts of the Soviet defences. At 2.20am the Germans were subjected to the same spoiling bombardments by Red Army artillery as had occurred in the north. *Grossdeutschland* and the SS divisions recovered quickly and thrust deep into the first belt of Soviet defences under cover of an artillery barrage of their own that expended more shells in fifty minutes than the Germans had fired in the Polish and French campaigns combined.

By mid-morning the first defensive belt had been breached, with German units crossing the Northern Donets River in the process, and the Panzers were pushing against the second belt. Devastating air support was supplied by the Luftwaffe, in particular by JU-87G Stukas that had been refitted with underwing 37mm cannon for knocking out tanks, as well as specialist Henschel Hs129B ground attack aircraft. The much-vaunted Panthers, however, got off to a shaky start by losing 36 tanks to mines and becoming bogged down under heavy Soviet artillery and anti-tank fire. Once freed at great cost to both the Pionieres and the Panther crews, they became bogged down again later in the day, literally this time, in swampy ground near the village of Gertsovka.

By the end of the first day Army Group Kempf and the Fourth Panzer Army had pierced the first belt of Soviet defences at multiple points up to a distance of 15km. The advance was uneven, however, with Army Group Kempf still fighting it out in the first belt near Belgorod. It was a state of equal dissatisfaction for both sides. The elite Panzer units had pushed farther into the defences than the Soviets believed possible, but they had not achieved the breakthroughs called for in Citadel's planned timetable.

On 6 July Stavka began to shift reserves to the southern front to bolster the second defensive belt, including some of the large reserve tank formations that the Germans were hoping to engage and destroy in the battle of Kursk. After the reported debacles in the northern counter attacks, many of the Red Army tanks were dug in to act as improvised strong points. As if to underline this necessity, a lone Tiger commanded by SS-Oberscharführer Franz Staudegger engaged a group of 50 T-34s on 7 July and destroyed 22 of them singlehandedly, earning the first Knight's Cross to be awarded to a Tiger commander.

The southern attack ground forward into the second belt making slow but steady progress against fierce Soviet resistance. By 9 July the first units had reached the Psel River and on the 10th German infantry crossed it to secure bridgeheads on the far bank. The SS Divisions wheeled northeast with the objective of taking the small town of Prokhorovka with an advance on both sides

of the Psel. Army Group Kempf secured a bridge across the Donets on 11 July and began to push its armour north to link up with the SS at Prokhorovka. If the two forces met they would complete the first encirclement of the Soviet defenders at Kursk. After all the casualties and the hard fighting so far, the possibility of success still beckoned.

PROKHOROVKA

Unknown to the Germans a mass of Soviet armour was concentrating near Prokhorovka on the night of 11/12 July; two tank corps and five brigades for a total of almost a thousand tanks and self-propelled guns – even including a few squadrons of British-supplied Churchill tanks. The commander of this combined force, Marshal Rotmistrov, had orders to block the German advance and stop them taking Prokhorovka at any cost. On the morning of 12 July, as the SS Panzers began to advance, they came under artillery bombardment and then bore witness to an astonishing sight – hundreds of Soviet tanks with tank riders clinging to their decks pouring down the slopes in front of Prokhorovka at full speed and firing wildly as they came. Rotmistrov had ordered his men to close at maximum speed to offset the well-proven German advantages at long range. In fact the SS divisions had only twenty Tigers still left in action between them, although this would have been cold comfort given the engagement with Staudegger's lone Tiger on 7 July, noted above.

Sheer numbers forced the SS divisions onto the defensive. In all there were approximately 600 German tanks and self-propelled guns confronting 900 Soviet tanks on the battlefield but the terrain prevented all of them engaging at once. Instead the fighting devolved into a confused mass of machines swirling and charging in between intermittent thunderstorms, blinding smoke and thick, choking dust. The battle was fought at all levels with Panzer grenadiers and Red Army tank riders clashing among the growing graveyard of wrecks while aircraft struck from the skies and artillery thundered non-stop.



Panther Ausf. A

No armoured engagement in history has equalled the carnage wrought at Prokhorovka. At the end of the day, when the two sides staggered back from the engagement to count their losses and tend their wounded, there were hundreds of wrecked tanks strewn across the area. Controversy still rages about the extent of the casualties suffered by both sides in the battle but it's clear that the Red Army suffered far greater losses than the SS during the fighting. However it was ultimately the Soviet tankers that won the victory through their sacrifices. The advance on Prokhorovka was stopped and it would not be resumed again.

On the evening of the 12th Hitler summoned his generals and informed them of his decision to call a halt to Operation *Citadel*. The Western Allies had landed on Sicily two days before and the prospect of them invading Italy or Southern France was looming. Von Kluge, the overall commander of Army Group Centre who had contributed the northern forces for *Citadel*, welcomed the news but Von Manstein who was in overall command of Army Group South was opposed to it. Manstein believed that his forces were on the verge of victory and argued passionately for continuing the attack at least until the Soviet's reserve tank armies had been destroyed. Hitler agreed to allow a continuation of the attack, but promptly withdrew the Panzer reserves Manstein was counting on to make a breakthrough possible. On 16 July the Germans bowed to the inevitable and began retreating to their starting positions. Operation *Citadel* had failed.

AFTERMATH

Operation *Citadel* represented the last chance the German Heer had to exercise strategic initiative on the Eastern Front, never again would it be able to mass the men and machines necessary to dictate the fighting to the Red Army. Following the battle of Kursk the war in the east turned into a long, hard-fought series of retreats for the Axis powers. It took the better part of two more years to get there, but Red Army tanks would one day roll down the streets of Berlin thanks to what happened at Kursk.

In terms of casualties the Soviets suffered far more than the Axis during the battle, just as they had at Stalingrad and during *Barbarossa*. This time the butcher's bill was 177,877 casualties, along with 1,614 tanks and self-propelled guns destroyed or damaged and the loss of just over a thousand aircraft. On the German side the losses were between a third and half of those they inflicted on the Red Army – a truly incredible feat when we stop to consider the Germans were fighting against a more numerous enemy who were dug in on ground of their own choosing. Even so, all the élan and bravery demonstrated by the veteran Panzer and infantry units at Kursk was not enough to win the victory that Germany so desperately needed.

Just how an army could inflict three-to-one casualty ratios and still lose is perhaps best illustrated by the two Soviet counter-offensives launched after the beginning of Operation *Citadel*, Operation *Kutuzov* and Operation *Polkovodets Rumyantsev* launched on 3 August against Army Group South. These two enormous flank attacks on the German forces trying to pierce the Kursk bulge doomed the fighting there to become irrelevant almost no matter what its outcome. The core objective of Kursk for the Germans – the elimination of Soviet mobile forces before they could make their attack – could not be completed because the bulk of those forces were not in the bulge where they were expected to be. The Soviet tank armies were instead waiting in reserve at the bulge's base and behind its flanks ready to launch their counterblows the moment that the German's best hope of stopping them – its own Panzer divisions – had impaled itself on the static defences around Kursk.

The Germans, the masters of mobile warfare, had again been out-thought and outmanoeuvred at a strategic level by the *Untermensch* they had held in such contempt two years earlier. The vast gulf between German and Soviet strategic skill had been closed, and while the Germans would still have a tactical and technological edge right until the end, it was insufficient to stem the tide of enemies now sweeping in on the Third Reich. For German commanders the chilling premonition that had first reared its head at Stalingrad returned with full force: the Soviet Union could not be defeated and the war in the East was all but lost.

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITH *BOLT ACTION*

Operation *Citadel* represents a rare moment in time where the German armed forces are numerous, at the peak of their proficiency and have a substantial technological advantage over their opponents. As such it makes a highly rewarding period for German players to collect for, although finding Red Army players willing to take on Tigers and Panthers with only T-34s and T-70s might be a little tricky! Kursk also makes an excellent campaign setting with its non-stop action and emphasis on attrition, replacements and a tight timescale for the Germans.

SCENARIOS

GENERAL SCENARIOS

The constant attacks and counterattacks that occurred during of intensive fighting around are fertile ground for all kinds of scenarios so all of the scenarios in the *Bolt Action* book are highly suitable:

- Scenario 1: Envelopment
- Scenario 2: Maximum Attrition
- Scenario 3: Point Defence
- Scenario 4: Hold Until Relieved
- Scenario 5: Top Secret
- Scenario 6: Demolition

The following scenarios from this book may also be used for Kursk with some minimal modifications.

- Scenario 2: Stormy, Stormy Night on [page 14](#).
- Scenario 3: Assault on the Mannerheim Line on [page 26](#) (without the snow and ice, Red Army defending).
- Scenario 5: Bridgehead on [page 42](#) (use the Limited Visibility Scenario Special Rules).
- Scenario 6: Hedgehog on [page 44](#) (without the snow and ice).

CITADEL SPECIAL SCENARIOS

The following scenarios, 'Pakfront' and 'Olkhovatka Heights', are designed to recreate in miniature some of the challenges faced by the opposing forces during Kursk.

TERRAIN

Within the Kursk bulge the terrain was predominantly low rolling hills between broad, shallow valleys. The majority of these valleys had small rivers running through them, many of them

meandering tributaries of the river Donets that ran along the south edge of the region. The valleys were dotted with orchards and vast fields of sunflowers, wheat and rye, between which nestled small farming communities with names like Kusl (Hens) and Butlika (butter), and the embattled settlement of Ponyri was famous for its apples.

By 1943 much of the area had been ravaged by war. The collective farms had been razed and their machinery plundered by retreating armies. Most of the bridges around Kursk had been demolished necessitating the construction of pontoon bridges for the armies to use, often under heavy bombardment. The summer of 1943 was hot and dry so grass caught fire readily and left the areas intense fighting scorched and barren-looking.

CAULDRON

The fighting around Kursk was defined primarily by two things – the deeply entrenched Red Army defences and the incessant bombardments from artillery and aircraft that bedevilled both sides. The Red Army defences can be addressed through appropriate scenario choices and allowing the Red Army player to purchase minefields as suggested on [page 105](#) in the Scenario Special Rules section. For all scenarios, Red Army units that are deployed on the table at the beginning of the game may use the Dug In rules as well.

To represent the heavier presence of air and artillery on both sides forward observers in Kursk scenarios can call for air strikes or artillery barrages (as appropriate) twice during the game instead of only once as is normally the case.

CITADEL THEATRE SELECTORS

Theatre Selectors suitable for *Citadel* and the battle of Kursk can be found in the *Armies of Germany* and the *Armies of the Soviet Union* books. The additional units already shown in the previous sections of this book may be included in their appropriate categories for Operation *Citadel* as desired.



*Attack of the Ferdinands, by Steve Noon © Osprey Publishing Ltd.
Taken from Campaign 272: Kursk 1943.*

SCENARIO 9: PAKFRONT

As the German spearheads thrust into the forward lines of the Soviet defences they found that the Red Army had massed its anti-tank guns and artillery into 'anti-tank resistance points' (*protivotankovye opornye punkty*, or PTOPs). These PTOPs were protected by mines, infantry and barbed wire, deeply entrenched and well-camouflaged. All guns in a PTOP fired at the direction of a single commander to maximize their effectiveness, a technique the Red Army had learned, like so much else, from the Germans. The Germans called it a '*Pakfront*'.

FORCES

This scenario pits the leading elements of a German Panzer attack against an entrenched Soviet anti-tank position. The Red Army player picks a force to an agreed points, the Axis player picks a force total of twice that amount (e.g. 1000pts if the Soviet player has 500pts). German and Red Army reinforced platoons are chosen from the appropriate Theatre Selectors with the following adjustments:

- The German player may purchase up to one additional tank over the normal allocation for every infantry squad in their force. This scenario works particularly well if the German player forms his forces from the Armoured platoons selector from the *Tank War* supplement.
- The German player also receives one forward air observer for free in addition to their other forces (they may choose additional air observers and pay the points for them if desired).
- The Red Army player may purchase up to one additional artillery piece over the normal allocation for every infantry squad in their force. The Red Army player receives one forward artillery observer for free in addition to their other forces (they may choose additional artillery observers and pay the points for them if desired).
- In addition to his force the Red Army player receives two bunkers, nine 'hard cover' linear obstacles and nine minefields. Each linear obstacle must be up to 6" long and 1" tall, and should provide hard cover (so use trenches, low walls, earth embankments, sandbags and the like). You can replace any number of 'hard cover' linear obstacles with 'soft cover' ones (barbed wire etc.) and if you do so, you get two 'soft cover' obstacles for each 'hard cover' one you surrender. Bunkers should be large enough to accommodate a single unit of infantry or artillery. The rules for bunkers are on page 104 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook. Minefields are approximately 6" x 6" and may be marked or unmarked at the option of the Red Army player. It's important for the Red Army player to make use of the existing terrain (suitably enhanced with mines and obstacles) to channel the German armour towards his guns.

SET-UP

This scenario is played across the width of a six by four feet gaming surface. The terrain for the battle is mostly open, with hills placed on the long edges of the table. A medium density of small woods (orchards), crop fields and occasional farm buildings should dominate the centre of the

table. Areas of rough and swampy ground can be used to add variety, as can a stream or small river running down the centre of the table, although this will count only as rough ground in this scenario.

DEPLOYMENT

The Red Army player picks a side of the table and sets up at least half of their units in the set-up area (as per the Envelopment scenario on page 109 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). These units can use the hidden set-up rules (see Hidden Set-up page 117 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook) and may be Dug In at the option of the Red Army player (See Scenario Special Rules on [page 102](#) of this book). Units that are not set-up to start with are left in reserve (see Reserves page 119 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook).

The German player's units are not set-up on the table at the start of the game. The German player must nominate at least half of their force to form his first wave. This can be the entire force if desired. Any units not included in the first wave are left in reserve.

SPECIAL RULES

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

Bombardments, interdiction and counter-battery fire swept across the battlefield at Kursk constantly. Roll on the preparatory bombardment chart (see page 118 of the *Bolt Action* rules) for every unit in the battle, including those in reserve. This is quite likely to interfere with the arrival of reserves due to the pin markers caused – welcome to Kursk!

RESERVES

Reserves enter from the respective player's table edges. In this scenario outflanking may not be used as the areas to either side of this particular section of the battlefield are just as active as this one.

OBJECTIVE

The German player must try to move as many of their units as possible into the Red Army player's set-up zone or off the opposing side's table edge in order to make a breakthrough. The Red Army player must try and stop the German succeeding. Note that in this scenario, German units are allowed to deliberately move off the table from the Red Army player's table edge to reach their objective.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During Turn 1, the German player must move their entire first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on the German player's table edge, and must be given either a *run* or *advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of the first wave.



ISU-152

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 8, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2 or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5 or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. If one side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

The German player scores 1 victory point for every enemy unit destroyed. He also scores 2 victory points for each of his own units that is inside the Red Army player's set-up area (even if only partially), and 3 victory points for each of his own units that has moved off the enemy table edge before the end of the game.

The defender scores 2 victory points for every enemy unit destroyed. This is doubled to 4 victory points for tanks that are destroyed.

SCENARIO 10: OLKHOVATKA HEIGHTS

During the battle at the northern shoulder of the bulge the Ninth Army made repeated attacks to try and seize the Olkhovatka Heights, a dominating high ground position. The view it gave over the surrounding terrain would allow them to observe and direct artillery fire deeper inside the Soviet defensive zone. The Red Army were well aware of the importance of the heights and counterattacked every German attempt to seize them with all available reserves.

FORCES

This scenario is designed to be played with equal points values on both sides. German and Red Army reinforced platoons are chosen from the appropriate Theatre Selectors with the following adjustments:

- The German player receives one forward air or artillery observer for free in addition to their other forces (they may choose additional air or artillery observers and pay the points for them if desired).
- The Red Army player receives one forward artillery observer for free in addition to their other forces (they may choose additional air or artillery observers and pay the points for them if desired).
- In addition to his force the Red Army player receives one bunker, six 'hard cover' linear obstacles and six minefields. Each linear obstacle must be up to 6" long and 1" tall, and should provide hard cover (so use trenches, low walls, earth embankments, sandbags and the like). You can replace any number of 'hard cover' linear obstacles with 'soft cover' ones (barbed wire etc.) and if you do so, you get two 'soft cover' obstacles for each 'hard cover' one you surrender. Bunkers should be large enough to accommodate a single unit of infantry or artillery. The rules for bunkers are on page 104 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook. Minefields are approximately 6" x 6" and may be marked or unmarked at the option of the Red Army player.

SET-UP

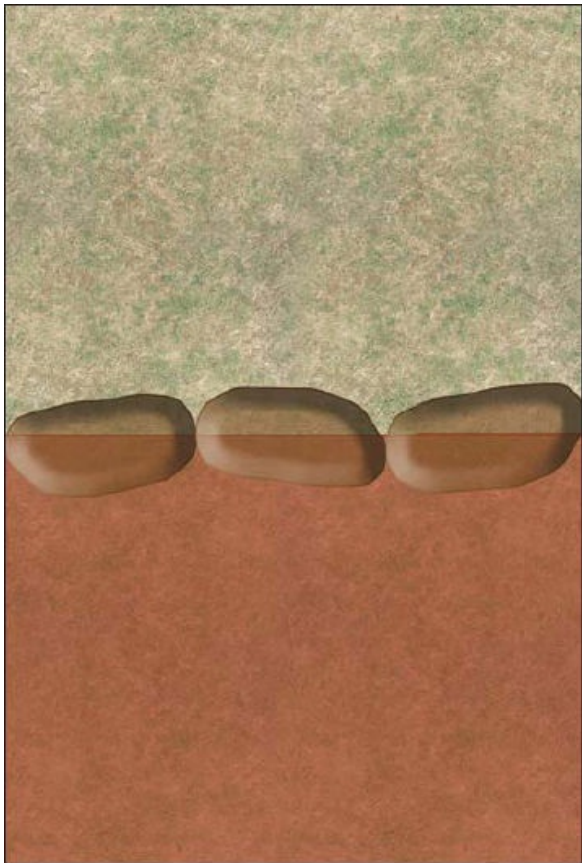
This scenario is played down the length of a six by four feet gaming surface. The terrain for the battle is dominated by the heights – represent these by placing all available hills along half way along the table (i.e. 36" along the long edge of a standard 6 x 4 foot gaming table). A medium density of small woods (orchards), crop fields and occasional farm buildings are scattered around the rest of the table, but the hilltops should be mostly clear terrain. Areas of rough and swampy ground can be used to add variety, as can a stream or two, although this will count only as rough ground in this scenario.

DEPLOYMENT

The Red Army player picks a side of the table and sets up at least half of their units in the set-up area (see diagram). These units can use the hidden set-up rules (see Hidden Set-up page 117 of

the *Bolt Action* rulebook) and may be Dug In at the option of the Red Army player (See Scenario Special Rules on [page 102](#) of this book). Units that are not set-up to start with are left in reserve (see Reserves page 119 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook).

The German player's units are not set-up on the table at the start of the game. The German player must nominate at least half of their force to form his first wave. This can be the entire force if desired. Any units not included in the first wave are left in reserve.



SPECIAL RULES

PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

Bombardments, interdiction and counter-battery fire swept across the battlefield at Kursk constantly. Roll on the preparatory bombardment chart (see page 118 of the *Bolt Action* rules) for all of the Red Army units that are deployed on the table at the start of the game.

RESERVES

Reserves enter from the respective player's table edges. In this scenario outflanking is permitted.

OBJECTIVE

Both players are fighting for control of the line of hills running along the centre of the table. Casualties are also important as Kursk is an ongoing battle of attrition.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During Turn 1, the German player must move their entire first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on the German player's table edge, and must be given either a *run* or *advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of the first wave.



T-34s advance past a burning village.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 8, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2 or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5 or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up **victory points** as follows. If one side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

- Players score 1 victory point for every enemy unit destroyed.
- Players score 5 victory points for each hill top captured.

To capture a hilltop there must be one of your units within 3” of the centre of the hill (or its highest point if that makes more sense for the terrain piece being used) at the end of the turn, and there must be no enemy unit within 3” of it. Once a hilltop is captured, it remains controlled by that side unless it's captured by the enemy.

ADDITIONAL UNITS

GERMAN UNITS

FERDINAND TANK DESTROYER

The Ferdinand was the earlier, original version of the Elefant heavy tank destroyer. It was produced in 1943 by mounting a 88mm PaK 43/2 anti-tank gun onto the chassis of all available Porsche Tiger prototypes (as Porsche lost the bid to produce the Tiger I tank) and protecting it with 200mm of armour plating. The resulting vehicle was slow and difficult to operate, but it did pack a tremendous punch and was able to knock out enemy tanks at over three miles range. After the battle of Kursk, all surviving Ferdinands were converted into the final version – the Elefant, with a series of modifications, like the addition of a machine gun in the hull for close defence. Principal service: 1943. Numbers manufactured: 90.

Cost: 400 pts (Inexperienced), 500 pts (Regular), 600 pts (Veteran)

Weapons: 1 casement-mounted forward-facing super-heavy anti-tank gun

Damage Value: 11+ (super heavy tank)

Special Rules:

- Slow
- Unreliable: If the Ferdinand suffers one or more pin markers as a result of an enemy attack it automatically suffers one further pin marker in addition – such is its extreme operational unreliability.

SELECTORS

The Ferdinand is a Tank Destroyer for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. It is also a Tank Destroyer for the Operation *Citadel* of the Armies of Germany book, where it replaces the Elefant.



Ferdinand heavy tank destroyer

RSO/PAK 40

The Raupenschlepper Ost (RSO), which translates as 'caterpillar tractor east', was a wide-tracked transport and towing vehicle developed in 1942 specifically for use in the muddy and snowy conditions of the Eastern Front. In 1943, some 60 RSOs were modified by mounting on them a PaK 40 anti-tank gun and some light armour plates for the protection of the crew from small arms fire. The resulting tank destroyer version, regardless of the fact that it was quite slow due to the weight of all the extra additions, was rushed into use to face the growing threat of the Soviet armoured divisions.

Cost: 116pts (Inexperienced), 145pts (Regular), 174pts (Veteran)

Weapons: 1 forward-facing heavy anti-tank gun

Damage Value: 7+ (armoured carrier)

Special Rules:

- Open-topped
- Slow

SELECTORS

The RSO/PaK 40 is a Tank Destroyer for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. It is also a Tank Destroyer for all Theatre Selectors of the Armies of Germany book that allow a normal RSO.

BEGLEIT – STUG ESCORT INFANTRY SQUAD

The Stug assault guns occupied a somewhat curious position in the German's order of battle

because they were crewed by artillerymen, but circumstances meant they were often called on to fight as Panzers. As Stugs lacked a turret they could prove very vulnerable to enemy tank hunting squads, so at Kursk they were assigned *Begleit* (literally 'bodyguard') infantry to ride on their rear decks. The *Begleit* would disembark to clean out enemy infantry positions and keep tank hunters at bay, leaving the Stugs free to concentrate their fire on more valuable targets.

Cost: Regular Infantry 50 pts

Composition: 1 NCO and 4 men

Weapons: Rifles

Options:

- Add up to 5 additional men with rifles at +10 pts each
- The NCO and up to 6 men can have submachine guns instead of rifles for +3 pts each
- Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20 pts – another man becomes the loader

Special Rules:

- Assault gun riders: An assault gun rider unit can mount or dismount from an assault gun or tank destroyer counting it as a transport for these purposes. Once dismounted the unit is replaced by a few assault gun rider models placed on the assault gun itself. One unit of assault gun riders can ride upon one assault gun or tank destroyer. As with other transported units the assault gun riders cannot be targeted whilst they ride upon their assault gun; however, unlike with other troops, assault gun riders must immediately disembark if the assault gun they are riding upon is shot at. Regardless of what kind of weapon is shooting at the assault gun, as long as the firer is within range of the assault gun the assault gun riders disembark when the shot is declared and before rolling the dice to determine hits. Units disembarking in this way immediately go 'down' or remain 'down' if they are down already.

SELECTORS

Begleit count as an infantry squad for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. Alternatively, 0–1 *Begleit* squad can be added to platoons from the following selectors in the *Armies of Germany* book: Operation *Citadel*; Defence of the East; Defence of Italy; Normandy; Operation *Watch on the Rhine*; Holding the West Wall; Operation *Spring Awakening*; Last Levy.

STRAFBATTALION PENALINFANTRY SQUAD

As early as 1941, Germany fielded penal units such as *Bewährungsbataillone* 500 (500th Probation Battalion). Initially their members were recruited from soldiers that committed some infraction while already under arms. Later, some civilian-convicted felons were also added to the *Strafbattalions*, but only people who committed minor crimes. The idea was that these units would be used in the most dangerous tasks, but if a soldier behaved well enough, his sentence would be commuted or at least reduced. As the situation worsened for the Axis and manpower shortages became more pressing, more serious criminals were recruited and other units like the *Bewährungstruppe* 999 (aka 999th Light Afrika Division) were deployed, with mixed results. For example, if the unit included a high number of felons that had been imprisoned for 'political

crimes', they were very likely to desert to the enemy at the first chance. The entry below allows for all different levels of Strafbattalion, from the equivalent to Regular Wehrmacht units to Inexperienced Shirkers.

Cost: Inexperienced Infantry 35pts or Regular Infantry 50pts

Composition: 1 NCO and 4 men

Weapons: Rifles

Options:

- Add up to 5 additional men with rifles at +4pts each (Inexperienced) or +7pts each (Regular)
- The NCO may have a submachine gun for +3 pts
- Up to 1 man can have a Panzerfaust in addition to other weapons for +10 pts each
- Up to 1 man can have a light machine gun for +20 pts – another man becomes the loader

Special Rules:

- Strafbattalion can be Shirkers at a cost of -3pts per model

SELECTORS

Strafbattalion count as an infantry squad for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. They also count as infantry for any selector of the Armies of Germany book set from 1941 onwards (except for Operation *Mercury*).



Stug II Ausf. D

***BAGRATION* TO BERLIN**



Urban warfare in Berlin, by Peter Dennis © Osprey Publishing Ltd.

Taken from Campaign 159: Berlin 1945.

PRELUDE

Arise, vast Land in awesome might!

For mortal combat gird

Against the powers of evil night,

The fascist hordes, accursed!

Let storms of indignation rage

And righteous wrath outpour!

This is a sacred war we wage,

A people's sacred war.

The Sacred War, Soviet patriotic song

Through the Summer and Autumn of 1943 the Red Army maintained pressure all across the Ostfront. German Army Group South was forced to give ground after the battle of Kursk in the face of two huge Soviet counteroffensives in July and August. The German defences, backed up by SS and Panzer divisions, took a heavy toll of the attackers, but after bitter fighting the Red Army finally succeeded in liberating Kharkov on 23 August in what the Germans called the Fourth Battle of Kharkov. The Germans had hoped to hold on at the river Dneipr for long enough to rest and refit their battered divisions. However Soviet forces pushed across the river and formed several dangerous-looking bridgeheads that later broke out and, despite a strong counterattack from the recently reinforced Fourth Panzer Army, liberated Kiev by the end of the year.

Despite all this, the Red Army was making less progress than it had hoped. Repeated attempts to encircle Army Group South had failed, while offensives against Army Group Centre and Army Group North produced little gain for the horrendous casualties they suffered. When Axis forces finally withdrew from the Rzhev salient near Moscow and from the outskirts of Leningrad, it was not because the Red Army succeeded in smashing through their well-fortified positions, but because events in the south had made their position untenable. An attempt early in 1944 to invade Romania through the Carpathian Mountains was likewise rebuffed.



The simple fact was that although the Heer and Germany's allies had suffered terribly, they were down but not out. Axis forces were rebuilding themselves ever faster as they got closer to their homelands and the new generation of Panzers still held a powerful edge in combat. It was true that crash Soviet development programmes to create tanks and tank destroyers able to face up to Tigers and Panthers were bearing some fruit in the shape of the SU-85, the IS series and the T34/85. However the Germans had improved machines of their own and their surviving Panzer veterans had a level of tactical experience that made them hard to beat.

In the spring of 1944 the front lines ran more or less straight from the Gulf of Finland in the north to the Black Sea in the south. However a vast bulge existed below the Pripyet marshes where Army Group South had been pushed back to the western edge of the Ukraine and Southern Poland over the previous year. Above that Army Group North and Army Group Centre still held all of the Baltic States and large tracts of Belorussia from prepared defences amidst forests, swamps and many rivers. Hitler and the German high command identified the southern sector as being at the greatest risk so they kept their most powerful Panzer forces there in positions behind the line to plug any breaches made by a renewed Soviet summer offensive.

Stavka, on the other hand, was confronted with many problems it had not encountered before. The Red Army's numerical superiority was becoming more marginal, its technological advantages had been surpassed. Lend-lease equipment, particularly 220,000 trucks, was helping to ease the strain somewhat, but logistics were becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the further the Red Army advanced into the blasted wastelands left in the wake of the Axis retreat. The Soviets needed a plan to unhinge the Axis defences and resume the offensive, particularly as the long promised and often-delayed 'second front' from the Western Allies was about to open in France in June 1944. Once again the art of deception, *Maskirovka*, would provide the key.

OPERATION *BAGRATION*

Through April, May and June 1944 Stavka laid its plans to push the invaders out of Belorussia and the Ukraine entirely, clear the Baltic States and drive as far as East Prussia and the Vistula River in Poland. It was an ambitious plan involving millions of soldiers and thousands of tanks. The powerful Red Army forces south of the Pripyet that were recovering after their failed invasion of Romania were heavily reinforced. A total of twelve tank and five mechanised corps with 4,500 aircraft flying in support began gathering in the Northern Ukraine facing Lvov and the Carpathian Mountains. Panzer, artillery and anti-tank units were hurriedly moved down from the well-entrenched divisions of Army Group Centre to help fend off the anticipated massed tank assaults. A special new Army Group, Army Group North Ukraine, was formed and began to ready itself for the coming maelstrom as best it could.

On 22 June, three years to the day after the invasion of the Soviet Union in Operation *Barbarossa* the first Red Army offensives began. Probing attacks occurred up and down the front as Soviet platoons tested it for weaknesses. Early on the 23rd, Operation *Bagrations* opened to the howl of 2,306 Kayushas and the thunder of 10,563 artillery pieces backed up by 11,514 mortars. The torrent of fire that poured down on the German front lines was without precedent in the war – defences were flattened and whole companies annihilated where they stood. The barrages rolled deeper into the German positions and were replaced by strikes from IL-2 and Pe-2 ground attack aircraft while thousands of tanks crawled towards the stunned defenders. Alarms from the front spread like shockwaves as recognition set in – the massive Soviet assaults were occurring against Army Group Centre and nowhere near the reinforced divisions to the south!



The Red Army liberates another Russian village.

The first day's fighting made substantial inroads into the German defences, with some of the fiercest fighting occurring on the Moscow–Minsk highway from Smolensk to Orsha. This area was protected by deep defensive belts of mines and entrenchments guarded by the 78th Sturm Division, one of the most powerful infantry formations in Belorussia. Echeloned battalions of Soviet tanks and engineers struggled to make headway against the tank traps and minefields in the face of resistance by tenacious German soldiers equipped with Panzerfausts. Further to the south, attacks on the Ninth Army across the marshy Drut flood plain were repulsed, but inflicted heavy losses on the Germans. The Red Army regrouped to prepare for fresh attacks after further air and artillery bombardment in the morning.



By the second day of the offensive, German frontline units were beginning to crumble under the pressure. Where powerful formations like the 78th Sturm Division held fast, they were bypassed as their neighbours were crushed. Hitler had issued his usual 'not one step back' command in response to requests to fall back and declared the towns and cities under threat to be *Feste Platze* – 'strong points' – to be fought to the last man. Such lofty rhetoric could not help Army Group Centre when 88% of its Panzers, 33% of its artillery and 50% of its tank destroyers had been deployed elsewhere. The Germans were outnumbered and outgunned by at least six to one in tanks and seven to one in aircraft. No amount of 'national will' could resist such firepower.

In less than a week, multiple breakthroughs allowed the Soviet tank and mechanised corps being

held behind the frontlines to lunge forward and thrust deep into the German rear. Vitebsk, Bobruysk, Orsha and Minsk were encircled in quick succession and the forces around them were crushed. Entire German corps were consumed in the conflagrations, with ruinous casualties inflicted on everyone from service personnel to command staff. Time and again German formations became surrounded and had to fight their way out in defiance of their orders. By the time reinforcements arrived on the scene to try and stabilise the front, most of Army Group Centre was gone, encircled and destroyed piece by piece through Soviet 'deep operations', Stavka's own take on blitzkrieg.

The worst was yet to come. Operation *Bagration* was part of a three-step plan. First, the obvious grouping of forces in the south ready to renew the offensives there. As predicted, this had drawn strength away from the centre and kept the Panzer formations tied down in the area. Next, having built up unnoticed, Operation *Bagration* was launched to create a crisis for Army Group Centre. Red Army forces including eight tank corps and two mechanised corps with massed artillery and air support blasted paths through the German fortified front line then exploited them. Finally, as the Panzers rushed back north to try and stem the tide of Soviet armour, the Red Army forces amassed in the south began their own offensives to drive through the Western Ukraine into Poland and Romania. *Bagration* was a stunning success, better than Stavka had hoped for, so the 'real' offensive towards Lvov landed with the impact of a thunderbolt. Army Group Northern Ukraine was routed after two weeks of fighting.

The German losses during Operation *Bagration* were horrific – around a quarter of the fighting forces on the Eastern Front totalling 17 divisions, making it a defeat worse than Stalingrad. Panzers and heavy equipment often had to be abandoned in the encirclements so the formations that did manage to escape were in no state to return to the fighting quickly. The overall losses included an estimated 400,000 casualties, and their seriousness can be measured by the fact that 31 out of 47 of the corps and division commanders for the units involved became casualties; the loss of irreplaceable experienced NCOs and officers was also keenly felt.

By the time the Soviet forces had to halt to draw breath and let their logistics catch up to them, they were on the Vistula close to Warsaw, in East Prussia and in the Baltic States. There were lasting political ramifications from the campaign. In August a renewed invasion of Romania prompted an internal coup and the beleaguered Axis power switched sides to join the Soviet Union. The *Armia Krajowa* (Polish Home Army) coordinated massed uprisings in Warsaw in an attempt to win their freedom before the Red Army arrived. Stalin displayed his monstrous cynicism towards Poland once again by choosing to hold his forces back, granting the most bestial units of the SS adequate time to murder 200,000 men, women and children while they reduced 95% of central Warsaw to smoking rubble.

VISTULA–ODER OFFENSIVE: THE ROAD TO BERLIN

For the rest of 1944, the Red Army consolidated its gains on the Vistula and fought off frantic German counterattacks. In the north a series of Stavka operations were undertaken to take the rest of the Baltic States and force Finland out of the war. To the south Romania was absorbed into the Eastern bloc, then Soviet forces turned their sights towards Hungary and the Balkans. However the main offensive towards Berlin was not renewed until January 1945.

Hitler's very last throw of the dice was failing at this time, an attempted surprise thrust through the Ardennes to cut off the Western Allies and deny them use of the Channel ports. Meanwhile the Red Army had built up three powerful army groups along the Vistula; the 1st Ukrainian Front under Konev, the 2nd Belorussian Front under Rokossovsky and the 1st Belorussian Front under none other than Zhukov himself. Nominally Zhukov had been given the prized assignment of capturing the enemy capital, but with the war's end looming so close politics were coming to the fore.

Stalin had manipulated his Marshals to promote a great deal of rivalry between them; Konev was an old adversary of Zhukov's, while Rokossovsky was aggrieved because he had been stripped of command of the 1st Belorussian Front so it could be given over to Zhukov. If the 1st Belorussian's attack should fail it was clear that either one of his rivals could be given the go-ahead to assault Berlin. Later during the offensive Stalin called all three marshals to Moscow to be shown 'evidence' that the Western Allies were making plans to reach Berlin, which spurred the marshals to move quickly to meet the Allies at the Elbe and cut them off from advancing any further. That, however, all still lay in the future.

On 11 January 1945 Zhukov struck across the Vistula from two bridgeheads secured during Operation *Bagration* while Konev attacked from a third bridgehead in the south at Baranow. The Red Army had a five to one advantage and quickly crushed the defences around the bridgeheads with devastating barrages followed by infantry attacks and final exploitation by tank shock groups. The cobbled-together German formations guarding the Vistula shattered under the onslaught. The 4th Panzer Army, for example, had lost two thirds of its artillery and a quarter of its infantry in the first four hours of the assault. As in *Bagration*, the few German formations that managed to hold their ground and retreat in good order soon found Soviet tank/mechanised groups streaming past them on both flanks.

Once in open country, the Red Army tanks raced forward at up to forty kilometres per day, often catching German rear echelon troops by surprise in the towns and villages between them and their next objectives on the Oder River. Behind the armoured spearheads, German units struggled to fight their way out of encirclements under ferocious artillery and air bombardments. The rapid Soviet advance also triggered a tidal wave of refugees, as ethnic Germans fled west to escape the 'savage hordes' portrayed by Nazi propaganda. In truth the civilians did have much to fear, as Red Army units indulged in an orgy of rape and looting in vengeance for the suffering inflicted on their own lands.

By 2 February the offensive was declared complete with several Soviet bridgeheads

established over the icebound Oder just 60 kilometres from Berlin. However the quick advance had left Zhukov's northern flank worryingly exposed to attacks from surviving German forces in Pomerania. A German counter-offensive called Operation *Solstice* (*Sonnenwende*) was launched on 15 February and enjoyed some initial success by relieving the besieged garrison at the town of Arnswalde.



Soviet jeep



A lone King Tiger prepares to face the Soviet hordes.

Within a few days, however, the assault bogged down in the face of determined Soviet resistance and muddy conditions that limited the mobility of the German's formidable Tiger IIs. On February 19th Zhukov counterattacked and two days later the German forces were in retreat and suffering heavy losses. Although the German counter-offensive was a complete failure, it convinced Zhukov and Stavka to delay any further advance on Berlin until Pomerania, Silesia and East Prussia had been cleared and the frontline troops fully resupplied. The delay proved to be two months long, a controversial decision that gave the Germans an opportunity to rebuild their

broken defences for one final struggle.

THE END

On 15 April the three Soviet fronts attacked again, Rokossovsky fresh from finally capturing Königsberg in the north, Zhukov in the centre and Konev to the south. Between them the three Fronts amassed 2.5 million men (including 78,556 soldiers of the 1st Polish Army), 6,250 tanks, 7,500 aircraft, 41,600 artillery pieces and mortars, 3,255 truck-mounted Katyusha rocket launchers and almost 100,000 other vehicles. The opening Soviet barrage for 1st Belorussian Front expended 98,000 tons of ammunition.

The Germans were outnumbered by more than three to one and their formations were a ramshackle collection of beaten Heer and SS units, Hitler Youth and Volkssturm scraped together as 'Army Group Vistula'. However they had been busy preparing for the attack under the command of the expert defensive general Gotthard Heinrici. Heinrici correctly identified the east-west autobahn as the most likely main thrust for the attack and heavily fortified the Seelow heights area to guard against it.

Heavy fighting erupted across the frontlines, and the heavyweight blow Zhukov directed against the autobahn area foundered at first. German engineers had allowed the Oder to flood creating a morass in front of the Seelow heights. Heinrici withdrew his first line of defenders to avoid the opening Soviet barrages and then re-manned the front lines after the Red Army attack had begun.

To the south, Konev's forces had been making faster progress against lighter opposition and forced a wedge behind the remnants of the German Ninth Army to isolate it from Berlin. On 17 April Stalin permitted leading elements of Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front to turn towards Berlin, spurring Zhukov to even greater efforts to break through at Seelow Heights. It was one of the last pitched battles of the war and Heinrici's defences resisted the Soviet steamroller for a total of four days before the 1st Belorussian Front broke through on the 19th.

On 20 April, Hitler's birthday, Soviet long range artillery opened fire on the city and kept it under continuous bombardment until its surrender. To the north the 2nd Belorussian Front started an encircling movement around the capital by attacking the flank of the rapidly disintegrating Army Group Vistula. On the 21st the success of a local counterattack by Army Group Centre against Konev's left flank in the vicinity of Bautzen gave Hitler another straw to grasp at, but by the 22nd grim reality settled in. Hitler realised the war was lost, but he refused to abandon the capital, vowing to stay to the end. On the 24th the arms of the Red Army envelopment closed and Berlin was isolated from the surviving German forces outside it.

The German defenders in Berlin amounted to some 45,000 soldiers, survivors of depleted Heer and SS Divisions supplemented by a similar number of police, Hitler Youth and Volkssturm divided into eight defensive sectors. The last unit to arrive on the 25th was a contingent of French SS volunteers – the severely depleted Charlemagne Division – that were assigned to Defence Sector C in the path of the main Soviet assault. On the 26th the Soviet 8th Guards Tank Army under Chuikov (the primary commander at Stalingrad) fought their way into the city from the south. They were engaged in stiff fighting with two depleted veteran German divisions, *Nordland* and *Müncheberg* around the Tempelhof Airport, but relentlessly pushed the defenders back.

Three major Red Army thrusts developed in the next days, two from the south and one from the south-east. The Soviet troops fought their way into the city centre in small moves; house by

house and block by block, often clearing defending positions by infiltrating through subways, backyards, sewers and cellars. Heavy artillery and tank support was liberally used, and specialist assault engineers with flamethrowers and explosives blasted their way forward. Fierce hand-to-hand combats took place, with particularly heavy fighting around The Reichstag building, the Moltke Bridge over the river Spree and Alexander Platz. Many Germans and Foreign SS alike fought to the death in the well-founded belief they would not survive if captured.



Nothing can halt the inexorable Soviet advance.

In the early hours of the 29th Hitler signed his last will and testament before marrying his mistress Eva Braun. At dawn Soviet forces crossed the Moltke Bridge and launched an attack on the enormous Reichstag building, a symbolic target only as the seat of the German parliament had not seen use since 1933. Nonetheless for the Soviets flying their banner from the top of the Reichstag would show their comrades and the whole world the extent of their victory.

Well-entrenched defenders and supporting fire from the 12.8cm guns of a giant concrete flak tower located at the Berlin zoo delayed the attackers until evening when they breached the walls and started fighting, room-by-room through the interior. The red banner was unfurled at 10.50pm on 30 April (the famous photograph of the event is a re-enactment the following day), although fighting at the Reichstag continued until 2 May when the 1,500 German survivors still inside surrendered.

Hitler, true to his word, committed suicide on the afternoon of the 30th and his body was burned in the Chancellery Gardens alongside that of his new bride. The Nazi hierarchy twisted on the hook before agreeing to the unconditional surrender of Berlin on 2 May, after surviving troops and large numbers of civilians attempted to break out of the city. A week after Berlin had fallen, what was left of Nazi Germany surrendered to the Allies. The war in Europe was over.



German forces, April 1945 (L-R): Leutnant, Grenadier-Regiment 1099; Grenadier, Grenadier-Regiment 1075; Feldwebel, Panzergrenadier-Regiment Müncheberg 1, by Stephen Andrew © Osprey Publishing Ltd. Taken from Men-at-Arms 326: The German Army 1939–45 (4).

FIGHTING THE BATTLE WITH *BOLT ACTION*

The downfall of the Third Reich is rife with possibilities for tactical battles of all kinds featuring the most iconic vehicles of World War II. Although the German armed forces were on the verge of collapse, there were still plenty of small units of hardened veterans determined to fight on to the bitter end against the Slavic hordes, and advanced weaponry which verges on the level of science fiction for the period. The Red Army, on the other hand, is at the peak of its efficiency, yet suffering from much the same problems of supply and replacements that thwarted the German's blitzkrieg.

SCENARIOS

GENERAL SCENARIOS

All of the scenarios in the *Bolt Action* book are eminently suitable for the series of offensives that end in Berlin:

- Scenario 1: Envelopment
- Scenario 2: Maximum Attrition
- Scenario 3: Point Defence
- Scenario 4: Hold Until Relieved
- Scenario 5: Top Secret
- Scenario 6: Demolition

The following scenarios from this book may also be used for *Bagration* to Berlin with some minimal modifications.



The remaining German forces pull back en masse.

- Scenario 2: Stormy, Stormy Night on [page 14](#). (Red Army attacking)
- Scenario 3: Assault on the Mannerheim line on [page 26](#) (without the snow and ice, Axis defending).
- Scenario 4: Pocketed on [page 28](#). (without the snow and ice).
- Scenario 5: Bridgehead on [page 42](#) (Red Army attacking, use the Limited Visibility Scenario Special Rules).
- Scenario 6: Hedgehog on [page 44](#) (without the snow and ice).
- Scenario 8: Block Busting on [page 61](#) (Red Army attacking).

The modifications noted for An Unequal Struggle on [page 41](#) for Barbarossa can be used for many scenarios in this period. It was rare for the Germans to achieve a local force superiority during this period, but it still occurred on occasion – however in most cases it was the German's turn to be overwhelmed by a seemingly endless tide of enemies.

BAGRATION TO BERLIN SPECIALSCENARIOS

The following scenarios, 'Breakout' and 'Battle of Berlin', have been designed to reflect incidents during the final portions of the war in the east.

TERRAIN

The opening of this campaign takes place in Western regions of Belorussia and the Ukraine fairly close to the Pripyet marshes. Thick forests and marshy ground are a feature of these areas as well as numerous streams and small rivers (for *Bagrations* the Soviets fielded a large number of engineering units specifically to overcome these obstacles). Much of the fighting was undertaken for control of main highways, rail lines and the settlements that lay along them. Units often took to the depths of the forests in order to escape or get around points of resistance. As the fighting moved west into Poland, open farmland began to predominate more in the central areas although tracts of the Baltic coast East Prussia were notably wilder. All-weather roads became more predominant and the Soviet tank armies used these to great effect to hasten their advance.

BERLIN

Berlin in the modern era has been almost entirely transformed since the battle in 1945 and only a handful of major landmarks survive in the shape of the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag building. It's notable that over 30% of Berlin was given over to parks and open recreation spaces, the most famous being the *Tiergarten* (Animal Garden), a large park adjacent to the Reichstag. Wartime Berlin was dominated by brick and stone-built shops, tenements and offices, mostly built in the late 19th and early 20th Century, as well as imposing neo-classical institutes, opera houses and governmental buildings. By the time of the Soviet attack much of central Berlin been reduced to rubble by Allied air raids and Soviet artillery.

WHAT IF?

The final weeks of the war in Europe were pregnant with possibilities for all the nations involved, providing for a number of interesting 'what if?' scenarios with different sides than you'd find in a historic event. For example:

WESTERN ALLIES AT BERLIN

General Eisenhower as Supreme Commander saw no point in expending lives fighting for Berlin because it was inside the lines of demarcation fixed for the Soviet Union's sphere of influence when the war was won. As such, the city was only going to be returned to Soviet control when Germany was defeated, but what if the Red Army's offensive had stalled at Seelow Heights or failed to cross the Oder? Under such circumstances British and American troops might have been necessary to capture Germany's last bastion. It's even possible that a three-way struggle could have developed with late-arriving Soviets attacking everyone within the city without regard to their allegiances.

WESTERN ALLIES (AND GERMANS?) VERSUS SOVIETS

During the last days of the war many Germans clung to the hope that the Western Allies would recognise the Soviet Union as the next threat to the western democracies and join forces with them against the mutual enemy. Churchill certainly foresaw the possibility, and had strategic plans drawn up called 'Unthinkable' to measure the likelihood of success if the Western Allies had to fight the Red Army. It didn't look good, but revitalising the shattered Heer utilising their abundant experience might have been just enough to turn the tide. American President Franklin D. Roosevelt died on 12 April and Hitler held hopes that there might have been a 'falling out' amongst the Allies on the eve of their potential victory, which would seem like a tenuous hope if something similar hadn't happened to Germany once before in 1759.

AXIS VERSUS AXIS

Similarly, allegiances on the German side sometimes came down only to the immediate members of a man's squad or the 'extended family' of his unit. The disintegration of the totalitarian regime that had held Europe in terror for so long released all the pent-up hatreds that had been kept firmly under the Nazi jackboot. Some fought on with surprising bravery while others turned on each other like rats in a trap. Thousands vanished into the countryside to mingle with the hordes of refugees and released prisoners, some with the intent of continuing the struggle but many looking only for escape. SS 'Drum-Head Court Martial Groups' scoured the countryside looking for deserters and executing them on the spot. Some Heer units became so sickened by the bestial outrages they had seen, they took to firing on SS units on sight. In at least one incident German Heer and released US prisoners fought side-by-side against SS death squads coming to execute them.

SOVIETS VERSUS SOVIETS

Another interesting 'what if' scenario is to pit Soviets against Soviets in the race to Berlin. The rivalry between Konev and Zhukov was well known by their troops and every soldier wanted to be 'first in at the kill' to share the glory when the fascists' capital was taken. Others might have

been motivated by an opportunity to loot the treasures the Nazis were rumoured to have collected, a vast fortune in stolen art and precious metal there for the taking. Added to this, there were also large contingents of troops from different countries fighting under the banner of the Red Army including Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Ukraine and the most far-flung states of the Soviet Union, few of which shared a common language and most of which had deep historical grievances with one another. Whatever else their motivations could be, Red Army units also had a legendary thirst for vodka in truly prodigious quantities!

***BAGRATION TO BERLIN* THEATRE SELECTORS**

Theatre Selectors suitable for *Bagrations* and the battle of Berlin can be found in the *Armies of Germany* and the *Armies of the Soviet Union* books. The additional units already shown in the previous sections of this book may be included in their appropriate categories for Operation *Bagrations* as desired.

SCENARIO 11: BREAKOUT

From the opening of Operation *Bagration* to the final struggle in Berlin, retreating Axis forces often had to fight their way through Red Army encirclements as the front line crumbled around them. Such battles often became a race between the mobile elements of the formation trying to smash a path through Soviet blocking troops before daybreak and enemy reinforcements could arrive.

FORCES

This scenario is designed to be played with equal points values on both sides. Axis and Red Army reinforced platoons are chosen from the appropriate Theatre Selectors with the following restrictions:

- The Axis platoons must include their full allocation of transport and towing vehicles.

SET-UP

This scenario is designed to be played along the length of a six by four feet gaming surface. A road stretches from the east (short) table edge to the west (short) table edge, roughly bisecting the table into two equal halves.

Place an anti-tank minefield section in the middle of the table cutting the road in two.

The rest of the table should be covered by a medium density of fields and wooded terrain, representing the areas at the side of the road. If available, place a few farm buildings near to the road. If hills are being used, the majority should be placed in the western half of the table.

DEPLOYMENT

The Red Army player must deploy first. Half of their force (rounding down) is deployed west of the minefield. All other Red Army units are left in reserve (see reserves page 119 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). All Red Army units can use the hidden set-up rules (see Hidden Set-up page 117 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook), and of course can start the game in Ambush. In addition roll a D6 for each Red Army infantry unit, on a roll of 4, 5 or 6 that unit may be Dug In at the option of the Red Army player (See Scenario Special Rules on [page 102](#) of this book).

The Axis player's units are not set-up on the table at the start of the game. The Axis player must nominate up to half of their force (rounding up) to form the first wave. All other Axis units are left in reserve (see reserves page 119 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook).

SPECIAL RULES

LIMITED VISIBILITY

The Breakout scenario uses the limited visibility rules, which can be found on [page 104](#) of this book. The Breakout scenario counts as a Dawn Assault so normal visibility will be almost certainly be restored in the final turns.

RESERVES

Axis reserves can enter the battle along the east table edge. They may not outflank in this scenario. The Red Army reserves must outflank in this scenario and enter along one of the long table edges to represent reinforcements rushing in to assist from the encircling forces.

OBJECTIVE

The Axis player must try to move forces off the western table edge, or at least into the Western half of the table. The Red Army player must try to stop him and inflict maximum damage in the process. Note that in this scenario, Axis units are allowed to deliberately move off the table from the west table edge to achieve their objective.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During turn 1, the Axis player must move their entire first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on the 'east' short table edge, and must be given either a *run* or *advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of the first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 8, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2 or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5 or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game calculate which side has won by adding up victory points as follows. If one side scores at least 2 more victory points than the other then that side has won a clear victory. Otherwise the result is deemed too close to call and honours are shared – a draw!

- The Red Army player scores 2 victory point for every enemy unit destroyed.
- The Axis player scores 1 victory point for every unit in the Western half of the table at the end of the game.
- Each Axis unit that exits the Western table edge earns the Axis player 3 victory points.

SCENARIO 12: BATTLE OF BERLIN

Berlin had been subjected to round-the-clock air raids by the Western Allies as the Red Army approached. Once within artillery range, Soviet guns dumped more high explosive on the city than the air raids had done. Overwhelming numbers of Red Army tanks and infantry supported by crushing barrages fought their way into the city according to a meticulously prepared plan, seizing city blocks, bridges and road junctions as they broke Berlin's defensive rings one by one.

FORCES

This scenario depicts a small force of Axis defenders attempting to halt a Red Army assault group. The Axis player picks a force to an agreed points, the Red Army player picks a force to a total of three times that amount (e.g. 1,500pts if the Axis player has 500pts).

In addition to his force the Axis player receives two bunkers, three 'hard cover' linear obstacles, two minefields and one free artillery observer (in addition to his normal force limits).

Each linear obstacle must be up to 6" long and 1" tall, and should provide hard cover (so use trenches, low walls, earth embankments, sandbags and the like). You can replace any number of 'hard cover' linear obstacles with 'soft cover' ones (barbed wire etc.) and if you do so, you get two 'soft cover' obstacles for each 'hard cover' one you surrender.

USING CAPTURED ENEMY VEHICLES

On all theatres of the war the combatants made use of enemy materiel that had been abandoned by the enemies as they retreated in a hurry or surrendered *en masse*. However this happened on a vast scale on the Eastern Front, due to the long supply lines and the massive encirclements that characterized this front, not to mention the sheer amount of vehicles and guns used.

In terms of *Bolt Action*, a strict application of the rules for force selection does not normally allow you to field tanks and guns from other forces. There are a few exceptions to this, however, such as the captured Soviet tanks in the Finnish list, or the captured Axis vehicles in the Partisans list, or the lend-lease vehicles in the Soviet list.

Following the same spirit of these exceptions, we think it's great fun to collect a tank or a gun from an enemy force and paint it in your own colour scheme... like a T-34 with Wehrmacht colours and markings, or a Panzer IV in Soviet camouflage. So, please feel free to undertake these fun modelling tasks, as I'm sure that your friends will not stop you fielding these vehicles in your force, as long as you pay the right points for them and they are taken simply to replace an equivalent 'slot'. For example, a Soviet platoon could include a 'captured' 88mm anti-tank gun with Soviet crewmen, as long as it would take the 0-1 artillery slot allowed for that platoon and the right points were paid.

As a rule of thumb, we tend to apply one further limit when we allow forces to purchase enemy 'captured' vehicles and guns. We say that the unit can be purchased only as Inexperienced, or at best as Regular (if there are good records of a particular vehicle/gun

being used in abundance by the enemy). This simulates the fact that the soldiers would be unfamiliar with the captured materiel, or if you prefer it can reflect the relative scarcity of its ammunition, spare parts etc., which would make its use and maintenance trickier. If you really want, and if you find an excellent historical reason for it, you can even allow the use of captured vehicles with a Veteran crew, but we feel they should then be penalised by adding the Unreliable rule to them (see below). This rule represents the same problems highlighted before, and ensures that only their rightful owners can make use of the vehicle or gun 'at its best', which seems just fair!

- **Unreliable:** a captured vehicle's or gun's chronic lack of ammunition and spare parts means it often suffers from extreme operational unreliability – if the unit suffers one or more pin markers as a result of an enemy attack, it automatically suffers one further pin marker in addition.

Bunkers should be large enough to accommodate a single unit of infantry or artillery. The rules for bunkers are on page 104 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook. Minefields are approximately 6" x 6" and may be marked or unmarked at the option of the Axis player.

SET-UP

A 6"-wide road runs from the middle of one long table edge to the middle of the other long table edge, roughly bisecting the table into two equal halves. A second road runs between the mid-points of the short table edges to form a crossroad at the middle of the table and dividing it into roughly equal quarters. The rest of the table needs to be covered by a high density of buildings, ruins and rubble. You can also include additional smaller roads and connecting side-streets to ease manoeuvring during the game.

The Red Army player next selects one of the short table edges as their point of entry and then places three objective markers; one must be placed within 6" of the crossroads at the centre of the table and two must be placed within the two table quarters furthest from the Red Army table edge. Counters, coins or other suitable markers can be used to mark objectives although a prominent terrain piece like a specific building or statue can make for a more satisfying target to aim for. Once the objectives have been placed the Axis player sets up their bunkers and obstacles and marks or notes the location of minefields.

DEPLOYMENT

The Axis player must deploy first anywhere on the table that is more than 12" from the Red Army's table edge. Their units may be Dug In at the option of the Axis player (See Scenario Special Rules on [page 102](#) of this book) and may use hidden set-up (see Hidden Set-up on page 117 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). One unit must be placed in each of the bunkers that were placed during set-up.

The Red Army player's units are not set-up on the table at the start of the game. The Red Army player must nominate up to half of their force (rounding up) to form the first wave. All

other Red Army units are left in reserve (see reserves page 119 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook).

SPECIAL RULES

CITY FIGHTING

The Battle of Berlin scenario uses the City Fighting rules which can be found on [page 108](#) of this book.

REINFORCEMENTS

Axis reinforcements might arrive from among the scattered units of defenders fighting around the city – or they might not. At the end of each turn after the first roll a die to see what units, if any, arrive to help the defenders.

- 6: 1x Panzer V Panther Ausf G (Inexperienced crew)*
- 5: 1x Volks Grenadier squad
- 4: 1x Volkssturm squad
- 1–3: Nothing. Any potential reinforcements are pinned down in other sectors.

*Any tank with a lower cost may be substituted if no model is available. Only ONE reinforcement tank is available at a time, if a 6 is subsequently rolled for reinforcements while a reinforcement tank is already in play another squad of Volks Grenadiers appears instead.



The last levy - Berlin's dogged defenders

If models are not available for the reinforcements rolled the Axis player is allowed to default down to any lower numbered result. Casualties incurred during the battle can be recycled as extra reinforcements as required.

Reinforcements can enter the table from any point on the short table edge opposite the one chosen by the Red Army, and must be given either a *run* or *advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as reinforcements.

OBJECTIVE

The Axis player must hold the objectives and prevent the Red Army player from capturing them. The Red Army player must capture the objectives at all costs.

FIRST TURN

The battle begins. During turn 1, the Red Army player must move their entire first wave onto the table. These units can enter the table from any point on the Red Army's short table edge, and must be given either a *run* or *advance* order. Note that no order test is required to move units onto the table as part of the first wave.

GAME DURATION

Keep a count of how many turns have elapsed as the game is played. At the end of turn 10, roll a die. On a result of 1, 2 or 3 the game ends, on a roll of 4, 5 or 6 play one further turn.

VICTORY!

At the end of the game the winner is the player in control of the most objectives. To capture an objective there must be one of your units within 3" of an objective at the end of the final turn, and there must be no enemy units within 3" of it. If both players hold an equal number of objectives the game is a draw.

ADDITIONAL UNITS

SOVIET UNITS

BIELSKI PARTISAN SQ UAD (LATE-WAR)

The Eastern Front was infamous for the harsh treatment inflicted on civilian populations by the German invaders, and particularly by the SS. These terror tactics often backfired, creating group of survivors that were just as ruthless when fighting the occupiers and their collaborators, animated by an unquenchable thirst for revenge. One of the most representative examples of these groups is represented by the Bielski partisan band, who operated in Eastern Poland. The Bielski partisans were named after the Polish Jew family that was at the head of the organisation and who had suffered greatly during the German occupation. This entry can also be used to represent any other band of desperate freedom fighters that were ready to die to avenge the horrors they had witnessed, like the fighters of the many 'liberation armies' such as the *Armia Krajowa* (Polish Home Army).

Cost: 35pts (Inexperienced)

Composition: 1 leader (NCO) and 4 Men

Weapons: Rifles

Options:

- Add up to 15 additional riflemen for +7pts each
- Three men can replace their rifle with a submachine gun for +3 pts per model
- One man may have a light machine gun for +20 pts. Another man becomes the loader
- One man can have a Panzerfaust for +5 pts (late-war only)
- Equip all men with Anti-Tank Grenades for +2 points per model

Special Rules:

- Green
- Tank Hunters (if anti-tank grenades option is taken)
- Vengeance. If the enemy force includes any SS units, the partisans count as both Fanatics and Tough Fighters



Soviet partisans on the move.

SELECTORS

The Bielski Partisans are an infantry squad for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. They are also an infantry squad for all Theatre Selectors of the *Armies of the Soviet Union* book that include partisan squads.

IS-3 HEAVY TANK

The IS-3 was a major redesign of the earlier Iosef Stalin line and its radical features have influenced all post-war tanks since. It retained the powerful 122mm gun of the IS-2 but mounted in a completely new dome-shaped turret with exceptional armour thickness. The frontal hull was also reworked to have a greater slope for increased protection giving it a long, pointed nose that earned it the nickname *Shchuka* (Pike). Overall, the new tank had a remarkably low silhouette, but it was less cramped inside than its predecessors and had an improved rate of fire. The IS-3 entered the Red Army's inventory in May 1945, but were too late to fight in the West, although they did participate in the victory parade at Berlin in September. IS-3s did see action in the Far East in August 1945, and must have been truly unstoppable behemoths against the Japanese with their limited anti-tank capability. IS-3s saw considerably more action in the service of Egypt against Israel, soldiering on for almost three more decades. Principal service: 1945–73. Numbers manufactured: 2,311.

Cost: 480 pts (Inexperienced), 600 pts (Regular), 720 pts (Veteran)

Weapons: 1 turret-mounted heavy anti-tank gun with co-axial MMG, 1 pintle-mounted HMG on the turret

Damage Value: 11+ (Super-heavy tank)

Special Rules:

- HE: instead of causing D3 HE hits an HE shell causes 2D6 hits
- Advanced armour: The IS-3s exceptional frontal armour surpassed all contemporary designs so against all shots hitting the front of the vehicle it counts its damage value as 12+

SELECTORS

The IS-3 is a Tank for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. It does not fit into any available Soviet Theatre Selector, as in World War II it only saw action against the Japanese in the very last few days of the war. So, either use it in a very late-war Soviet force for the Far East or for 'what if' scenarios.

BM-31-12 HEAVY KATYUSHA

Starting in 1944, the heavier M-31 rockets were mounted on Studebaker US6 U3 series truck chassis to create a more mobile launcher. The experiment proved a success and the BM-31 saw extensive action in Budapest and Berlin where its relatively short range was more than compensated for by the devastating salvo it could unleash. Principal service: 1944–45. Numbers manufactured: 1,800.

Cost: 56 pts (Inexperienced), 70 pts (Regular), 84 pts (Veteran)

Weapons: 1 forward-facing heavy Katyusha multiple rocket launcher

Damage Value: 6+ (soft skin)

Special Rules:

- Multiple launcher
- Heavy Rocket Launcher: this heavy rocket launcher fires HE (3D6) rockets rather than the usual HE (2D6) rockets. However, to represent the fact that it is so slow to reload, when it fires it immediately suffers D3 pin markers. It must then be given a successful Rally order to reload it before it can be ordered to Fire again

SELECTORS

The BM-31 Heavy Katyusha is Self-propelled artillery for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. It is also Self-propelled artillery for all Theatre Selectors of the *Armies of the Soviet Union* book from 1944 onwards.

TANK EQUIPMENT OPTIONS

PT-34 MINEROLLER

As early as 1942 experiments were conducted with fitting sets of heavy spiked wheels to the front of various Soviet tanks for the purpose of clearing a safe path through minefields. The device was called a *Protivominniy Tral* (counter-mine trawl) and it was found that the T-34

had the best power transmission and armour for utilising it. During Operation *Bagration* the fighting on the Moscow-Minsk highway saw whole battalions of PT-34s and PT-34-85s used in an effort to breakthrough the thick defensive mine belts.

Any T-34 or T-34-85 can be updated to a PT version for +10 pts. This option gives the tank the following special rules:

- When you give this unit an Advance order, it automatically clears any anti-personnel minefield sections it moves into. If it moves into an anti-tank minefield section, it clears it automatically, but the mineroller is destroyed and cannot be used any longer in the game.
- Slow (this rule is lost the moment the mineroller is destroyed by an anti-tank minefield)

GERMAN UNITS

33RD WAFEN-SS GRENADIER DIVISION 'CHARLEMAGNE' (1ST FRENCH) SQ UAD

Formed in September 1944 from the remains of the units of French volunteers that had fought in the German armed forces since as early as Operation *Barbarossa*, the Charlemagne SS division fought mostly on the Eastern Front. This was due both to the anti-communist feelings of most adherents and so that they would not have to fight against Frenchmen fighting with the Western Allies. The unit never reached the size of a true division, fielding a maximum of two understrength regiments and a few support specialist units. It was the last Axis unit to arrive to take part to the last stand in Berlin before the city was completely cut off. Knowing what expected them at the hands of the Soviets, and what would almost certainly happen to them if they were captured by the Western Allies and brought in front of Free French tribunals, most of the remaining men of the Charlemagne fought to the death, often mounting suicidal charges against Soviet tanks in the ruins of Berlin.

Cost: Veteran Infantry 85 pts

Composition: 1 NCO and 4 men

Weapons: Rifles

Options:

- Add up to 5 additional men with rifle for +17 pts each
- The NCO and up to 4 men can have submachine guns instead of rifles for +3 pts each
- The NCO and up to 4 men can have assault rifles instead of rifles for +5 pts each
- Up to 2 men can have a light machine gun for +20 pts – for each light machine gun included another man becomes the loader
- Up to 6 men can have a Panzerfaust in addition to other weapons for +10 pts each
- The squad can be given anti-tank grenades for +2 pts per man

Special Rules:

- No way out: To represent their desperate situation in late-war, Charlemagne SS units have the Fanatics special rule, except that even if they are left with a single man, no Morale test is taken!

- In addition, they automatically pass morale checks for being assaulted by enemy tanks
- Tank hunters (if anti-tank grenades taken)

SELECTORS

The Charlemagne SS squads are equivalent to late-war SS infantry squads for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook and for all selectors in the *Armies of Germany* book including late-war SS infantry squads.



FLAMMPANZER 38(T) HETZER

The Flammpanzer 38(t) Hetzer replaced its main gun with a Keobe flamethrower. It was deployed on the Western Front, and first saw action in late 1944 during the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes although it is possible that it also saw action in the final fighting in the east. Numbers manufactured: fewer than 50.

Cost: 120 pts (Inexperienced), 150 pts (Regular), 180 pts (Veteran)

Weapons: 1 hull-mounted, forward-facing flamethrower and 1 MMG with 360-degree arc of fire

Damage Value: 9+ (medium tank)

Special Rules:

- Weak Sides:** The Hetzer's weak side armour means that all shots to the side of the vehicle count as to the rear (i.e. they have a +2 penetration modifier rather than +1)
- Flammpanzer:** Internal, volatile fuel tanks makes each tank a potential fireball. Flame-throwing vehicles are more likely to be destroyed by damage, as explained on page 51 of the rulebook

SELECTORS

The Flammpanzer 38(t) Hetzer is a Tank for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. It is also a Tank for the following Theatre Selectors of the *Armies of Germany* book: Operation *Watch on the Rhine*; Holding the West Wall; Operation *Spring Awakening*; Last Levy.

PANZERJAGDFAHRZEUGEN AUF FAHREGSTELLBREN (E)

Late in the war some examples of the captured British Bren carriers were converted into light armoured personnel carriers to carry three Panzerschreck teams into combat. The team's long Panzerschreck tubes were stowed together centrally and pointing forward giving rise to the idea that they may have been intended to be fired that way. In game terms, you can allow German forces for this period to purchase Bren carriers from the entry in the *Bolt Action* rulebook as transports for their Panzerschreck teams.

INFANTRY EQUIPMENT OPTIONS

ASSAULT RIFLE

Goliath Demolition Teams, Sturmpanziere assault engineers and Begleit Stug escort infantry during this period gain the following additional equipment options:

- The NCO and any number of men can have assault rifles instead of rifles for +5 pts each

PANZERFAUST

Sturmpanziere assault engineers and Begleit Stug escort infantry during this period gain the following in addition to their existing equipment options:

- Up to 4 men can have a Panzerfaust in addition to other weapons for +10 pts

LUFTEFAUST

Also called the Fliegerfaust is some sources, the Luftfaust was an attempt to create a shoulder-fired anti-aircraft weapon in a similar vein to the highly successful Panzerfaust. It comprised multiple tubes (five initially, seven in later versions) holding 20mm spin-stabilised rockets. When triggered, it launched all of the rockets in a slightly diverging pattern. Empty Luftfausts were found scattered in the debris after the battle of Berlin so some were most certainly used in combat.

Special Rules

Any unit included in the 1945 – Last Levy selector of the *Armies of Germany* book can take Luftfaust rocket launchers. Up to one model in the unit that has been equipped with a Panzerfaust can replace the Panzerfaust with a Luftfaust for +10pts. The Luftfaust counts as a light autocannon that only fires HE rounds and has a range of 24” instead of 48”. It does not have the Team and Fixed special rules, but instead it has the Flak and One-Shot special rules.



KRUMLAUF ASSAULT RIFLE

The Krumlauf was a curious design – an assault rifle or machine gun with a curved barrel and reflector sight for shooting around corners. They were intended primarily for Panzer crews to give them the ability to shoot enemy tank hunters right next to the tank, but they had their uses in street fighting as well. Ultimately the design was impractical with the special barrels being prone to rapid wear and bullets often coming out of them fragmented, but in the dying days of the Reich anything and everything was used to its best effect.

Special Rules

Any unit included in the 1945 – Last Levy selector of the *Armies of Germany* book can take a Krumlauf assault rifle. Up to one model in the unit can replace his weapon with a Krumlauf for +10pts. The Krumlauf counts as an assault rifle. In addition, when the unit has a Down order, every time you remove the Down order from the unit at the end of the turn (or even if you decide that the unit stays Down for the next turn), the model with the Krumlauf can fire his weapon as normal. This represents him firing the weapon while remaining in cover.

GERMAN NIGHT-FIGHTING UNITS

Not many people know that towards the end of World War II the German Army had already developed and produced some night-fighting devices. Though it was too late to change the course of the war, these experimental weapons were the first examples of such gear as night-vision goggles and targeting systems that many modern soldiers use in the field today. The following units are additional units for the *Armies of Germany* supplement book for *Bolt Action*.

PANZER V ‘PANTHER’ AUSEF G WITH IR EQUIPMENT

In late 1944, the German army had developed night-vision equipment for Panther tanks in the form of the *Sperber* (Sparrow Hawk) system. It consisted of a 20cm FG 1250 infrared searchlight (with a useful range of 600m), coupled with an image converter operated by the tank commander. This allowed the tank to illuminate its targets with a searchlight that its crew could see, but the enemy could not – an incredible advantage in night fight conditions. Thankfully for the Allies, not enough of these devices were produced in time to make a difference, and only a relatively small number of these night-vision equipped Panthers saw action on the Eastern Front and in the Battle of the Bulge. Principal service: 1945. Numbers manufactured: around 50?

Cost: 304 pts (Inexperienced), 380 pts (Regular), 456 pts (Veteran)

Weapons: 1 turret-mounted super-heavy anti-tank gun with co-axial MMG and 1 forward-facing, hull-mounted MMG. 1 turret-mounted 20cm IR searchlight

Damage Value: 9+ (medium tank)

Special Rules:

- Advanced armour: The Panther's heavy frontal armour was comparable to that of some much heavier tanks, so against all shots hitting the front of the vehicle it counts its damage value as 10+
- 20cm Infrared Searchlight: the infrared searchlight confers a +24" modifier to the Panther's spotting rolls

SELECTORS

The Panther with IR equipment is a Tank for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. It is also a Tank for the following Theatre Selectors of the *Armies of Germany* book: Operation *Watch on the Rhine*; Holding the West Wall; Operation *Spring Awakening*; Last Levy.

SDKFZ251/20 'UHU'

This modified Hanomag armoured half-track was equipped with night vision and a 60cm searchlight that could illuminate targets much further away than the Panthers' smaller searchlights. Attached to units of night-fighting Panthers and protected by infantry squads equipped with night-fighting assault rifles, the Uhu was designed to work in conjunction with the Panthers in order to try to make better use of the long range of their main guns. Principal service: 1945. Numbers manufactured: unknown.

Cost: 64 pts (Inexperienced), 80 pts (Regular), 96 pts (Veteran)

Weapons: 60cm IR searchlight with a 360-degree arc of fire

Damage Value: 7+ (armoured carrier)

Special Rules:

- Open-topped
- 60cm Infrared Searchlight: the infrared searchlight of the Uhu is a weapon with a range of 72" that only works when the Reduced Visibility applies because of night conditions (so not for fog and other weather conditions). When firing this weapon, pick a target as normal for the Limited

Visibility rules, but with a +60" modifier to the roll. If you manage to spot a target, then the weapon hits automatically and illuminates the target. No roll to hit is necessary and the target is not allowed any reaction, as they are unaware of the infrared light 'illuminating' them. Any unit with IR equipment also get a +60" modifier (instead of its normal bonus) to their spotting rolls towards the target that has been 'illuminated', until either the target moves or the Uhu moves or tries to spot another target

SELECTORS

The Uhu counts as an Armoured Car for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. It is also an Armoured Car for the following Theatre Selectors of the *Armies of Germany* book: Operation *Watch on the Rhine*; Holding the West Wall; Operation *Spring Awakening*; Last Levy.



Nachtjäger squad

NACHTJÄGER SQUAD

Nachtjäger ('Night Hunters') were hand-picked SS and Wehrmacht veterans, equipped with StG 44 assault rifles with Vampir night-fighting devices. These consisted of a scope that allowed the soldier to see in the infrared spectrum, topped by a small IR searchlight powered by a battery that the soldier was carrying in a pack on his shoulders. This system could also be fitted on machine guns and other small arms. Whether or not these night-fighting elite units did actually see action, or were still in training towards the end of the conflict, is debated, but we think that it is likely that in the dire straits of the last few months of the war they were actually 'combat-tested'.

Cost: Veteran Infantry 125 pts

Composition: 1 NCO and 4 men

Weapons: Vampir Assault Rifles

Options:

- Add up to 5 additional men with Vampir Assault rifles at +25 pts each
- Up to 2 men can have a Vampir light machine gun for +20 pts – for each light machine gun included another man becomes the loader

- Up to 4 men can have a Panzerfaust in addition to other weapons for +10 pts each

Special Rules:

- Fanatics
- Vampir Infrared Searchlight: the infrared searchlight of Vampir assault rifles and light machine guns confers a +15” modifier to the spotting rolls of the models firing them. Models firing Panzerfausts do not get this bonus

SELECTORS

The Nachtjäger Squad is an Infantry Squad for the purposes of the generic Reinforced Platoon selector from the *Bolt Action* rulebook. It is also an Infantry Squad for the following Theatre Selectors of the *Armies of Germany* book: Operation *Watch on the Rhine*; Holding the West Wall; Operation *Spring Awakening*; Last Levy.

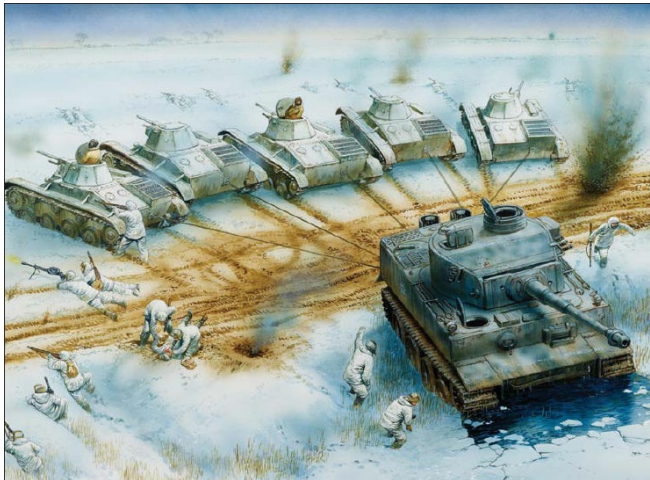
NEW SCENARIO RULES



The liberation of the Peterhof, by Peter Dennis © Osprey

SNOW, MUD, ICE AND FROSTBITE

A defining feature of the war in the east was the powerful effect of the seasons on the combatants. During the summer heat, thirst and dust were additional enemies to be fought; during spring and autumn, the foe became the clinging mud. Harshes of all was the winter, when ice, snow and frostbite conspired to disable men and machines at a frightening rate. The bitter cold alone could inflict terrible casualties on ill-prepared troops caught in the grip of the harsh Russian winter. During the Winter War in Finland, Red Army frostbite casualties exceeded 10% and the Axis suffered equally in the drive on Moscow in 1941. The following additional rules reflect the additional effects of winter conditions.



Five Soviet T-60s drag a Tiger out of the ice, by Peter Dennis © Osprey Publishing Ltd. Taken from Campaign 215: Leningrad 1941–44.

SNOW

Thick, heavy snowfalls are commonplace in continental Russia. In the depths of winter special precautions had to be taken to ensure roads did not vanish entirely underneath drifting snow and travelling off-road was virtually impossible except by men on foot (at great effort) or tracked vehicles.

In rules terms, areas of snow are treated as rough ground (see page 27 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook). This means that infantry and tracked vehicles are limited to making advance moves in snow, while artillery and wheeled vehicles may not move in it at all. Soviet tanks featured notably wider tracks than their opponents to assist with moving in snow and are not subject to this rule. Likewise ski-troops and Aerosans rely on snowy conditions so they are allowed to treat areas of snow as open ground for movement purposes.

MUD

The autumn rains and the spring meltdown of the winter snows created vast quagmires of deep mud on the Eastern Front, and even the roads were normally no more than dirt tracks, which turned into near-unusable rivers of mud as the advancing columns trod onto them with increasing difficulty before getting completely bogged down. Infantry and tracked vehicles could deal better with the mud (at least in the short-timescale represented by a *Bolt Action* engagement), but wheeled vehicles really struggled. Areas of mud are normally treated as difficult ground in *Bolt Action*. However, if you like to add an element of randomness similar to the one we used for ice, you can agree with your opponent to use the rules below for vehicles and artillery units moving across areas of mud – vehicles and artillery units treat mud as open ground, but any such unit whose movement is going to cross a section of mud must declare their intended move and then roll on the Deep Mud table the moment they start moving onto the mud.

DEEP MUD TABLE

D6 ROLL	RESULT
0	Buried deep: The unit cannot move for the rest of the game.
1–2	Bogged down: The unit has to stop, losing grip on the ground. The unit moves into the mud and then immediately stops (or does not move at all if it started the move in mud). The unit also suffers an extra -1 modifier to this roll the next time it moves.
3–4	Struggle: The efforts to cross this section of mud are very troublesome for your vehicle's traction. Vehicles continue with their move normally, but can only move through a maximum of 6" of mud as part of their move, after which they must stop. The same goes for Artillery units, except that they can move only up to 2".
5–6	Fairly solid going: This area was not as deep and soft as you thought. The unit continues with its move normally.

Deep Mud Modifiers

Fully tracked vehicle: +1

Half-track: +0

Wheeled vehicle, artillery: -1

ICE

The extremely low temperatures of the Russian winter meant tanks and men could usually move across frozen lakes and waterways with little risk – 3" thickness of ice is sufficient to bear a man's weight 10" thickness will support up to 7 tons, so iced-over water features are simply treated as open ground. However, the gamer in us all will say 'where's the fun in that?' So, if you

want to have a little more randomness in your battles, any units whose movement is going to cross a section of ice must declare their intended move and then roll on the Thin Ice table the moment they start moving onto the ice.



GAZ-98 Aerosan

THIN ICE TABLE

D6 ROLL	RESULT
0	Splash: The ice breaks and dumps the unit into the frigid waters beneath. Remove the entire unit as casualties – any individuals that manage to struggle out of the water will be in no state to continue fighting in sub-zero temperatures.
1–2	Creceeeaaaaaalkk The unit has to stop as the ice starts to crack visibly beneath them. Roll another D6 to determine how far the unit actually moves (slides) on the ice before it stops. The unit still has to roll on the Thin Ice table and suffers an extra -1 modifier to the roll next time it moves.
3–4	Seems safe enough: The unit has no problems moving on this occasion although it and any units following it might not be so lucky next time. The unit continues with its move normally, but units still have to roll on the Thin Ice table when crossing this part of the ice.

Solid as a rock The ice is thick enough to take any amount of traffic along the route the unit has followed. The unit continues with its move normally. In addition, no more Thin Ice rolls have to be made for other units following this exact same route.

Thin Ice Modifiers

Heavy or Superheavy Tank -3

Armoured car/carrier, light or medium tank -2

Artillery piece or soft skin vehicle: -1

Infantry making a Run move: -1

Small team: +1

Ski troops: +2

HE AND FLAMETHROWER WEAPONS ON ICE

Luring an incautious enemy onto thin ice is an eastern tradition that dates back beyond the 'battle of the ice' on Lake Peipus in 1242 AD, when retreating Teutonic knights met with a cold and watery demise at the hands of the army of Alexander Nevsky. There can be little doubt that coming under fire while on the ice would be a horrific experience. HE and flamethrower weapons will, naturally enough, be particularly effective against units on ice. To represent the attacker can reroll the dice for the number of hits scored against units on ice that are struck by HE weapons and flamethrowers of all kinds.



FROSTBITE

In scenarios where the frostbite rule applies, affected units must take a Morale check at the beginning of the game. If the test is failed, each point by which it is failed indicates the loss of one soldier or crewman from the unit in the case of infantry or artillery, or immobilisation in the case

of vehicles. If a vehicle is immobilised by frostbite while not on the table (including outflanking), it's considered destroyed – its passengers can arrive on the table on foot, but suffer an additional – 1 to their test for coming on to the table (when such test is needed).

DUG IN: FOXHOLES, TRENCHES AND GUN PITS

Every professional army since the Romans has understood the importance of digging in whenever time and terrain permit it. By the 20th century soldiers were routinely equipped with entrenching tools so that they could 'disappear' into the ground as fast as humanly possible. The simple truth was that a soldier hiding in a hole was massively harder to kill with bullets, explosives or shrapnel than a soldier out in the open.

In every theatre with suitable terrain all sides used gun pits, foxholes and trenches to defend their ground. In *Bolt Action* terms this means that defending units set up on the tabletop at the beginning of the game can have the advantages of Dug In positions. Dug In positions work a lot like the Hidden Set-Up rules in that regard, but in the case of Dug In positions the bonuses continue to function during combat.



*Bagramyan's breakthrough, by Steve Noon © Osprey Publishing Ltd.
Taken from Campaign 272: Kursk 1943.*

DUG IN RULES

Where indicated in the scenario, units can be Dug In at the start of the game (for scenarios where it is not specifically mentioned as a rule of thumb a unit that can use Hidden Set-Up is allowed to be Dug In). These units must be deployed on the tabletop at the start of the scenario and may be subject to the Hidden Set-Up rules as well. Dug In units are still placed on the table in the usual way, and must be marked in some fashion to show that they are hidden – any distinct token or marker will do.

A Dug In unit counts as 'Down' when shot at, even if it's not Down (additional -1 to be hit and the number of hits from HE is halved rounding down). If the unit does go 'Down' while Dug In, the benefits of being Down are doubled (i.e. -2 to be hit and only one-quarter damage from HE). Being Dug In offers no additional protection or benefit against enemy assaults (although tank assaults are an exception, see below)

Units count as Dug In until they're ordered to Advance or Run. If possible mark the locations of vacated foxholes, gun pits and trenches so that they can be re-occupied or captured by the enemy later. Card counters, plasticine or piles of small stones can be used as a makeshift solution, although gorgeous modelling solutions made with foamcore, clay or similar materials are preferred of course!

DUG IN VEHICLES

On the defensive it was common practice to dig in tanks as well as men, albeit considerably more digging was required! While the tank sacrifices its mobility, it gains protection by reducing its target size and not having its more vulnerable treads and hull exposed to enemy fire.

Dug In vehicles count as being in Hard Cover to attackers and count *immobilised* damage results as *crew stunned* instead. Dug In vehicles may not move during the game.

DUG IN WITH HIDDEN SET-UP

A unit can be both Dug-In and use Hidden Set Up, providing it satisfies the deployment restrictions for both – in this case it is assumed the Dug-In unit has had the time and opportunity to properly camouflage its positions.

The Hidden Set-Up rules take precedence until they no longer apply, the Dug In unit does gain the additional protection of counting as Down against HE fire while Hidden. Once Hidden Set Up rules no longer apply to the unit for any reason, the Dug In rules apply instead.

DUG IN VS PREPARATORY BOMBARDMENT

In scenarios which use the Preparatory Bombardment rules (see Preparatory Bombardment on page 118 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook) being Dug In doesn't modify the effects of the bombardment. It's assumed that units are already taking cover as best they can from the bombardment and that in the event of a direct hit being dug in won't offer any additional protection from a heavy calibre shell, bomb or rocket.

DUG IN VS TANK ASSAULT

A foxhole or trench would give protection for a few moments, but if a tank actually stopped on it and twisted on its tracks a few times 'like a man crushing out a cigarette' (to quote one observer) the hole would collapse with messy results for the unfortunate occupant.

Models from Dug In units automatically pass their morale check and are not moved aside when assaulted by a tank as they simply duck down in their entrenchment and allow the tank to pass overhead. However, if a tank ends its Assault movement on top of any Dug In models those models are removed as casualties and the unit must take the morale check for tank assault as normal.

DIGGING IN DURING A GAME

We do not normally allow troops to Dig In during the course of a game, but if both players agree, troops can be allowed to Dig In during a game if they are given a *Down* order. Make an order test for the unit at the end of the turn, if it succeeds and the unit remains on Down orders in the same spot until the end of the next turn, they will count as Dug In at their current positions in the end phase of that turn.

As this can slow down the game and makes some scenarios harder for one side to win we present it as an optional rule for experienced players rather than as a general rule of play.

NIGHT FIGHTING

The following rules deal with the limited visibility and uncertainty caused by night operations. They can also be used for battles that occur in other situations of limited visibility, like in heavy fog, snow blizzards, sandstorms and the like. We have found that these rules add a layer of complexity to games of *Bolt Action*, and slightly slow down game-play, but they create a very different gaming experience, with different tactical challenges and extra tension that, we feel, perfectly captures the fear and confusion of fighting at night.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF NIGHT FIGHTING GAMES

Whenever you are about to pick a scenario for a game of *Bolt Action*, you can agree with your opponent that the game you are going to play is going to simply follow the normal game rules, or that it is going to be a Night Fight, in which case the Reduced Visibility rules (below) will apply throughout the game. Alternatively, you can decide that you are playing a Dawn Assault game, a Longest Day game, or a Flare! game.

If you cannot decide on which type of game to play, you may instead roll on the chart below at the same time as you roll for the scenario being played:

- 1: Night Fight
- 2: Flare!
- 3: Dawn Assault
- 4: Longest Day
- 5: Normal visibility game (or roll again, if both players agree)
- 6: Players roll-off and the winner chooses

DAWN ASSAULT

In a Dawn Assault, the game begins with the Reduced Visibility rules, but you must roll a die at the beginning of each turn after the first, and add the current turn number to the result (e.g. add +2 on turn two, +3 on turn three, etc.). On a modified total of 8 or more, the Reduced Visibility rules immediately cease to apply and visibility returns to normal for the rest of the game.

LONGEST DAY

In a Longest Day game, you begin with normal visibility, but you must roll a die at the beginning of each turn after the first and add the current turn number to the result (as above). On a modified total of 8 or more, the Reduced Visibility rules immediately begin to apply and last for the rest of the game.

FLARE!

In a Flare! game, the action takes place at night, with Reduced Visibility throughout, but you must roll a die at the beginning of each turn after the first. On a roll of 4 or more, a powerful flare goes up (or series of flares are parachuted in, or a heavy fog curtain lifts temporarily ...) and visibility is normal for that turn only. Roll again for visibility the next turn, and so on.

NIGHT FIGHTING RULES

LIMITED VISIBILITY

When you are determining whether a unit is able to see a target (for shooting, assaulting, etc.) at night, first follow the normal rules for line of sight. If the target would be visible according to the normal rules, then start the normal shooting procedure and declare the target. Then, before the 'target reacts' step, you must take a spotting roll for the acting unit to see whether they can actually identify the target through the darkness:

Roll 2D6 and add or subtract any of the modifiers listed below that apply, down to a minimum modified total of 2.

VISIBILITY MODIFIERS

- +6" The target has a 'Fire', 'Advance', 'Run' or 'Rally' order die on it.
- +6" The target has a 'Muzzle Flashes!' marker on it (see below)
- -6" The target has a 'Down' order die on it.
- -6" The target is a small unit
- +6" The target is a vehicle

If the modified total is equal or higher than the distance between the firing unit and the target, then the target is visible and the firing/assaulting sequence continues as normal – target reacts etc.

If the total is lower than the distance to the target, the attacking unit cannot shoot/assault the target and its action ends immediately (the acting unit's Order Die is simply left as it is), as the men nervously scan the darkness in search of targets.

MUZZLE FLASHES

The worst thing a unit can do at night is to open fire, as the loud noises and particularly the flashes of their weapons will reveal their position to the enemy. And tracer rounds are infamous for 'working both ways'. To represent this, when a unit fires any weaponry against an enemy, it must be marked with a 'Muzzle Flashes' marker (a coin or other token). This token makes the unit more visible, as shown in the chart above, and will remain with the unit until it receives another order.

Note that it is possible for a unit to receive a Fire! order die, but then to be unable to actually open fire (because of a failed spotting roll, for example). These units do not receive a Muzzle Flashes! marker – you only get one when you actually fire a weapon at the enemy.

FIRES

Burning vehicles or buildings illuminate a surprisingly wide area at night and anyone near them is very likely to get spotted. Count any unit within 6" of a building or vehicle that's on fire as having a 'muzzle flashes' marker even if they haven't fired.

REACTING TO AN ASSAULT

If a unit successfully declares an assault at night and the target reacts by firing at the assaulting models, the target unit must first make a spotting roll to see if they can see the assaulting models (before they are moved). If the target unit fails this spotting roll, it may not react, just as if the

assaulting unit was within 6" when they declared the assault – a bloodcurdling surprise charge out of the darkness!

INDIRECT FIRE

If a weapon with Indirect Fire has 'zeroed in' on a target, there is no need of making another spotting roll to fire at that target; simply roll to hit on a 2+, as normal.

FORWARD AIR AND ARTILLERY OBSERVERS

When an artillery observer calls in a barrage, it does not get a Muzzle Flashes! marker, as he's not firing any gun (unless of course someone else in his team does fire a weapon as part of the same order). When calling in a barrage, the observer does not need to make a spotting roll, but can instead place the marker anywhere on the table, as he would be relying on maps and noise/gun flashes rather than direct observation of targets. However, to simulate the increased chances of something going wrong, you suffer a -1 on the Artillery or Smoke Barrage charts (down to a minimum of 1).

Air Strikes cannot be called at all at night, making Forward Air Observers quite useless.

MINEFIELDS

Minefields became a major factor in the Great Patriotic War. Anywhere that the battle lines began to stabilise or major defences were sited quickly sprouted its own crop of mines, while retreating troops left veritable 'devil's gardens' of booby traps and mines in their wake. Behind the lines, partisans used mines to make travelling on any road by night a potentially risky prospect. Detection was no simple matter either. The Red Army had a great fondness for wooden 'cigar box' mines, and often old battlefields being fought over contained such a wealth of shrapnel and scrap metal that mine detectors were useless.

As the war went on, both sides honed their skills with mines to new levels of frightfulness. At Kursk for example, the Soviets laid a million mines during the spring growing season so that their tripwires and pressure plates were completely hidden by vegetation in summer. During the battle they also had special 'mobile obstacle detachments' dedicated to laying fresh minefields overnight in the predicted directions of advance the German Panzers would take the next day. For their part German pioneers 'subverted' minefields by moving mines onto paths the Soviets had left clear for themselves.

MINEFIELD RULES

Players can decide to add minefields to any of their games, as long as they agree beforehand. Usually the defender in a scenario can deploy mines, since attackers are pushing into a new area and have not had the opportunity.

Initially, we are going to provide rules for visible, marked minefields, as we assume that both sides are adhering to the Geneva Convention and marking their minefields. We shall also deal by default with anti-personnel mines, as they are the most common. Later on we'll also provide rules for anti-tank, mixed, dummy and concealed minefields.

MINEFIELD SECTIONS

The default minefield section in *Bolt Action* is a 6"-sided square area. Larger minefields can be made by placing several of these sections next to each other.

Normally, we tend to allow the defender in a scenario two minefield sections per full 1000 points of his force. Or if you prefer you can allow a certain amount of points to be spent on minefields (up to 10 per cent of the force total), and say that each section costs 50pts.

A minefield section can either be a cardboard base appropriately decorated, much like an area of rough ground, or can be delimited ad hoc before a game using four 6" long obstacles (like a 6" length of barbed wire), or even simply using four counters set up at 6" distance to mark the corners of the minefield.

EFFECT OF MINEFIELDS

When any unit (friend or foe) moves into a minefield section, the opponent can interrupt their movement once at any point during their move, just as if the minefield itself was in Ambush. When the opponent declares that the minefield is 'attacking' the unit, the controlling player must

halt at that point and note how much movement the unit has left. Assuming the unit survives its encounter with the minefield, it will finish its move as normal.

After the unit has been positioned at its 'Ambush' point, the opponent rolls one die to see if the unit triggers a mine, effectively rolling to hit the unit with the minefield section itself. A minefield section needs a 3+ to hit an Inexperienced unit, 4+ for a Regular unit, and 5+ for a Veteran unit.

Units belonging to the player that has placed the minefield are supposed to know the location of the mines, so they can force the opponent to re-roll any successful hit, as long as they are moving at an Advance. Also, units of combat engineers (Engineers, Pioneers, etc.) are trained to deal with these obstacles and always benefit from this re-roll when moving at an Advance, even when crossing the enemy's minefields.

If any unit (including friends and engineers) is sufficiently foolhardy to cross a minefield at a Run, the minefield rolls three dice when ambushing the unit rather than one!

If the minefield misses with all of its dice, the unit has not triggered a mine and can finish its move normally. If the minefield scores hits, then each successful hit is resolved with a Penetration value of +2 against non-armoured targets and +3 against armoured targets (Damage roll of 7+). Roll to damage as normal. A unit that is hit also suffers D3 pin markers rather than just 1. Note that the higher value Pen against armoured targets reflects the fact that the anti-personnel mine hits the weakly armoured belly of the vehicle – not normally considered from the point of view of other hits.

If the unit is not destroyed, or broken by a resulting Morale check, it can finish its move as normal.

Note that a single minefield section can attack a unit only once per move, but can attack any number of units moving over it during the turn. Also, if a unit was foolish enough to cross two (or more!) minefield sections as part of the same move, each section can ambush it in turn.

ANTI-TANK MINEFIELDS

At the beginning of the game, you may secretly write down that any of your minefields is an anti-tank minefield. Anti-tank minefields only affect vehicles, and are ignored by infantry and artillery units that move over them. However, hits inflicted on vehicles are at +5 Pen rather than the normal +2.

MIXED MINEFIELDS

You can also create a mixed minefield section by 'using up' two of your sections. So, if for example you were allowed two sections in the scenario being played, you can lay both out as anti-tank or anti-personnel minefields, or deploy a single one as a mixed minefield. Make a note of which section is mixed.

A mixed minefield section combines the best of both worlds and will affect infantry and artillery with +2 Pen hits, but vehicles with +5 Pen hits.

FLAMETHROWER MINES

The Red Army employed two types of 'static explosive flamethrowers', the FOG-1 and FOG-2, which for all practical purposes worked as mines. They were successful enough that Germans made a direct copy of the FOG-1 called the Abwehrflammenwerfer 42 for their own use.

In game terms flamethrower mines work the same way as antipersonnel mines, but a unit that triggers a flamethrower mine section must also check morale regardless of the casualties inflicted. Vehicles that are hit but not penetrated by a flamethrower mine roll another die, on a result of 6 they are 'on fire' as described on the Damage Results table on page 87 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook. Flamethrower mines cost two normal minefield sections to deploy just like mixed minefields.

DUMMY MINEFIELDS

You can replace any real minefield section allowed by the scenario with two dummy minefield sections. For example, if you are allowed two sections, you can place three down. Make a note of which sections are dummies. Your opponent might notice this variation in the number of allowed minefields, in which case he'll know some minefields are dummies, but of course he won't know which ones!

When units enter a dummy minefield, roll to ambush them as normal (including any re-rolls that the opponent may force upon you). If you score a hit, however, you have to reveal the minefield is just a dummy, and from now on it counts as a cleared minefield section (see below), as a few mines were often left even in dummy minefields.

MINEFIELDS IN WATER

As mines in shallow and deep water are intended solely to destroy boats and amphibious vehicles, you cannot place antipersonnel minefields in water terrain (Shallow or Deep), but you can place anti-tank minefields, or dummy ones, in either type of water terrain (see rules for movement in water on [page 31](#) of *Battleground Europe*).

CONCEALED MINEFIELDS

Instead of visibly deploying your minefields sections, you may halve the number of sections available and deploy them hidden without any markings. We cannot condone and do not encourage the use of this despicable practice, which is against the Geneva Convention!

Make an accurate note of where the minefield sections are. You can either use coordinates and/or make a map of the table as you wish. You cannot place hidden minefields in the enemy's set-up zone.

During the game, when a unit moves into the minefield, you must reveal it (the unit has spotted that something is amiss) and place it on the table, and then proceed to ambush the unit as normal.

CLEARING MINEFIELDS

Once a minefield section has scored one or more hits on a unit passing over it, the opposing player rolls a die. On the roll of a 6, the minefield is **cleared**. If the unit that was hit was a vehicle with damage value 8 or more, the minefield is instead cleared on a 4+. This represents any subsequent troops either following in the tracks of the first or moving over craters left by previous exploded mines.

A cleared minefield is left in place, but from that point onwards the minefield only ever scores hits on a 6, regardless of the quality of the troops crossing it, and always rolls a single die 'to hit'.

even against units moving at a Run. Re-rolls for friends and Engineers still apply. This represents hurried mines clearance under fire, which is not exactly a thorough process, and might definitely leave a few isolated mines behind.

Thankfully, there are alternative means of clearing a minefield other than walking your infantry or driving your tanks over it. These are listed below with their rules.

MANUAL MINE CLEARANCE BY INFANTRY

Any infantry unit that has at least five models inside a minefield can be ordered to attempt to clear it using their bayonets. The unit must be given a special 'Mine clearing' order, which is the same as giving the unit a Down order – place a Down marker next to the unit and then make a 'mine clearing roll' applying all of the modifiers below. In order to clear the minefield section, the result needs to be a 6 after modifications. Note that a natural 6 is always a success and a natural 1 is always a failure. In addition, if a natural 1 is rolled, the minefield section ambushes the unit as normal (and in this case, an anti-tank minefield **does** affect the tampering infantry!).



German forces advance cautiously through prime minefield terrain.

MINE CLEARING MODIFIERS (CUMULATIVE)

- Veterans +1
- Inexperienced -1
- Engineers +1
- Mine-clearing gear* +2
- Per pin marker on unit -1



*Any Engineer unit may be equipped before the game with mine clearing gear (Bangalore Torpedoes, mine detectors, etc.) at a cost of +1pt per model, at least one of the models should show this upgrade.

BLOWING IT UP!

Any weapon capable of Indirect Fire can target a visible minefield section. Aim for the centre point of the section and roll to hit as normal (including ranging in for successive shots). If a hit is scored, roll for the HE value of the weapon – if you score at least 6 hits on the minefield with a single shot, the minefield section is cleared.

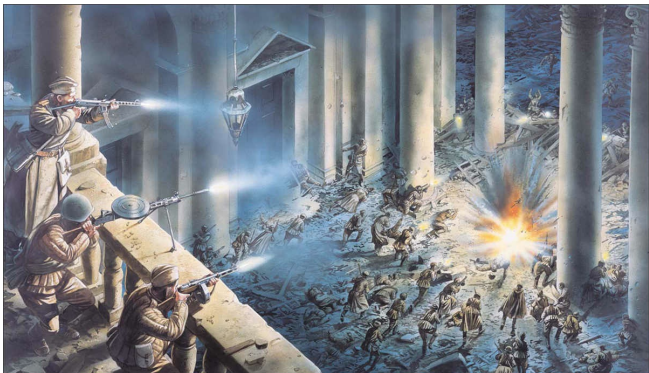
When resolving an artillery barrage 'Fire for effect' result, roll a die for each minefield section within range of the barrage (including concealed ones!). If you roll a 6, the minefield section is hit by a heavy howitzer as normal, and if you score at least 6 hits on it, it is cleared.

When firing a preparatory bombardment, roll a die for each minefield sections in the defender's set-up zone (including concealed ones!). If you roll a 6 that minefield section is cleared.

CITY FIGHTING

The Eastern Front was marked by some of the most vicious city battles of the war. Of them all Stalingrad is undoubtedly the most infamous, because the very heart of that city became a battleground for many months and the German Heer suffered its first catastrophic defeat there with the complete loss of Paulus' Sixth Army. However, there were many other cities that became battlegrounds in the east; Kharkov, Kiev, Sevastopol, Odessa, Voronezh, Vilnius, Warsaw, Konigsberg, Budapest and finally Berlin, to name but a few. Leningrad was besieged for almost three years and the fighting in its suburbs was a constant during that time. All of these places were torn apart by ferocious fighting and if the duration of the battles were shorter in some places than others the fighting was certainly no less intense.





The attack on the Reichstag, by Peter Dennis © Osprey Publishing Ltd. Taken from Campaign 159: Berlin 1945.

Fighting in built-up areas brings a perplexing set of extra challenges to unit commanders. Buildings, even ones reduced to rubble, make superb fighting positions for defenders while attackers must contend with moving through open streets to advance. The confusing landscape of ruins and rubble was easy to get lost in and squads often found themselves pinned down or cut off with little idea of where friends and enemies might be. Even gaining entry to a defended building could be a miniature battle of its own with fighting room-to-room and floor-to-floor using grenades, bullets and close combat to dislodge the defenders.

The city fighting rules are intended to supplement the rules for buildings on page 100 of the *Bolt Action* rulebook by laying out a number of additional challenges.

THE CITY AS A BATTLEFIELD

The kind of terrain pieces you have available to make up your city battlefield will dictate a lot about how it all fits together in terms of the rules. Some players like to construct modular boards with built-in ruins, buildings and other features. Others have baseboards with features – particularly ‘sunk-in’ ones – like streets and canals, but with separate buildings that can be removed for ease of transport and storage. The third approach is the simplest one – as many buildings and ruins as possible placed on a suitably coloured/textured mat.

For the purposes of city fighting the terrain on the tabletop counts as one of four types:

- Rubble

- Buildings
- Roads
- Open Ground



RUBBLE

When buildings are destroyed they leave behind a big pile of rubble. Attackers found that, if anything, rubble was even worse to assault than the buildings it had replaced; instead of having obvious doors and windows to cover as they advanced, they found defenders might be lurking literally anywhere. Moving across large piles of loose rubble could be tricky, especially for multi-ton tanks!

MOVEMENT IN RUBBLE

Rubble counts as rough ground for movement purposes, but it offers additional perils for tracked vehicles moving across it. Tracked vehicles attempting to pick their way across irregular mounds of brick and concrete may slide sideways, 'belly out' or even crash through into cellars, sewers or other hidden voids beneath the rubble.

When a tracked vehicle is going to move across rubble that is above half the height of the vehicle model itself, declare their intended move and then roll on the Rubble table the moment they start moving onto the rubble.

RUBBLE TABLE

D6 ROLL	RESULT
0 or lower	Crash: The vehicle crashes through the rubble and into a cellar or sewer beneath. The vehicle is removed and it counts as destroyed.
	Bellied: The vehicle becomes temporarily immobilised by a

1-2	protruding obstacle pushing against its belly armour and preventing the tracks from gripping. Roll another D6 to determine how far the vehicle actually moves across the rubble this turn before it becomes immobilised until its next activation. Any shooting at the vehicle from the front that rolls a natural 6 to hit will strike its exposed belly armour (counts as rear armour). The vehicle can attempt to move across rubble again next turn.
3-4	Slipped: The vehicle moves a short distance before slipping awkwardly sidewise or backwards. Roll another D6 to determine how far the vehicle actually moves across the rubble this turn. The vehicle can attempt to move across rubble again next turn.
5-6	Crunch: With its engine roaring and treads clattering the vehicle is free to move across the rubble without any incident this turn.

Rubble Modifiers

Heavy or superheavy tank -2

Light or medium tank -1

Inexperienced crew: -1

Veteran crew: +1

SHOOTING IN RUBBLE

The plentiful hiding places rubble provides means the hit modifier it provides for infantry occupying it depends on a unit's current orders, as it is very important what a squad is actually supposed to be doing when they come under fire inside rubble.

Rubble counts as hard cover when shot across at targets behind it, but when shooting against a unit that has the majority of its models inside the rubble, the following modifiers apply instead of the normal -2 hard cover modifier.

TARGET ORDERS	TO HIT MODIFIER
No orders, Ambush, or Down*	-3
Fire or Rally	-2
Advance	-1
*Cumulative with the Down Modifier.	

BUILDINGS

See the *Bolt Action* rulebook for rules on buildings. As mentioned there any building that is more than 8"x 8" in size should be regarded as two (or more) buildings for game purposes. If you're

lucky enough to have buildings models with interior details it can work well to treat each room, hallway and staircase as a separate 'building' in the case of a city fight.

ROADS AND OPEN GROUND

Roads and areas of open ground represent a rare opportunity for fast movement inside a city, but they can also be a deadly trap for units brought under fire. Hard surfaces can channel or reflect bullets, blasts and shrapnel, and this, along with a stark absence of cover, means casualty rates are much higher in urban environments.

When rolling to damage infantry or soft-skinned vehicles that are on roads or open ground in a city fight add +1 pen.



Soviet T-34s thunder into a blazing German town.

SEWER MOVEMENT

Outflanking units can also opt to try and move through the city sewers so that they can emerge just about anywhere. Only infantry squads, headquarters teams and sniper teams can use sewer movement.

The order test penalty to arrive when using sewer movement is doubled to -2 instead of the usual -1. If the test is successfully passed the unit may use an *advance* or *run* order to move onto the table from any ground-level point on the tabletop that is more than 6" away from any enemy model.

If a FUBAR result is rolled by a unit attempting to use sewer movement, it gets hopelessly lost, suffocates or triggers a booby trap. The unfortunate unit is destroyed.

COMMAND AND CONTROL IN A CITY FIGHT

Another effect of urban terrain that was compounded by uncertain movement and high casualty rates was difficulty of maintaining adequate command control. The chaotic landscape conspired to make runners and radios unreliable. Individual units could become pinned down for hours waiting for orders or support. Snipers, infiltrators, booby traps and an uncertain front line would quickly dissipate any forward momentum and wreck any chance of a coordinated attack. Actions soon devolved into to sporadic squad versus squad engagements over a single building or landmark.

To represent the effects of command breakdown, the players may agree to use the following rule in a city fight scenario: at the end of each turn one of each player's units must remain on Down or Ambush orders and their dice is not returned to the cup. If none of a player's units are currently on Down or Ambush orders, the opposing player may select one unit at the end of the turn and change their orders to Ambush or Down (in which case the unit immediately loses a pin marker if it had one). Headquarters units may never be chosen for this purpose as their motivation and communications are generally superior.

This command breakdown effect is cumulative, so at the end of the second turn two units must remain on Down or Ambush orders, at the end of the third turn three units must remain on Down or Ambush and so on.

The intended effect is that both players will have a shrinking number of units to activate each turn, but it doesn't limit exactly which units you can activate. This means a well-placed (or lucky unit) might be able to push deep into the enemy lines, but with fewer and fewer supporting units.

Because Headquarters units are immune to this rule, a player's number of available order dice will never drop below their number of surviving Headquarters units. So stack up on officers, medics and observers when going into a city – you're going to need them!



Soviet urban anti-tank operations, by Steve Noon © Osprey Publishing Ltd. Taken from Elite 124: World War II Infantry Anti-Tank Tactics.

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