

Situations, Analysis, and Campaign Journal, PANZERBLITZ on the Eastern Front, By JAMES JOHNSON June - December 1941

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PanzerBlitz Barbarossa Introduction

In the humid, predawn darkness of a late June morning, the Second World War finally exploded into its full horrific scope. This was Operation Barbarossa, named for King Frederick Barbarossa (Red Beard), Germanic crusader against the eastern heathens in the late Twelfth Century. While the previous campaigns in Poland, Scandinavia, France, and the Balkans were certainly awesome in their scope, startling in their speed, and fearsome in their violence, in many ways they were only preludes to the apocalypse about to scorch across the steppes of the Soviet Union. These other campaigns can offer no comparison to the scale, savagery, or gravity of what we call the Eastern Front and the Soviets call the Great Patriotic War. Here is where Hitler and his Third Reich were truly defeated, here is where the greatest conflict in human history was ultimately decided. Here is where the real "Greatest Generation" shaped the course of the Twentieth Century like no other . . . and now lies buried in the soil of Russia, the Ukraine, and Belarus.

Of course, this campaign journal is hardly the venue for a complete appraisal of the Eastern Front, oceans of ink have already been spilled by historians like Glantz, Overy, Keegan, Carrel, Werth, and a catalogue others. This is simply a record of research, game scenario design, tabletop tactics, and results for the first four months of that titanic conflict, as seen through the eyes of Jim Dunnigan's classic game *PanzerBlitz*.

As any student of *PanzerBlitz* knows, the game is a masterpiece, particularly since it was the first truly tactical game of its kind. In the decades since, new rules have been amended, countless opinions offered, and new variants produced, each adding a new dimension or perspective to this largest land campaign every fought. While the original box set includes a few situations set in the opening months of the war, and a *PanzerBlitz 1941* article was later published in *General* magazine (Raymond Cruz, Volume 13, Issue 1, Sep-Oct 1976) with more expansion 1941 situations, these have honestly fallen far short of any kind of representation of those battles. Limited unit counters included in the original box sets

forced designers to include units that weren't there, and the original rules set had no provisions for factors of command, morale, and supply, so critical in all campaigns but especially telling in any treatise on Barbarossa. Accurate and granular data on these battles was particularly hard to come by (especially on the Soviet side), in the pre-internet days such data was probably nonexistent to the "dining room table general." For these and many more reasons, it's understandable why Barbarossa gets rather thin treatment in *PanzerBlitz*. The Eastern Front is just too vast, changed too quickly, and is far too complex for a single commercially-viable box set to capture its complete tactical course in any kind of detail. Some things had to be left out, and who would want to play a series of games set in such a one-sided part of the war?

This campaign project hopes to redress this shortcoming. Using updated rules, custom counters, and updated internet research sources, a new series of PanzerBlitz situations will be researched, built, and playtested, all within the context of the first twentyfour weeks of the war. Students of the Eastern Front will quickly notice that, strictly speaking, this timespan includes not only Operation Barbarossa, but Operation Typhoon as well. What the campaign hopes to recreate, at least within the context of PanzerBlitz, is a tactical glimpse of Germany's first titanic shove into the Soviet Union, from the opening days of the war to the crippling Soviet counterattacks that finally threw them back from the gates of Moscow. Those months of '41 were a campaign of frantic movement, incredible distance, and bloody desperation, all with the fate of great nations hung in the balance. In other words, it's all the things that make PanzerBlitz the game it is.

Campaign Methodology

The situations of *PanzerBlitz Barbarossa* will be researched, designed, and played according to a number of groundwork parameters. These are briefly outlined below.

New Counters: Thanks to superlative sites such as gregspanzerblitz.com and Imaginative Strategist, we have a host of new counters available to represent the





units specific to the opening months of the war in are considered a "draw" on the game table. Russia. These include lower-value infantry units for under-armed and badly-led Soviet platoons, smaller weapons like the Soviet 45mm antitank gun, and a slew of "panzer bait" Barbarossa-era vehicles like the T-26, T-28, T-35, T-40, T-60, and BT-series "fast tanks." These are the tanks you never see in the original PanzerBlitz because by the time those situations take place, all this equipment has been destroyed, captured, or phased out. Through the grim necessity of attrition, the Red Army was forced to completely reinvent itself several times through the course of the Great Patriotic War, and these Barbarossa situations will deal with a period usually not portrayed in classic PanzerBlitz.

The Germans will also have a few new units, such as all the Mark III tank variants not included in classic PanzerBlitz, smaller 3.7 cm and 5.0 cm antitank guns, and aircraft like the He-111 and Ju-88 bombers, Bf-110 fighter-bombers, and the dreaded Ju-87 "Stuka" divebombers.

PanzerBlitz Liberation Rules: These situations will be built on the PanzerBlitz Liberation rules variant, which is based in turn on two fundamental shifts in the basic PanzerBlitz rules structure. One, Soviet units are based on 5-tank platoons or "half companies" just like the Germans (thus resulting in diminished AF and DF values for Soviet units). Two, the majority of the rules are retrofitted into PanzerBlitz from Arab-Israeli Wars, which corrects such long-standing problems as artillery mechanics, overclocked speed, overestimated range, "panzer-bush" movement rules, "armored" towns, etc. It also incorporates the rules for morale (probably better defined as "unit cohesion"), which is such a crucial difference between the opposing sides in Barbarossa.

Victory **Conditions:** Establishing victory conditions will be based upon historical results of the engagement in question. Obviously the Soviet player will "lose" almost every time, but if he can lose just a little bit less than his historical counterparts, or cost the Germans a few extra casualties or a little more time, the Soviet player will actually win a game victory. As best as we are able, victory conditions will be structured in such a way that the historical results

Therefore, given the historical results Wehrmacht was able to rack up in 1941, the victory conditions for the German player will almost always be extremely challenging. The German player will have to exceed those accomplishments, after all. The Soviets, on the other hand, will be crippled by horrible morale ratings, hamstrung by special rules, and burdened with a portfolio of units to make a PanzerBlitz player weep. Simply surviving will usually constitute a victory, because this was often more than the historical Soviets were able to do in those dark days. Rest assured that, for the Soviet player, "simple survival" will be challenging enough.

Sources

One of the most challenging aspects of *PanzerBlitz* Barbarossa will be the research, given the relative drought of information typically available for Eastern Front battles. However, a handful of sources deserve special mention.

First, the websites gregspanzerblitz.com and Imaginative Strategist were invaluable not only for their tables of organization and new unit types (especially those specific to the 1941 campaign) but also for "translating" this data into ready-made PanzerBlitz counters and rules.

From a purely historical standpoint, sites like niehortser.orbat.com were very helpful, especially in getting a handle on how Soviet formations were put together in this period. The whole site is strictly orders of battle, and their data on the Soviets in June of 1941 was a godsend. Also, the "Amvas" site at armchairgeneral.com/rkkaww2 (RKKA in World War II Project) has once again proven very valuable, especially when it comes to Soviet maps, orders of battle, and unit configurations. One especially valuable find was the site's day-by-day combat diary for K. K. Rokossovsky's 9th Mechanized Corps during the first weeks of the campaign. This is the kind of information that just isn't out there for the Soviets, whose historians are a little leery of really getting into the blood and guts of this campaign. Another is a massive (35MB) map that not only lists and marks











strength and manpower of every single division, as well as the air forces backing up the ground forces.

feldgrau.com Germans, the axishistory.com standbys have proven as valuable especially for more famous units, is amazing.

Of course, research was also conducted using more traditional sources. Foremost among these was Guderian's Panzer Leader, which provides great detail on his Panzer Group II's operations, starting with the initial advance through Brest-Litovsk and winding up with the last "Typhoon" battles around Tula. Of for these situations is, typically, a complete lack of course Guderian is a little self-serving at times, and he doesn't provide any detail on which Soviet brigades, divisions, or corps he's fighting. But his detail and reliability regarding the Germans is excellent, and is easily matched up with Soviet sources to provide enough material to build viable situations.

Richard Armstrong's Armored Guards: Red Army Tank Commanders was used, especially in regards to M. E. Katukov, always one of my favorite "Soviet Pattons." Katukov, initially commanding the 20th Tank Division of Rokossovsky's 9th Mechanized Corps, was involved in the war from the practically the very first day, and some of the situations in what units he's commanding, we know who's in the PanzerBlitz Barbarossa will "follow" the progression of battle at hand and can "rebuild" orders of battle by Katukov's units and battles.

Probably the undisputed master of pure tactical and operational science for the Eastern Front is David Glantz, and his Operation Barbarossa is an excellent umbrella source for the campaign, especially from the For greater granularity, his Soviet perspective. appendix contains a complete order of battle for both sides, sometimes down to battalion level. Another great reference is Osprey Publishing's Barbarossa Part A stack of new Russian 1: Army Group Center. websites also provides amazing degrees of detail, assuming you're using Google Chrome or other browsers with automatic translator functionality.

Magazines have also posted a number a great articles which, if you have the right issues, can really zoom in on one or two battles in sufficient detail to build situations. Strategy and Tactics No. 254 has an excellent article that was particularly helpful with

every division on both sides, but also the tank regards to the Soviet 4th Army's counterattacks vs. Panzer Group "Kleist" during June 24-27. World at War No. 27 presents a fiery debate from and multiple writers posing different questions about which battles during Barbarossa were really the most and reliable as ever. The detail that is available, crucial, and whether the Germans really could have won at all (and what such a victory really would have looked like). WWII History, January 2009 provided a solid article on the July battles in front of Smolensk, while their September 2009 issue went more in-depth on the Typhoon phase of the war.

> The biggest obstacle encountered during research granularity or detail in any of the available material. Sure, there are plenty of books, sites, and magazine articles. But always the war is too big to get down into any kind of detail. Arrows cut vast swaths across the maps, you're lucky to get individual positions on Soviet armies, never mind corps or divisions. Germanperspective sources of course have plenty of detail, but always the enemy is a faceless red mass. The most reliable antidote for this unfortunate imbalance is what we're calling the "Katukov Option." Here, we grab one well-documented Soviet commander and "follow" him through the campaign. Since we know looking up appropriate component units on our online sources, using educated guesswork to account for losses, etc. This data is then cross-referenced against German sources and hopefully we have a PanzerBlitz situation.

Sections

This campaign journal will be constructed in sections, with each section covering campaign set during roughly one month of the war.

- Section One (June): Battles at the Frontier
- Section Two (July): War of the Rivers
- Section Three (August): Crossroads of Fate
- Section Four (September): New Directions
- Section Five (October): The Typhoon Strikes
- Section Six (November): Enemy at the Gates
- Section Seven (December): Counterstrike!





SECTION ONE - JUNE, 1941 BATTLES AT THE FRONTIER

Operation Barbarossa ripped across the Soviet border on June 22, 1941, opening one of the most violent and least understood weeks in the history of warfare. From June 22 to June 30, an unbelievable amount of Soviet military power was eradicated, despite enjoying all the advantages of defense, numbers, and even better equipment in some cases. Exactly how the Germans were able to amass an army of nearly four million men right on the Soviet border and still achieve near-total surprise is also a question that still sparks debate to this day. These situations will explore some of the sharper battles during that horrific week, and set in motion the runaway advance that was to characterize much of Barbarossa.

Situation 01 First Clash of Armor Pruzana, Belarus **22 June, 1941**

Summary: One of the very first tank-on-tank actions of the Eastern Front comes during the first evening of the war. Here, the 18th Panzer Division has crossed the River Bug that morning (using submersible tanks originally meant for the invasion of England), bypassed the fortress at Brest-Litovsk, and now leads the XLVII Panzer Corps on the left wing of Guderian's Panzer Group II. After crossing the smaller Lesna River and penetrating some 37 miles into Soviet territory, they finally run into the Soviet 30th Tank Division at the village of Pruzana. This is part of the 4th Army's 14th Motorized Corps, struggling to form up in response to the German invasion. The battle is joined just as the sun starts to set on the first day of the war.

Background: Operation Barbarossa started at 03:15 hours on Sunday, June 22, 1941. It was without a doubt the largest military enterprise ever mounted up until that time, and remains so to this day depending on exactly how the size is measured and who's doing the measuring. A few things, however, are certain. with thousands of guns all along a 1,080 mile front.

From this moment until the surrender of Germany, this front would be the epicenter around which all other parts of World War II would ultimately revolve, and claim more lives than the rest of World War II put together.

The invasion was truly an "Axis" effort, fully 25% (almost one million) of all troops in the invading armies would be Rumanians, Hungarians, Finns, Italians, Slovaks, Croats, even French, Belgian, and Spanish volunteers. The Germans would eventually have over 600,000 ex-Soviets fighting for them, either in General Volkhov's army, the infamous Cossack detachments, or the "Hiwi" volunteer units. From the outset the Germans had tried to brand this effort as a Pan-European "crusade against Bolshevism," and to a large extent they certainly succeeded.

The surprise that morning was almost complete, and entire books have been written on why. Even today the debate rages over just how the Soviets allowed almost four million Axis troops to mass along their borders and still not see this coming. Hundreds of blatant reconnaissance flights had been flown over Soviet border defenses. Soviet spies had given clear and precise warning. The British "Ultra" intelligence section had read every OKH directive on the plan, and Churchill had likewise given Stalin ample notice. German embassies had been evacuated, and German ships had pulled out of Soviet ports. True, some Soviet generals had seen the writing on the wall. But they were prohibited from taking any "provocative" action thanks to Stalin's wishful thinking that these German deployments were a bluff, or perhaps Hitler striving to strong-arm the Soviets into political or economic concessions. These more wary Soviet commanders had tried to "sneak in" whatever precautions and preparations they could, but the fact of the matter is that the first Soviet lines of defense were by and large caught utterly off-guard. "Brandenburg Detachment 800" commandos, some of them in Soviet uniforms, added to the chaos that morning - as did nationalist BeloSoviet, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian sympathizers trained by German agents.

At exactly 03:15 AM, German artillery opened fire









The first bombers went in shortly after, a picked group of thirty planes targeted at specific communication links. By 06:00 the sun was up fully (this is the shortest night of the year), and the Luftwaffe was in the air at full strength. The first German assault troops had already slaughtered the NKVD border detachments, and the tanks were now rumbling off their jump-off lines.

The die had been cast. Barbarossa was on. Three on the sixth day, but admits in his memoirs that army groups, totaling four million men, were now in "Papa" Hoth's tanks were already waiting for him.

To make this push, Guderian's Panzer Group II was built from three main components. These were formed the cutting edge of the Barbarossa axe.

Needless to say, we don't intend to go into any semblance of detail about the whole length of the Eastern Front in this essay. However, these four panzer groups deserve special mention since they will naturally be featured center stage in many of our PanzerBlitz Barbarossa situations. Each was a basically a panzer army of at least two panzer or mechanized corps and supporting infantry divisions. Group North (Field Marshal Ritter von Leeb) had Panzer Group IV under Colonel-General Erich Hoepner. Army Group South (Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt) had Colonel-General Ludwig von Kleist's Panzer Group I. But Army Group Center (Field Marshal Fedor von Bock) was to the main punch, and so had both Colonel-General Heinz Guderian's Panzer Group II and Colonel-General Hermann Hoth's Panzer Group III.

To start with, we'll be looking at Guderian's Panzer Group II, deployed on the right (southern) wing of Army Group Center. In general, his initial mission was cross the Soviet border (along the River Bug, where the Soviets and Germans had partitioned Poland in 1939), strike over 300 miles into Soviet territory with two panzer corps, curl northwards, and eventually link up with Hoth's Panzer Group III at Minsk. In so doing, he would help trap the bulk of the Soviet 10th, 3rd, and 4th Armies (part of the Western Special Military District, soon to be redesignated as the Western Front), which was deployed in the socalled Bialostok Salient. Completing this initial mission would put the armored spearheads of Army Group Center one-third of the way to Moscow and

The first bombers went in shortly after, a picked hopefully eliminate some 300,000 troops from the group of thirty planes targeted at specific Soviet order of battle.

Incidentally, when Hitler convened his generals for his "pregame pep-talk" on June 14, he asked Guderian how long it would take him to smash through Soviet border defenses, defeat counter attacks, push through the Soviet backfield, and cover the 300-plus miles to Minsk. Guderian said five or six days. He got there on the sixth day, but admits in his memoirs that "Papa" Hoth's tanks were already waiting for him.

To make this push, Guderian's Panzer Group II the XLVII Motorized Corps on his left flank, the XXIV Motorized Corps on his right flank, and the XLVI Motorized Corps in reserve (these "motorized corps" would later be rebranded as the more famous "panzer corps"). This made Guderian's formation a truly fearsome concentration of offensive power. For the initial phases of Barbarossa, he also requested temporary command of XII Corps, a collection of infantry divisions to deal with the immediate obstacle standing right in front of his jump-off line, the Brest-Litovsk fortress. This was an old "star" fort dating back hundreds of years, modernized and expanded to become a significant strongpoint even in a war of over-the-horizon artillery and Stuka dive bombers. The fact that the fortress sat squarely on the River Bug made it an even tougher nut to crack.

Needless to say, "Schnell Heinz" had no intention of sending his panzers straight at the fortress. Instead he bypassed it on either side, directing the XLVII Motorized Corps to swing by on the left and XXIV Motorized Corps on the right, while XII Corps enveloped the fortress and started to squeeze it in a siege. As it turned out, Brest-Litovsk would hold out until July 12, an epic story of Soviet heroism and determination that would provide nearly the only good news in the otherwise disastrous panorama unfolding for Stalin's generals.

Meanwhile, however, Guderian's panzers were driving forward. They crossed the river Bug (actually a pretty big river forming the much of the present-day border between Poland and Belarus), using the "trauchpanzer" submersible tanks originally obtained for Operation Seelöwe, the planned invasion of





England. Unlike "DD" tanks of Normandy fame, with our other sources for a general confirmation. crawled along the bottom using return valves for the engine exhaust and a snorkel-like device for the water and although we'll never know how they would have performed in the English Channel, they did just fine on that first day of Barbarossa.

As discussed, Soviet border defenses were in chaos or nonexistent. On Guderian's left wing, his XLVII Motorized Corps (17th Panzer, 18th Panzer, 29th Panzergrenadier, and 167th Infantry Divisions) pushed across the Bug and bypassed Brest-Litovsk to the southeast. The 18th Panzer Division then crossed the smaller Lesna River (mentioned in Guderian's memoirs, but a Google photo search shows this "river" to be barely more than muddy ditch) and bolted northeast. Guderian himself spent most of that first day on this wing because he was very concerned about powerful Soviet counterattacks that might develop from Marshal D. M. Pavlov's Western Front, deployed in the Bialostok (the very same forces he and Hoth were trying to encircle). In particular, the Soviet 4th Army (28th Rifle and 14th Mechanized Corps, including two armored divisions) was perched just to the right of Guderian's axis of advance, and his Panzer Group's left wing was admittedly exposed.

Sure enough, his left wing hit its first armored resistance at the end of the day. This clash came with the 18th Panzer Division at the village of Puzana, "first tank clash of the war."

Situation Design: Unfortunately, the panzer division, name of the town, and time of day is about all the information Guderian gives us. Luckily we were able to cross-reference this location with an RKKA map that put the 30th Tank Division (14th Mechanized Corps, 4th Army) squarely at this town on the first day of Barbarossa. Thus, we can proceed in confidence that this was the formation engaged by 18th Panzer on the evening of June 22.

The composition of 30th Tank Division comes from orbat.com and gregspanzerblitz.com, which also provides great information on the composition of 18th Panzer. RKKA also gives an overall tank strength for the 30th Tank Division, which was cross-referenced

these modified Mark IIIs didn't even try to float, but The RKKA database gives the starting strength for the 30th Tank Division at 211 "tanks", although we can never be sure of what they're considering a "tank." intake. The could operate in about twenty feet of It's also unclear whether this reflects "paper" strength or what was actually in the field. Looking at the scenario card, we see that we have about 150 armored vehicles represented in Situation 01, so we can confidently estimate that this is the "main body" of the 30th Tank Division.

> Of particular interest are the OTflamethrower light tanks. rebuilds of the comical T-33 tankette, evidently assigned to most Soviet tank regiments at this point of the



war. It's hardly surprising these things didn't last long. How anyone's supposed to get close enough to a determined target to use the flamethrower (RF of 1) and survive with that DF of 2 seems highly uncertain at best.

Far more common, of course, are the T-26Bs. These are armed with the surprisingly capable "20K" 45mm gun, not bad for a tank that cut its teeth in the Spanish Civil War. Its



game characteristics were based on finding a middle ground between the British 40mm 2-pounder (6-A-3) and the German 5.0 cm L48 (8-A-3). Remember that PanzerBlitz normally considers Soviet tank units half as effective as any other nation, hence the original composition of "company" counters instead of platoons or half-companies like everyone else. PanzerBlitz Liberation seeks to redress this "Russophobe" slander by finding the middle ground of a reduction to 75%. This yields us a number of 7, times 75% = 5. The "5" value is reserved for the slightly more advanced L/46 45mm gun we will see on later Soviet models like the BT-5 and BT-7, leaving the little T-26B with its 20K model 45mm with an AF of 4.

Also take note of the slightly reduced values for the Soviet infantry counters. Because there are three platoons in a company (instead of two 5-tank "half companies" in the typical Soviet tank company of 10 vehicles), Liberation usually cuts the AF values of PanzerBlitz Soviet infantry counters in half instead of





to 75% (divide by three, then give a slight redress for Unlike the OT-133s of the Soviet regiments, this did the low "opinion" PanzerBlitz has of Soviets). not represent a standard part of a German panzer However, for Barbarossa we have to take a pretty poor division. The battalion was a mixed bag of captured particularly in state of supply. In some companies players), light PzKpfw IIs, and up to there was only one rifle for every five men. Many forty "Flamingo" flamethrower tanks. didn't even have uniforms, conscripted into the army Their silly name notwith-standing, only days before with no training whatsoever. Such these units were little better than militia, and officers often effective in playtesting. With their bolstered their courage with generous amounts of high speed and relatively thick DFs (and wellvodka. Sources like James Lucas' War on the Eastern supported by other tanks of the German panzer force), Front (a vivid German "trench" perspective on the these Flamingos proved they could easily wipe out war based on diaries, letters home, and battlefield swaths of Soviet infantry a stack at a time. We don't reports) describe whole battalions of Soviet infantry know if they were really this effective in actual marching into the German machine guns, drunk out combat, but on our game board they were monsters . . of their minds, arms linked, and singing. Needless to say, such records suggest slightly reduced values for these things first. Soviet infantry platoons.

sources were murky but for different reasons. While required a little guesswork. Guderian doesn't tell us we have highly-detailed sources for 18th Panzer how the fight turned out, we only know that by the Division's composition, there is no way the vanguard end of the second day, the 18th Panzer was in Slomin, was approaching Pruzana (37 miles into enemy territory after crossing a major river) with anything approaching divisional strength. For this reason, we have only about slightly less than half the tanks (reflecting the lead battalion of the panzer regiment, minus breakdowns and maybe even some combat would allow a mechanized force to pull out in the face losses). Infantry is practically nonexistent. We're guessing that only the halftrack company (just one per division, the rest were in trucks) have been able to keep up with the tanks with no roads over Soviet We also show some of the "Pioneer" engineers, part of the recon battalion, and a handful of support assets like tracked FlaK vehicles and a little artillery. In all, this isn't much . . . somewhere between a quarter and a third of the division's parade ground strength. We can easily picture the rest of the division strung out behind this vanguard (perhaps all the way back to the Bug River bridges), to be consolidated throughout the night in Pruzana before resuming the advance the next morning.

Barbarossa, simply called the "100th Battalion." tree cover, elevation, and other terrain features are

of Soviet infantry formations as well, British A-13s (called "Dunkirk Specials" by the

vehicles proved brutally



. at least until the Soviet player learned to shoot at

Victory conditions, as always, tries to assign the For the German side of the situation's design, historical outcomes as a draw. Again, however, this about 40 miles beyond Pruzana. Doesn't sound like the 30th Tank Division was in much shape to contest the XLVII Motorized Corps' advance on June 23. Given their "stand and die" orders from Moscow, the lack of fuel, spare parts, and communications that of a superior enemy force (at night, no less), we have to assume that 30th Tank Division was largely annihilated where it stood. Conversely, the 18th Panzer must have remained almost completely intact in order to score another such incredible advance on the invasion's second day. These are the presumptions on which the victory conditions were based, slightly tweaked by experience borne out by the first round of playtesting.

A few other factors went into situation design. Because we know that the battle was taking place at the very end of daylight hours, the game is limited to ten turns (a blessing, given the size of the game). The photo options in Google Earth actually let us take a That being said, he 18th Panzer Division had a look at some general landmarks around the area, so special unit attached to it at the beginning of we can make a pretty good guess about how much





typical for this corner of Belarus. The ground here seems divided by large tracks of farmland broken by "straight line" forests, which is why the board is divided so sharply between the wide open expanse of Board 6, followed sharply by the dense brush of Board 1. Furthermore, we know that this ground is extremely flat, hence the special rules about terrain elevation.

Speaking of special rules, a few others deserve quick mention. Because many of these will appear regularly in subsequent *Barbarossa* games, we will take the time to discuss them in some detail here.

 German A-13s: As mentioned before, these are captured British cruiser tanks, probably from Dunkirk. They were armed with the 2-pounder 40mm gun, fine for



engaging light armor but useless against anything else because the gun was incapable of firing any kind of high explosive round. Solid shot was the only ammunition this gun would accept, so overruns are the only way these platoons can engage soft targets.

• Soviet "Activation Rolls": In addition to the various supply, equipment, and training shortfalls suffered in the opening phases of Barbarossa, the Red Army was also crippled by tremendous weaknesses in command. At all levels of command, political officers or "commissars" held equal status with the unit commander. Every decision had to be countersigned to ensure compliance and loyalty to the Party. Radios were a rarity. Even those units that had them often couldn't use them because of missing parts or batteries. Such problems were made worse by the first German air and artillery strikes, expertly targeted on Soviet command and control networks. Even if a unit was in touch with its headquarters, the commanders would often get conflicting orders as different levels of command desperately screamed orders. A tank battalion, for instance, might get orders to fall back from its regiment, orders to attack from division, orders to join another unit from corps, and no orders at all from army. When the unit failed to comply with the army-level orders it never received, the commander would be executed for cowardice or This, combined with the fear of the commissars, largely destroyed any real sense of initiative from many middle and lower-level Soviet commanders. Finally, the brains of the Soviet army had been torn out by Stalin's purges of 1937-1939. Only a handful of marshals survived, no front commanders, and very few of any officers over the rank of lieutenant-colonel. The junior officers who were rapidly promoted to fill this void were woefully unqualified, and the Red Army also had to struggle to back-fill their places as well. Often platoon and company commanders were no more than the oldest sergeant in the unit (usually 20 or so), or one who had scored marginally higher on some kind of academy test. The Red Army's dismal showing in Finland triggered massive reforms to redress these problems, but these were far from complete when Barbarossa struck. Suffice it to say that the tactical-level officers of the Red Army were nowhere near prepared for anything even close to a real war, much less an assault like Barbarossa.

Soviet tank companies: Again, Soviet tank companies (usually three platoons of three tanks plus a company commander for a total of ten tanks) usually only had one radio. This was in the company commander's turret, and strictly used for communication with battalion. For controlling their platoons, company commanders had to rely on red and green signal flags. As if this were not obvious enough to German gunners (who quickly learned to shoot these tanks first), they also learned to target the only Soviet tanks with antennae. Further exacerbating this problem is the fact that in most Soviet tanks of the period, the tank commander was also required to act as the gunner. Adding the workload of communications with battalion and waving colored flags to maintain control of the company means that a commander's tank was all but useless in actual combat since he had next to no time to actually engage targets. In an attempt to overcome these shortfalls (and to train as many relatively



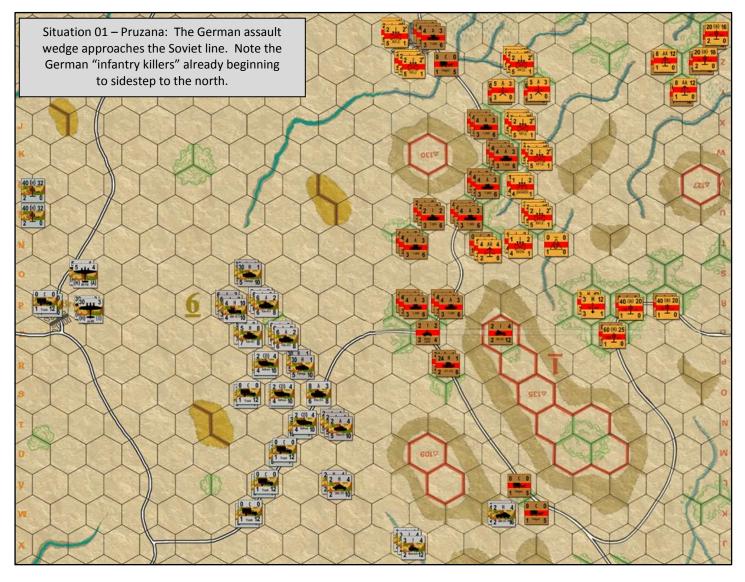


possible), Soviet tactical armor doctrine relied heavily on very rigid drills, formations, and maneuvers that required a minimum of "flag waving." All this, of course, required the company to stay very close together (in visual range of their CO's tank, if nothing else), and quickly fell apart if separated in the heat of battle.

certainly very early exceptions (Mikhail Efimov Katukov among the most notable), Soviet tank crews were not trained in "shoot-and-scoot" type tactics early in the war. Because of the communication and command shortfalls discussed above, a whole Soviet tank company was typically directed to mass-fire on a single target designated by the commander's signal flags. This, of course, is far too cumbersome a system to allow rapid and flexible combinations of fire and maneuver.

uneducated tank crews in as short a time as **Playtesting**: This game was playtested twice, as will all situations throughout the Barbarossa series. While we will naturally strive to design the most historically accurate, balanced, and enjoyable situations possible, inevitable tweaks and adjustments will frequently be made between the first and second runs of a given situation to produce the optimal final result.

The first game saw both players take a rather • Soviet Split Move and Fire: Although there were conservative approach, at least initially. With no territorial objectives to attack or defend, there was little incentive for either player to spread out. This worked particularly well for the Soviets, who are more or less required by special rules to mass together anyway. As for the Germans, a primary objective of Operation Barbarossa wasn't so much the acquisition of territory (historical results of the campaign notwithstanding), but the destruction of the Red Army where it stood. The last thing the Germans wanted (on any level of command) was to allow the







gather seemingly limitless reserves. In short, the "mass collision" tactics encouraged by this situation works for the Germans as well.

The Soviet defense was set up along the lines running from 1U9 south to 1O9. Stacks of T-26B light tanks formed up along the front and flanks, with in woods hexes 1R3, 1R4, and 1Q4, and the Soviet powerful reserve forces staged along in the "backfield" between these tree lines and what used to be Hill 135. In this secondary tree lines were also staged the antitank guns, motorcycles, armored cars, and the light flak, while the heavy and medium artillery was set further back in woods hexes 1R3, 1R4, and 1Q4. Two aspects of the Soviet setup were a little curious. One, the 76.2mm divisional guns were staged at 1Y2, 1Z2, and 1AA1. True, these are wellcovered hexes, but the short range of Soviet artillery meant that these lightest of all their howitzers couldn't reach much of the board. Two, there was a large mass of infantry stacked up in the town hexes of Uschas and the swamp, woods, and gully hexes behind. This is pretty far to the north, and would prove difficult for the Soviet to mobilize southwards when the battle started in the center, especially considering the special rules regarding activation rolls.

The Germans, for their part, started well. They split their force into two main elements, a tank-killer group and an infantry-killer group. The tank killers (PzKpfw-IIIs, PzKpfw-IIs, and most of the infantry) angled northwards to hit the Soviet line from hexes 6P11 and 6O10. This approach made the most of the blind angles created by the tree line, thus used the Soviet terrain against them. Meanwhile, the PzKpfw-IVs, Flamingos, and flak halftracks headed north to engage the Soviet infantry piled around Uschas. The idea was to get Soviet infantry positions spotted so the German artillery could work them over for easy victory points, while the heavy "H" class AFs of these units could deal with any Soviet CATs via opportunity fire. As it turns out, however, the enough to do the job.

disposition of their infantry. They went straight at the of the A-13s, and five out of six of their PzKpfw-III Ds,

Soviets to fall back into their depthless steppe and front of the Soviet tree line, hoping to CAT Soviet tanks or maybe call in some fire missions. But their approach was a little too predictable, and Soviet artillery soon had them pinned down and largely annihilated. But soon the German armored cars have the Soviet 122mm and 152mm batteries spotted, and guns are soon silenced. But then these German recon cars get too cocky. They thread their way northward, and soon have eyes on the Soviet 76.2mm divisional guns back at 1Y2, 1Z2, and 1AA1 (remember that Hill 127 isn't really there due to special terrain rules). This time the Germans pay, as Soviet 37mm AA batteries smash up both SdKfz231/8s. This gives away the battery's position, however, and the 37mms are soon hit by German artillery, largely clearing the way for when the Ju-88s and Bf-110s arrive . . .

> Still, the Germans are doing pretty well. Their "blind angle" attack on the northern shoulder of the main Soviet tank line is going well, and their Flamingos are positively barbequing stacks of Soviet infantry in the woods southeast of Uschas. In one case, a stack of Soviet infantry is actually overrun in ford hex 1Z9, and another stack in 1Y8 is then hit on three sides by point blank PzKpfw-IVs and three Flamingos. As the Soviet player noted with grim humor . . . "I don't think that's a woods hex anymore."

Then the Germans nearly throw the game away, however. The stacks of Soviet wreck counters combine with green hex sides to largely choke off the northern angle of their PzKpfw-III Underestimating the firepower the Soviets still had left, they formed a quick battle group of Mark IIs, A-13s, and their one PzKpfw-III G and sent it around the south end of this tree line in what they hoped would be a pincer. Bad idea. The Soviets were able to stagger upright as the Germans divided their firepower, and the pointblank fire of the remaining T-26Bs gave the Germans one hell of a bloody nose. The Soviets don't need an "activation roll" to fire, after all, firepower of this infantry killer group was more than and even after they've lost half their T-26Bs, half of an entire tank division is still an awful lot of firepower. One thing the Germans did not do well was the The Germans quickly lost two of their PzKpfw-IIs, one





largely smashing the heart out of 18th Panzer might have been with the division's vanguard). Division's vanguard. Only when the German BF-110s showed up with their tank-killing 20mm cannon did the Germans manage to pull their survivors out of that hellish pocket behind the Soviet tree line. In the end, the remaining Soviet tank force (now down to about a quarter) was finally cooked alive by the Flamingos and PzKpfw-IVs as they trundled down the wooded road running from 1X8 to 1U8. The Flamingos torched out Soviet antitank guns as they went, along with the 12.7mm AA position and Soviet recon units. Finally they got close enough to start heating up Soviet tanks, their flamethrowers literally cooking Soviet crews alive as T-26Bs became tracked the Germans as they once more nose their way into but remember old Godzilla movies, where the up their infantry forces a little closer to their center, monster's radioactive flame breath invariably melts at making CAT attacks against the panzers much easier least a dozen little models of Japanese tanks.

remaining 37mm knocks down one Ju-88 before it's strategy: aiming at the Flamingos first. This makes a killed by German halftracks and PzKpfw-IVs, while considerable difference, since less Flamingos mean a in a reenactment from Sons of Anarchy (hex 1R8 . . . that's not a slope hex, remember).

destroyed every single unit in the battle except for a as well. tactical victory, yielding a comfortable overall rush past. marginal victory to the Germans.

good attack (except for that secondary pincer), the game doesn't seem terribly well balanced. While the Germans should win the battle (this is the first day of Barbarossa, after all), the Soviet player should stand a better chance of winning the game. Victory conditions are thus adjusted, and small adjustments are made to the German available forces. Chief among these is the reduction of the Flamingos from four platoons to three (even through the 100th Battalion is supposed to have eight of these, who knows how many of them company stacking" special rule.

The situation is tried again with a solitaire run. The Soviets are much more aggressive this time, briefly considering a mass overrun as the German PzKpfw-IIIs made their approach past the woods hexes at 6Q8 and 6P8. Although these woods (and the low German RFs) divide the potential opportunity fire somewhat, it still seems too much for the thin-skinned little T-26Bs. Soviet activation rolls pose a further problem, as would the inevitable pile-up of wrecks that would stop any overrunning tanks the Germans failed to hit.

Waiting one more turn, the Soviet armor charges microwave ovens. The German player couldn't help the corridor 1S10-1T11. The Soviets have also piled as they try to squeeze through the woods hexes. The Still, the Soviets put up one hell of a fight. Their Soviet tank try one more adjustment to their previous the dispersed Soviet motorcycle platoon is overrun lot more Soviet infantry platoons available for massed and destroyed by three German motorcycle platoons CATs on German tanks bottled up in the narrow confines of Board 1.

As the Germans start sending their armored cars In the end, the Germans win in a landslide. The around the south flank again, they find that the Germans have killed 67 Soviet combat units, having Soviets are handling their artillery a little differently One battery has been left deliberately The Germans have lost thirteen forward, still in woods but in front of a green hex side. combat units, including engineers and nearly all the This battery does not participate in the early fire PzKpfw-IIIs. Thus the Germans have won an easy missions, which means it is available for opportunity decisive victory balanced against a slender Soviet fire on the thin-skinned armored cars as they try to Two die straight off. But as the "panzerspähwagens" race into their OP woods, they While the Germans played well, coordinating a find themselves bum-rushed by a handful of tanks, tractors, even wagons. These pin the armored cars in hex 1L2 and the Soviet artillery then direct-fires on them as well. While this tactic costs the Soviets almost all their artillery (some German fire missions still get in, and it doesn't take much to smash up these Soviet batteries), four easy armored car kills put the Soviets on the fast-track to accomplishing their victory conditions. Two T-26B platoons are also lost, however, deliberately sacrificed via the "Soviet tank

Panzert

SITUATION 01

FIRST CLASH OF ARMOR - PRUZANA, BELARUS (22 June 1941): One of the opening tank actions on the Eastern Front comes during the first evening of the war. Here, the 18th Panzer Division has crossed the River Bug (that morning, with submersible tanks originally meant for the invasion of England), bypassed the fortress at Brest-Litovsk, and is now leading the XLVII Panzer Corps on the left wing of Guderian's Panzergruppe II. After penetrating some 37 miles into Soviet territory, they finally run into the Soviet 30th Tank Division at the village of Pruzana. This is part of the 4th Army's 14th Motorized Corps, struggling to form up in response to the German invasion. The battle is joined just as the sun starts to set on the first day of the war.





RUSSIAN FORCES

Main Body, 30th Tank Division 14th Mechanized Corps, 4th Army **Western Special Military District** (Morale D)



60th and 61st Tank Regiments



24 3 30th Recon Battalion



30th Motorized Infantry Regiment



30th Howitzer Regiment



1 2 **HQ and 30th AA Battalion** 8 AA 12 0 - 0 0 C 0

30th Engineer Battalion



2

VICTORY CONDITIONS

- Destroy 20 German units: Russian DECISIVE
- Destroy 12 German units: Russian TACTICAL
- Destroy 7 German units: Russian MARGINAL
- Destroy 25 Russian units: German MARGINAL
- Destroy 40 Russian units: German TACTICAL
- Destroy 60 Russian units: German DECISIVE

JEL GERMAN FORCES

Vanguard, 18th Panzer Division XLVII Mot. Corps, Panzergruppe II **Army Group Center** (Morale B)



18th Panzer Regiment



100th Special Panzer Battalion



631st Flak Company



Sorties, SKG 210 and 1(F)122, Luftflotte 2



Vanguard, 52 Infantry Regiment



98th Engineer Battalion





Batteries, 88th Artillery Regiment



*Off-board

SET UP:

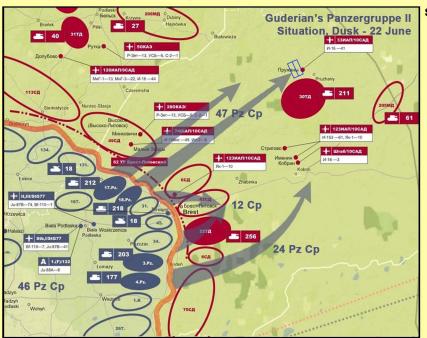
- Russians set up anywhere on Board 1.
- Germans enter along west edge of the board.
- German airpower arrives on Turn 6.

Germans move first Turn

5

6

9



SPECIAL RULES:

- Russian Confusion: Russian communications and command was in chaos. Before moving, all Russian units must make an "activation" roll (1-4 on a d6). If they miss the roll, they cannot move, overrun, or load, or unload. "Motionless" CATs do not need this roll. For loading or unloading, only the carrier unit has to make the roll. For movement only, Russian units may always fire per normal rules.
- Belorussian Flatlands: ignore all slopes, hilltops, and brown hex sides. Swamps, woods, towns, and gullies are still in effect. Otherwise the board is perfectly flat.
- Russian Tank Companies: In Russian tank companies, only the CO had a radio, and controlled his unit via signal flags. Thus, Russian tank companies must always stack at least 2 in a hex. If a unit is left isolated through combat or movement, the Russian player has one movement phase to re-stack the tank counter with another. At the end of the Russian movement phase, any Russian tank counter not stacked with another Russian tank counter is immediately eiminated. Only tanks operate under this rule.
- Captured British Tanks: German Pz A-13s are armed with the British 2-pounder, which only fires solid shot. Cannot engage any soft targets via direct fire, only overruns.
- Russian Tactics: Russians may not use split move and





Germans have tried a much wider pincer maneuver, especially in the south, hoping to get at the Soviet tanks without funneling everything through those murderously-tight gaps in the tree lines. The Soviets, meanwhile, have rushed out to meet them, creating a much more scattered, wide-open series of small firefights. The battle starts to grind down, however, as the Soviets are let down by their activation rolls. The Germans are also quick to catch onto the handy trick of dispersing large numbers of Soviet tanks rather than going for the easy kills on a few. By resisting the usual urge to go for the 4:1 and instead settling for a near-certain dispersal on 2:1, the Germans can keep the Soviets easily pinned down. Given the poor Soviet morale, this usually means the Germans can mop the Soviets up at their leisure, all while keeping their own casualties down.

Still, the Soviets are causing the Germans plenty of problems, especially in the north. Here, direct fire from a company of T-26Bs kills a Flamingo, while other tanks make their activation rolls and start an overrun. The Soviets take hideous losses, but by using up all the opportunity fire, they open the way for a subsequent CAT that wipes out one stack of panzers and disperses another. These are then overrun next turn, although the attack is only partially successful. The Soviets also score a miracle with their flak guns, shooting down *both* Ju-88s when the Luftwaffe shows up. Again, however, the Bf-110s take a fearsome toll on what's left of their tanks.

At the end, once the Soviets have picked up their decisive victory (20 kills), they start disengaging as fast as they can, pulling back into woods, gullies, and swamps. The Germans have only killed 52 units so far, if the Soviets can keep their losses below 60 they'll win when the Germans only score a tactical victory. The Germans, of course, pursue, and the lack of Soviet split move and fire (along with busted activation rolls) allow them to catch a few luckless Soviet units. But the Soviet tactic works in the end, albeit barely. The Soviets have lost 57 units, and the Germans have *just* missed their decisive victory conditions.

Overall, the German marginal victory in the first game was won with a lot more room to spare than the

In all, the second game is much more wild. The Soviet marginal victory in the second game. Therefore, the overall situation is chalked up as a secially in the south, hoping to get at the Soviet German victory.

Situation 02 Boldin's Counterattack vs. German Ninth Army Grodno, Belarus 24 June, 1941

As the armored spearheads of Army **Summary:** Group Center plunge into Soviet territory, Red Army commanders at the front receive increasingly-frantic orders to mount hopeless counterattacks. One such order comes to General I. V. Boldin, deputy commander of the Soviet Western Front. Already cut off, Boldin nevertheless masses a "shock group" of three corps and drives northwest toward the town of Grodno. His objective is to hit the right wing of Hoth's Panzer Group III, but Hoth has already bypassed him so the blow lands instead on the XX and XLII Corps of Strauss' Ninth Army. While the Soviets are all but annihilated in two days, they do cause something of a panic in one sector, where the 33rd Tank Division hits the German 256th Infantry Division.

Background: As Barbarossa exploded across the Soviet frontier that terrible Sunday, the defenders found themselves completely overwhelmed. In some places, such as the fortress at Brest-Litovsk, they managed to mount a tenacious and protracted defense. But these were exception rather than the rule. For most Soviet formations, surprise that day was complete and in many locations, German tanks were already behind them. German artillery pounded their positions and the Luftwaffe owned the sky (the Soviets lost 1,400 planes on the first day). The Soviet communication network, very poor to begin with, completely disintegrated under the onslaught. Oceans of ink have been spilled on how bad the Soviet situation was at the outset of Barbarossa, and we won't spill another one here. Suffice it to say that in those first few days, the Soviet defenses by and large evaporated along the most of the frontier.





barrage of orders that started coming down from from Moscow with orders to attack. Accordingly, higher levels of Soviet command: Counterattack, Pavlov ordered his deputy front commander, General counterattack, counterattack! The lack of information Boldin, to put together a "shock group" to strike available to Soviet commanders played a big role in northwestwards out of the Volkovysk area and hit this, most honestly had no idea of the scale of Hoth's Panzer Group III in the southern flank and Barbarossa or how hopeless the situation at the front retake Grodno. As if all this were not impossible really was. Another factor was the lack of training enough, Boldin was also ordered to break through the and experience endemic throughout the post-purge German lines and take Augustovo, practically in The finesse of phased withdrawals, entrapments, flank attacks, or economy of force just wasn't there, Red Army doctrine instead largely dominated by a general "when in doubt, attack." Thirdly, many of these attacks were ordered by commanders out of fear of seeming cowardly, defeatist, or even treasonous in the eyes of the dreaded NKVD, GRU, or the ever-present commissars watching their every move.

So the orders went out, often to units that no longer existed. Their objectives were impossible, assigned with no regard to the odds against them or the support that was available. Tanks attacked alone in some places, infantry alone in other sectors, each to right away. Most of their reconnaissance planes were be chewed up because of the other's absence. Flanking units didn't go in to support those at the spearheads because they didn't get orders, had no idea what was going on, had contradictory orders, or were still holding to Stalin's strict commands to under no circumstance take "provocative action" against the Germans.

The heaviest German blows landed in the center, along the line held by Western Special Military District (Colonel-General D. G. Pavlov). Of course, the Western Special Military District because the Soviet Western Front (roughly an "army group") when the shooting started, but the change in title did little for the hapless Pavlov or his troops. Despite having sixteen corps organized into three armies (3rd, 4th, and 10th, with seven of those corps organized into an Front reserve), Pavlov's forces quickly splintered into a shattered mass. So bad were the communications that Pavlov managed to get only one message to Moscow on the first day of the war. "We its 32,000 men had been reduced to just over 600. are through," was all it said.

One feature we will mention, however, was the remained of his forces, he was ceaselessly barraged Poland (actually, today the town is in Poland). Why not go for Berlin while you're at it?

> A capable soldier but a better political gamester, Boldin was determined to at least appear to carry out He recognized a disaster when he saw one and knew the Red Army would be in the market for some scapegoats . . . and he was resolved not to be among To that end, he gathered together the 6th Mechanized, 11th Mechanized, and 6th Cavalry Corps (four tank divisions, two mechanized divisions, and two cavalry divisions, over 1,000 tanks in all) and push resolutely toward his impossible objective.

> The Germans, oddly, didn't catch this movement ranging far ahead of the panzer spearheads, and they knew surprisingly little about what was happening on their flanks or in their rear. When the Germans finally picked up the movement of Boldin's shock group, however, Boldin's columns were ripped apart from the air. The 6th Cavalry Corps suffered especially horrendous losses, 70% of its 36th Cavalry Division was destroyed by Stukas in a single day.

Needless to say, when Boldin's attack finally hit on June 24, it was a much reduced force. Yet they hit all the same. The attacks sparked off a battle ranging from Grodno southwest some forty miles to Przystovka, involving at least five German divisions along the southern shoulder of Ninth Army's advance (Hoth's III Panzer Group had already bypassed Boldin's attack path). Overall, the Soviets were predictably annihilated. By June 25, the 11th Corps (part of whose attack we recreate with this scenario) had been reduced from 305 tanks down to 30, while These men, including Boldin himself, then began an Yet even as Pavlov was trying to withdraw what epic fighting march back through German-occupied





territory, finally breaking back through to Soviet lines Situation 01. and rejoining the Red Army in early August.

Although Boldin's counterattack cannot considered a success in any way, it did cause a moment of panic in a small sector of the XX Corps' line. Here, the German 256th Infantry Division was struck rather hard by what remained of the Soviet 33rd Tank Division on June 24. This is the battle we will try and create with Barbarossa Situation 02.

Situation Design: Say the word "Barbarossa" to most World War II enthusiasts and the mind conjures a portfolio of classic imagery. We see German officers confidently gazing toward an eastern horizon smudged with smoke, dusty columns of grenadiers, panzers rolling beneath droning formations of Stukas, perhaps a few dazed Soviet prisoners thrown in for good measure. A quick glance at our cover shows that this very campaign journal is guilty of perpetuating this same oversimplification. But out of 166 German divisions in the initial assault, only 18 divisions (leaving out satellite were "panzer" "armored" formations whose value was dubious at best). The vast majority of Barbarossa's weight was made up of plodding infantry - their guns, ammunition, and supplies drawn by some 625,000 horses. Yet it was upon these leg-powered formations that a great deal of the fighting would fall. Once the panzers and halftracks had encircled huge pockets of Soviet divisions, after all, it was the job of these follow-up infantry to engage, pin down, and eventually liquidate these hundreds of thousands of bypassed Soviet troops.

Situation 02 tries to shine a little of the spotlight on these "second-line formations." In fact, the 256th Infantry Division was designated as "fourth wave" by the OKW/OKH (they had . . . no kidding, up to sixteen "waves" in all, although the last of these were little more than police brigades). As such, 256th Infantry was built with some pretty hand-me-down equipment. Some other fourth-wave divisions were set up with almost entirely French equipment, outfitted from the great "1940 Garage Sale" after Dunkirk and the Fall of France. Based on our research, it seems the 256th has escaped this practice, and the attackers have a relatively short window in but is still a far cry from the 18th Panzer we saw in which to accomplish their objectives. What we're

Note the mix of rifle and security platoons. This is meant to "thin out" the overall power of the German infantry, since these regiments were still built pretty much on the 1940 model (2 AF instead of 3 AF). Also note the HMG platoons, fielding MG-15s and the like, the kinds of weapons usually mounted in aircraft. We saw some of these in early situations of Desert Leader, but were usually "melted" into the rifle platoons once the easily-manufactured MG-42 came out and made the German machine gun truly a squad-based weapon (part of the reason their AF jumps from 2 to 3). Another telling feature is the large number of wagons provided for transport, meant to demonstrate just how mechanized this part of the blitzkrieg wasn't.

There's also a platoon of German cavalry (definitely a scouting force) and . . . no kidding, a bicycle platoon in the recon battalion. This may sound odd but scenarios, counter sets,



and situations set in the 1939 Poland campaign, French forces in 1940, and even hypothetical games (Czechs Resist and Thunder on the

Dniepr) have plenty of these bicycle platoons, it seems that some of the lesser-equipped German formations still had a few of them as late as the summer of 1941.



As for the Soviets, we have a pretty solid picture of the 33rd Tank Division's order of battle. The trick is to guestimate how much of it might have made it to the actual battlefield after their "death march" of the last few days. We can only judge by a summary of the historical results—the Germans did contain the advance and smashed the Soviet force, but by all accounts that we can find, the 256th Infantry did have a bit of a heart attack that day. Accordingly, we've built a force representing about 50% of 33rd Division's tanks and about 75% of its motorized rifle regiment, capable of beating up the 256th elements we have on the game board and accomplishing its rather modest victory conditions.

As in all *PanzerBlitz* situations, the clock is running





visualizing here is panicked German commanders since the two tanks are basically identical (at least calling in the airstrikes, most of which are presumably committed to forward targets deep in the Soviet rear. At the end of Turn 12, the Luftwaffe darkens the sky and kills just about anything not in a town hex, making the accomplishment of the Soviet victory conditions all the more paramount. Their prime weapon will probably be their artillery, certainly the first targets once Stukas start screaming out of the sky. The Soviets thus need to organize their lumbering force as best as they can, hit fast and hard, take their town hexes, and then run for cover in a basement and hope the sun sets soon.

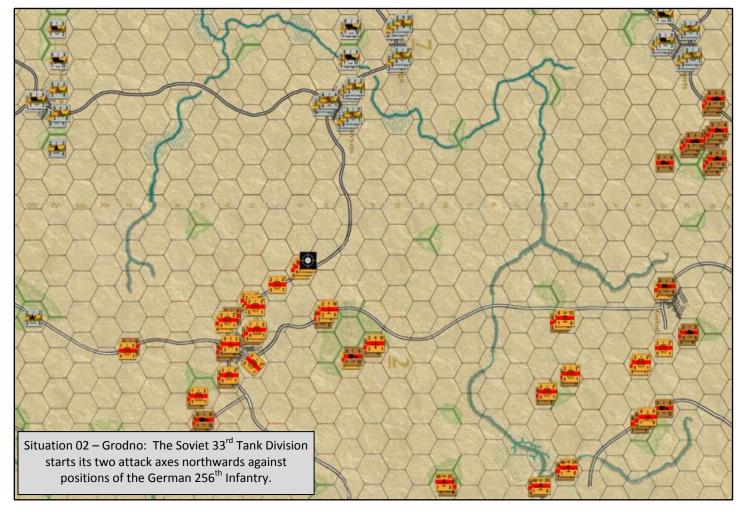
One small detail that bears noting is the similarity between the BT-5 and BT-7 tanks. Players will quickly see that they have the same values. This is not a typo, but the two tanks had the same gun, armor, engine, etc. There were only slight differences in the layout of the tank, secondary armament, and the BT-7 had a bigger turret that they hoped might one day be retrofitted with a bigger gun. Some would say that

through the eyes of *PanzerBlitz*), we should have made only one counter. But having two counters helps add just a little more historical flavor to the 33rd Tank Division's makeup. Admittedly, the BT-7 was definitely the better vehicle and much more common.

Accordingly, we'll be seeing a lot more of these in future situations, and less of the BT-5 as the Soviets "burn through" their stock of these older vehicles.



Playtesting: At first glance this might seem like a frustrating situation for both sides, and if not approached correctly, it certainly can be. With the Germans suffering from a shortage of firepower and a near complete lack of mobility, and the Soviets struggling with their poor equipment and difficult special rules, Situation 02 looks like a headache waiting to happen. But it precisely because neither side really has the right tools for the job that this game





anzerbiitz, Bardarossa



can be an interesting challenge.

One thing that became pretty clear right away is that both sides need to have a solid game plan at the outset, because no one has any meaningful flexibility for major changes mid-game. Sure, the Soviets can use their quick BT tanks and armored cars to run around the German backfield calling in new artillery missions, and the Germans can reinforce threatened town hexes with reserve platoons tucked away in gullies and woods hexes. But these are small adjustments to an overall plan already in place.

In our first game (played live), the Soviets made roughly equal pushes up two axes of advance. To the east, they pushed up through Golod to Zhapets while in the west, they pushed up through Bednost toward Kharavyets and Shpaga. Both these thrusts were wellsupported by light direct-fire artillery (76mm IGs and 37mm flak) along the tree line 2R5-2O5, while the mortars set up a nice little firebase in the gullies and the heavier artillery fired from hexes 2M11, 2I11, and 2H10. From these positions, Soviet firepower was more or less immune to German spotting efforts and could reach just about any meaningful spot on the board. This very effective placement of artillery was a key factor in supporting Soviet efforts as they pushed up onto Board 7.

German set up was also pretty solid. The only possible flaw was the weight with which the German player decided to defend Voroniva. Almost all their antitank guns were here, hedging against the possibility that the fast BTs would sprint in this direction in the hopes of some easy victory points. While the Germans were admittedly able to forget about Voroniva (they had enough to worry about with the other towns), the amount of firepower here might have been better deployed elsewhere.

thanks to their "activation rolls" (see special rules). The very last units didn't make it on the board until Turn 6. Most of their tanks pushed up the eastern approach toward Zhapets, where they supported infantry CATs hammering away at the rather weak German defense. Zhapets was holding out pretty well, however, until they starting eating full-scale strikes of Soviet artillery. In the original draft of the

situation, an additional 122mm battery was included in the 33rd Howitzer Regiment's OOB. This allowed the Soviet player to, if he was careful enough, mass a total of 52 factors on a single fire mission, enough to score a 4-1 on a German rifle platoon in a town hex. Needless to say, the Soviet player was quick to clue in on this and began hammering out town hexes, first in Zhapets, then Kharavyets, and finally Shpaga. True, a CRT result of 5 or 6 allows the target unit to remain dispersed in the hex, and the Soviets just don't have the firepower to realistically clean out these hexes through any other means. But the Soviet player had placed his artillery with enough safety, forethought, and efficiency to make the most of this advantage, and was soon playing "finger of God" through the German defenses.

Another great move by the Soviet player (even if it came a little late) was to hook armored cars clear around the German strongpoints and get deep into their rear. From the very top hex row on the map board, these armored cars soon had eyes on the German howitzer batteries in 7K1 and 7L2.

Yet even the elimination of these 10.5mm howitzers only slightly reduced what was becoming a staggering Soviet casualty rate. In particular, the German infantry guns in 706 were butchering a stack of Soviet infantry every turn. Frankly it's amazing these guns lasted as long as they did. Admittedly, the Soviets did *disperse* them once, but soon after the guns came back to wreak more havoc and by then the Soviet howitzer missions were committed elsewhere. Finally the infantry guns were dispersed by Soviet direct fire and ultimately squashed by the howitzers, but a lot of Soviet infantry had paid dearly for this delay.

One comical episode developed along the extreme The Soviets had a helluva time getting on the board Soviet left wing. Here, a lone recon platoon on foot ran into the German cavalry platoon, and engaged in an endless series of CAT and counter-CAT that remained unresolved at the end of the game. The German bicycle platoon tried to get down there and help, but while pedaling across the steppe found themselves ripped apart by Soviet 37mms. So much for the Tours de France.

In the end, the Soviets wound up taking all three

Panzer

BOLDIN'S COUNTERATTACK VS. GERMAN NINTH ARMY - GRODNO, BELARUS (24 June 1941): As the armored spearheads of Army Group Center plunge into Soviet territory, Red Army commanders receive frantic orders to mount immediate and hopeless counterattacks. One such order comes to General I. V. Boldin, deputy commander of the Soviet Western Front. Already cut off, Boldin nevertheless masses a "shock group" of three corps and drives northwest toward the town of Grodno. He hopes to hit the right wing of Hoth's Panzergruppe III, but the blow lands on Stauss'

SITUATION 02

11th Mechanized Corps, 3rd Army

JEL GERMAN FORCES **Elements, 256th Infantry Division** XX Corps, Ninth Army **Army Group Center (Morale B)**

Ninth Army instead. While the Russians are all but annihilated in two days of fighting, they do cause considerable panic here, where the 33rd Tank Division hits the German 256th Infantry Division



Remnants, 65th and 66th Tank Regiments

RUSSIAN FORCES Remnants, 33rd Tank Division

Western Front (Morale D)



Main Body, 33rd Motorized Rifle Regiment



Batteries. 33rd Howitzer Regiment 60 (H) 25 40 (H) 20 0 C 0

2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 (0 2 BA-20 12 2 Motor cycle 2

33rd Reconnaissance Battalion

Elements, 33rd Engineer Bn



8 AA 12 0 C 0

Elements, 33rd AA Bn

SETUP: Germans set up on Board 7. Russians enter from the eastern half of the board's southern edge (hex rows A-Q, inclusive). Note that Russian units must make "activation" rolls to enter (see special rules). Units that fail try again next turn.



WIV

12

Main Body, Infantry Regiment 481, 256th Infantry Division





Elements, 256th Recon Battalion Elements, 256th Artillery Regiment



Elements, 256th Antitank Battalion



VICTORY CONDITIONS: Judged by how many town hexes on Board 7 the Russians control (occupied by combat unit) at the end of Turn 12.

Zero hexes: German DECISIVE victory

• 1-2 hexes: German TACTICAL victory

• 3-4 hexes: German MARGINAL victory

• 5-7 hexes: Russian MARGINAL victory

• 8-10 hexes: Russian TACTICAL victory • 11+ hexes: Russian DECISIVE victory

Russians move first Turn 3 2 6 9 10

LITHUANIA EAST PRUSSIA

SPECIAL RULES:

- Russian Confusion: Russian communications and command was in chaos. Before moving, all Russian units must make an "activation" roll (1-4 on a d6). If they miss the roll, they cannot move, overrun, or load, or unload. "Motionless" CATs do not need this roll. For loading or unloading, only the carrier unit has to make the roll. For movement only, Russian units may always fire per normal
- Belorussian Flatlands: ignore all slopes, hilltops, and brown hex sides. Swamps, woods, towns, and gullies are still in effect. Otherwise the board is perfectly flat.
- Russian Tank Companies: In Russian tank companies, only the CO had a radio, and controlled his unit via signal flags. Thus, Russian tank companies must always stack at least 2 in a hex. If a unit is left isolated through combat or movement, the Russian player has one movement phase to re-stack the tank counter with another. At the end of the Russian movement phase, any Russian tank counter not stacked with another Russian tank counter is immediately eiminated. Only tanks operate under this rule.
- Russian Tactics: Russians may not use split move and fire.
- Bicycles: Use all vehicle movement rules. Must pay truck movement rates. Bicycles platoons are not allowed to overrun.





This gave them a comfortable hex of Shpaga. While this is certainly not a marginal victory. problem (the Soviet player performed very well), the sheer firepower of the available Soviet artillery suggested a possible *slight* game imbalance. While the Soviet player mounted frontal attacks against German town hexes and was able to play "finger of God" against the strongest German units, one can only image what could happen if he decided to be devious and start spotting fire missions on German trucks, Kubelwagens, and CPs back in Molkanova. another way, the Soviet player did everything the hard way, did not have good dice, took hideous losses, and still won the game with room and time to spare. This is not in any way meant to take away from the Soviet victory. Quite the contrary, the Soviet player's excellent use of his artillery, both direct and indirect, is what made it such a devastating weapon.

In the solitaire replay, one of the Soviet 122mm batteries was removed from their order of battle, and this time the Soviet attack was handled in the most treacherous way possible. By this we mean that their armored cars and light BT tanks ran everywhere, immune to the pitiful German firepower (not that it could reach them anyway). By the end of Turn 4 they had eyes everywhere, on at least two sides of every single German town. Rather than start a headlong smash at the German center, the Soviets started by slamming down fire missions on the German howitzers, then their IG guns, then their little mortars, trucks, wagons, CPs, and Kubelwagens at the back end of towns like Molkanova, Shpaga, Kharavyets. Meanwhile, the Soviet "wall" advanced from the south, not so much rushing headlong into German machine guns as pressurizing from the south so the Germans couldn't safely send back forces to reinforce the hexes threatened in their rear. In this way, the Soviets basically "attacked" the Germans from two sides, the south and the north.

The strategy worked, just not well enough. Some truly horrendous activation rolls stalled this tactic enough where the tenacious Germans were able to hold on. A ill-advised and halfhearted Soviet attack at Zhapets was completely shot to ruin, and German

hexes of Zhapets, two hexes of Kharavyets, and one counterattacks thrown at the Soviets as they tried to hedge around Shpaga to reinforce gains in Molkanova caused horrendous losses. The Soviets also lost a lot of time when these heavy howitzers took three full turns to get on the board, then a turn to set up, then a turn to receive their orders. They first rounds didn't impact until Turn 6, with the game halfway over. Most telling of all, however, the Soviets could only get a 3-1 on their artillery strikes, at least against German rifle platoons. Against targets like trucks and CPs, however, these fire missions were still "thunderbolts of Zeus." Thus, once finally set to work, they quickly began emptying weak German urban hexes and putting points on the Soviet scoreboard.

> In the end, the Soviets *just* missed their marginal victory conditions, occupying four town hexes. Because the Soviet marginal victory in the first game was won with a greater edge than the German marginal in the second game, the overall situation is chalked up as a Soviet marginal victory. This is a good sign, proof that we can build historically accurate PanzerBlitz games in the Barbarossa period that are still balanced. The Soviets will lose almost every battle, naturally, but the Soviet *player* still has to have a chance of winning the game.

Situation 03 **Mass Armored Counterstrike** vs. Panzer Group Kleist **Dubno, Ukraine 27 June, 1941**

Summary: As von Kleist's panzer group makes its opening drive through the northern Ukraine, they run into a determined line of resistance near the town of Dubno. The delay gives the Soviet 5th and 6th armies enough time to mass five additional tank corps that strike the German spearhead from almost every side. Although these attacks were badly coordinated, the combined four-day battle would constitute history's largest tank engagement until Kursk in 1943. One of the strongest of these counterattacks is mounted by the 8th Mechanized Corps striking out of the southwest. Having pushed back the German 57th Infantry Division, they are soon met by the German





16th Panzer Division. Among the Soviet tanks, however, are significant numbers of the T-34 and KV-series battle tanks. The panzers have officially met their match.

Background: From almost the outset, the advance of Barbarossa was somewhat more difficult in the south. There were a number of reasons for this. generally, the Soviets had slightly stronger forces in the south. In their pre-war contingency planning against a possible German invasion, the Soviets knew that the massive Pipret Marshes (sitting squarely in the middle of any German advance out of Poland) would force the Germans to vector either north or south of this obstacle. The Soviets had guessed that the Germans would hit harder in the south, aiming at the rich economic prizes in the Ukraine. Although Hitler would become obsessed with these targets later, at least at the outset the Soviets had guess dead wrong. Army Group Center's strike with two panzer groups northward of the marshes was much stronger than Army Group South with just one panzer group. Army Group South also enjoyed much less air support than its big brother in the center. All these factors add up to a somewhat weaker German force hitting a much stronger Soviet defense in the Ukraine.

Second, the Soviet commanders seemed to be a little better in the south. The Southwestern Front was under the command of Mikhail Kirponos, a far better choice than the hapless Pavlov commanding the Western Front. Kirponos had some pretty solid people working for him, as well, including some names destined to rise to greatness in subsequent phases of the Eastern Front like Rokossovsky and Katukov. Although Kirponos gets some bad press from writers like Georgi Zhukov and Nikita Khrushchev (the future General Secretary of the Soviet Union, a flag-ranked commissar during the war), he seems to have done marginally better than many of his peers. Who knows what history might have held for this man, but he was killed during the defense of Kiev in September. Subsequent writing, however, has treated him a little better, especially in light of the difficulties he faced not only from the Germans, but the crippling weaknesses inherent in the Red Army.

Lastly, the Soviets seems to have slightly better equipment in many of these formations. Most notably, a new of the tank divisions assigned to 5th and 6th Army were partially equipped with the new T-34 and KV-1 series of battle tanks, while the Western Front formations were still dealing largely with models like the T-26, T-40, and the wretched T-38.

Panzer Group I (Colonel-General von Kleist) led the way for von Rundstedt's Army Group South into the Ukraine on June 22. Once across the Bug River, von Kleist was to advance to Rovno and Korosten with the strategic objective of Kiev. He deployed the III and XLVIII Motorized Corps up front, driving a wedge between the Soviet 5th and 6th Armies and hoping to cut an important railroad line to Kiev.

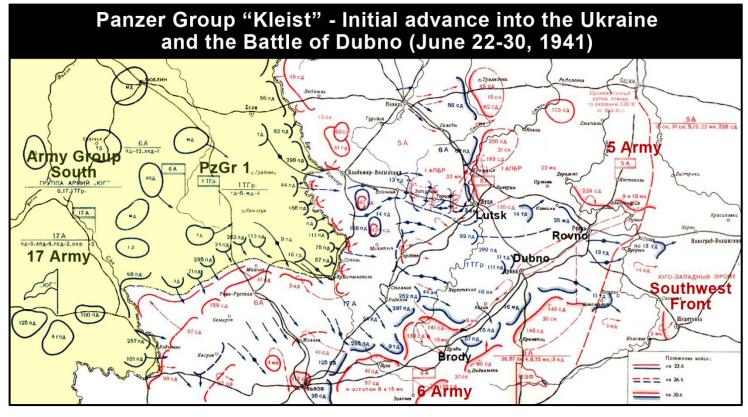
The Southwestern Front was actually pretty quick to react, goaded in no small part by very blunt (if murky and indistinct) orders from Moscow. Six Soviet mechanized corps, with over 2,500 tanks, were massed to take part in combined counterattacks against the front, left, and right of Panzer Group Kleist. The Soviet 22nd Mechanized Corps would halt (or at least slow) the Germans from the front near Rovno, while the tanks of the Soviet 5th Army would strike from the north and the 6th Army did the same from the south. The idea was for these two counterattack to slice behind the Germans and meet at the town of Dubno, cutting off the German spearhead into a pocket the Soviets could destroy later.

The orders went out and the Soviets got moving. Marshal Georgi Zhukov and Nikita Khrushchev headed to Kirponos' headquarters to ensure nothing went wrong. Unfortunately, plenty *did* go wrong.

Most importantly, the Soviet units earmarked for the operation were widely spread across the vast distances of the western Ukraine, and would take some time to get in position. Second, many of these so called "motorized" units were nothing of the sort, especially the infantry. Rokossovsky (9th Mechanized Corps commander, 5th Army) had to basically steal 200 trucks and even then most of his infantry were riding on tanks. Most of the Soviet units were thus strung along long dust roads, with the tanks too far ahead of the supporting infantry. This meant that either the units arrived piecemeal or, as in







Rokossovsky's case, whole and intact but far too late.

Lastly, the Germans owned the skies. They saw the Soviets coming from a long way off and many of the formations were heavily bombed before the battle really began.

The Germans ran into the 22nd Mechanized Corps on June 24, starting a series of engagements that are sometimes called the Battle of Brody, Battle of Rovno, or Battle of Dubno. Whatever the name, it would last four days and involve more tanks than any other part of Barbarossa. In fact, this would stand as history's largest single tank battle until the Battle of Kursk in 1943. Kleist's whole panzer group (13 divisions, including five panzer divisions and two motorized divisions) would be struck by at least elements of *six* Soviet tank corps, totaling 12 tank divisions and backup infantry. Again, these Soviet units were hardly full-strength, but suffice it to say that this was one hell of an explosion that had many on the German general staff genuinely worried.

Let's get down to details. As mentioned above, the Group Kleist can almost be likened to the hero in a Soviet attack combined six mechanized corps under the command 5th Army to the north and the 6th Army who always attack *one at a time*. The fast, agile, and to the south. From the north, the Soviets would strike well-coordinated Germans (11th, 13th, 14th, and 16th with K.K. Rokossovsky's 9th and N. V. Feklenko's 19th Panzer Divisions) were able to pivot time and again, Mechanized Corps, while the 22nd Mechanized Corps smacking down poorly-coordinated Soviet attacks

was to assemble northeast of Lutsk and try to hold the German advance long enough for the flanking attacks to develop. To the south, under the command of the 6th Army, Ryabyshev's 8th and Karpezo's especially powerful 15th Mechanized Corps would strike from the south, while the 4th Mechanized Corps under A. Vlasov would support from the southwest, on the left flank of the 15th Mechanized Corps.

If all these Soviet forces had managed to hit the Germans at once, the results could have been spectacular. The Germans were outnumbered in tanks by 4-1 (650 to over 2500). Nor were the German tanks any better than some Soviet machines, since some of these Soviet formations had upwards of 700 of the new T-34s and KVs. And the Germans were being hit on three sides, practically surrounded. As it turned out, however, distance, bad mobility, poor supplies, incomplete communications, and German air superiority meant that many of these Soviet forces hit one at a time, and many others never at all. Panzer Group Kleist can almost be likened to the hero in a martial-arts movie, surrounded by twenty assailants who always attack one at a time. The fast, agile, and well-coordinated Germans (11th, 13th, 14th, and 16th





and then quickly turning to face another.

In the end, the Soviet pincers were unable to close at Dubno. Instead they took horrific losses, particularly their tank forces. The 10th Tank Division of the 15th Mechanized Corps (one of the stronger Soviet counterstrikes at Dubno) went from 205 tanks to about 20 in two days. The 22^{nd} , 8^{th} , and 4^{th} Mechanized Corps but annihilated. were all Rokossovsky managed to withdraw his understrength 9th Mechanized Corps in relatively good order (including Katukov's 20th Tank Division, his first battle of the war), which also bought time for the 19th Mechanized Corps to pull out. All Soviet formations involved, however, had taken shattering losses.

The Germans, however, had also taken a heavy battering. But although Panzer Group Kleist had lost large numbers of tanks, the formation remained capable of offensive operations. In any event, the Soviets had largely shattered themselves against the panzers, and there was very little to oppose Kleist's further advance. The Soviet 6th Army was forced to abandon its defenses and withdraw south toward L'vov. But three days later they had to abandon L'vov altogether before von Kleist encircled them from the north. What was left of the 5th Army was also in full retreat, at least when and where it was able to do even that thanks to the Luftwaffe.

By the beginning of July Kirponos was ordered back to the old "Stalin Line" of fortifications along the 1939 Soviet-Polish border. But without large forces and mobile reserves to defend them, these fortifications were a hollow shell. These forces had already been destroyed further west, fighting to defend the new border along the Bug River border without the benefit of any fortifications. Such conflicted defensive strategy can be traced directly to the political and prestige priorities of Josef Stalin, flawed thinking which contributed heavily to many of the catastrophic Soviet defeats during Barbarossa.

Still, the Battle of Dubno caused a great deal of worry among the German leadership. On June 26, Colonel-General Franz Hadler, chief-of-staff of the OKH, wrote: "Army Group South is advancing slowly and unfortunately with great losses." On June 27 he added: "The Soviet command in the Ukraine is doing

a good job." In a more detailed report, he adds: "In the Army Group South sector, heavy fighting continues on the right flank of Panzer Group 1. The Soviet 8th Tank Corps has effected a deep penetration of our front and is now in the rear of the 11th Panzer Division. This penetration has seriously disrupted our rear areas between Brody and Dubno. The enemy is threatening Dubno from the southwest ... the enemy also has several separate tank groups acting in the rear of Panzer Group 1, which are managing to cover considerable distances."

In all, the Battle of Dubno slowed the advance of Army Group South by at least a week, something that no one else on the Soviet line was able to say. The fierce Soviet resistance also worried Hitler, would already began fretting about advancing too fast and the panzer group exposing their flanks. Hadler and other generals managed to convince Hitler to stick to the original plan for now, but later they would not be so lucky. In September, when Hitler again wanted to turn more of his tanks south into the Ukraine for mopping up operations, he could point to battles like Dubno as proof that his army's flanks and rear had been vulnerable to bypassed Soviet forces almost from the outset.

Lastly, the Battle of Dubno saw one of the first encounters between the Germans and the new T-34

and KV-1 model tanks. We'll save the of complete breakdown this development for another situation, since the new Soviet tanks had little effect on the Battle of Dubno despite their superlative qualities. Suffice it to say that the appearance of these new vehicles proved two facts: that the Soviets could indeed build some of the best tanks in the world, and that the best tanks in the world can't help an army that doesn't know how to use them. Despite their clear superiority, these new tanks were outmaneuvered, pinned down, and







destroyed by the Germans. The full potential of these weapons, especially the T-34, would have to wait for another day.





Situation Design: Detailed, granular information on by 16th Panzer Division." Eastern Front battles is usually tough to find, but once in a while you get lucky. Such was the case for part of the Battle of Dubno, with great maps detailing operations found on the RKKA in World War II website. Other maps were found on other websites that contradicted these RKKA maps, but the RKKA sources were proved more reliable when crossagainst sources like Glanz, factbook.com, and axishistoryforum (containing maps uploaded from Osprey books). Once the exact formations and positions were determined, a favorite "flashpoint" spot was chosen, which in turn yielded what units to research on sites like niehortster.orbat and gregspanzerblitz.com. Accordingly, we were able Panzer is the fight we will attempt to recreate with to build a pretty solid force composition for both Situation 03. More than 200 AFVs are represented on sides.

The exact part of the battle we're trying to recreate is 8th Mechanized Corps' counterattack from the southwest, digging deep into the right flank and rear of von Kleist's panzer group. In particular, we're looking at 8th Mechanized Corps' operations on June 27, after they had pushed back the German 57th Infantry Division six miles the previous day. Zhukov personally ordered the 8th Mechanized to strike again the next day, continuing the drive northeast into the flank and rear of the German XIV and XLVIII Motorized Corps, making for Dubno. There, they hoped to link up with elements of the Soviet 9th and 19th Mechanized Corps, mounting similar drives from the northeast.

Of course, the Soviet pincers were doomed by all the factors discussed above. In particular, the 9th and 19th Mechanized Corps just didn't have the strength or equipment to even come close to its objective. In the kind that actually happens very rarely in real combat. south, however, the 8th Mechanized had started out with some heavier gear, especially the new T-34 and KV tanks. Having pushed back the 57th Infantry, they now massed the best of their remaining mobile units (drawn from the 34th and 12th Tank Divisions) and made another push northeast toward Dubno. One source says they overran and destroyed several "rear

This new division, incidentally, was part of the XIV Motorized Corps trailing behind the German vanguard further east.

According to one source (Strategy & Tactics #254), this Soviet force actually managed to occupy some of the southern suburbs of Dubno. Where all the sources agree, however, is where the 8th Mechanized Corps is surrounded by counterattacking German elements of 16th Panzer and other units on 28 June. Most of the corps is annihilated, and the 34th Tank Division's commander is killed. However, a handful of survivors do manage to escape back to Soviet lines on July 1.

This first Soviet push against the German 16th the Soviet side. However, the lack of other Soviet forces like infantry or artillery is meant to represent how the Soviet tank regiments have outpaced their support echelon during the harsh road march to the Dubno battle area and in lingering battles against the 57th Infantry.

The Germans are in similar shape. Our map shows both battalions of the 2nd Panzer Regiment (16th Panzer Division), which are represented at nearly full strength since this is very early in the campaign and this is probably 16th Panzer's first real fight (part of a reserve just being committed). However, other elements like panzergrenadiers, recon battalions, and air defense are largely missing, evidence of how the division is still coming up. Only the 16th Artillery Regiment seems to be close enough to offer any kind of support.

The end result is a relatively "pure" tank battle, the

Next we look at the map. Google Earth shows this area to be extremely flat, so again all elevation is removed. There are plenty of trees, however, sharply divided between dense "Pipret-style" forests and wide expanses of farmland. The biggest terrain feature is Granzhelyz, meant to represent the historical Kozyn, a small town on the road to Dubno echelon" elements of 11th Panzer (by now pushed far further northeast. However, note that the game's to the east). Glanz, however, tells us that these Soviets victory conditions (measured by how many Soviet ran into Dubno and "directly into positions occupied" units survive on Board 8) will not necessarily make





the town's urban hexes crucial to the game.

The stars of the game, at least on the Soviet side, will almost certainly be the T-34s and KV-1s. However, PanzerBlitz veterans may notice reduced after the ubiquitous Soviet 76.2mm gun installed on these tanks has already been reduced from 12-A-6 to 9-A-6 due to the conversion to *Liberation* style rules). So what's with the 8-A-5? Simply put, these are older 1939-style KV-1s and 1940s-style T-34s, equipped with the L-11 and F-32 model guns (L/30.5) instead of the later, much more common F-34 model gun (L/42.5) installed later. This is the primary difference between the A-model and C-model tanks with the improved gun we will see in subsequent situations.

As for the Germans, they're going to have a rough time stopping the T-34s and especially KVs with those puny 3.7 cm and 5.0 cm guns. But of course, this is exactly what we want. Historically, the Germans found that only the 8.8 cm antiaircraft gun could reliably kill these targets, but it doesn't look like the 2nd Panzer Regiment had any such weapons that day.

However, the Luftwaffe seems to have been a dominating factor that might help redress this German weakness. During the Battle of Dubno, German air strikes were reported to have killed over 200 tanks on their own. The primary units were "kampfgeschwader" wings KG 51 "Edelweiss", KG 54 "Totenkopf", and KG 55 "Grief."





Sources state that the Soviets were, as usual in the period of the war, suffering from communication and supply problems. Accordingly, all the "early Barbarossa" special rules remain in effect (forced armor stacking, activation rolls, etc.) Their mission, as stipulated by the victory conditions, is simply to put as much weight as possible as far north as possible. The Germans, naturally, are determined to stop them, and prevent the Soviets from developing a significant threat to the southern flank of Panzer Group Kleist.

Playtesting: As any student of the Eastern Front knows, when the Germans first ran across the T-34 and KV model tanks, there were horrified to see their

antitank shells ping harmlessly off the Soviet armor. This started what was called the "tank terror," a phenomenon that seems to persist on our PanzerBlitz map boards 70 years later. This is because once these AFs and RFs on the "T-34As" and "KV-1As" (even new tanks were added to game, the Germans suddenly seemed in dire need of all kinds of help to stop these monsters.

> Of course, with only seven combined counters (later increased to eleven), a "D" morale rating, and all the usual Barbarossa special rules, these T-34s and KVs became something of paper tigers. But they were scary enough to cause a little design trouble when Situation 03 first rolled out, artificially tilting the game in the Germans' favor. Originally designed with a 15.0 cm battery and an extra 10.5 cm battery in the German artillery regiment, not to mention double the He-111 and Ju-88 bombers, this situation had to undergo quick remediation during its first playtest to ensure a fair game. Even these fixes were quickly shown to be insufficient.

> During the first (live) playtest, the Soviets took a fairly straight-forward approach. Advancing onto the board through road hex 4Q1 and "hopping" on the road through hex 4M1, they swarmed through Novo and Mikelyevna, angling north-northwest toward the woods running from 8B3 to 8D2. The Germans, however, had parked "spoiler" trucks in many of these hexes, forcing the Soviets to at least fight for one turn in the open to get these hexes. "Speed bump" trucks were also parked in the I-row gully in the hopes of denying the Soviets a "subway tunnel." These delays, combined with the usual frustration of activation rolls, delayed the Soviets long enough for the Germans to deploy and commit their mobile reserve in the form of the 2nd Panzer Regiment. These tanks were largely massed along the back end of Granzhelyz, where the east-west road makes for a great lateral route.

> Initial German attempts at a major counterattack, however, were frustrated somewhat by the large gullies throughout the west half of Board 8. When the big German overruns finally hit, Soviet opportunity fire was ready and waiting. "These big opportunity fire phases are never as bad as they look," commented the Soviet player, even as he ruthlessly targeted



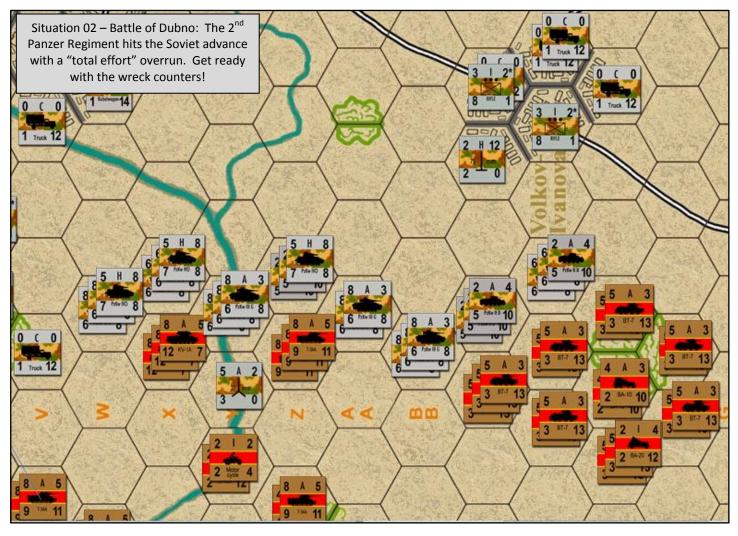


Such losses notwithstanding, onrushing armor. however, the Soviets took hideous damage. particular, the betuskas (BT-7s, also known to the Soviets as "knights in plywood") went up with attempt to storm the Soviet "wreck counter castle." ghastly speed. The T-34s and KVs chugged up to the line, adding their firepower as more German Mark nearly so well. To the east near Mikelyevna, a Soviet IIIGs joined the fray. The whole western third of Board 8 was soon a mass of wreck counters in true "Prokhorovka" fashion. Yet the Germans were slowly getting an upper hand. "This is why they call the game PanzerBlitz," cracked the German player.

impenetrable wall of wrecks. Between the wrecks (both brown and gray) and the green hex sides, this part of the board was soon largely choked off, leaving for the "Flamingo Pig Roast" of Situation 01. But this the Germans with an unenviable choice. They could counterattack was soon destroyed with another CAT either lurk behind the line (thus leaving the Soviets a and German artillery, and the halftracks were able to happy Board 8 sanctuary into which they could pile park in woods hex 4Q2 for a peep at the Soviet victory points) or try to blitz south one counter at a artillery, just in time for the He-111s and Ju-88s to

German Mark IIIGs from among the mass of time through the wreck-choked hexes and into the teeth of Soviet opportunity fire. As it turns out, the Germans only nibbled at the edges of this mess, unwilling to throw away the rest of their armor in an

Other parts of the Soviet attack weren't going recon group was outflanked by empty halftracks and armored cars were set alight via overruns. Meanwhile, the "perfect CAT" was set up (three-unit stacks of a rifle platoon, engineer platoon, and HMG section) that quickly blew up the rest of the recon The Soviets fell back slightly behind their nearly- battalion. The Soviets had one glimmer of hope here as their OT-133 rolled up into Mikelyevna and torched a German HMG section, a small measure of payback







as well as a stack of Soviet infantry trying to creep up the I-row gully on Board 8.

In the end, the Germans made a last lunge at a pair of KVs parked on hex 8E1. Every single tank the Germans had left tried to overrun these two Godzillas, but with a combined DF of 24, the Germans were only able to get a 1:1 odds column, modified to 2:1 for overrun. The Germans rolled a 5, leaving the Soviet behemoths only dispersed . . . quite a feat considering they'd just been overrun by half the 16th Panzer Division. "See what happens when I wear my KV T-shirt?" cracked the Soviet player.

Nevertheless, the game came down to a German marginal victory, with 15 Soviet combat units surviving on Board 8. As the game was replayed twice more in solitaire, however, the victory conditions were also found to unfair and amended in favor of the unfortunate Soviets. Thus, a score of 15 minor tweaks to Soviet force pools and victory units on Board 8 was later reassessed as a Soviet marginal victory.

Needless to say, this situation needed serious work. Soviet victory or not, a big piece of the German force never got into the fight, and the motivation to really pile on the hapless Soviets was little deflated once we realized how unbalanced the game was. The German air and artillery assets were reduced, as previously discussed. The victory conditions were adjusted to lower Soviet requirements. The German tank strength was left intact, however, for historical reasons . . . the 16th Panzer really hadn't been exposed to any combat yet and so should really be at close to full strength. Accordingly, the Soviet tank strength was increased instead. All we can find in our references are mentions of a "mobile group built around the Soviet 34th Tank Division," which I'm sure included pieces of the 12th Tank Division (also in the aforementioned 8th Mechanized Corps). With no real and was part of the largest tank engagement until Kursk, we felt justified in cranking up the T-34s, KVs, and BT tanks.

show up. They quickly destroyed the Soviet artillery, hex 4Q1 and streaking northwest, aiming for the woods hexes 4W8 and the beginning of the gully that leads onto the eastern half of Board 8. This time the Germans went all out in their defense, with towed guns (never engaged in the first game) deployed further forward in key woods hexes and gullies to block Soviet cover. The German "spoiler trucks" were also placed more extensively, and the German counterattack against the Soviet spearhead was ferocious. While the Germans absolutely butchered the eastern thrust, follow-on Soviet forces (those that had failed their initial activation checks to enter the board) swung west instead, and at least managed to chalk up a few Soviet victory points. In the end, the Soviets wound up with only ten units on Board 8, a defeat even when measured against the lowered victory requirements.

> The game was thus tried a third time (again with requirements). Again the Germans really had their fangs out (in general, a lot of this situation seems to come down to Soviet luck with the activation rolls and just how aggressive the German player is willing to be). But at least this time we were close, with the Soviets managing fourteen units, just missing a marginal victory. It also bears noting that the German losses in the third playtest were grim, far, far worse than the 16th Panzer likely suffered on June 27, 1941.

One interesting phenomenon that comes out in this scenario is the mass overrun. As the Soviet tanks pour onto the board, the Germans twice made massive overruns into the teeth of Soviet opportunity fire. While the Germans indeed lost more tanks than the Soviets at first, what winds up happening is that the Germans get "on top of the turn sequence." Because the Soviets have all fired and cannot use split move and fire, they sit there helplessly during their following turn, allowing the Germans to plaster them idea how big this "mobile group" was, but guided by with another salvo of point-blank direct fire. Now the the context that this battle scared the Germans a little Soviets are in real trouble because many of them are dispersed (and almost never rally), and even those that aren't have a hard time moving because of activation rolls. In short, although they take a It didn't help. This time the Soviets made a shove tremendous pounding in their initial charge, the the other way, channeling everything through road Germans usually find these losses well worthwhile

PanzerBlitz.

COUNTERSTRIKE VS. PANZERGRUPPE KLEIST - BATTLE OF DUBNO (25 June 1941): As von Kleist's Panzergruppe I makes its opening drive through the northern Ukraine, they run into a determined line of resistance near the town of Dubno. The delay gives the Soviet 5th and 6th armies time to mass five more tank corps to strike the German spearhead from almost every side. Although these attacks were badly coordinated, the combined four-day battle would constitute history's largest tank engagement until



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SITUATION 03

Kursk in 1943. One of the strongest of these counterattacks is mounted from the southwest by the 8th Mechanized Corps against the rear and flank of the 16th Panzer Division, mounting a significant number of the new KV-1 and T-34 battle tanks. Have the panzers finally met their match?



RUSSIAN FORCES Mingled Elements, 34th & 12th Tank Divisions 8th Mechanized Corps, 6th Army Southwestern Front (Morale D)



Mixed Mobile Group, 23rd, 24th, 67th, and 68th Tank Regiments

8 A 5	8 A 5	5 A 3	8 H 6	4 A 3	24 H 1	4 A 3	2 4
12 KV-1A 7	9 T-34A 11	3 BT-7 13	3 T-28 6	3 T-268 6	2 OT-133 6	2 BA-10 10	2 BA-20 12
-5	6	18	3	3	1	2	1

Elements, 34th Motorized Rifle Regiment



Batteries, 34th Howitzer Regiment



34th Reconnaissance Battalion



Elements, 34th Engineer Bn



Elements, 34th AA Bn



SETUP: Germans set up on Board 8. Russians enter from the westernn half of the board's southern edge (hex rows A-Q, inclusive). Note that Russian units must make "activation" rolls to enter (see special rules). Units that fail try again next turn. German aircraft arrive on Turn 6.

#

JEL GERMAN FORCES

16th Panzer Division, XIV Motorized Corps, Panzergruppe Kleist Army Group South (Morale B)



2nd Panzer Regiment





I. Battalion, Infantry Regiment 79 (with attachments)



Elements, 16th Antitank Battalion



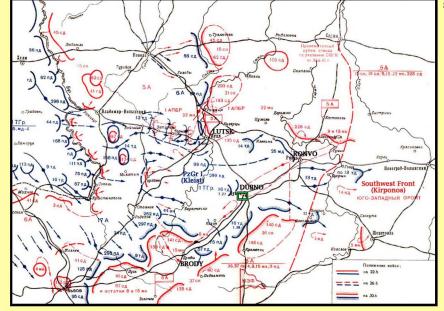
Sorties, Kampfgeschwader 55 and 54 "Grief, Totenkopf"



VICTORY CONDITIONS: Judged by how many combat units the Russians have on Board 8 (to include "border" hexes) at the end of Turn 10.

- Zero units: German DECISIVE victory
- 1-7 units: German TACTICAL victory
- 8-14 units: German MARGINAL victory
- 15-21 units: Russian MARGINAL victory
- 22-28 units: Russian TACTICAL victory
- 29+ units: Russian DECISIVE victory

Russians move first Turn 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



SPECIAL RULES:

- Russian Confusion: Russian communications and command was in chaos. Before moving, all Russian units must make an "activation" roll (1-4 on a d6). If they miss the roll, they cannot move, overrun, or load, or unload. "Motionless" CATs do not need this roll. For loading or unloading, only the carrier unit has to make the roll. For movement only, Russian units may always fire per normal rules.
- Belorussian Flatlands: ignore all slopes, hilltops, and brown hex sides. Swamps, woods, towns, and gullies are still in effect. Otherwise the board is perfectly flat.
- Russian Tank Companies: In Russian tank companies, only the CO had a radio, and controlled his unit via signal flags. Thus, Russian tank companies must always stack at least 2 in a hex. If a unit is left isolated through combat or movement, the Russian player has one movement phase to re-stack the tank counter with another. At the end of the Russian movement phase, any Russian tank counter not stacked with another Russian tank counter is immediately eiminated. Only tanks operate under this rule.
- Russian Tactics: Russians may not use split move and fire.

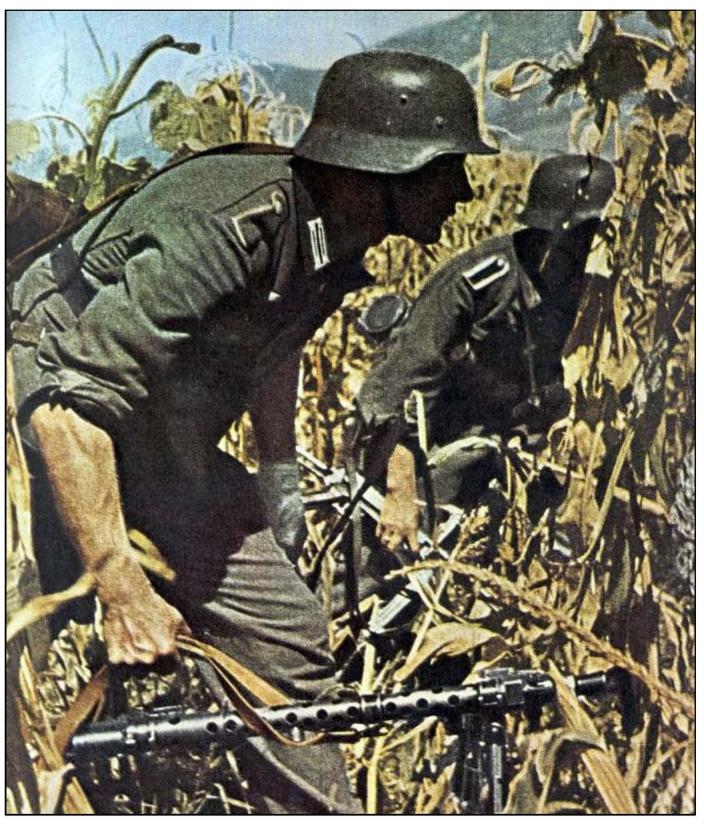




because they can literally shoot the whole Soviet tank marginal victory (15 units, the exact requirement), the without taking any additional losses.

the final requirements, the live game was a Soviet an overall German marginal victory.

division to ribbons in subsequent turns, usually second playtest was a German marginal victory (10 units, German requirement +4), and the third playtest In summary, this game is a tough one to score since was another German marginal victory (14 units, the the victory conditions kept changing. Judged against exact requirement). Thus, Situation 03 comes down as





Situations, Analysis, and Campaign Journal, PANZERBLITZ on the Eastern Front, By JAMES JOHNSON June - December 1941

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SECTION TWO - JULY, 1941 WAR OF THE RIVERS

The frontiers of the Soviet Union have been torn open and the first echelons of the Red Army all but annihilated in one of the most stunning weeks of modern warfare. The panzer spearheads now push deep into the Soviet hinterland, aimed for their first operational objectives. In the north, the drive on Leningrad has begun, assisted in no small part by the miraculous capture of bridges over the River Dvina. In the south, von Rundstedt's forward elements have crossed the Dniestr, and the Romanians and Schobert's 11th Army have joined Barbarossa by invading Bessarabia over the River Prut. In the center, the spearheads of Guderian and Hoth have closed behind Minsk and sealed the first great encirclement of the war. Now they push eastward, driving for the great sweep of the upper Dniepr. All across the battle front, Barbarossa has become a war of rivers, with the Germans racing for crossings and bridgeheads before the reeling Soviets can establish new defenses behind these formidable obstacles.

Situation 04 Guderian at the Dniepr Kopys, Belarus 11 July, 1941

Summary: After the panzer groups of Guderian and Hoth sealed some 300,000 Soviets in the Bialostok pocket, they began a risky push toward the Dniepr River, the next great obstacle of the campaign. The gamble was dire, with many Soviet pockets behind them still not reduced and the German infantry divisions lagging far behind. German high command was far from convinced that the gamble was worth it, but the panzer commanders eventually made the case that they couldn't afford to allow the Soviets time to reassemble fresh defenses anchored on the mighty rivers of Russia. Here, the 29th Motorized Division of the XLVII Motorized Corps makes ready to push across the Dniepr River, resisted by scattered elements of the 18th and 54th Rifle Divisions, 46th Corps.

Background: Although they certainly didn't know it at the time, at the beginning of July 1941 the German armed forces were probably standing at the absolute apex of their power. They had just destroyed, or at least soundly routed, the entire first echelon of the Soviet forces facing them. After just over a week, about a million Soviet troops were dead, wounded, captured, or about to be captured in vast pockets carved out of the Soviet forward defensive zones. What remained of the Red Army was reeling backward in a shattered, disorganized, and near-leaderless mass. In all, it was a military accomplishment of epic proportions.

Naturally, the Germans were hard at work on ways to screw it up.

One of the largest aspects of this initial success, at least in Army Group Center's sector, was the closure of two massive pockets at Bialostok and Minsk. These pockets were right behind each other, between the former Polish-Soviet border and Minsk. Between them they contained the bulk of the Soviet 3rd, 4th, and 10th Armies (some 330,000 troops), bypassed on the north by Panzer Group Hoth and on the south by Panzer Group Guderian. As they had promised, these two generals had linked up their spearheads in Minsk near the end of the first week of the war, thus sealing these two pockets and bagging the first great encirclement of Barbarossa.

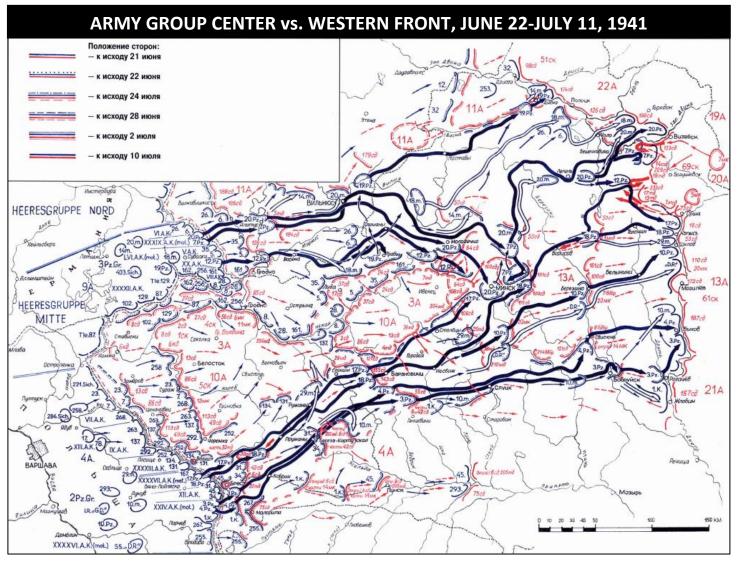
Certainly, there had been problems. The Soviet fortress at Brest-Litovsk was still holding out (disrupting Guderian's rail lines), Boldin's counterattack had caused Strauss' Ninth Army considerable problems, and Guderian's left flank had been seriously threatened by Soviet tank action out of Bialostok itself (with strong armored counterattacks against the 17th Panzer Division at Slonim, among other places). But overall, Hoth and Guderian were on schedule. They had seized the major transport center of Minsk, thus placing them over a third of the way to Moscow. Soviet command was in chaos. The commander of the Western Front, Dmitri Pavlov, had already been executed by Stalin's commissars, along with his chief of staff and the commander of the Soviet 4th Army.

Far more important than any territorial gain,



PanzerBlitz, <mark>Barbarossa</mark>





however, Hoth and Guderian had accomplished a huge part of Barbarossa's initial objective. This was the annihilation of the Red Army west of the Dniepr and Dvina Rivers, *before* it could fall back, reorganize, and start massing its limitless reserves. The problem, predictably, was what to do next.

The problem was that the Soviet Union was such a huge country, and tackling it presented such a different challenge to anything the Wehrmacht had previously faced. The Germans had never tried a blitzkrieg on this scale, and generals disagreed on what specific things had to happen in order for the war to be won. In *PanzerBlitz* parlance, no one agreed on the "victory conditions." First, they could take Moscow and cripple the Soviet Union politically. Second, they could destroy the Red Army and cripple the Soviet Union militarily. Third, they could take the Ukraine, the Don Basin, and the Caucasus, and cripple it economically.

The problem is, all three of these solutions seem incomplete. Take Moscow? Great. Napoleon did it, and look what happened to him. It's not like the Soviet Union ends at Moscow, especially since all the Soviet factories were already being moved further east to the Urals. Destroy the Red Army? Great. They'll build another, and another after that. Even in July of 1941 the Soviets were already deploying a fresh line of reserves and rewriting their operational doctrine, practically under fire. Take the Ukraine? The Soviets were already burning it down and again, many of their factories were already being shipped east. Also, these southern objectives are much further away than places like Leningrad or even Moscow, as the Germans would find to their cost during their "Case Blue" offensive of 1942.

Were any of these strategies possible? Even if they were, would any of them really have knocked down the Soviet Union? Would the Germans have to





the Dvina and Dniepr rivers" had been designated as an initial goal, but was it the only goal, or even the remained in doubt. This would lead to conflict, confusion, and crossed wires all the way down to the commanders in the field, as happened with Guderian Soviet pockets were hardly air-tight. in the first week of July.

Guderian and Hoth had successfully sealed the first big pocket of the war. First, there was the option favored by Guderian and Hoth themselves - turn east and bolt for those all-important rivers and force crossings before the Soviets could reorganize and make those rivers into real military obstacles. Taking crossings over the Dniepr, for example, gets you into Smolensk, which tears open the read to Moscow, which gives you the Soviet capital. But was this really a game of football, where you win simply by spiking the ball in the end zone? Would taking Moscow really have ended the war? Would millions of Soviet soldiers simply say "shucks" and put up their hands?

Actually . . . just maybe. Moscow was that important of a political, logistics, and communication center, so say nothing of the psychological shock its fall would represent. Analogies of Napoleon notwithstanding, Russia in 1812 was not the Soviet Union of 1941. Stalin had just spent the last fifteen years centralizing everything, what would happen if that center was torn out remained far from certain.

Second, there was the option favored by Hitler, von Kluge, and other more conventional generals. Army, specifically those formations caught in pockets mean that 330,000 Soviets have disappeared.

accomplish all three? These three and more? Even tank commanders' lines of communication and seventy years later, experts argue these points, but at supply. The infantry columns struggling to keep up the moment the critical weakness in the German with the panzers (marching on foot, their equipment position was that they hadn't picked a conclusive and supplies completely horse-drawn) were having strategy at all. Sure, "destroy the Red Army west of trouble getting their arms around these pockets. Hitler and his worriers were concerned that the infantry divisions were too slow and too few to most important goal? Strangely, the Germans seemed effectively seal and reduce these pockets, and the unsure. Even if it was accepted as the one overriding Soviets would be free to run wild through the German objective of the campaign, how to accomplish it rear. Soon it would be tough to tell exactly who had "cut off" who.

To be fair, the worriers had a case in that these thousands of Soviets were escaping these pockets to The question on the table was what to do now that fight on as partisans or make their way back to Red Accordingly, orders went out to Army lines. Guderian and Hoth to detach some of their tanks and send them backward to help seal these pockets behind them.

> Here's where things get sticky. Guderian and Hoth naturally balked at this idea. While some historians have taken up von Kluge's suggestion that Hoth and Guderian were "conspiring" to circumvent these orders, it can't be denied that the panzer generals detached the minimum possible forces for the absolute minimum possible time. Meanwhile, Guderian was already launching toward the Dniepr, despite von Kluge's orders to the contrary.

Guderian was pretty crafty in how he did this. While his memoirs plead innocence, it's clear that he deliberately sent elements of 18th Panzer and 29th Motorized Infantry forward toward the Dniepr. This represented the bulk of his left wing, the XLVII Motorized Corps (the 17th Panzer had been detached for "pocket duty"). While this spearhead was headed for the river at the town of Kopys, the 10th Panzer Division, the Infantry Regiment Grossdeutschland and SS Regiment Das Reich were headed for the river at Put most simply, their priority was to destroy the Red Mogilev. 10th Motorized and 4th Panzer Divisions were headed for Stary Bychov while the 3rd Panzer behind the German spearheads. Just because you've and 1st Cavalry divisions were moving to Rogachev to driven your tanks in a big circle, after all, doesn't protect the panzer group's right (southern) flank. Von magically Kluge wasn't told of any of this, partly distracted by a Those pockets were dozens of miles strong Soviet armored counterattack against Hoth to across and contained whole armies sitting across the the north at the town of Senna. By the time Guderian





brought news of his eastward push to von Kluge, he'd actually allows you to fly over any potential Dniepr was on.

This was damned risky, and even Guderian admits it in his memoirs. His flanks were far from secure. To the north, Hoth had his hands full at Senna. This battle soon sucked in elements of 17th Panzer, which had broken off from "pocket duty" (the Bialostok-Minsk pockets surrendered on July 1) and was on its way back to the front when Hoth's crisis blew up to the north. The 18th Panzer had actually already made a crossing but there were too many Soviets measurements for such terrain as given in *PanzerBlitz*. counterattacking them on the east bank, and Guderian actually had to pull them back across the river. the river itself. While the special rules may seem Clearly a full-scale, infantry-led river crossing was needed to establish a solid, viable bridgehead. But what if Hoth buckled in the north? How vulnerable would Guderian be if his panzer group was hit in the left wing and rear, with his formations on both sides of a contested river?

Heinz" committed his 29th Motorized Infantry (The Falcon Division) across the river at Kopys. The 18th Panzer, which had actually just pulled back across the river, would follow behind, followed in turn by the 17th Panzer, once they'd extricated themselves from the problems along Guderian's left and rear. The assault started at first light on July 11, and is the engagement we're trying to recreate with our Situation 04.

Situation Design: Thankfully, Guderian gives us a little detail here (he personally viewed the action starting at about 06:10 hours). He even names the Soviet forces he was fighting that day. These were cross-checked (and slightly corrected) against maps found on the RKKA site, giving us a rare chance to design a situation based on clear viewpoints on both sides.

The first thing to note is the map board. Clearly, Board 5 ("River Styx") is used, set in such a way to present Kopys itself on the east bank of the river. Using Google Earth and other sources, we've managed to get a feel for the terrain and elevation (Google Earth has that "flight simulator" add-in that

made sure that it was too late to stop it. Von Kluge battlefield on the planet and see how tall the elevation reluctantly acquiesced and Guderian's assault on the really is). Furthermore, since Guderian was there and loved having pictures taken of himself, we actually get some great clues in the background of the photos. Based on this evidence, the ridges and hilltops are back in the game (no more "Belorussian flatland" special rule), but note the special rule about not halving DF shooting uphill. These were very gentle folds in the ground, enough to block LOS in some cases but not much else. They certainly don't qualify as full hills and slopes if compared against the

The most complex terrain feature, unfortunately, is cumbersome, reading them through will demonstrate that they represent little more than common sense. The last thing we wanted to create here, after all, was a Suez Canal game out of Arab-Israeli Wars. Probably the toughest part of the river rules are some of the "canyon" line of sight rules, which is why so many Nevertheless, the orders went out, and "Fast examples are laid out in the special rules to ensure no confusion. Also, the keeping the status of German infantry platoons during their crossing will be a slight challenge, hopefully alleviated by

> "assault boat" counters. Please note that while these counters have gaming values on them, they are not considered units in any way. They magically "appear" when the infantry



are ready to cross and vanish when they're done, much like the Higgins Boat counters you don't get in Panzer Leader. Think of these more as game function counters. We even have pictures of these assault boats in Guderian's memoirs, so we know exactly what kind of boat we're talking about.

Because of all these special rules and the headache of pushing around endless triple-stacks of infantry counters, the game was limited in size. Situation 04 only represents the *lead battalions* of Infantry Regiments 15 and 71, 29th Motorized Infantry Division. This almost instantly cuts the game down to one-third its "true" size. This also means that the Soviets get only a slice of their defense forces in the area, the mingled and disorganized formations of the





18th and 53rd Rifle Divisions. Although Guderian calls this the 66th Corps, we have no idea if it's true since he gets one of the divisions wrong and no 66th Corps shows up anywhere in any of the Soviet RKKA maps or the neihorster.orbat website. In fact, there doesn't seem to be any corps structure at all, at least in this sector. The Soviet 20th Army is a STAVKA reserve formation that seems to be, like so many others, thrown together at the last minute in a desperate attempt to stem the German spearheads.

The victory conditions are pretty harsh on the Germans, as usual in our *PanzerBlitz: Barbarossa* series. They pretty much have to get their entire infantry force across the river unscathed for a decisive victory, not an easy prospect given the Soviet numbers, artillery (note the 122mm infantry guns), and difficulties posed by the river itself. Not only is this "fair" given the deplorable state of the Soviet forces (morale D, activation checks, etc.), but it seems to reflect the historical outcome, which is the benchmark for victory conditions in these situations anyway. Guderian writes how he left his headquarters at Tolochino (an old headquarters of Napoleon) at 06:10 hours and went to the front to watch the crossing. By the time he got to Kopys, the two German regiments were already across and engaged against the Soviets "in the woods on the east side of Kopys." Guderian describes the drive as difficult, but we can still infer that the assault had carried over the river by 07:30 at the latest.

We also know from Guderian's account that there were no bridges. He describes the assault boats, and how his forward HQ "had a good view of the bridge building in progress" later on the day. Finally he crossed himself in an assault boat, but couldn't get to other bridgeheads further south because they weren't connected yet. This shows us that the bridgeheads hadn't been expanded that far even at the end of the day (70-80 PanzerBlitz turns later), which in turn infers that although defeated, the Soviets didn't completely come apart.

included in their order of battle. This is purely for have enough firepower to really offer much cover. guess what was next to die. Making matters worse,

This, of course, represents the division and corps command posts, along with Guderian himself, who's little "command group" of halftracks arrived to watch the crossings take place.

Playtesting: Ever since the first of these "river boards" was drawn, I've wanted to run a bona fide river-crossing assault. Sure, we've tinkered with river crossings before, with engineer bridges already in place (PanzerBlitz Liberation 08) and highway bridges actually still up to be defended (Panzer Leader: ATO 03). But we've always shied away from a "raw" river assault, with little more than rubber boats to get the infantry across. In playtesting Barbarossa Situation 04, we've found that despite the rather involved special rules regarding assault boats and the river, the game ran remarkably smooth, especially with the inclusion of the assault boat "status" counters (this game would be pretty tough without them).

More interestingly, the game was found to present interesting challenges to both the attacker and defender. The attacker has to carefully employ his artillery and air support in order to clear the way for his infantry . . . which will be exceedingly vulnerable if they simply drag their boats into the river and try to putter across. The defender is faced with the challenge of stopping a heavily-supported enemy attack with only the barest of assets, his only chance is to read the terrain and make the best use of the river as part of his defense.

The first game went pretty well for the Germans, since the Soviets were kind enough to deploy some

heavy mortars, 37mm AA guns, and infantry platoons in open hexes. Some of these hexes were great in a land battle, being in gullies or the reverse slope of Hill 128. But in a



game with Stukas, this was a sacrifice the German was quick to exploit. Stukas screamed down and although one was shot out of the sky by the 37mms, the rest made short work of several key Soviet targets.

The Germans didn't even have to use all of their Lastly, note the German "headquarters" unit bombs, they were able to save one load of ordinance for when the Soviet 122mm howitzer battery fired on "decoration," they can't cross the river and they don't a "guess" target hex. Once this was revealed . . . well,



<u>PanzerBlitz, Barbarossa</u>



Othe Soviet .50 cals gave away their position when they fired to German spotters across the river, opening up a city hex of Zapolye to the first thunderous German artillery strike.

Bereft of many of their best weapons, the Soviets were hard-pressed to stop the actual German assault. German direct fire from weapons like flak halftracks, armored cars, and infantry guns lined up in Kilovo and the surrounding woods,

woods, pouring fire across the river to support the river crossing. In went the German assault boats, with one battalion making a push through hex rows H-L and another through hex rows BB-GG. Dividing their force in the face of the enemy like this was risky, but the geometry of the river, the set-up LOS rules, and the tight assault schedule left few options. Germans seemed to have gotten away with it, however, failing a few "river checks" here and there but otherwise largely unhindered by the Soviets. One stack was disrupted once loaded in their assault boats in the south, while another was hammered pretty badly by Soviet direct fire (including massed small arms fire) in hex row I. But the worst damage was delivered by the Germans themselves, when a "blind" artillery mission called in on woods hex 5J7 drifted and instead landed on a German weapons company trying to boat across the river. Say goodbye to some HMGs, with the 81mm mortars dispersed and nearly overstacking against the rifle company in the next hex.

One thing the Soviets did well included "bank blocker" units like empty wagons and trucks that quickly clogged up the obvious landing hexes towards which the German assault boats were puttering. While these units were quickly smashed up by "flack-tracks," strafing Stukas, and even rifle fire from across the river, they did succeed in tying down this German fire which allowed Soviet infantry



platoons to advance toward the river bank, and thus CAT the Germans as their boats thunked into the east bank. Another good move by the Soviets was the elimination of the German direct fire positions in Kilovo and the surrounding woods hexes. The big German 15.0 cm infantry gun was the first to go, followed by the smaller IGs even as these same Soviet fire hexes were founded by German indirect fire. The whole thing resembled a Napoleonic battle, with lines of direct-fire guns hammering away at each other at 300 meters. One can only imagine the streams of tracers and spouts of water exploding across that bloody river.

A few more incidents of misfortune would strike the Germans in their crossing. A rash of very bad "boating checks" in the north resulted in about half that battalion landing 300-500 meters further south than intended, much too close for comfort to those Soviet guns in Zapolye. Drifting boats narrowly missed an over-stack violation, which of course would have resulted in destroyed units drowning in the river. In the south, a screwed-up stack on the German river bank caused a traffic jam just south of Dubnya, which held up the engineer company so they were the *last* to cross, rather than the first. Lastly, one 81mm mortar section in the extreme south actually failed two consecutive boating checks and wound up whisked down the river and off the "edge of the





cliff and out of the game, perhaps to find themselves in Sid and Marty Krofft's Land of the Lost.

But that was about it. Other than these few hiccups (and two more rifle platoons still in the water when the clock ran out), the Germans made it across the proved more or less unstoppable. With their artillery Dubnya.

German victory, with 23 German units successfully in southern Zapolye. This leaves only two real pushed across the river. Furthermore, the Soviet avenues for attack, between hex rows G and M, and defense force was all but annihilated. There may have south of hex row AA. The realization of this makes been a few aspects of the Soviet defense to handle a little differently, starting with the deployment of the heavy mortars, 37mm AA batteries, and some of the infantry platoons. In a game where the attacker owns the air, there really is no reason to offer anything to the birds of prey by leaving it in an open hex.

In the second game, the Soviets try a different deployment for their artillery. The heavy mortars are no longer set up in the open on the reverse slope of Hill 128, and more of the Soviet big guns are deployed further forward (especially flak). Also, the howitzers and heavy mortars are placed in the city this time, so at least when the Germans inevitably spotted them from the air and send in their six Stukas, the Soviets stand a chance. Put another way, the Soviets will try a "passive-aggressive" deployment, with more guns further forward to further restrict German set up and threaten any crossing . . . but at the same time these guns will hold their fire until German units started getting into boats. Thus, they will not reveal their positions to the Stukas. The hope is that the Germans will be forced to rain down on these hexes with "blind" artillery missions to provide some softeningup cover for the assault infantry. The Soviet guns are therefore deployed in as many different city and woods/slope hexes as possible (many with *direct* LOS on the river) so the Germans will have to get lucky with blind missions more than once. It's assumed that

world." Down they went, over the transdimensional the Soviets will only get one or two cracks with these big pieces given the amount of German air and artillery support, the Soviet goal here is to make those cracks count, preferably against loads of vulnerable assault boats.

As for the Germans, the second game sees river in good order. Once they were ashore, they surprisingly little change in their plan. They actually did very well in the first game, and it turns out they long gone, the Soviet rifle platoons just didn't have have very few options to cross the river anyway. Hex what it took to CAT with any effectiveness. This was rows A-F are out because of the "Yaslov fork" in the especially true in the south, where German IGs were river. Hex rows N-U are presumably out because of still covering the bridgehead with direct fire out of the city of Zapolye (Kopys) itself. Hex rows V-Z are out because the river is too wide, blocked by an In the end, the game shook out as a Tactical island, and presumably well-covered by Soviet guns Soviet defensive deployment that much easier, although with the admitted risk that the Germans might try one of these "impossible" attack vectors simply in the hopes of surprise. One possible alternate is staging their howitzers in a direct fire roll from the north slope of Hill 122 in Kharavyets, and simply blasting a hole through the Soviets in northern Zapolye. Also, this is a game where the seldom-used rules for smoke shell concentrations might actually prove worthwhile. Given these variables, the Soviets must remain at least somewhat flexible in their defense, or at least in the application of their firepower.







what has worked for them. They make a few slight revisions to the assault plan made in the first game, but not much.

The game starts and the Germans come in. There's nothing for them to bomb at first this time, the Stukas are forced to circle idly until some targets present themselves. The Soviets do not fire their artillery, even when they're pretty sure where some Germans will load into boats next turn. This is too easy, too obvious. The Germans could well choose not to load into boats but instead jog further up the bank, and a fired artillery mission is practically a dinner bell for the Stukas and the howitzers. Doom is inevitable for these Soviet units, but the they're determined to at least take some Germans with them.

waiting game as well. Their north battalion reaches the bank and just stands there, all but breaking out the fishing poles, *not* getting into the boats until the south battalion is in position as well. Better to have the whole assault force vulnerable for as few Soviet fire a German rifle platoon with a DF of 8 than an assault boat with a DF of 3. On the other hand, being too hasty and sending the north battalion over the river one or two rounds in advance of the south battalion would only give the Soviet guns that many more rounds of carnage.

The Germans continue to set up on the Soviets. Can the Soviets continue to afford this waiting game? The Germans are methodically unloading artillery, massing infantry on the banks, taking their time since the Soviets are so obligingly holding their fire. Finally, as the Germans try to unload their 15.0 cm infantry gun in Kilovo, the Soviet infantry guns in northern Zapolye speak. Still in the truck (it takes them a whole round to unload a gun that big, the board. First blood has been drawn, and finally the killing starts.

In our playtest, however, the Germans stick to infantry gun, but the Soviets miraculously survive a few seconds (at least until direct fire from across the river finishes them off). But these "5" and "6" rolls are only the beginning of what will be a long and painful game for the Germans, who have apparently forgotten to send Lady Luck her required flowers and chocolates. She is one cold bitch to the Germans this game, and they pay a dear price for her displeasure.

The Soviet flak, meanwhile, forgets going after Stukas, instead targeting German engineers as they load into boats at the north crossing. The point of the game is to stop Germans from crossing the river, after all, not shoot down Stukas. Scratch one platoon of pioneers. Soviet AT guns, massed rifle fire, and the small Soviet IG kill another. More infantry fire disperses a third engineer platoon. In short, the The Germans, for their part, are playing the northern German battalion is shot to hell, but admittedly the Soviet defenders have now all given their positions . . . and here come the artillery and Stukas. One is shot down, but the Soviet howitzer and heavy mortars are blown apart, city hexes and all. The next round, southern Soviet IGs and light mortars phases as possible, and it's a helluva lot tougher to kill hit Germans on the south crossing with direct fire on Germans in boats on south bank. The massacre in the north continues, and Soviets roll up with infantry to block landing beaches. German northern battalion is being bloodily mauled, but south is doing okay . . . for now.

This balance of luck between the Germans in the north and south, however, swings wildly on Turn 5. The south German battalion gets its turn of woe as Soviet IGs and AA guns blow three German platoons to kingdom come with a 4:1 and two lucky 3:1s (still in boats). These last Soviet guns are quickly silenced by German artillery on Turn 6. Meanwhile, the first company of the northern battalion is hit by a massed Soviet CAT. One Soviet platoon is shot off by covering opportunity fire from the west bank, and the remember), the Soviets blow the German battery off remaining Soviet platoons score a "6" on their CAT. At last the Germans in the north are catching a break. But none of the dispersed Germans rally. Then the The Soviet 122mm howitzer strike lands on a stack Soviets miss their opportunity fire against more of German rifles in boats in the northern battalion. All Germans chugging across the river, and a German are gone in a bloody flash. German artillery lands on counter-CAT fails as well. The whole north bank the 122mm infantry gun that just killed the German must be covered in smoke and "fog of war," as both

Panzer

SITUATION 04

GUDERIAN AT THE DNIEPR - KOPYS, BELARUS (11 July 1941): After the panzer groups of Guderian and Hoth sealed some 300,000 Russians in the Bialostok pocket, they began a risky push toward the Dniepr River, the next great obstacle of the campaign. The gamble was dire, with Russian pockets still not reduced behind them and the German infantry lagging weeks behind. High Command was far from convinced, but the panzer commanders made the case that the Soviets couldn't be allowed time to build fresh lines of defense anchored on one of the mightiest divisions in Russia. Here, the vanguard of the Guderian's 29th Motorized Division makes ready to push across the river, resisted by scattered elements of the Soviet 18th and 53rd Rifle Divisions, 20th Army



RUSSIAN FORCES Scattered Elements,

18th and 53rd Rifle Divisions 20th Army, Western Front (Morale D)



Mingled Elements, 12th, 97th, 233rd, and 316th Rifle Regiments



Mixed Batteries, 12th Heavy Artillery and 36th Howitzer Regiments



Elements, 356th AA Battalion



Elements, 34th Separate Antitank Battalion



2

SETUP: Russians set up first, anywhere on the east bank of the river. Germans set up second, anywhere on the west bank of the river, and out of all LOS/LOF of any Russian unit. Neither side can set up on the islands in the river. German aircraft are available right away.



JEL GERMAN FORCES

Infantry Regiments 15 & 71 29th Motorized Division **XLVII Motorized Corps** Panzergruppe Guderian (Morale B)



Lead Battalions, Infantry Regiments 15 and 71



Assault Companies, 29th Pioneer Battalion

Command Groups, 29th Infantry Division **XLVII Panzer Corps, and PzGp Guderian**



I. and II. Battalions, 29th Artillery Regiment



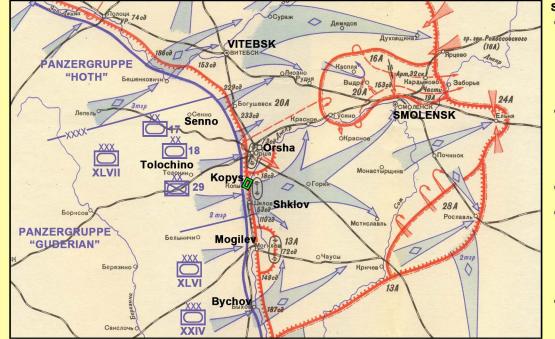
Sorties, Stukageschwader 77



VICTORY CONDITIONS: Judged by how many units the Germans can get on the east bank of the river (island hexes do not count).

- 25+ units: German DECISIVE victory
- 22-24 units: German TACTICAL victory
- 19-21 units: German MARGINAL victory
- 16-18 units: Russian MARGINAL victory
- 13-15 units: Russian TACTICAL victory • 12 units or less: Russian DECISIVE victory

Germans move first Turn 6



SPECIAL RULES

- LOW HILLS: Hills and slopes in this region are rather gentle. All terrain rules for slopes and hilltops apply as normal **EXCEPT** the rule specifiying that direct fire is halved when shooting "uphill." Ignore this rule, but all others for slopes and hilltops apply.
- RUSSIAN ACTIVATION ROLLS: At the beginning of each movement phase, a Russian unit must roll a d6. On a result of 1-4, the unit can move and operate normally. On a result of 5-6, the Russian unit cannot move or overrun.
- RUSSIAN TACTICS: Russian units may not use Split move and Fire.
- ASSAULT BOATS: No bridges are up, and the Germans must force the river via assault boats. See attached supplement for river rules for details. In this scenario, only German rifles, HMG, and 81mm mortar teams may use assault boats. River current is to the south.
- PIONEERS: German engineers make river checks on 1-5. All other units make the check on 1-4.

PanzerBli

SUPPLEMENTAL RULES CARD FOR RIVER CROSSINGS: For Situation 04 and any others using a major river, please refer to the below rules and examples. These rules explain how rivers are handled not only for "assault" situations (assault boats, landing craft, tracked amphibious vehicles, etc), but also situations SITUATION 04 tracked amphibious vehicles, etc), but also situations where bridges are up as specified in the situation card.



RIVER RULES:

• LINE OF SIGHT:

- Put most simply, consider river hexes at "minus" one level of ground elevation.
- In other words, treat their LOS in most respects as very large gully hexes.
- The exception to this is that units can see and shoot "up and down" the river, even if they are not adjacent, if they are already in the river, subject to the rules below.
- To see into a river hex, a unit must meet one of the following criteria:
 Be in a "river bank" hex, defined as any ground level hex adjacent to the river, and not obstructed by any other ground-level hexes.
 - Be in another river hex, and not obstructed by any riverbank hexes.
 - Be in a hilltop or slope hex, and not obstructed by any terrain feature that would normally dispqualify LOS per normal gully LOS rules (towns, brown hexsides, or green woods hex sides at greater than half the distance between the elevated hex and the river hex).
- Unless one unit is on a slope or hilltop, any FULL land hex blocks LOS between two river hexes.
- Small islands that are less than one full hex are "decorative," and do not block line of sight in any way whatsoever.

• Examples:

- 5W6-5S4: YES. Units can shoot up the river onto or out of bank hexes.
- 5W6-5U7: NO. River hex LOS blocked by intervening full land hex.
- 5AA2-5U7: YES. LOS enabled because 5AA2 is a hilltop or slope.
- 5U7-5S4: YES. River-to-bank LOS not blocked by small "decorative" islands.
- 5CC2-5X8: NO. Despite 5CC2's elevation, towx hexside blocks LOS as normal, as do orange hexsides in 5BB3.
- 5U4-5T5: YES. Even though the German unit is in a gully, the Russian unit is adiacent.
- 5S6-5W6: NO. LOS is barely blocked by the land (riverbank) hex 5V7.

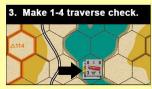
• BRIDGES:

- Unless otherwise stated in the situation, assume that full rivers are too wide for bridging units or engineering vehicles to establish a quick span.
- Any bridges that are still in the river will be specified in the situation card.
- Any bridgebuilding is conducted per special rules on the situation card, per rules laid out in Arab-Isreali Wars. Bridges will be specified as either "Truck" or "Tank" type, with the appropriate DFs from Panzer Leader if targeted by enemy (or friendly) fire.
- ASSAULT BOATS: Situations may call for one side or the other to force an infantry crossing via assault boats. To do this they must LOAD, TRAVERSE, and LAND, and UNLOAD.
 - Nothing heavier than an 81mm mortar platoon can load into an assault boat. No vehicles, artillery, or cavalry may use assault boats.
 - To LOAD, a unit must start its turn in a bank hex. Their whole turn is to LOAD. They can do this automatically, assuming they are in good order. Dispersed units cannot load.
 - To TRAVERSE (enter a river hex), the unit must roll 1-4 on a d6. EXCEPTION: Certain infantry types like German engineers (pioneers) do this on a 1-5. If they succeed, they can enter a river hex. Note that if a unit has to (or chooses to) cross more than one river hex, they must make more than one TRAVERSE check. "River speed" is always 1 hex per turn.
 - To LAND, the unit must be in a river hex next to a bank hex. Roll another 1-4 (1-5 for special infantry). If they succeed, the unit lands on the east bank STILL LOADED. The unit spends one whole enemy turn and its own fire phase of the next turn still LOADED.
 - At the beginning of that unit's next movement phase, the assault boat counter is removed and the unit may move (and CAT) normally.
 - DRIFT: If a unit is dispersed while in the river, or fails a traverse or landing check, the unit has to drift one hex with the current (direction specified on the situation card). After drifting, a dispersed unit may check morale to rally as normal. Drifting that causes a stacking violation will force units to be eliminated, as on land.
 - COMBAT: Units loaded in boats cannot spot, fire, or CAT until they successfully unload.
 - Boats (and all units in the boats) have UNARMORED defense factor of 3.
 - Units that are dispersed while loaded in assault boats do not automatically "unload" like trucks or
 - halftracks. They are simply dispersed in their last recorded "assault boat state."
 EXCEPTION: A player may CHOOSE to have dispersed units auto-unload when dispersed. On a friendly bank, this means they have to spend another turn re-loading. If this happens in the river, the unit is eliminated. Most commonly, this option will be taken while under fire on an enemy bank.
 - CARRYING ASSAULT BOATS: Any unit designated to be carrying assault boats prior to loading and getting in the river has a movement rate of 1 rather than 2. Once on the other bank, assault boats are assumed to be "discarded" and infantry units move normally. Some situations may specify that assault boats are carried in trucks prior to deployment.
 - ASSAULT BOAT COUNTERS: Note that these counters are not "carrier units" like trucks or halftracks. They designate a unit's status for transport, and show the lower defense factor an infantry unit accepts when "clustered" into small, unarmored boats.

















artillery missions smash or disperse the last Soviet Panzer Group Kleist. Some of the more successful of platoons on the north bank, effectively ending resistance against the German left wing. But the Germans just can't catch a break on the right, where a German CAT on the east bank fails to break up a stack of Soviet infantry setting up a CAT of their own on the next company of Germans still landing in their boats. These Soviets we well-placed behind the ridge 5DD8-5Z8 to avoid devastating covering fire from the IGs based in Dubnya, and two German platoons are wiped out still in their boats by a lucky "2" result. Meanwhile, some of their follow-on platoons haven't been able to get into the water after three consecutive tries. One company of three platoons in boats goes to move and rolls . . . no kidding, triple 6s. German platoon is chewed up next round when Soviet CAT attack disperses German spotters on the other side of ridge 5DD8-5Z8, spoiling the only German indirect fire that can reach this murderous stack of Soviets. Sure enough, these same Soviets, reinforced by some comrades who made lucky activation checks, then takes out yet another German platoon as they try to land.

This one came down to luck, nothing else. The craftier placement of Soviet artillery has balanced the situation, but the outcome of this playtest can simply be called "the rape of the sixes." The Germans just grabbed hold of the raw end of the stick and never let it go. The final score is 15 German units across the river, for a tactical Soviet victory. However, since the Soviets barely got a tactical, and the Germans won their tactical with one unit to spare in the first game, the overall situation is chalked up as a razor-thin German marginal victory.

Situation 05 **Katukov's Delaying Actions** Ulashnikova, Ukraine **14 July. 1941**

Summary: Despite taking horrific losses at the Battle of Dubno, the Southwestern Front is managing to fall counterattacks.

sides roll a combined string of four "6" results in a back in relatively good order. They keep an intact line of resistance between the Germans and Kiev, and At last the Soviet defense starts to break. German launch continued counterattacks against the flanks of these are launched by the 5th Army from the north, where the 22nd, 19th, and 9th Mechanized Corps hit units of the German 6th Army, following up behind von Kleist's armored spearhead. The 9th Mechanized Corps is commanded by a future star of the Red Army, K.K. Rokossovsky, and his best tank division is commanded by M. E. Katukov, future commander of the premier Soviet 1st Guards Tank Army. Here, they deliver a bloody nose to the 44th Infantry, actually an Austrian division with roots extending back to the 1600s.

> **Background:** From the very outset, Barbarossa's advance in the Ukraine was markedly more difficult than in other sectors. There were simply more Soviet units deployed in the south, and they were better equipped and had better commanders. Furthermore, the German Army Group South wasn't nearly as strong as its "big brother" Army Group Center, especially in regards to tanks. Luftwaffe support was also more thinly deployed in the south, and even the Army Group's infantry was partially made up of Rumanians. To make a long story short, this was far from the strongest German attack . . . hitting what was probably the strongest Soviet defense.

> Nevertheless German progress was steady. We have already discussed at length the Battle of Dubno-Brody (Situation 03), the largest tank engagement the world would see until Kursk in 1943. The Germans took steep losses in this encounter, particularly among the panzer divisions of Panzer Group "Kleist." But still the advance continued toward Kiev on the banks of the Dniepr. Yet for all ground overrun by the panzers, there no massive encirclement of Soviet forces yet, at least not on the scale seen at Minsk and Bialostok. The Soviet defenders of Lieutenant-General M. P. Kirponos' Southwestern Front had managed to keep their line intact - reeling backwards to be sure, but intact nonetheless). Meanwhile, the Soviets continued to hammer at the German spearheads with stubborn, courageous, ultimately futile but





successful of counterattacks were carried out by the sad remnants as far back as 18th Century. up with the 8th and 15th Mechanized Corps of the 6th hem. They had failed, of course, and now bore the scars to prove it. Nevertheless, as Panzer Group Kleist pushed deeper into the Ukraine, the 9th, 19th, and 22nd Mechanized Corps mustered what remained of their strength to once again hit the Germans on their left wing.

The moment came soon after the Germans had taken Zhitomir, just 120 kilometers west-southwest of Kiev and the all-important Dniepr River. The 9th Panzer Division had taken the city before angling southeast, with the 13th and 14th Panzer Divisions arcing northeast toward Kiev. As von Kleist's panzers continued to flood east, the shoulders of the elongating German salient were soon being filled in by elements of von Riechenau's Sixth Army to the north and von Stüpnagel's Seventeenth Army to the south. German progress in these sectors was of course more modest, and with every kilometer that von Kleist's panzers pushed east, the proportions of the "Zhitomir Salient" grew more and more narrow.

that salient on July 14. The three aforementioned mechanized corps all struck together in a rare moment of concentrated unity, with the 19th Mechanized on the right, the 22nd on the left, and the 9th Mechanized Finland (and it became clear just how badly they Corps right down the center. Slashing south, their needed experienced commanders) was Rokossovsky targets were the villages of Barbarovka and released from the gulag just in time to be rehabilitated Ulashnikova, dangerously near the Zhitomir road that into the Red Army and help meet the Barbarossa was supporting a large part of von Kleist's continuing invasion. advance.

roots extending as far back as 1696. They were no If Rokossovsky can be likened to a Manstein, a

these strangers to the East, since they'd been fighting Turks Nevertheless, they of the Soviet 9th, 19th, and 22nd Mechanized Corps. weren't mechanized (considered a "first wave" These were three of the corps that had taken part in infantry division in the German hierarchy), and the the Battle of Dubno, forming the armored edge of Soviets were able to cause considerable damage, Major-General Potapov's 5th Army. In that titanic particularly in the center. Here, some reports suggest battle, their mission had been to drive south and link that the 9th Mechanized Corps destroyed the better part of 44th Infantry's artillery assets, blew up over a Army, which were driving up from the south to meet hundred trucks, and killed over a thousand Germans and Austrians. One thing that seems certain as that they retook a stretch of the Zhitomir Road, at least momentarily severing one of von Kleist's major support and communication arteries.

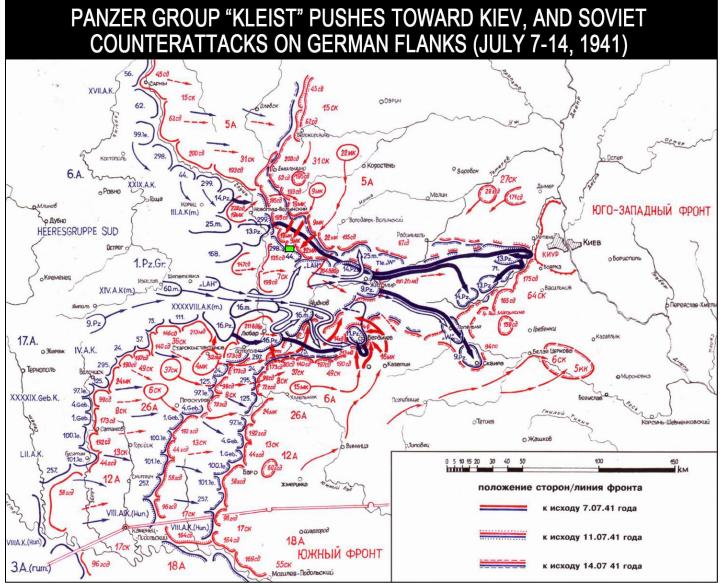
Other aspects that make this engagement special are some of the personalities involved, particularly on the Soviet side. The Soviet 9th Mechanized Corps was commanded by none other than Konstantine Konstantinovich Rokossovsky, one of the commanders that would subsequently shine in the galaxy soon to characterize the Red Army. In future battles, Rokossovsky would score some of the few Soviet successes during the Battle of Smolensk, play a vital role in the Soviet victory at Moscow, command the north pincer that helped trapped the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad, lead the front that held the northern shoulder of the Kursk Salient, help spearhead the Bagration offensive back into Poland, and finally lead 3rd Belorussian Front across northern Germany. Actually born in Poland, he hardly started Finally, the Soviets struck the left (north) side of off with the best of careers. Despite combat service with Zhukov in the Far East, he was eventually jailed and tortured during Stalin's purges of the late 1930s. Only after the Red Army had failed so abysmally in

Another future "celebrity" this field The Soviets were surprisingly successful here. The commanded one of Rokossovsky's tank divisions. formation they hit was one of "Hitler's favorites" (so Colonel Mikhail Efimovich Katukov led the 20th Tank called in Strategy & Tactics - World at War #20), the Division at Dubno and again here at Ulashnikova, and "Hoch und Deutschmeister," the 44th Infantry in the coming years would grow into one of the great Division. This was actually an Austrian unit with operational-level tank commanders of the Red Army.



Panzerblitz, Barbarossa





grow into something like a Patton, a Balck, or a Rommel. He would lead the Soviet Union's first "tank army" in the battles around Stalingrad, later upgraded to the 1st "Guards" Tank Army for a bitter fight in the Battle of Kursk. He'd be at the front end of the war the rest of the way, his tanks eventually among those to rumble through Berlin in April, 1945.

Right from the outset, Katukov seems to present a cagey, sly, and sometimes almost "wise-ass" outlook on tactical armored warfare. He was in a hospital recovering from surgery when the Germans struck on June 22, and despite carrying a load of stitches and a high fever, "discharged" himself from the hospital and basically hitchhiked back to his unit. The 20th Tank Division was in sad shape, however. War had them mid-way through found

Bradley, or a Montgomery, Katukov would eventually reorganization. He had no T-34s or KVs, still stuck entirely with BT-5s and T-26s. His first battle was against the 13th Panzer Division along the northern shoulder of the Dubno-Brody battle. Right off the bat Katukov's losses were horrendous. regiment was wiped out and its commander killed, as was the commander of Katukov's artillery regiment. The Germans took very steep losses as well, particularly to Katukov's artillery, but eventually the Stukas won the day.

> As the 9th Mechanized Corps (and all of the 5th Army) started to fall back, Katukov engaged the Germans over and again in small skirmishes. A tank instructor before the war, he began to note German tactics and was already hard at work on ways to beat them. One of the first things he did was come up with complete defensive systems where Soviets would set up



PanzerBlitz, Barbarossa



dummy positions, goad the Germans to hit them, then hit the Germans in the flank, and finally displace to prepared secondary positions. His dummy positions would be manned by a few motorized infantry, units he called "actors," making noise and smoke and then vanishing as the Germans approached. He gave orders on how to use natural camouflage like trees, hillocks, haystacks, barns, and gullies. He forbade his antitank gunners from firing until the Germans were within 200-300 meters. Katukov called engagements in the western Ukraine his "real combat school," but it was a brutally expensive education. By the time the battles around Ulashnikova were complete, the 20th Tanks Division was effectively annihilated and Katukov was recalled to Moscow to take command of a new unit.

Situation Design: In the construction of this situation, we are aided by the invaluable resource of the 9th Mechanized Corps' day-by-day combat diary of the first 30 days of the war. This exceedingly-

detailed document lists grievous losses, broken down by how many officers, NCOs, and men killed and wounded per day. Towns and villages are named in meticulous detail, and all mentioned operations line up with other sources. there is a little bit of pro-Soviet slant, but this isn't a political document, there is no "glorious sacrifice of the Red Army of Workers and Peasants" verbiage. The slant comes from careful omissions in the report. For instance, there may be a detailed



description of a particular counterattack at such-andsuch town, followed the next day by another counterattack at another town. You get the idea that these guys are counterattacking furiously all the time. There is no mention of the fact that the second town is a hundred kilometers further east, or why the unit had to pull out, or what the retreat looked like or how it was undertaken. Only by looking at a map and "connecting the dots" . . . and adding up the grim casualty statistics . . . do you get the real picture of a truly grim fighting retreat.

Still, the report offers a detailed description of Ulashnikova-Barbarovka, which was the primary source used to build Situation 05. The report mentions wooded marshland, so Boards 1 and 7 were used. The terrain here is exceedingly flat, so the "no elevation" special rule is back. So are all the usual Soviet "drawback" rules like double-stacked tanks and activation rolls. One thing the Soviets do get in their favor, however, is split move and fire, thanks to the details gleaned on Katukov's tactics (R. N. Armstrong's *The Armored Guards, Red Army Tank Commanders*). Although he would officially teach these tactics to his new unit later, here in the Ukraine is where he first started to experiment.

The Germans, meanwhile, are up against it. According to maps pulled from the RKKA website, the 44th Infantry was being hit by the 19th and the 22nd Mechanized Corps. Thus, only one of the 44th infantry regiments is used in the Situation (one against the 9th, one against the 22nd, and the third regiment presumably in some kind of reserve or second echelon). Using the organization tables of a "first wave" infantry division found on gregspanzer-blitz.com, we find the unit surprisingly unmechanized, but because of their storied status we give them an "A" morale rating.

As far as victory conditions go, this thing is all about how many Germans are killed. The Soviet aim was to inflict as much damage as they could. Historically, the 20th Tank Division's remnants were basically wiped out, so using our usual "historical results" model we're allowing the Soviets to pretty much take total losses in order to accomplish the mission. The German requirement to hold at least two towns stems from the idea that the Germans are trying to protect the Zhitomir road. This also prevents a "munchkin" German gamer from simply scattering his units in every gully and woods hex in an unrealistic "Viet Cong" deployment, then daring the Soviets to come after him in a futile game of hideand-seek.

Playtesting: The name of this chapter might be "War of the Rivers," but at least so far as Situation 05 is concerned, this is definitely the "War of the Gullies." Gullies proved to be an absolutely indispensable part





of both attack and defense, almost to the point where terribly bright when the Soviet infantry starts warfare.

In the first game (played live), the Soviets set up their artillery in the urban hexes of Uschas, hoping not a toe-to-toe slug-fest. Not only do the Germans only for concealment, but also that handy +5/+1 eventually lose this fight to superior Soviet numbers, bonus. The only drawback to this position was that but they're also naturally spotted for Soviet artillery the relatively short range of these guns meant that the Soviets couldn't hit most of the hexes of Molkanova, where most of the German forces would wind up retreating to once the Soviet attack hit.

The Soviets also had trouble setting up their big infantry guns. In their defense, these guns are almost impossible to set up safely, at least in any useful positions. Only if "blind" Soviet howitzer missions happen to disperse the big German 15.0 cm infantry gun and the 2.0 cm flak batteries (or if the German player has been polite enough to deploy them poorly) do these Soviet 122mms really stand a chance. Otherwise, these guns will be destroyed when the Soviet carrier unit tries to spend an entire movement phase unloading them (thus triggering opportunity fire).

In the first playtest, this is what exactly happens. German infantry guns and flak batteries open up on the Soviets right away, blowing up Soviet IGs, infantry platoons, and 37mm batteries right off the Soviet losses are steep, but at least this opportunity fire reveals plenty of German firing positions. The only problem is that some of these guns have to fire more than once for the Soviets to successfully spot them because "spotter" units were not safely in place when they started killing Soviets on the move. By the time Soviet artillery missions start coming in, the Germans have evacuated all mobile units (i.e., infantry) from the threatened hexes, and even hitched some towed units and dragged them to The German IGs and flak batteries are pretty grisly cost.

The Germans, meanwhile, are hard at work making mistakes of their own. Fearing Soviet numbers, they probably open fire a little sooner than was absolutely necessary. For the Germans, half this

certain parts of the board took on a feel of trench swarming down the central road in a frontal assault on Kharavyets. To a certain extent, the Germans stand there and take it, meeting the Soviets head on in missions. Later, the Germans fall back to Shpaga and the woods/gully hexes to the south. Here they hold well, and are safely out of the range of those Soviet howitzers. But by the time the Germans smarten up in this regard, they'd already lost several expensive units to the Soviets. Looking at the victory conditions, these are losses the Germans can ill-afford.

> The Soviets also have their share of problems. Initially they had set up a "western task force" of BTs, T-26s, and armored cars to the far west, hoping to turn the German flank and maybe get eyes on some backfield hexes. But the Soviets are seriously let down by their activation rolls. When a hex finally does open up in Shpaga thanks to Soviet artillery fire, a stack of BTs race in to take the town. These BTs never stand a chance, they're engulfed in German infantry like turtles dropped in an anthill. However, in forcing a battle here, these valiant "knights in plywood" (as Katukov calls BT tanks) at least force the Germans to break cover, reveal some positions, and invite a few more profitable artillery missions.

> All the same, the game seems won by the Germans when their cavalry sneaks around the Soviet left. Sticking to woods hexes and those all-important gullies, they manage to snake their way up to Uschas and actually CAT attack the Soviet howitzers. Although they lack the firepower to actually destroy the Soviet guns, they manage to disperse one battery and eventually call in a German counterbattery mission that decisively settles the issue.

Without those howitzers, the Soviet cause seems eventually taken out, but not terribly quickly and at a lost. Although they have nine German units killed so far, their infantry just doesn't have the firepower to get that vital tenth kill, and there just isn't any directfire hardware left. The Germans, meanwhile, are engaging in a "gully-trench" defense, falling back into the gullies and woods between Molkanova and game is remaining hidden. The Germans are also not Shpaga, denying lines of sight, and hammering Soviet



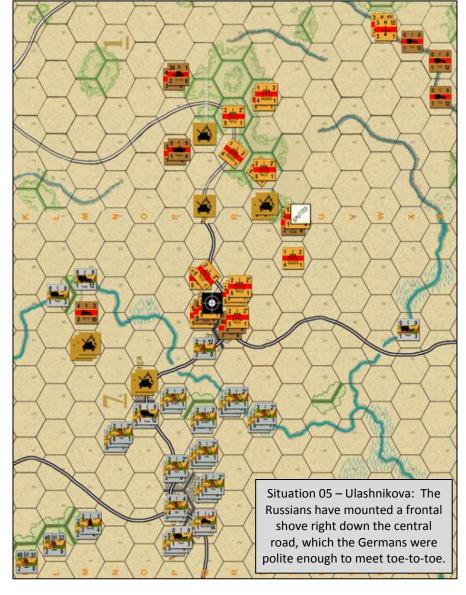


CATS with powerful opportunity fire. But a miracle lost, the Soviets may as well go home. miss on German rally checks, followed by a miracle "coin flip" on the very last roll of the game, manages to kill two German rifle platoons in hex 7R6, kicking the Soviet score up to eleven and giving them a comfortable marginal win.

The game has come down to a pretty tight finish, but both sides have honestly made some moderatesized conceptual mistakes in their play (i.e., forgetting what the victory conditions were). Thus, the game is done again in the usual solitaire format just to recheck balance and playability. This time the Germans are packed a little more tightly into Molkanova, Shpaga,

repeated, it seems to be a little too disconnected given the Soviet activation checks and armor stacking rules. It seems best to pile up your tanks closely together, so they can more easily "leapfrog" and "piggy-back" their way forward and always keep at least two units in a hex. They also stage their artillery a little further forward, setting up in gully hex 1S6 to get better range on all the German forces piled up in Molkanova. One particularly nasty Soviet trick (as if there was another kind) is to deploy wagons, trucks, and tractors around that gully hex, ensuring that renegade German cavalry can't get eyes on the batteries since you have to be adjacent to spot units in a gully. Pile up a handful of infantry units to safeguard this deployment, and the Germans won't want to risk losing three cavalry units to spot the Soviet guns. This deployment, centered on this particular hex, really makes the Soviet artillery a force to be reckoned with, which is critical since its really they only weapon they have. As we saw in the first game, if those guns are

The first Soviet move is uncontested, as practically miss on German opportunity fire, followed by a lucky no German gun can reach them, even in open terrain. BT-5s swiftly move into Voroniva, and soon have eyes on all kinds of German hexes. The Germans, for their part, hold their fire for the most part, including mortar missions. With the Soviets so aggressive in getting eves on their towns and forest hexes, the Germans are in no hurry to start cooking off muzzle flashes to give away their positions. By the end of Turn 2, the Soviets have "armored eyes" all the way to the south in gully hex 7Y1, forcing one German howitzer battery to not take fire mission orders, instead reserving its firepower for direct-fire self-defense. German cavalry, and Kharavyets. Soviets opt for a more concentrated meanwhile, has galloped up the central road onto approach, curving around the east side of the German Board 1, forcing the Soviets to dump a sizable infantry position. The "western task force" approach is not force out of its trucks in order to protect its towed







infantry in woods.

On Turn 3, the Soviet guns open up on Molkanova, and score their first kill with a German 20mm flak battery. In go the BT-5s, same as last time, in a mad "knights in plywood" cavalry charge into the town. Once again, they are swarmed by German infantry, but at least the Soviets get to spot some new targets. Meanwhile, the Both the Soviets and the Germans have ignited their obligatory sideshow, this time the west since the main battle is raging to the east. Here, Soviets had detached a few infantry and engineer chance the Germans would simply deny battle, withdraw to the west, and run out the clock. Instead, when the Soviets are all fighting deactivation checks up unload. This may prove to be a mistake, as these German cavalry platoons are awfully vulnerable, and the Soviets just have to rack up a pretty small number of German kills to win the game . . .

Things keep getting tighter for the Germans. They lose one of their artillery batteries to a Soviet mission, spotted (at great cost) from the open hexes in the extreme southeast corner of the board. They manage to take out two of the Soviet infantry guns as they unload, but now their 150mm infantry gun is spotted. The German cavalry breaks off the sideshow, unwilling to give the Soviets any easy kills. Soviets certainly don't need the help, by now they have both 37mm AA batteries set up in the woods south of Voroniva, and they start picking off weaker German infantry platoons like HMGs and security sections that are helping in the annihilation of those BT-5s in Molkanova.

However, things start to turn the in the Germans' favor. A combination of direct fire and a last artillery frustrate the Soviets, who finally decide to start calling mission blows up the two Soviet 37mm batteries on in blind missions on the weak German units clustered the Voroniva flank. The last BT-5 is now alone, so in woods hexes 7J2-7M2. They only need one more "self-destructs" per Soviet special rules. This allows kill, and even if the Soviet fire missions drift, they're the German infantry companies that

guns. The cavalry breaks off, not willing to put that surrounding them to scatter for cover from the Soviet "3" DF on the line in a CAT-fest against Soviet artillery. Like roaches on the kitchen floor when the lights are switched on, they scurry for woods, gullies, and behind the blocking hex sides of Molkanova. The Germans also start mobbing trucks and wagons into town hexes where light guns have fired (and are thus spotted), determined to hitch up and evacuate at least a few of them to deny the Soviets every possible kill.

The Soviets start to get lucky, however. As the Germans withdraw westwards, some of their evacuating trucks and wagons catch a blind Soviet artillery mission that takes out a 20mm flak battery. What's left of the Soviet infantry is starting to pile up units, as well as one infantry gun, all against the in front of Kharavyets, and a CAT with engineers manages to blow up a hapless 3.7cm antitank gun. The Germans are starting to run out of room to the Germans are committing to a defensive battle in retreat, they have to hold on to at least two cities, the center cities (that +5/+1 bonus is just too hard to remember. Also, the Soviets are starting to make an give up), but they do engage in this western end run around the east to snag Zhapets, thus detachment with their cavalry, seizing the moment denying the German victory conditions. So far they are frustrated by activation rolls (these really have been abysmal so far) but that luck won't hold out forever.

> The Soviet play isn't perfect, however. They manage to get themselves bogged down in a completely useless battle against stubborn German wagons in Voroniva. This town has long ago lost its value as an observation point, but the Soviet units that are involved are so slow that they really wouldn't be able to do much else anyway. So the frustrating game of "dig the wagons out of the urban hex" continues. The Soviets actually never kill them.

Meanwhile, German cavalry occupies Zhapets on their left wing, and so they no longer have to hold Kharavyets or Shpaga in the center. After all, they still hold all of Molkanova (contested only by BT-5 wreck counters), so the "tale of two cities" victory This means that the Germans condition is met. continue to fade back and deny battle. Clever use of woods, town hexes, and above all gullies continues to were bound to hit something. But two very unlucky scatter

anzer

KATUKOV'S MOBILE DEFENSE - ULASHNIKOVA, UKRAINE (14 July 1941): Despite horrific losses at the Battle of Dubno, the Southwestern Front manages to fall back in good order and launch repeated counterattacks at the flanks of Panzergruppe Kleist. Some of the more successful of these are launched by the 9th Mechanized Corps against the German 6th Army, following up behind von Kleist's spearhead. This Soviet corps is commanded by a future star of the Red Army, K. K. Rokossovsky, and his

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ITUATION 05

lead tank division is commanded by M. E. Katukov, future commander of the premeire Soviet 1st Guards Tank Army. Here, the 20th Tank Division delivers a bloody nose to the 44th "Hoch und Deutschmeister" Infantry, actually an Austrian division with roots extending back to the 1600s.



RUSSIAN FORCES Concentrated Remnants

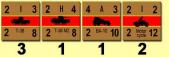
20th Tank Division, 9th Mechanized Corps, Southwest Front (Morale D)



Concentrated Remnants, 39th and 40th Tank Regiments



20th Reconnaissance Battalion



Remnants, 20th Motorized Infantry Regiment



Main Body, 20th Howitzer Regiment



Remnants, 20th Engineer Battalion



Elements, 20th AA Battalion



SETUP: Germans set up first, anywhere on Board 7. Russians set on Board 1, within five hexes of the north edge of the board and out of all LOS/LOF of any German unit. Russians move first.

JEL GERMAN FORCES

44th "Hoch und Deutschmeister" Infantry Division, XXIX Corps Sixth Army, Army Group South (Morale A)



Lead Battalions, Infantry Regiments 15 and 71





II. and III. Batteries Artillery Regiment 96



64th Reconnaissance Battalion



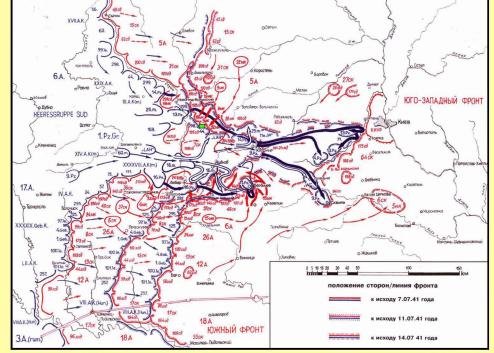
Elements, Antitank Battalion 46



VICTORY CONDITIONS: Judged by how many German combat units are destroyed at the end of the game. Also, the Germans must hold control of two towns (more combat units than the Russians in the town hexes) until the end of the game.

- 0-3 units: German DECISIVE
- 10-12 units: Russian DECISIVE
- 4-6 units: German TACTICAL
- 13-15 units: Russian TACTICAL
- 7-9 units: German MARGINAL
- 16 units+: German MARGINAL

Russians move first Turn 6



SPECIAL RULES

- Ignore all elevation on the mapboards. There are no slopes or hilltops. Treat these hexes as clear
- Russian activation rolls: 1-4. At the beginning of each movement phase, a Russian unit must roll a d6. On a result of 1-4, the unit can move and operate normally. On a result of 5-6, the Russian unit cannot move or overrun. This does not include "motionless" CATs. If a unit declares its intent to move and then fails its activation check, it cannot choose to do something else that turn.
- Russian tanks must always be stacked at least two deep. If a stack takes losses, the "lone" Russian unit has one movement phase to rejoin another armored unit. If that can't do it, chooses not to do it, or fails its "Russian activation roll," the unit is eliminated.
- Russian units MAY use Split move and Fire.
- German bicycles are considered vehicles. They pay truck movement rates for off-road movement. They cannot CAT or overrun. However, they can spot (they were primarily reconnaissance units).
- Russian T-28 tractors are officially armored "combat" units. For all rules, consider them halftracks or British Bren carriers.





artillery into the one hex where no Germans are hiding. Blind luck (literally) saves the Germans.

In all, the Soviets played a very tight second game, and putting that artillery in 1S6 worked particularly well. Almost no Soviet units were sacrificed without at least getting eyes on something the artillery could hit, and so the Soviets always got something for their money. The Germans, for their part, also played well, not getting drawn into useless battles and standing up against the Soviet guns only when absolutely necessary. The Soviets may have frittered away a little strength in their sideshows at Molkanova and along the "corridor of trees" on Board 1 (hex 1J5), but they were also plagued by some nasty dice. This alone diluted some awesome play, leaving the Soviets *just* shy of a marginal victory with nine German kills.

Still, because the Soviet marginal victory in the first game was won with one German kill to spare, and the German victory in the second game was won by the skin of their teeth, the overall situation is chalked up as a Soviet marginal victory.

Situation 06 Vatutin Checks Manstein Soltsy, Russia **16 July. 1941**

Summary: Although Army Group North was by far the smallest of the three great German drives into the Soviet Union, their initial advance was still incredible. After the Baltic States were overrun, however, stiffening Soviet resistance began to hamper advances along the routes toward Leningrad. One setback was suffered by von Manstein's LVI Motorized Corps, when it became strung out in a widely-spaced column on the way toward Lake Illmen. Marshal Klementi Voroshilov (for whom the KV tanks are named) sent Nikolai Vatutin to coordinate an attack against this spearhead, which succeeded in completely severing the lead of Manstein's column. Here, the isolated vanguard of 8th Panzer Division desperately fights its way backward to rejoin the rest of Manstein's corps, resisted by elements of the Soviet 70th Rifle Division,

checks (Turns 11 and 12) just happen to drift the reinforced by tanks presumably from the 21st Tank Division.

> **Background:** Situation 06 gives us a new opportunity in PanzerBlitz Barbarossa in several respects. One, we finally get a look at Army Group North's operations against the Soviet Northwest Front. Second, this is our first "invasion of Russia" situation that actually takes place in Russia, as opposed to Poland, Belarus, or the Ukraine. Thirdly, the Soviets actually won this engagement, and not in a "hit hard and did damage, delayed the German advance but then disintegrated in defeat" kind of way. The Soviets struck here, took the ground, at least for a few days encircled a German force the way the Germans were doing everywhere else. Yes, the Germans would break out, and they would quickly retake this ground. But that would be another force, striking from another direction, in another whole engagement. The Germans we see on this field . . . straight out *lost* this one.

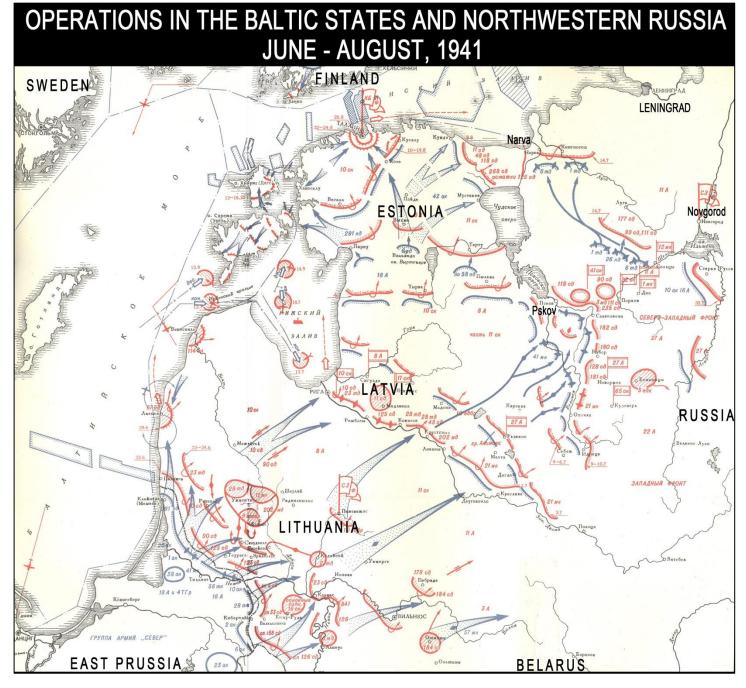
> At first, Army Group North's invasion went well. Despite having the smallest number of divisions, the smallest share of air support, and the smallest panzer group, Field Marshall Ritter von Leeb commanded a formidable force. On his left, hugging the Baltic coast, was the Eighteenth Army. On his right was the Sixteenth Army. In the middle was his Panzer Group IV, commanded by Colonel-General Hoepner, the "Old Calvaryman." This was currently the smallest of the four German panzer groups spearheading Barbarossa. Hoepner had only two motorized corps, the XLI and the LVI, and these only had three panzer divisions between them, along with motorized infantry divisions and even "leg" infantry divisions. By comparison, Guderian's Panzer Group II had three motorized corps with five total panzer divisions, plus a whole infantry corps (the XII) attached just for taking Brest-Litovsk. As if this weren't enough, Guderian's panzer group was just one of two in Army Group Center.

> The Soviets facing them were Colonel-General F. I. Kuznetsov's Baltic Special Military District, which became the Northwest Front when the war started. Fortunately for Leeb, who commanded the weakest German army group, the Northwest Front was the weakest front deployed by the Soviets as well.



PanzerBlitz, <u>Barbarossa</u>





Furthermore, these Germans were hardly advancing atrocities in into hostile territory, at least at first. Lithuania, Lithuanian par Latvia, and Estonia hated Stalin and the Soviets, who not terribly far had forcibly absorbed these small states into the Soviet Union only fourteen months previously. These states were fiercely nationalistic, having their own culture, language, and history, and having won their planners had independence from the carcass of the Czarist Empire obstacle, was to coup, the Germans in Lithuania, who saw the invaders almost bridges over the as liberators. Some dark chapters would be written in a tremendous a sightseeing of shortage of volunteers to help them enact their of the panzers.

atrocities in occupied Lithuania. Furthermore, Lithuanian partisans fought an open and bitter (albeit not terribly famous) war against NKVD and KGB troops as late as 1950.

Leeb's forces were also helped by no small amount of luck. In particular, the Dvina River, which German planners had rightly considered a serious potential obstacle, was taken almost on the fly. In a miraculous coup, the Germans seized no less than *four* intact bridges over this river, turning what could have been a tremendous defensive bulwark into little more than a sightseeing drive-by to be enjoyed from the turrets of the panzers.



Panzerbiitz, Barbarossa



Colonel-General Hans Reinhardt (later to commander Panzer Group III) and the LVI Motorized Corps was commanded by none other Colonel-General Erich von lost his share of battles. Many times he was betrayed Manstein. Reinhardt was a very capable commander, his corps had been among those to spearhead the own forces, or meddling from Hitler. Situation 06 was breakout through the Ardennes a year before. In not one of those times. Manstein needed no help on months to come, his units would come practically within sight of Moscow and would absorb some of the heaviest blows of Zhukov's December counteroffensive. Later, he'd be given the impossible task of pushed out of Lithuania and into southeastern Latvia. commanding Army Group Center after it was effectively annihilated by the Bagration Offensive of heavy fighting to Reinhardt (including a pretty epic 1944, and would at least manage to keep the army group alive and hold the Soviets in Poland until deep into relative Soviet emptiness, leaving Latvia January 1945.

written about his accomplishments. The great "Fall Gelb" invasion of the West was executed according to his "Sickle-Cut" plan, and remains one of the most stunning military operations of modern times. He was continually "promoted out of the way" by enemies on the OKH, especially Colonel-General He would salvage the whole front in southern Russia after the catastrophe at Stalingrad, and would deliver the famous "Manstein Backhand Blow" that retook Khar'kov and is studied at West Point to this day. One writer said that Manstein's defensive warfare operations in 1943-44 are so amazing that one has to go back to General Lee in the Wilderness Campaign of 1864 to find its equal. During the Cold War the US Army studied his operations exhaustively, convinced that they would soon also be faced with numberless "red tanks" in the Fulda Gap.

Lastly, it seems clear that Manstein's battles were a big inspiration for Jim Dunnigan to create his "Tactical Game 3" and eventually PanzerBlitz in 1969 and 1970. Don't believe me? Look at the Germanloving rules and numbers, and look at where and Germans could brace screening positions while the when most of the situations take place . . . in the south rest of the Army Group pushed north on Leningrad. of Russia, during 1943 and 1944, scene of most of

Lastly, Army Group North had some excellent and "dining room" generals like to argue about their officers. While their panzer force may have been favorite generals all the time, but one thing almost all small, XLI Motorized Corps was commanded by of them agree on . . . Manstein is always near the top of those lists.

> For all this, Manstein was far from perfect, and he by overwhelming enemy numbers, weaknesses in his this one, this time he managed to get his ass kicked all by himself.

After crossing the Dvina, Manstein's LVI Corps He sidestepped the nastier engagements, leaving the battle against some KV-2s). Instead, Manstein pushed and plunging into the pine forests of northwestern As for Manstein, libraries of books have been Russia. The Germans took Pskov at the southern end of Lake Peipus and started the great wheel north toward Leningrad.

> The problem, as was so often the case, was Hitler. The stiff fighting encountered by Reinhardt and the infantry's inability to keep up with the panzers again spooked him, and Hoepner's panzers (including Manstein's corps) were ordered to halt and wait for nearly a week. By the time they were on the move again, Kuznetsov had managed to pull in reserves from the Leningrad Military District and rebuild his shattered line. He even had some reserves with which to mount local counterattacks, as we will see in Situation 06.

> As the great German army made the shift from moving northeast to north (heading for Leningrad), they presented an "outside lane" on their open right flank that would be left dangerously exposed. Manstein's corps was among those forces tasked with securing this flank. They would do it by advancing toward Lake Ilmen, just south of Novgorod, about 160 kilometers beyond Lake Peipus. Reaching this lake would provide a "terrain anchor" on which the

Manstein, however, wasn't terribly careful in how Manstein's great defensive engagements. Armchair he did this. Perhaps under too much pressure from





headquarters, he shoved his corps too far forward, too the its own artillery support. The next German units fast. Advancing along a single road on the north bank in Manstein's column (the rest of the 8th Panzer and of the Shelon River, his divisions became stretched out, strung out, and too widely dispersed. particular, 8th Panzer Division was way out in front beyond the town of Soltsy, and this division was also badly dispersed, strung back along that road for about twelve miles.

They gathered what remained of their units, so badly nearly lost, and paid a dear, dear price to win. It took shattered in battles along the frontier and back nearly two full days for the 8th Panzer to fight its way through the Baltic States. They basically re-built the free of the trap, requiring Manstein at one point to 11th Army from scratch and readied a plan (under partially supply the force by air. Even then, the SS command of Major-General I. Lazarev) to destroy a large part of LVI Motorized Corps. To ensure things went according to plan, Marshal of the Soviet Union Klimenti Voroshilov (for whom the "KV" line of heavy tanks are named, by the way), sent the able Nikolai Vatutin to coordinate and oversee 11th Army's attack. Of course, Vatutin would eventually rise to become another of the Red Army's star commanders. Furthermore, he would face Manstein again on the mother of all battlefields at Kursk, where his Voronezh Front squared off against Manstein's Army Group South on the battle's southern shoulder.

For now, however, the Manstein-Vatutin rivalry was starting out small. With the 8th Panzer broken into isolated component formations along the Shelon Road, Vatutin would strike mostly from the north, where the river wouldn't be in his way. The 70th Rifle Division, backed up by about 100 tanks from the 21st Tank Division, would strike the left and rear of 8th Panzer's forward kampfgruppe, cutting them off from the rest of the division and the LVI Motorized Corps. Other units involved would be the rest of the 21st Tank Division and the 237th Rifle Division. From the south, Vatutin would strike 202nd, 108th, and 183rd Rifle Divisions, admittedly badly understrength. Strung out as they were along the road, the LVI Corps would be chopped up like so much fish bait.

The plan pretty much worked. The 8th Panzer was caught by surprise and its forward two kampfgruppe completely outflanked from the north. The 70th Rifle Division reached the Shelon River and thus cut off the front half of the 8th Panzer, which was out of range of

the 3rd Motorized Infantry) were also heavily mauled and pushed back, widening the deadly gap between those forward two kampfgruppe and friendly lines. The 8th Panzer was compelled to turn around and launch a desperate fight westward, completely in reverse, just to reestablish contact with the rest of The Soviets were waiting for just such a chance. Manstein's corps. This was a fight the 8th Panzer very motorized regiment Totenkopf had to go in and help pull them free. When 8th Panzer finally did break loose, the division was so badly battered that it was pulled off the line for quite some time, reducing Manstein's whole LVI Motorized Corps to basically one reinforced "leg" infantry division, the 290th. One account (Robert Forczyk's Erich von Manztein by Osprey Publishing) even mentions limited Soviet air support, indeed a rarity during the Barbarossa days.

> Suffice it to say that Soltsy was a harsh defeat for the Germans, and Manstein's first. As a result, his LVI Corps was not able to reach Lake Ilmen, outflank the Soviet defenses forming behind the Luga River, or support the northward drive on Leningrad.

> **Situation Design:** I'm sorry . . . did someone way Soviet *air support?* That's right, and brown air

counters are only one of the interesting oddities we'll see in this situation. We'll also see the Czechbuilt PzKpfw-38(t) tank formed the backbone of 8th Panzer's strength) not to mention a battle where the Soviets are encircling the Germans instead of vice-versa.





Board 5 was incorporated into the design because, most simply, there

was a river there. True, there is no way to interact with the river, and there are no units on the far side of the river, basically it's there for historical flavor. However, having the river eat up over half of one board's width narrows the actual battlefield, posing a functional game condition reflecting actual terrain





"barbarians." Board 4 was selected for the other half Ridge" feature can represent the higher ground above the river's shoulder.

In building this situation, we were lucky to have lots of detailed sources (at least for an Eastern Front battle). Robert Forczyk's Osprey Publishing book on Manstein has already been mentioned. The maps on the RKKA site were also very helpful, proof that the Soviets are much more keen on documenting battles in which they did well. There are GMT gaming modules available on-line featuring this engagement, and the fight is even mentioned in a Russianproduced TV documentary The Great War (the English version is titled Soviet Storm, available on YouTube of all places). Of course the tables in the RKKA website are also vital for piecing together the subunits of the Soviet divisions, while gregspanzerblitz.com and Axishistory Forum provide the same insight for German units.

In particular, Forczyk's text and maps provide great insight into exactly which pieces of the 8th Panzer Division were where, while the RKKA maps do the same for the Soviets. The fact that all these sources line up with each other (for a change) lends further credibility to the research.

The one piece of real guesswork was in the Soviet aircraft. Forczyk talks about how the Soviets were "even able to bring in some air support," although he doesn't say what kind, how much, or what units were The RKKA maps offer clues, but no involved. definitive proof. To make a long story short, we found the closest recorded Red Air Force base, looked up the unit, and assigned that kind of aircraft to the Soviet force pool. Given the abstract manner in which airpower is handled in PanzerBlitz and Panzer Leader, it doesn't seem to be that big of an issue.

The first design of this situation **Playtesting:** admittedly had some problems that became evident only in playtesting. Although the game shook out as fast, challenging, and more or less fair, the wrong "flavor" of battle was produced, one not resembling at

present on the field. This was practically a modern- all the desperate fight described in the source day Teutoburg Forest, with Germans strung out in a material. Basically, the original draft of the situation narrow line and getting hacked up by Soviet had all the Soviet forces coming onto the north edge of the board (with none already in place). Naturally, this of the map because its predominant "Heartbreak meant that the Germans would get many more units off the board, and so the game demanded much higher scores on their part for marginal, tactical, and decisive victories.

> The only problem is that this produced the mother of all "running back" games, with a huge blob of German units racing down the Board 5 roads in an effort to shimmy around the Soviets and get off the west end of the board. There turned out to be very little actual fighting, and only thirteen German units destroyed. The game seemed to come down to what kind of activation rolls the Soviet player happened to get, and how careless the German player would get with all those trucks with Soviet bombers in the air. Although the Soviet player did his best, there seemed to be almost nothing he could realistically do to block the German escape or even force a meaningful fight. In the end, the game came down to a sweet bombing mission (two triple stacks of trucks in the open, loaded with rifles and engineers, each hit with a 30-H bomb strike) and a handful of opportunity fire rolls with 37mm AA guns and 122mm direct fire batteries. We did have one funny moment where Soviet armored cars and motorcycles were engaged by German armored cars, motorcycles, Kubelwagen shooting his Walther P-38 out the The motorcycle-on-motorcycle combat window. prompted the German player to crack: "This gives a whole new meaning to the word *ChopperBlitz!*"

> Other than that, Germans the simply blasted/overran open a hole in 5A10-4A2 and rushed through. Even with a monstrous parade of triplestacked trucks rumbling cross-country in the open, the Soviets couldn't get that many kills and the Germans were damned near able to get a tactical victory. Clearly, this game needed work.

> While the first game proved to be fun, surprisingly quick, and pretty well balanced, it just wasn't producing the right historical feel. In the actual battle, the 8th Panzer Division took a much harsher pounding than this, they certainly weren't able to snake their



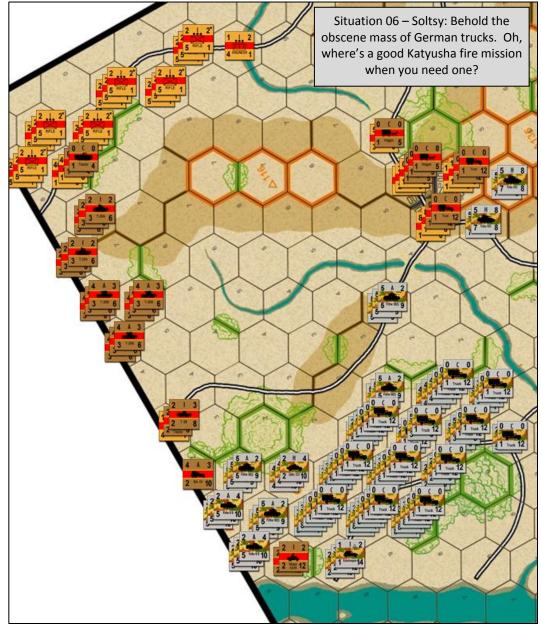


hammering in the historical battle), the victory our various sources.

Rifle Regiments on the board, as well as direct-fire assets of the 221st Artillery Regiment, 94th Separate Antitank Battalion, 340th Separate Antiaircraft Battalion (the indirect batteries of 221st Artillery and 227th Howitzer Regiments are now "off board," as shown on the RKKA maps). The Soviets set up a solid defense of all gullies, roads, especially fords, setting up platoons and AT batteries in the woods *just* these behind junctions, ready to hit German tanks as they tried cross. Directfire 122mms were set up in Novo and on ridge 4D3-4G3, along with 37mm AA guns. This allowed these guns to spot and hit targets on both the northern and southern exit routes, depending on which way the Germans lunge.

The Germans, for their

way through Soviet defenses that were still shifting part, tried a modified variant of the same strategy. Of into place. So the situation was largely redesigned. course the German tanks couldn't blitz all the way Basically, the available forces were kept in place, but back to the western edge of the board by the end of some Soviet forces were allowed to deploy on the map Turn 2 this time, but they did make strong contact with the rest coming in at a later time. Since the with the Soviet line of defense on Board 5, running German mission would be much tougher this time generally along the gully 517-5111. Soviet opportunity (and because we know the 8th Panzer took such a fire was ferocious (since the Germans really had no artillery to worry about, the Soviets were much less condition requirements for the Germans were be paranoid about getting spotted), and German tanks greatly lowered. This seems to better reflect the started burning immediately. More bad luck befell situation suggested on the RKKA maps, and will the Germans when an artillery mission drifted into certainly produce results closer to those described in Zapolye (Soltsy), spotted by a T-28 tractor of all things, and landed on a stack of German rifle platoons In the second (solitaire) game, the Soviets were still in trucks. Even in a city hex, the result was grim. allowed to deploy the vanguard of 252nd and 239th Soviet CAT attacks followed, backed up by engineers







historical pounding.

Division was due on the north edge of the board, so counters in that hex . . . so goodbye German rifle the German recon battalion was sent north to platoon. Mikelyevna as an "insurance policy" against their horrendous, and some German trucks were forced to arrival. The Germans were afraid that these back flow southward and pile up in the gully. A German roads would just prove too tempting for the Soviets to rifle company also CAT attacked and destroyed the Trace down and plunge into the vulnerable German 28 tractors holding the woods hex leading to this truck convoy that would be stacked up in or around Zapolye. Meanwhile, things were getting hectic at the German front, where lead units were still trying to crowbar open an escape path to the southwest. At last units were hauling ass in a wide loop back behind the the panzers got into the mix, with the six PzKpfw IVs and "flaktracks" set up behind the front line of would be now or never, and for quite a few of them, it PzKpfw-38(t)s, so they got a full double-AF crack on would be the latter. all the Soviet units that exposed themselves trying to German escape path was indeed blown open through hexes, and those that do were quickly dispersed by is not nearly as wide or secure as they would like. Some German units managed to escape using split stack of PzKpfw IVs, showing just how dangerous move and fire, but no one got off the board.

following them, and the 21st Tank Division had just of Barbarossa. arrived from the north. Of course activation rolls were a hindering factor here, but the arrival of such a larger numbers on Turn 5. The Soviets were not powerful Soviet force still posed a grave threat to German forces strung along out along that southern road. Soviet CAT attacks against stacks of PzKpfw IVs were largely broken up in hex 5H11, but Soviet tanks were quickly bearing down on them from the Novo road. In a word, the western ten hex rows of the board were chaos, with counters being swatted off the field with horrific speed and new units sprinting into the whirlwind from every direction.

The Germans were out of time. If those Soviet tanks succeeded in re-sealing the road through ford hex 5I10, the Germans would never get it open again. Already Soviet artillery was landing on their dispersed tanks, and finally the Germans have no choice but to give their trucks the word to hit the gas. Twenty-four German units have successfully broken Every Soviet gun that could see them got its crack off the board, giving them the marginal victory.

and aided by two lucky "2" results on the die. Four with opportunity fire, and four more German more PzKpfw-38(t)s were set aflame. One thing was platoons were destroyed. One was killed when a certain, the 8th Panzer was certainly taking its solitary Soviet rifle platoon right next to the ford hex hit a truck on 2-1, forcing it to unload with a dispersal. Things would only get worse. The Soviet 21st Tank Unfortunately there were already three wreck The traffic jam beyond the ford was gully, and the flaktracks took out a spoiler wagon in another woods hex. The Germans also pulled in their recon battalion holding Mikelyevna, and soon these desperate German breakout. The Germans knew it

The Soviet overrun of T-26s proved to be a paper set up a blocking line. Soviet losses were grim, and a tiger. Not nearly enough of them could reach the key ford hex 5I10, but bad German dice mean that the hole PzKpfw IIs and PzKpfw-38(t)s. A lucky "1" however, allows a weak Soviet CAT to disperse a complete Soviet infantry can be . . . and just how useless their Worse, the German truck convoy still couldn't risk massive tank armies were during the opening months

> German units started breaking off the board in helped by the fact that both their bombers failed their initial activation checks. Still, an artillery mission landed on a triple stack of PzKpfw-IVs, which killed two and dispersed a third. Soviet overruns through the "edge of the world" corridor at 4A2 were broken up by German opportunity fire (these were the rest of the Soviet tanks and recon battalion speeding onto the board after initial failed activation checks), and the precious exit hexes remained open to the Germans. The Soviets also tried to bring in more tanks and rifle platoons from the northeast, but their activation checks really let them down here (something like eight out of ten units have failed).

On Turn 6, the game was effectively decided.

Panzer

SITUATION 06

VATUTIN CHECKS MANSTEIN - SOLTSY, RUSSIA (16 July 1941): After the Baltic States were overrun by the spearheads of Army Group North, stiffening Russian resistance began to hamper advances along the routes toward Leningrad. One setback was suffered by von Mainstein's LVI Panzer Corps, when it became strung out in a widely-spaced . column on the road to Lake Ilmen. Nikolai Vatutin was sent to coordinate a strike by the Soviet 11th Army against the flanks of this spearhead, which succeeded in completely severing the head of Manstein's column. Here, the isolated vanguard of 8th Panzer Division desperately fights its way back to rejoin the rest of Mainstein's corps, resisted by elements of the Soviet 70th Rifle Division and 21st Tank Division.



RUSSIAN FORCES

70th Rifle Division (Reinforced) 50th Corps, 11th Army Northwest Front (Morale D)



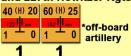
94th Separate

FORCE A

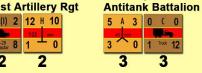
Vanguard, 252nd and 239th Rifle Regiments



Batteries, 221st Artillery and 227th Howitzer Rgts



Detached guns, 221st Artillery Rgt 2 (I) 2 12 H 10



Elements, 340th AA Battalion



Sorties, 7th Long-Ranged Bomber Regiment, 40th LR Aviation Division



'Arrives on Turn 6, subject to to activation rolls

FORCE B Attached armor. 21st Tank Division



18

65th Reconnaissance Battalion



JEL GERMAN FORCES

8th Panzer Division, LVI Motorized Corps, Panzergruppe Hoepner Army Group North (Morale A)



n

10th Panzer Regiment



4/48th Antiaircraft Company



59th Reconnaissance Battalion



Lead Battalions, Infantry Regiments 8 and 28

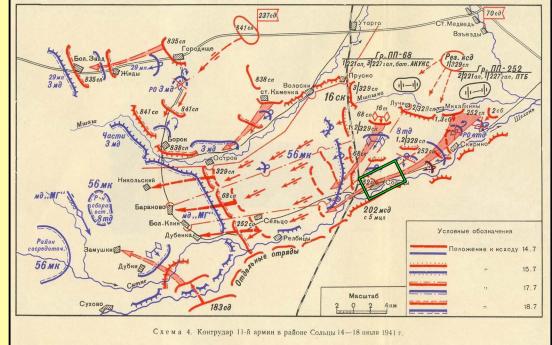


VICTORY CONDITIONS: Judged by how many German combat units can get off the east edge of the board by the end of Turn 10.

- 31+ units: German DECISIVE
- 16-20 units: Russian DECISIVE
- 26-30 units: German TACTICAL 11-15 units: Russian TACTICAL
- 21-25 units: German MARGINAL 10 or less: Russian DECISIVE

SETUP: Russian FORCE A sets up first, north of the river, within 10 hexes of the west edge of the board (hex rows A-J, inclusive). Germans enter the east edge of the board on Turn 1, north of the river. Russian FORCE B enters anywhere along the north edge of the board during their movement phase on Turn 1. Russian aircraft enter on Turn 6, subject to activation rolls, as usual.

Germans move first Turn 6 8



SPECIAL RULES

- Russian activation rolls: 1-4. At the beginning of each movement phase, a Russian unit must roll a d6. On a result of 1-4, the unit can move and operate normally. On a result of 5-6, the Russian unit cannot move or overrun. This does not include "motionless" CATs. If a unit entering the board does not make its activation roll, it must remain off-board and can try again next turn. These rules INCLUDE aircraft.
- Russian tanks must always be stacked at least two deep. If a stack takes losses, the "lone" Russian unit has one movement phase to rejoin another armored unit. If that can't do it, chooses not to do it, or fails its "Russian activation roll," the unit is eliminated.
- Russian units may not use Split move and Fire.
- Russian T-28 tractors are officially armored "combat" units. For all rules. consider them halftracks or British Bren carriers.





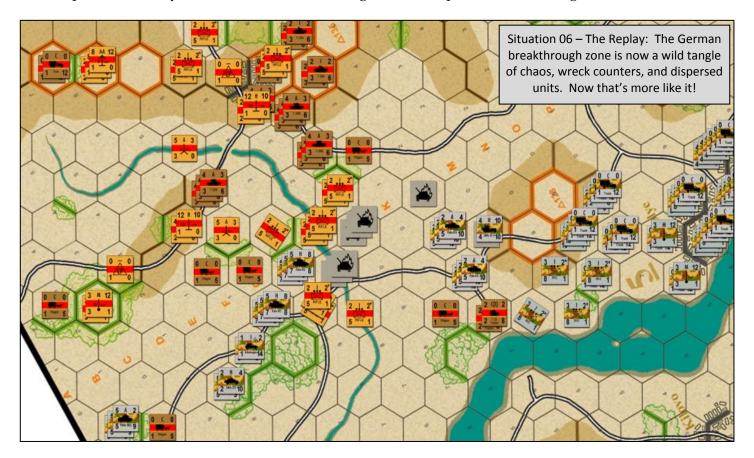
However, the Soviets fought on, determined to deny the German butcher's bill higher and higher. The opportunity fire clipped a few more trucks loaded with German light artillery and rifle platoons, keeping German infantry platoons trying to sneak off the board via the southern gully. There was no German air defense, one flaktrack was burning and the other had already fled.

Soviet activation checks marginally improved in the last few turns, allowing an infantry CAT against more German security platoons in southern gulley. Furthermore, the Soviets managed to parked a few more sacrificial recon units and empty carrier units across the German escape path. Overruns and pointblank direct fire re-opened these hexes (with more flaming wreckage, of course), but Soviet opportunity fire continued to wreak a heavy toll on escaping German units. Pretty much the entire wooded ridge running from 4A2 to 4H1 was now a solid mass of Soviet units, and every German lunge off the board prompted a killer hail of opportunity fire. As units were dispersed, artillery missions howled in, driving

the Germans a tactical. As the Germans fled, Soviet Soviets may have lost but they go down swinging . . . even a small 45mm antitank gun that was just hauled in behind a wagon gets a lucky shot on a dispersed the game good and bloody. The Soviet TB-3 bombers PzKpfw-IV, flaming out another of these German finally arrived, and destroyed two dismounted monsters. Yes, for victory points a PzKpfw-IV is worth the same as a Kubelwagen, but it just feels better. One last PzKpfw-IV scoots off the Board on Turn 8, and that's it. The rest of the German forces (dispersed infantry guns, a handful of infantry, and both 81mm mortars) are hopelessly cut off.

> The Germans have escaped with 28 units, giving them another marginal victory, albeit one much more narrow than the first game. More importantly, the 8th Panzer has taken one hell of a bloody nose, giving us much more of a "retreat under pressure" feel than a tracked version of a NASCAR race. The situation also feels balanced, the Soviets could easily have clipped more German units and won a marginal if their activations rolls hadn't taken such a disastrous swerve on Turns 5 and 6.

> Obviously, since the Germans won marginal victories in both games, the overall situation is chalked up as a German marginal.





Panzer Blitz, Barbarossa

Situations, Analysis, and Campaign Journal, PANZERBLITZ on the Eastern Front, By JAMES JOHNSON June - December 1941

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Panzerblitz, Barbarossa



SECTION THREE - AUGUST, 1941 CROSSROADS OF FATE

So far, the greatest invasion yet seen has won some of the greatest victories recorded in the annals of warfare. The Soviet borders have been overrun and their standing armies practically annihilated. New armies have been raised only to be annihilated again along the banks of the great Russian rivers. Now the Russian heartland, and the road to Moscow, lays open to Hitler's "Barbarossa."

Yet all is not well among the invading Axis armies. Some quarter of a million casualties have been sustained . . . and not replaced. Soviet reserves seem as endless as the land. The battlefield is also growing wider as the front pushes east, and the formations along the blitzkrieg's leading edge are starting to spread apart at the seams. Worst of all, the German High Command has still not settled on any long-term strategy for what they assumed would be a short-term war. Hesitation stalls the advance as the Führer and his generals fret over objectives and priorities, throwing away the one commodity their armies cannot afford: time. In the field, the first whispers of doubt begin to crawl through the minds of the German invaders . . . just how badly have they underestimated the task before them?

Situation 07 Escape from Smolensk Solov'evo. Russia **03 August, 1941**

Summary: The twin panzer groups of Hoth and Guderian have closed around yet another massive encirclement of Soviet forces. This time the victims are the 16th and 20th Armies trapped in the major city of Smolensk, gateway to the main Moscow highway. But this time the trap is not perfect. In particular, Guderian's southern arm is partially diverted by strong Soviet counterattacks, forcing Hoth to push rest of France). down further from the north to compensate. The trap mounted by new forces commanded by K. K. initial blitz across the border, the first big

Rokossovsky, allowing still more Soviet forces to escape. Here, a jumbled "refugee" force of Soviet tanks and infantry makes a break back across the Dniepr River, while elements of the 7th Panzer Division fight to reclose the noose.

Background: As almost everyone knows, the original Barbarossa plan was far from perfect. One of its biggest flaws, however, is one that doesn't get a lot of press. Sure, everyone knows about how the Germans expected the war to be over by autumn and thus never arranged for winter equipment. knows how they underestimated the Soviet capacity for raising reserves, the toughness of the Soviet soldier, and the difficulties in supplying an army this size across such distances. But these are mostly failures to anticipate what might happen after Barbarossa, after the plan had failed and left the German spearheads stranded in the middle of the great Russian nowhere. In truth, consequences of this this failure of German foresight start squirming into evidence perhaps as early as July, when Barbarossa was just catching its stride. To boil it down, while the Germans were still winning amazing victories and each officer was doing very well in achieving individual objectives, as a combined force . . . the Germans had no idea what the hell they were doing.

The symptoms are plain enough. While its initial "shock" phase was drilled down to the last detail with typical German precision, the Barbarossa plan did a much poorer job of asking the fateful question . . . "then what?" While this is natural to a certain extent (it's not like Eisenhower and Montgomery sat down in May 1944 and planned every inch of the Rhine crossing like they did for the Normandy beaches), at least there was an ironclad consensus. Land the troops. Expand the bridgehead. Open a deep-water port. Pivot on Paris. Land in southern France, etc. The Germans were also more than capable of this kind of planning. Look at Case Yellow (the invasion of France and the Low Countries), followed by Case Red (the big turn south to Paris and the conquest of the

But they didn't do it here. Barbarossa had is then broken open again by a strong counterattack definitive timetables, objectives, and priorities for the





encirclements, and the thrust to the rivers. After that, the plan became very murky. were less able to drill down details, but they should've at least had an overall game plan. Push on and the Dniepr River, this was the third major stop for Kiev. Pivot to Moscow. Invest Leningrad in a siege. Hold Soviet counterattacks on the Don. was none of that, or if there was, it was sketched only in the vaguest of terms. And we don't just mean vague in detail, we mean priority. Put another way, while the opening of Barbarossa was choreographed in iron, the middle and end were handled much more along the lines of "we'll see how it goes."

Bad call. Some historians assert that the Germans assumed that the Soviets would've such a beating by this point that the blitzkrieg could roll pretty much wherever it wanted. Who needs priorities when you can do everything you want at once? But new Soviet armies kept rising, and this lack of a German plan (or even a list of agreed-upon priorities) became a deadly problem. And we don't mean in December in the infamous Russian snow. We mean in July, when the Germans were still "winning" the war.

Just read the literature. This history of Barbarossa makes sense through June and July, it reads almost like the first thirty minutes of a Hollywood script. Get to August, and you suddenly have no idea what the hell is going on. You re-read, you re-re-read, you cross check other sources. This is with 70 years of hindsight, no less. Finally you clue in to the fact that the historians sound like they don't have a clue because they people they're writing about . . . had no clue. German armies are no longer nearly marching in divisions, corps, and armies eastward. Formations are breaking up, mixing together, heading north, heading south, changing direction seemingly every day. The simple fact is that while they were tactically still in absolute command, operationally the Germans were dangerously confused. When the Red Army failed to conveniently evaporate by the end of July, German field commanders were compelled to act against the new threat . . . and since there was conflicted direction from above, commanders had to take their own interpretation of a general plan that was written much too vaguely to begin with.

Nowhere was this more apparent than where Sure, a naturally Army Group Center was closing on Smolensk. This is expanding "zone of uncertainty" meant that planners a big city, a major transport hub, and the gateway to the main highway leading to Moscow. After Minsk Army Group Center. Once again Panzergruppe Hoth But there raced around from the north, and the much larger Panzergruppe Guderian curled around from the south. By July 20 they were poised to meet up behind Smolensk and bag another huge encirclement of Soviet soldiers.

> It didn't quite happen that way. For one, Guderian sent some of his force east to Yelnia to preemptively hold off brewing Soviet counterattacks. This meant that his northeastward attack to hook up with Hoth was badly understrength. The superb German 29th Motorized "Falcon" Division got into the city on July 16, and engaged in three days of horrendous street fighting to clear the city. But really? Just one division to clear out half of a major metropolis? Meanwhile, Hoth's tanks were poised to the north, but his panzer group was much smaller to begin with. Not that Guderian was in that great of shape, by now his 18th Panzer Division was down to 12 operational tanks.

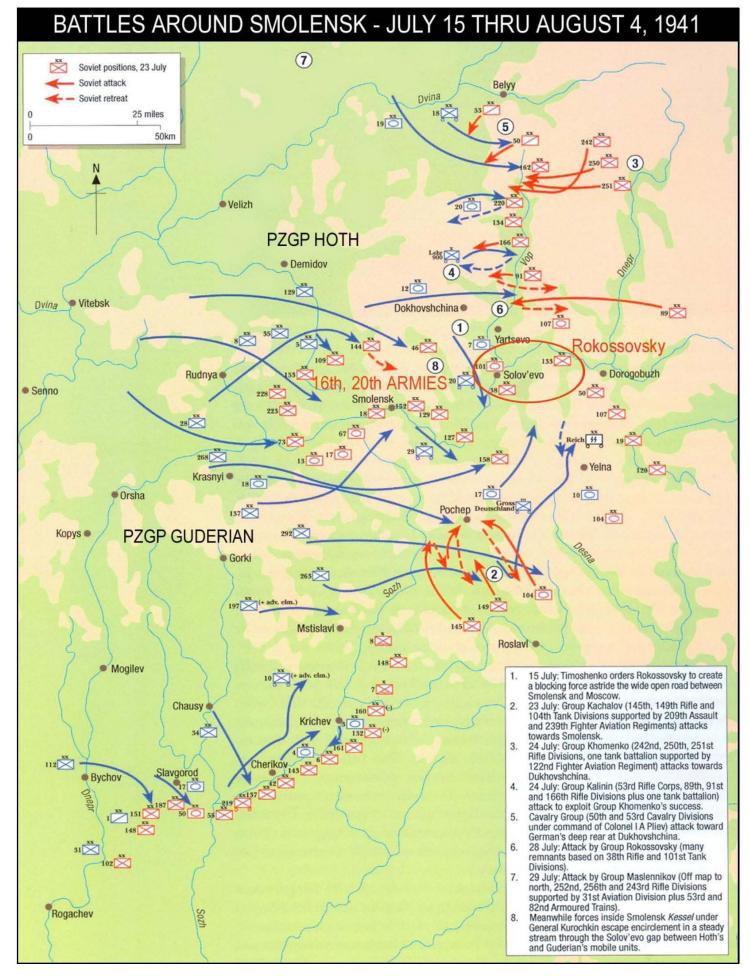
> All this resulted in the Germans being unable to snap the jaws shut around Smolensk right away, and here's where that lack of foresight comes in. Because the Germans hadn't smashed all organized resistance, and because they'd taken far deeper losses than anticipated, and because their logistics system was already showing signs of serious strain, and because they *couldn't* do everything they wanted at once, they had to make hard choices about what to do first (or what to do at all). Simply put, these kinds of choices cannot be made by groups of willful men if firm priorities are not set beforehand.

> Guderian wanted to push east. Von Kluge, von Bock, and Hitler wanted to invest and reduce the Soviets in Smolensk. The indecision caused delays, which allowed more Soviet units to escape the trap. It also gave the Soviets time to launch a massive fivepronged counterattack at German positions deployed around Smolensk, each prong built around a different army under a different commander, coming in from a different direction. Operationally, these attacks were pretty well coordinated. They all converged at the



PanzerBlitz, Barbarossa









same general target and all hit at pretty much the losses, and the land was just too big. same time (unlike similar operations like Dubno). The German operational indecision.

But what if that German company is hit by two Soviet battalions? Or three or four or five? Like Lenin once wrote: "quantity has a quality all its own," and soon the Germans trying to strangle the Soviets trapped in Smolensk found themselves in real trouble.

By this time, German indecision was hardly a factor since Soviet counterattacks were forcing them to move in multiple directions anyway. Again, Guderian's forces give us the greatest example, where his spearhead had to fight off Soviet counterattacks against Yelnia, his right wing had to meet a massive Soviet counterattack coming at him from Rosavl, and his left wing was still trying to push north to meet Hoth's spearheads coming down from behind Smolensk. He just didn't have the weight to push up "Ghost Division" from France, part of the XXXIX Panzer Corps) had to keep pushing further south to compensate.

Basically, the river "loops" and even though Smolensk straddles the Dniepr, Soviet troops trying to escape the city by fleeing east would have to cross that same river again at Solov'evo.

The 7th Panzer Division had reached the nearby town of Yartsevo on July 15, even before the 29th Motorized got into Smolensk itself. The 7th Panzer spent all day shooting up a river of Soviet trucks and trains passing through Yartsevo . . . trying to get into Smolensk. Finally the trap was closed when the 7th Panzer pushed further south to Solov'evo to hook up with forward elements of Guderian's 29th Motorized. This didn't happen until much later, after plenty of hold it open. Meanwhile, desperate scraps of the 13th, Soviets had already escaped. Even once the ring was 17th, and 67th Tank Divisions (along with the sad closed, it was tissue thin. The Germans just didn't remnants of God only knows what rifle divisions) try had the weight anymore. They'd taken too many to break out from the west.

Then came Rokossovsky. Formerly problem for the Soviets was tactical. The simple fact commander of the 9th Mechanized Corps (which no that any German company could shatter any Soviet longer existed), he'd reported back to Moscow and battalion coming at it meant that even Soviet had been given a patchwork of newly-raised forces. operational competence broke down in the face of He was sent back to the front with just two trucks worth of headquarters units, promised he would find his assigned forces along the way. He did so, and scooped up some other sad remnants along the way. A big part of this were the shattered scraps of the 7th Mechanized Corps, whose headquarters assets he "stole" to form his own command group. Such was the state of the Red Army at the height of Barbarossa. Rokossovsky's hodge-podge force now formed one of the five Soviet "shock groups" wailing on the Germans surrounding Smolensk. With the 101st Tank Division, the 38th Rifle and the 133rd Rifle Divisions (plus remnants if the aforementioned 7th Mechanized Corps), he went right up the middle on July 23 and slammed the 7th Panzer with everything he had at Solov'evo.

It worked. The overstretched 7th Panzer buckled to meet Hoth, so Hoth's 7th Panzer (Rommel's old and had to give ground, and for a while the Solov'evo bottleneck was open for still more Soviets to escape from Smolensk. But Rokossovsky's 101st Tank Division was down from 170 tanks to just 30. Then The flashpoint would come at Solov'evo, about 42 the Germans hit back on July 29. The Rokossovsky kilometers east of Smolensk. Here, the Dniepr River mustered his reserves hit back again on July 30, re-repasses south before turning west and passing through retook Solov'evo, and again held open the bottleneck. This time 7th Panzer couldn't close it again until August 4. By this time, all organized Soviet resistance in the Smolensk pocket had ceased, and another 302,000 Soviet troops (the bulk of 16th, 19th, and 20th Armies, twelve infantry divisions and three tank divisions) had passed into captivity.

> But plenty of Red Army troops had escaped as well, mostly through the fiery bottleneck of Solov'evo thanks to "Shock Group Rokossovsky." Situation 07 tries to recreate part of this horrendous fight. While the 7th Panzer Division fights to re-close the gap, remnants of Rokossovsky's shattered force fights to





must-do for PanzerBlitz Barbarossa despite the relative lack of detailed information. With a Soviet force trying to hold a river bridgehead open against a German counterattack coming in from the flank, all while a second Soviet force is trying to escape, produces three converging forces instead of the usual two. Also, the relative lack of hard data can actually be considered something of a blessing, since it opens the door to a little "careful creativity."

The reason the data is beginning to dry up is actually quite simple. We've now left the time period when any "starting forces on June 22" references can be relied upon, and these represent the majority of the really detailed source material. Initial Soviet forces are all smashed, replaced with newly-raised units hastily thrown together. For their part, German forces are starting to come apart at the seams as divisions are whittled down to informal "kampfgruppe." Sure, we have hard data on which units were where and when, but when it comes to what those units had, things are getting hazy.

Establishing victory conditions is also a little murky because it isn't really known how many Soviet troops made it out of the Smolensk pocket, by which route on which day, belonging to which units, and whether they had their equipment with them. It's one thing to drive a counter of BT-7s across a bridge, after all, and quite another for the crew to blow up the tank and slip through German lines in the night. Both represent "escaped Soviet troops" but present two very different outcomes in terms of PanzerBlitz victory conditions.

Still, there are a lot of things we do know, and so we pieced together as much as we can and left the rest to designing a fun game with a challenging game balance.

Let's start with the map. As usual, it was easy enough to find the location on our RKKA maps, confirm the units involved, then fill in additional map data with Google Earth. None of the elevation here varies by more than 80 feet or so (24 meters), not enough to include the normal 60-70 meter slopes and 100-140 meter hilltops prescribed in basic PanzerBlitz Wolfram von Richthofen (cousin to Lothar and

Situation Design: Building the situation offered a rules. The angle of the board and the placement of the range of interesting opportunities, which made it a major city (Zapolye) is meant to represent the angle of the Dniepr on this field and the position of the historical Solov'evo.

> At first, the victory conditions were built based around how many Soviet units could escape from the But this would produce an Smolensk pocket. unrealistic game since Rokossovsky's forces (which were larger and better) would sacrifice themselves to save a flock of "Smolensk shitbirds." The idea here is to get some Smolensk forces out, but also keep the Solov'evo bottleneck open so more troops can escape in the days (and nights) to come. Thus, the victory conditions were re-worked to include both escaped Smolensk units and German losses.

> The German forces were easier to put together, the famous 7th Panzer Division is very well documented on gregspanzerblitz.com and niehorster.orbat.com. The only question was how much of this force to actually put in the game, since the 7th Panzer was fighting in several places along the Solov'evo-Yartsevo corridor and was running understrength

besides. Tanks, artillery, and infantry were naturally reduced, but we just had to include the preposterous GW-1 self-propelled infantry gun of the 705th IG Company and the Panhard of the 57th armored cars Battalion. I can only Rommel's boys captured these things in France last year and never "turned them in" to the quartermaster.





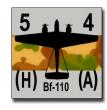
course this is the "Ghost Division," so they get the Morale A . . . but note how they're still stuck with the PzKpfw-38(t) tanks. That's the problem with being an elite German division early in the war. Sure, you've been around forever. But so has your equipment since the German high command unfortunately put a higher priority on raising new units rather than maintaining veteran formations already in the field.

Another interesting factor was German airpower. The Luftwaffe formation in the area was the VIII Fliegerkorps, one of the better outfits around when it came to ground support. Commanded by General





Manfred, the famous "Red Baron" of World War One), their squadrons usually had liaison communication officers right with the ground-pounders, unafraid to get



their boots dirty in order to have direct air support precisely where and when it was needed. This is bad news for the Soviet player, but the VIII Fliegerkorps was also in the process of redeploying northward to support the imminent assault on Leningrad. Again, we see that German indecision rearing its head. But VIII Fliegerkorps didn't leave entirely until August 4, so here we have them represented at reduced chance to use them. strength.

With the Soviets, there were two forces to nail First was Rokossovsky's, but once again gregspanzerblitz.com came to the rescue with detailed orders of battle for the so-called "July Tank not hard to imagine a handful of these Divisions," of which the 101st was clearly numbered. Reorganized around smaller number of better tanks (almost all T-34As or at least BT-7s), these divisions are numbered from 101 through 112, and were built entirely after the war started, sometimes out of cannibalized fragments of shattered pre-war tank divisions (numbered 1-67 or so, the 101st was in fact built from the remains of the 52nd Tank Division). They also had a few KV-1s, which we were glad to include, although we know that for most of these divisions, a big part of their BT-7 complement was replaced by those wretched little T-26Bs (we're assuming these have all been blown up in the Rokossovsky's earlier fighting at Solov'evo). One last interesting note is the inclusion of the "new" T-40 light tanks for the recon battalion.

Another addition we just couldn't resist was the KV-2. We know that "Shock Group Rokossovsky" was reinforced by the sad remnants of the 7th

Mechanized Corps, which included the old 14th and 18th Tank Divisions. These units both had . . . you guessed it, the KV-2 behemoth. If any units of these division can be assumed to



have survived German fire (if not mechanical breakdown), it would be at least one platoon of these monsters.

When it came to the "Smolensk Shitbirds," we had even more creative license. We're looking at three tank divisions plus twelve rifle divisions, all mashed together, then put through the shredder, and now trying to leak out of the pocket. Who knows what kind of PanzerBlitz units we can include here?

Honestly, we took this to probably be our last chance to use "Winter War" oddballs like the T-100, the T-35, T-28, and similar curiosities. Who knows if these tanks were really there, but this will almost certainly be our last Furthermore, Smolensk was close to the so-called "Stalin Line," the old pre-war fortification system where last-ditch reserves might have been staged. It's "Finland Survivors" popping among the ranks of the hard-pressed Soviet troops.







One last note on the design of the Smolensk forces: note how there is no duplication of unit types between them and Rokossovky's rescue force. This is done simply to make keeping score easier, without keeping separate buckets of counters, recoloring pieces, or stacking them sideways. They don't have the same kind of tanks or artillery, and all their infantry is represented by recon platoon counters. This is meant to reflect understrength platoons of Smolensk survivors, but also avoid confusion when Soviet units start crossing the river . . . wait a second, was this a Smolensk platoon that I get points for, or from the 101st Tank Division that gives no points?

Happily, this situation played very Playtesting: smoothly the first time it was tried, was tightly fought by both players, and came down to a pretty close finish. The only revision (made early in the first game) was the aforementioned widening of the Soviet victory point parameters, but once this adjustment was made the situation was damned near perfect on the first try. This was especially gratifying considering all the moving parts in this situation, with phased entry for the Soviets from different parts of the board.



<u>PanzerBlitz, Barbarossa</u>

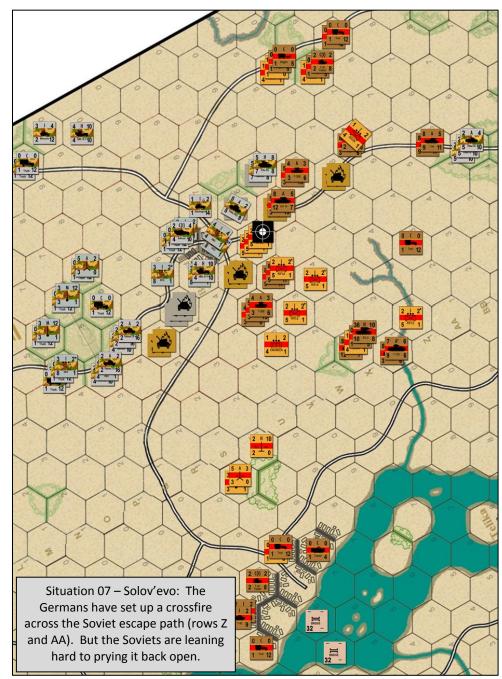


Predictably, the Soviets set up a centralized defense Zapolye (Solov'evo) on Board 5. Not only do they not know from which direction the Germans will come at them, but they have to hold that bridge over the Dniepr or the whole mission is pretty much moot. However, the Soviets also set up with an aggressive forward element, using everything from empty trucks to powerful companies of KV tanks to block up as much of eastern Board 5 as they could/ They also pushed the set-up conditions to the limit, clearly poised to lunge onto Board 2 and block (or at least slow) the German attempts at interdiction as well.

While the Soviets blocked up Board 5 admirably, the Germans were just too fast for the Soviets to really do anything effective on Board 2. Those Panhard armored cars in particular zipped clear down the board and took up an all-around defense in *Golod* on the very first turn. German motorcycles also took up positions in the western gullies, while infantry, tanks, and even light

artillery set up on the northwestern face of the "Bednost Woods." Clearly the Germans expected the Soviets to make a bolt down the western edge of the board with their Smolensk forces, hoping that the Germans wouldn't have time to set up a terribly strong defense in that sector, particularly with the 101st Tank Division causing problems in the south.

The Germans were wrong. The Soviets ducked practically *behind* them, making the "Smolensk Push" down the eastern side of the board. Cutting through ford hex 2BB10 (conveniently covered by woods, no less), they starting bolting for the gully starting in hex 2Z4. Once there, the crafty Soviets could use the gully



artillery set up on the northwestern face of the as a "subway tunnel" down to ford hex 5Y10, hop "Bednost Woods." Clearly the Germans expected the onto the Solov'evo road and be across the bridge in no Soviets to make a bolt down the western edge of the more than nine movement points.

Unfortunately for the Soviets, their activation checks really let them down. After a string of excellent rolls at the beginning of the game (where we saw Soviet units move almost like German units), the Smolensk garrison forces just stalled very badly in getting on the board, through that ford, and down to gulley hex 2Z4. The Germans had plenty of time to set up a vicious crossfire of PzKpfw IIs to the east, PzKpfw IVs to the west, and even flak halftracks and infantry guns to in long-range fire hexes like 2S10.





Nothing was getting down those murderous open the whole battle. hexes between ford 2BB10 and gulley 2Z4 without taking a horrific mauling.

So the Soviets went to work on re-prying these German jaws back open again. It was a nasty business, but for once the Soviets had the hardware to mount a realistic effort. "Czech 38s" and PzKpfw-IIs wailed on KVs, often at point blank range, and just like the history books say . . . had no effect on these steel dinosaurs. German tanks started going up in flames to Soviet counterfire, no matter much the Germans exploited their split move and fire ability. Finally, in order to "shoot and scoot" out of Soviet link up with elements of the 101st Tank Division spotting and return fire, some German units had to start backing up to where they could no longer see the "corridor of death." The Soviets had done it, they had crowbarred the eastern escape path open again.

To make matters worse, the Germans made two pretty sad mistakes in response to this development. One, they continued to fight for Bednost, even though there were Soviet KV-2s parked in 2X2. Evidently the Germans hoped to use Bednost as an "anchored fire base" to continue to threaten the escape corridor's five hexes, a magic number given for the KV-2's 36-H-10 attack values. With a thunderous 72 attack factors to drop on German infantry in Bednost, the Soviets were easily getting 4-1 shots even on German engineers . . . in city hexes.

The Germans also screwed up when they tried to preemptively close down the back end of this escape gully by sending their Panhards and empty halftracks down through 2U1, between the two treelines flaking this corridor, and to the gully exit hex at 5Y10. Not only were the Soviets able to stack up enough opportunity fire to prevent this from happening, but the easy kills only added to the Soviet score.

The Germans did do some things right, however. By sneaking their GW-1 into woods hex 5FF7, way on the end of the board, they were able to just barely steal a peep at the Soviet artillery batteries firing from city hex 5P3. This GW-1 battery also racked up some impressive kills on infantry, engineer, and escaping recon platoons, and despite its DF of only 2, survived assault at Bednost, which the Germans met with some

In the end, the first game shook out to a pretty close call on the first try. The Soviets got three Smolensk units across the river and destroyed 17 German units, resulting in a total score of 20, or a marginal Soviet victory.

As usual, the game was re-run solitaire. This time the Soviets would try sending their Smolensk forces down the board as far west as possible, hoping to outdistance the reach of the 7th Panzer Division coming in from the northeast. Passing through the ford at 2G9, they hoped to use the gullies of Board 2 to which would lunch northwest out of Solov'evo to meet them.

This game came down to an even tighter finish, with neither side making the mistakes of the first game (this was a solitaire game, after all, and played with the benefit of the first game's hindsight). The Germans didn't foolishly throw away the bulk of the 57th Reconnaissance Battalion, and the Soviets deployed their artillery in 5R7, making it virtually impossible to spot (at least from the ground). The western flank. But not only did the KV-2s have LOS Soviets were also much more fortunate with the on most of Bednost, but this hex also puts them within activation rolls for their Smolensk forces. These units flooded onto the board almost all at once, aptly covered by T-34s and BT-7s staged throughout the woods and gulley hexes of Board 2. These covering units did a great job of scaring off German Panhards and motorcycles hoping to interdict the Soviet entry.

> Other things didn't go so well for the Soviets. An artillery strike killed that KV-2, while the two KV-1s only killed a single German infantry gun before they made an overrun attempt on German infantry in the open. The opportunity CAT was 1-4, and with a miracle "1" the KV attack was broken up. Once this happened, the KVs were swarmed by German rifle, HMG, and engineer platoons, and the KVs met a grim end. Ironically, the crappy T-100s and T-35s did a little better, actually overrunning some PzKpfw-IIs and PzKpfw-38(t)s, scoring a couple of kills before they were engulfed in the rest of the 25th Panzer Regiment and annihilated.

The Soviets also did well with a massed infantry

PanzerB

SITUATION 07

ESCAPE FROM SMOLENSK - SOLOV'EVO, RUSSIA (02 Aug 1941): The panzer groups of Hoth and Guderian have encircled another huge collection of Soviet forces in the city of di Smolensk, gateway to the main Moscow highway. But this time the trap isn't perfect In particular, Guderian's southern arm is partially diverted by powerful Soviet counterattacks from the east and south, forcing Hoth to push down further from n the north to compensate. The trap is then broken open again by new forces under K. K. Rokossovsky, allowing still more Soviet units to escape. Here, a jumbled "refugee" force of Soviet tanks and infantry makes a break back across the Dniepr River, while elements of the 7th Panzer Division fight to reclose the noose.



RUSSIAN FORCES

101st Tank Division "Group Rokossovsky" includes part of 7th Mech Corps West Front (Morale D)



FORCE A

Vanguard, 202nd and 203rd **Tank Regiments**



Remnants, 14th Tank Division 7th Mech Corps



Elements, 101st Reconnaissance Battalion



0 0 0

Elements, 101st Motorized Rifle Battalion



Batteries, 101st Artillery Regiment, 101st Separate AA Battalion



FORCE B

Shattered Remnants, 13th, 17th, and 67th Tank Divisions



JEL GERMAN FORCES

7th Panzer Division, XXXIX Motorized Corps, Panzergruppe Hoth **Army Group Center (Morale A)**

Elements, 25th Panzer Regiment



3/59th Antiaircraft Company 4 H 10

57th Reconnaissance Battalion



Forward Kampfgruppe, Infantry Regiment 6



Sorties, VIII Fliegerkorps Luftflotte 2

Batteries, 78th

40 (H) 32

Artillery Regiment

*off-board

705th Infantry

Gun Company

artillery

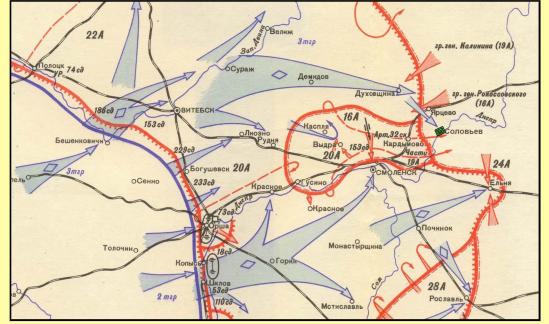


VICTORY CONDITIONS: Russians get one point for each German unit destroyed, plus each Force B unit that gets across the bridge.

- 12 or less: German DECISIVE
- 19-21 pts: Russian MARGINAL
- 13-15 pts: German TACTICAL
- 22-24 pts: Russian TACTICAL
- 25+ pts: Russian DECISIVE • 16-18 pts: German MARGINAL

SETUP: Set up bridges (32 DF) on 5S5 and 5S6. Russian FORCE A sets up anywhere on Board 5. Germans enter east side of the board, north of the river. Russian Force B enters anywhere on the north edge of the board on Turn 3. German aircraft arrive on Turn 6.

Germans move first Turn



SPECIAL RULES

- Russian activation rolls: 1-4. At the beginning of each movement phase, a Russian unit must roll a d6. On a result of 1-4, the unit can move and operate normally. On a result of 5-6, the unit cannot move or overrun. This does not include "motionless" CATs. If a unit entering the board does not make its activation roll, it must remain off-board and can try again next turn.
- Russian tanks must always be stacked
- at least two deep. If a stack takes losses, the "lone" Russian unit has one movement phase to rejoin another armored unit. If that can't do it, chooses not to do it, or fails its "Russian activation roll," the unit is eliminated.
- Russian units may not use Split move and Fire.
- Russian T-28 tractors are officially armored "combat" units. For all rules, consider them halftracks or British Bren carriers.





It should be noted that this assault was undertaken before Turn 3, before the Smolensk garrison forces started arriving in force. Thus, the Germans couldn't know for sure whether this strike on Bednost was a diversion or a real slam to open the eastern escape corridor. By the end of Turn 4, the answer was obvious, but already the massive Soviet artillery had hammered the Bennost hexes and hilled three platoons of German infantry, the Kubelwagen command car section, and the GW-1 assault guns.

Disappointment also hit the Germans when their air power came on the board. According to the rules, those planes have to be on the board and within ten hexes when the Soviet artillery fires in order to spot the guns from the air. That means the big German bombing raid on those guns (the only weapon the Germans had that could really hit hex 5R7) actually had to wait until Turn 7. Unfortunately, this also gave the Soviet 37mms a free crack on the Stukas. One of them was swatted out of the sky along with its ordinance, not to mention with any realistic chance the Germans had of silencing the Soviet artillery.

The Germans fought back, striking southward with their tanks and armored cars into the corridor of hexes roughly described as 2M2 to 5Q8. Looking at the map, it's easy to see how this completely severs the western road into Solov'evo, and cuts any chance of Soviet units trying to escape across the bridge from the area southeast of Golod. Quickly the battle collapsed into a tighter geographical area as these hexes west of Solov'evo became the focal point of the engagement. There were overruns, opportunity fires, and counter-overruns, with the Soviets taking absolutely hideous losses but killing more and more German units at the same time. Even if three or four Soviet units were dying for every German platoon killed, each such success crept the Soviets closer and closer to victory. In the end, only one Smolensk platoon got across the bridge, a solitary T-38 M2 that somehow survived the gauntlet of German opportunity fire.

Escaped Smolensk units, however, would hardly losses. The decisive moment came on Turn 8, when a Soviet 43rd Rifle Division, 50th Corps.

of their own infantry, "flaktracks," and GW-1 assault deadly Soviet gamble paid off in spaces. A stack of German tanks and armored cars had parked in hex 5J10, blocking the road for any more Smolensk escapees and essentially winning that "part of the battle" for the Germans. However, the Soviets called in artillery on that hex and then launched a massed overrun on the hex with all the armor they had left, even if failed activation checks meant that same precious tank units, like T-34s, would be sacrificed per the "Soviet tank company" special rules. literally, this was all or nothing.

> But it worked. The Soviets took hideous losses but managed to disperse the stack. Then, the Germans failed morale checks on two of the three units in that hex (pretty epic when you consider the Germans have a morale of "A"), dooming them to be killed by Soviet artillery. These two Panhards were just enough to tip the game in the Soviets' favor, giving them eighteen kills plus one escaped platoon for a total score of nineteen points. Thus the Soviets, despite losing 46 units plus a dozen trucks and wagons, walked away with a razor-thin marginal victory.

> Since the Soviets actually won *both* games (albeit by very slender margins), the overall situation is obviously chalked up as a marginal Soviet victory.

Situation 08 Storm From the North **Vyborg, Russia 22 August, 1941**

Summary: Although the Finns were eager to reclaim territory lost to the Soviets during the infamous Winter War of 1939-40, they were somewhat reluctant to jump headlong into the fury of Barbarossa on the side of Hitler's Germany. Thus, their initial attacks across the Karelian Isthmus toward Leningrad were strictly limited in scope, but at the end of July they finally struck with the full force of their small but tough and well-equipped army. Here, the Finnish 4th Infantry Division launches an attack towards the former Finnish city of Vyborg, hitting a perimeter matter, not with the Germans taking these kinds of held by confused and ill-prepared elements of the





Barbarossa that many European historians seem eager to forget: just how many nations besides Germany initially bought into the idea. Of course this was barbaric episode in human experience and before the Barbarossa was advertised to prevent . . . the overrunning of Europe by the "Red menace." Like Galeazzo Ciano once said, "Victory has a hundred fathers but defeat is always an orphan." Add atrocity, genocide, and continental-scale stupidity into the mix, and it's easy to see why people prefer not to remember their nation's initial participation in Barbarossa as a "good idea". But the fact remains that Barbarossa included contingents from Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, Croatia, Norway, France, Belgium, Spain, Austria, and Denmark. Eventually even the Ukraine and yes . . . 600,000 soldiers from Russia herself . . . would participate. The simple fact is that Soviet communism scared the hell out of people in 1941, and this multinational support allowed Hitler's Reich to trumpet (with some Hitler and Stalin were technically allies thanks to the truth) that this really was a pan-European crusade.

Another nation that participated in Barbarossa was However, there were three important Finland. differences between Finland and most of the other Axis minor powers who took part in Barbarossa. First, Finnish forces in the field were actually a credit to their nation (unlike certain other Axis armies we could mention). Second, Finnish participation was never really wholehearted, and pursued to a large part to secure specific criteria of Finnish national interests and not ideological goose-stepping handed down from Berlin. Third (and perhaps most important), the Finns had a legitimate beef with the Soviet Union.

As everyone knows, the Finns had been attacked and invaded by the Soviet Union on November 30, 1939. What followed was one of the great upsets in all of military history, with a Finnish army of just eight divisions halting and thrashing a mechanized army 125-1 in tanks, the Finns mauled the Soviets in a

Background: There's one uncomfortable fact about 300,000 Soviet dead. This was a war made famous by white-clad commando-style "jägers" on skis, where the first submachine gun was widely used (Finnish "Suomi" KP-31s), and where the "Molotov Cocktail" before the war in Russia degenerated into the most got its name. In the end, lack of foreign intervention and sheer Soviet numbers forced the Finns to sue for invasion brought about the exact nightmare that peace, but the territory won by the Soviets was hardly worth the price. In the words of Marshal Timoshenko, "we have barely won enough ground to bury our dead."

> Even worse was the damage to Soviet prestige and how her armed forces were viewed by the rest of the world. Although no one can say for sure, many historians argue that the Red Army's neolithic incompetence during the Winter War was part of what convinced Hitler that Barbarossa would be a success. "We have only to kick in the door," he said, "and the whole rotten structure will come crashing down."

> Yet in the immediate aftermath of the Winter War (concluded in March, 1940), Germany was not a popular country in the hearts of Finns. After all, Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of August, 1939. clauses of this treaty had pre-divided the occupation of Poland between Russia and Germany, as well as "sold" to Stalin the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Finland was just one more step in Stalin's big northwest push in the fall and winter of 1939. Furthermore, both Sweden and Norway were still afraid of German invasion at this time, and the Germans coerced these nations to deny Britain and France access to their territory through which they could send help to the Finns (in truth, all these countries were already "setting up the chessboard" for the anticipated war in Norway starting in April 1940). In all, the Finns couldn't help but feel like they'd been sold up the river by Hitler's foreign office.

Once planning got underway for Barbarossa, of course, things started to change. The Finnish government was quietly contacted by the Germans, and relations began to warm between Finland and six times its size. Outnumbered 30-1 in aircraft and Germany. These negotiations were largely held under the table, however, with secret meetings between David-and-Goliath war marked by upwards of at least select Finnish officers and German commanders in





Salzburg from May 25-28. The rest of the Helsinki couldn't have helped matters. government was kept largely kept in the dark, and "start mobilization of reservists" due to "increased tensions" between Germany and the Soviet Union. Isthmus soon after.

Nazi Germany between and Finland parliamentary (a democracy) was never airtight. Never will you see German and Finnish units the same on board, for PanzerBlitz example. the Germans would However, station two whole corps in the extreme north of Finland (the XXXVI Corps and Edward Dietl's "Gebirgkorps Norwegen" - see PanzerBlitz Situation 22, published the Wargamer's Guide PanzerBlitz). Furthermore, Germans would supply the Finns with much better weapons, especially in the latter years of the units Finnish eventually deploy batteries of StG-IIIs, carry MP-44 assault rifles, and field the panzerfaust and panzerschreck antitank weapons until Finland was finally forced to drop out of the war in September of 1944. they But never were "full members" of the Axis (much to their credit) and worked hard after the war to distance their part in World War II from the history of the Third Reich. The fact that the Finnish runic insignia commonly painted on their tanks looks a lot like a modified swastika, however,

But the facts are in the history. When Barbarossa weren't informed until June 9 that the country would hit on June 22, the Finns did basically nothing. In fact, the Soviets hit them first, bombing Finnish airfields and shelling Finnish ports on the first day of the war. Yet even then, no one in Finland was told of the exact For more than a month, there were only platoon or date for Barbarossa. The Germans hinted that they company-sized probing actions along the Russowould begin the attack sometime in late June, and that Finnish border for more than a month. Meanwhile, the Finns would open their attacks down the Karelian the Soviets kept having to transfer units off the Finnish line to reinforce defenses being destroyed by the The reason we're bringing all this into a *PanzerBlitz* Germans coming up from the southwest. Finally, the discussion is to show that the cooperation and trust Soviets fell back from the Finnish border on their own.







defensible ground and started digging in.

The Finns at last opened their offensive on July 31, almost six weeks after the start of Barbarossa. The main battlefield would be where it was in 1939-1940, along the Karelian Isthmus between the Gulf of Finland and Lake Ladoga. Here the Finns had two corps, the IV Corps to the west (advancing along the Gulf of Finland toward Vyborg) and the II Corps to the east (advancing along Lake Ladoga toward Käkisalmi. But even now, most Finns thought they were in this war to regain territory they'd been forced Soviets took it in the Winter War), retaking this port to cede to Russia after the Winter War. In fact, they call this conflict the "Continuation War" ("Jatkosota") to stress its connection to Russia's original invasion nineteen months previously.

Avoiding the worst of Soviet fortifications, the Finns instead concentrated their forces on narrow, deep breakthroughs over the trackless terrain. These axes were supported by pioneer engineers, building temporary supply roads through the forests and over the swamps. Despite a rather bloody nose at the town of Tyrjä, the Finnish advance was steady and by August 5 they had reached their first objective line, the Vyborg-Sortavala railroad.

The commander of the Soviet defenses north of Leningrad (23rd Army, Lieutenant-General M. Gerasimov) starting hitting this Finnish advance with Vyborg and develop an assault on the city itself. counterattacks mainly to the east, near Lake Ladoga. These didn't work, however, and elements of the Finnish 10th Division reached the northern shore of Lake Ladoga on August 9. These advances were particularly impressive considering that the Finns were outnumbered by the defenders (usually the attacks are supposed to outnumber defenders), the Soviets actually had air superiority, and the Finns had very few vehicles and basically no tanks. They were walking south through Karelia, and as we've said, their advance was purposefully avoiding most of the roads. It bears mentioning, however, that the Finns suffered more dead in this invasion than they had in during the whole Winter War of 1939-1940.

The Soviets tried again, with larger counteroffensives against the Finnish II Corps to the east, striking between Antrea and Lake Ladoga.

They picked what they hoped would be more another counterstrike would come at the west flank of the Finnish 2nd Infantry Division as it pushed south near the Taipale River (one of the bloodiest battlefields of the Winter War). Yet again the Soviets were frustrated and the Finnish advance continued.

> To the west, along the shores of the Gulf of Finland, the Finnish IV Corps was likewise making good progress. Here, the Soviet 50th Corps (123rd and 43rd Rifle Divisions) were unable to stop a steady Finnish drive on Vyborg. Known by the Finns as Viipuri (the second-largest city in Finland before the was naturally a major objective for the Finnish offensive.

> The IV Corps mounted their attack on Vyborg during mid-August, driving down along three basic axes of advance. In the east, the 12th Infantry Division edged around Vyborg, cutting through inner Karelia before curling west. Finally the 12th Infantry Division would reach the Gulf of Finland near Koiviosto, thus cutting off the town of Vyborg and trapping the bulk of the Soviet 50th Corps. To the west, meanwhile, the Finnish 8th Infantry Division would cave in the Soviet left wing (held by the 123rd Rifle Division) and push the Soviets back into Vyborg. Eventually the 8th Infantry Division would also cross a small arm of the Gulf of Finland in order to actually land troops in

> In the center, meanwhile, the Finnish 4th Infantry Division (Col. Kaarlo Viljanen) would hold the two wings of the assault together and push down straight out of the north. Their primary opponent would be the Soviet 43rd Rifle Division (Major-General V. Kirpitsnikov), with whom it would clash repeatedly as it relentlessly carved a path to the northern gates of Vyborg. These are the engagements which Situation 08 will attempt to represent.

Eventually, the Soviets were forced to pull out of Vyborg on August 27, and the Finns secured the city on August 29. The Finns had retaken the second largest city in their country, and commemorated the event with photo ops, congratulatory meetings between the Finnish commanders of IV and II Corps, and a parade past the old Swedish castle in the city. Yet The Soviets meanwhile, were trying to escape. The





Mannerheim Line had been during the Winter War. the 1939 border.

Although the Finns would advance much further in other sectors (in East Karelia on the other side of Lake Ladoga and up the long line extending up through Lapland toward the Arctic Ocean), here in the Karelian Isthmus . . . they stopped. They exerted pressure on the Soviets to prevent them from regaining their balance, but declined to advance closer than 30 kilometers to the northern suburbs of Leningrad. Their objectives had been met, all their territory of 1939 had been regained. This offers further proof that the Finns were less than totally committed to visions of marching into Moscow as part of a Teutonic crusade to save western civilization. To they'd lost in 1940.

the lessened Finnish pressure, and on September 5 two divisions were transferred from the Karelian Isthmus to the south of the city, against the Germans of Leeb's Army Group North. Although the Finnish troops on the Karelian Isthmus didn't actively participate in the siege of Leningrad, the threat posed by their positions gave the Soviets plenty to worry about, and hampered Soviet efforts to supply of the city around and across the Lake Ladoga.

In 1942 and 1943 the Arctic Front was largely static, a stalled trench war with fortifications to rival those seen in Flanders in 1914-1918. So extensive were these fieldworks that traces of them remain to this day. But in 1944, with the war clearly turned against the Germans, things broke loose once again in the Finnish sector and a third war quickly gained momentum. Gone were the bumbling Soviet conscripts of 1939 and 1941. By 1944 the Red Army was a huge, hardened, experienced, and well-commanded force, spearheaded by T-34/85s, Il-2 "Sturmoviks," JS-IIs, and ISU-152s. Despite limited supplies of the latest additional German weapons (and munitions purchased from Sweden), the Finns stood less than no

survivors that managed to get through the gauntlet chance against the reborn Red Army. They couldn't set up by the Finnish 12th Infantry Division helped set even depend on the weather to aid their defense since up new Soviet positions roughly where the Soviets came out them at the height of summer. The siege of Leningrad had finally been broken in The Finns continued their advance, and soon reached February, and now the Germans of Army Group North were reeling back toward Estonia, thus leaving the Finns to stand alone.

> Needless to say, the Finns didn't last long. They sued for a separate peace, and an armistice was signed on September 4, 1944. The Soviets wound up retaking everything they had won in 1940, and now added the whole Petsamo region in the far north for good measure (taking this land from Finland cut the country off completely from the Arctic Ocean).

But still the fighting was not over for Finland. In the far north, the German troops still fighting in Lapland (now known as "AOK Norwegen" or the Twentieth Mountain Army) did not leave willingly. Thus, the Finns actually went to war with them in a a large extent, the simply wanted to take back what fourth campaign called the Lapland War. How much of this stemmed from Finnish independence and a The Soviet military leadership quickly learned of turn against Hitler . . . and how much was simply compelled by terms of the Soviet cease-fire . . . is less than clear. In any event, this conflict lasted from September of 1944 to April of 1945, pushed German division out of northern Finland and back into





Panzerbiitz, Barbarossa



1,200 Germans. So we have to take back what we said earlier . . . you honestly could have German and Finnish units on the same PanzerBlitz board . . . on opposite sides. This makes Finland one of only two Axis powers whose regular army formally took the field in pitched battle against the Germans (Romanian troops fought alongside the Soviets starting in August 1944, and we're not counting Italian partisan operations in northern Italy). Finland was also the only truly democratic power to ever fight on the side used in Situation 04 (Guderian at the Dniepr). of the Axis.

regard. This wasn't always the case. The Finns never really figured out how to deal with enemy tanks (their infantry often panicked at the mere sight of them), they developed no real combined arms doctrine, and most of their victories were fought against a truly incompetent enemy. Once the Soviets actually got their act together, the Finns lost the field rather quickly. Also, many people like to take a soft view on Finland morally, considering them the one "good guy" among the Axis powers. While this is true to a certain extent, we must almost remember that Finnish volunteers fought in the Waffen SS, both in the SS "Viking" Division and in their own Finnish SS Battalion. Recent evidence has also come to light (documents uncovered in 2008) showing that a small German Einsatzgruppen operated in Lapland and northern Finland, and received limited cooperation from the Finnish police. These facts suggest that Finland may not have been quite as innocent as previously supposed in matters of Nazi ideology and atrocities. Indeed, the Germans and Finns had an odd, disjointed, uncomfortable, and very complex relationship in World War II.

Situation Design: Despite the unique nature of the new Finnish counters used in this game, the situation itself was pretty easy to design. Basically this is an infantry assault and breakthrough game, balancing the need for the attacker to inflict damage on his opponent's forces and cover physical ground toward a territorial objective.

The boards were the first thing chosen. Given the

occupied Norway, and killed 770 Finns and up to extreme nature of the terrain in the Karelian Isthmus, by default we picked the "worst" available boards, Board 1 and Board 4. Board 1 is particularly appropriate, given its swamps and large tracks of woods. The ground here is heavily wooded, boggy, with lots of streams and rolling hills . . . enough to block line of sight but not necessarily enough to qualify for the measurements given in PanzerBlitz or trigger half AF penalties for uphill direct fire. Thus we see the "low hills" special rule, the same as first

The next step was to build the armies. The Soviets Many historians like to regard the Finnish are pretty much the same as always for Barbarossa, accomplishments of World War II with near-mythical perhaps even less well-equipped than usual because the Soviets were forced to transfer as much material as they could to south of Leningrad to try and slow down the Germans. So as bad as the Soviet infantry regiments have been so far, this one will actually be a little less complete, and with even less in the way of support assets.

> The Finns, on the other hand, were the wild card. But again, designing their force wasn't that hard thanks to the awesome materials presented by gregspanzerblitz.com and Imaginative Strategist. Imagine my relief when these two sources, always goldmines of detailed PanzerBlitz and Panzer Leader information, agreed 100% on values and compositions of the Finnish formations. This isn't always the case, and saved me from having to rework Michael Bennighof's well-meaning but thoroughly slanted "Panssari Salama" home supplement. All due respect goes to this guy for being the first to try adopting the Finnish wars into PanzerBlitz, but the values he presents in his game are just silly. Finnish infantry platoons in 1939 with 4-I-6-10-1? Even worse are the jägers with 7-I-3-10-4. These are platoons, before you ask, wielding 1939 weapons. Note the MF of 4 for the jägers, I guess these are supposed to be ski troops? That's great, except not all his scenarios take place in snow. He uses them in his June 1941 Scenario F7, in which he includes no less than 65 tanks (?!?) including PzKpfw-IVs the Finns never had, in an attack they never launched (they didn't strike until July 31), and has his date as June 12 (10 days before Barbarossa?!?). Okay, this last one is obviously just a typo, but you



PanzerBlitz, Barbarossa



see what I mean.

In Bennighof's defense, it seems he was trying to reflect the qualitative disparity between Finnish and Soviet infantry without the benefit of retrofitted rules like morale, Soviet activation rolls, split move and fire, etc. Still, skimming through his write-up, it's clear he has a serious axe to grind here, and his data is not balanced, historically accurate, or tactically realistic.

For our Situation 08, we're building a standard Finnish infantry battalion, "converting" the one bicycle and engineer platoon into an extra rifle platoon. We're also reinforcing the "lead battalion" somewhat with elements from the division's antitank

company and antiaircraft battery. With no snow on the ground, we can't really use ski troops . . . but the 9th Light Battalion is included with its bicycle recon and cavalry. We also have a little artillery, according to online records the 1st Finnish Artillery Regiment was armed primarily with 76.2mm divisional guns, presumably captured from the Soviets during the Winter War. We're also including a company from the 25th Pioneer Battalion, some truly epic engineers except for that low DF (these much have been small, elite units).







The only tough part in the situation's design was the victory conditions. We didn't want to make it based on the Finns taking cities because that would compel the Soviets to simply bunch up in the three towns on Board 4 and turn the battle into a game of "capture the castle." Making the game about Soviet casualties would encourage the same defensive posture since the Soviets would try and squeeze as many units as possible into that +5/+1 city bonus. Making the game about a Finnish breakthrough would be unfair to the Soviets, unless we game them masses of infantry to block up the whole length of Board 4.

Finally we settled on a hybrid set of victory conditions. The Finns can win in two ways, either infiltrating the Soviets and pushing off the south edge of the board, or by engaging and destroying a big part

of the Soviet force. Obviously, the Finns will have to do a little of both. In the interests of game balance and historical outcome (the Soviet 43rd Division barely slowed down the Finnish advance into northern Vyborg), the bar is set quite high for the Finnish player. All the Soviet player will have to do is cause a little bit of trouble, but looking at the disparity (and quality) of available forces, this will prove challenging enough.

Playtesting: Designing and playtesting a game that pits a large and unwieldy force against a smaller and more elite force is always a little tricky, especially when the smaller, better force is on the attack. Few campaigns in history present this contrast in more stark relief than Barbarossa, and putting Finnish infantry up against Soviet 1941 infantry is certainly no exception. But we must be getting better at this, because Situation 08 played pretty tight, without modifications, on the first try.

As stipulated in the Situation, the Soviets set up first. In the words of the Soviet player, he was trying to build a flexible "accordion" that could compress and expand in response to where the Finns set up their push. The vector of the Finnish attack would be nakedly obvious the moment the Finns set up, they don't have the motorized resources to set up a "running back" feint-and-rush. But since the Finns set up second, the Soviets have to be prepared wherever that blitz may be. This is hard on the Soviets, since they really don't mechanization to set up any kind of mobile defense, either. Fortunately, the victory conditions stipulate that they only have to inflict a moderate amount of damage as the Finns rush by to win the game.

The left-right "accordion" property of the Soviet set up was fine, where they may have fumbled a little was on the other axis, forward-backward. Everything was set up on the reverse slope of the big ridge running down the middle of Board 4, which certainly kept the Soviets safe but left them blind to the north. This lack of LOS onto Board 1 allowed the Finns to set up right along the very edge of Board 1, in effect already halfway across the required terrain to escape off the bottom Board 4. The northern spur of "Heartbreak Ridge" (4O6-4N2) blinded some heavy



<u> Panzerbiitz, Bardarossa</u>



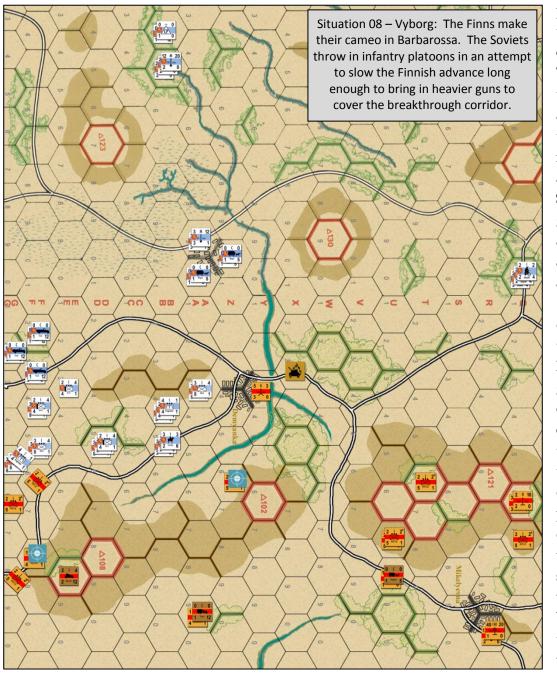
infantry guns stationed on the other side in the town and also as a small measure of "psychological of Novo. The Finns were quick to take advantage of this fact when they staged almost everything in the big swamp on the southwest corner of Board 1,safely out safely of any Soviet LOS since the bulk of Soviet perfection. About the only thing that went wrong forces were set up behind Ridges 102-108 and 121-135. were some turns of overly-predictable infantry Almost the entire Finnish force was also on foot, so the swamp terrain posed them no problems for movement. The only Finnish forces not deployed here were the bicycles and cavalry, which set up squarely in the middle of the board, in the woods near road junction 4Q1. This was to keep eyes on some of the Soviet eastern defenses for Finnish artillery missions, this is simple.

warfare" to keep the Soviets distracted somewhat from the obvious main effort in the west.

The Finnish plan and execution worked almost to movement, when the massive Soviet howitzer and mortar fire missions landed on stacks of Finnish engineers and MG sections and resolutely squashed The Finns were also more than a little aggressive in engaging and destroying Soviet units in (or even *near*) their path of advance. The reason for Even if the Finns escape with

practically everything, they don't reliably score enough points to win. They have to tangle with the Soviets at least a little and do some damage on their way out. As Soviet redeployment (and bad activation rolls) fed Soviet units into the meat grinder, the Finns were able concentrate against each new element and chew it up in turn.

the In Soviets' defense, they regained their balance and soon had powerful infantry guns overlooking obvious Finnish route of Furthermore, escape. they were crafty in how they held their during the first phases of potential indirect fire, denying the Finns a spot until the high-payoff stacks of Finnish units were set to make their break. This corridor, by way, started the in woods-slope hex 4FF8.







board without even having to take the required 1:2 Soviets get a few more light units, not really in the odds attack (Arab-Israeli Wars rules on Quick-Time interest of giving them more firepower, but more March), but they did suffer the half-DF when eyes. subjected to Soviet opportunity fire. Here, the combined fire of Soviet infantry guns, indirect fire in the second game. The eastern approach is nowhere from howitzers and heavy mortars, massed rifle near as convenient as the western approach, with platoons, and even 82mm mortars used in a direct Soviet OPs presumably posted on the Board 4 ridge in role, all took a grim toll on the last batches of Finnish Novo and a ready-made Soviet bulwark in the form of forces to make their sprint into the end zone. The the woods and tree line running from 4G3 to 4A2. Soviets just took too long to get this fire zone set up, far too many Finnish units had already made the platoons pretty far forward, forcing the Finns to set up break for safety.

The Finns enjoyed one more success that frankly surprised even them. After calling in some artillery unstoppable. By mixing rifle platoons with engineer missions (with only lackluster success), the bicycle company broke up and headed in different directions. Some went to spot for artillery missions against Soviet some took the far eastern road and invaded Board 4. This was purely meant as a "stunt," maybe annoying enough to cause the Soviet to send one or two rifle platoons to stop them. But this sole bicycle platoon actually made it (partly because the Soviets didn't take the bait), and barely escaped off the board via gully hex 4I10, with just one movement point to spare on the very last Finnish turn.

In the end, the Finns had scored 17 Soviet kills while getting 15 of their units off the south edge of the board. Thus scoring a total of 32 points, this was just enough to win the Tactical Victory. "Augh!" exclaimed the Soviet player. "All that time making won you the Tactical!"

Soviets started out by setting up a little further forward. The Finns also tried setting up for a rush down the east side of the board instead of the west side, just to test the different approaches to the game. In the interest of game balance, the Finns also gave up one of their 76.2mm howitzer batteries, and the Soviets received a slight bump to their infantry, light While this mistake might be forgivable in the live mortars, and light AA guns (.50 cals). The first game this situation is their artillery, but the problem is game when you have the benefit of hindsight.

From here they could "quick time" march clean off the getting spotters in position to call it in. Thus, the

Right off the bat, the Finns seemed to be in trouble Furthermore, the Soviets deployed some spotter further north than they did in the first game.

But these Finnish infantry platoons are just platoons, the Finnish player can give many of his companies the special CAT abilities. By further "cutting" this mix with machine gun sections, the ATGs in Demyanka (which never happened), and Finnish player is able to set up that many more companies with only a minimal decrease in firepower (although a significant drop in DF, admittedly). Furthermore, these units aren't slowed down one bit by the "Soviet bulwark" running from 4G3 to 4A2 because of the infantry movement rules. This goes triple for the cavalry, which present a murderous threat because of their startling mobility. This board seems made for them, after all, whisking across brown and green hexes to strike terror into every Soviet truck and wagon trying to bring up more infantry platoons and guns . . . all while struggling with the bad Karelian terrain, of course.

The Soviets once again had a tough time with their fun of the Finnish bicycles, and that's the unit that spotting. In both games, the Soviets embraced the idea of a "mobile counterattack force" behind the For the second (solitaire) test of the game, the ridge, ready to "counter-blitz" the Finns whichever way they lunged. Really? In wagons? Against Finnish rifle platoons with an RF of 4 and those deadly cavalry squadrons running around? Instead, this unrealistic strategy left the Soviets with a protective ridge they usually couldn't see over for their one true weapon, indirect artillery fire missions. game (since the situation is brand new to both proved that the only real weapon the Soviets have in players), it's just sad when it happens in the second

PanzerA

SITUATION 08

STORM FROM THE NORTH - ASSAULT ON VYBORG (15 Aug 1941): Although the Finns were eager to reclaim territory lost to the Soviets during the infamous Winter War, they were somewhat reluctant to jump headlong into the fury of Barbarossa. At the end of July they finally struck down the Karelian Isthmus, and in a few weeks they managed to push through the woods, lakes, and marshes to within 30 kilometers of the northern defenses of Leningrad. One of the main objectives of this campaign was retaking the port city of Vyborg (Viipuri), formerly the second-largest city in Finland. Here, the Finnish 4th Infantry Division (IV Corps) attacks the central Soviet perimeter protecting the city, confused and illprepared elements of the Soviet 43rd Rifle Division, 50th Corps.

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RUSSIAN FORCES 43rd Rifle Division, 50th Rifle Corps 23rd Army, Leningrad Front (Morale D)



Scattered Main Body, 147th Rifle Regiment



337th Battery, 299th Separate **Antiaircraft Battalion**



Batteries, 64th Artillery



Regiment

25th Reconnaissance

Batteries, 200th Howitzer

Regiment

Company

40 (H) 20 2 C(I) 2

SETUP: Russians set up first, anywhere on Board 4. Finns set up second, anywhere on Board 1 and completely out of any and all LOS of any Russian unit (except trucks and wagons, which cannot spot). Finns move first.



FINNISH FORCES 4th Infantry Division, IV Corps **Finnish Karelian Army** (Morale A)



Vanguard, 5th Infantry Regiment



9th Light Battalion



First Company, 25th Engineer Battalion



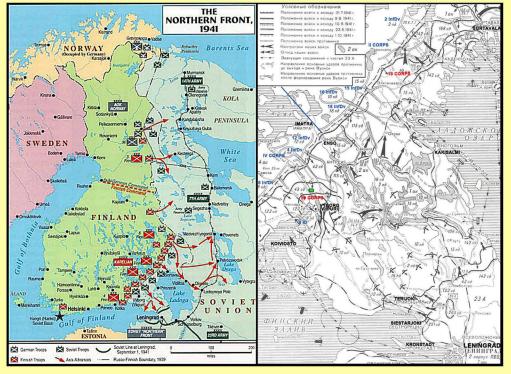
Battery, 1st Artillery Battalion



VICTORY CONDITIONS: The Finns are awarded one point for every Russian unit destroyed, and one for every unit (not trucks or wagons) that get off the south edge of the board by the end of Turn 10.

- 40+ pts: Finnish DECISIVE • 32-39 pts: Finnish TACTICAL
- 24-31 pts: Finnish MARGINAL
- 16-23 pts: Russian MARGINAL • 8-15 pts: Russian TACTICAL
 - 7 or less pts: Russian DECISIVE

Finns move first Turn 2 6 10



SPECIAL RULES

- Russian activation rolls: 1-4. At the beginning of each movement phase, a Russian unit must roll a d6. On a result of 1-4, the unit can move and operate normally. On a result of 5-6, the unit cannot move or overrun. This does not include "motionless" CATs. Russian units may not use Split move and Fire.
- Russian T-28 tractors are officially armored "combat" units. For all rules, consider them halftracks or British Bren carriers.
- Low Hills: The terrain in this area is rolling, with low ridges and hills only. Thus, ignore terrain elevation effects on direct fire (no halving for shooting uphill). All other TET and Movement rules apply (3 MF for vehicles in slopes, 4 MF for trucks, blocking LOS/LOF, etc.).
- Bicycles are considered "trucks" for all movement rules. They cannot CAT or overrun. They spend 2 MF for clear terrain off-road. However, they only spend 4 MF to exit a gulley, and CAN move through green hex-sides.





But the Soviets did have some things going their The Soviets were eager to hit back in any way they way. A stubborn infantry platoon in 4A2 held on for quite a while, dispersed at least four times but never dying, all while clogging up the escape path for Finnish trucks, wagons, and yes . . . bicycles. This position was eventually outflanked on the left and annihilated, but not before the Finns had lost plenty of time. The Soviets put this time to good use by setting up a positively murderous position of heavy direct fire artillery along the back side of tree line 4D10-4B9, with a 122mm infantry gun, a 76.2mm infantry gun, and a 37mm AA gun, all ready for when the Finns made their break off the board. The Finns, obviously, did not oblige, but because of the Soviet deployment they couldn't see the hex for artillery, even "blind" fire missions. The Finns were thus forces to rush up with sacrificial "spotting" units, trigger either opportunity fire or launching a CAT attack, all while still more Finnish units stood back to spot the muzzle flashes and call in the artillery. It was bloody work, especially with a handful of Soviet rifle and engineer platoons in the area, and weaker units like Finnish cavalry, MG units, and engineers all took additional losses from opportunity fire. Finally the Finnish divisional guns and mortars smashed this firebase, but the cost had been high, both in blood and in time.

In the end, however, the Finns still squeaked out a win, mostly because of the Soviets and their "wagon counter-blitz" fantasy. The Finns killed 16 Soviet units and got 11 units off the board (including their CP in a wagon, no less), giving them a score of 27 and a comfortable marginal victory. Because the Finns won both games, the overall situation goes in the books as a marginal Finnish victory.

Situation 09 Cossack Deep Cavalry Raid Velizh, Russia 24 August, 1941

the center of the line had been stopped by stiffening Soviet resistance, supply problems, and especially by central panzer groups north and south in wide shifting priorities in the German High Command. outflanking movements behind Kiev and Leningrad.

could before the German spearheads got moving again. One of the more successful attempts was made by the 3rd Cavalry Corps under Lev Dovator. Consisting of the 50th and 53rd Cavalry Divisions (made of up Terek and Kuban Cossacks), they struck deep into the north flank of Army Group Center, penetrating about 100 kilometers into the rear of the German Ninth Army, and caused tremendous damage before breaking back out again. elements of the Soviet cavalry group engage rearechelon units of the German 110th Infantry Division.

Background: Hitler was nothing if not a micromanager, and throughout World War II his armed forces would pay dearly for his leadership style. Some of the most far-reaching examples of this behavior came during August and September of 1941, when the Führer took it upon himself to start Russia shuffling operational priorities in and changing the basic direction of some of the Wehrmacht's largest field formations.

He'd certainly done this before, particularly in regards to Russia. The OKH's original plan for the invasion of the Soviet Union had been Operation "Otto," a simpler and more direct plan involving a three-pronged push toward Leningrad, Moscow, and Kiev, followed by converging attacks inward toward Moscow once Leningrad and Kiev had been taken. Hitler, however, was deathly afraid of following in the footsteps of Napoleon, who'd successfully taken Moscow in 1812 only to be lose his entire army when the Russian Empire refused to fall. Thus, Hitler had always held that taking Moscow wasn't really that important, and that economic prizes (especially in the Ukraine, Donbas, and Caucasus) were the real jugular veins of the Soviet Union. Not only would Stalin not be able to wage war without these resources, but German needed them desperately in her starving war machine was to fight an ever-growing global war into 1942 and beyond.

Thus, Hitler had torn up Operation Otto and Summary: By the end of August, German progress in insisted on a new plan, Barbarossa. This plan started out basically the same, but then planned to send the



Panzerbiitz, Barbarossa



Army Group South would not help against Moscow south to help von Kleist and von Rundstedt to encircle at all, but instead race southeast down the Dniepr river to prevent a Soviet withdrawal out of the Ukraine, all while making a mad dash toward the Donbas and Caucasus. Meanwhile, the reduction of Soviet forces in the Ukraine would be left to part of Army Group Center who, after turning south to do this, would have to turn 180 degrees and shuffle back north to finally mount some kind of attack against Moscow, presumably with help from some of the forces coming back down from Leningrad.

If this sounds confusing, you're not alone. Actually sketching out this plan results in a very "sloppy" map, and condemned the German forces, especially those in the center, to make a lot of lateral redeployments across hundreds of miles, usually in the teeth of the enemy. As we've said before, it was a plan that assumed the Soviets would already be numerically and morally broken by this point, and that the Wehrmacht would be able to dance all around the theater like they had in France and the Balkans.

Wrong. Yes, the Soviets had taken hideous losses, and still had a lot of very bloody lessons to learn in tactical and operational modern warfare. But they remained determined to lash out at the Germans at every opportunity, and as the Germans started pivoting left and right to start their redeployments, the Red Army was able to score some of their first real operational successes.

In August, the biggest of these would come at the Yelnia Salient, a little over sixty kilometers east of Smolensk. The fall of Smolensk had created a large salient of occupied territory pushing east, deeper into the Soviet Union. Early in August, Guderian and Hoth (always itching to cross the next river before the Soviets could set it up as a new defense barrier) had pushed forward out of the forward edge of the Smolensk bulge, and had secured a small bridgehead over the Desna River at the town of Yelnia.

Group Center's HQ at Borisov on August 4, and there and Terek Cossacks (from the south of Russia, starting informed Field Marshal von Bock that he'd be from the Black Sea and extending east of the Volga). temporarily losing both his panzer groups. would be detached north to help Hoepner and von Army divisions after the invasion, since Stalin was Leeb take Leningrad, while Guderian would be sent notoriously distrustful of nationalist ethnic groups

Kiev. With no significant tanks, von Bock's Army Group center would have to dig in on the defensive for perhaps six weeks.

Almost as if sensing this, the Soviets started hitting von Bock, and hard. In particular, his forward most position at the Yelnia Salient took a particularly harsh pounding as the Soviet 24th Army (General K. I. Rakutin) hammered Yelnia remorselessly. Every day fresh units were fed into a ceaseless succession of counterattacks. Guderian was soon suggested that since Army Group Center wasn't pushing forward anytime soon anyway, maybe they should pull out of the Yelnia Salient in favor of better ground around Smolensk. Hitler refused, citing that they'd need that bridgehead over the Desna River once the advance in the center resumed.

The Yelnia Battle will be reviewed in much greater detail (particularly its later stages) later in this PanzerBlitz series, since later situations will deal with these engagements specifically. For now, we'll take a closer look at one of the supporting operations launched by the Soviets a few dozen kilometers to the north. This was a massive cavalry incursion mounted by the Soviet 3rd Cavalry Corps, 29th Army, Western Front in the second half of August.

Despite being a moderately famous raid, details are surprisingly hard to come by in most of our usual sources. Everyone mentions it, but not many sites or references seem to have many details. Those that do discuss the raid are heavily soaked in heroic fervor written by amateurs who clearly have axes to grind.

What we do know is that the 3rd Cavalry Corps was made up of the 50th and 53rd Cavalry Divisions. The 45th Cavalry Division would be added later. We also know that these divisions were raised after the initial onslaught of Barbarossa since they are not included among the original nine cavalry divisions in the Red Army OOB as of June 22. Furthermore, other sites That's when Hitler stepped in. He flew to Army describe these divisions as being made up of Kuban Hoth It makes sense that such men were organized into Red



'anzerbiitz, Barbarossa

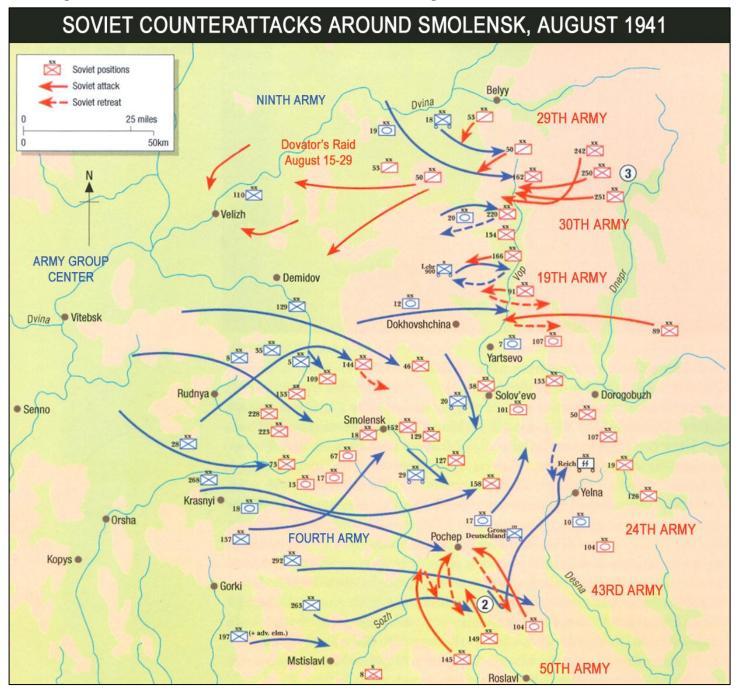


for Stalin's gulags. Many Cossacks fought for the Germans, and many even joined the Waffen SS. These particular Cossacks, however, had put their loyalty unmistakably with the Motherland. In fact, they'd do so well on this raid that the 50th and 53rd Cavalry Divisions would shortly be designated 3rd and 4th units to be honored with the "Guards" title.

The man in command was Colonel Lev M. Red Banner for bravery in the defensive battles along

like this. Indeed, Cossacks provided plenty of bodies had helped stall the 18th Motorized and 19th Panzer Divisions at Solovyov. His stature in the Red Army was especially unusual because of his peasant Jewish origin. As history grimly remembers, Stalin cared about as much for Jews as he did for Cossacks. Jews and Cossacks are hardly traditional friends, either. Yet here was a Jewish colonel, leading divisions of Guards Cavalry Divisions, among the very first Soviet Cossack cavalry in an army that treated Jews almost as badly as Nazi Germany.

In August, Colonel Dovator's divisions were Dovator. In July, he'd already won the Order of the reformed into a new, independent "Cavalry Group Dovator" and sent around the north wing of the the Dniepr north of Smolensk, where the his divisions German positions around Smolensk. Under Dovator's







command, this large mounted formation raided the engagement type along the Eastern Front, it may be a front, and were soon spreading havoc as much as 100 PanzerBlitz: Barbarossa goes forward. kilometers behind the front. Soviet maps on the RKKA website offer clues as to where Dovator made units (corps and division) his men encountered.

some 2,500 Germans, destroying nine tanks and 200 communication and supply. The captured heavy weapons that were eventually passed on to partisans. The OKH put a bounty of Dovator for 50,000 Reichmarks and raised special battle groups to track him down . . . to no avail. In ten days, his cavalry about 300 kilometers covered successfully breaking through back to friendly lines.

In September, Dovator was promoted to Major General, and as previously discussed, his divisions were upgraded to "Guards" status (3rd and 4th Guards Cavalry Divisions made up then Dovator's new 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps). During the battle of Moscow, this corps was instrumental in fending off German advances at Volokolamsk. Dovator, however, was finally killed in action near the outskirts of Ruza on December 19. He was reportedly cut down by machine gun fire while crawling towards a forward position to spot German units. Lev Dovator was posthumously given the tile Hero of the Soviet Union, and Zhukov himself is reported to have lamented that Dovator's death was a "grievous loss."

Originally, Situation 09 was Situation Design: supposed to depict the fighting in the Yelnia Salient, where the German XX Corps (Fourth Army, Army Group Center) was relentlessly hammered by the full force of the Soviet 24th Army (Western Front) until the Germans finally withdrew from this bridgehead over the Desna River. But basically this is a "massed Soviet tank-infantry assault on a thin German infantry line" scenario, and while this is certainly a common

enemy's rear, striking lines of communication. They little too common in PanzerBlitz. We'll certainly have broke through the German defenses on a narrow plenty of opportunity to run such battles as discussions of the Yelnia battlefield, a one-line footnote in our Osprey Publishing Operation his break behind German lines, and we know he spent Barbarossa; Army Group Center book mentioned this most of late August behind the German Ninth Army. massive cavalry operation. This became the first in a Cross-referencing dates and positions, we can then series of research breadcrumbs across at least twenty take a fairly solid guess as to what specific German websites that finally managed to cobble together enough data to build a viable situation. The decision For two weeks, Dovator's men carved a bloody was taken to run this one instead, since mass cavalry trail through the trackless forests and swamps, killing raids are much less frequent than classic Soviet waves of infantry and T-34s, particularly a cavalry raid that other vehicles, and tearing up German lines of has any information recorded about it at all. Thus, the Yelnia battle was moved back to Situation 10 (the closing engagements took place in September anyway, and so are better handled in Section Four of the series), in order to take what might be a unique opportunity to examine a unusual battle.

> Because this situation is meant to recreate a raid as opposed to a pitched battle, it offered the chance to introduce a few unusual features. Note how the Soviets can come in from any side of the map board, meant to represent the operational freedom of Cossack cavalry units ranging free through the Russian steppes, forest, and swamps.

> The Soviets are also given a morale of "C". Cossacks were certainly brave, but hardly known for their precise military discipline. If you think it's hard keeping a platoon of riflemen together under fire, try it when your men are all on horseback waving sabers over their heads.

Another improvement is the omission of the hated "Soviet activation roll" special rule. These are Cossacks, after all, they're hardly riding around with faulty radios, an



over-centralized command structure, and political commissars countersigning every operational order.

Some of the web sites dropped hints that Dovator made widespread use of his men in the dismounted cavalry role, which naturally hurts their tactical speed but greatly enhances durability since it's damned hard to "take cover" while on horseback. As the Soviet





player once said about the low cavalry DFs, "you can't basic slit trenches, foxholes, and sandbag checkpoints. ride a horse into a foxhole." These hints in the admittedly spotty historical record are why we have "infantry" units in the game like rifle, engineer, and recon platoons. Note that there are wagons for everything, however, since we're trying to represent a completely horse driven force almost a hundred miles in German-occupied territory.

In contrast, the Germans are portrayed rather more poorly than is typical for the Barbarossa series. This is because the 110th Infantry Division was a twelfthwave formation, hardly an elite outfit. Furthermore, their available forces are meant to represent the rear echelon of the division, not the front line. This is the back end of a division that's supposed to form the back end of the army . . . basically reservists, clerks, admin personnel, and occupation troops. This is the reason over half their base infantry force is made up

of security rather than rifle platoons. In particular, we know that the 110th Infantry had no cavalry in its recon battalion (as is typical for this type of formation), instead entirely made up of bicycles. This is just as well, since putting two or three German cavalry platoons up against twenty-seven platoons of mounted Cossacks would be just plain mean.





The maps themselves offered some unusual opportunities as well. We know that Dovator ran his cavalry through the thickest woods and marshes he could find, and the area north of Smolensk is rich in such terrain (Hoth's panzer group had a hell of a time crossing this ground earlier in August). So the use of two Board 1s is natural, "flattened" by implementing the "no hills or slopes" special rule. Another useful feature of Board 1 is how the road intersections are never in towns. Actually this feature has always seemed more than a little odd (the roads meet at random intervals in the wilderness, but the towns stand a few kilometers away almost like roadside inns), but for this situation it's perfect since it offers clear tactical objectives for a cavalry raid without sinking the game into a "clear the town hex" meat

Although it's assumed the German player will place intersection, there's certainly no rule commanding that he do so. But the point is that the Cossacks have to take



the intersections, not the towns, allowing for a fasterpaced game that doesn't automatically gravitate toward the same urban hexes over and over again.

Note the new rules on cavalry. In past games, cavalry seemed to move a little too fast, with no regards to any kind of terrain (almost like four-legged "super infantry"). The new rules on quick march, green hex sides, and slopes hopes to make cavalry movement a little more realistic. This isn't usually a problem for games like Panzer Leader or Arab-Israeli Wars, but in Russia cavalry never really went completely out of use even in the closing days of World War II. Note the special rule on Cossack cavalry charges. This may never actually be used, but just might provide a little "saber-swinging" anachronistic flavor.

Playtesting: One of the first things we noticed when setting up and starting this game was how well suited it would be for solitaire play. The Germans set up as best they can, then the Soviets rush on from whichever direction(s) they like. Basically, the game breaks down to how big a hole the Soviets can smash out of the wall the Germans have set up. Once play begins the German player really doesn't have that much to do. Because of his small forces and lack of transport, all his real decisions have to be made before Turn 1.

So how do the Germans set up? The initial impulse is to set up the six IPs on the six intersections to be defended. There's nothing wrong with this, just note that this is not required. Playtesting has shown that even with IPs, the intersections at 1FF8 (both north and south) are terribly vulnerable since they are in clear terrain, and thus susceptible to the "Cossack Cavalry Charge" special rule. One possible German deployment scheme would sacrifice these two intersections since they are all but impossible to hold anyway. Better to use those IPs (and forces that grinder. The German IPs are meant to portray some would presumably garrison them) back at more





intersections (1Q9 north and south) are harder to reach, close together (and thus potentially mutually supportive), and all but surrounded by woods. Plugging an extra two IPs in this thicket may well help the Germans hold the center.

one other IP in addition to the two in the center in sets this parameter on purpose so the game doesn't invariably sink into a central crunch every time). That intersection hexes. means the Germans have to hold 1J5 (either north or south) as well.

The Soviets, for their part, have a refreshing range of options, far more than is typical for a Barbarossa-The rigid commissar-style command era game. structure is replaced by the fluid, free-ranging, and fast-hitting rush of the cavalry charge. The problem is that horses don't react well to MG-42s or 2.0 cm flak cannon, and the Soviet player has to be careful not to let his losses get too hideous. Yes, they have 27 cavalry platoons, but these only have a 4 DF, perfect "decimation math" against the 4 AF of German HMG sections, 2.0 cm flak batteries, or even 7.5 cm infantry guns at close range. Also, four of these intersections sit in woods, and that's a +1 DRM in addition to the +2 for the IPs presumably guarding them. CAT or not, a +3 DRM of a six-sided die is nothing to sneeze at. In a word, don't let the size of the Soviet force or the freedom from activation rolls get to your head, these Cossacks definitely have their work cut out for them.

In the first game, the Germans set up in more or less a convention manner. There was one IP per intersection, with the "open" intersections more or less sacrificed as "speed bumps" mean to soak up at least one or two Soviet turns. The 1J5 intersections were garrisoned a little better, with security platoons backed up by ATGs. But the real defense was in the center, with the 1Q9 IPs heavily garrisoned. Between these two lurked the rest of the German infantry and bicycle force, ready to reinforce either threatened sector. Basically, the Germans were determined to hold onto the middle two, and basically just hoped that the clock would run out before the Soviets could overrun all the other four. Also, the German player

important IPs like the ones in the center. These two used the "reciprocal" layout of the game board (two inverted copies of Board 1) to set up interlocking fields of fire with artillery based in the two 1Z10 urban hexes. These guns could see and shoot against almost any approach to the 1Q9 hexes, and even offer some support to the 1J5 hexes. The town hexes would The problem is, the Germans have to hold at least provide additional defense, and hopefully make these positions tough for the Soviets to knock out. Even if order to win at least a marginal victory (the situation they did, the resources required to do so would be a welcome distraction from the real objective, the

> The Cossacks came on primarily from the north, smashing down with the bulk of the 37th and 43rd Cavalry Regiments to quickly overrun the intersection at "North" 1J5. The Germans tried to disrupt these attacks by using opportunity fire to disperse (rather than kill) larger numbers of cavalry counters, but the Soviets were just too strong. A supporting attack was also developed out of the southeast, mounted around the 12th Cavalry Regiment of the 53rd Cavalry Division. The "South" 1FF8 intersection folded just as quickly, and before they knew it the Germans had already lost two of the intersections.

> Deeper into the board's interior, however, things started to get sticky. Wagons carrying artillery, infantry, and flak units were picked off by longranged German guns. As Soviet cavalry made the rush across the open fields immediately north of the 1Q9 intersections, they came under the murderous artillery fire of the German 7.5 cm howitzer and one of the 2.0 cm flak batteries based in "West" Uschas. The howitzer in particular was doubled for half-range direct fire, sending many brave Cossack horses to the glue factory. Even the German bicycles were able to help, pedaling out to all the woods hexes surrounding the IP intersections (along with some empty wagons), dragging out the time it took for the Cossacks to really get a "donut of death" around the German positions. On more than one occasion, the 2 AF of a German bicycle unit was just enough to get a 4:1 on Soviet cavalry, and thus directly resulted in heavy Soviet casualties. "Remember what happened the last time you made fun of my bicycles," cracked the German player. "Respect the schwere-Schwinns!"

Nevertheless, the Cossack cavalry was soon able to



anzerbiitz, Bardarossa



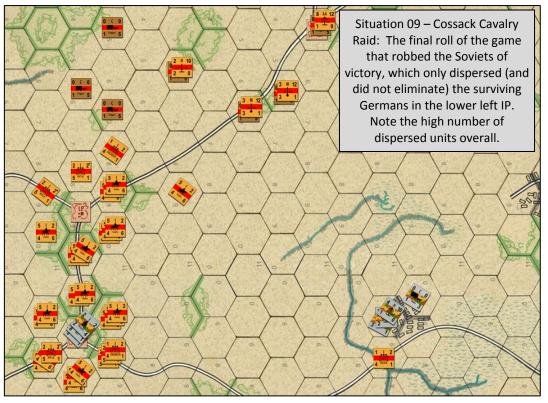
southern 1FF8 was soon able to roll up on the central result between a 1 and 4. They rolled a heartbreaking urban hex 1AA9. "Yes!" celebrated the Soviet player. able to limp away with a stolen marginal victory. "Sneak peeks, low blows!"

Soviets had "donuts of death" around both central from the corners, determined to overrun the four German IPs, triple-stacked with cavalry and even set outlying German intersection hexes. If they could do up with engineers (at least in the south). The Soviets managed to set up a 3:1 in the north, dispersing the Germans twice before finally catching a "DD" that center. The catch is that in order to do this, the Soviets killed them off and gave them the IP at north 1Q9. Now the Cossacks had three intersections, one more would give them the game.

It was not to be, although the Cossacks honestly deserved the win. On Turn 9 (the last real chance the Soviets had to kill the Germans since the turn sequence mandates that they have to wait until next turn to actually occupy the intersection, the Soviets massed 57 AF against 15 German DF, just missing the 4:1. There was an engineer in the stack, however,

surround the northern German IP at 1Q9, which also giving the Soviets a 4:1 anyway. Since the Germans meant that they were mercifully out of LOS of the were in an IP in woods, they had a net +1 to their German artillery in West Uschas. Furthermore, the DRM (-2 DRM for CAT, +2 DRM for IP, +1 IP for cavalry battle group that had wiped out the IP at woods). Thus, the Soviets won the game on any d6 German position from the south, facilitated by a 5. Thus, the Germans were only dispersed, and by the miracle CAT made by some infantry and recon skin of their teeth managed to hold on to the IP. With platoons on the Kubelwagen blocking the road at only three intersections taken, the Germans were thus

For the second (solitaire) game, the Soviets tried a Thus, it was only a matter of time before the different attack approach. This time they came in this, they could win the game without ever having to make a drive into that wasp nest in the German have to divide their forces at least three ways, giving up all the benefits of concentrated attack or local superiority of force. Alternatively, they can try to "domino" some of the intersections, such as hitting the easy ones in the open (northwest and southeast) before shifting up and down to hit the ones in the northeast and southwest. The tradeoff here, of course, is time. The Soviets *might* win without ever engaging the really heavy German defenses, but everything has to go like clockwork.



Of course, it doesn't. The Soviets open their attack with mounted drives out of the northwest and northeast, hoping to overrun the easy southeast interwith just section the dismounted cavalry (infantry) of the 37th and 43rd Regiments. Predictably, the easy northwest IP is emptied on Turn 1 and is occupied on Turn 2. The northeast IP at 1J5, however, holds on for an extra turn, not falling until Turn 3. Even worse is the south, where the

COSSACK CAVALRY RAID - VELIZH, RUSSIA (24 Aug 1941): By the end of August, German progress anzer

SITUATION 09

in the center of the line had been stopped, largely by shifting priorities in the German High Command. The Soviets were eager to hit back in any way they could before the German spearheads got moving again. One of the more successful attempts was made by the 3rd Cavalry Corps under Lev Dovator. Made of up Terek and Kuban Cossacks, they struck deep into the north flank of Army Group Center, penetrating about 100 kilometers into the rear of the German Ninth Army, and caused tremendous damage before breaking back

out again. Here, elements of the Soviet cavalry group engage rear-echelon units of





RUSSIAN FORCES

50th and 53rd Cavalry Divisions 3rd Cavalry Corps, 29th Army Western Front (Morale C)



the German 110th Infantry Division.

Vanguard, 37th and 43rd Cavalry Regiments, 50th Cavalry Division



FORCE B

Vanguard, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 53rd Cavalry Division



SETUP: The Germans set up first, anywhere on the board. Russian Force A enters from any edge of the board on Turn 1. Force B enters from any edge on Turn 3. Russians move first.





Rear Echelon, Infantry Regiment 254



Reserve Battery

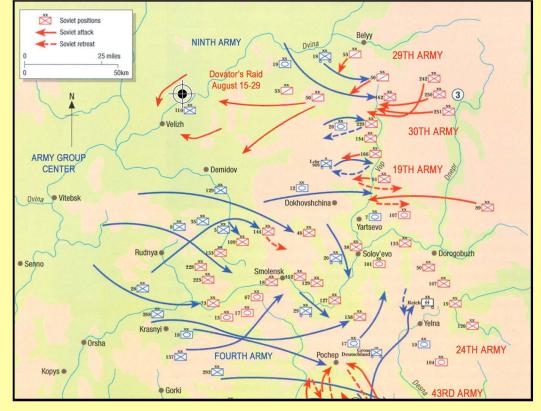
Artillery Regiment 120 Antiaircraft, Recon, Antitank Elements



VICTORY CONDITIONS: There are six road intersection hexes on the board. The Russians must take and hold as many as they can by the end of Turn 10.

- 1 hex: German DECISIVE
- 2 hexes: German TACTICAL
- 3 hexes: German MARGINAL
- 4 hexes: Russian MARGINAL
- 5 hexes: Russian TACTICAL
- 6 hexes: Russian DECISIVE

Russians move first Turn 3 5 7 2 6 10



SPECIAL RULES

- Russian Activation Rolls: These are Kuban and Terek Cossacks, born to the saddle and highly trained at this type of warfare. Russians make NO activation checks.
- Russian Tactics: Russian units may not use Split move and Fire.
- Flat Terrain: There are no hills or slopes here. Ignore all brown slope hexes, brown ridge hex sides, and orange hill top hexes.
- Revised Cavalry Movement: Cavalry spends 2 movement points to pass through a green hex side with no road, or through any brown slope hex. Cavalry does NOT get the double bonus for movement along roads. Cavarly CAN use the "quick time march" rule for 10 MF. All other normal quick time rules apply.
- Cossack Charges: A Cossack cavalry unit can shift the odds by +1 column when executing a CAT attack (like an engineer). They can ONLY do this if the defending unit is standing in a clear hex or a "clear" gully, and only if the defending unit is unarmored. Any woods, town, swamp, or slope terrain negates this effect. Only Cossack cavalry can make such a "charge."
- Bicycles are considered "trucks" for all movement rules. They cannot CAT or overrun. They spend 2 MF for clear terrain off-road. However, they only spend 4 MF to exit a gulley, and CAN move through green hex-sides.





Force B (12th Regiment, 53rd Cavalry Division) enters that the Soviets can reinforce this drive and occupy a third intersection by the end of Turn 4.

The rest of 12th Cavalry Regiment heads up from intersection. the southwest to engage the fourth German IP at "south" 1J5. The problem is that by now the Germans see what it happening, and are determined to keep this fourth (and decisive) IP from falling. As cavalry heads down from the northwest to help with this attack, some are caught by German artillery in West Uschas. Wagons are placed to delay the inevitable Soviet CAT through Turn 5, giving time for German infantry, HMGs, and even bicycles to haul ass down the southwest road to reinforce this position. The Soviets clean out the IP on Turn 6 only to have additional German units rush in and refill it. Of course, not all of these German units make it through the opportunity fire. They are pinned down and quickly murdered on that southwest road, but this just means less Soviet platoons are available for the immediate re-assault on 1J5 (Turns 7 and finally 8). The clock is running out for the Soviets, but eventually they take it on Turn 8 and "win" the game with a fourth intersection.

All is not well, however. The Germans have set up their artillery slightly differently this time, leaving wagons tucked under their big guns. allowed them to quickly load the 7.5 cm howitzer battery in Uschas, move it to the other side of the town, and open short-range direct fire on the north-

"easy" IP at 1FF8 actually hangs on against the weak cm flak (also within half range), the howitzers quickly infantry assault. It's not until the follow-on cavalry of kill the Soviet dismounted cavalry and in the movement phase immediately after the fire phase, send in a wagon with a CP to reoccupy the IP. Against all odds, the Germans have actually retaken an

> Not that it matters, already the powerful Soviet cavalry force to the north has converged on the German IP at intersection hex 1Q9 North. They never quite get a "donut of death," but do manage to get enough cavalry piled up to score a lucky "2" result on the 3:1 column, enough to wipe out the German garrison and take the intersection on Turn 9, thus taking a *fifth* intersection.

> All the same, the Soviets have also lost an intersection back at 1FF8 North (bringing their net score back down to four). Soviet cavalry is already rushing back to retake the hex, hardly a difficult prospect with only one German CP and a wagon (both units with DFs of 1). The problem is time. The Soviets easily destroy these German units on Turn 10 (taking more losses from the howitzer and flak batteries as they go), but because of the turn sequence, they cannot actually retake it until Turn 11, which of course never comes. The game shakes out as a Soviet marginal victory, although again, an empty IP stands surrounded by Soviets, the additional score denied them only by a quirk in the rules.

> Overall, since the Germans won a narrow marginal victory in the first game, and the Soviets won a marginal victory in the second game, the overall situation is chalked up as a draw.





Panzer Blitz, Barbarossa

Situations, Analysis, and Campaign Journal, PANZERBLITZ on the Eastern Front, By JAMES JOHNSON June - December 1941

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<u>PanzerBlitz, Barbarossa</u>



SECTION FOUR SEPTEMBER, 1941 NEW DIRECTIONS

For better or worse, the focus of Operation Barbarossa has shifted in dangerous new directions. The great drive on Moscow has been suspended, diverted instead toward Leningrad in the north and Kiev in the south. As for the Soviets, virtually their entire prewar army has been annihilated. What they have left has largely been wrenched into existence since June 22. *Still* the Soviets are raising more armies, locked in a frantic race to put fresh forces in the field faster than the Germans can destroy them.

It is the destruction of these new armies, combined with the capture of economic assets in the south, that commands Hitler's fretful attention as summer turns to autumn. But as the Germans pause to make these fateful pivots, the Soviets squander the opportunity to rebuild solid defenses. Instead they burn through their dwindling reserves in desperate counterattacks and hopeless "stand and die" defensive actions. Yet this is the doctrine that will finally force Barbarossa to swallow its first large-scale setback . . . even as the Soviets also suffer the largest battlefield defeat in the history of human warfare.

Situation 10 Barbarossa's First Reverse The Yelnia Salient 06 September, 1941

Summary: After the encirclement of Smolensk, the panzer spearheads of Hoth and Guderian again surged eastward to capture a small bridgehead over the Desna River at the village of Yelnia. Even after the panzers were diverted to their new missions at Leningrad and Kiev, German infantry were ordered to hold this exposed forward position, which would be needed when the drive on Moscow resumed. The Soviets hammered this salient relentlessly, finally forcing the Germans into the first operational-scale withdrawal in Russia. Here, the spearhead of the Soviet 102nd Tank Division (24th Army) drives hard

into the seam between the German 78th Infantry Division (XX Corps) and 137th Infantry Division (IX Corps), along the northern shoulder of the salient.

Background: By the beginning of September, all debate in the OKH about the direction of Barbarossa had been conclusively ended. As discussed in previous sections, Hitler had personally stepped in and realigned the priorities of the invasion. Blitzing down the great "land bridge" of central Russia through Minsk, Smolensk, Vyazma, and finally Moscow was no longer the central focus of the campaign. Then again, depending on how one interprets the actual Barbarossa plan, it may never have been the priority in the first place (hence the switch from the earlier Operation Otto). Instead, the Führer had declared that destruction of large Soviet armies still holding out in the north and south, the capture of Leningrad, and the seizure of rich economic prizes in the Ukraine and Caucasus were the targeted objectives. Moscow could wait . . . and that was final.

Up until now, vague priorities and contingencies in the Barbarossa plan had allowed some German commanders like Guderian and Hoth to hope that Moscow could be taken in *conjunction* with these other objectives, but such ideas were only viable in the face of a truly shattered Soviet defense. The Soviets however, had not "come crashing down" as Hitler had predicted, no matter how hard his army had "kicked in the front door." Stubborn Red Army resistance and the continuous arrival of fresh reserves had forced the Germans to choose their targets, and Hitler's choices naturally won the argument. Guderian's panzer group was diverted southeast, through Rosavl, then Starodub, and finally deep into the Ukraine behind Kiev. Hoth's panzer group, meanwhile, was turned northward to help Hoepner and von Leeb with the encirclement and (it was hoped) the capture of Leningrad.

Thus bereft of both his panzer groups, the helpless Field-Marshal von Bock was forced to shift his Army Group Center over to the defensive. Once the messes had been cleared up to the north and south, he was promised, Hoth and Guderian would return for a smashing central drive once again toward Moscow.





battlefields in the north and south didn't mean the fighting had died down in the center. Indeed, if the Battle of Smolensk was "over," someone had forgotten to tell the Soviets. Despite the bloody failure of two great counteroffensives, Zhukov was already feeling the heat from STAVKA to mount a the central highway that led straight to Moscow like a spear aimed at the nation's heart. By the end of August, even as the panzers left this sector for their new missions . . . the Soviets completed their reorganization for one more titanic shove straight back at the German center.

The shape of the line was generally in a "double salient." First, the encirclement of Smolensk and the liquidation of the subsequent pocket had developed a threateningly east toward Moscow. Additionally, German tanks had raced even further east to secure a bridgehead over the next river obstacle (the River Desna) at the small town of Yelnia. This position formed a smaller salient "atop" the Smolensk bulge, presented the Soviets with an irresistible target. Guderian actually suggested that the Germans give up the salient since they were postponing the drive on Moscow and so didn't need a bridgehead over the Desna anyway. But he was refused, Hitler almost never condoned a retreat and was loathe to pay for the same ground twice. Soon enough, he argued, the push on Moscow would be resumed, and the Yelnia bridgehead would be needed as a jump-off point.

The Soviet attack would be aimed not only at the Yelnia salient, but the whole Smolensk region. Accordingly, the assault would be huge, built around three general sectors.

In the north, the Western Front's 16th, 19th, and 20th Armies would shove through Yartsevo, collapsing the northern shoulder of the Smolensk bulge. Admittedly, these armies were vastly understrength, the 20th Army in particular was little more than a of constant fighting, not to mention walking across the collection of survivors from the fall of Smolensk.

But just because the panzers had left for their new (reinforced and cannibalized from the shattered remnants of the former Central Front) would strike northwest through Rosavl. They would smash clean through Guderian as he tried to pivot toward the Ukraine, then collapse the southern shoulder of the Smolensk Bulge.

In the center would come the greatly-reinforced third attack at the end of August. Smolensk was just 24th Army under Major-General K. I. Rakutin. Now too important for the Soviets, it was the beginning of loaded with no less than ten divisions, including the brand-new 102nd and 105th Tank Divisions, the 24th Army would pinch off the smaller Yelnia salient from the north and south, thus "biting a hole" in the front of the Smolensk bulge. Rushing through the breach and re-crossing the Desna, the 24th Army would then link up with the aforementioned spearheads of the Western and Bryansk fronts and slash into Smolensk from three sides.

The plan, of course, didn't work. Things were large, shallow bulge in the German line, pushing especially bad in the south, where General Eremenko's Bryansk Front collided more or less headon with Guderian, who was trying to get to the Ukraine. Not many of Eremenko's formations survived the encounter. Not only did this shatter any hope for a southern arm of the Smolensk counterlike a cherry on a sideways cake. This position offensive, but it also annihilated any meaningful Soviet defenses of the north Ukraine. As we will see later, this was the first disastrous step toward the eventual encirclement of Kiev.

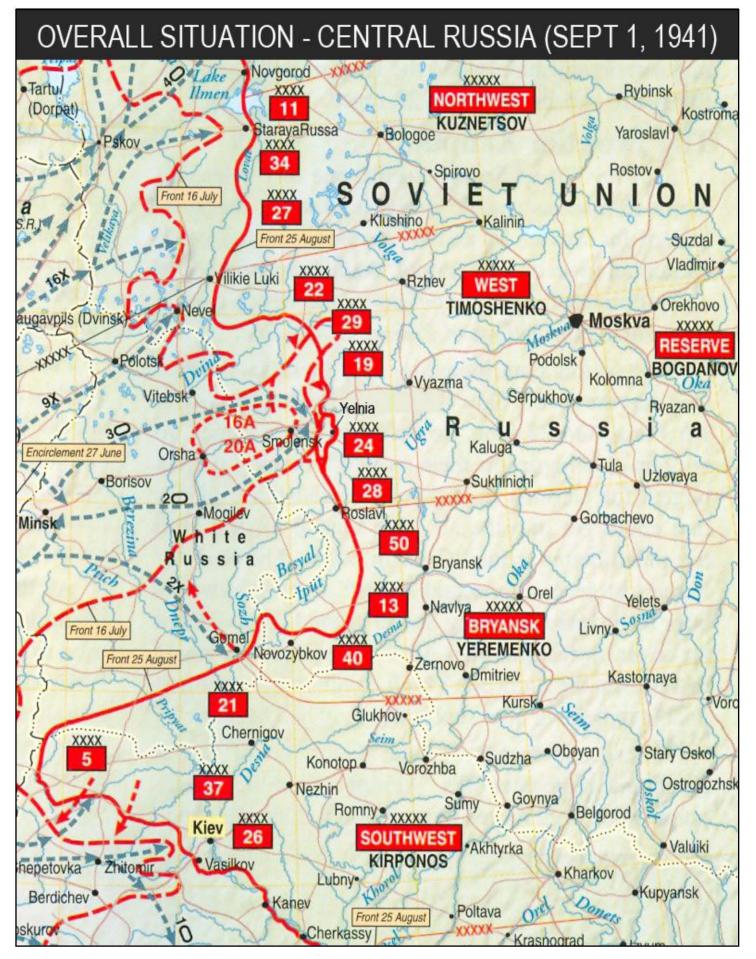
> Things went slightly better in the north. There was a gap pushed open momentarily in the German line (through which Lev Dovator's cavalry raid rushed, see Situation 09). But Soviet progress never got far enough for these units to event participate in the overall assault on Smolensk.

In the center, however, Rakutin's 24th Army performed relatively well against the exposed German positions at Yelnia. Here, just five German divisions struggled to hold the bridgehead over the Desna River against the ten divisions attacking them. True, the Germans were better equipped and enjoying the natural advantages of defense, but the majority of these units were badly worn after almost two months Soviet Union. Furthermore, these Germans had just To the south, the newly-formed Bryansk Front weathered three weeks of constant Soviet counter-



PanzerBlitz, Barbarossa









assaults, and had largely destroyed everything sent attack. against them. These ten Soviet divisions, meanwhile, were by and large fresh formations. Yet another German disadvantage was the bad defensive quality of the ground. The Yelnia bridgehead was always regarded a temporary position, to be used as a jumpoff point for further advances, it was hardly chosen as a good spot to make a stand. There are far too many woods here, giving an attacker plenty of cover to make an approach.

Taking a look at RKKA maps, one last German weakness becomes apparent, at least along the northern shoulder of the salient. The line here was held by two different corps. To the German left, the IX Corps held the line to the north and west, and the XX Corps to the south and east on the right. As fate would have it, one of Rakutin's spearheads (led by the 102nd Tank Division) would smash headlong right into this corps boundary.

The southern arm of Rakutin's 24th Army was also enjoying a measure of success . . . slow, bloody, and painful success, but success all the same. The 106th Mechanized Division and 120th Rifle Division soon broke through along the south shoulder, and the Yelnia salient began to narrow. Night attacks became common, there were even parachute drops behind German lines, The Soviets committed artillery and even air support, heedless of the cost, determined to hurl in every possible resource.

Meanwhile, although the larger supporting Soviet attacks to the north and south were coming to grief, at least they were exerting enough pressure to prevent the Germans from reinforcing the hot spot in the center. Elements of the Germans XX Corps launched repeated counterattacks, but Field Marshal von Bock could read the writing on the wall. Soon he had no choice but to order his forces in the Yelnia bridgehead to conduct a fighting withdrawal back across the Desna River. Rakutin pressed his advantage, crossing the river and plunging westward toward Smolensk. His forward elements would advance a further fifteen kilometers until finally running into prepared German defenses behind the smaller Ustrom and Striana Rivers. Finally the Soviets were stopped, and Zhukov secured permission from STAVKA to suspend the

Overall, the Soviet High Command was far from pleased. Despite the success of Rakutin's 24th Army in the center, the larger attacks in the north and south had failed miserably. The Soviets came nowhere close to retaking Smolensk, their original objective. Furthermore, as we've discussed, the virtual selfdestruction of Eremenko's Bryansk Front in the south had all but torn open the northern door to the Ukraine. Overall, the Soviets were in far worse shape than when they'd started. Even the "success" at Yelnia had come at a hideous cost. In all, 103,200 men had been committed to the fight. Out of this force, 10,701 had been killed or captured and 21,1520 wounded for a total loss rate of over 30%. Even for a "successful" Soviet attack lasting just eight days, this was excessive.

Nevertheless, the Germans had been forced into their first operation-scale withdrawal since the start of Barbarossa. While small slivers of ground had been given up for a day or two here and there, usually just by one or two division (examples include Manstein's 8th Panzer Division at Soltsy and von Kleist's vanguard at the fateful Battle of Dubno), never had whole German corps been thrown back across river, giving up bridgeheads and coughing up dozens of kilometers . . . more or less permanently.

Situation Design: In an effort to keep our *Barbarossa* series from sinking into stereotype and repetition, situation designs have tried to explore different dimensions of the campaign. Wherever I could, I've tried to avoid the "classic" Eastern Front battle type of a massive Soviet mixed armor/infantry force, backed up by massive artillery, smashing into a thin but (hopefully) flexible German defense. We've had river crossings, cavalry raids, Finnish infantry assaults, breakouts from encirclement, and head-on meeting engagements. But sooner or later, you've got to do a "thin gray line bending before the red sea" scenario because so many of the historical engagements follow this general model. As a designer, your only option then is to find and highlight an unusual odd feature of the battle to set your game apart from the countless "Situation 13s" floating around out there. Barbarossa Situation 10, that feature is unit boundaries.





northern arm bit into the German line, right where the right flank of the IX Corps' 137th Infantry Division butted up against the left flank of the XX Corps' 78th Infantry Division. As such, we have a fairly unusual (but by no means unique) chance to explore what effects unit boundaries can have on the defender, and spots" to an attacking force.

At first glance, the odds seem highly stacked in favor of the Germans, especially in regards to artillery. Only when one considers the set up and special rules does it become apparent that the Germans are virtually fighting two separate battles here, and it's the Soviets who have the choice of which battle will actually take place. For the Germans, the name of the game is mitigation of this inherent weakness. If they can do it, their other strengths (artillery firepower, natural defensive advantage, better troops, etc.) will almost certainly hand them the game. If they don't, the Soviets will either kick in the left or right door and their hands.

One must always remember that real-life commanders don't get to sit in dining rooms over a

PanzerBlitz map board. Especially when on defense, they're standing over maps with their units marked out on them, and no idea of enemy units or friendly units that might fall under a different chain of command. The artillery plotting officer of the 78th Infantry Division has no idea where the forward positions of the 137th are. Even if their officers have





exchanged this information (unlikely since their chains of command don't merge until army level), this data goes out the window when the shooting starts and units start to move. Sure, the commanders and staff officers of a division or regiment hopefully know where their own people are, and ensure that their artillery doesn't land on them. But when the takes someone from the army-level command staff to quality definitely suffers.

Historically, this seems to be where Rakutin's tell you who's there. Direct friendly-fire incidents are common enough, when all you see is shapes moving between distant houses or trees and you know it's not "any of your people." Indirect fire becomes all but impossible.

There are other problems as well, without even going into the issues of unit boundaries in the attack, why such sectors were always considered prime "soft unit rivalries, fighting over roads or supplies, conflicting missions, or mishaps in communication. If the next unit answers to a different chain of command, you'd best not stumble into their sector of front because they might well open fire on you. Where are the other unit's machine gun fire lanes? Pre-sited artillery boxes? Minefields?

> Of course, in PanzerBlitz you get a "God's eye" view of the battlefield, and so these constraints and conditions must be artificially imposed via special rules like those found in Situation 10.

Just as the Germans must find a way to mitigate this weakness, the Soviet player must find the best way to exploit it. If he just sends his division down leave the other half of the German house sitting on the middle of the board, heedlessly engaging both German divisions, he's throwing away the only advantage he has and deserves what will probably happen to him.

> The map was carefully chosen. We know from sources that the ground was horrible for the Germans, and ("the terrain spelt the end for many a landser," according to one reference). The Yelnia bridgehead was meant to be a springboard for further German offensives, they did not know they would be stalled due to shifting priorities at OKH and thus subjected to Soviet counterattack. For this purpose, Board 7 is set up in the north to provide the Soviets with plenty of cover for their approach, while the Germans lay open on the murderously-open Board 3. The game board is a complete travesty from the defender's terrain point of view, and it is meant to be exactly that.

Note the different morale levels and general level of equipment employed by the two German divisions. Again, this is intentional. The 78th was a "second wave" division, and thus regarded as among the more company in the next tree line answers to a different solid formations in the German line. The 137th, on the regiment, divisional, and corps command structure, it other hand, is an "eleventh wave" division, and so the





As far as the Soviets go, their equipment is steadily improving. T-26Bs and BT-7s are slowly giving way

to T-34s and KV-1s. The process, however, is a slow one. thing players may notice is that the number of platoons in Soviets units is slowly going down as the Red Army



reorganizes itself (under fire, no less) into smaller formations that are easier for their inexperienced officer corps to handle on a mobile battlefield.

Other shortcomings, however, remain stubbornly in place. Yes, more T-34s and KV-1s were coming into the line, but the quality of their manufacture was actually decreasing from pre-war models. because the factories that produced these machines were in the process of being relocated to the Urals, and ancillary equipment like radios, fume evacuators, machine guns, and vision periscopes were all seeing a nosedive in production quality. Stackpole Publishing's T-34 in Action is comprised entirely of accounts of Red Army tank veterans, all of whom lament the quality of these less-obvious but vital components. Even the hatch design was simplified to a less-suitable layout, which might seem like a small detail until you and three other men have to abandon a tank in seconds because it was just hit by a German antitank round.

Other weaknesses were more basic, like the continuing lack of experience displayed by the average Red Army recruit. As bad as this problem had been on June 22, at least that army had been trained for months, if not years. That army was largely gone, replaced by men who six weeks before had been working in the fields or factories. Red Army officers (those who survived the Germans and Stalin's need for scapegoats) were learning fast, but the bedrock of the army was getting killed or captured just as fast they could learn, leading to an actual regress in the average tactical skills of the private soldier.

Suffice it to say that these two basic trends are the reasons that Soviet forces in the Barbarossa series remain set at Morale D, with the 1-4 activation checks. True, "grass roots" improvements in the Red Army's training, experience, doctrine, and equipment will almost always a bad bet, but in this case it's even

eventually bring about a much more level playing field (particularly as reflected by our Liberation-edition counters). But those changes would take a very long time, and won't even begin to assert themselves until much later in the Barbarossa series.

Playtesting: Two things become immediately apparent when setting up and playing the first couple of turns of this situation. For the Germans, the use of the town of Opustoschenia is positively critical to their overall defense. For the Soviets, they have one fundamental choice to make, whether to strike in the east against a stronger opponent (but through easier terrain), or in the west against the weaker opponent (but through tougher terrain).

First, the Germans have to set up. Note how the setup rules have their forces split not quite evenly between the two halves of the board. To the east, the 78th Infantry (Force A) gets to use hex row Q. This was originally done just so the corps boundary wouldn't crease right through the center of Opustoschenia, but this turns out to be the critical feature in the German defense. Not only are these town hexes the only tactical cover in the center of Board 3, but it also allows the Germans to set up some of their bigger guns in the direct fire role to shoot either east or west, depending on where in the town they are deployed. This is the only way the Germans have any chance of using most of their artillery (since indirect fire into the opposite side of the board is strictly prohibited). A good idea for the Germans is to set up their big guns on both flanks of the town, overtop of empty wagons or trucks. This way they can shift that critical one hex either direction, depending on which way the Soviets lunge. With this done, a lot of the lighter German artillery (antitank guns, mortars, smaller infantry guns) should be set up with eyes on the extreme flanks. These are the most likely avenues for Soviet breakthrough attempts. If the Soviets don't conform to this expectation, this will only mean that they have been channelized toward the bigger guns in the center. Either way, the Germans should get some reasonably good cracks in.

As for the Soviets, they have the usual three basic avenues of attack-left, right, or center. The center is



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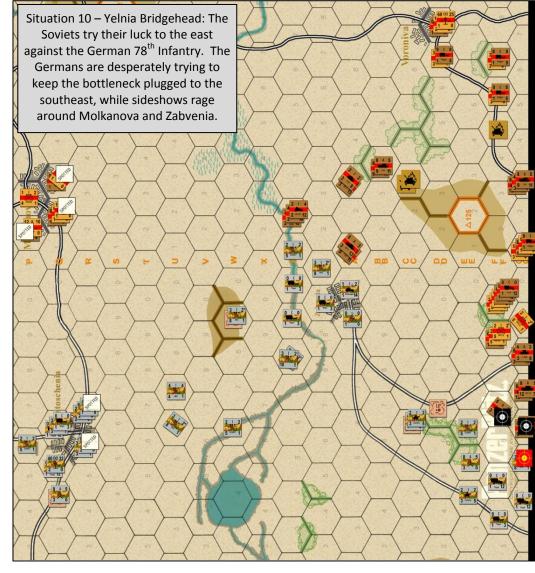
more so because of the way the special rules force a German separation, not just in deployment but also reflexive mobility and even direct firepower. The only reason the Soviets could possibly want to blitz down the middle would be to try and win the game by piling up German kills rather than escaped Soviet units. This probably won't work because the German center is probably well-fortified by the town hexes of Opustoschenia, and also because the Soviets just won't get enough kills to fulfill his victory conditions.

This leaves the left or the right. On the Soviet left, they're up against the better-armed, more numerous, and better trained 78th Infantry Division. However, the terrain is much friendlier here. Between the Voroniva road, Hill 125, and the tree line running from 7DD6 to 7DD4, there is lots of good cover and a quick transport route to get into the extreme east edge of Board 3. Even once on Board 3, there are scraps of

woods to give the Soviets some partial cover from the German guns presumably staged to the west.

On the other hand, the ground facing the Soviet right is held by the weaker, thinner, and less resilient 137th Infantry Division. But here the terrain is not nearly so accommodating. Ridge 118-106-112 provides plenty of cover, eventually the Soviets will have to *cross* that ridge. The "looped" gully running from 7E2 to 3B10 creates a "double gully" that will have to be crossed twice, especially troublesome for Soviet trucks. Once the Soviets get onto Board 3, there's no real cover to be had west of Hill 107, while German guns in Grabyosh will likely be having a field day.

In the first game, the Soviets made a shove at the western end of the board, against the German 137th. The going was tough for the Soviets, largely because of catastrophically failed activation checks trying to get on the board. However, the Germans had not properly deployed their biggest guns, the 15.0 cm howitzers, and so they barely got to fire all game. The big German mortars and infantry guns were also set up poorly, and "triple-stacked" with other immobile units so they would never be able to move unless something was sacrificed (intentionally destroyed via stacking violation in order to get a truck or wagon in the hex). The German 137th fought very well, making a very nice account of itself despite being the "weaker" German force. As for the 78th, their poor deployment meant that they were largely unable to get into the battle at all. The Soviets set up some of their bigger guns in Shpaga and Kharavyets, which







size of the guns in question (one 122mm IG battery Soviet breakout.

German units and getting 5 tank platoons off the south edge of the board for a total of 19 points.

The game was then played again, but this time the Soviets made their push down the eastern side of the board, tangling with the German 78th Infantry. Immediately the Soviets had something of a better time of it, with better activation rolls and a much "friendlier" board in the way of roads and covering terrain. For their part, however, the Germans had deployed their artillery differently, learning from their mistakes in the previous game. As things got going, however, it seemed apparent that the Germans had simply exchanged their old mistakes for new ones as far as their big guns were concerned.

At the start of the game, Soviet activation rolls were positively epic. Except for some of their light artillery (basically useless units like .50 cal AA and 76.2mm infantry guns), almost everything came on the board right on schedule. The Soviets set up their big indirect artillery base in Voroniva, and managed to quickly unload most of their guns thanks to more good activation rolls. The direct-fire guns (37mm AA and 122mm howitzers) set up in Molkanova, which was a good spot since the Germans set up many of their big crushers too far forward (as opposed to last time, when they were set up too far out of the way). Sure, the German artillery base landed some great fire missions on the advancing Soviets, but they were instantly spotted in the front hexes of Opustoschenia and quickly erased from the face of the earth by big Soviet counterbattery fire out of Voroniva.

Another mistake the Germans made was to underestimate just how dangerous that far eastern corridor really is. This is a shame, because it really is easy to close down, assuming the Germans gave even one or two solid units in position. But they didn't, and the Germans spent most of the game playing

took a while because of bad activation checks and the catch-up in this area. Trucks and wagons were used to plug up chokepoints like 3FF6-3GG6. The Soviets didn't get deployed and ready to fire until Turn 8!). overran these positions easily enough (led by T-34s But once they finally got to work, they opened up a and KV-1s), but by standing still for one round they pathway through the town hexes of Grabyosh and the only got set up for big German artillery missions surrounding woods to clear the way for a partial landing next round. One German 5.0 cm PaK-37 antitank gun in woods hex 3EE5 pinged away In the end, the Soviets just missed a win, killing 14 forlornly at T-34s and KV-1s, but couldn't score a hit even at point blank range. Such was the case during Barbarossa, after all.

> The Germans had some things go their way, though. In what's gotta be some kind of record for the longest direct-fire shot ever, a German 7.5 cm howitzer dropped opportunity fire on Soviet BT-7s trying to climb slope hex 7CC3 . . . firing all the way from Grabyosh town hex 3D5 (25 hexes on direct fire). The Germans also got the artillery batteries of the 137th Infantry involved when the Soviets set up some of their infantry guns on the western side of Molkanova, and followed up with an infantry push that actually took half of that town and CATdestroyed some of the Soviet artillery.

> Another German success story was their 15.0 cm mortar battery, set up on the eastern side of Opustoschenia. After killing plenty of Soviet trucks, light guns, infantry, and even a few T-26Bs, these mortars came under fire from Soviet artillery. But despite the 4:1 odds, the Soviets couldn't kill this unit, and it kept making rally checks. Kubelwagen snuck around to a woods hex south of Voroniva to spot the Soviet guns, and these same German mortars suppressed and then destroyed the Soviet batteries to finally win fire superiority. Also, German infantry concentrated in Opustoschenia and on the reverse slope of Ridge 3V8-3V10 managed to force-march east over the Board 3 gully, through Zabvenia, and finally into the rear of Soviet units who couldn't get off the board in time thanks to a sudden rash of truly abysmal activation rolls.

> In the end, however, it wasn't enough. Once the Soviets opened the floodgates along the easternmost two hex rows of the board, they literally poured through and raced off the board. In the end, they killed 15 German units (one more than last time), but their real money was on the breakthrough. They got

Panzert

SITUATION 10

BARBAROSSA'S FIRST REVERSE - THE YELNIA BRIDGEHEAD (06 Sep 1941): After the encirclement of Smolensk, the spearheads of Hoth and Guderian again surged east to capture a small bridgehead over the Desna River at the village of Yelnia. But after the panzers were diverted to their new

missions at Leningrad and Kiev, German infantry were ordered to hold this exposed forward position, which would be needed when the drive on Moscow was resumed. The Soviets hammered this salient relentlessly, finally forcing the Germans into the first operational-scale withdrawal in Russia. Here, the Soviet 102nd Tank Division drives hard into the seam between the German 78th Infantry Division (XX Corps) and 137th Infantry Division (IX Corps), along the northern shoulder of the salient.





RUSSIAN FORCES

Vanguard, 102nd Tank Division 24th Army, Western Front Western Front (Morale D)



Main Body, 205th Tank Regiment

A 5 8 A 5 5 A 3 4 A 3

Lead Batteries. 102nd Artillery Regiment

60 (H) 25 12 H 10 0 - 0 0 C 0 0 C 0

Vanguard, 102nd Motorized Rifle Battalion



Elements, 102nd

Antiaircraft Battalion 102nd Reconnaissance Battalion





VICTORY CONDITIONS: Russians get one point for each German unit destroyed, plus every Russian combat unit that breaks through off the south edge of the board.

- 10 or less: German DECISIVE
- 11-15 pts: German TACTICAL
- 16-20 pts: German MARGINAL
- 21-25 pts: Russian MARGINAL
- 26-30 pts: Russian TACTICAL
- 31+ pts: Russian DECISIVE

SETUP: German Force A sets up on Board 3, between hex rows Q and GG (inclusive). German Force B sets up on Board 3, between hex rows A and P, inclusive. Russians enter on Turn 1 from the north side of the board, Russians move first.



JEL GERMAN FORCES

78th and 137th Infantry Divisions XX and IX Corps, Fourth Army Army Group Center (Morale B, C)



FORCE A (78th Infantry Division - Morale B)

Elements, Infantry Regiment 215



Batteries, Artillery Regiment 178





Elements, Recon Battalion 178





FORCE B (137th Infantry Division - Morale C) Right Wing, Infantry Regiment 449



Batteries, Artillery Regiment 137



Elements, AT and AA **Battalion 137**



Elements, Recon

Russians move first Turn

4

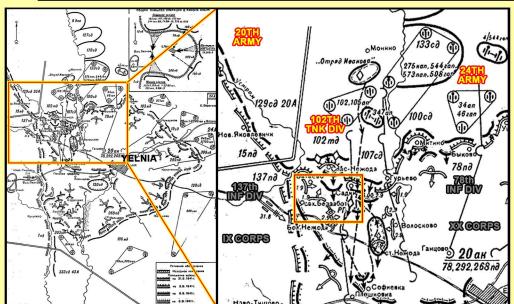
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6

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3

10



SPECIAL RULES

- All "Barbarossa" Special Rules for the Russians remain in effect: activation rolls (1-4), mandatory stacking for Russian tank companies, no Russian split move and fire.
- Low Hills and Slopes: Do not halve attack factors for "uphill" direct fire. All other terrain rules apply.
- Unit Boundaries: No unit from Force A can move west of row Q, and no unit from Force B can move east of row P.
- Also, no indirect fire missions executed by Force A units can ever land move west of row Q, and no indirect fire missions executed by Force B can land east of row P.
- Finally, units of Force A cannot spot for units in Force B, and vice-versa. Units can direct-fire into the other hanlf of the board only if the target unit unit is spotted from the shooter's side of the board. Basically, the two German division must fight two separate battles.





no less than 10 units off the south edge of the board (double last score) for a total of 25 points, just missing the tactical victory. Lucky rolls with some artillery missions, bad German artillery deployment (again), and some awesome Soviet activation rolls (at least at the beginning) made the difference. Also, the German player didn't really appreciate just how vulnerable that extreme eastern section of the game board really was, and never really managed to set up an effective blocking force in front of it.

+1 point margin, while the Soviet marginal was won by a +4 point margin. Thus, the overall game is chalked up as a Soviet marginal victory.

Situation 11 Kleist Hooks Across the Dniepr – Ghlobyno, Ukraine **12 September, 1941**

Summary: By the end of August, the German focus of Barbarossa had shifted to the Ukraine and the Battle for Kiev was fully underway. As part of what would become the largest encirclement in military history, Army Group South drove northeast toward the Dniepr to threaten the southern flank of the Red Army's Southwest Front. By the first week of September, three German infantry corps had units across the river at Kremenchug and on September 11, the tanks of Panzer Group "Kleist" poured across to engage the Soviets the next morning. Here, General Hans Hube's 16th Panzer Division lashes out of the Kremenchug Bridgehead, smashing into the Soviet 297th Rifle Division trying to contain the German threat.

Background: As summer began to melt into autumn, the situation along the Eastern Front was reaching several critical tipping points for both sides. For their part, the Germans had won crushing victories and carved huge spearheads across hundreds of miles of Soviet territory. At the same time, however, their army was beginning to come apart at the seams. Supplies, exhaustion, reserves, vehicle maintenance, all were starting to pose major problems. Of course

geography was also a problem, not only in depth of the battlefield, but also in breadth. The further east an army pushes into the Soviet Union, after all, the wider the battlefield grows, forcing divergence of effort and thinning occupational density.

The Soviets, meanwhile, had admittedly managed to maintain a coherent defense against the blitzkrieg for almost three months, something no other Allied army had managed to do so far. But this was only because the Soviets had thrown up fresh armies to In all, the German marginal victory was won by a replace those annihilated at the front. Yet even the Soviets couldn't build new armies *quite* as fast as the Germans were destroying them. Overall, STAVKA was losing this grim race. Furthermore, while Soviet reserves were deep, they weren't limitless. Sooner or later, the Soviets wouldn't be able to put new formations the field at all.

> To summarize more succinctly, by the beginning of September both sides were beginning to feel the real limitations of what their armies could withstand and achieve. They weren't quite at the end of their tether, but the generals could start to feel the tug, and it scared them.

> A further crisis point was time. Almost everyone has heard of the infamous Russian winter, but perhaps even more devastating from an operational perspective (at least to a mechanized army) was the Russian autumn. More specifically, this was the rainy season, the rasputitsa, when basically the entire country (and all its unpaved roads) vanished under a morass of mud.

> One final "fulcrum of fate" was emerging . . . this one from the physical shape of the Eastern Front's front line. While the Soviets had lost ground everywhere, but the rate of German advance had been much slower in some sectors than in others. These separations only grew more pronounced as the Germans pressed deeper into the Soviet Union, and soon the front had developed dangerous curves and open flanks. These irregularities presented grave threats and tempting opportunities to both armies.

> All these factors were lining up to present both sides with a very dangerous set of circumstances against which they felt compelled to make what might seem to be radical decisions. These decisions, made in



anzerbiitz, Barbarossa



mammoth battles of the Ukraine, alter the course of Barbarossa, and result in some of the most shattering events to ever befall an army in the history of warfare.

In previous sections of this journal, we have already discussed at length the decisions made by the OKH and Adolf Hitler about shifting the primary emphasis of Barbarossa away from Moscow and toward the resources of the Ukraine. While most historians point to Hitler's obsession with the economic value of the Ukraine, there were also operational reasons for this change in direction. From the very outset of Barbarossa, the Soviets of Marshal right into the Germans' hand. Marshal Kirponos, Kirponos' Southwest Front had resisted better than their comrades further north (it bears mentioning that the Southwest Front had better equipped divisions and more of them, of course). Thus, while the spearheads of Army Group Center had shoved beyond Smolensk, the defensive line of the Southwest Front in the Ukraine remained anchored on the Ukraine's capital city, Kiev.

Looking at the map, we see that Kiev is further west than Smolensk, resulting in a huge bulge of Soviet-held territory in the south, overshadowed by a shelf of German-occupied territory looming in the north. Thus, Army Group Center's southern flank was badly exposed to potential Soviet counterattacks out of the south, especially if these German forces made a further eastward push toward Moscow. Meanwhile, the Southwest Front would be vulnerable to German attacks out of the north, the threat growing more serious with every day the positions around Kiev were held. Historians usually criticize the German decision to turn south (away from Moscow and toward Kiev), but an objective view of the situation suggests this idea might not have been so bad. Both Army Group Center and the Southwest Front were faced with reciprocal threats, but it was the Germans who recognized the situation and made a decision based on changing circumstance. The Soviets, as we will see, remained adamant in their defense of Kiev, and paid what's probably the highest single butcher's bill in military history.

The Soviet Southwest Front was massive, definitely

late August and early September, would shape the including seven armies and almost a million men. The threat such a force would pose to the southern flank of any German thrust made at Moscow, combined with its own vulnerability to concentric German thrusts behind the great bend in the Dniepr River, further combined with Hitler's interest in the Ukraine's economic value, all made the choice an obvious one for the German high command. Besides, remember that the primary aim of Barbarossa from the outset had always been to destroy the Red Army before it could retreat deeper into the Soviet hinterland.

> On the Soviet side of the hill, Stalin was playing commander of the Southwest Front, and Zhukov, Stalin's most trusted commander, were both begging Stalin for permission to pull out of what was becoming a dangerously exposed bulge of immense proportions. Finally STAVKA (specifically, Marshals Shapashnikov and Vasilevsky) convinced Stalin to give partial permission on September 7, authorizing the "redeployment" of the Soviet 5th and 37th Armies to better defensive ground.

> But after that, But Stalin refused time and again. Too much ground had been lost already, too many resources, too many cities, too much population. Kiev was the third largest city in the Soviet Union and the capital of the largest Soviet republic besides Russia Officials in the United States and United Kingdom were advising Roosevelt and Churchill not to send aid to the Soviets since clearly they were already a beaten force. Stalin hoped that by drawing a line in the sand, he could show his allies, his enemies, and his people . . . that there was still hope.

Of course, the exact opposite happened. German spearheads swept north and south around Kiev like river currents around a rock, the Southwest Front's position grew ever more precarious. By the end of August, Guderian's panzer group turned south from Smolensk, smashing open the newly-formed Bryansk Front (discussed in Situation 11), and pushing deep behind the Southwest Front from the north. Matching the move, Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt (commander, Army Group South), pushed elements of his Seventeenth Army towards the lower the biggest single block of firepower Stalin still had, Dniepr. This line of advance soon hooked northeast

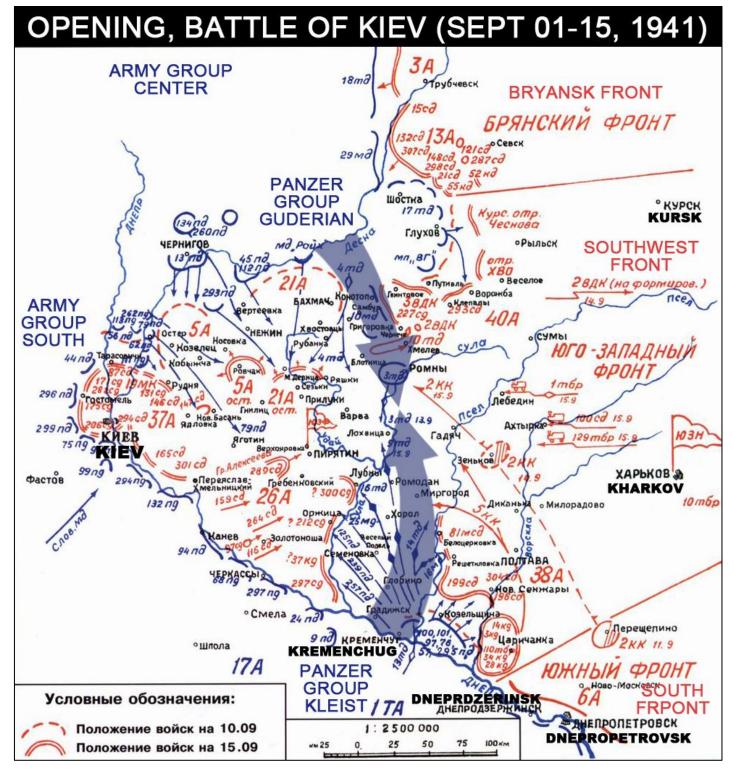


Panzerbiitz, Barbarossa



and reached the great river just south of the city of an encirclement could never happen. It was just too Kremenchug, thus threatening the Southwest Front's southern wing. Still Stalin refused permission for Kirponos to withdraw, despite the fact that his Southwest Front now had Panzer Groups Guderian and Kleist poised at both flanks, like two blades resting against both Soviet jugulars.

big. A Soviet "front," remember, is basically analogous to an army group, and Kirponos had the largest one in the Red Army. At least five Soviet more armies (the 40th, 21st, 37th, 26th, and 38th), over 700,000 men, still made up the great arc of Soviet defenses anchored on Kiev. The territory involved was almost But many Soviet commanders (at least Stalin and 80,000 square miles, a third of the Ukraine, an area his more timid cronies) simply refused to believe such larger than the state of Nebraska. Despite what had







happened at Minsk, Bialostok, and Uman (another Southwest Front . . . major encirclement in the far south, where the Soviet 12th, 6th, and 18th Armies had been lost to the German Seventeenth and Eleventh Armies along with the Rumanian Third Army), Stalin just couldn't imagine such a disaster happening on this scale. The German Army just didn't have the reach. Right?

Wrong. The key, once again, was in the panzer groups. Not only was each jaw of the German pincer built around an entire such formation, these were the largest of the panzer groups. Both Kleist and Guderian's forces could each easily dwarf those of Hoth and Hoepner put together. The Soviets may have been right about 90% of the German Army being unable to pull off such a maneuver. But this was precisely the elite and lavishly-equipped 10% that could. This wasn't luck on the German part (having the right forces in the right place at the right time). Remember that Guderian's whole panzer group had to be yanked out of its line of advance and moved hundreds of miles in a new direction, shutting down the whole advance of Army Group Center. This was a definitive choice and, right or wrong, shows what's possible when mobile forces are massed "blowtorch" attacks at a key places and times.

For Situation 11, we'll be looking at the southern hook of this pincer in its early stages, where elements of the Army Group South's 17th Army had just managed a sizable bridgehead across the Dniepr River near Kremenchug. This is the lower Dniepr, of course, where the massive river dwarfs the Mississippi in width, depth, and speed. Nevertheless, the Germans had eight divisions from the LII, LV, and XI Corps (actually drawn from the German Seventeenth, Sixth, Eleventh and Armies, respectively). Soviet commanders like Kirponos, Zhukov, and even highranking commissars like Nikita Khrushchev all recognized the dire threat this bridgehead posed. It was the perfect base from which to launch a massive armored attack northwards through the "back" Ukraine, behind the Dniepr and all of the Southwest Front. Guderian's monstrous spearhead had already gutted Eremenko's Bryansk Front to the north, and was coming down like the sword of Ares. If the two panzer groups linked up behind the Soviets of the

Guderian's counterpart in Army Group South, Colonel-General Ewald von Kliest, was already working on making this happen. He had orders from his boss, Field Marshal von Rundstedt Bock, to get his tanks over the Dniepr bridges (some 2,000 meters long, set up by the aforementioned German infantry divisions) and set up a northward blitz through the Soviet backfield. The objective was to link up with Guderian somewhere around Lokhvitsa. The ground was carefully chosen, since it would allow the Germans to use the Dniepr and Sula rivers to help block expected breakout attempts, thus turning these rivers from potential Soviet bulwarks into the very cords with which the Germans would strangle them.

On the night of September 11, in the midst of a driving rainstorm, Kleist's part of the plan was already in motion. Under Major General Hans Hube, the 16th Panzer Division (XLVIII Motorized Corps) started crossing the river. They finished the following morning, and quickly massed for an attack against the Soviet infantry divisions of the 38th Army, trying to contain the German bridgehead. The blow would fall on the 297th Rifle Division, which quickly came apart under the overpowering German onslaught. To make matters worse, Kleist was already pushing elements of his other two motorized corps (the 14th Panzer Division of III Motorized Corps and the 9th Panzer Division of the XIV Motorized Corps) through the breach. By the end of September 13, there was a corridor of steel some twenty kilometers wide slashing northwards toward their objective, all while Guderian's panzers rolled south to meet them.

For the Soviets, the disaster of Kiev had begun. More will be discussed in Situation 12, when we look at the latter phases of the Battle of Kiev, but suffice it to say that the writing was on the wall. Five Soviet armies, virtually the entire Southwest Front, was about to be sliced clean out of Stalin's order of battle in one of the greatest single battlefield defeats of all time.

Situation Design: After all our recent explorations of cavalry raids, river crossings, and Finnish infantry assaults, perhaps it's time to get back to some good old fashioned "smash-mouth" Barbarossa. What





and-breakthrough game, with Panzer Mark IIs, IIIs, and IVs overrunning hapless Soviet infantry before the enemy rear.

Looking at the situation card, one of the most obvious features is the three map boards. While this is the first time we've had three boards in our Barbarossa series, a quick look at the situation card also shows that the southern map (Board 5) is pretty much just for show. We could have easily set up the game where the Germans simply "enter along the southern edge of Board 6," but we wanted to show the Germans coming out of the Kremenchug bridgehead over the River Dniepr. Of 1057th) deployed in full, backed up by all the course, if we were really purists, there would be a "Force B" representing elements of the German LII Corps, unable to move off of Board 5. But since this would be a bit excessive for the sake of historical scenery, instead we simply have the special rule prohibiting any Soviet movement within three hexes of Board 5.

A massive help in the construction of this situation, especially on the Soviet side, came with the discovery of the "tashv.nm.ru" site. This is a Russian historical resource giving, in the site's own words, "statistical materials on the history of the Second World War." Although the whole site is naturally in Russian, this is nothing that Google Translate has much trouble translating except for military abbreviations, but MS Word docs found on RKKA can fill in the gaps. The granularity presented, particularly in Red Army rifle All 422 Red Army rifle divisions, is amazing. divisions are broken down all the way to field bakeries, military police units, and motor transport battalions, antiaircraft *companies*, and even veterinary hospital units (horses for wagons and cavalry scouts). Of course we don't know precisely what these units had. But by cross-referencing with TO&E tables sites like niehortser.orbat.com and British units when playing Panzer Leader.

we're talking about, of course, is a German assault- Panzer Division was set up at about half strength, especially its "star players," Panzer Regiment 2. This reflects the ongoing problems of vehicle maintenance, roaring off the board toward distant objectives deep in shortage of replacement machines and men, and generally "strung out" shape of the German spearheads. This deep into the Soviet Union, remember, the Wehrmacht was basically running itself to pieces. The German air units is an educated guess, we know that Kampfgeschwader 54 was deployed at Kirovograd (just 60 southwest), and flew primarily the Ju-88 bomber presented here.

> The Soviet forces were set up to reflect the center of all-important the 297th Rifle Division, with its middle regiment (the divisional-level support assets like the artillery, sappers, and reconnaissance companies. Note that we are using the "August 1941" template for the construction of Soviet infantry formations, presented on Gregory Moore's PanzerBlitz site. Units are far weaker using this new template, especially in regards to support assets like artillery and reconnaissance units. There is also no antitank battalion any longer. As we've said, the Soviets were gradually losing the race to throw up fresh units faster than the Germans could destroy them.

> > Note that the Soviets have IPs and for the first time in our PanzerBlitz: Barbarossa series, minefields. This is to start reflecting a common lament recorded by virtually every German commander who write a book

after World War II, that the Soviets were masters of field camouflage, earthworks, and mines. For example, Soviet sappers were infamous for belly-crawling across no-man's land



in the middle of the night, mines strapped to their back, and laying fresh minefields right in front of German jump-off points for the panzers to run over at first light. Previously, these traits were curiously absent from most accounts of Barbarossa battles. This gregspanzerblitz.com, we can now approach a level of is because of Stalin's insistence on a forward defense Red Army detail to rival the much better documented along the Bug River, which the Soviets had only Wehrmacht or Waffen SS, perhaps even American or occupied since the fall of Poland. Also, the Germans were just advancing too fast for these kinds of Setting up forces was thus relatively easy. The 16th fieldworks to be set up. Increasingly, however, we'll





the map in our Barbarossa situations. Another new experiment in our design (again, part of the new gun.

With the forces set up, we immediately saw that the Soviets would be hard-pressed to mount any kid of defense. Stacking a German panzer division (even a depleted one)



against a Soviet rifle division just doesn't result in an even battle. Thus, game balance must be found in the victory conditions, stacking them very steeply against the Germans. This seems to fit perfectly with the historical record, since the 16th Panzer is recorded to have basically annihilated the 297th Rifle right there "in their boots," then pressing on twenty kilometers to Khorol by the end of the night. The next day they pushed on to Lubna, one of the planned linkup points with Guderian's panzer group, until they were finally stopped by a scratch force built primarily around Soviet 76.2mm and 85mm antiaircraft guns pressed into the antitank role, almost like "poor man's 88s." Suffice it to say that to duplicate this result (always the baseline for a draw), the German player has to basically gut the Soviet player and rush the bulk of his forces off the north edge of the board, all in a very short amount of time. Again, its classic "Barbarossa," if the Soviet player can manage any reasonable showing at all, he deserves the win.

Playtesting: Once this situation was set up and dice started rolling, one aspect of the situation quickly became apparent. This just isn't a terribly fun game, at least not for two players. Sure, it works functionally and matches the historical situation, but unless the Soviet player is some kind of masochist, this might be a better one to try from a solitaire perspective.

For the Soviets, it's obviously all about the setup. They have to balance the need to engage and slow down the Germans in getting off the board against the need to keep their own casualties down. Germans get points for breakthrough units and Soviets units killed, remember. Make no mistake, the

be adding more and more of these to the Soviet side of situation is "smash-mouth Barbarossa," remember. But if they can inflict enough casualties, keep their own forces at least marginally intact, and perhaps August 1941 templates) is the 76.2mm antiaircraft even strand a handful of German units on the board, the Soviets have a solid shot and pulling off a win. Once the Germans set up and start moving, of course, the Soviet gameplay becomes almost entirely reactive, hence the recommendation for solitaire play.

> One trick the Soviets learned pretty quickly was using their minefields to section off the extreme wings of the board. By carefully placing the minefields in conjunction with green hex sides, the Soviets can channelize vehicular traffic into the center of the board, where their heavier weapons can hopefully catch thin-skinned German vehicles in a crossfire.

> Another key choice for the Soviet player is whether to use their big guns in a direct fire or indirect fire role. Both choices have pros and cons, of course. Keeping them further back for indirect fire keeps them safe (at least until the German bombers show up), but hitting fast-moving German vehicles with fire missions is very difficult. Putting them further forward in IPs or town hexes allows them to hit targets of opportunity, but also sets them up for annihilation via German counter-battery fire.

> The use of terrain, naturally, is vital for defense. At least the Soviets get some great gullies to use as "trenches," protecting their infantry platoons from overrun or long-ranged direct fire. Bracing the ends of tree lines with IPs is also effective (who doesn't like a +3 DRM, after all), and forces the Germans into open ground as they try to squeeze past these obstacles.

As for the Germans, they get two fundamental choices. First, the sector of their approach. The board can be divided into five basic "lanes," three of which are presumed to be impossible. To the far west, lane one is presumed to be blocked by green hex sides and mines. Lane three (the center) is blocked by Sovietoccupied towns. Lane five (far east) is also blocked by green hex sides and mines. That leaves lane two and lane four, the middle west and middle east. Lane two is far more open, and has a great road leading up for quick entry onto Board 7, but may appear too obvious and well-covered by Soviet fire. Lane four is Soviets aren't stopping the Germans in the least. This more narrow and has no easy road, but might offer





less resistance thanks to thinner Soviet deployment.

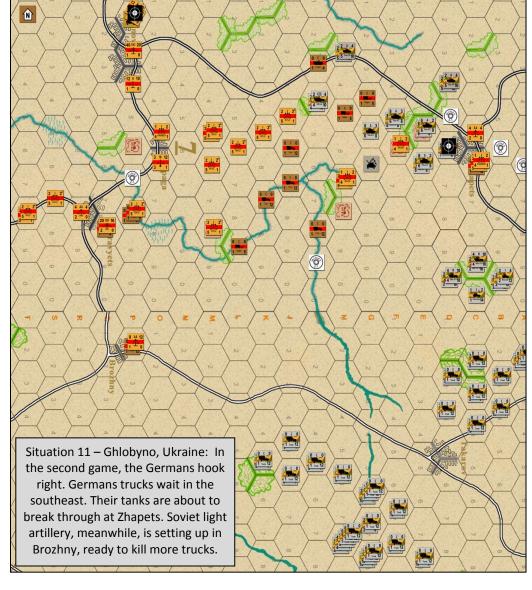
The other big choice the Germans get to make is how fast they advance, at least with their vulnerable "rump" units, primarily infantry and light artillery mounted in trucks. The tradeoff here is between rushing ahead and taking your lumps from Soviet artillery, hoping your artillery, tanks, and (later) air support can keep Soviet guns suppressed . . . and hanging back and letting your tanks hammer (or at least spot) Soviet gun positions to clear the way. Honestly, both methods were tried and they both work pretty well. Even when the Germans waited until Turns 4 and 5 to really get their trucks moving, they didn't have too tough a time getting their convoy off the map, especially since Soviet artillery was largely destroyed or suppressed by this point.

could include the use of their copious engineers. Everyone loves to use them for ampedup CAT attacks, but never forget their utility in clearing minefields. Pop one small hole in a Soviet minefield on lanes one or two, and those green hex sides that the Soviet player was using as part of his defense are now the Germans' best friend, screening their northward blitz from Soviet artillery trying to hit them from the center. Another idea is to use artillery to pop a hole in either Zhapets or Voroniva. Since the Soviet player can't deploy minefields in towns, these are "pre-made" gaps in the minefields that could also open a surprise exit ramp, especially if blasted with the plentiful German artillery.

Again, there really isn't a winning strategy for the Soviet player here. They

simply have to hunker down and kill as much as they can. Once the Germans have well and truly busted open a hole and their trucks are making the rush off the board, don't waste units in futile counterattacks. Run for gullies and woods hexes and hide. At least the Soviets can keep down the German victory point score. Other than that, the only advice to offer the Soviet player is to lock up all sharp objects and prescription meds in the house before the game . . . before this game is done you may find yourself looking for the quick way out.

In the first game, the Germans went for "lane two," with a left hook up the "middle west." The option worked well, the Germans scored a solid marginal victory by killing 26 Soviet units, getting 35 of their own units off the board for a total score of 61. Other smaller considerations for the Germans German trucks started their run right off the bat and



Panzert

SITUATION

KLEIST HOOKS OVER THE DNIEPR - GHLOBYNO, UKRAINE (12 Sep 1941): By the end of August, the German focus for Barbarossa had shifted to the Ukraine and the Battle for Kiev was fully underway. As part of the planned encirclement, Army Group South drove northeast toward the Dniepr to threaten the left flank of the Red Army's Southwest Front. Three German infantry corps soon had units over the broad river at Kremenchug and on September 11, the tanks of Panzer Group "von Kleist" poured across to engage the Russians the next morning. Here, General Hans Hube's 16th Panzer Division lashes out of the Kremenchug Bridgehead, smashing into the Soviet 297th Rifle Division bravely trying to contain the German threat.

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RUSSIAN FORCES 297th Rifle Division 38th Army, Southwestern Front (Morale D)



1057th Rifle Regiment



842nd Artillery Regiment



557th Reconnaissance Company, 357th Reconnaissance Battalion



VICTORY CONDITIONS: Germans get one point for each Russian unit destroyed, plus every German combat unit that breaks through off the north edge of the board.

- 70 or more: German DECISIVE 52-57 pts: Russian MARGINAL
- 64-69 pts: German TACTICAL
- 58-63 pts: German MARGINAL
- 46-51 pts: Russian TACTICAL
- 45 or less: Russian DECISIVE

415th Antiaircraft Battery,

10 AA 12 8 AA 12 0 C 0

Elements, 593rd Sapper

(Engineer) Battalion

1 ... 2 0 0 0

583rd Separate AA Battalion

SETUP: Russians set up first on Board 7. Germans set up second on Board 5, north of the river, within four hexes of the river. German air support arrives on Turn 6. Germans move first.



JEL GERMAN FORCES **16th Panzer Division**

XLVIII Motorized Corps Panzer Group "Kleist" **Army Group South (Morale B)**



Panzer Regiment 2 (Remnants)



Sorties, I./Kampfgeschwader 54 V Fliegerkorps, Luftflotte IV



Vanguard, Infantry Regiment 64



Batteries, Artillery Regiment 16



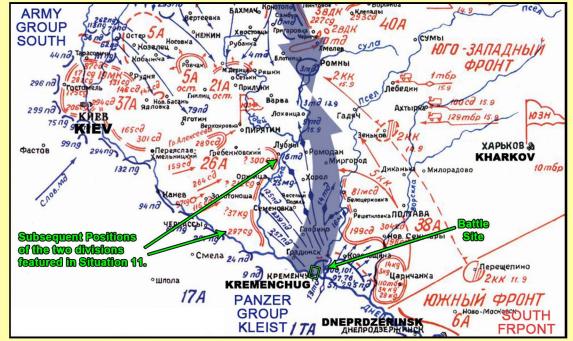
Elements, Pioneer Battalion 16

6/66th AA Company

Reconnaissance Battalion 16



Germans move first Turn 6 8



SPECIAL RULES

- All "Barbarossa" Special Rules for the Russians remain in effect: activation rolls (1-4), mandatory stacking for Russian tanks, no Russian split move and fire.
- No Hills or Slopes: Ignore any and all slopes or hilltop hexes. Except for gullies and the river, the board is flat.
- Kremenchug Bridgehead: The north bank of Board 5 is occupied by German infantry divisions not actually represented in the game. No Russian unit can move to within 5 hexes of the north edge of Board 5.
- Special set up: The normal rule that would prevent Germans from setting up in LOS of Russian units is partially lifted. German units can set up Russian LOS, but only in the town hexes along the north bank of the river (there just isn't enough hexes for the Germans to strictly obey this normal rule).



PanzerBlitz, **Barbarossa**



took some pretty serious losses, but there were enough empty hexes for the Germans to stay well-spread out and thus avoid any double- or triple-stack truck slaughters under Soviet artillery missions. To their credit, the Soviets came damned close (note the Germans need 58 points to score any kind of victory at all) and managed to kill 11 German units.

As always, the game was played again. This time, the Soviets deployed their artillery further forward, opting for direct-fire and opportunity fire shots rather than indirect fire missions. However, they didn't get to reap the anticipated grim harvest of German trucks because the Germans opted to try their "hang back until the tanks and artillery plow the field a little while" approach. Blind German artillery missions didn't get the job done, a succession of strikes only managing to take out the Soviet 120mm mortar on a scatter check. Finally the German tanks simply rolled up to Zhapets, Shpaga, and Molkanova (the Germans were trying the lane four "middle east" attack axis), spotting the guns for German artillery missions. The urban defense bonuses and some lucky rolls allowed the Soviet guns to last a little longer than the Germans would have liked, and the German artillery couldn't hit all the Soviet guns at once. Thus, the German trucks had to wait until Turn 5 to really get going, which really slowed them down and actually left a handful of them stranded on the board at the end of Meanwhile, the Soviets actually the game. redeployed some of their western guns forward, like 37mm AA guns all the way up in Brozhny (on board 6), right on the German flank. By the time the Germans got going, these new guns were in position and the Germans would up losing trucks anyway.

However, the Germans had an answer. As their airstrikes finally silenced the worst of the Soviet artillery (although that little 82mm mortar kept scoring awesome kills on trucks on the 1:3 column), their own batteries combined with point blank fire from PzKpfw-IVs and flack-tracks to hammer open a path straight through Zhapets. Now with a hole blasted through the Soviet minefields, covered by the tree line 7D4-7E5, and with a short road running up hex row B, the Germans were able to get most of their remaining units off the north edge of the board.

When the smoke cleared, the Germans had scored a much more slender marginal victory, *barely* squeaking by with 58 points (22 Soviet units killed plus 36 German units escaped). The Soviets, meanwhile, did a little better in the damage they managed to inflict on the Germans, with 21 German units killed. Since the Germans won both games with marginal victories (even if the second one was a true last-minute skin-of-their-teeth win), the overall situation is chalked up as a German marginal win.

Situation 12 Attempt to Rescue Encircled Forces – Romni, Ukraine 19 September, 1941

Summary: Even as the panzer groups of Guderian and Kleist closed behind Kiev, Stalin adamantly refused to allow withdrawal from what would soon be the largest pocket in history. Once the German spearheads met at Lokhvitsa, it was too late. The bulk of five Soviet armies, virtually the whole Southwest Front, was trapped. Even now, however, valiant attempts were made by Soviet forces outside the pocket to hammer open a chance at escape for their doomed comrades. Here, elements of a Soviet cavalry division, rifle division, and one of the newly-formed tank brigades hits positions of the 3rd Panzer Division, striving to crack the ring of steel strangling some 600,000 of their countrymen.

Background: While Colonel-General Kleist was pushing his Panzergruppe I up from the southern Ukraine, across the lower Dniepr, and deep into the backfield of Kirponos' Southwestern Front, Guderian was matching the move with an even more powerful thrust down from the north. This, of course, was Panzergruppe II, pulled out of the battles Army Group Center was fighting around Smolensk. While Guderian naturally hated the idea of giving up the drive on Moscow, and thought this huge right turn down into the Ukraine was a colossal (and potentially fatal) waste of time, he was soldier and did as he was ordered. Of course, he took the opportunity to raise plenty of protest, and is on the record with his boss von Kluge, his boss Field Marshal von Bock, the OKH





also funny story in Guderian's memoir Panzer Leader went out on September 2. about another meeting he had with the Fuhrer back as Guderian got into the room he was met by the Army no uncertain terms that Hitler's mind was made up about Kiev and explicitly forbade Guderian to bring up any mention of Moscow. Guderian went in to see Hitler (surrounded by twenty other advisors), who asked him if his panzer group was ready for another "great effort." Guderian replied yes, if given a clear objective that would be evident "to every soldier." "You mean Moscow?" Hitler parried. "Well no," returned Guderian, "but since *you* brought it up . . . "

The first victim of Guderian's big right turn was the hapless Lieutenant-General A. I. Eremenko, recently put in command of the newly-formed Bryansk Front. Roughly speaking, this was a Soviet "army group" of sixteen rifle divisions, three cavalry divisions, and one tank division - all staged between the reeling Western Front falling back from Smolensk and the Southwest Front stubbornly holding on to Kiev. Of course, as the Southwestern Front held on and the Western Front fell back, a gap soon appeared between the two. This was the gap filled by the Bryansk Front, and was vital to protecting the increasingly exposed right flank of Kirponos' huge Southwest Front.

Guderian was quick to handle this little obstacle. If he and his officers were frustrated over the order to turn south, it seems that they contented themselves in taking it out on Eremenko's Bryansk Front.

was actually coming to Guderian. Eremenko had orders from STAVKA to actually attack and encircle Guderian's whole panzer group, something of a Guderian," his mission was clearly hopeless. He tried rear of the Southwest Front.

Chief-of-Staff Colonel-General Franz Halder, and to delay the attack he could gather more ammunition, even the boss of bosses, Adolf Hitler (specifically, supplies, and reinforcements, but Stalin and Zhukov during Hitler's visit to Borisov on August 4). There's put the sword in Eremenko's back and the orders

The Soviet plan was not a good one, overly Rastenburg on the evening of August 23. Before complex and cumbersome, especially for an army not well-supplied with robust communications a Chief-of-Staff (von Brauchtisch), who told Guderian in infrastructure, command staffs, or a solid supply network to support large-scale, long-reaching operational movements. Eremenko's two armies (50th and 3rd) were supposed to hook up with the Reserve Front's 43rd Army and attack along one axis, while the Eremenko's "mobile group" (108th Tank Division, 141st Tank Brigade, and 4th Cavalry Division, would attack from another. First of all, notice how Eremenko wasn't even in command of all the forces involved. Secondly, major attacks mounted along different axes of advance only work when those forces wellcoordinated, but the Red Army was still crippled by a chronic lack of mid-level staff officers, radio equipment, and similar necessities. Thirdly, the Germans still controlled the air, and so naturally saw everything the Soviets were up to.

The end result was as swift as it was predictable. With the Germans driving southeast and the Soviets driving northwest, Guderian's great right wheel and smashing blow into the Southwest Front's rear wasn't so much a typical German blitzkrieg through Soviet defenses . . . as it was Guderian and Eremenko colliding at full speed on the plains between Rosavl and Novozybkov. By the end of the first day, the 108th Tank Division was already hideously mauled and half encircled, while the 4th Cavalry Division was so badly beaten it had to be pulled off the line for a refit. By September 5, Eremenko had requested and been given The surprise, however, was that the Bryansk Front permission to form "blocking detachments," ready to gun down the first Soviet soldiers to run from battle. It made no difference. By September 6, the 108th was down to just sixteen tanks and a handful of armored fantasy considering that Eremenko had only one tank cars. The next day, Guderian's division took the key division (the 108th) and one additional tank brigade. road junction of Konotop. By September 10, his tanks With this force, Eremenko was supposed to encircle were across the River Desna and carving through the Guderian's three armored corps? Despite the fact that Bryansk Front, its poor remnants shoved to the east Eremenko was sometimes referred to as the "Soviet" while the Germans pushed past them, down into the



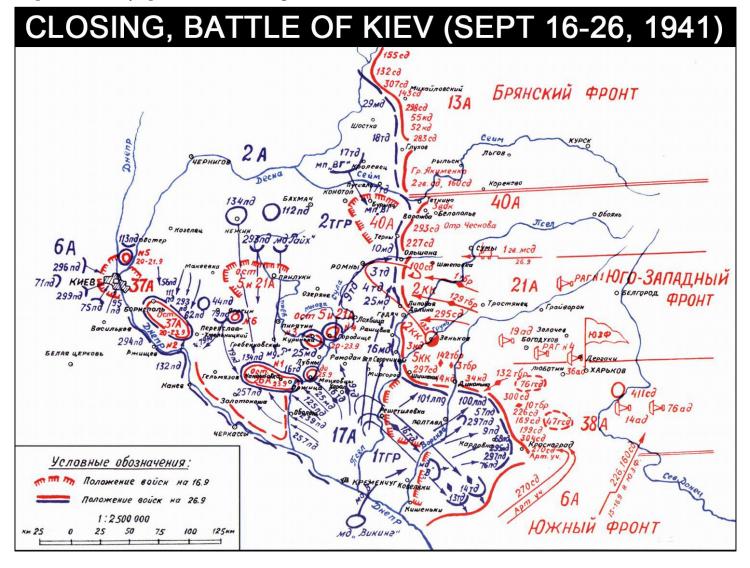


complete, costing the Soviets over 100,000 casualties Front had just begun. After crossing the Desna, Guderian's spearheads continued southward until jaws snap shut. Meanwhile, Kirponos himself had they linked up with Kleist's spearheads coming up from the lower Dniepr. The linkup came at Lokhvitsa on September 16, thus slicing off the whole of Kirponos' Southwest Front from Soviet-held territory. Five Soviet armies, over 700,000 men, were now trapped.

Soviet high command, of course, was in an uproar. had to pull out of Kiev. STAVKA replied by going around the hapless Budenny, directly ordering Kirponos to stay put and forbidding him from

The decimation of the Bryansk Front was now blowing up any bridges without express permission from STAVKA. On September 13 they went a step and 140 tanks. But the execution of the Southwest further, replacing Budenny with Timoshenko, who arrived at headquarters just in time to see the steel been asking for permission to withdraw his armies form the massive Kiev bulge. But he also knew all too well what fate had befallen other Soviet scapegoats like Colonel-General Pavlov and countless others, commanders who'd fallen not to the Germans but Stalin's NKVD on charges of cowardice and incompetence. More of Kirponos' men may have Marshall Budenny (commander of the Soviet escaped the Kiev pocket if he'd started his withdrawal Southwestern High Command Direction, a title that when he had radio permission (delivered via Nikita basically put him in command of the Southwest and Khrushchev, future premiere of the Soviet Union), but South Fronts), told STAVKA on September 11 that he in the extra day it took to get written permission, Guderian and Kleist completed their stranglehold at Lokhvitsa.

The snake had swallowed its meal, but that meal





anzerkiitz, Bardarossa



Guderian and Kleist couldn't seal off an area the size Colonel-General Kirponos, killed by shell fragments of Nebraska in an air-tight pocket, especially while leading the breakout attempt. considering the condition of their formations by this point of the campaign. Some Soviet troops managed front commanders up until this point, whose to escape back through to friendly lines, albeit without Southwest Front had been giving Army Group South any vehicles or heavy equipment. German 6th Army had started the assault on Kiev itself, attacking brave but doomed divisions of the 37th Army in fierce street fighting. Furthermore, those few units of Southwest Front not caught in the pocket were gathered together into desperate counterattacks out of the east. Their orders were to bash open a path of escape for their comrades trapped further west.

One of the largest of these efforts was mounted by remnants of the Soviet 21st Army, and is the battle we will try to recreate with Situation 12. Elements of a joined with support elements of a nearby Soviet rifle division, a cavalry division, and even heavy bombers against the left side of Guderian's spearhead at the town of Romni. The German 10th Motorized Division was hard pressed to contain the threat, and not until elements of the 4th Panzer Division were brought up were the Soviets finally pushed back.

In the end, however, the Soviets trapped in the Kiev pocket were already gone. Massive breakout attempts mounted by units of the 5th, 21st, 26th, and 37th Armies were set upon from all sides and torn apart. The Kiev pocket was soon dissolved into several smaller pockets, all isolated from each other and engaged in its own hopeless fight for survival. The 26th Army held out perhaps the longest, fighting at Orzhitsa until September 26. The 37th Army lasted until September 23, while the 5th and 21st Army fought side-by-side until September 25. Even after all these armies had effectively died, handfuls of officers and men still tried to filter back to friendly lines. One included Colonel-General Kirponos, commander of Soviet Union (after Moscow and Leningrad). the Southwest Front. They got as far as a state farm just nine miles southwest of Lokhvitsa before they almost none would ever return. Only when one were set upon by the 3rd Panzer Division. Generals considers how few Soviet POWs actually survived

wouldn't be digested quite so easily. Even the Tupikov and Potapov were among the dead, as was

Thus ended the career of one of the better Soviet Meanwhile, such a hard time from the opening moments of Barbarossa. He'd also commanded the Battle of Dubno (Situation 3), which would be the largest single engagement of tanks until the clash at Kursk over two years later, and was decorated as a Hero of the Soviet Union for his service during the war with Finland in 1940. His stature is largely overshadowed in the Red Army by luckier commanders like Zhukov, Konev, Vasilevsky, and Rokossovsky, men who didn't have to die or fight losing battles. This is an injustice, however. Men like this deserve to me remembered.

Overall, Soviet losses defied belief. Only 15,000 newly-created Soviet tank brigade (not a division), Soviets would ever escape the Kiev pocket (the last ones to be recorded made it out on October 2), leaving 452,700 men as prisoners (532,000 had been encircled, of the VVS (Soviet Air Force), in a ferocious attack but about 80,000 of these would be killed in the subsequent fighting). This doesn't include all the dead sustained in the fighting leading up to the catastrophe, nor the 2,642 guns and 64 tanks. In all, the Soviets had suffered over 700,000 casualties, including 616,304 killed or captured at the Battle of Kiev. Adolf Hitler called it "the greatest battle in history," and depending on how you measure it, he might actually have been right. This was definitely the largest encirclement in military history, and probably the greatest number of sheer casualties ever sustained in a single battlefield engagement. Four Soviet field armies, the 5th, 26th, 37th, and the 21st, a force totaling 43 divisions, were gone. The Soviet 6th, 38th, and 40th Armies had also taken a tremendous beating. The Southwest Front, the largest front still in the Red Army, would have to be rebuilt virtually from scratch. As if the Soviets needed any more bad news, the Battle of Kiev had also cost them Kiev itself, small unit of perhaps 2,000 men of the 5th Army capital of the Ukraine and third largest city in the

Of the 452,000 Soviets marched into captivity,





German captivity, and remembering that many of replaced by the Pe-2. these lucky few had survived only to die in Stalin's gulags after the war, does horrific scale of the Battle of Kiev become truly apparent.

Situation Design: In designing this situation, we had the usual sources to call on, such as the RKKA site (always a treasure trove for highly-detailed maps), Gregory Moore's site and niehorster.orbat.com (excellent OOB information, Gregory Moore even "translates it" into PanzerBlitz for us), Feldgrau and Axis History Factbook. The new tashv.nm.ru site, discussed previously, is a godsend of granular detail on Soviet orders of battle, assuming you can either read Russian or at least have tools to translate it.

For Situation 12, however, we have an additional source, our old friend Guderian. It seems this Soviet counterattack at Romni was pretty serious, since he puts it in his memoir and even mentions the 9th Cavalry division by name. He personally watched the battle from a prison guard tower in the city of Romni, and gives us several details that the other sources would have missed. For example, the RKKA maps show that the 3rd Panzer Division was present at the fight. In truth it wasn't, it had been pulled out just the beforehand for a rest and refit. The only weakness of these maps is the fact that they usually cover ranges of time (in this case, September 16-26), and sometimes can be misinterpreted if not cross-referenced against other sources.

Another detail Guderian gives is the presence of Soviet bombers. He describes "heavy bomber raids" and the fact that his own aerial reconnaissance was blocked by "local Soviet air superiority." In picking exactly what Soviet bombers and units to portray, we had to use a little guesswork. Basically, the largest heavy bomber aviation regiment and division available to the Southwest Front was used, the 94th Bomber Aviation Regiment, 62nd Bomber Aviation Division. Units, headquarters, and combat strength was found on RKKA's excellent "Beginning of Barbarossa" map, and the 94th was selected in the hopes that for the Battle of Kiev, this unit would have German the best chance of still having planes to put in the air. niehorster.com site came through with details on the The type of bomber used by this regiment is the SB, an Luftwaffe flak units attached to Panzer Group

Looking at planes supplied by "official" PanzerBlitz sources, we notice that the "H" value for their bomb load is roughly 1 point per hundred pounds



of bombs, with a slight "bonus" given for non-level bombers like Stukas and Sturmoviks. This is where the SB's 20 "H" AF comes from. It gets 2 "I" AF for its secondary armament because it carries four 7.62mm machine guns, including one mounted ventrally for easy strafing.

One last detail regarding these bombers deserves a quick note. In 1941, the Red Air Force was set up in such a way where the fighters and attack craft were under the army control (by that we mean field army like the 21st Army here, not the "Red Army" as a whole), but the heavy bombers were under the command of the front (e.g., the Southwest Front). This led to horrendous losses since it was difficult to coordinate fighter protection out of one level of command for bombers being commanded from another level. Big Soviet bombers often went in alone and were shredded by the Messerschmidts. It's also the reason the heavy bombers in Situation 12 don't show up until Turn 6, even though this is a planned Soviet attack and the SBs should theoretically show up right away.

For the German forces, we have Guderian's account that "available for the defense were two battalions of the 10th Motorized Division, and a few flak batteries." Of course we don't know what battalions Guderian was referring to, so we're building our German force pool based on two slightly understrength battalions of motorized infantry, specifically Infantry Regiment (Motorized) Interestingly, the 10th Motorized Division had no integral flak units, meaning that Guderian's "few flak batteries" had to come from corps or even panzer group level. Unfortunately, such units were technically commanded by the Luftwaffe, and so do not appear in most recorded orders of battle for army formations. Fortunately, obsolete two-engine craft in the process of being "Guderian." A likely unit was picked and added to



PanzerBlitz, Barbarossa



the German available forces. Note that this is where we finally get to use one of the dreaded German "88s." Using sites like Feldgrau, Axis Factbook, and gregspanzerblitz.com,



we haven't been able to find these fearsome weapons. At least the answer was found at niehorster.orbat.com, where we see that these units never show up in German orders of battle because they're usually only found in *Luftwaffe* units. At least the Soviets aren't the only ones with bizarre organizational problems.

Then we come to German Force B, the very first units of the 4th Panzer Division. Guderian mentions that this unit was in motion, redeploying to Konotop to deal with a Soviet threat in that area. But his maps of the situation on September 19, 20, and 22 show where at least some of the 4th Panzer was in the area on the day in question, rolling north *toward* Konotop, with limited elements probably mixed up in this fight on September 19.

As for the Soviets, we have Guderian's description of the Soviet attack coming in "three columns" and coming within "half a mile" (5 hexes) of the town of Romni. Thus, in the interest of game scale and reflecting this "three columns," approach, we're taking a sizable sample of each major attacking formation. Each is discussed below.

First, we have both Guderian's confirmation and the RKKA maps naming that the cavalry unit present was indeed the 9th Cavalry Division. To reflect this battle's importance as the focus of a determined Soviet effort, elements of the 9th Cavalry's horse artillery battalion is also included.

Also included is the artillery assets of the 100th Rifle Division (according to Soviet maps on the RKKA site). This unit was one of the better units still standing in the Red Army, in fact the day *before* this battle the order had been issued re-naming this unit as the 1st Guards Rifle Division. While the full effect of this conversion naturally can't be reflected in the game yet (upgrading to "Guards" didn't just mean a new name, it included increased training, better equipment, pay, and beefed-up orders of battle), clearly this indicates that the Soviet high command thought highly of this

unit, and it had done well in previous battles. Thus, we give it a Morale of C (instead of the usual D), along with the new 1-5 activation roll on a d6 instead of the usual 1-4.

Another new element in the Soviet forces is reflected in their tanks. Specifically, these counters are not units of a tank division, but a tank brigade. After the disastrous battles of the summer, it was clear that the Soviet-model mechanized corps (and the tank divisions that made them up) were too large to be controlled effectively by inexperienced Soviet staff officers with little communications, command, and control infrastructure. By cutting down the size of these units into smaller, more manageable formations, it was hoped that the Soviet commanders (and more importantly, their operational staffs) would be able to get a handle on their forces in fast-moving armored warfare. People's Commissar of Defense Order No. 0063, dated August 12, directed the creation of the first 18 of these brigades in August and September, 1941. These were very small units, really only a single tank regiment paired with a single motorized infantry regiment, supported with a relatively contingent of antiaircraft, mortar, 76.2mm guns, and

the like. They were supposed to be comprised entirely of new tanks like the KV-1, T-34, T-40, and the T-50. Of course, this proved never to be the case in the dire months of 1941, and



most of the new brigades were partially made up of the BT-7 "Knights in Plywood" or even the old T-26s. Yet the idea worked. Almost immediately, tank brigades were outperforming the old tank divisions. They couldn't do as much, naturally, since they were much smaller, and the Soviet commanders still had a lot to learn about how to get several of these tank brigades to work together. But the new organization marked a considerable improvement, which is another reason why the activation roll for Soviet units in this game has been increased from to 1-5, and the tank units also get the Morale of C.

One interesting addition to the Soviet tank brigade is the company of SMGs. These new units are described on the Gregory Moore site as a special "tank destroyer" company armed with flamethrowers and





special demolitions. We're assuming he didn't want to make this unit an engineer company because of the relatively weak game values of Soviet engineer companies, and since he's



sticking with classical company-scale Soviet units, he's only got one counter to work with. Our Liberation edition rules, however, dispense with this limitation with platoon-scale Soviet units, so we're representing this unit with two SMGs and one combat engineer to give the enhanced CAT capability indicative of "flamethrowers and special demolitions."

The design of the map was based on the usual educated guesswork. Google Earth shows this battlefield as quite uneven, allowing us to dispense with the "no elevation" or "low hills and slopes" special rules. In fact, this gives us a chance to break out good ole' "Bednost Hill" on Board 2. We can also guess that Romni was a pretty large town in those days, at least big enough to have its own prison (remember Guderian's personal vantage point, watching the fight from one of the prison's guard towers). Hence, the German side of the board is represented by Board 8.

At last we come to victory conditions. Since the Soviets obviously didn't break through in this battle to free any of the units trapped in the Kiev pocket, and the 10th Motorized Division was far from can't demand destroyed, we these accomplishments for our victory conditions (always based on historical outcomes, after all). Nor do we want the game to devolve into a bloody "mini-Stalingrad" in Granzhelys, so instead the victory conditions are based on how much of a foothold (measured by a count of Soviet combat units) the Soviets can push onto and maintain on Board 8.

Playtesting: For this game, the Soviet player finally gets to launch an attack with only one hand tied behind his back, instead of both of them as he's had to so far. What we mean, of course, is the new activation rolls (1-5 instead of 1-4). It's amazing what a difference this makes, to say nothing of the Morale C.

As for the Germans, they get to stop (or at least slow down) a vastly superior force with harshly

least part of Panzer Regiment 35) makes a debut, but shows up late to the party and with only a handful of tanks . . . machines that have a tough time standing up to T-34s and KV-1s even one-on-one. Clearly the German player will have to rely more heavily on his infantry and artillery. But how often was that the case on the Eastern Front, even in 1941? Sure, the panzers and Stukas get all the press, but most accounts from Russian veterans lavish far more grim respect to the German grenadier and heavy artillery. really, the kinds of "historical lessons" this kind of game can teach better than facts-and-figures history books.

Given the set up rules, victory conditions, and entry parameters for the Panzer Regiment 35 (enter from the south edge of Board 8), the Soviets seem to have basically three choices when making their approach their approach.

First, they can roll up the center. As usual, this is probably a bad idea. Not only can both German wings easily collapse around the Soviet flanks, but Bednost Hill is right in the Soviets' way. Furthermore, the German player will most likely have packed the town hexes of Granzhelys with his artillery, hoping the +1/+5 defense bonuses will help redress the pitiful defense factors of these units if nothing else. However, two factors do make a central approach at (depending least possibility on German deployment). First, the Soviet player will be looking right down the Germans' throats from the high ground of Bednost Hill. Second, if the Soviets do make a crack and get significant units into Granzhelys itself, it will be all put impossible for 4th Panzer Division to dig them out in the second half of the game.

The second approach open to the Soviets is along the south shoulder of the board. This was actually tried in the second game, and didn't work out too well. The terrain on the south end of Board 2 is not very helpful here. Long green hex sides channelize the Soviets into predictable pathways, and Soviet units truing to crest all those small, open ridges make perfect targets for German opportunity fire. Worst of all, the Soviets are set up for a direct slam in the left limited resources. Sure, the 4th Panzer Division (or at flank when 4th Panzer shows up, and given how much





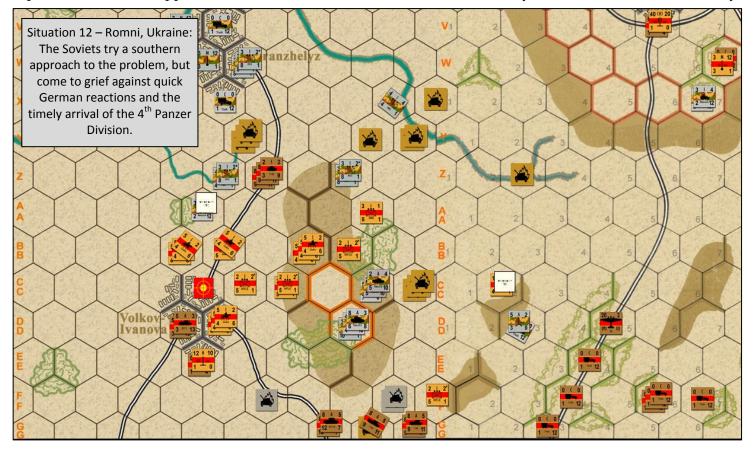
probably won't be ready with all their vulnerable units piled up in Board 8 town hexes (especially in Volkhov-Ivanova). Once again, however, two factors might stand to recommend a southern approach. First, the Soviets might try to get their tanks (at least) lined up on the high ground or in Volkhov-Ivanova, ready to blast the 4th Panzer right as they come onto the board. Block that little neck of low ground south of Hill 134, occupy that wooded crest and a few hexes of the town, and the Germans are driving straight into a pretty nasty fire pocket. Second, because the central and southern approaches appear so miserable, the Germans *might* not defend the southern sector very well, instead concentrating in the north.

the Soviets strike primarily in the north, they can dodge the worst of the fire coming from Granzhelys and at least make the 4th Panzer Division chase up after them (making their effective entry into the battle on Turn 7 or 8 instead of Turn 6). The terrain is relatively open on Board 2 for a Soviet approach, gullies provide nice egress, and Hill 129 provides pretty good initial cover. Direct fire assets can be set those fast tanks. These Germans were eventually up in Golod to support the advance, and it's encircled and destroyed, however, overwhelmed by

the terrain will have slowed them down, the Soviets surprisingly tough for Germans to get a shot from any artillery stationed in Granzhelys. Drodzova remains a dangerous obstacle, however, especially if Germans drop an 88 in there.

> The only problem with the northern approach is precisely that it is the best approach, and therefore obvious. Any German player that doesn't put at least one 88 battery in Drodzova probably shouldn't be playing PanzerBlitz, and once Soviet units start getting dispersed, they're "meat on the table" for the impressive German off-board artillery. Finally, the long roads up both boards mean that the 4th Panzer Division won't be delayed for long, regardless of how far north the Soviets have struck.

For our first game, the Soviets picked the northern The third option, of course, is the most obvious. If approach. The faster tanks immediate made a break for the blind gap along the extreme edge of the board, north of ridge 8B9-8D9. The German infantry in the area couldn't do much about it, so instead they advanced one company over the ridge to tree line 2B2-2C1. From here they could call in artillery missions on the artillery the Soviets were trying to set up in Golod, as well as shoot up the armada of trucks following







the sheer number of Soviet infantry that dismounted attempt to overrun straggling Soviet cavalry. The three sides.

The Soviet cavalry, meanwhile, was advancing further to the south, using gully 2I1-2L8 for cover. Their mission was to draw fire and prevent the Germans from redeploying too much of their firepower northwards toward the vulnerable fleet of trucks rumbling on through Golod. Lastly, the Soviets set up some OPs on Hill 129 and their big howitzers back in the woods and gullies in the northeast corner of Board 2.

Board 2, the Soviets made their rush onto Board 8 starting on Turns 3 and 4. Their cavalry rushed up to the gates of Drodzova and German positions in tree line 8K7-8L8, taking predictably horrible losses. But their powerful CATs cleaned out woods and town hexes, assisted immensely by the first thunderous Soviet artillery barrages and a huge armored attack crashing down from the north. The heavier tanks had now caught up with the BT-7s that had snuck by along the extreme northern edge of the board, and as this Soviet "sickle" came curving down behind the north flank of Golod, it smashed down with all the force of the "hammer." By the end of Turn 5, the whole German left flank had been basically annihilated, and Soviet infantry were pouring onto the Board 8. The Germans didn't even have anyone left to get eyes on them for artillery missions. Some Kubelwagens and motorcycles were sacrificed atop Hill 115 in an effort to get eyes on the Soviet breakthrough, but these were quickly taken under fire from KVs lurking in gully hex 8G3. One can almost imagine Indiana Jones and his dad peering off the bald hilltop down into the ravine, watching the tanks come at them. "Junior, will you get down!" . . . "Relax, Dad. We're well out of range." BOOM! "Oh no! My brother-in-law's Kubelwagen!"

When the 4th Panzer finally made its appearance, there wasn't much they could do. The Germans made a bad situation worse by splitting this force up in three directions, sending the PzKpfw IIs up to spot the Russian artillery behind Hill 129, while the heavier PzKpfw IIIs and IVs forked off in two directions in an Interestingly, one of the Soviet fire missions originally

in the field around Golod and charged them from Russians eventually curled their massive tank force back around to engage them, but didn't make the mistake of crossing back off Board 8 to Board 2 (thus forfeiting victory points, after all), so the big tank clash never really took place.

> In the end, Soviets won a a comfortable marginal victory with 28 ground combat units on Board 8 at the end of the game.

For the second game, the Germans deployed more of their artillery in the north (in the first game, their 88s had only gotten one or two shots because of bad Having crossed the dangerous open ground of placement in Granzhelys). However, the Soviets were tried to sidestep this deployment by trying an attack through the southern sector, hoping surprise and thing German defense would pay off against tougher terrain and an eventual body-slam by the vanguard of the 4th Panzer Division. Again the Germans were caught off balance, but at least this time they reacted a little more organization and clarity of thought. The 88s were almost immediately shifted to the southern shoulder of Granzhelys (at least as quickly as such weapons can be shifted, that is). Meanwhile, their infantry scored with a lucky CAT on the lead company of Soviet BT-7s, putting three quick wreck counters on the board to get things started. The terrain in the south of Board 2 proved even worse than feared, with the Soviets slowed down further by some bad activation rolls.

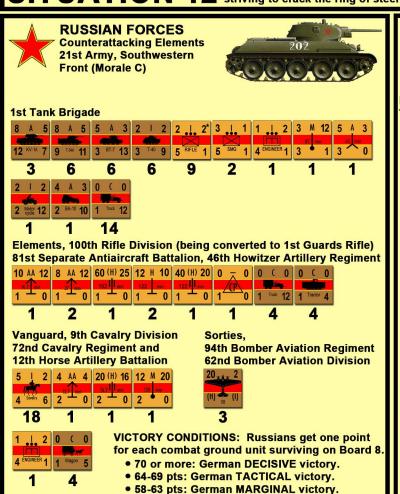
> Eventually, of course, Soviet numbers started to tell. The Soviets soon finally turned the north flank of Hill 134, although doing so cost them another couple of BT-7s to the opportunity fire of 88s. Soon these 88s even took out a KV-1, almost "paying homage" to the countless historical accounts relating how 88s were the only German weapon that really had a shot of putting down these Soviet beasts. But of course these same shots also gave away the position of these 88s (as did similar fire from the German 150mm infantry gun), and Soviet artillery soon had this threat wellneutralized. Of course, this only spotlighted some of the Soviet artillery in turn (deployed largely in Bednost on Hill 132), quickly destroyed by the offboard German batteries of 10.5 cm howitzers.

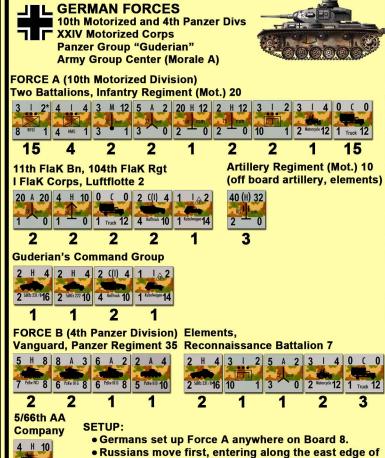
anzer

SITUATION

ATTEMPT TO RESCUE ENCIRCLE FORCES - ROMNI, UKRAINE (19 Sep 1941): Even as the panzer groups of Guderian and Kleist closed behind Kiev, Stalin adamantly refused to allow any withdrawal from what would soon be the largest pocket in history. Once the German spearheads met at Lokhvitsa, it was too late. The bulk of four Soviet armies, virtually the whole Southwest Front, was trapped. Even now, however, valiant attempts were made by Soviet forces outside the pocket to hammer open an escape path for their doomed comrades. Here, elements of the Soviet 9th Cavalry Division, a rifle division, and one of the newly-formed tank brigades hits positions of the German 10th Motorized Division, striving to crack the ring of steel that is strangling some 600,000 of their countrymen.

N 8



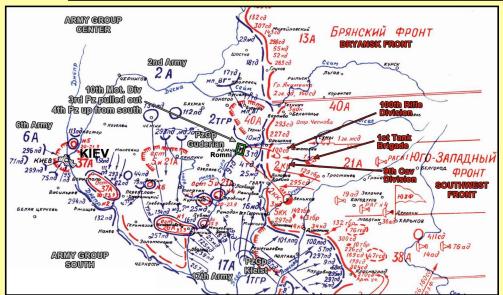


Board 2, per "activation rolls" special rule.

Russian air power arrives on Turn 6.

• German Force B arrives on Turn 6.

Russians move first Turn 3 5 6 9 4



• 52-57 pts: Russian MARGINAL victory.

• 46-51 pts: Russian TACTICAL victory. • 45 or less: Russian DECISIVE victory.

SPECIAL RULES

- Russian activation rolls: Note that these are now 1-5. At the beginning of each movement phase, Russian units must roll a d6. On a result of 1-5, the unit can move and operate normally. On a result of 5-6, the Russian unit cannot move or overrun. This does not include "motionless" CATs. If a unit entering the board does not make its activation roll, it must remain off-board and can try again next turn. These rules INCLUDE aircraft before ground attacks.
- Russian tanks must always be stacked at least two deep. If a stack takes losses, the "lone" Russian unit has one movement phase to rejoin another armored unit. If that can't do it. chooses not to do it, or fails its "Russian activation roll," the unit is eliminated.
- Russian units may not use Split Move and Fire.
- German 88s double their AFs against "A" class targets up to a range of 5, not the normal 2. Note that they cannot attack aircraft represented in the game (for high-altitude bombers, not low-flying ground attack aircraft).





(note Panzer Group "Guderian" Command Section in the German available forces). Did we change the course of history by perhaps taking Guderian out of the campaign in Russia?

The 4th Panzer arrived in force, literally overrunning and even CAT-attacking their way onto the board through hexes 8GG8 and 8GG9. Soviets were ready with opportunity fire and counteroverruns, and there was actually a vicious tank scrap on the east side of Hill 134. But again the Soviets refused to be drawn into battle on the wrong board, and consolidated as much as they could in the town of Volkhov-Ivanova (completely emptied of German units by this point). The Germans still launched potent CATs out of southern Granzhelys, however, and the Soviet body count stacked to alarming levels.

Meanwhile, of course, Soviet air power was making its presence felt. As if often the case with air strikes, however, players tend to expect a little more influence than actually manifests itself on the game This is early World War II, after all, the Sturmoviks, Typhoons, and Thunderbolts have yet to darken the skies with smoke and rocket exhaust. game.

drifted and landed on "Guderian's" Kubelwagen in Even when playing Panzer Leader 1940, the German player usually gets four or even eight Stukas. Against this kind of experience and expectation, there just isn't much that three Soviet SBs are going to do. In both games they managed to kill off one or two German infantry platoons, but never made a truly decisive impact on the course of the game. Still, it's nice to see the Soviets get some air support once in a while.

> The game came down to an extremely close finish. At the very end, the Germans desperately threw in an all-or-nothing overrun on a stack of Soviet infantry hung up in clear hex 8CC6. Russian tanks were ready, both in and immediately south of Volkhov-Ivanova, and the Germans took some ghastly losses to opportunity fire. But Soviet infantry stack went down, which was just enough to top the scales. Germans barely, and we do mean barely, squeaked out a win, with the Soviets only counting 23 ground combat units on Board 8 . . . and of course they need 24 for the marginal victory.

> Overall, the Situation 12 is marked down as a Soviet marginal victory, since they won the first game by a wider margin than the Germans won the second





Panzer Blitz, Barbarossa

Situations, Analysis, and Campaign Journal, PANZERBLITZ on the Eastern Front, By JAMES JOHNSON June - December 1941

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<u> Panzerbiitz, Bardarossa</u>



SECTION FIVE OCTOBER, 1941 THE TYPHOON STRIKES

By the end of September 1941, the Third Reich is convinced that it stands on the precipice of complete victory in Russia. Leningrad, second city of the Soviet Union, has been encircled and now endures the first of its epic "900 days" of siege. To the south, Kiev has fallen and with it, almost three quarters of a million Soviet soldiers. Of the Red Army's four initial major fronts, the largest two have been all but annihilated. The Soviet High Command scrambles to hurl fresh divisions into the storm, only hoping they can raise new units faster than the Germans can destroy them. Ominously, after the horrific loss at Kiev, for the very first time, the Soviet Army does not outnumber the Germans in Russia.

With Leningrad under siege and Kiev fallen, the time comes at last for the invaders to shift their attentions back on the central prize: Moscow. Technically speaking, Operation Barbarossa is now over. A new invasion plan has been drawn up for what the Germans hope will be the final effort in the east. If successful, this assault could win them the war in Russia and, with the United States still neutral and Great Britain's survival hanging by a thread, perhaps all of the Second World War as well. The name of the operation is "Typhoon," and if one really wants to select a single operation where the final outcome of World War II really could have swung the other way, it's this one.

Situation 13 Katukov vs. Guderian Mtensk, Russia **06 October, 1941**

Summary: With other objectives to the north and south now secure, the focus of the German invasion shifts back to the central push on Moscow with the opening of Operation Typhoon. Guderian's Panzer Group forms the southern arm of this titanic effort, and quickly smashes through the defenses of the a "tank brigade" as discussed in Situation 12. Even

Bryansk Front. STAVKA reacts with reserves, including the newly-organized "1st Special Guards Rifle Corps." Part of this unit is Colonel Mikhail Katukov's new outfit, the 4th Tank Brigade, which takes the field along with withdrawing NKVD border guards, guards rifle units, even elements of Soviet airborne divisions and the new "Katyusha" rocket launchers. Northeast of Orel, they meet Guderian's spearhead, made up of the 4th Panzer Division.

Background: As the September passed along the Eastern Front, the battles to the north (near Leningrad) and to the south (near Kiev) were beginning to draw to a close. Even as these fights were still progressing through their final stages, the OKH was already turning its attention back to the center, for a return to the drive on Moscow. Since the middle of August the Germans had been on the defensive in this sector of the front, hammered from the east, southeast, and northeast by the Western and Bryansk Fronts. In Section Three, we reviewed the particularly ferocious fighting around the Yelnia Salient, finally forcing two German corps into the first operational-scale withdrawal in the east.

These battles, however, had perhaps done even more damage to the Soviets who prosecuted them. Soviet reserves, although deep, were not limitless, and the Soviets were having additional trouble building the equipment for their new divisions since most of their manufacturing infrastructure was still being moved to the east. Building tanks, artillery, and aircraft during wartime is hard enough, but trying to do it while your factories are being disassembled, shipped thousands of miles, and being rebuilt in new cities is practically impossible.

As a result, Soviet divisions were become more and more threadbare. Their template orders of battle were being rebuilt along smaller and smaller lines, partly to enable new (and somewhat inexperienced) Soviet commanders better handle them in the field, but also because there just weren't enough men and equipment to go around. Some infantry divisions were down to less than 3,000 men. The Soviets had already given up on the idea of a tank division at all, instead building new armored units along the lines of





promised to their commanders.

The Germans, meanwhile, were likewise feeling the effects of fighting such a huge war over such a vast area, now entering its fourth month. No sooner had the panzer groups of Hoth and Guderian been pulled out of the line, send hundreds of miles in new directions, and won large and savage battles in the northern and southern sectors of the front . . . then would come largely to a halt. Leningrad was securely they were ordered back where they came from to prepare for immediate commitment to new battles in the center. Replacements had not kept up with losses. Tanks, trucks, and halftracks were falling apart. Artillery batteries were having a hard time getting the proper amount of ammunition.

Most panzer divisions, already shaved down to about 60% of the strength they had during the 1940 invasion of France (so Hitler would have the double the number of panzer divisions with basically the same number of actual tanks), now had half of that strength due to combat losses, breakdowns, and lack of parts. They'd gone into Russia with about 160 tanks and 3,000 trucks per division, most divisions now had between 50 and 100 tanks, and not nearly enough serviceable trucks to keep even these few surviving machines in the field. When one considers that a great many of these tanks were in fact ineffective models like prewar PzKpfw-IIs and Czech PzKpfw-38(t)s, or even captured British or French tanks that were laughable even in 1940, the true crisis facing the panzerwaffe becomes clear.

The Luftwaffe, meanwhile, was also flying on a wing and a prayer. At the beginning of Barbarossa, a third of their machines were in desperate need of overhaul, and while the Red Air Force had so far not put up a terribly impressive threat, conditions on the primitive runways, dust, mud, and overuse had word down the squadrons. There was just no time, no parts, no supplies, no choice but to keep performing in the face of ever greater demands presented by this war without end in a land without end.

Despite what many people believe, the German high command knew of these problems. It was part of the thinking that went into Operation Typhoon, envisioned to be the last great effort to smash into

these were not being equipped to the full standard Moscow and end the war before the end of the year. The German general staff knew their army was on its last legs, and were grimly determined to end the war as quickly as possible. Thus, Operation Typhoon was born, prompted by Führer Directive No. 35, issues as early as September 6, even while the Kiev battles were just getting warmed up.

> Broadly speaking, German operations in the north under siege, and the Germans were convinced the city would have to capitulate soon. Therefore, Army Group North's panzer group (Panzer Group IV under Colonel-General Hoepner, the "Old Cavalryman") was sent south to Army Group Center, along with the returning Panzer Group III under Colonel-General "Papa" Hoth. Interestingly, Hoepner's signals unit was left in the north sending out false radio traffic to dupe Soviet intelligence into thinking it was still near Leningrad. The trick worked, and the arrival of a new panzer group into the central sector of the battlefield came as a stunning shock to Soviet planners.

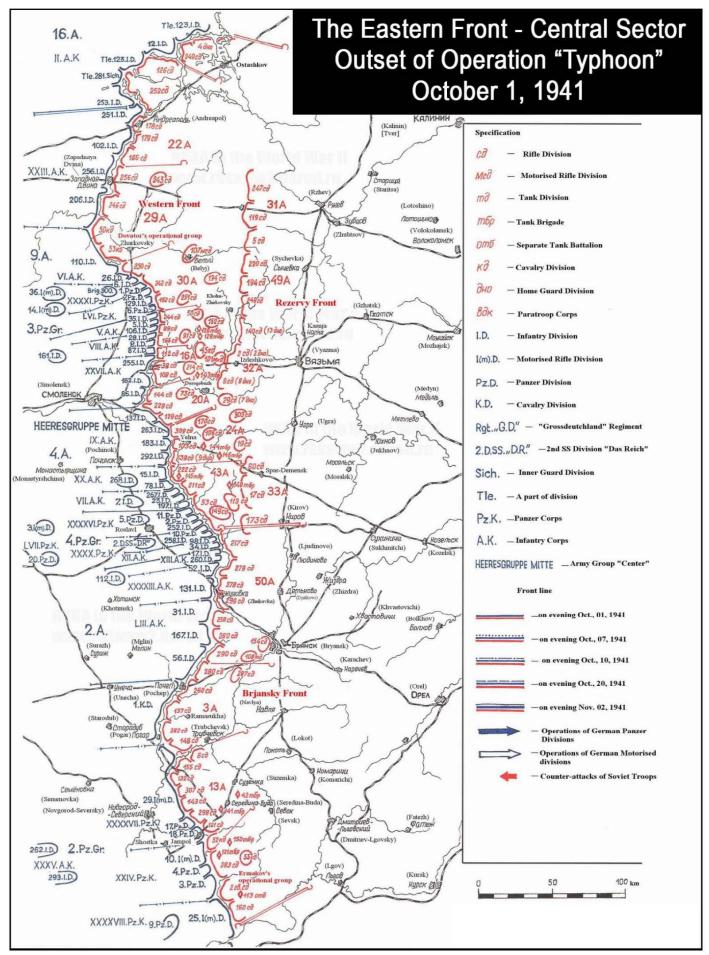
> Meanwhile, "Fast Heinz" Guderian's Panzer Group II was turned around from the Kiev battlefields and brought back into the fight for Moscow. rather than redeploy this formation beside Panzer Groups III and IV, Guderian's divisions would strike toward Moscow directly from where they stood, smashing through the Bryansk Front and attacking Moscow from the southwest. Meanwhile, von Kleist's Panzer Group I would continue fighting in the south, driving for objectives like Khar'kov, Voroshilovgrad, Zaporozhye, and Rostov.

> With three of the four panzer groups at its vanguard, the German force assembled for Typhoon was massive. Not including Luftwaffe personnel, the force totaled 1,929,406 men, three armies comprised of 78 divisions including fourteen panzer divisions and eight motorized divisions. The attack was to be supported by 14,000 pieces of artillery and 1,390 aircraft. As badly emaciated as Army Group Center had been during late August and September, for the Typhoon offensive it would include half the men in the entire German Army (not just the army in Russia), and over two thirds of its tanks. Kleist's panzer group and the handful of tanks with Rommel in North



PanzerBlitz, Barbarossa









formations anywhere else in the war.

The Soviets, meanwhile, were also "going all in" for the upcoming showdown in the center. By the beginning of October, 40% of the Red Army (including units in the Far East still defending against a possible attack from Japan) stood directly in front of These were organized into three fronts. 29th, 30th, 19th, 16th, and 20th Armies under General Konev. Behind it stood the reserve front, commanded by the unfortunate Marshal Budenny who'd just lost the Battle of Kiev. Budenny had the 24th and 43rd Armies deployed forward along with the Konev's Western Front forces, with the 31st, 49th, 32nd, and 33rd Armies in a second line around Vyazma. To the south, standing in Guderian's way, was the Bryansk front commanded by General Eremenko, comprised of the 50th, 3rd, and 13th Armies, along with were called panzer corps now, no longer "motorized" "Operational Group Ermakov." The Soviets had also corps) to Hoepner's Panzer Group IV. Guderian had started a crash program of field fortifications. The received the XLVIII Panzer Corps in its place, along first of these lines ran roughly along the frontal with two infantry corps (XXXIV and XXXV). As of positions currently held by the Soviets, with a second October 5, Guderian's Panzer Group 2 would also line built closer to Moscow, centered on the town of Mozhaisk.

The Germans planned to kick off Typhoon on October 2. The objectives and overall plan were much the same as they'd been for Barbarossa. The panzer group of Hoth and Hoepner would close around Vyamza, and encircle the bulk of the Western and never got along very well). Reserve fronts. Guderian's panzer group, meanwhile, would strike northeast, closing its own encirclements in the area of Orel and Bryansk, and shatter the The primary consideration in the Bryansk front. opening phases, as it had back in June, was to prevent Orel. Guderian took Orel so fast that the Soviets the Soviets from withdrawing in good order. It would do little good to shove the Soviets back toward Guderian notes that the street cars were still running Moscow, the Germans wanted to cut off and destroy even as his tanks rolled in. the primary Soviet armies in the field and leave the door to Moscow open.

slamming into Operational Group

Africa were they only significant German armored soon he was shoved back so a 13-mile gap opened between his units and those of the neighboring 13th Army. Local Soviet counterattacks were launched, but failed for all the usual reasons. Yet at higher headquarters, Guderian's attack was judged to be a diversion. The Soviets expected the main attack to come straight out of the west (indeed in would, in two days), and so made no large First was the Western Front, consisting of the 22nd, redeployments against Guderian at first. When they did, they overreacted to the other extreme, shifting forces out of the north just in time for Hoth and Hoepner's panzer groups to strike out at the head of the German Second and Fourth Armies near Vyazma.

> Guderian's Panzer Group II was not the same formation that had crashed across the border at Brest back on June 22. It had taken steep losses during the Battle of Kiev. Furthermore, Guderian had been ordered to give up the XLVI Panzer Corps (yes, they renamed as the Second Panzer Army. Ironically, it had less tanks than it had when it was just a "panzer group," but at least now as an "army" level command Guderian would report directly to Field Marshal von Bock at (commander, Army Group Center) and not von Kluge of the Fourth Army (Guderian and Kluge

> Reorganizations notwithstanding, Guderian made startling progress against the weak and thinlydeployed forces of the Bryansk Front. Within a week, he'd advanced 150 miles from Glukhov all the way to didn't even have time to cut the power in the city,

Soviet resistance, although disorganized, was ferocious. By way of example, here is the first As stated previously, Guderian asked for and recorded use of "mine dogs" in a desperate effort to received permission to start his attack two days early. destroy German tanks. Dogs were fed under Soviet On September 30 his spearheads launched northeast, tanks until the dogs grew conditioned to run under Ermakov. tanks whenever they appeared. When German tanks Ermakov's five divisions were badly scattered, and approached, explosives were strapped to these poor





creatures and they were set loose on the panzers. new brigade entirely with the new T-34s, but when he However horrific, this tactic never really worked since German tanks used gasoline engines (contrary to popular belief), which meant that they sounded and smelled different from Russian tanks, which usually used diesel. Russian mine dogs would just as often not recognize the German tanks as "dinner" or, even worse, run beneath Soviet tanks instead.

Nevertheless, Guderian was about to hit a very serious obstacle. Even as his 3rd and 4th Panzer Divisions flew through Orel and pushed northeast up the highway beyond, the Soviets were moving in a reserve unit to check his advance. Against all odds, this new unit, the "1st Special Guards Rifle Corps" (Major-General Dmitri Danilovich Lelyushenko), would slam Guderian dead in his tracks and completely halt his rapid drive on Tula, and perhaps even Moscow itself.

This odd formation is tough to research, as it only existed for about ten days. It contained the 4th and 6th Guards Rifle Divisions, the 11th Tank Brigade, and a number of artillery and corps antiaircraft battalions. It also contained the a brigade of Soviet airborne troops and two battalions of the brand-new M-13 "Katyusha" rocket launchers (some references stating that these weapons had been used as early as July 14 have been disproven).

One more unit in the 1st Special Guards Rifle Corps was the newly-formed 4th Tank Brigade under the command of Colonel Mikhail E. Katukov. This officer has been discussed twice before in our campaign study, once in Situation 03 and again in Situation 05. In these battles (Brody-Dubno and the delaying actions that immediately followed), Katyukov commanded the 20th Tank Division, part of Rokossovsky's 9th Mechanized Corps. After his division had been basically annihilated in prolonged and staunch defense, Katukov was recalled to Moscow to be decorated with the Order of the Red Banner and take command of his new unit. This was the 4th Tank Brigade, and while this decorated divisional commander was naturally unhappy with being "demoted" to brigade command, the Red Army wasn't building tank divisions anymore. Katukov

got to the tank factory in Stalingrad to actually form his brigade, he learned that mounting pressures from the front and a shortage of the new machines meant that Katukov's new brigade would in fact be halfequipped with the BT-7s after all. Nevertheless, Katukov was determined to make the most of it, and ensure that the nightmares he'd witnessed in June and early July would not be repeated.

Katukov was a rare creature in the autumn of 1941, a Red Army tank officer who'd fought the Germans tooth and nail . . . and lived. He hadn't been fired, killed in action, executed as another scapegoat for Stalin, or captured by the Germans. As a result, he was able to take what he'd learned in combat and apply it to the construction and training of his new unit from scratch. He called those early battles in the Ukraine his "real combat school," and devised counter-tactics to overcome observed German advantages in armor and air power.

For one, he knew and openly admitted that the Red Army was ". . . insufficiently prepared in tactical terms. We are especially poor in the conduct of defensive battle." He made sure his new drivers were taught to read terrain and make the most of even the slightest folds in the ground, defilades, or vegetation. He was also a Red Army pioneer in "mechanized" deception, using dummy positions, false firing points, and multiple fallback lines and rally points. These multiple fighting positions were prepared beforehand, and were chosen not only for how well units could fight from them, but how units could move between them unobserved. Dummy positions, held only by thin screening units (to fire off a few rounds, making some smoke and noise) would take the brunt of any initial German air and artillery preparation. Because the units were so thinly deployed, they'd take very Quickly they'd fall back to the real few losses. fighting positions while the German blow landed on an empty bag. Then the Katukov's tanks would either strike back or ambush with point-blank fire (whenever he could help it, Katukov would only engage at 200-300 meters), then fall back, then ambush again, then fall back again . . . he drilled his officers tried to take solace in STAVKA's promise to equip the and crews relentlessly in these tactics, sticking to





Wars: "hard in training, easy in battle."

Katukov got the chance to apply his new tactics along the highway running between Orel in the southwest and Mtensk in the northeast. Attached to the 1st Special Guards Rifle Corps, he formed his brigade first in front, then on the right flank continually skirmishing with the Germans as they advanced through a series of successive positions.

Finally, Guderian sent word down to his divisional commanders, ordering them to smash open the Orel highway and resume the advance on Tula. Guderian gave these orders with one eye on the sky, he knew the weather was about to crack and was determined to push over as much ground as possible before the autumn rains began in earnest.

The main German blow in this area landed on October 6, and this is the battle we will attempt to recreate with our Situation 13. The details will be discussed in the Situation Design section, but suffice it to say that the fight was a ferocious one. On October 6, the Germans were stopped cold in their tracks. General Lelyushenko pulled his corps back a few kilometers closer to Mtensk while the Germans paused for a few days to bring up supplies and repair vehicles. The Germans struck again on October 9, turning Katukov's left flank and breaking his line. Still Katukov kept his unit together, withdrawing under pressure in good order, crossing back across the Zusha River over a damaged railroad bridge in the middle of the night, even now under German fire.

The Germans, however, had already run out of time. The first snows fell on October 7. Guderian's spearhead, after having advanced 200 miles in the first week, advanced only 20 miles the second week. Katukov would receive the Order of Lenin for his fighting around Mtensk, and his 4th Tank Brigade would become the 1st Guards Tank Brigade on November 11. On that same day, Katukov was promoted to Major-General, and was well on his way to becoming one of the great Red Army tank commanders of World War II.

As for Guderian, his memories of Mtensk were far more ominous. Of October 6, he writes: "our 4th Panzer Division was attacked by Russian tanks and against German infantry or trucks.

Marshal Suvorov's old maxim from the Napoleonic went through some bad hours. This was the first occasion on which the vast superiority of the Russian T-34 to our tanks became plainly apparent. division suffered grievous casualties. The rapid advance on Tula which we had planned had therefore to be abandoned for the moment."

> When looking at battles like this, it's easy to fastforward the video of history, adding arbitrary "whatif" questions and exaggerate the importance of this or that particular engagement. In the case of Mtensk, however, given just how close the Germans would eventually come to Moscow, it's hard to imagine what would happen if Guderian's advance had not suffered this critical and undeniable setback at the outset of Operation Typhoon.

Situation Design: This was a fun game to design, if only because of the variety of Soviet units presented. Thankfully, the Battle for Mtensk is pretty welldocumented in Soviet history, so we have some pretty good detail to work with.

First let's look at the German units. If the order of battle seems a little familiar, note that we're looking at the exact same 4th Panzer Division portrayed in Situation 12. While this doesn't make for the most interesting part of game design, it does illustrate how exhausted these German units must have been, fighting battle after battle after battle across endless kilometers of Soviet steppe. At least the German player should be more than familiar with the fortes and failings of his units by this point.

Next we move to the Soviet units. The Soviet artillery (corps support assets, we're guessing they were actually part of 6th Guards Rifle Division, deployed right behind the battlefield according to RKKA maps) is pretty straightforward, as is their

antiaircraft weapons. Again, note the antiaircraft 76.2mm Personally, I remain doubtful such a weapon can be used against the *types* of aircraft flying the types of missions



usually represented in a PanzerBlitz game (these kinds of big guns were usually meant for high-altitude bombers), but there's no doubting its effectiveness





platoon with a new title and unit type symbol. They do not get the usual ParaLeader "all paratroopers engineers for CAT purposes" rule, because these guys are not equipped



with all the special satchel charges and other equipment usually carried in actual airborne drops. Like the 101st Airborne at Bastogne, they were called in as emergency reserves to help stabilize the Soviet south flank at Orel, Mtensk, and Bryansk. But their new 3 AF is going to make a hell of a difference in massed CAT attack, and of course the counter great.

Finally, we come to the Katyushas. Players who've fought with these things before in later-era PanzerBlitz Liberation games are certainly familiar with their firepower, but also know how rocket units like this can only fire every other



turn. The Soviet player is thus only really going to get three or four cracks with these things, but they're going to be good cracks, so choose their targets well. Called "guards mortar battalions," they were initially so secret that they could only be fired by speciallycleared NKVD troops. Many sources would have you think that these weapons were first at Orsha (near Smolensk) on July 14, 1941 . . . forgetting that the rail station they supposedly leveled was in fact still in Soviet hands on July 14. Guderian's XXIV Motorized Corps actually ran into these things on October 3, but these particular battalions (raised so quickly I don't think they ever had an actual name, no one seems to have it recorded) had *just* arrived the day before this battle was fought.

On the not-so-glamorous side, we have the sad "recon platoons" of the NKVD border regiments. Of course we're a long way from the Soviet border by this point, but naturally the Soviets were throwing every available man into the fight no matter how illtrained or equipped. Little better than glorified policemen, we know these guys were trying to withdraw under German pressure and were folded into the 1st Special Guards Rifle Corps as the defenses coalesced around Mtensk. Of course they aren't really "recon" units, but these counters are used for their

The Soviet airborne platoon is really just an SMG lower game values to represent the under-equipped drawbacks of these NKVD units.

> New units notwithstanding, the star of the Soviet show remains of course Katukov's 4th Tank Brigade. Despite the tables presented in Gregory Moore's site (which include KVs in most Soviet tank brigades), we happen to know that this particular tank brigade was made up entirely of T-34s and BT-7s. The usual rifle platoons and light support weapons are included, but what makes this formation special isn't in the units included, but how they behave on the field. This was due to Katukov's training techniques, handled in the special rules. Note that Soviet units can use split move and fire, a rule that fits perfectly with Katukov's "shoot-and-scoot" tactics.

> Katukov's use of deception, "actors," and dummy positions is a little harder to represent in PanzerBlitz without double blind rules, but again a few special rules can approximate its effects. Note how there are no German air units in the game. Richard Armstrong's Red Army Tank Commanders tells how a heavy German air strike was present . . . but hit Katukov's dummy positions before the tanks went in. So the Stukas were removed from Situation 13. Secondly, note how the German artillery can't take fire missions until Turn 4, impacting until Turn 5. Again, this is to represent German gunners dropping their first big fire missions on the wrong positions.

> The board, as always, is an approximation. The angled setup of course represents the general direction of the battlefield. Google Earth shows the southern half to indeed be a ridge as we show with Board 4, but this should really be more of a "shelf" rather than a ridge with a reverse slope to the southeast. Overall, however, we hope to show generally higher ground to the south, running southwest to northeast in parallel to the main Mtensk road in the northwest. Board 6 was chosen for its flatness, and to force the Soviet player to think carefully about his "Katukov-style" deployment. While this shouldn't be too easy for the Soviet player, there are some pretty nice spots for concealed armor deployment back at Tarakov and the surrounding gullies, woods, and low slopes.

One further note about the board is the slightly





Note that the vegetation is gold and orange, showing was right around the corner.

Lastly, we come to the victory conditions. These are a little more complex than usual, but do a better job at portraying the delicate balances involved in breakthrough scenarios. Sure, the Germans have to maul the Soviets and get some of their units off the far end of the board, but they can't shatter the whole front end of the 4th Panzer Division in the process. For this reason, the overall formula is Soviet combat units killed plus German units off the northeast edge of the board, minus German losses in combat units. This results in a net score where not only the overall position of the opposing forces are measured, but also the status and condition of those forces as well. Historically, the 4th Panzer Division, 201st Airborne Brigade, and especially Katukov's 4th Tank Brigade few days, and the player who has lost his whole force on this battlefield is gonna have some explaining to do when Guderian or Lelyushenko shows up at your command post and orders you to do it . . . again.

Playtesting: This is a big game, with over 120 *combat* units on the board (never mind trucks, wagons, and tractors). But it's a fun one, in fact almost too fun. Both times, both sides tried to throw away victory (and sometimes succeeded) by getting too aggressive or attacking the wrong target. Don't get dizzy looking at all this firepower. Remember that the other guy has a lot of firepower too, and it doesn't take a big mistake to lose this battle.

In setting up their defense, the Soviets deployed the NKVD Regiment in a stalling position, in the wooded road junctions and towns southeast of hex row T. No real though was given to their salvation or withdrawal, just stalling the German advance toward the "real" battle as much as possible. Given the general reputation of the NKVD, this somehow seemed poetic justice.

The rest of the Soviet defense was set up in more

modified color scheme, an easy thing to do when robust fashion. The towns of Novo and Tarakov playing electronically with Photoshop and Excel. made great firebases for their artillery, while the dreaded Katyushas were tucked up in the corner "autumn" colors. The first snow fell the morning after north of wooded ridge 6D2-6C3. The T-34s were this battle, remember, and although it didn't "stick," it deployed in woods and gullies (in true Katukov style) definitely warned both sides that Old Man Winter on Board 6, where there seemed to be a greater chance of a head-on collision with the bulk of 4th Panzer's tanks. If the Germans decided to be sly and try a snaking thrust through the wooded high ground of Board 4, the BT battalion was stacked up in woods and gullies where it was hoped the terrain would aid their delaying defense until the T-34s could crash down on the German left flank.

For the first game, the Germans tried the conventional approach, straight down the open low ground of Board 6. NKVD wagons were deployed in Grodino as a stalling measure, but this only gave the Germans a chance to literally CAT their way onto the board with perfect "CAT stacks" of a rifle, an HMG, and an engineer platoon. Town hexes notwithstanding, Grodino fell by Turn 2. Germans were careful to set up their second big wave were all called upon to fight further battles in the next of CATs here with only two infantry platoons per hex, so they could be picked up easily by their trucks on Turn 3. Meanwhile, the Germans' forward spearhead split into two basic elements, an infantry heavy detachment that went after Soviet positions in Brozhny, and a panzer element that turned right and made for the Soviet rifle and airborne platoons in woods and gulley hexes running from 6M6 to 6N7. The Soviets responded by collapsing the rest of their NKVD defense back as best they could (no longer needed that far forward on Board 4). We also saw the first "Katukov" split move and fire, with T-34s kneecapping German tanks before falling back to the next line of gullies. Finally came the first CAT from the Soviet airborne companies, dispersing a whole stack of PzKpfw IIIs.

> The German spearhead hit hard, but the Soviets hit back even harder with a ruthless pincer, built around T-34s from the north and BT-7s from the south. Losses on both sides were heavy and more or less equal (German opportunity fire poured in from no less than eleven separate hexes), but of course the Soviets had far more tanks to lose. German tanks left





bolt for the far end of the board, while those who still had a path of retreat decided to make use of it. At least the Germans could take solace in the fact that casualties were the Soviet antiaircraft batteries their artillery was now in play, their very first fire mission taking out Soviet mortars and 122mm field guns back in Tarakov. The Soviets responded by falling back in kind, remembering that German last of these positions on Turn 6, however. But even victory conditions demand that they inflict the casualties, not the other way around. They lost one more platoon due to failed activation checks, and 6K2 was hit by Russian direct artillery fire all the way some Soviet tanks had to stand their ground rather than join their comrades in defeat. The Soviet "tank half their pioneer battalion at a stroke. Soviet CATs company" special rules is especially important in this situation, the German player should keep a close eye while BT-7s running to the rescue of the NKVD on Soviet tank platoons and make sure the rule is regiment overran a German motorcycle platoon. being observed. superior tanks, after all, any Soviet wreck counter is a good thing for the Germans.

did look bad, such was their firepower and mobility that the first band of Soviet defenses was at last beginning to crack. One risky move the Germans pulled to accomplish this was the "Napoleonic" use of their infantry guns, literally in a line in theopen (hexes 6R4, 6S4, and 6S5, along with the big guns back in woods hex 6T2). They quite literally blew the Soviet rifle and airborne platoons out of their IPs, with no small amount of help from off-board artillery, PzKpfw IVs, and flaktracks, of course. Another gutsy play was a counter-overrun with their remaining PzKpfw IIIs and IIs, which killed another stack of Soviet T-34s at a cost of just one PzKpfw-IIIG. Sometimes you get lucky, is all. The Germans poured through the "Brozhny Gap" and were soon on the way to Tarakov. One "cheap trick" the Germans were also using during the course of this advance was a line of empty trucks screening their loaded trucks, hoping to at least provide a degree of protection against possible overruns, especially those potentially executed by those ridiculously fast BT-7s.

Meanwhile, the Germans were also dispatching a smaller battle group (remaining armored cars, motorcycles, about four infantry platoons of favious

on the wrong side of these jaws decided to make a easy victory points at the expense of the NKVD regiment.

> One thing that caused the Germans considerable belonging to the corps antiaircraft regiment, especially on trucks trying to bring up German infantry and guns. A German artillery mission finally silenced the as they restarted their push along the northern edge of the board, a stack of trucks loaded with engineers in from Novo. This expensive mistake cost the German also dispersed and then killed a German PzKpfw IV, Faced with larger numbers of Indeed this was becoming a battle for the record books.

Finally the Germans made their direct assault on As bad as things looked for the Germans, and they the next line of Soviet defense, built around trucks and tractors, four T-34s, a handful of BT-7s, and the fire support desperately coming in from Board 4. The assault was a bloody one, fight into the teeth of Soviet opportunity and artillery fire. But the line soon cracked. PzKpfw-IIs were the first to rush through, dodging the opportunity fire of BTs on ridge 6E2 only to catch the point-blank fire of Katyushas on the reverse slope (deliberately not taking indirect fire missions because by this point all the important Germans were within their minimum range anyway).

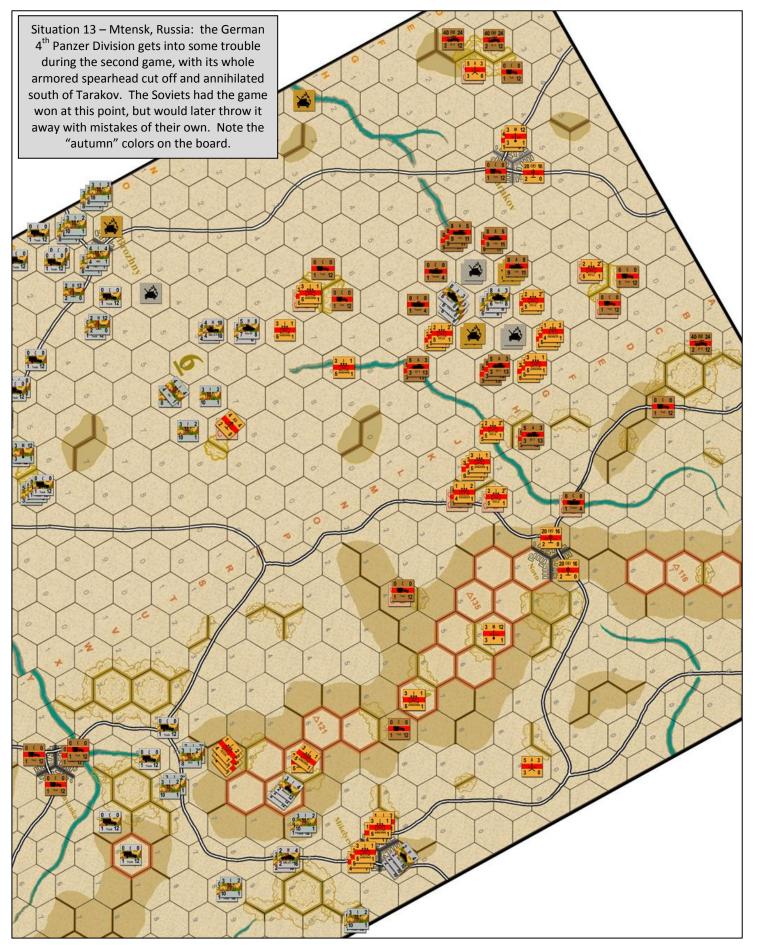
> Meanwhile, a vicious little sideshow had erupted way down in Mikelyevna, where a small German battle group had originally gone "NKVD hunting" in hopes of some quick victory points. The Soviets, however, had responded, and the Germans had met the challenge with armored cars and motorcycle reinforcements. Now a small battle had erupted around this little town, with the Soviets determined to make the Germans pay for their "easy kills."

Pinned down at Mikelyevna and with their right flank torn open north of Tarakov, the Soviets still fought bitterly. Even as five PzKpfw IIIGs escaped the board, the last PzKpfw IV was pinned down by direct fire from Soviet 76.2mm divisional guns (no types) to the south in the hopes of racking up some more fire missions, with the exception of one battery



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the Soviets had switched entirely to direct opportunity fire for their artillery). The two flaktracks stuck with the dispersed PzKpfw IV (they couldn't make it off the board and better to be in a stack with tanks when the Soviet CATs and overruns come in), only to die with the tanks when the Soviets overran the hex with their last BT-7s and T-34s. One more PzKpfw-II died to direct Katyusha fire as he fled off the board, while a last Soviet fire mission smashed a motorcycle section near Mikelyevna, just out of spite.

In the end, the Soviets held the Germans enough to win a very ugly marginal victory. The Germans killed 38 Soviet units and got 7 units off the, board, for a total score of 45. But they lost a horrific total of 29 units of their own, for a net score of 14 (just short of the 15 they need to win). In retrospect, both sides made mistakes. For their part, the Germans probably shouldn't have bothered with the reduction of Grodino, which cost them valuable time in developing their infantry-based attack. Also, the "NKVD hunting" expedition was pretty much a flop, costing the Germans more units (both in casualties and in units that could have escaped the board) than they gained by knocking down cheap recon platoons.

As for the Soviets, they shouldn't have launched that initial overrun, or if they did (it was damned pretty to see the Germans caught in such a perfect pincer), they should have stuck with it, pressing their advantage. True, they may have lost additional tanks, but these same PzKpfw-IIIGs were precisely the units that escaped the board. Five less victory points for the Germans could have tipped the balance.

Basically, the game worked well. Historically, the Germans weren't able to effect a real breakthrough, Katukov held his ground until he was withdrawn by his boss (Lelyushenko) two days later. Here, although the Germans managed a minor breakthrough (just 7 units, but they were all tanks), looking at the German losses, the 4th Panzer has been shattered as a fighting force. Despite Guderian's description of "heavy casualties" among the 4th Panzer's "bad hours," at least the division was ready for action over the following days and weeks. Although good German dice made up for a lot of their bad mistakes in the second half of the game, it *just* fell short of putting

Soviets had switched entirely to direct them over the goal line. Their mistakes at Grodino rtunity fire for their artillery). The two flaktracks and Mikyevna were just too grievous to overcome.

As usual, the second game was a lot more bloody. This time the Germans didn't waste time clearing out Soviet spoiling positions in Demyanka and Grodino, and shoved straight down the "valley floor" of Board 6. They took the same initial lumps from Soviet fire missions and direct fire from antiaircraft guns, but this time their tanks, organized into a tight panzerkiel, lunged straight for the far end of the board. It didn't work. The Soviets came out the gullies, woods, and towns with masses of tanks and swarms of riflemen, paratroopers, and engineers. The slaughter took place in the open meadow centered at 6G8. Even Soviet tractors rumbled behind the Germans to cut them off from easy escape. Every PzKpfw II and III died in that pocket, although they certainly took a grim toll of Soviet tanks and infantry with them. The PzKpfw IVs weren't in the cauldron, lagging behind after shooting up some Soviet antiaircraft positions. They eventually got off the board after shooting up two Katyusha batteries in the far northeast corner of the board.

Despite this masterful success, the Soviets then snatched defeat from the jaws of victory by *again* failing to stay on the defensive and charging after the German infantry following after the doomed panzers. Although they'd taken nasty losses to Soviet artillery in the predicable battles around Brozhny, they still packed enough punch to easily CAT a stack of BT-7s and then get lucky with a stack of T-34s. Soviet wreck counters choked the field around 6K4, and the balance began to tip toward the Germans once more.

The Germans were also a little smarter about how they handled things on Board 4. This time, although again investing Mikeyevna in a determined attack (and getting a little luckier with their artillery strikes this time), their faster armored cars and motorcycles didn't engage in a pointless slugging match against entrenched Soviet infantry . . . and instead made a break for the northeast end of the board behind the far side of Hills 116 ad 135. Five more victory points was just enough to turn the game in favor the Germans.

In the end, the second game was another squeaker. The Germans got 9 units off the board, although this time they were mostly light reconnaissance units like

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SITUATION

KATUKOV VS. GUDERIAN - MTENSK, RUSSIA (06 Oct 1941): With objectives to the north and south now secure, the focus of the German invasion shifts back to the central push on Moscow with the opening of Operation Typhoon. Guderian's Panzer Group forms the southern arm of this titanic effort, and quickly smashes through the Bryansk Front. STAVKA reacts with reserves, including the newly-organized "1st Special Guards Rifle Corps." Part of this unit is Mikhail Katukov's new outfit, the 4th Tank Brigade, which takes the field along with withdrawing NKVD border regiments, guards rifle units, even Soviet paratroopers and the new "Katyusha" rocket launchers Northeast of Orel, they meet Guderian's spearhead, made up of the 4th Panzer Division.



RUSSIAN FORCES

1st Special Guards Rifle Corps 26th Army, Bryansk Front (Morale C)



FORCE A 4th Tank Brigade



Elements, 201st Airborne Brigade **5th Airborne Corps**



Corps Support Elements, 1st Special Guards Rifle Corps



FORCE B

Shattered Remnants, NKVD Border Regiments



VICTORY CONDITIONS: Germans get one point for every Russian combat unit killed, plus one point for every German combat unit off the northeast end of the board. Subtract one point for each German ground unit lost to arrive at a net score for the game.

- more than 25: German DECISIVE •11-15 pts: Russian MARGINAL • 21-25 pts: German TACTICAL
- 16-20 pts: German MARGINAL
- •6-10 pts: Russian TACTICAL •5 or less: Russian DECISIVE

JEL GERMAN FORCES

4th Panzer Division, XXIV Mot. Corps Panzer Group "Guderian" **Army Group Center (Morale A)**



Current Strength, Panzer Regiment 35



5/66th Antiaircraft Company



Main Body, **Pioneer Battalion 79**



Artillery Regiment (Mot.) 10 (off board artillery, elements)



Vanguard (two understrength battalions), Infantry Regiment (mot.) 12



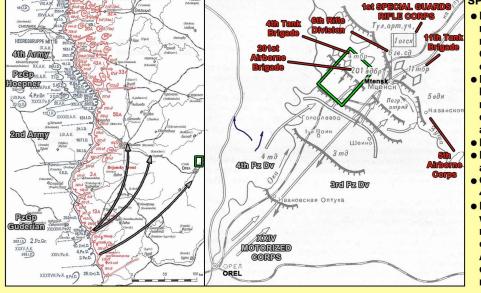
Reconnaissance Battalion 7



SETUP:

- Russians set up Force A anywhere northeast of hex row Q.
- Russians set up Force B anywhere southwest of hex row T.
- Germans enter along the southwest end of the map on Turn 1.

Germans move first Turn 5 2 3 6 9



SPECIAL RULES

- Russian activation rolls: At the beginning of each movement phase, Russian units must roll a d6. On a result of 1-5, the unit can move and operate normally. On a result of 6, the Russian unit cannot move or overrun. This does not include "motionless" CATs.
- Russian tanks must always be stacked at least two deep. If a stack takes losses, the "lone" Russian unit has one movement phase to rejoin another armored unit. If that can't do it, chooses not to do it, or fails its "Russian activation roll," the unit is eliminated.
 • Russian units MAY use Split Move and Fire.
- Russian airborne units do not get special CAT bonuses afforded to other airborne units in ParaLeader.
- German artillery cannot receive fire missions until Turn 4, to impact on Turn 5.
- Russian Katyshas: After firing, must take an entire turn without moving before they can fire again (reloading rockets). During this off turn, Katyushas cannot move or use opportunity fire. If they do, they must wait ANOTHER turn before firing. Also, if Katyushas use direct fire, they do NOT double AF at less than half range against unarmored targets.



PanzerBlitz, Barbarossa



SdKfz-234/8 armored cars, motorcycles, and flaktracks. But they killed 38 Soviet units, truly shattering the Soviet defense. This gave them a total of 47 points, minus the ghastly 30 points for combat losses. But this still gave them the net score 17 points, more than enough to win. The difference this time, of course, was the Soviet butcher's bill. Historically we know that Katukov's brigade in particular was heavily damaged but still operational (they fought another pitched battle against XXIV Motorized Corps just three days later). But here, they were basically annihilated in their boots.

Overall, the Germans and Soviets both claimed a win. Because the Soviet win was achieved with a +1 margin (they needed to hold the Germans to 15 or less, and they held them to 14), and the German win also achieved by a +1 margin (16 needed to win, and they walked away with 17), the combined result for Situation 13 goes down as a dead tie.

Situation 14 Return to Old Battlefields Borodino, Russia 16 October, 1941

Summary: The main effort of Operation Typhoon came right up the Smolensk-Moscow highway, with German panzer groups carving out yet another mammoth encirclement of Soviet armies around the town of Vyazma. While this pocket was being reduced, spearheads of the German XL Motorized Corps (including the SS "Das Reich" division and Vichy French volunteers) were among those racing eastward to exploit the breach. But they met fierce resistance at the historic battlefield of Borodino, where Russia's fate had been decided against the French in 1812. This time Mother Russia was defended by a "Red Banner" division recently arrived from Siberia, veterans of victories over Japan, and symbolically headquartered from the exact site where Marshal Kutuzov had commanded his long-ago battle against Napoleon.

Background: Some battles just beg to be made into *PanzerBlitz* games, and despite the fact that Western

and Front and North African battles are far better documented, if you research the right sources, you can still find some real gems in the East as well. The sheer pageantry of the 1941 Battle of Borodino (often called the Battle of Borodino Field in Russian sources, to distinguish it from the more famous Battle of Borodino in 1812) makes it hard to resist. Not only do we have a Waffen SS Motorized Division (SS "Das Reich," one of Nazi Germany's best and most infamous units), but we also have confirmed participation of French volunteers, fighting Russians on the very same battlefield where Napoleon fought Kutuzov in 1812. As for the Soviets, we have the 32nd "Red Banner" Rifle Division, one of the first of the famous "Siberian" divisions of 1941 to arrive, awarded their Red Banner title for their victory over the Japanese at Lake Khasan back in 1938. On top of all that, this is actually a pretty interesting battle in a strictly tactical sense. This is where the German spearheads first hit the outer extents of the so-called Mozhaisk Line, the emergency field fortification system, centered just 110 kilometers (68 miles) west of the Soviet capital.

At least from a Soviet perspective, the background for this fight it painted in rather grim colors. While Guderian had started his part of Operation Typhoon on September 30, the main effort of the great German offensive struck on October 2. The attack came right at the two major formations defending the approaches to Moscow, the Western Front (Konev) and the Reserve Front (Budenny). To the north, the German Ninth Army would protect the great attack's left flank. Then came "Papa" Hoth's Panzer Group III, forming the attacks great right hook and slicing down toward Vyazma from the northwest. In the middle stood von Kluge's Fourth Army, the big hulking "center" in this titanic line of scrimmage. Next came Colonel-General Hoepner (The Old Cavalryman), leading his Panzer Group IV in a "right hook" up from the southwest to meet Hoth at Vyazma. Meanwhile, the Second Army would protect the assault's right flank to the south. The objective was to encircle and annihilate the vast majority of the Soviet forces defending Moscow, which were primarily deployed around Vyazma. Additionally, the Second



anzerbiitz, Bardarossa



places like Bryansk and Karachev, meeting up with Guderian's spearheads coming up from the eastern Ukraine and thus closing still more encirclements around elements of Eremenko's Bryansk Front.

The Soviets, for their part, could only hope they were ready. The full list of the seventeen armies was too late. On October 6, Vyazma fell. The jaws available to the Western, Bryansk, and Reserve Fronts is listed in the background section for Situation 12. Suffice it to say that this accounted for over 40% of the Soviet entire military, in addition aforementioned fortifications of the Mozhaisk Line.

von Bock's massively-reinforced Army Group Center slammed into the Soviet line on the morning of October 2, under the cover of a brief artillery barrage and smokescreen. The Germans struck along a 360mile front, tearing open gaps from the western Dvina to the Desna rivers. In the north, Hoth's panzer group split open the junction between the Soviet 19th and 30th Armies. In the south, Hoepner hit the 43rd Army between the eyes under immense air support, smashed all the way through, and by the end of the first day was already tangled up with the 33rd Army of the Reserve Front. Konev had a massive artillery barrage prepared to meet the German attack, as well as reserves and counterattack forces. But these were all too slow and uncoordinated, the Soviet strikes arrived at the designated places and times only to find the Germans had already swung around behind them. Stalin forbade retreat, which was like Christmas come early to the OKH. Their main objective, remember, was to kill the Moscow defenses where they stood.

That was all on the first day. On the second day, the Germans pressed to a depth of 48 miles in some places, and Hoth's panzer divisions captured two intact bridges over the upper Dniepr. Now the whole rear area of Konev's Western Front was threatened from the north. Konev's deputy commander, General Boldin, tried a counterattack with the 50th Army, just as he had in the dark days of June (see Situation 02 -At least this time Boldin found Hoth's panzers, and sparked a heated fight involving the was finished that they started splitting off their drives Soviet 101st Motorized Division, 126th Tank Brigade, to other directions. The biggest was up north, where

Army would dispatch some units further south to not stopped. Meanwhile, Hoepner's Panzer Group IV completed the annihilation of the 43rd Army, turned the left flank of two more Soviet armies, and shoved them northwards into the rapidly-forming pocket that was taking shape just west of Vyazma.

At STAVKA's ordered a retreat, but like always, it had closed behind the Soviet armies of the Western and Reserve Fronts (the 16th, 19th, 20th, 24th, and part of the 32nd Armies), with Hoth carving down from the north and Hoepner curling up from the south. Meanwhile, the German Second Army's 113th Infantry Not that it helped them very much. Field Marshal Division had hooked up with Guderian's 18th Panzer northeast of Bryansk, slicing off two more pockets (3rd and 13th Armies north of the city, 50th Army to the Smaller pieces of Eremenko's south of the city). Bryansk Front had fragmented under Guderian's onslaught, and were also encircled. Eremenko himself was now badly wounded and had to be flown out of his encircled positions with the 50th Army.

> The Germans, naturally, thrilled. were Newspapers and newsreels screamed that the war is Russia was as good as won. The Soviets, meanwhile, were horrified. A gap 300 miles wide had been torn clean though the Moscow defenses, squarely in front of the capital. There were no real reserves with which to fill it, since these forces had already been squandered in the futile fighting around Kiev. Nothing seemed to stand in the way of a complete German victory. Of course, we know that didn't happen. The question is why. The answer is a complex one, but suffice it to say that in mid-October, three factors had a hand in saving the Soviet capital.

The first was the weather. As discussed in Situation 12, October 7 saw the first snow, which turned quickly to sleet and soon reduced the whole battlefield to a sloppy, goopy morass of mud. While this pretty much doomed any hope that significant Soviet forces would escape the pockets, it also slowed the German advance forward to the Mozhaisk Line and Moscow. The second factor was German indecision. They were so confident that the Red Army and 128th Tank Brigade. Hoth was slowed down but part of the Ninth Army was diverted to cut the



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up with some of von Leeb's forces coming down through the Valdai Hills. These were forces that were supposed to be covering Hoth's left wing. Sending them elsewhere meant that Hoth had to invest his own forces in protecting his wing, and less forces up front meant slower forward progress for his panzer group. Details notwithstanding, what the Germans missed about their belief that they had once again delivered a knock-out blow against the Red Army . . . was the "once again." How many times before had the OKH been convinced that the Soviets could never recover from the defeat just suffered?

Finally, the German advance was slowed by the sheer tenacity of the Soviet troops on the ground, including the ones doomed behind German lines. According to the Russian documentary series The Great War (English version: Soviet Storm, World War II required 22 German divisions, that's over 300,000 men was declared completely liquidated on October 13, five divisions remained tied down mopping up until the end of the month. The Soviet soldier was simply not giving up, despite being beaten, outflanked, cut off, bombarded from the air, starved, abandoned by their government, attacked on all sides by invading armies, and without hope of resupply, reinforcement, or rescue. They simply stood and fought, and fought, and fought further.

Nevertheless, the first phase of Operation Typhoon had been a horrific defeat for the Red Army. The Western and Reserve Fronts had been basically annihilated. The Bryansk Front was in full retreat. Although not all in one big pocket as seen at Kiev, the Soviet encirclements around Vyazma, Yelnia, Bryansk, and Karachev totaled almost another million men. Once again, the Germans were never really able to seal these off, and about 250,000 total Soviet troops escaped these encirclements by one means or another. But all told, another 688,000 Soviet soldiers were gone, making these encirclements collectively an even bigger disaster than Kiev. Out of fifteen armies, seven were gone. The Soviets had lost 64 out of 95 divisions,

Moscow-Leningrad Highway and maybe even hook artillery regiments. About 6,000 guns and mortars had been lost, together with 830 tanks.

> And as we've mentioned, this was the end of Typhoon's first phase. Now the Germans started heading east to exploit this breach they had created.

The Soviets, by this point, were in a state of near panic. Parts of the government were evacuated from People who tried to evacuate without authorization were arrested and sometimes shot. The reinforcements headed for Leningrad, which needed them desperately to break the siege that was already killing tens of thousands of people through bombardment and hunger, were diverted back to Moscow to man the Mozhaisk Line. Leningrad would have to live or die on its own. Another thing Leningrad lost to Moscow was the commander for its defense, Georgi Zhukov. He arrived at Moscow to take command of the defenses and quickly saw that in the East), the reduction of the Vyazma pocket the task ahead of him was damned near impossible. Seven infantry divisions were jammed into the not advancing on Moscow. Even though the pocket Mozhaisk Line, brand new, with sometimes one rifle for every five men and not even in full uniforms. Military academies were emptied, their 16-year old cadets marched off to die in the German whirlwind.

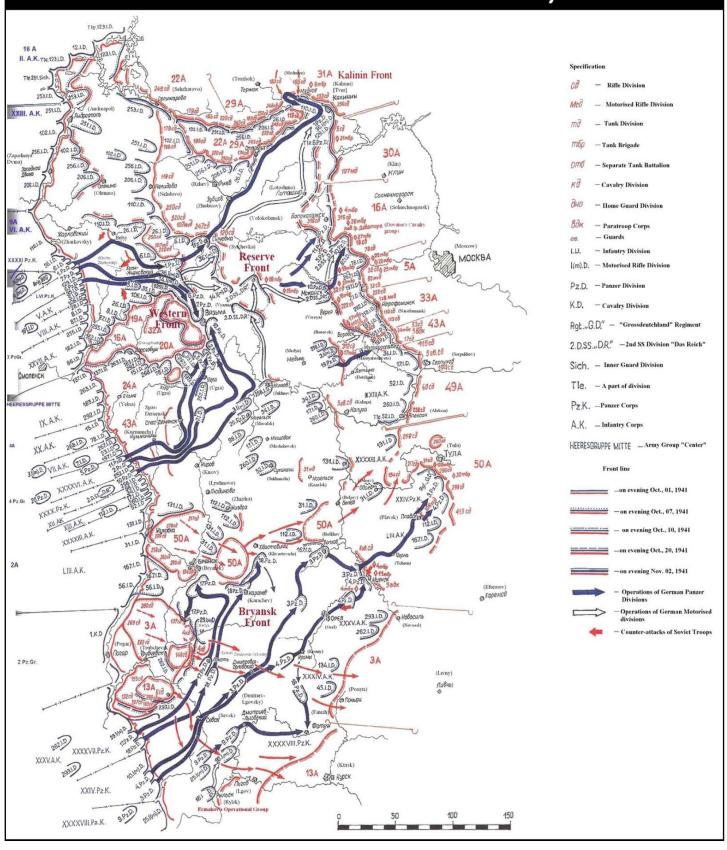
> Other defensive measures were more effective. For weeks now, the Mozhaisk Line had been under construction using the most draconian of conscript labor measures. Basically, if you weren't in the army or working in a factory, you wielded a shovel on the Mozhaisk Line. But field fortifications can only help if solid units occupy them. The first such units were just arriving from the Far East, but Stalin would need more time for many of them to make the long journey from Siberia. Also, STAVKA didn't dare take too many divisions out of Siberia for fear that Germany's ally, Japan, would take the opportunity to launch a strike. The Soviets had defeated the Japanese in Siberia twice already (1938 and 1939), and the Kwantung Army in Manchuria could very easily take this opportunity for payback.

Back at Moscow, STAVKA took the sad remains of the Western and Reserve Fronts, together with the trickle of reinforcements that had arrived so far from Siberia, and assembled the 16th, 5th, 43rd, and 49th 11 out of 15 tank brigades, and 50 out of 62 attached Armies. If any of these numbers seem familiar, you're

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OPERATION TYPHOON OCTOBER 2 - NOVEMBER 2, 1941





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times during the dark days of 1941.

The Soviet 5th Army was assigned to defend the most central sector of the Mozhaisk Line, pretty much right in front of Mozhaisk itself. German spearheads this line, along with Volokolamsk, Maloyoslavets, and Kaluga, during the third week of October. Fighting started immediately and the second great round of Operation Typhoon was underway.

One of the more interesting engagements in this second stage is the one we will try to recreate with Situation 14. A mixed spearhead of the XL Motorized Corps (made up of units from Hoepner's Panzer Group IV and the VII Corps of Kluge's Fourth Army) headed through Gzansk and straight up the Moscow Highway toward Mozhaisk. Actually all these forces were nominally under Kluge's Fourth Army command, remember that in 1941 German panzer "groups" were not yet panzer "armies" in their own right as they would become in 1942. This force was built primarily around the 10th Panzer Division, the SS "Das Reich" Motorized Division, and the 7th Infantry Division. Such a force was actually badly understrength to serve as a spearhead for all of Army Group Center. But again, too many German divisions were still required for the reduction of the Vyazma and Bryansk pockets.

Nevertheless, these were some of the best soldiers in the entire Reich. The 10th Panzer Division and 7th Infantry had fought since the war's opening days in Poland, and drew upon long histories with regiments extending back through the days of the Reichswehr. Curiously, the 7th Infantry Division also had the 638th Infantry Regiment attached to it, more commonly known as the Légion des Volontaires Français, or LVF. This was a unit of 2,400 Frenchmen under the command of Major Roger Labonne, men who either preferred military service to conscript labor after the fall of France the previous year, or genuinely hated and feared Bolshevism.

approached the Mozhaisk Line. In their path was the divisions to arrive from the Far East. The 32nd had

not wrong. STAVKA raised dozens of armies multiple Rifle Corps in July and August of 1938, where it had helped decisively defeat the Japanese. This division was not like many of the others who'd fought against Barbarossa or Typhoon so far. These men had won major victories after Stalin's purges, and had avoided the subsequent disasters of Finland and Barbarossa. Their officers knew their business, and the men had smelled gunpowder before.

> Needless to say, Das Reich's smooth ride over open ground was destined to come to a impolite halt. The first bloody nose came at the village of Elnya, where a famous series of Soviet antitank pillboxes jammed up a Das Reich column of PzKpfw-IIIs while they were trying to cross a river. The first and last tank of the column were hit first, leaving the rest of the column helplessly strung out in the water. Sergeant Harintseva's bunker still stands there to this day, a monument to the day's heroism.

> Still, the Germans were able to bypass this obstacle and continue the drive toward Mozhaisk. But they ran into the rest of the 32nd Red Banner Rifle Division (part of the reconstituted 5th Army, now under the command of Katukov's boss from last week, General D. D. Lelyushenko). The battlefield where the two forces met was no more a stranger to death and blood than the men who gathered to fight there. This was Borodino, where Marshal Kutusov and Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte had fought an epic battle in 1812, the last time an invading army had come this close to Moscow.

> The symbolism was lost on no one. Field Marshal von Kluge visited the front and spoke in particular to the men of the LVF, reminding them that Germans and French had fought together against the Russians on this very field 129 years ago. As for the Soviets, they staged the 32nd Red Banner Division's headquarters on the exact spot where Kutuzov had his headquarters in 1812.

The odds against the 32nd Red Banner Rifle Division were long. They were up against the whole This German spearhead was in for a rough ride asit Das Reich Division, the 10th Panzer Division, and part of the 7th Infantry Division. Granted, none of these 32nd Red Banner Rifle Division, one of the first units were exactly at full strength after pushing all the way from the Polish border, but the fact remained earned its "Red Banner" designation as part of the 39th that the Soviets were badly outnumbered. However,





with attached units like 421st and 367th Separate Antitank Regiments, as well as the 18th, 19th, and 20th Tank Brigades. Furthermore, the 32nd was defending the first belts of the Mozhaisk Line. Forget blocks, minefields, and IPs, the Soviets here had trenches and pillboxes, not to mention concrete bunkers with emplaced machine guns, antitank and howitzers.

The battle would last almost a week and needless to say, the invaders took horrendous casualties. The LVF had soon lost over fifty percent of its strength and had to be pulled off the line. Das Reich also took steep losses, including a hideous proportion of its officers. Although the 32nd would indeed finally have to be pulled out, the retreat wouldn't come for six days and even then only when other Soviet units in the south gave way (near Barovsk and Kaluga) and the 32nd was threatened with encirclement. Still, the 32nd fought back every step of the way, "retreating by recoil" as the Marine Corps expression goes. The time gained by this defense was invaluable, Zhukov was able to bring in more divisions and eventually halt the Germans at the lines of the Pratva and Nara Rivers, just 40 miles from the outskirts of Moscow.

Yet World War II was not yet done with Borodino When the great Moscow counteroffensive field. started on December 5 and the war started moving the other way, it soon came time for the Soviets to reclaim this sacred Russian soil. On January 18, 1942, the Borodino battlefield was liberated by soldiers of the 82nd Motorized Division. The October defense of this ground was celebrated as an important part of saving the capital, and more monuments would be erected in years to come, those of 1941 to stand beside those of 1812.

Situation Design: This situation was both immensely enjoyable and very tough to design. On the one hand, there was so much detailed information available (actually a rarity in most Eastern Front situations), combined with so many interesting units like Waffen SS grenadiers, Vichy French volunteers, and Red Banner infantry regiments. On the other hand, it was just too painful to leave out any of these delicious temptations, so the situation quickly grew very large.

the 32nd Rifle Division was also heavily reinforced Further considerations like the fortifications of the Mozhaisk Line and the massive Soviet artillery confirmed to be in this engagement also contributed to making this game a monster. Then again, if you want small games, stick to Desert Leader where the battles were usually rather modest in size. This is the Eastern Front, where they never did anything small.

> One of the most immediate things a player will notice when opening this situation is the new units involved. Don't be thrown by the new colors, the Waffen SS and Vichy French units are the exact same infantry, artillery, and transport units AFV, Germans have been using all along. The mix of counters for each force is a little different (per Gregory Moore's SS "Das Reich" for Axisforum.net for the LVF), but the new colors are purely decorative. The only real functional consideration here is the use of the blue-colored Vichy counters to help track their slightly lower morale rating. Granted, the Soviets also different morale ratings for different units within their order of battle, but the "oddballs" in this case are all the same unique unit type (Soviet recon platoons), so a different counter color is not required).



As for the Soviets, the novelty isn't in the types of units, but the sheer quantity. Although "only" a rifle division, the 32nd Red Banner was reinforced very heavily for this fight, which goes a long way in explaining how it held on for so long against such a powerful German assault. Note the Morale B, meant to reflect this formation's status as a Red Banner division (basically, the 32nd had been a "Guards" unit for three years now). The one exception, of course, is the training regiment made up of raw, under-armed recruits (recon platoons with Morale D). But even the best Soviet units still work within the parameters of a flawed Red Army command structure, so the Soviet tank stacking rule and the 1-5 activation checks are



PanzerBlitz, Barbarossa



still in effect. Also, Katukov was unfortunately not here, so Soviet tanks do not get to use the split move and fire rule. In fact, many of their tanks at Borodino *may* have been dug into the earth as improvised pillboxes (I can't confirm this, so it's not in the special rules).

Speaking of "dug in," players will also notice that the Soviets have at their disposal a massive amount of field fortifications. Hundreds of thousands of civilians and soldiers have been slaving away "chaingang" style on the Mozhaisk Line for almost two months now, and the results are well documented in sources like RKKA, firsthand accounts of Soviet veterans, and the documentary Soviet Storm, World War II in the East. Actual pillboxes are everywhere, together with concrete fortifications housing machine guns, antitank guns, and direct-fire howitzers. Please note that any Soviet unit can make use of these counters. On the situation card they are listed beside the 230th Reserve Training Regiment strictly for space and layout purposes.

For set up and victory conditions, the RKKA site has a truly wonderful map that shows Soviet dispositions down to the battalion level, along with lines of German progress through different stages of the battle. This allowed us to establish very precise set up parameters and victory conditions that the German player will have to fulfill (we always try to have the victory conditions based on the approximate historical outcome, remember). Looking the lines that the Germans actually reached, we can set those same lines as an "end zone" on our game board and judge victory by how many German units can get in there.

The map board itself was also a relatively straightforward affair. The RKKA map shows heavy woods to the north, and a relatively open field to the south (where the historical battlefield of Borodino presumably took place). Thus, Boards 1 and 7 were used, with the marshes taken out of board via special rules. Note that the town of Molkanova *roughly* approximates Borodino, in a perfect world the Molkanova town hexes would be about another kilometer to the northwest. But short of drawing custom maps per scenario, this is certainly close enough for our situation.

Another result of having such a richly-detailed RKKA battlefield map is the sheer number of Soviet formations that winds up getting included in the game's design. Because the map is so detailed, we know exactly what artillery regiments, tank brigades, or antitank battalions were present. There's no guesswork, and the RKKA map shows a *lot* of Soviet units, it's clear that the 32nd Red Banner Rifle Division was "reinforced to the teeth" for this fight. Even assuming that many of these component units were not at full strength, by the time we translated everything off the RKKA historical map into the *PanzerBlitz* situation, we were looking at a helluva lot of counters. Just look at the artillery involved.

As for the Germans, for once they're the ones only "summarized" in most of the source material, and they're the ones where we have to use a little creative guesswork. We know that "Das Reich" was there, as well as the 10th Panzer Division and the 638th "LVF" Regiment. But how much of each force isn't clear. So basically we have to look at the historical outcome and work our way backwards. How much German firepower should be included so that *most* equally well-fought games, with roughly equal degrees of good old-fashioned luck, will usually produce results generally comparable to the real-life battle? As you can imagine, this kind of *PanzerBlitz* reverse engineering requires a little finesse and a leap of faith.

We also know that the Germans had significant air support, but again, details are very hazy. We selected units that online sources (a newly-discovered Danish site: www.ww2.dk) confirmed were close to the Borodino battlefield. Again, we tried to select a level of firepower that would present both players with the level of challenge that would produce a historical game.

Playtesting: We've had some great luck with our PanzerBlitz Barbarossa games as of late, with situations running smoothly and balanced the first time. This one, while a lot of fun, started off less than perfect. First of all, it was (and honestly still is) just way too big. A ten-turn game easily took about twelve hours to play, not including set up which was a considerable task in itself with all these field fortifications. Also, the initial run of the game showed that despite their



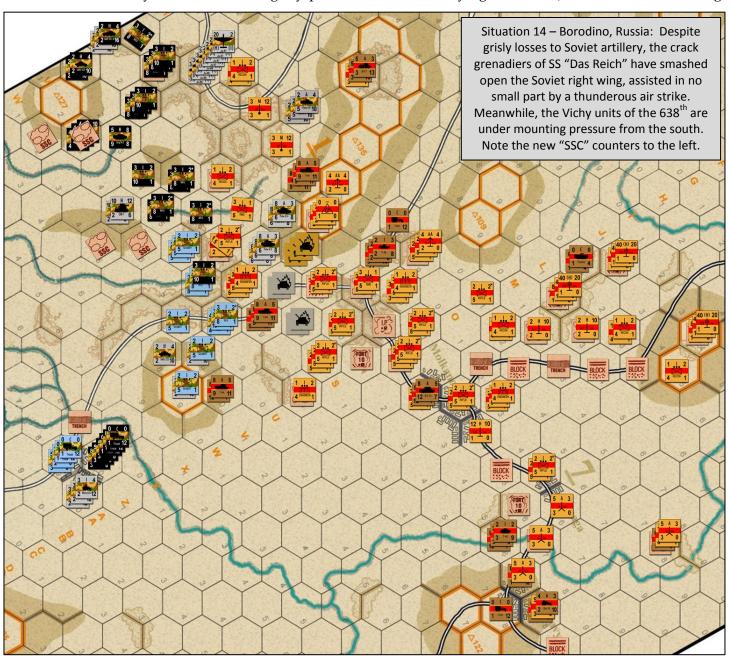


disadvantage. "Deutschland" Regiment, plus the "Reich" Pioneer Battalion, plus the JU-88s and Stukas, was all just too much.

inversion of the historical battle. On the actual day in question, the infantry of "Das Reich" and the LVF fixed the Soviets from the north and northwest while eventually pushed up from the southwest. Here, the 10th Panzer sidestepped to the left to hit the northern that German infantry. While the tightly-packed hexes and relying on the +1/+5 bonuses, then using

massive artillery, all their field fortifications, and German infantry initially took losses from the heavy tank support, the Soviets were actually at a mammoth barrages of Soviet artillery, the losses In the first game, the whole actually weren't that bad because all the tree lines and ridges tangled across Board 1 made it very hard for Soviets spotters to call in the fire missions. Germans also made use of their own artillery to call in The basic German plan in the first game was in smoke shell concentrations (Panzer Leader Rule XVI.C) that actually helped screen parts of the German advance as well.

Meanwhile, the Luftwaffe positively gutted the the 10th Panzer caved in the opposite Soviet wing and only real offensive edge the Soviets had, their massive batteries of 152mm and 122mm howitzers. Soviets had tried to get more bang for their defensive end of the Soviet line shoulder-to-shoulder with all buck, deploying artillery batteries far back in town





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their fortifications for frontal positions. This tactic fortresses, all in woods hexes. This meant that a bonus, blew these guns into dust.

artillery and blew a kilometer-wide hole in the Soviet DRM). Surely the big German bombing raid would right wing, their lack of weight in the south allowed burn some of the Soviet artillery, but this time the the Soviets to swing up and hit the advancing Soviets wouldn't have to fight the rest of the battle Germans in their own right wing. The whole battle without their big bat. began to swirl around itself, with black, grey, brown, and even blue counters almost forming a demented Soviet artillery at all, at least not with their aircraft. pinwheel pattern on the board. The Vichy French of Instead they put all their bombers on the northern the 638th Infantry Regiment took the brunt of this Soviet line, and quite simply blew a gigantic hole assault, and suffered horrendous casualties to the T- clean through the Soviet position. With no units left 34s, KVs, and especially masses of 32nd Red Banner Infantry trudging up as fast as they could from the forgotten southern half of the battlefield.

In the end, the battle was a disaster for the Soviets. Not only was the game clearly (yet surprisingly) favored toward the Germans, but the Soviets misjudged the deployment of their artillery very badly, and at a single stroke lost their entire base of fire support. Once that happened, the massed German infantry assault, particularly that of the SS "Deutschland" Regiment, was just unstoppable. If there is any lesson to be taken from Situation 14, it is never underestimate the power of a solid infantry assault, even if the tanks elsewhere are having their heads handed to them by Soviet T-34s. The Germans wound up with 32 ground combat units on the northeastern half of Board 1, just enough to give them the *tactical* victory.

The game was adjusted, slightly reducing German airpower and pioneer engineers. A deeper cut was realistically insubstantial) breakthrough points. While plenty of SdKfz-222 and 231/8 armored cars and BMW motorcycles had gotten into the "Borodino end zone" these are hardly the kinds of units that can anchor a new breakthrough.

Another adjustment was made not to the available forces, but to how the Soviets deployed their artillery. This time they deployed all their big howitzers in enough score to hand the *Soviets* a marginal victory.

proved to be an absolute disaster, since the German 152mm howitzer battery with a DF of 1 now had a DF air group was able to get 4-1 odds on almost every of 11, with a +3 DRM. So in order to get anything Soviet howitzer and even with the city +1 DRM close to a "sure" kill on a single battery, the Germans would have to put 80 AF of aircraft bombing on it (to Yet even as the Germans annihilated the Soviet get a 7-1, where a die result of 4 gives a kill after a +3

> As it turned out, the Germans didn't go after the to spot effectively, the Soviet thus artillery was silenced in a different way, at least on this part of the battlefield.

Again a wild melee started on the German right wing as the Soviets pulled their tanks up to engage. But this time some Soviet tanks also engaged the front of the German penetration in the north. A stack of T-34s managed to overrun the dispersed "Reich" StG-III, and lasted long enough to call in a Soviet artillery barrage that really kicked the teeth out of "Deutschland" regiment's leading edge. But in the end these T-34s were swarmed in CAT attacks and destroyed, and there was just no Soviet infantry left in this sector after that bombing run and the initial German charge. The result was almost exactly the same as seen in the first game, with the Soviet right wing blown off and the German right wing caved in by counterattacking Soviet tanks and infantry (losses among the 638th LVF Regiment were even worse this time). A vicious battle of CAT and counter-CAT made to the high-speed recon units that had allowed raged over the length of Hill 135, with both sides the Germans to score so many "cheap" (but losing terribly but Soviet numbers finally winning

> Nevertheless, the Germans still managed to get significant forces into the northeastern half of Board 1, mostly pouring through the gaping gash torn open by Stukas, JU-88s, and "Das Reich" grenadiers. difference here was the scale. This time the Germans got only 22 units into the end zone, which was a low

Panzer

SITUATION

RETURN TO OLD BATTLEFIELDS - BORODINO, RUSSIA (16 Oct 1941): The main effort of Operation Typhoon came with two German panzer groups carving out another mammoth encirclement of Soviet armies around the town of Vyazma. While this pocket was being reduced, the spearhead of the German XL Motorized Corps (including the SS "Das Reich" division and Vichy French volunteers) raced eastward to exploit N the breach. But at the historic battlefield of Borodino, they ran into the 32nd "Red Banner" division, recently arrived from Siberia. These were veterans of victories over Japan, and symbolically commanded from the exact site where Marshal Kutuzov had led his long-ago battle against Napoleon in 1812



RUSSIAN FORCES

32nd Red Banner Rifle Division (Reinforced) 5th Army, Western Front (Morale B)



Current Strength, 322nd Rifle Rgt, 17th Rifle Rgt, and 30th Sapper Bn



65th Separate Antitank Bn

3

166th Battery, 53rd Antiaircraft Bn

Remnants, 230th Reserve **Training Rgt**

Morale D

153rd Howitzer Artillery Rgt, elements of 133rd Light Artillery Rgt



Remnants, 18th, 19th, and 20th Tank Brigades (attached)



Field Fortifications



12



VICTORY CONDITIONS

Based on how many German combat ground units can break into (and survive until the end of the game) the northeast half of Board 1 at the end of the game (rows A through Q).

- 40+ units: German DECISIVE victory
- 32-39 units: German TACTICAL victory
- 24-31 units: German MARGINAL victory
- 16-23 units: Russian MARGINAL victory
- 8-15 units: Russian TACTICAL victory
- Less than 8: Russian DECISIVE victory



JEL GERMAN FORCES

Vanguard, XL Motorized Corps Panzer Group "Hoepner"

Army Group Center (Morale A and B)



FORCE A (Morale A - 2nd SS "Das Reich" Division) "Deutschland" Regiment



SS "Reich"

Pioneer Bn 3 | 2

SS "Reich" Reconnaissance Battalion



SS "Reich"

Artillery Rgt 60 (H) 36 40 (H) 32 SS "Reich" Sturmgeschutz, FlaK, and AT Bns



FORCE B (Morale B - 7th Infantry Division): 638th Infantry Regiment Légion des Volontaires Français (LVF)



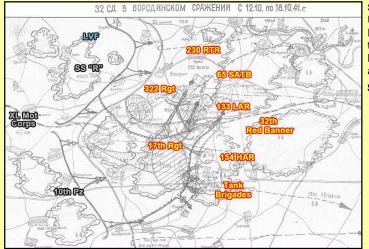
FORCE C (Morale A - 10th Panzer Division) 7th Panzer Regiment, 90th Recon Battalion, 706th Infantry Gun Company



Kampfgeschwader 3 and Sturzkampfgeschwader 77, II Fliegerkorps, Luftflotte 2 (Schatalowka and Orel)



Germans move first Turn 2 5



SET UP: Russians set up first. Field fortifications can be set up anywhere. Units can be set up anywhere in hex rows A through T. German Force A and B enter along the southwestern end of Board 1. German Force C enters along the southwestern end of Board 7. If the German player wishes, units can be held off the board until Turn 2. Any units that don't enter on Turn 2, however, are considered lost. German air power arrives on Turn 4.

SPECIAL RULES

- Russian activation rolls: Roll 1-5 At the beginning of each movement phase, Russian units must roll a d6. On a result of 1-5, the unit can move and operate normally. On a result of 6, the Russian unit cannot move or overrun. This does not include "motionless" CATs.
- Russian tanks must always be stacked at least two deep. If a stack takes losses, the "lone" Russian unit has one movement phase to rejoin another armored unit. If that can't do it, chooses not to do it, or fails its "Russian activation roll," the unit is eliminated.
- Russian units may NOT use Split Move and Fire.
- Ignore all swamp hexes. Consider clear terrain unless there are other terrain features also in the hex.
- Russian recon units have a Morale D (230th Reserve Training Regiment)



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German marginal victory for the overall situation. While definitely a lot of fun, running this game is definitely a weekend project, and shouldn't be undertaken lightly.

Situation 15 The Hungarian "Rapid Corps" Pobjeda, Ukraine 19 October, 1941

Summary: For better or worse, the invasion of the Soviet Union was truly an international effort. One of the allied units was the Hungarian "Fast Corps," a three-brigade formation of light tanks, infantry, and cavalry in support of Army Group South. One of its more celebrated moments came after the Battle of Kiev, when the German 17th Army was advancing toward the Donets River. Despite being battered down to just six battalions, the Hungarian Fast Corps was ordered to break through a strong section of the Soviet line held near Pobjeda. However, the Hungarians outflanked the Soviets instead and destabilized their defenses enough to facilitate a German breakthrough toward Izyum. Here, the remnants of the Hungarian 1st Mechanized Brigade engage part of the Soviet 270th Rifle Division.

Background: Even though the main Axis effort of October and November was funneled into the Eastern Front's central region with the launch of Operation Typhoon in the center, the north and south flanks also saw significant action during this timeframe. German offensives were unleashed in these sectors despite the loss of virtually all their armored and mechanized forces, with local commanders feeling the pressure to fulfill Hitler's overreaching strategic and economic goals even as the Typhoon drank up the lion's share of Wehrmacht offensive resources.

In the north, these battles revolved around the Earlier, Zhukov had encirclement of Leningrad. frustrated German attempts to captured the city by coup de main, and now Army Group North's commander (Field Marshal Ritter von Leeb) sought to strangle the city. The encirclement operation was

Balancing a German tactical victory against a spearheaded by the XXXIX Motorized Corps (his only Soviet marginal victory, we naturally end up with a remaining mechanized formation, Hoth's Panzer Group IV had been ordered to join Operation Typhoon). These troops were ordered to cut around Leningrad from the south, turn northeast behind the city, and link up with the Finns along the Svir River. Although they didn't quite make it before the arrival of winter (this is northern Russia, remember, by the beginning of November temperatures were dropping as low as -40 degrees Fahrenheit), they did maul the Soviet 52nd and 4th Armies, cut the last land route to Lake Ladoga, and smash all Soviet counterattacks thrown at them. Suffice it to say that Leningrad was now under siege and beginning to starve (11,000 would die of starvation in November 1941 alone). This siege wouldn't be lifted for 882 days, during which time at least 1.5 million Leningrad civilians died of starvation, disease, cold (there was no fuel for heating), and incessant German shelling.

> To the south, things looked even worse for the Red Army. The apocalyptic Battle of Kiev had just ended, leaving the Southwest Front horrifically mauled and without any of its commanders (Marshal Kirponos and most of his staff had been killed during the fight). Meanwhile, von Rundstedt's Army Group South was attacking in three different directions, toward Khar'kov in the north, the Donbas in the center, and toward Rostov to the south. Again, the Germans seemed convinced that the Red Army had been effectively annihilated in front of them and thought they could simply "road trip" to their objectives in as many simultaneous directions as they wanted. The Soviets, however, were finally beginning to smarten up a little when it came with withdrawing. They pulled their forces out of Odessa (which had been holding out almost since the war started), leaving these forces available for offering resistance against German advances toward Rostov and the Crimea.

> These southern defenses never really formed a cohesive line, however, and didn't hold for long. By the middle of October, Manstein (transferred out of Army Group North, see Situation 6) took over the German Eleventh Army in the extreme south of the battlefront and shoved the Soviet 51st Army back into the Crimea. He soon had them backed up into



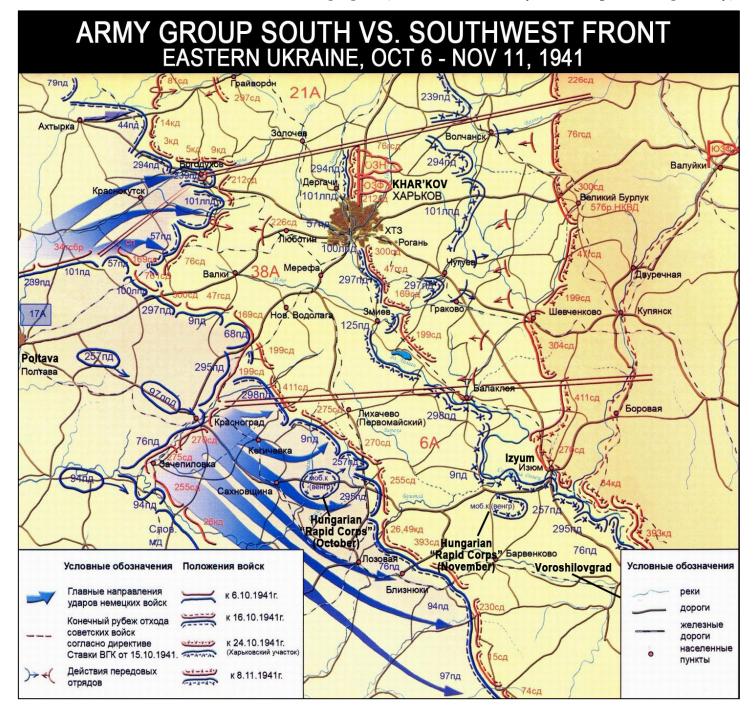
Panzerbiitz, Barbarossa



Sevastopol, starting another epic siege, while the rest support assets (especially air power) had the deck of the 51st Army was kicked off the Crimea altogether stacked hopelessly in favor of the Germans. Khar'kov (withdrawing through Kerch onto the Taman fell on October 24, but several more battles would Peninsula). Rostov, meanwhile, would prove a much swirl around this town in 1942 and 1943. It would tougher nut to crack. Fighting there wouldn't even change hands a total of four times, making Khar'kov begin until well into November, and the city wouldn't one of the most embattled cities of the Eastern Front. be permanently taken until 1942.

meanwhile, von Reichenau's Sixth Army was engaged German Seventeenth Army out of the Poltava Region in fierce fighting along the approaches toward Khar'kov. Again, Soviet resistance was bitter but a lack of mechanization, reinforcements, and proper

Meanwhile, Army Group South's third drive was Along Army Group South's northern flank, aimed right up the center, spearheaded by the on October 6. This assault made good ground, and quickly shattered the Soviet 6th and 38th Armies (Generals Malinovsky and Tsiganov, respectively).







cities of Voroshilovgrad (named for the same Klimenti an invasion of the USSR until someone bombed a (locomotives and ironworks, economic prizes especially), but the largest cities in the extreme east of Taking them would complete the conquest of the Ukraine, and Izyum also had would have to be crossed before the Germans could contemplate assaults eastward toward Stalingrad or southward into the oil-rich Caucasus.

lack of available mechanized forces (Army Group South still had Kleitst's panzer group, but they were driving further south toward Rostov), and soon the Soviets pulled back to the general line of the Donets and Mius Rivers. There were just no reserves after the manpower catastrophe of Kiev. Furthermore, the Moscow sector had full priority on all reinforcements and even these were being systematically chewed up in the encirclements near Yelnia, Bryansk, and especially Vyazma. Still, the Soviet formations in the south managed respectable resistance at several points, their task made easier by the overall dilution and sheer exhaustion of the German forces coming at them.

One particularly interesting battle took place in Seventeenth Army's sector, which we will try to recreate for our Situation 15. Here, the Germans hit a stubborn knot of Soviet defense (mounted by the 270th Rifle Division of Malinovsky's 6th Army), where initial assaults toward the small Berekha were repulsed. Reeling back and shaking off the shock, the Germans then ordered their allies to hit the same sector of the line. These allies were the Hungarian "Rapid Corps" under the command of Major-General Bela Dalnoki-Miklos.

The Hungarian Rapid Corps (Gyorshadtest in Hungarian) was a semi-motorized force made up two motorized brigades and a cavalry brigade, and was without a doubt the best formation of the Royal strong Axis sympathies, Hungary had actually tried to Miklos knew full well that a frontal attack was out of

The German objective was to reach the industrial stay out of the war and definitely wanted no part of Voroshilov that gave his name to the KV-series of Hungarian city shortly after Barbarossa started. To tanks) and Izyum. Not only were these important this day, it's hotly debated who actually carried out this bombing, but suffice it to say it got Hungary into the war on Germany's side.

The Royal Hungarian Army sent the 40,000-strong "Carpathian Group" into the Ukraine (spearheaded important bridges over the Donets River, which by the Rapid Corps), where it achieved notable successes during the German encirclements of Uman in July, and the Battle of Nikopol in August. However, losses were always severe in these battles, German progress was rapid despite the relative much higher than those suffered by neighboring German units. Part of the reason is (to put it cynically) that the Germans considered these satellite units as inferior and expendable, and had no compunctions about sending them headlong into the worst of situations. More directly, these Hungarian units were poorly equipped in comparison to German or even Soviet units at the time, and thus took predictably heavy losses.

> The Rapid Corps was probably the best example of this. Each motorized brigade of the corps (there were only two in the whole Royal Hungarian Army) was made up of standard rifle infantry in trucks, although by this stage of the war many were carried in wagons instead. Additionally, there were bicycle regiments under the direct control of the corps commander, and each brigade also had a "mechanized battalion" for These "armored" battalions were reconnaissance. made of "Toldi I" tanks (based on Swedish Ladsverk L60 light tanks), T-35s purchased Czechoslovakia before the war, and old Italian CV-33 infantry carriers. Anyone who's played Desert Leader is woefully familiar with these wretched little machines, and probably feels pity for any soldiers who unfortunate enough to go into combat with them.

The commander of the Seventeenth Army (Lieutenant-General Carl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel) ordered the Rapid Corps to hit the Soviet 270th Rifle Division and clear the way for a continued German advance. However, these same defensive positions Hungarian Army sent in to Russia during the first had just repelled a better-equipped German force year of the war. Although always influenced by several times larger than the Rapid Corps, so Dalnoki-





taking independent action from their German masters, the side, opening a breach that would soon lead to the encirclement of substantial Soviet forces. Meanwhile, the Hungarians had also opened the path for continued German advances, which were soon drawing toward Voroshilovgrad and Izyum.

Hungarian Rapid Corps would again be put into battle, fighting two more bitter engagements just south of Izyum until the Germans finally took the city and secured a bridgehead over the Donets River. By this point, however, the Hungarians could take no more. The Rapid Corps alone had lost almost 3,000 dead, 1,500 missing, and 7,500 wounded. Eighty percent of the Toldi tanks were destroyed, every one of their CV-33s and L3 tankettes (another Italian gem from Desert Leader), and ninety percent of their "Csaba" armored cars. The Rapid Corps had effectively ground itself to powder in the Ukraine, and was finally withdrawn to Budapest at the beginning of December.

Situation Design: Learning our lesson after the last monster scenario, a major consideration this time was to keep the situation design down to a manageable This actually proved easy to do, given the relatively small and thinly-deployed forces left to the southern sector of the Eastern Front with all the heavy hitters drawn up into the Typhoon maelstrom.

Several historical factors helped keep this situation design more modest in scale. First was the size of the Hungarian Rapid Corps. Never a particularly imposing force, by this point of the campaign the corps was a shadow of its former self. Yet the Soviets they met couldn't have been too impressive either, in order for the Hungarians to have scored this notable success. Looking at the tashv.nm.ru website for the detailed breakdown of the 270th Rifle Division, we find at least circumstantial evidence supporting this assumption, seeing where the 270th was formed only two months before on August 20. This definitely puts it in the second-wave bracket of post-Barbarossa divisions as outlined on Gregory Moore's site, and the situation map found on the RKKA site (included on a

the question. In a rare case of a satellite-nation unit previous page) shows where the 270th faced not on the Hungarian Rapid Corps, but also the whole German the Rapid Corps struck the 270th Rifle Division from 257th Infantry Division (XLIX Corps, Seventeenth Army). This was a respectably solid "fourth wave" formation, that would certainly have demanded most of the 270th Rifle Division's attention.

The construction of the Soviet force pool was pretty straight forward, simply putting one wing of the In November, the battered and exhausted division (basically, one full regiment with support assets) on the board. General Soviet doctrine during this part of the war, at least for rifle divisions, was to stack two regiments up on the line, with the third regiment centered and braced behind them. Soviet field fortifications are pretty much ubiquitous by this point, writings of Hans von Luck, Friedrich von Mellenthin, and Heinz Guderian all lament on just how fast Soviet troops could dig in, lay camouflage, and sow mines. Still, given the speed of recent Axis advances, these are kept to a modest scale since the Soviets have had only a short amount of time to prepare them (unlike the Mozhaisk Line field works as seen in Situation 14).

The Hungarians, of course, required a little more effort. New counters had to be made up, using designs and values provided on Gregory Moore's site and of course Imaginative Strategist.com. It was a little extra work, but I couldn't resist putting the Hungarian national colors on the counters, just as was done for the Finns (and of course even our "everyday" German and Soviet counters have embellishments not found even on these fantastic websites). As stated many times before, one of the objectives of PanzerBlitz: Barbarossa was to explore often-neglected corners of the campaign and try types of battles beyond the usual "bread and butter" PanzerBlitz shootouts. This was the reason for trying

at least one "satellite nation" situation in the first place, and represented our last real chance to do so with the Uman encirclement and Battle of Nikolpol already behind us (by the time you get to the battles immediately south of Izyum, the Hungarian Rapid Corps is just too weak to play a big role in a convincing *PanzerBlitz* situation).









As stated previously, the values and compositions of the Hungarian units are taken from Imaginative Strategist and especially Gregory Moore's website. To reflect the generally "run-down" state of the Rapid Corps by this stage of the campaign, all battalions and regiments are portrayed as understrength. Note the combat values for the Hungarian rifle platoon, basically the 2-I-2*-8-1 we see for the Germans in *Panzer Leader* 1940. It bears mentioning that this is the



"pre MG-42" rifle platoon that most sources use for German rifle platoons during Barbarossa. Admittedly, so far we've been using a mix of more traditional "3-I-2*-8-1" rifle platoons for the Germans. To compensate, we've mixed with Security platoons where appropriate to "water down" German infantry strength, almost never given German infantry Morale A, and designed situations without the large numbers **HMG** sections as suggested these in aforementioned sources. Not only does this save us a lot of custom counters for German infantry situations, but also (hopefully) portrays the German infantry as the tactically cohesive force that made it such an unsung powerhouse in the shadow of the "gloryhound" units like the panzers and the Stukas.

Getting back to the Hungarians, note their morale rating of "B." These Rapid Corps troops are often referred to as the best fielded by the Royal Hungarian Army, which is in turn usually regarded as the best satellite army in the south (as compared to the Romanians and Italians, for example). Platoon for platoon and battalion for battalion, only the Finns are generally regarded as better. Where the Hungarians are let down, however, are in the mechanical quality. These tanks (if you really want to call them that) are just sad. But against these strung out Soviet positions on a wide-open field, they just might score a success (as of course they seemed to have done historically). The "Csaba" armored car seems to be the best unit on the board, unfortunately the Hungarians only have one of them. Originally a British design named for the son of Atilla the Hun, the Csaba mounted a 20mm centrally located faceted turret. Hungarian artillery seems to be the standard 105mm mid-caliber howitzer, and their antiaircraft guns the Swedesh Bofors 40mm used by so many nations on all sides of World War II. Looking at the "Toldi I" tanks, we already know that the Hungarians indeed bought military equipment from Sweden.

The board is based on what we can find on Google Earth, where almost no significant changes of elevation are apparent in the general battle area, which seems to be flat farmland with isolated patches of trees. Players who want a slightly wider perspective of the battle area could envision Board 5 atop the two copies of Board 6, thus representing the Berekha River to the northeast (although honestly the Berekha River is probably not as big as the Board 5 river would suggest).

This leads us to the victory conditions. Breaking off the northeast edge of the map board (and thus "reaching" that river), represents the Hungarian objectives of turning the 270th Rifle Division's wing through indirect attack and thus setting it up for encirclement with the help of the German 257th Infantry Division.

The Soviets, meanwhile, unfortunately take a step backwards with this "second string" rifle division only seven weeks old. Activations rolls are again 1-4, and morale is once again rated at "D."

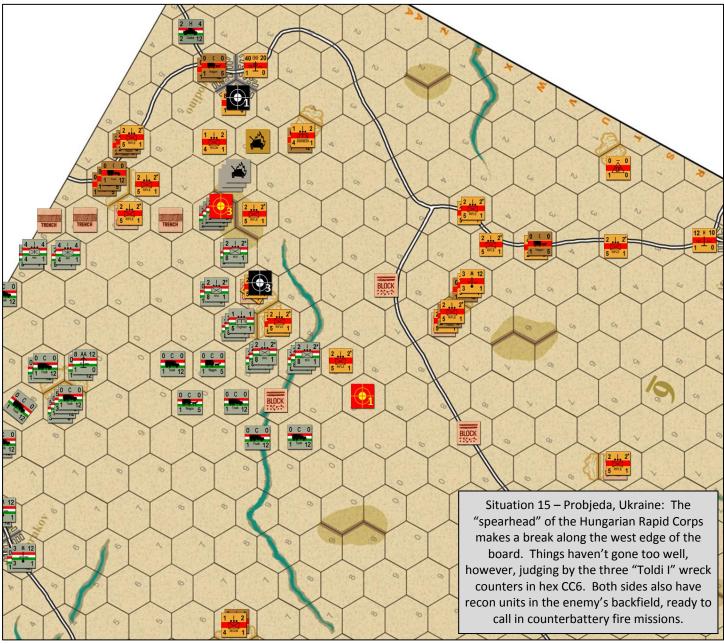
Playtesting: Oh, what a pleasure it is to play a "normal" sized *PanzerBlitz* game again!

Setting up Situation 15, we're confronted by the usual breakthrough scenario questions. The defender never has enough units to build a solid Maginot Line across the board, so has to make the most of fields of fire, long-ranged weapons, terrain, and a mobile reaction force to seal up the board as tight as he can. The attacker, meanwhile, can either hook left or hook right, blitzing up the center is usually a bad idea *unless* the defender has truly left the middle empty.

(as of course they seemed to have done historically). For the first game, the Hungarians decided to hook The "Csaba" armored car seems to be the best unit on left, making a push up the northwest edge of the map board, unfortunately the Hungarians only have board through "north" Grodino sector. They rolled one of them. Originally a British design named for the son of Atilla the Hun, the Csaba mounted a 20mm Soviets experienced some trouble getting their cannon and an 8mm coaxial machine gun in a defenses realigned (now that the Hungarian attack







corridor was so transparently clear). In particular, the Soviets needed no less than five turns to get their eastern 122mm battery hitched behind some trucks and headed over to the right side of the battlefield from "east" Tarakov. Direct-fire artillery strikes had better luck, particularly the 37mm antiaircraft guns posted in North Grodino and hitting Hungarian trucks with opportunity fire. The Hungarian convoy dispersed and unloaded near the seam between the two boards, while Hungarian artillery started hunting for these troublesome Soviet fire points. Soviet .50 cal AA guns in 6EE8 (fortified in an IP, no less) caused additional problems, which Hungarian infantry needed a few turns to dig out, taking casualties in the process.

As the Soviet defense re-coalesced directly in front of the Hungarian spearhead (limited to hex rows AA-GG by the threat of Soviet 122mm direct-fire guns in North Brozhny), the Hungarians started thinking about sending their armored forces around to the right. The idea was to swing around behind the converging Soviet reinforcements, taking a few lumps from the Soviet 122mm infantry guns but hopefully getting the rest of these mechanized forces off the board. By the gully hexes 618-6110, combined with some well-placed Soviet block counters, prevented this move. Swinging back to the inside, the Hungarian Toldi I tanks got hung up in the midst of Soviet infantry and wiped out just short of North Grodino. But this opened the door for the CV-33





tankettes and Csaba armored cars right behind, which strike up the southeast corridor. soon swung around behind the town. Just before Hungarians did much better. They rolled their truck leaving the board, they called in artillery on the back convoy up onto the northern board and dismounted hex of Grodino, thus pasting the Soviet 122mm en masse on Turn 2, basically burning their truck fleet artillery battery.

range of the 122mm infantry guns, with the western howitzers annihilated and the eastern howitzers having trouble getting set up, the Soviet defense just didn't have the fire support to withstand the impact of the Hungarian infantry. Meanwhile, the Hungarian 40mm AA guns (set up in woods hex South 6D10), provided great fire support until they were taken out by Soviet mortars. Interestingly, once the Hungarians got halfway across the northern board, they simply laced up their boots for the "Infantry Quick March" rule and made a run for it. With so few units ready to lay down opportunity fire, the "half-DF" rule didn't matter too much and with a Morale B, the Hungarians had a reasonable chance to quickly recover from "selfdispersals" as a result of using this rule. Long story short, a lot of Hungarian infantry got off the northeast edge of the board this way (just remember that MG sections and mortars *do not get* to use this rule).

Sadly, those Hungarian units who didn't get off the board were now left to their own devices against Soviet counterattacks. As more Soviet infantry continued to trickle in from the east end of the board along the Brozhny road, and as they Soviets finally got their second 122mm howitzer battery set up, they decisively pinned down and inflicted heavy casualties on remaining Hungarian units unlucky enough to still be on the board.

In the end, Hungarians managed to get 11 units off the northeast edge of the board, barely giving them a marginal victory. Additionally, the Hungarians had lost 21 units (along with the bulk of their transport), while the Soviets lost 22. Overall, the game seemed to work well. In played in about three hours (after setup), allowed the Hungarians modest breakthrough, although only at a hideous cost (in keeping with the steep price the Gyorshadtest always seemed to pay for its successes).

other approach, hooking around the far right for a cals up on Ridge 6D3 combined with redeployed

and started a northeast march on foot. While this Bereft of the 37mm and .50 cal AA guns, out of tactic may have been a little rough on the trucks (voluntary self-destruction stacking limitations), it definitely put the "Hungarian phalanx" in prime position for a direct, concentrated, and wellformed attack. Unfortunately, the Soviets had set up a solid line of trenches across hexes 6C5, 6B6, and 6A6. This mean that any breakthroughs the Hungarian infantry managed to score here could not be used by their vehicles. Therefore, the Hungarians had to shove through the urban hexes of East Tarakov. Here, they just had no luck. The Hungarian artillery, despite stacking up to the 3-1 odds column for successive fire missions, and despite massive Hungarian CATs, just couldn't kill Soviet infantry fast enough. Enough platoons survived each turn (usually dispersed, but entrenched nonetheless), to allow fresh platoons to be fed in from the Soviet reserves.

> Running out of time, the Hungarians tried to flow around the Tarakov obstacle. The mechanized battalion shifted left, taking horrendous losses through opportunity fire. All three CV-33 tankettes were swiftly converted to Hungarian wreck counters, while one Toldi I would eventually by burned out as well. Two Toldi Is and the Csaba escaped, however, but this was nowhere near enough to secure a Hungarian victory.

Fortunately for the Hungarians, they were also flowing around to the right (trenches don't bother infantry, remember). With HMG and 40mm AA support, they Hungarians shot their way over ridge 6C4-6A5 and poured through the breach. The rest of the Hungarian infantry (still piled up in front of East Tarakov) took too long to swing around through this gap, however. To make matters worse, some of the Hungarian infantry platoons that did get through this gap compounded the mistake by curling back west to attach East Tarakov from behind. The town cracked but never fell, while the continued battle here cost the For the second game, the Hungarians tried the Hungarians in time and infantry platoons. Soviet .50

Panzer Blitz.

SITUATION 15

THE HUNGARIAN RAPID CORPS - PROBJEDA, UKRAINE (19 Oct 1941): One of the allied units fighting alongside the Germans was the Hungarian "Rapid Corps," made up of light tanks, infantry, and cavalry in support of Army Group South. One of their more celebrated moments came during the German 17th Army's advance toward the Donets River. Despite being battered down to just six battalions, the Rapid Corps was ordered to break through a strong section of the Soviet line held near Pobjeda. The Hungarians outflanked the Soviets instead and managed to destabilize their defenses enough to facilitate a German breakthrough toward Izyum. Here, remnants of the Hungarian 1st Motorized Brigade engage part of the Soviet 270th Rifle Division.



RUSSIAN FORCES Left Wing, 270th Rifle Division

Left Wing, 270th Rifle Division 6th Army, Southwest Front (Morale D)



977th Rifle Regiment



Batteries, 810th Artillery Regiment



542nd Separate Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion



Elements, 549th Sapper Battalion



344th Recon Company



SET UP

Soviets set up first on the northeast board. Hungarians enter along the southwest edge of the board on Turn 1. Hungarian howitzers are off-board.





1st Mechanized Battalion (current strength)



Main Body, 1st Motorized Regiment



Brigate Antiaircraft Battery



Batteries,
1st Motorized Artillery Battalion

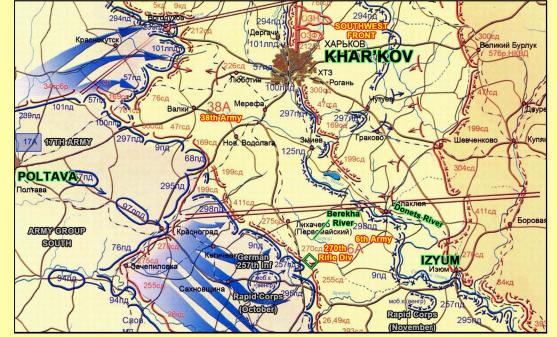


VICTORY CONDITIONS

Based on how many Hungarian combat units can escape off the northeast edge of the board by the end of the game.

- 15+ units: Hungarian DECISIVE victory
- 13-14 units: Hungarian TACTICAL victory
- 11-12 units: Hungarian MARGINAL victory
- 9-10 units: Russian MARGINAL victory
- 7-8 units: Russian TACTICAL victory
- 6 or less units: Russian DECISIVE victory

Hungarians move first Turn 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



SPECIAL RULES

- Russian activation rolls: Roll 1-4.
 At the beginning of each movement phase, Russian units must roll a d6.
 On a result of 1-4, the unit can move and operate normally. On a result of 5-6, the Russian unit cannot move or overrun. This does not include "motionless" CATs.
- Russian units may NOT use Split Move and Fire.
- Hungarian CV-33s are not turreted AFVs, and cannot use split move and fire.
- Soviet T-28 tractors are considered armored targets. Thus, they leave wreck counters when eliminated, and can overrun non-armored targets. Basically, consider them "Russian Bren carriers."
- Note: A "third map board" to the northeast would contain the small Berekha River, ultimate aim of the Hungarian flanking movement.





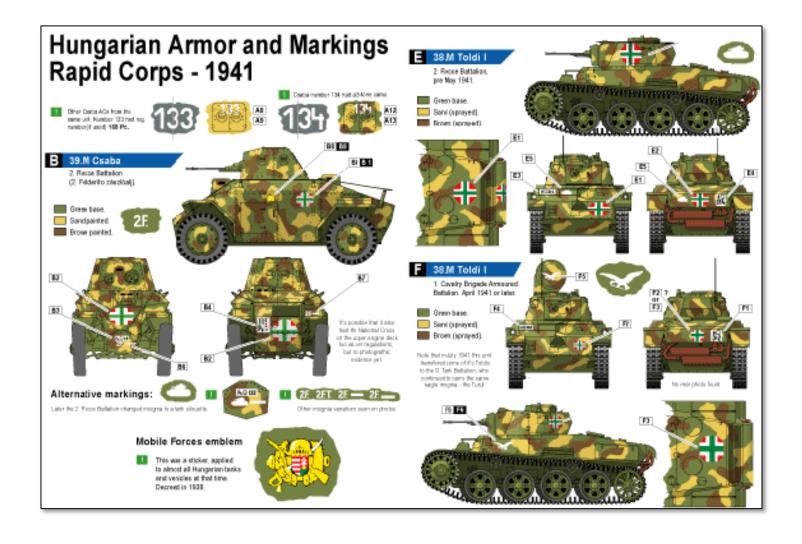
Soviet howitzers and of course the 82mm mortars to continually arriving from the west end of the board pin down and kill still more Hungarian infantry. Granted, other platoons kicked into quick march and made it off the board, but the balance of the game remained in doubt.

Meanwhile, a stack of Hungarian trucks had actually been caught in the open and destroyed by an unlikely overrun by the Soviet T-28 tractors, who only fell in turn to a combined assault of Hungarian infantry with CAT attacks and even Hungarian 37mm antitank guns (it's not often these little "door knockers" actually get to kill anything). But this wasn't enough damage to allow these antitank guns to re-hitch behind their trucks and escape, to say nothing of other Hungarian infantry or the aforementioned third platoon of Toldi I tanks. The slow but steady trickle of Soviet reinforcements

was just enough to keep things sealed up across the corridor F through K, and the Hungarians were never able to get anything else off the northeast edge of the board.

At the end of the second game, the Soviets had managed to hold the Hungarians to just 10 units off the northeast edge of the map board, thus winning the skin-of-the-teeth marginal Strangely, the second game wasn't bloodier than the first (as is usually the case). Only 17 Soviet units were destroyed, compared to 16 Hungarians.

Since both the Hungarians and the Soviets have walked away with the absolute barest of victories in this battle (both won by just 1-point margins), the overall result for Situation 15 is chalked up as a dead





Situations, Analysis, and Campaign Journal, PANZERBLITZ on the Eastern Front, By JAMES JOHNSON June - December 1941

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SECTION SIX NOVEMBER, 1941 ENEMY AT THE GATES

The runaway victories of Operations Barbarossa and Typhoon have at last brought the armies of the Third Reich to the very gates of Moscow. What would have really happened if the Germans managed to take the Soviet capital? Napoleon took Moscow but was still defeated by the Russian Army and Russian winter. But this is not 1812. Not only is Moscow the capital and symbolic heart of the Soviet Union, but also the center of transport, government, and communication crucial to running a modern war and state. The city was literally the head of the Soviet Union, sever it and the rest of the country might have been reduced to twitching, disconnected limbs. Soviet industry east of the Urals was still being established. The fall of Moscow just *might* have made the difference not only in Russia, but all of World War II.

Even if this wasn't the case, taking Moscow was vital for the Germans. The city had become a symbol for them as well, a shining hope held out against flagging morale and mounting exhaustion. And as winter closed in, the Army desperately needed an anchor, a shore one which to land in the seemingly endless sea of Russian steppe. Perhaps most of all, everyone in the Wehrmacht now knew how the Red Army could dig in and raise reserves. At least subconsciously, the Germans knew that if they didn't take Moscow now . . . they never would.

Situation 16 Katukov's Spoiling Attack Skirmanovo, Russia 12 November, 1941

Summary: Despite its amazing successes, Operation Typhoon had ground largely to a halt by the beginning of November, 1941. Primary causes were the weakened state of German units, poor logistics, and the *rasputitsa*, the torrential Russian autumn rains. With the battlefield dissolved into a sea of mud, the Red Army was given a respite that it used to prepare a

series of spoiling attacks to be hurled against the German spearheads poised to strike at Moscow. Although most of these attacks were wasteful failures, the one carried out by Katukov's new 1st Guards Tank Brigade saw notable success. Here, Katukov's tankers encounter forward elements of the 10th Panzer Division, XL Panzer Corps, just 50 miles westnorthwest of Moscow.

Background: By the end of October, the German armies in Russia were in bad shape. Total casualties had amounted to 686,000. Only one third of all motorized vehicles were still operational, and the panzer divisions averaged about 35% of their original strength (already reduced to 60% of their strength in France, so really these formations were about 20% of what the divisional commanders had gone into action with on May 10, 1940). This is just the front-line operational strength, other areas like logistics were in even worse condition. Horses were dying by the tens of thousands due to overuse and exhaustion. The rail network could not support the long German supply lines, and were under increasing threat from Soviet partisans (often formed around cadres of Red Army soldiers who'd been encircled).

Nor was the Luftwaffe operating at anything close to established strength. Not only were combat losses adding up, but the brutal demands put upon the squadrons were taking their toll on men and machines. The Russian dust, rain, and primitive airfields were also beating on the aircraft, and Field Marshal Kesselring would soon have to make substantial transfers *out* of Russia to support new operations in North Africa.

While many German commanders and staff officers saw these shortcomings and sent repeated warnings up the chains of command, other factors blinded Hitler and his clique to the danger. One, after an advance of nearly a thousand kilometers, German units were now within just 60 kilometers of Moscow in some places. By way of comparison, Guderian's tanks had covered sixty kilometers in just the first day of Barbarossa, so the senior German leadership remained hypnotized by the idea that "just one last push" would see Moscow fall into their hands. Second, although the Germans had indeed suffered



<u>anzerbiitz, Barbarossa</u>



six million, the vast majority of these being prisoners captured in the twenty or so major encirclements scored by the Wehrmacht so far. Surely the Red Army was reaching the bottom of its reserves by now. The problem was, the Germans had been saying this almost since the beginning of the war, and since almost the beginning of the war, the Soviets had been proving them wrong.

Another basic misconception under which the German commanders labored was the idea that the Red Army soldier would sooner or later just "give up." As unrealistic as this sounds with seventy years of hindsight, at the time the Germans could be forgiven for nursing such misplaced hope. The Poles, the French, even the British had all reached "tipping points," with a general malaise of defeat soon consuming large portions of their armies. Poles and winter, you know, in Russia, where the temperature is French had begun surrendering en masse, and the British had long perfected their "scarper march" in North Africa. Despite recent successes with their "Crusader" offensive and the lifting of the siege of Tobruk, British morale in the desert was actually remains that at the end of October, the German armies rather poor thanks to Rommel's resiliency, rapid counterattacks, and persistent unpredictability. Shouldn't the Red Army, having been pushed 94% of the way back to Moscow and having suffered six million casualties, soon have to throw in the towel as well? Everyone knew how much the average Soviet peasant, worker, and soldier hated Stalin anyway.

But of course Stalin had ensured that this war wasn't about him, the Party, or even the Soviet Union. He'd made this war about "Mother Russia," an almost mythological concept for which the average Russian would fight long after any Western army would have wilted. Say what you will about Stalin's military incompetence or nervous breakdown at the start of Barbarossa. He did this one thing right, and it made damned sure that Zhukov, Shapashnikov, and Vasilevsky had the bedrock army they'd need to score all their miraculous successes in the field.

Last but not least, the Soviets were helped immensely by the weather. Although much has been made of the "bottomless" Russian mud in October and November, followed by the "killer" winter of Army (see Situation 10) were dead.

over 600,000 casualties, the Soviets had suffered over December, the fact remains that in many ways this weather was very typical for the season. Sources vary widely on this, with the documentary Soviet Storm claiming it was the worst winter in 140 years, while Robert Kirchubel's Operations Barbarossa, Army Group Center claims that rainfall was actually less than normal during October, and only 0.5 inches above normal in November. Furthermore, temperatures were only 2.0 degrees colder than average in October, and 3.5 degrees colder in November. True, the frost came a little early, but this actually helped the Germans since it froze the mud solid for German vehicles. The point here is that the real failing of Typhoon wasn't just "bad luck with the weather," but poor German planning not to have taken these factors into account in the first place. As Churchill was once quoted before the House of Commons, "There is a apt top fall . . . very low. We all read about it in school, but Hitler forgot it. He must have been very loosely educated."

> Whatever the norms in meteorology, the fact standing in front of Moscow quite literally sank into an ocean of mud. The mud, of course, was a handicap for both sides, another fact that doesn't get a lot of press in the history books. Colonel Katukov would write that even T-34s could foul their tracks in the rasputitsa mud, and that wheeled vehicles like staff cars had to be towed or mounted on the beds of larger trucks if they were to have any chance at all.

> The end result was that all the German divisions striking "within distance" Moscow of completely stuck through the end of October and the first half of November. This precious stall gave Zhukov time to gather more reinforcements from Siberia, reorganize and reform the shattered units that had somehow survived Typhoon, and prepare yet another line of hand-dug defenses in front of Moscow.

> Zhukov had a tall order ahead of him, as the Typhoon offensive had left the Red Army defenses of Moscow grievously mauled. Seven armies were gone. Two army commanders, Major General Petrov of the 50th Army and Major General Rakutin of the 24th





commander (Eremenko, Bryansk Front) was badly wounded. Three other Soviet generals had been captured. One would die in German captivity, one would be liberated in 1945 only to be shot for "treason," and one would be fully reinstated with Stalin's personal blessing . . . probably because he'd been badly wounded when captured.

In Moscow itself, the city was on the verge on panic. We've already discussed how part of the Soviet government was evacuated (Central Committee of the Communist Party and most of the foreign ministries pulled out as early as October 15). Metros stopped running, and the massive Moscow subway system was converted into a huge bomb shelter as the Luftwaffe stepped up its bombing raids on the city.

Yet even as NKVD squads were shooting suspected "looters defeatists," the Soviet Union's top film star was booked for a highly-publicized concert right in Moscow. The annual November 7 parade was held to commemorate Bolshevik the Revolution, with all the pomp and ceremony defiantly held with German armies only an hour's drive away. Of course, most of the units in the parade rolled right off the parade and

into the front line. Stalin himself refused to move act of political theater. The Red Army wouldn't hold gestures), announcing to his people "if it's a war of response to Hitler's statement at the beginning of the war that Barbarossa would be a "war not of conquest, but annihilation."). The whole parade was a complete

FINAL GERMAN DRIVES ON MOSCOW **NOVEMBER 15 - DECEMBER 5, 1941** 30 A XXVII.A.K. 86.I.D. 36.1(m).D 6.Pz.D. 3.Pz.Gr. LVI.Pz.K. 166c6p HEERESGRUPPE MITTE MOSCOW 029тбр 5A ЗАПАДНЫЙ ФРОНТ Подольск 33A Линия фронта к исходу: XX.A.K. 43A 20 ноября 415ca 49A 5 ≥ 8.00 4.A. XIII.A.K.

from Moscow (another of his more shrewd symbolic it again until November 1945. To hold one in 1941 with German armies right at Moscow's doorstep was annihilation they want, they shall have one" (in meant purely to demonstrate Stalin's and the Red Army's determination to fight on regardless of the odds.

Other gestures of defiance had a darker edge. On





November 4, the commander and commissar of the Soviet 133rd Rifle Division was shot for ordering a retreat from Ruza without permission. The order was "not a step backwards," and Stalin meant it.

Yet Stalin, still seeing himself as the Supreme Commander of the Red Army *in practice* instead of just in name, insisted on a series of spoiling attacks to be hurled into the teeth of the German spearheads during the second and third weeks of November. Far from knocking the Germans off balance and preventing the subsequent German lunge, the only thing these attacks "spoiled" was the reserve force Over 2,000 men were killed and thousands more Zhukov had so gingerly reassembled with baling wire wounded against the German 106th Infantry Division, and duct tape. Thus, when the mud eventually froze which didn't lose a single man. Soon Rokossovsky's so German vehicles could move again, Zhukov had right wing was almost surrounded and as the that much less strength to resist them. Indeed, both Germans started their own offensive, Rokossovsky's armies were working with the handicap of a "Little left was soon under tremendous pressure as well. The Napoleon" dictator pushing flags around a map table.

limited success in at least one small sector. Not Guards Tank Brigade fighting a number of rear-guard surprisingly, this was under the command of the and covering actions until the end of November. newly-promoted Major-General Katukov. He'd also been decorated with the Order of Lenin for his him) barely got a night's sleep during the whole time. staunch defensive operations outside of Mtensk on the Orel-Tula Highway (see Situation 13). Most importantly, his 4th Tank Brigade had been rebuilt and upgraded into the 1st Guards Tank Brigade (obviously, the first such brigade so honored in the Red Army). Katukov was hardly a man with time to rest on his laurels, however. Straight from Mtensk he'd brought the remains of his shattered brigade and rebuilt it to a "guards" order of battle. According to Richard Armstrong's Red Army Tank Commanders, he didn't even have time to get his new rank insignia, he literally drew general's stars on his great coat with indelible ink, the 1940s version of a "Sharpie" marker.

He wouldn't have time for much else. Once again working for his old boss K. K. Rokossovsky, Katukov was part of the 16th Army, and was soon in action at Skirmanovo against the 10th Panzer Division of the XL Panzer Corps (part of Hoepner's Panzer Group IV, Army Group Center). Although Katukov's attack gained no real ground, it wasn't really supposed to. Instead they destroyed 21 German tanks and even captured an 88mm gun.

Katukov's brigade would be in action constantly for the next several days. Driving southwest toward Kozlovo, he was again engaged as part of larger spoiling attacks launched by the right wing of Rokossovsky's 16th Army (against the advice of Rokossovsky and Zhukov). Again, Katukov managed to break even while other Soviet units were decimated. Major General Dovator, cavalry hero from Situation 09, lost almost the entire 44th Cavalry Division in one single charge (Dovator himself died somewhere in the midst of these battles for Moscow). whole 16th Army started a gradual and well-ordered Nevertheless, these spoiling attacks did enjoy withdrawal to new defenses, with Katukov's 1st "General Sly" Katukov (as his men would soon call Katukov's staff knew that their chain-smoking general could keep going just as long as they kept him wellsupplied with cigarettes, they went to tremendous lengths to keep him stocked.

> He'd need the energy, as more and more units were attached beneath his command. Already the 27th and 28th Tank Brigades were attached to the 1st Guards, and on the night of November 23, the 23rd and 33rd Tank Brigades were also attached to 1st Guards. By the beginning of December, he'd even been given a battalion of British made Matilda IIs. While many of these attachments were temporary, clearly Katukov was on his way to becoming one of the premiere tank army commanders of the Red Army.

> Situation Design: This situation was originally selected for design and play based on a few paragraphs found in Richard Armstrong's Red Army Tank Commanders. Using maps found on RKKA, we found where Katukov's 1st Guards Tank Brigade would be and then postulated which German unit(s) it would be engaged with. Subsequent tooling around





TestofBattle.com (Test of Battle Games), a small site apparently built by dining room generals to publish roughly with the small Rassorkha River. scenarios, rules, and support products for Command Decision and other miniatures games. One of their McKenzie's Command Decision version of this battle, regular bloggers and contributing designers in Bob McKenzie who, although he works in Command Decision and Test of Battle (as opposed to PanzerBlitz or Panzer Leader), has truly come up with some highly respectable scenarios. His research is meticulous, and the reference links on his webpages lead to many of the same sites used for this project as well as other gems (mostly Russian) I had not yet found.

a scenario specifically dealing with the fight at Skirmanovo. I was very happy to learn that his research matched exactly with my educated guesses (German units involved, specifically). Even better, McKenzie provides detailed information on the other units involved in the fight (18th Rifle Division, 27th and 28th Tank Brigades, detailed breakdown of the famous 1st Guards Tank Brigade), etc. This last part was particularly gratifying, since I'm a big fan of Katukov's anyway and having to handle his brigade breaking out the actual T-34/c and as a single homogenous block was starting to get on KV-1 with the longer-barreled F34 my nerves. Lastly, McKenzie's research helps drill model guns (longer L/42.5 barrels down the German units involved, although in truth for higher muzzle velocity and McKenzie seems to have them a little "over-strength," given the condition of the panzer divisions by this values stage of the campaign. familiar with Command Decision scale, so I could just staple from the original PanzerBlitz. be misreading his data. reference his great research on which units were there, were just coming out during the confirmation of the time and date of the attack, and closing months of 1941. general equipment of the different formations (just not "tanks" are truly horrible despite the numbers available). Our usual sources (gregspanzerblitz.com, niehorster.orbat, axishistory forum.com, and the books of Glantz, Guderian, Kirchubel, and Armstrong) will provide the actual additional DF point over BT-7s is the assets available for each of these units.

The game board was surprisingly easy to set up. Soviets would come out with one Google Earth confirms what McKenzie has on his site, more a high ledge of heavily wooded ground to the massively-produced northwest, overlooking a low floor of marshes to the made up so much of the Guards tank southeast. The town of Molkanova nicely corresponds armies as late as Prokhorovka. Mercifully, after that

the web then turned up a gem of a site, to the historical Skirmanovo, and the major gully to the southeast (complete with marshes) matches up

The tough part was the entry zones. According to the vanguard of the 10th Panzer looks like it was all but surrounded, struck especially hard from the east and north. Working out his map board scale (1" = 50meters) to our hex scale, we find that our game boards are in fact almost a perfect match. But to prevent us from having six or seven groups of Soviet forces (Soviet Force G just sounds bad and would be impossible to fit on a situation card), the Soviet forces Long story short, Bob McKenzie has come up with and entry zones have been slightly simplified. Make no mistake, players can still enter the map and attack the Germans exactly as happened historically, but by leaving the set up rules more generalized, they're no longer required to do so. Trying out new approaches to historical battles is half the fun of PanzerBlitz, after

> Finally we come to the new units. Because this is the first guards tank unit we've seen, we're finally range). We've also worked out improved for Then again, I'm hardly infantry platoons, a long-cherished Still, we can certainly Also note the new T-60As, which their status as the "latest and greatest" in the light tank division, the only reason they have one machine's smaller size. Sadly, the light design, tank the T-70 which





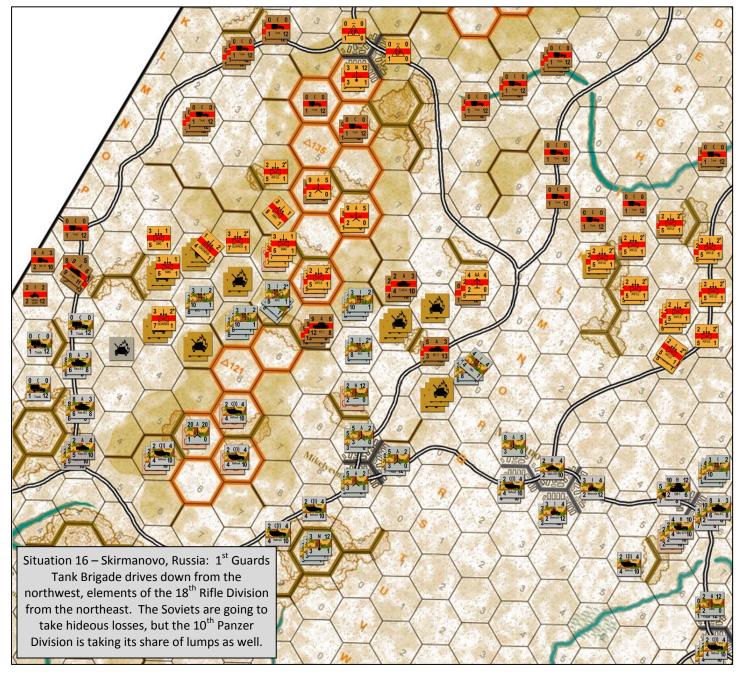


the Soviets finally gave up on the idea of a light tank, instead using their massive surplus of old T-34/c tanks in the "breakthrough" role. As if in compensation, we've also included the new Soviet 76.2mm antitank gun, which was in the 289th Tank Destroyer Regiment according to Bob McKenzie.

Last but not least, we've "dusted" our map board with a light covering of snow. Katukov's account says that there was some snow on the ground, but not enough to hamper anyone's movement. On the contrary, the ground was hard-frozen, thus removing the factor of mud bogging down any of the vehicles. Conditions were perfect for a last lunge of movement before the full descent of winter, hard-frozen ground

the Soviets finally gave up on the idea of a light tank, to deal with the mud of autumn yet *before* the first instead using their massive surplus of old T-34/c heavy falls of snow.

Playtesting: In playing this situation, both sides are presented with a delicate balancing act. Most obvious is the dilemma presented to the Germans, who must repress their usual offensive "panzer blitz" instinct (pun completely intended) and deny battle as long as they can. At the same time, they have to hit the Soviets where and when they can in order to sap their strength, and reduce their capacity to inflict German casualties which are the point of the game. As for the Soviets, they naturally need to go after the Germans like a pit bull with a chew toy, and for once they have







the firepower and mobility to do it.

But the Soviets must also be careful to keep their own casualties at least moderately in check, lest they lose all their teeth too early in the game. Playtesting also shows that the Soviets are really hard-pressed to win this game if something happens to their howitzers. Sure, the Katyushas are flashy, but because they only get to fire every other turn (at most), they are only half as valuable, and the Soviets will have a hard time digging German infantry and artillery out of those town, woods, and IP hexes without big H-class support.

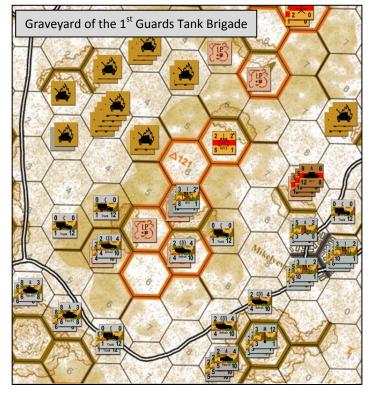
In the first game, the Germans deployed in a pretty predictable, yet solid defense. They set up a compressed line running from the Board 4 ridge in the northwest to the town of Kharavyets in the southeast. IPs were almost exclusively used in on Board 4, especially for the 88s which were set up on Hill 121, one aiming left and one right. Also, the big GW-1 infantry guns of the 706th were deployed in Shpaga, ready to cover the open expanses of Board 7 from possible Soviet infantry attack (the set up rules have most of their armor coming in from the northwest on Board 4).

The game went through three general phases. In the opening three turns, we were sure the game was out of balance, and that the Soviets had no prayer of winning this fight. But once the Germans started to crack (and the Soviet units started to get into position), they cracked hard. But in the last three turns of the game or so, the Soviets started getting a little desperate and engaged in some rather wasteful tactics (even by Soviet standards). Pretty much the remainder of the 1st Guards Tank Brigade was thrown away in futile overruns against German trucks (under intense German opportunity fire) trying to get at the Mark IIIs, but in the end all the Soviets could do was disperse them. Also, the infantry losses taken by the 18th Rifle Division trying to cross Board 7 were criminal, and sadly typical of Soviet tactics in 1941. Like Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg, only a handful of survivors actually reached the Molkanova-Shpaga line, and then lacked the firepower to dent German defenses or even hold their positions. The only bright spot was a detached company of T-40s and T-34As

from 27th Tank Brigade, which finally took out some of the GW-1s and SdKfz-222 armored cars to help put the Soviet kill score over the top.

One surprise was the durability of the German 88s. Usually these weapons are so terrifying for the other side that they get one or two shots off at most before enemy artillery snuffs them out. But here, deployed in wooded IPs (cumulative +3 DRM), they actually lasts a while and took a grim toll of both the 27th Tank Brigade and the 1st Guards Tank Brigade. Large howitzer barrages could only disperse these guns thanks to poor dice. Yet one battery of these same guns were later killed by the humble 82mm mortars thanks to fantastic dice. The same phenomenon of huge Soviet attacks failing only to have weak off-hand attacks score killer blows was repeated when the triple-stack of 1st Guards KVs failed to overrun German infantry in the open, only to be later killed by antitank guns of all things, backed up by a 37mm AA battery and an overrun of little T-40 lawnmowers.

In the end, the game was a bloodbath. The Soviets *barely* hobbled away with a marginal victory, having killed 31 German units. However, the "victory" cost them a staggering toll of 74 units of their own. In particular, the infantry and "destroyer" regiments of the 18th Rifle Division were cruelly hammered, and even Katukov's 1st Guards Tank Brigade was basically







with historical results, with the Soviets making no real territorial gain, taking tremendous (i.e., counterproductive) casualties, and yet at least in this sector, inflicting severe punishment on the Germans in turn. Although their tanks never took that many losses, German infantry, light armor, and light artillery The Soviets even overran the suffered badly. positions held by the 88s, giving Katukov's brigade his historical trophy.

In the second game, the Germans tried the opposite strategy. They deployed further back, set up only a thin delaying screen along the Molkanova-Hill 121 line, and then fell back into the southeast corner of the board to deny battle as long as humanly possible. The idea was to give their artillery as much time as possible to hammer the Soviets as they crossed the board, hopefully tripping over activation rolls and infantry guns, and of course the 88s.

The tactic didn't quite work, but not necessarily because it was a bad idea. In retrospect, it just might not have been executed quite correctly. The problem is that there isn't that much cover in the southeast corner of the board, just the town of Voroniva and some woods hexes. So the whole German force couldn't realistically "fit" in this smaller defense zone. Accordingly, the German defense spread a little to the west, over the slopes of Hill 108 and the town of Demyanka.

What this wound up doing in was dividing the German defense into bite-sized zones that he Soviets could attack in detail. First they swarmed over the German truck roadblocks west of the Board 4 ridge, then they engulfed Demyanka, then hit Hill 108. Meanwhile, another attack was launched down the southeast shoulder of the board toward Kharavyets. German problems were made a little worse by the fact that their screening forces were too large, deployed too far forward, and thus offered up as "sacrificial lambs" that the Soviets were again able to focus on in detail and destroy one at a time.

Despite these problems, a few things admittedly went well for the Germans. One was a strong battle

wiped out with the exception of (predictably) the group of reconnaissance units (flaktracks, armored triple-stack of KV-1s. Overall, the game matched well cars, and motorcycles) that immediately launched northwards when the Soviet attack came in. They overran a handful of Soviet infantry platoons still in their trucks, made the "Daytona left turn" through Zhapets. They were hit by a nasty Soviet CAT attack by infantry just coming onto the board thanks to failed activation checks. But they swung around this and were soon over the northern end of the Board 4 ridge and deep behind the Soviet position. missions made short work of first the Katyushas (deployed in Novo) and then the artillery batteries (deployed in woods hexes 4R3 and 4Q3). A few more of these recon units were hit by Soviet "self-defense" direct fire artillery strikes and some luckily-placed 76.2mm antitank guns, but by the end of Turn 8 the Soviets had finally lost all their artillery except their two 82mm mortars.

Speaking of mortars, once again these little opportunity fire delivered by the GW-1s, 150mm company-level weapons made their presence felt, this time on the German side. The three 81mm mortars scored a lucky "1" on the 2:1 odds column against a Soviet engineer platoon, killing it while it was trying to support a mass Soviet CAT attack against German IPs on Hill 108. Without the engineer, the Soviet CAT didn't get the +1 odds column bonus, and thus the attack failed, saving Hill 108 for at least another two

> In the end, the Soviets walked away with another marginal victory with 33 German units destroyed. The German plan of a "fading defense" might have been based on a sound idea (and that recon blitz mission turned out to work very well), but in this case the overall German plan might not have been executed quite right. If you're going to give ground, give ground. If you're going to stand and fight, stand and fight. But by trying to adopt a lukewarm game plan between the two, the Germans wound up with the worst of both worlds. Given by how close the game was, just a slight tweak to the German strategy might well have tipped it in their favor. Interestingly, the Soviets only lost 55 units this time, still a high cost, but certainly nothing compared to the butcher's bill of 74 sustained in the first game.

With two marginal victories (admittedly very close

Panzer

SITUATION 16

KATUKOV'S SPOILING ATTACK - SKIRMANOVO, RUSSIA (12 Nov 1941): Despite amazing successes, by the beginning of November, Operation Typhoon had ground largely to a halt. Primary causes were the weakened state of German units, poor logistics, and the torrential Russian autumn rains. With the battlefield dissolved into a sea of mud, the Red Army was given a respite that it used to prepare a series of spoiling attacks to be hurled against the German spearheads poised to strike at Moscow. Although most of these attacks were wasteful failures, the one carried out by Katukov's new 1st Guards Tank Brigade saw notable success. Here, Katukov's tankers encounter forward elements of the 10th Panzer Division, XL Panzer Corps, just 50 miles from Moscov



RUSSIAN FORCES

1st Guards Tank Brigade (reinf.) and 18th Rifle Division 16th Army, Western Front (Morale B and C)



FORCE A

1st Guards Tank Brigade (Morale B)



1st Guards Tank Brigade,

Antiaircraft, Recon, and HQ Companies

AA 12 4 AA 4 4 A 3 2 I 2 0 - 0 0 C 0

2nd Battalion 14th Gds Mortar Rgt

FORCE B

Elements, 27th and 28th Tank Brigades (Morale C)



FORCE C - 18th Rifle Division (365th Rifle Rgt, 289th Tank Destroyer Rgt, 3rd Bn/1308th Rifle Rgt, 1st Bn/928th Artillery Rgt) - Morale C



VICTORY CONDITIONS: Russians get one point for every German combat unit destroyed at the end of the game.

- less than 20: German DECISIVE
- •30-34 pts: Russian MARGINAL
- 20-24 pts: German TACTICAL
- 15-29 pts: German MARGINAL
- •35-39 pts: Russian TACTICAL
- •40 or more: Russian DECISIVE

L GERMAN FORCES

10th Panzer Division XL Panzer Corps Panzer Group "Hoepner"

Army Group Center (Morale A)



Current Strength, Panzer Regiment 7 H 8 8 A 3 6 A 2

11th FlaK Battalion 20 A 20 4 H 10 2 ((I) 4 0

3/55th AA Company

90th Reconnaissance **Battalion**

Batteries, 90th Artillery Regiment (off board)







Remnants, 69th and 86th Infantry Regiments



706th IG Company 90th Antitank Battalion 10 H 12

Main Body, **Pioneer Battalion 49** 2 2 (1) 4 0 (0

SETUP:

- · Germans set up in rows O-GG.
- Russian Force A enters along the northwest side of Board 4, through hex rows A through M.
- Russian Force B enters along the northeast end of the map, or the northwestern side through hexes A through P.
- Russian Force C enters anywhere along the northeast end of the map, or along either side between Rows A and F.

Russians move first Turn 6 9

SKIRMANOVO Oth Panzer Division

SPECIAL RULES

- Russian activation rolls: At the beginning of each movement phase, Russian units must roll a d6. On a result of 1-5, the unit can move and operate normally. On a result of 6, the Russian unit cannot move or overrun. This does not include "motionless" CATs.
- Russian tanks must always be stacked at least two deep. If a stack takes losses, the "lone" Russian unit has one movement phase to rejoin another armored unit. If that can't do it, chooses not to do it, or fails its activation roll, the unit is eliminated.
- German howitzer units are off board.
- Eligible Russian MAY units use Split Move and Fire.
- Russian Katyshas: After firing, must take an entire turn without moving before they can fire again (reloading rockets). During this off turn, Katyushas cannot move or use opportunity fire. If they do, they must wait ANOTHER turn before firing. Also, if Katyushas use direct fire, they do NOT double AF at less than half range against unarmored targets.
- Ignore all hilltops and slopes on Board 7. Except for gullies, woods, and towns, Board 7 is completely flat.
- German 88s double AF vs, armored targets to 5 hexes.





games that could have gone either way), the Soviets are naturally awarded an overall marginal victory for Situation 16.

Situation 17 Kampfgruppe Eberbach Uzlovaya, Russia **20 November, 1941**

Summary: With the cream of Soviet reserves wasted in fruitless "spoiling attacks," and with the battlefield's mud now frozen, the Germans were finally able to open a second phase of Operation Typhoon on November 15. An important part of this offensive was delivered by Guderian's Second Panzer Army, striking toward Moscow from the south. But Guderian's force was a shadow of its former self, and was still struggling to outflank stubborn Soviet defenses in the city of Tula. One of these efforts came at small, snowy factory town of Uzlovaya, where a patched-together battle group under the command of Heinrich Eberbach broke through the defenses of the Soviet 10th Army.

Background: By the middle of November, two of the primary factors that had been stalling the progress of Operation Typhoon had more or less dissipated. First, the mud that had proven such an obstacle in October and early November had largely frozen solid. Second, Soviet reserves in front of Moscow had been badly weakened by Stalin's insistence on the so-called "spoiling attacks" described in background for Situation 16. At least in these two areas, Typhoon seemed ready to yet again make a shove for Moscow.

In other areas, however, Army Group Center was still in very bad shape. In particular, the German logistical system, always the great "Achilles Heel" of the Wehrmacht, was largely breaking down for a variety of reasons. The rail lines in Russia were the wrong gauge, the supply lines were too long, the Germans never had enough rail cars to begin with, and the Soviet rail network in the occupied regions had far too few lines to support an operation like Barbarossa or Typhoon anyway. Not only was the

quality. Remember that were' talking about 1940s chemistry here, particularly in the petrochemicals. German antifreeze and lubricants couldn't stand up to the severity of the Russian winter. Gun oil, engine oil, and transmission fluid, and hydraulic fluid would partially freeze in a soupy, beady mess that would lock German machinery into useless blocks of metal. James Lucas' War on the Eastern Front has stories taken from German letters and dispatches, talking about how men had to unzip their trousers and urinate on their rifles so the bolts would function . . . a terrifying prospect in -40 degree weather, never mind doing this under fire. Rubber was freezing, crumbling into chalky black dust. That meant no seals or fuel lines in the engines, no tires on the vehicles or even boots on the men. Guderian's memoirs talk about how the cold would cloud German optics, pretty much killing one of their great advantages over comparable Soviet units. German artillery couldn't recoil, and of course everyone's familiar with the terrible plight of the German landser stuck in the full fury of the Russian winter in just his summer uniform, complete with hob-nailed boots and steel helmets, perfect for sucking body heat out of man's core.

Of course, real history is always a little more complicated than the "History Channel 46-minute documentary" version. Some German commanders had seen this coming and had lined up the right supplies for their men. The cold affected the Soviet soldier almost as badly as the German soldier, both sides were only human, after all. But the Soviet soldier was better equipped for the right clothing, sheep-skin boots, and fur-lined hats. His weapons and equipment, while still inferior to German equipment in normal temperatures, were at least designed to work in the Russian winter. But despite these edges, and they were significant, Soviet soldiers still froze to death by the thousands. James Lucas' book has an example of a German patrol passing right by a whole Soviet platoon, in formation no less, with the Germans wondering why the Soviets weren't moving until the Germans realized they were all frozen to death right in their boots. Another grim trickle of supplies insufficient in quantity, but also in phenomenon is how both German and Soviet soldiers





hours, instead turning to fight desperate battles for farmhouses, barns, sheds, anything that would offer down and another winter night descended over the countryside.

Despite appalling these (and worsening) conditions, Hitler was still fixated on Moscow, even if his commanders had already begun to read the writing in the snow. By November 7, with his whole army stuck in the mud, Colonel-General Halder had prepared a plan entitled "Continuation of Operations against Enemy Groupings between the Volga River and Lake Ladoga." Notice how he carefully omitted any mention of Moscow. This is not to say that he didn't expect tremendously unrealistic progress. One version of this plan demanded the immediate fall of Stalingrad in the south, Leningrad in the north, and Gorki in the center (a major industrial city 240 miles east of Moscow)! Memoirs from officers as low as a Army (Hermann Hoss) mention this incredible objective, which might as well have been on the moon for all the chance Guderian had of reaching it. Yet even Halder knew that Moscow probably would not fall, instead he was hoping to bypass it, encircle it, or cut it off from the rest of the battlefield. Despite the common misconception that the German army was obsessed top-to-bottom with the idea of taking Moscow, it seems that many of its officers even now stuck to the original concept of Barbarossa - that of destroying Red Army formations instead of seizing symbolic, political, or economic prizes.

On November 13, Hitler flew to Orsha, Russia (near Smolensk) to meet with his OKH generals and the staffs of the three army groups. He would have none of Halder's idea that Moscow be bypassed or besieged. He wanted it taken for purposes of home morale, despite the fact that back in June he'd been the loudest voice crying that taking of Moscow was unimportant. As late as September, when Guderian was begging Hitler to let him drive on Moscow, Hitler had told him that Moscow was irrelevant compared to the Southwest Front forces massed around Kiev. Now here was the Führer, ranting and pounding on Soviet resistance. In particular, the Soviet 3rd Army

usually gave up fighting for objectives by about 16:00 the map table, screaming that the fall of Moscow was a make-or-break imperative.

The new plan was predictable. With Panzer Group shelter (and a chance for survival) once the sun went III to the north (now under the command of General Georg-Hans Reinhardt, Hoth had taken over Seventeenth Army in the south due to Colonel-General Carl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel's failing health) and Hoepner's Panzer Group IV in the south (with Fourth Army holding the two wings together in the center), yet another German pincer would smash through the front of the Soviet 5th and 16th Armies. Initially, despite all the problems of the weather and supply, the Germans made respectable ground. Rokossovsky's 16th Army was pushed back and soon split apart from the 30th Army to the north. This opened the road to Klin, one of the last large towns before the suburbs of Moscow and the scene of desperate fighting through the rest of November and early December.

Meanwhile, Guderian's Second Panzer Army was signals officer serving with Guderian's Second Panzer making a similarly bitter drive up from the north. Looking at a larger-scale map, it's easy to dismiss Guderian's impact on the Battle for Moscow simply because he was too far south. But Guderian hoped that since most of the Soviet reserves had been committed against Reinhardt and Hoepner, a significant breakthrough could still be achieved in the far south and another road opened toward Moscow. Guderian's problem (other than the weather and the fact that such a breakthrough would have required rebuilt and well-supplied panzer divisions) was the city of Tula. After his spectacular advance through Orel at the beginning of October, Guderian had been slammed to a halt at Mtensk (see Situation 13) and by the time he got going again and took Mtensk, the rasputitsa rains had begun and what remained of his panzer divisions sank in an ocean of mud. By the time this obstacle was overcome and Guderian actually got moving again, Tula was heavily reinforced and ready for a serious head-to-head battle against Guderian's panzers.

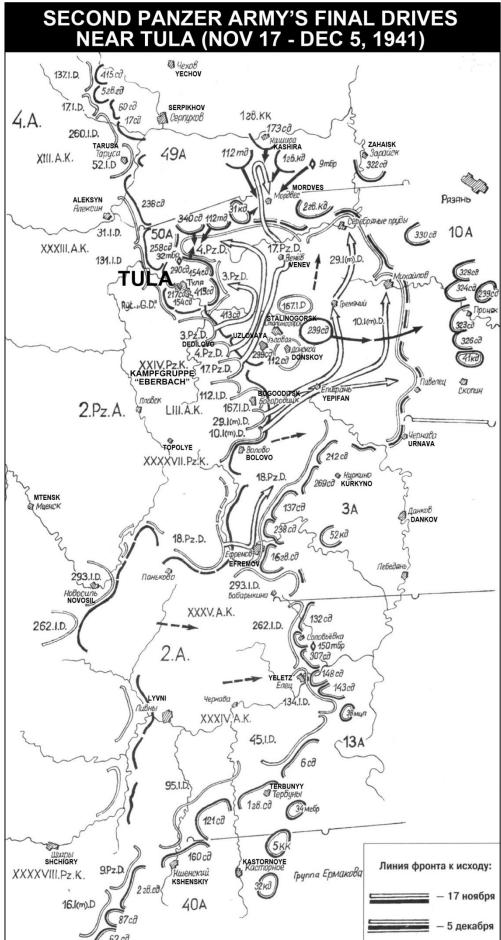
> Guderian failed to take Tula off the march on October 31. Attempts to go around it were frustrated by the clinging mud, bad supplies, and ferocious





(moving north to cut Guderian's flank) collided with the LIII Corps around the town of Topolye and engaged in a running slugfest for over eight (November 3-11). Finally, Guderian had to send virtually his tank whole strength, consolidated into "Kampfgruppe Eberbach," to help break the LIII Corps loose. Only with this threat resolved on his right flank could Guderian continue his attempts to either outflank or take Tula itself. In 1941, there were so few roads in this part of Russia that there was just no other way to Moscow from Guderian's position, at least not sufficient to move and supply a whole panzer army. One way or another, Tula had to be liquidated before Guderian could threaten Moscow and thus contribute to the larger battle taking place further north.

To finally crack things loose at Tula, Guderian selected a sector southeast of the town and committed (vet again) his weary Kampfgruppe Eberbach. This was a force of about fifty tanks, backed up by a patchwork of infantry, artillery, and support units. represented almost all the armored strength left to the so-called Second Panzer "Army," drawn from the 3rd, 4th, and 17th Panzer Divisions (the 18th Panzer Division was still engaged in a small battle to the south). Officially known as the "5th Panzer Brigade," the formation commanded by Colonel was Heinrich Eberbach (winner of the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves) one of Germany's great middle-







east and west fronts. Put another way, whenever anyone sits down to play the Germans in PanzerBlitz or Panzer Leader, it is guys like this they are trying to emulate.

As Guderian's offensive renewed on November 18, Eberbach certainly found himself with a tall order. Again the LIII Corps was hung up on Soviet defenses southeast of Tula, and needed help for force the Soviet line. In particular, the German 112th Infantry Division ran into the new 413th Rifle Division from Siberia. The German 112th, finally at the end of their tether, snapped as the 413th mounted a counterattack. Guderian mentions T-34s, and how the 112th had no weapons to counter them. We can't quite tell where the tanks might have come from (the 24th and 108th Tank Brigades are the most likely candidates), but whatever the case, the 112th completely came apart and routed in one of the first cases of a complete battlefield breakdown in modern German military history. The 112th soon rallied, and with the help of rude surprise as they approached the vital junction. Kampfgruppe Eberbach, stabilized the line. But it was an ominous sign of things to come.

With this crisis averted, Kampfgruppe Eberbach went back over to the offensive on November 19, spearheading Guderian's push through Dedilovo, about 30 kilometers southeast of Tula. Rather than attack the well-defended town, the kampfgruppe enveloped it from the left (according to Hermann Hoss, the 5th Panzer Brigade's signals officer, his account included in Hans Schäufler's Knight's Cross Panzers, Stackpole Publishing). Hoss describes these defenders as more "Siberians," which lines up with RKKA maps and the 413th Rifle Division. These units of the 413th were left to be killed to the last man by follow-on infantry while the tanks pushed on to spend the night in a railroad station outside of Uzlovaya.

On November 20, the Eberbach's kampfgruppe would find itself in another pitched battle for Uzlovaya, which we will try to recreate in our Situation 17. Some of the panzers chased off a detachment of T-26 tanks and a battalion of infantry just arriving off a train (RKKA maps show the 299th Rifle Division in the area), then bypassed the town and headed north toward Stalinogorsk. The rest of

echelon tank commanders who'd fight on both the the kampfgruppe took the southern part of Uzlovaya itself and spent the night there, while infantry teams dueled with "individual KV-52s" (we assume Hoss means KV-2s, with a 152mm howitzer) in the streets. In the morning, the kampfgruppe was relieved by elements of the LIII Corps, who secured the rest of the town during the rest of November 21.

> By November 22 the re-consolidated kampfgruppe was able to take Stalinogorsk and surrounding most of the 239th Rifle Division, thus opening a new road leading behind Tula. By November 26 the Germans were through Venev and approaching Kashira, which was a big enough road center that Tula would be almost superfluous to Guderian's overall mission. Kashira was also home to a massive electrical power and its loss would shut down light, grid, communication, and a host of other utilities halfway to Moscow itself. However, Kampfgruppe Eberbach, the rest of the XXIV Panzer Corps, and in fact the whole of Guderian's Second Panzer Army was in for a As we will see in Situation 18, the fight for the southern approaches to Moscow was about to take a final, decisive turn.

Situation Design: This was a tough one to design, mostly because of the relative lack of historical information. Our primary source was the account of Hermann Hoss, signals officer for 5th Panzer Brigade (Kampfgruppe Eberbach), but despite the undeniable value of first-hand accounts, I really try not to use them because of the emotional investment involved. Hoss admits that he has an axe to grind when he states that "history records LIII Corps as the conqueror of Uzlovaya, this account should set the record straight in the interest of historical truth). Never mind the usual "I hate the Russians" or "I hate the Germans" bias, the more subtle slanting of these accounts is much more dangerous when trying to build an iron-clad picture of what really happened. Difficulties are usually exaggerated ("you wouldn't believe what we had to put up with!"), failures or mistakes are glossed over or simply omitted. The enemy is always portrayed as a faceless block. The scale of success isn't usually exaggerated, the "soldier culture" usually makes them very wary of claiming





undue laurels. However, the importance of those aren't attacking, there aren't that many good accomplishments sometimes gets skewed, many times because of something their commanding officer said ("thanks to your courage, the road to victory now lies open for the rest of our regiment, division, corps, or army").

Yet it cannot be denied that first-hand accounts are great at the little "spice" details that you'd never get in a more conventional account. Hoss' mention that information on Axis History Forum, but even these the tanks of Kampfgruppe Eberbach did not have their snow cleats, and thus were slipping and sliding all over the field, is a gem that was quickly incorporated into Situation 17's special rules.

this part of the campaign, particularly on the German The fact of the matter is that the Germans simply weren't moving anywhere very quickly, and there isn't that much to write. There aren't that many good PanzerBlitz situations to work with, at least not well-documented ones. What battles do take place are long, grinding attritions like the fight between LIII Corps and the Soviet 3rd Army at Topolye (November 3-11, 1941). An eight-day slugging match doesn't make for the best PanzerBlitz scenario. The battlefield had slowed down, sunken into mud and frozen in ice. The Soviets were dug in and waiting for the Germans, and the Germans just didn't have the strength to advance very far or attack very aggressively. The men were spending as much effort fighting the elements as they were each other.

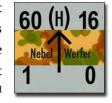
There's a reason our *Barbarossa* campaign, at least path another 30+ *PanzerBlitz* boards long. in Army Group Center's sector, jumped from October 16 in Situation 14 all the way to November 12 in least one new unit, and Situation 17 is even this Situation 16 (and was counterattack). Who wants to play PanzerBlitz Nebelwerfer situations with special rules like, "Mud: All vehicle movement is reduced to 2. Germans get 1 point for every single hex row they kampfgruppe. Strangely, the Nebelwerfer counters advance. Zhukov Digs In: fortifications, mines, and IP counters." Critics may point at our situations and cry that none of them take different generations of this weapon, which varied mud stopped the Germans, and when the Germans Nebelwerfer 41 launched from wooden or metal box

PanzerBlitz situations to work with.

Fortunately, Hermann Hoss gives us an exception with Uslovaya, albeit an imperfect one. We were also lucky that the RKKA maps placed this attack and the Soviet units involved, and other Russian websites helped us build the 299th Rifle Division in detail. For Kampfgruppe Eberbach, we managed to find some experts admit that the makeup of these fluid, informal organizations was in a constant state of flux. For instance, we were briefly tantalized with the mention of sturmgeschutz-III assault guns, but it seems these More conventional sources are oddly sparse about were assigned to another unit the week before Situation 17.

> I've said many times that playing carefullydesigned and researched PanzerBlitz games can really bring home certain truth about a campaign that just don't come through as effectively from conventional history books. Here's another example. When you set up Situation 17, take a moment and look at what the German player has. That's pretty much what is left of Second Panzer Army's armored striking power. That's what's left of three panzer divisions. That's how bad the mud, the weather, five months of campaigning, Soviet resistance, bad supplies, and poor maintenance had affected what was once the biggest panzer group in the Wehrmacht. That force on the situation card is supposed to drive 95 more miles to Moscow, fighting through Soviet resistance over a

Almost all our situations have at This time it's the a Soviet no exception. battlefield rocket system, part of the I. Battalion / 53rd



Meters, not Miles: Nebelwerfer Regiment assigned to Eberbach's Soviets get 100 included on sites like Imaginative Strategist or gregspanzerblitz.com make no distinction between the rasputitsa rains and mud into account, such a pretty widely. This would have been an early model tremendous factor in the autumn and early winter. 15 cm Nebelwerfer 41 (a small, early version of the Actually, they do. We simply skipped them. The classic six-tube launcher), or the larger 28/32 cm





crates. The range might seem a little short, but a quick check on the Nebelwerfer's statistics bear this out. Note that they are subject to the same "every other turn" rocket rules as BM-13 Katyshas. But as towed guns, they are considered light artillery (most systems weighing less than 1,500 kg) for loading and transport purposes.

Another quirky unit is the KV-2. Again, Hoss' account on this might not be correct (he mentions something about street fighting with "KV-52s," which *might* allude to the



152mm short-barrel howitzer in the KV-2) but who can pass up even the chance of including one of these bad boys in a situation. Almost certainly this will be the last chance to play it in our *Barbarossa* series, and only one counter is included. To keep it from exploding due to the "Soviet tank company" special rule, we're also including some of the T-26s Hoss mentions.

Note the movement handicap put on German tanks due to the mention of "no snow cleats" for the tracks. Kampfgruppe Eberbach had these flown in and installed a few days after this battle, and according to Hoss, the difference was enormous. So future "snow games" in the *Barbarossa* series will not include this special rule, and playtesting here shows that it actually doesn't make that much a difference for the German player. Consider it a small piece of historical decoration.

The board was chosen to reflect the rather large town of Uzlovaya, a direct objective of Kampfgruppe Eberbach (as opposed to many battles, where the town in question is "just off the map"). This fits well with the special rule where the Soviet tanks have to start in the town, encouraging (but not mandating) the German engineers fighting KV-2s in the streets of Uzlovaya. Board 6 was chosen because a quick Google Earth check confirms that the area is very open and flat, and Hoss describes seeing Soviet infantry getting off a train and being engaged (along with the T-26s) at very long range. And of course, our map is also re-colored in our new "Arctic" white and gray scheme to give the impression of the frigid Russian steppe.

When it comes to victory conditions, of course much of Kampfgruppe will want to bypass the town and strike deep into the Soviet rear. The Soviets, for their part, know this is the last of Guderian's striking power, so their real money is on killing units and thus blunting this last cutting edge of the Second Panzer Army. However, both sides are also keen to either take or hold urban hexes. Old Man Winter has finally descended on the Russian steppe, after all, and these men are desperate to win some shelter for the night. Note that the Germans certainly do *not* have to take all of Granzhelyz to win the game. Historically, they gained a foothold in the southern part of the town and gratefully bedded down for the night, then reengaged the Soviets in the morning. Not until the infantry of LIII Corps arrived did Uzlovaya completely fall to the Second Panzer Army.

Playtesting: This situation is relatively small, quick, fast, and easy. Well, it's relatively small by PanzerBlitz standards that is – measured against Desert Leader, most Arab Israeli Wars and Panzer Leader, and certainly ParaLeader games, this battle is still respectable in scale. It was run twice in one day with plenty of time to spare, unlike some of the previous monster-games like Borodino or Skirmanovo (that took a solid eight hours to play, usually broken into two days). Don't be fooled by its modest size, however. This is a sneaky, unforgiving battle that doesn't take kindly to careless players on either side.

Consider the shortfalls each side faces. The Soviets are crippled by the usual problems, poor infantry firepower, lack of mobility, and "knee-jerk" mobility thanks to special rules regarding tank stacking and activation rolls. They also have a lot of territory to defend, since the Germans get 2 victory points per city hex the Soviets have to at least offer resistance in Grodino, Brozny, Volkhov-Ivanova, and especially Granzhelyz. So they can't circle the wagons and "Alamo-defend" all in one place. Making matters still worse, they have to hold (or at least try and cover) the two road exit hexes along the top of Board 8.

As for the Germans, they're hampered by very small numbers and the fact that they have to "kick down doors" in as many urban hexes as possible . . . never a pleasant prospect in any *PanzerBlitz* game.





also vulnerable unless they're put in "blind" town hexes, and because of these weapons' short range, the only real option there is Drodzdova (for fire missions against Granzhelyz). Meanwhile, the Germans can also try to bypass the Soviets and break through off the north end of Board 8, but they have to do it through those exact two road hexes, they have a lot of ground to cover to get there, and they're dealing with tank tracks not equipped for deep snow and ice. Play testing has also shown (in game two) that when the Germans rely too heavily on the breakthrough option, they just don't win enough points to overcome the initial Soviet lead. Any realistic chance of winning involves at least some street fighting.

However, both sides have some great advantages too. The Soviets, for example, start out owning 30 town hexes, and thus a "de facto" 30-point lead. All they really have to do is hold onto that lead. And don't discount that KV-2. Even against armor, that 36-H DF comes out to 18, enough for a 3-1 on a PzKpfw-IIIG out to 10 hexes away. Its effect on massed German infantry or (even worse) in trucks is terrifying (and yet perversely fun) to contemplate.

The Germans, meanwhile, hold all the cards. They have "real" tanks, plenty of pioneer engineers for assaulting those towns, 88s, artillery support, and of course . . . those beautiful Nebelwerfers. So long as you have the target spotted, their combined 40-H AF is enough to get 4-1 on Russian infantry even in a town hex. This, combined with the direct fire of the 88s, the infantry guns, and those beautiful PzKpfw-IVD workhorses with the short-barrel L24 7.5cm howitzer, should give the Germans a pretty respectable "urban renewal" capability. Note how the PzKpfw-IVDs can park precisely four hexes away from Soviet antitank guns, completely out of their range and yet within the double-H range for the tanks.

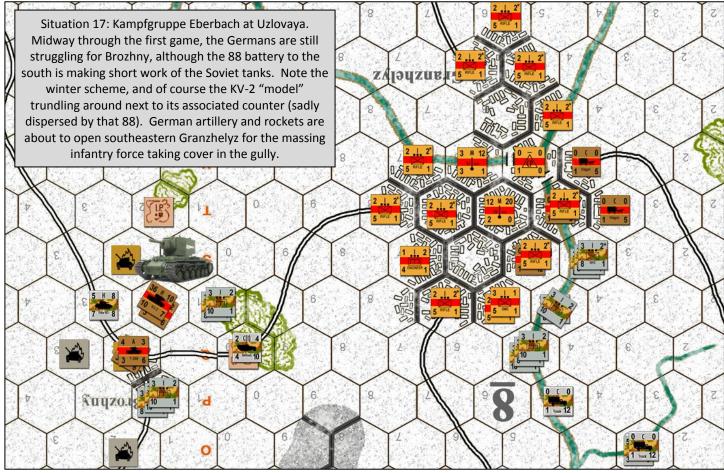
approach, striving to win a respectable number of Soviets tried reinforcing the main battle to the south. town hexes and get a nice breakthrough force off the Once the Soviets started to crack, the rate of German north edge of Board 8. The tanks went straight up for success rose dramatically. In the end, they held seven Brozhny with a little infantry support, while the bulk hexes of Granzhelyz.

Yes, those Nebelwerfers are nice, but of course they're of the infantry and artillery hoped over into Board 8 and set up for an assault on southern Granzhelyz based out of Drodzdova. One 88 battery was deployed in Drodzdova and another in Tarakov, setting up nice crossfires on both boards in case the Soviet tanks tried anything cute. The Nebelwerfers were staged on the back side of Drodzdova, affording these batteries nice protection while allowing them to put just about all of Granzhelyz under fire.

> The Soviets, however, put up a ferocious fight. Since they couldn't put their IPs in towns (illegal use of IPs per Arab-Israeli Wars rules), they instead put them in nearby woods covering approaches to the town, or likely routes the Germans would try to take toward the breakthrough hexes like 8GG8. Also in these IPs were more infantry platoons, perfect for rushing in an reoccupying town hexes just cleaned out by German CAT attacks. The Soviet tanks pulled a similar stunt in and just north of Brozhny, turning this first German "speed bump" objective into a formidable "mini-Stalingrad" the Germans had to take more than once. Perhaps the highlight of the game (at least from the Soviet side) was when the Soviet tanks rolled out of Granzhelys and the KV-2 actually managed to overrun and destroy a PzKpfw-IVD. Of course these Soviet tanks were dealt with handily by the German 88s. The battery in Tarakov first dispersed and finally killed the KV-2 at over a mile away, reenacting a classic Barbarossa scene.

The Nebelwerfers, meanwhile, combined with the off-board 10.5 cm howitzers, the flak batteries, infantry guns and even the 88s to make a fine mess of things in southern Granzhelyz. German engineers and infantry soon broke into the city and started chewing their way deeper into the town hexes. Things were tough until the Soviets took enough casualties where they couldn't physically occupy all the town hexes anymore. The Germans were also smart in parking empty halftracks around the town, In the first game, the Germans tried a balanced ready to swoop in and take any back hexes if the





Meanwhile, a more mobile battle group was heading up to break off the board. Here, the fighting was much more one-sided. The Soviets made a brave doesn't stand much chance against overrun by tanks coming around the back side of Hill 134. The smart move made by the Germans here was not immediately bolting off the map the second they secured the breakout hex. They were now right behind Volkhov-Ivanova, and took the opportunity to second game with almost the exact same way. The do some damage here, as well. Armored cars called in main difference for the Germans this time was in their an off-board artillery mission which silenced much drive not for the town hexes of Granzhelyz (or any (but not all) of the Soviet artillery in the town, while other town on the map, for that matter), but in getting PzKpfw-IVs blew up a wagon holding a town hex. as many units off the board as quickly as possible. The Germans wound up actually holding one town Put another way, they emphasized the breakthrough hex in Volkhov-Ivanova, which combined with their objective more than the street fight objective. This two in Brozhny and seven in Granzhelyz gave them a strategy might have worked for them (the game respectable total of 10.

from the Soviets (20 points), and got 11 units off the

Soviets, meanwhile, retained 20 town hexes points) and killed five German combat units (10 points) for a total score of 30. Really smart play was stand at exit hex 8GG8, but an IP standing in the open used on both sides, but the Germans just got one or two more lucky rolls than the Soviets did.

In the second game, the Germans tried a different approach, much to their regret. In contrast, the Soviets were happy with their deployment in the first game, so with only a few small tweaks, played the provides victory points for both options), but they The Germans wound up walking away with a win, were a little too zealous in getting their mobile units albeit a very narrow one. They took 10 urban hexes off the board for the quick points early in the game. True, they hooked around Hill 134 and hit 8GG8 with north edge of the board through road hex 8GG8 (11 remarkable speed, tearing open the escape route by points), giving them a combined score of 31. The the end of Turn 4. But then they simply all bolted.

Panzer

SITUATION

KAMPFGRUPPE EBERBACH - UZLOVAYA, RUSSIA (20 Nov 1941); With the cream of Soviet reserves wasted in fruitless "spoiling attacks," and with the battlefield's mud now frozen, German forces were finally able to open a second phase of Operation Typhoon on November 15. An important part of this offensive was delivered by Guderian's Second Panzer Army, striking for Moscow from the south. But Guderian's force was a shadow of its former self, and was still struggling to outflank stubborn Soviet defenses in the city of Tula. One of these efforts came at small, snowy factory town of Uzlovaya, where a patchedtogether battle group under the command of Heinrich Eberbach (made up of units from 3rd, 4th, and 17th Panzer Divisions) broke through the defenses of the Soviet 10th Army

N 9



RUSSIAN FORCES

299th Rifle Division and Elements, 108th Tank Brigade **Tenth Army, Western Front** (Morale C)



FORCE A

956th Rifle Regiment



Batteries, 843rd Artillery Regiment



Elements, 344th Separate Antitank and **564th Separate AA Artillery Battalions**



Elements, 363rd Recon and **559th Sapper Battalions**



Advanced Elements, 108th Tank Brigade



SETUP: Russians set up first. Force A deploys anywhere on the board in hexes P-GG. Force B sets up in the urban hexes of Granzhelyz. Germans enter through the south end of Board 6.



JEL GERMAN FORCES

Elements, Kampfgruppe Eberbach XXIV Panzer Corps, Second Panzer **Army, Army Group Center** (Morale A)



Consolidated Remnants, Panzer Regiments 35 and 39



Detached Companies, Pioneer Battalions 79 and 27



I. Battalion / Infantry Regiment 33



I. and V. Batteries, FlaK Bn 11, 104th FlaK Rgt, 104th FlaK Corps



II. Battalion, Artillery Regiment 103 (off board)



I. Battalion, Nebelwerfer

Regiment 53 60 (H) 16 0 C 0

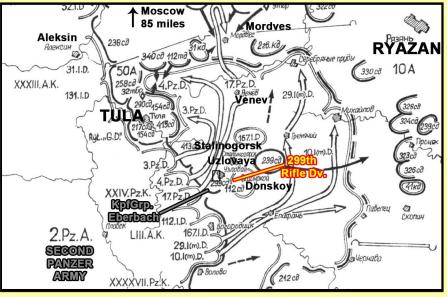


VICTORY CONDITIONS

Germans get 2 points for every urban hex taken on the north half of the board (hex rows P-GG). They also get 1 point for every combat unit that breaks through through the road hexes on the north end of Board 8 (hexes 8GG8 and 8GG3). Soviets get 2 points for evert German unit killed, and 1 point for every town hex still held on the north half of the board (hex rows P-GG).

- Win with high score: MARGINAL Victory
- Win by 10 or more: TACTICAL Victory
- Win by 20 or more: DECISIVE Victory

Germans move first Turn 5 6 9 10



SPECIAL RULES

- Russian activation rolls: Roll 1-4. At the beginning of each movement phase, Russian units must roll a d6. On a result of 1-4, the unit can move and operate normally. On a result of 5-6, the Russian unit cannot move or overrun. This does not include "motionless" CATs.
- Russian tanks must always be stacked at least two deep. If a stack takes losses, the "lone" Russian unit has one movement phase to rejoin another armored unit. If that can't do it, chooses not to do it, or fails its activation roll, the unit is eliminated.
- Russian units may NOT use Split Move and Fire.
- All German tracked vehicles (tanks and halftracks) reduce their MF by -2. (no snow cleats for their tracks).
- Nebelwerfers count as LIGHT artillery for loading and transport purposes. Otherwise, treat these weapons like Katyushas. After firing, they must take an entire turn without moving before they can fire again (reloading rockets). During this off turn, Nebelwerfers cannot move. If they do, they must wait another turn after moving before firing. Note that Nebelwerfers CANNOT use direct fire, nor take Opportunity Fire.





on the back of Volkhov-Ivanova or even call in a fire mission on the Soviet artillery staged in those town hexes. Granted, getting halftracks loaded with infantry off the board sounds like a great move at first (two points per load, remember that halftracks count as combat units unlike trucks), but then Germans could have certainly used these units against Volkhov-Ivanova and racked up a few more town hexes . . . then easily bolted for 8GG8 or 8GG3. Note that every town hex taken from the Soviets represents a three-point swing in the score (with the Soviets losing one point and the Germans gaining two), and even putting a dent in Volkhov-Ivanova would have helped the German immensely.

On the contrary, since the German breakthrough battle group left so early, the Soviets were able to push a reinforced company's worth of infantry and trucks down the Volkhov-Ivanova road Granzhelyz. These new units reached the northern hexes of the big town, which then freed up the units already there to push further down against the weakened German infantry force trying to get into southern Granzhelyz. The result was predictable for the Germans, taking only four hexes of Granzhelyz, plus the two in Brozhny.

This time, the Soviets won, and the results were not that close. German mistakes and impatience cost them 8 combat units destroyed (16 Soviet points), while the Germans were only able to take 6 town hexes (leaving the Soviets with 24 points). Thus, the Soviets walked away with 40 points total. While the Germans racked up an impressive 19 "breakthrough" combat units through hex 8GG8, the fact that they only took six town hexes (12 German points) left them with a total score of 31. Thus, the Soviets just missed winning a tactical victory.

While the results of second game might make the situation seem unbalanced, the fact of the matter is that the Germans threw this game away. The results of the first game show that played with balance and patience, the Germans can certainly win even against a smart, aggressive, and sometimes lucky Soviet player.

They didn't hang around to mount any kind of attack the German win came with a +1 margin, the Soviets are awarded an overall marginal victory for Situation

Situation 18 Guderian Checked at Last Kashira, Russia **27 November, 1941**

Summary: Despite repeated attempts at assault and encirclement, elements of the Soviet 50th Army continued to hold out at Tula, frustrating Guderian's advance toward Moscow. Now, with the town finally bypassed to the east, the spearhead of the XXIV Panzer Corps is driving toward Kashira, an important junction behind Tula on the road to Moscow. Recognizing the threat, Zhukov finally releases "Group Belov," built around the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps, heavily reinforced with tanks and infantry. The blow hits Guderian's frazzled spearhead on November 27, driving it back 16 miles to Mordves and forever closing the door on German hopes for taking Moscow from the south.

Background: By the last week of November, in spite of all the odds stacked against them, the Germans were actually making significant progress with the second stage of Operation Typhoon. Having opened on November 15, German spearheads had hit weak junctures of the Soviet armies facing them, and like blocks of concrete in a failing dam, the splits in the Soviet line were beginning to spread.

One such juncture, as discussed previously, came with Reinhardt's Panzer Group III splitting the boundary between the Soviet 16th and 30th Armies northwest of Moscow. Soon the Ninth Army (Colonel General Strauss) was exploiting this breach, setting up bridgeheads over the Volga River north of the Volga Reservoir. With his flanks thus made secure, Reinhardt was able to pivot east-southeast, driving for the Moscow-Volga Canal, the last major physical obstacle before Moscow itself. To support this drive from the northwest, Hoepner's Panzer Group IV and von Kluge's Fourth Army put their shoulders into a Because the Soviet win came with a +9 margin and frontal blitz against Rokossovsky's 16th Army and



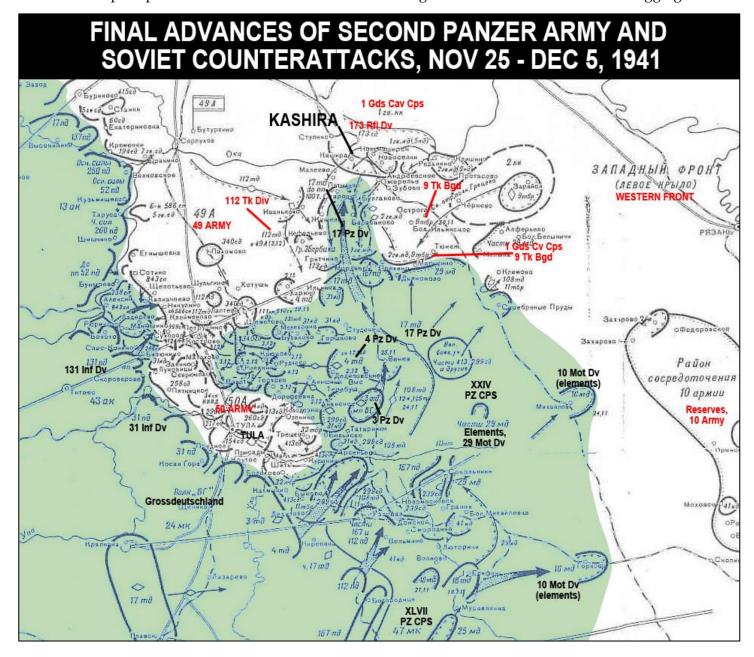


stalemate was finally broken on November 20. This prompted Zhukov to release the last of STAVKA's strategic reserves, the 1st Shock Army under Kuznetsov and Liziukov's 20th Army. This soon sparked engagements around the cities of Kalinin and Klin which, in the words of David Glantz, "led to a seesaw battle that decimated both sides."

Even though situation 18 deals with Second Panzer Army's last advances far to the south, we mention these desperate battles along the central and northern Moscow sectors because they illustrate just how close are plenty of reasons. the large-scale operational picture really was. While the common perception of Moscow holds that the through the bottom of the barrel and digging into the

Govorov's 5th Army. Progress was slow but once Soviets were building up massive reserves for a huge Hoepner committed all three of his corps, the December counterblow, the truth of the matter is that many of these formations (as just discussed) had been largely committed. True, these units were fresh, and their full weight wouldn't be thrown in until the famous Soviet counterattack on December 5. But the fact remains that the Soviets were really reaching the bottom of the barrel, at least for the immediate future. This brings Guderian's last big push in the south into sharp relief, since it shows just how much damage might have been done if he'd been more successful.

> Of course, Guderian was not successful, and there First and foremost, if the Soviets were at the bottom of the barrel, Guderian was







Situation 17, Kampfgruppe Eberbach was his last real armored striking force, and even it down to about fifty operational tanks. Situation 17 also outlines all the manpower, supply, and weather problems faced by Guderian's Second Panzer Army. This is no fault to men or their general, but it's a simple truth in war that you can only push men and machines so far. The racking up miles wherever he could, pursuing men knew it, Guderian knew it, Guderian's superiors knew it. The only ones who didn't seem to know it were the little Bohemian corporal and his cronies, for whom this whole war was only a matter of inches on a big map.

Yet despite all these problems, Kampfgruppe Eberbach, the XXIV Panzer Corps, and by extension keep the Soviets off-balance, doing the best he could the whole Second Panzer Army initially showed surprising progress when their wing of the offensive re-opened on November 18. We've already seen their victory at Uzlovaya in Situation 17. In the days following this, the Germans took Stalinogorsk, Donskoy, and then Venev. Each town fell as another milestone in a steady northward march behind Tula, the great obstacle that was blocking all of Second Panzer Army from the main drive north on Moscow. At Veney, the 3rd and 4th Panzer Divisions split off to the west, hoping to encircle Tula from the north. 17th Panzer Division continued to drive north, passing through Mordves and finally on to Kashira.

Meanwhile, further south, Guderian's lengthening right flank was covered by 29th Motorized Division's (the "Falcon" Division, see Situation 4) attack on Yepifan, 10^{th} Motorized Division's taking Mikhailov, and 18th Panzer Division in the far south clearing Efremov. These divisions continued driving east in an attempt to secure Guderian's vulnerable right wing, always advancing to keep the Soviets offbalance and unable to mount a counterattack. The problem was that it also meant that Guderian was attacking in at least three directions from at least three major operational centers. Looking at the map, one quickly sees where Guderian's forces seem to be moving helter-skelter in all directions, with only one common thread between them all . . . they were all moving away from each other. Field Marshal von Colonel-General Hadler, and even von consent." Bock,

ground on which the barrel sits. As discussed in Brauchtisch were all concerned that Guderian was scattering his forces, and in truth, he was. Considering the winter conditions, supply shortfalls, and dangerously weakened state of his units to begin with, this was a very dangerous trend that promised disaster when the Soviets finally struck back.

> Critics sometimes say that Guderian was simply objectives that could not support the larger picture. This almost comes out in Guderian's own memoirs, which coyly omits any mention of the massive Soviet counterattack at Kashira at all, but still makes plenty of hay about advances far to the east as late as December 4. Supporters state that he was trying to with limited resources and against impossible odds. Reality, as usual, probably represents a mixture of both cases. What is true is that Guderian got no help from von Kluge, his former boss and commander of the Fourth Army to the north. Guderian's 3^{rd} and 4^{th} Panzer Armies were trying to encircle Tula by driving almost 360 degrees around the city (Infantry Regiment Grossdeutschland was stalled against the city from the front), even a modest push by Kluge's right wing could have met these panzers halfway and sealed Tula's fate.

> In any event, the disaster which had long loomed finally struck on November 27. Startled by Guderian's push from the south (now reaching Kashira, as mentioned above), and with all his major reserves committed to the battles in the north and center, Zhukov knew that a crisis was quickly developing in the Tula sector. Here, General Boldin's 50th Army was mounting a near-fanatical resistance against Guderian's spearheads, launching repeated counterattacks against the lines of Infantry Regiment Grossdeutschland and the 131st Infantry Division. Also, Guderian started reporting encounters with "Siberian troops" (the 413th and 415th Rifle Divisions, specifically, according to RKKA maps), and as the temperature continued to plummet, he repeatedly asked that the offensive be cancelled until spring. However, in the words of Glantz, "no one at OKH had the authority to take such action without Hitler's





sector. While Guderian's spearhead (XXIV Panzer Corps) was having tremendous difficulty and was might still break though at Kashira. If it did, there was almost nothing else in its way.

Zhukov thus tapped Major-General P. A. Belov's 2nd Cavalry Corps, literally the last operational reserve in the south (note we didn't say strategic reserve, 1st Shock Army and 20th Army had already been committed to the north). His orders were to "restore the situation at any cost," and for the job he was reinforced with half the 112th Tank Division, the 9th Tank Brigade, parts of the 173rd Rifle Division (artillery, antiaircraft and engineer units, not the main life regiments), and a "Guards Mortar" regiment of Katyushas, and a scattering of smaller independent tank, militia, and training units. This rag-tag force was hastily redesignated as the "1st Guards Cavalry Corps" on November 26 and on the very next day slammed into the 17th Panzer Division (leading element of the XXIV Panzer Corps) from the north, northeast, and northwest. The effect was immediate, the fragile remnants of the 17th Panzer, already at the limits of its endurance and with its panzer regiment at 30% strength or less, was quickly hurled back to the south. In no time they were back at Mordves, and soon driven back to Venev by the beginning of December.

Needless to say, XXIV Panzer Corps, and by extension the Second Panzer Army, was getting nowhere near Moscow. Guderian's drive across the Russian steppe was finally and decisively halted, never coming within 95 miles or so of Moscow. The fallout was immediate and long-lasting, but will be dealt with in future sections (once the rest of Typhoon fell apart, froze solid, and bled to death on the white Russian steppe).

The 1st Guards Cavalry Corps, meanwhile, was just getting started. The line of the 17th Panzer was so widely scattered and so porous that many of the cavalry units simply slipped through, plunging into the German rear where they would embark on a fivemonth rampage. Complete with tanks, this was the first attempt to resurrect Tukhachevsky's old 1930s

Still, a crisis point had been reached in the Tula idea of the Soviet "cavalry-mechanized group" for deep penetrations. Given the desperate lack of equipment, supplies, and reserves available to the unsupported by neighboring units, it looked as if it Soviets, Belov's strike worked amazingly well. Furthermore, the concept would serve as a revived model for the resurgent Red Army as "cavalrymechanized groups" scored repeated successes against the Germans well into 1945.

> Situation Design: Everyone with even a passing interest in World War II has seen old footage of Soviet T-34s, their decks crowded with infantry, speeding over snowy steppes alongside galloping ranks of cavalry. Of course we all know these are staged propaganda reels, but we also know that assaults like this did happen, and debate still rages over just how effective these Soviet "cavalry-mechanized groups" actually were. Can horsemen really keep up with tanks tactically? Can tanks really keep up with horsemen operationally (since armored units have a much shorter leash when it comes to supplies, fuel, oil, spare parts, supporting artillery, air cover, and a host of other demands)? Can horsemen really survive against the high-firepower resistance typically encountered by a tank attack? Can tanks really operate effectively over the same kind of wooded, hilly terrain that horsemen can? Were cavalry units really just a myth of the Russian steppe, or did they actually form part of the Red Army's offensive doctrine? And if so, how?

> These are the kinds of questions we can at least try to answer with Situation 18. In broad terms, the game tries to recreate the left wing of Belov's November 27 offensive, where 1st Guards Cavalry Corps and the 9th Tank Brigade (35th and 127th Separate Tank Battalions) made a shove against the eastern shoulder of 17th Panzer Division's northward-facing salient just short of Kashira.

> The first step in building this scenario was constructing a map board. Since Google Earth shows the field to be largely (but not completely) flat, with only a few scatterings of trees, Boards 3 and 6 were chosen. There are quite a few small villages in the area (Tyunezh, Marygino, Tokarevo, Topkanovo), making these boards a reasonable fit. Of course we recolored our board in our winter color scheme, and





angled it to reflect Belov's vector of attack.

skips over this engagement in his memoirs. Many others, while acknowledging the battle's importance, only handle it only in high-level terms typical of many Eastern Front references. Only by picking through divisions). In any case, this gives us RKKA maps, other Russian websites, and David a chance to finally use our Il-2 Glantz books do we get a more detailed view of what "Stormovik" counters, along with "1st Guards Cavalry Corps" really was.

Note the addition of the new tankoivy descant tank 2 light bomber. Note how the attack riding infantry attached to 9th Tank Brigade. These were SMG units (which players can mix with some of the engineers for a CAT bonus to reflect the "destroyer" mission of these units), first widely used special rule that these can only be mounted on T-34s (as opposed to BT-7s). Casualties rates for these men were ghastly enough, tank-riding on a BT-7 ("Knights in Plywood" as Katukov called them) would have been just this side of suicide. Playtesting shows that the Liberation stacking limit of three units in a hex, combined with the Soviet special rule of always keeping two tanks in a stack, makes dismounting these tank riders a bit tricky, but workable.

Using these sources, we were able to confirm the presence of the 1st Stavropol Guards and 2nd Crimean Cavalry Artillery Regiment. We've also included the 35th and 127th Tank Regiments and the 237th Engineer some of their divisional artillery (979th Artillery Regiment) to support 1st Guards Cavalry. We also know from Glanz and RKKA sites that the 15th Guards Kirchubel's *Barbarossa*: *Army Group Centre* tells us that Panzer. the Soviets had "substantial air support" for this research, but again Russian sites and Google Translate first war as an armored formation.

came through. The 77th Ground Attack Regiment is a For once, the Soviet units were easier to research complete guess, but was the only ground attack than the Germans. Guderian, for example, completely regiment I could find defending Moscow during this time (surely most of the air support available to Zhukov was tied up in the much more numerous

> "mixed aviation" regiments and another Red Air Force classic, the Peaircraft only show up on Turn 4, despite the fact that this is a "planned assault." As stated in previous situations, the Red Air



at about this time in the campaign. Just note the Force was still learning the trade of close air support, with some units assigned at Army level and others at Front level. This made it very difficult to coordinate different squadrons, much less with commanders on the ground.

Meanwhile, outside of a simple "17th Panzer Division" notation, we have no real idea what the Germans had here. We know that the 5th Panzer Brigade (the basis for "Kampfgruppe Eberbach") was returned to the 4th Panzer Division, driving back west in its attempt to encircle Tula. This leaves 17th Panzer on its own, but when trying to estimate its current Guards Cavalry Divisions. We chose (pretty much at strength, we're left largely to educated guesswork. random) to depict the 1st Stavropol Guards, which Despite the fact that 17th Panzer had contributed at included the 1st Red Banner Saratov Guards Regiment least some of its armor to Kampfgruppe Eberbach, we (along with three others), together with the 1st Guards know 17th Panzer had at least a few tanks. But these would be only a handful. For lack of anything else, we went by the published estimation that most Battalion of the 9th Tank Brigade. We also know the German panzer regiments were running at 30% or less 173rd Rifle Division was present, although mostly on strength by this stage of the war, with a little more the western shoulder of this offensive. Thus, none of chipped off for contributing to Kampfgruppe their infantry units are included, but they have lent Eberbach and the losses it had sustained since November 18. If anything, the tanks we give 17th Panzer here are a little too generous.

Note also that the Germans are reduced to a Mortar Regiment was here (Katyushas) while Robert Morale of B. This is not meant as a slight against 17th True, they were a "second generation" panzer division (formed from the 27th Infantry attack. As always, air units are notoriously hard to Division in November 1940) and thus Russia was their But after six





certainly crack panzer troops by now. The erosion here is due to bad equipment for freezing temperatures, sickness, losses, and sheer exhaustion. Again, these are men at the end of their rope.

While Situation 18 is moderately-sized, it does have quite a few special rules. Those dealing with the German SdKfz 251/10 "flaktracks," 2.0 cm flak mounts, and 88s are probably superfluous to veteran PanzerBlitz players, they are simply meant as clarification of old weapons classes (technically the flaktracks and 2.0 cm batteries should be "AA" class by Liberation rules, not "H"). Also, with Soviet aircraft in the sky for a change, players might want to point their 88 up for a shot at a Sturmovik. But while these 88s were in fact antiaircraft guns, they are meant to shoot down high-altitude level bombers and recon planes, not low-flying ground-pounders where you need fast-traverse, rapid-fire guns like the German 2.0 cm. In the world of PanzerBlitz, the 88 is truly an antitank gun, hence its "A" weapon class.

Playtesting: One the first tricks to playing Situation 18, at least as the Soviet player, is to carefully read the historical account of what happened here. The Soviet cavalry was able to get through the German lines by slipping between wide-scattered outposts of the 17th Panzer Division. Nowhere does it say the Soviet cavalry overran the German positions in a heroic saber-slashing assault more worthy of Suvorov than The Soviet player who tries to tackle German defenses head-on, at least with his cavalry, does so at his peril.

Instead, playtesting shows that the better play is to hammer the German position with massed volleys of artillery and Katyusha rockets, followed up by aircraft on Turn 4. Thicker-skinned units like the T-34s, backed up by tank-riding infantry and the 76.2mm howitzers deployed in true Red Army "divisional gun" direct-fire role, are ideal for making the required spots. BT-7s can make a good "free safety" battle group to keep the Soviet rear free of marauding German armored cars or flaktracks looking to call in artillery missions. Once the Germans have been

months on Guderian's leading edge, they were make the break into the German rear. Not many of them have to make it, remember that every kill is a point for the Germans so it's too risky, the Soviet player might as well not send them. Sure, you don't the points, but neither to the Germans. If half of the cavalry are killed getting off the board, you've given the German player as many points as you've earned vourself.

> Given how fast the Soviet armor needs to close with the enemy (in order to start calling in those artillery and Katyusha strikes), playtesting shows that Picking up the the eastern attack lane is best. Zabvenia road at 3AA10 and scooting southeast offers options for slithering down the far side of the board toward Grodino or ducking into the gullies near the Board 3 lake. The Germans will almost certainly have heavy guns staged in Grodino, but once they fire they're spotted and the Stalin can start playing his Katyusha "organ pipes." The object is to blast (or at least suppress) the Germans sufficiently so more than half the cavalry makes it to safety. Again, break even with the Germans on cavalry losses and you've won nothing. If the Germans kill more than you get off the board, you've effectively *lost* points. Again, let the T-34s do the heavy lifting. These are T-34/cs with better guns, and they have tank-riding infantry no less. Seven T-34/cs against three PzKpfw-IIIGs should make you more than ready to engage in a tank brawl.

As for the German player, you don't really have enough artillery to mount the "two shoulder" defense against a breakthrough game. Normally, the best option is to put your guns on both shoulders with your mobile forces in the center, ready to respond in either direction. If the attacker is kind enough to come down the middle, your tanks and mobile infantry meet him head on and you've got him in a crossfire. But here, that formula almost has to be turned inside-out because of the comparative lack of German direct-fire artillery. One option is to put the 88 and 150mm infantry gun in Brozhny, where it can fire against Soviets coming down either flank. The problem here is that your first volley may well be your last, Brozhny is awfully easy to spot for Soviet hammered a little, the cavalry can make the dash artillery observers. Another idea is to put the 88 in down the board, hopefully into a gully for cover, and Grodino and the infantry gun in Tarakov. Soviet

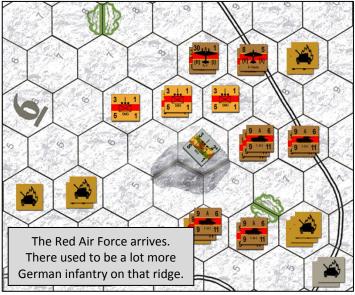




cavalry and infantry will have an comparatively easier time in the west and the tanks will have an easier time in the east because of terrain and the layout of the roads. Although in truth, given the speeds of T-34s and BT-7s, Soviet armor will be on top of you quickly no matter where they decide to strike.

The main German weapon, of course, is the offboard artillery. Accordingly, remember to keep at least a few sets of eyes on elevated ground to look down into gullies. The Soviet player will almost certainly be using these "subways" to get units onto Board 6, and nothing is as much fun as dropping 60-H fire mission on a stack of 4 DF Soviet cavalry. Naturally, hex 6D3 is invaluable for this purpose. Getting some armored cars into Board 3 woods hexes is a good idea, too, especially if the Soviet player is trying to hoard his cavalry platoons under cover for a mid-game mass dash down through a weakened German line. Just remember to keep these spotters in woods, as a Stormovik's chain guns will eat a German armored car for breakfast. On that note, pay especially close attention to the placement of your units during Turn 3. Leaving nothing exposed for Turn 4, as the Red Air Force arrives on the next movement phase.

As always, this game was played twice. In the first game, the Soviets tried a rush down the east side of the board. Except for a disastrous series of activation rolls, the Soviet plan worked rather well. The tanks swept down the central road through Opustoschenia, using the ridges and woods in hex rows 6T, 6U, and 6V as screening from the 88 lurking in Grodino. Soon the Germans in Grodino were in something of a pincer, with tanks pressing on their left wing while infantry and direct-fire artillery threatened them from the tree line 3BB6-3EE5. The Soviet cavalry made a break for it, and when German artillery opened up on them, "blind" missions abruptly became "spotted" missions and the German guns were almost completely wiped out. German tanks tried nipping at the Soviet armored force, scattered somewhat due to bad activation checks, and scored notable success. Lighter German guns, meanwhile, kept at the cavalry, opting not to kill but to disperse twice as many,



called in. Then, of course, the Soviet air support showed up, and killed enough German screening forces that the cavalry were able to make escapes though hex rows 6Z, 6AA, and 6BB.

Yet no matter how many times we see it in these games or write it in this journal, the German infantry is always underestimated. With HMG, rifle, and engineer platoons stacked together, just a handful singlehandedly shattered a second such penetration tried down the far eastern end of the board. Meeting the Soviets in the woods in hex rows 6EE and 6FF, they halted, pinned, and destroyed a force of Soviet guards infantry and cavalry, at least until the last of the Soviet tanks showed up and overran the remains of the German infantry. Meanwhile, German armored cars had nestled into woods hex 3I3 and called in fire missions on the Soviet artillery base set up in Opustoschenia, killing two Katyushas as they tried to reload.

Yet despite all this, the Soviets won the game. They killed 32 German units and got 10 cavalry platoons off the board for a total score of 42. The Germans, meanwhile, managed to kill only 37 Soviet units, thus giving the Soviets a 5-point marginal victory.

completely wiped out. German tanks tried nipping at the Soviet armored force, scattered somewhat due to bad activation checks, and scored notable success. Lighter German guns, meanwhile, kept at the cavalry, on this end of the board and the Germans should have opting not to kill but to disperse twice as many, had a harder time getting at the Soviet cavalry. Pinning them down for artillery missions already

PanzerH

SITUATION 18

GUDERIAN CHECKED AT LAST - KASHIRA, RUSSIA (27 Nov 1941): Despite repeated attempts at assault and encirclement, elements of the Soviet 50th Army continued to hold out at Tula, frustrating Guderian's advance toward Moscow. Now, with the town finally bypassed to the east, the spearhead of the XXIV Panzer Corps is driving toward Kashira, an important junction behind Tula on the road to Moscow. Recognizing the threat, Zhukov releases "Group Belov," built around the newlyminted 1st Guards Cavalry Corps, heavily reinforced with tanks and infantry. The blow hits Guderian's frazzled spearhead on November 27, driving it back 16 miles to Mordves and forever dashing German hopes for taking Moscow from the south.





RUSSIAN FORCES Left Wing, "Group Belov" 1st Guards Cavalry Corps Western Front (Morale C)



1st Red Banner Saratov Guards Cavalry Rgt and 1st Guards Cavalry **Artillery Rgt, 1st Stavropol Guards Cavalry Division**



Batteries, 979th Artillery Regiment, 173rd Rifle Division

40 (H) 20 20 (H) 16 0 C 0

Batteries, 15th Guards Mortar Regiment

40 (H) 24

35th and 127th Separate Tank Battalions, 237th Engineer Battalion, 9th Tank Brigade



Sorties, 77th Ground Attack **Aviation Regiment**



SETUP: Germans set up on Board 6. Russians enter along the northeastern edge of Board 3 on Turn 1. Russian aircraft enters on Turn 4 (subject to activation rolls, like all other units).

JEL GERMAN FORCES

Spearhead, 17th Panzer Division **XXIV Panzer Corps Second Panzer Army**

Army Group Center (Morale B)



Remnants, **Pioneer Battalion 27** 1/66 Antiaircraft Company 4 H 10

Remnants, Infantry Regiment 63 and Antitank Battalion 27



Batteries, FlaK Bn 11, 104th Flak Rgt, 104th Flak Corps



Lead Battalion, Artillery Regiment 27 (off board)



Remnants, Recon Battalion 27

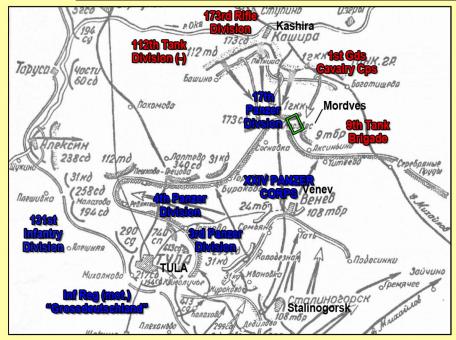


VICTORY CONDITIONS

Germans get 1 point for each Russian unit destroyed. Russians get 1 point for each German unit destroyed, and 1 point for each cavalry platoon that escapes off the southwest edge of Board 6.

- Win with high score: MARGINAL Victory
- Win by 10 or more: TACTICAL Victory
- Win by 20 or more: DECISIVE Victory

Russians move first Turn 6 10

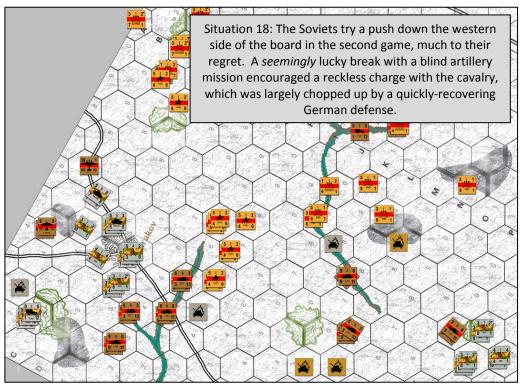


SPECIAL RULES

- Russian activation rolls: Roll 1-5. At the beginning of each movement phase, Russian units must roll a d6. On a result of 1-5, the unit can move and operate normally. On a result of 6, the Russian unit cannot move, overrun, or enter the board (units entering the board who fail this roll can try again next turn). This rule includes aircraft, but does not include infantry or cavalry making "motionless" CATs.
- Russian tanks must always be stacked at least two deep. If a stack takes losses, the "lone" Russian unit has one movement phase to rejoin another armored unit. If that can't do it, chooses not to do it, or fails its activation roll, the unit is eliminated.
- Russian units may NOT use Split Move and Fire.
- Tankoviy Descant: Russian SMGs and engineers may ride on T-34s only. See tank-riding rules in PanzerBlitz.
- German 88s double "A" class AF out to 5 hexes, not 2.
- Cement Bomber: All AA fire against Stormoviks must do so at a +1 DRM (heavy armor plating and redundant flight systems).
- Katvushas must reload for one turn after firing, during which they cannot move. If they move while reloading, they must take another round to reload.
- German 20mm flak and SdKfz 10/4 units can make AA class attacks vs. aircraft (weapons class should be AA, not H).
- German 88s cannot engage aircraft in PanzerBlitz.







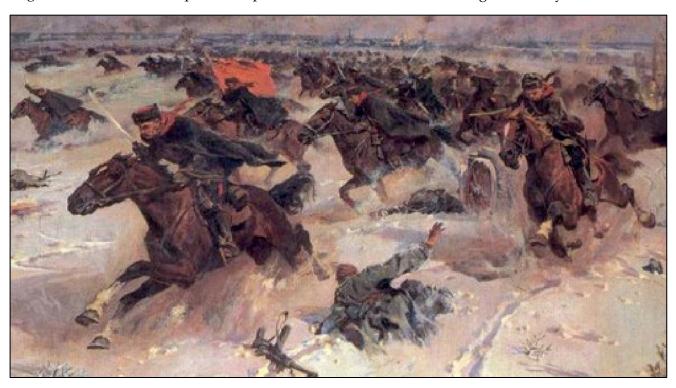
Tarakov wound up killing or dispersing a large part of the German defense, apparently opening the door for an early cavalry rush. This proved to be a bad idea. The Soviets immediately started a mass CAT cavalry charge right at the German defenses, which although battered, were still strong enough to hammer down the Soviet cavalry. Bad activation checks also meant that the Soviets came down at the Germans in two almost perfectly equal waves, allowing the Germans to chop them up in detail.

Reinforcing German infantry CAT attacks out of Tarakov, combined with off-board artillery strikes and even overruns by PzKpfw IVs, IIIs, and flaktracks meant that only six Soviet cavalry units would escape this time.

Meanwhile, a "suicide" run by German armored cars crested Hill 107 on the northern end of Board 3 and looked down into the gully where all their artillery and Katyushas were staged. The Stormoviks got two of the cars, but the rest called in a massed artillery strike that

eliminated most of the major Soviet support assets and left the German off-board batteries as kings of the field.

In the end, the Soviets killed 26 German units and got only six cavalry off the board. This gave them a total score of 32 points. Meanwhile, the Germans scored 38 kills, giving them a +6 marginal victory. With a German +6 victory compared to a Soviet +5 victory, the overall situation goes down as a *very* slender German Marginal Victory.





Situations, Analysis, and Campaign Journal, PANZERBLITZ on the Eastern Front, By JAMES JOHNSON June - December 1941

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SECTION SEVEN DECEMBER, 1941 COUNTERSTRIKE!

The first week of 1941 saw some of the most decisive events in World War II. While the American public (and future historians) would certainly focus on Pearl Harbor, more important battles were already unfolding across the blizzard swept countryside just outside of Moscow. Here, German spearheads were closing to within sight of Moscow, and German artillery spotters claimed they could see morning sunlight glinting off the golden domes of the Kremlin.

Of course, Moscow would never fall. With the German Army exhausted, freezing, starved for supplies and bled white by five constant months of campaigning, they just didn't have the strength for the last gargantuan effort to take the Soviet capital. Worse yet, Zhukov was about to release a counterstrike built around newly-arrived divisions from Siberia, which would hit the German line with shattering force. Before it was over, the ensuring Soviet offensive would liberate 10,000 Russian towns and villages, push the German line back across thousands of square miles, and inflict the first large reverse to the German army in World War II. Dozens of German generals and field marshals would be sacked, and the confidence of the German military shaken to its foundations. Moreover, this offensive would shatter forever the myth of the Wehrmacht's invincibility, ensure the Soviet Union's survival in 1942 and beyond, and doom the Third Reich to the grim prospect to a two-front war.

Situation 19 The Spires of the Kremlin Khimki, Russia 2 December, 1941

Summary: Even as the weather continued to deteriorate and Soviet resistance continued to stiffen, the depleted and exhausted vanguard of Army Group Center still ground inexorably toward Moscow. While the main battles of this last German drive took

place directly west of the city, other German units to the north would actually draw even closer to Moscow. The closest recorded position of any German unit to the Soviet capital was at Khimki, a small town on the Moscow-Volga Canal just 11 kilometers northwest of the city's outskirts and 23 kilometers from its center. However, these German reconnaissance units could not take Khimki or maintain their forward positions, and were quickly driven back with heavy losses.

Background: Despite all the factors stacked against it, Field Marshal Fedor von Bock's Army Group Center continued to creep ever closer to the gates of Moscow through the last days of November, 1941. Part of what enabled them to accomplish this seemingly superhuman feat of endurance has to rest with Stalin himself, who threw away so many of Zhukov's carefully-hoarded reserves in his "spoiling attacks" of mid-November (see Situation 16). Now, despite having suffered so many losses through five months of ceaseless combat, the spearheads of von Kluge's Fourth Army were making slow but steady progress along the western approaches to Moscow, fighting through places like Novo-Petrovskoye and Istra and soon approaching Naro-Fominsk. This assault was supported to the north by the armored drives of Reinhardt's Panzer Group III and Hoepner's Panzer Group IV. These drives smashed through Soviet defenses around the city of Klin and made much more rapid progress across the ground northwest of Moscow

This drive was resisted by the Western Front (under Zhukov, directly in front of Moscow) and the Kalinin Front (commanded by Konev on the Western Front's north wing). Zhukov, naturally, was hit the hardest. Almost immediately, a split developed between Rokossovsky's 16th Army and the 30th Army to his north. Rokossovsky's line split wide open near the aforementioned city of Klin. His deputy (Major-General Zakharov) was given an emergency task force to seal this breach, made up of the 126th Rifle Division, the 17th Cavalry Division, the 107th Motorized Division, and two tank brigades. This collided with the LVI Panzer Corps of Reinhardt's Panzer Group III (including the famed 7th "Ghost" Panzer Division, formerly commanded by Rommel during the French





stopped, and once the line broke again, he made a closest approach to Moscow to made by German rapid advance through Klin (the town was taken on forces. November 23). Reinhardt's panzers were soon north of Moscow along the Yakhroma River and the split into two directions. To the north, Reinhardt's Moscow Canal.

To Reinhardt's immediate south, meanwhile, Hoepner was having a harder time. He hadn't struck right in the "seam" between 16th and 30th Armies like Reinhardt had, and faced determined counterattacks and stubborn defense by units like Dovator's 50th and 53rd Cavalry Divisions (see Situation 9) and Katukov's 1st Guards Tank Brigade. Three rifle divisions backed up these Soviet units, finally forcing Hoepner to commit all three of his corps (leaving nothing in reserve) in order to get his forces moving again.

Clearly, another crisis was developing to the north of Moscow. As reviewed in Situation 18, Zhukov was forced to commit his last operational reserves into this widening breach, consisting of the small 20th Army and the 1st Shock Army. These new forces (not nearly fed into the line between the retreating 16th and 30th Armies. To the north, the 30th was ordered to keep contact with Konev's Kalinin Front at all costs, while Rokossovsky's 16th Army was pulled back to a new line beside the 5th Army (directly in front of Moscow) and ordered to stand and die.

This was the Soviet Union's darkest hour. German artillery fire could clearly be heard in the streets of Moscow. Stalin was reported to have called Zhukov on the phone and asked him point blank: "Can we hold Moscow? Answer me truthfully. Answer me as a Communist."

Although larger battles were taking place at towns like Naro-Forminsk, directly west of Moscow, the real danger point seemed to be to the northwest of Moscow. Here, where the 1st Shock and 20th Armies had just been committed, two German panzer groups were still driving east. Depleted as exhausted as they were, we're still talking about six German panzer

Campaign of 1940). Reinhardt was slowed but not place, and where history would see the absolute

As Panzer Groups III and IV made their eastward approaching Dmitrov, located 65 kilometers directly push through the ground north of Moscow, they soon Panzer Group III continued east, soon reaching Dmitrov on the Moscow Canal, where it was engaged and halted by the 1st Shock Army under General Vasili I. Kuznetsov. Reinhardt quickly had a hell of a fight on his hands, despite Kuznetsov's small forces (1st Shock Army wasn't made up of formal divisions, but primarily a hastily-collected assortment of rifle and tank brigades). This was because Kuznetsov was tough, pragmatic, and talented, originally commander of the 3rd Army during the disastrous opening days of Since then, he'd given the Germans Barbarossa. plenty of grief despite their string of overall victories, and had proven himself one of the few Soviet armylevel commanders talented enough to survive both the Germans and Stalin's need for scapegoats.

To the south, meanwhile, Hoepner's Panzer Group as large as their "army" designation suggests) were IV had turned south to approach Moscow from the northwest. Here, the Germans were up against the 20th Army under General Andrei Vlasov. A solid commander, his forces were even weaker than Kuznetsov's, and really represented the crust from the bottom of the barrel Zhukov had just scraped. Consisting of just two rifle divisions, three rifle brigades, artillery and Katyusha units, engineers, and two tank battalions, it was really more of a sloppily bulked-up corps than an army.

Interestingly, Vlasov would be decorated after the defense of Moscow, given command of 2nd Shock Army for the attempted relief of Leningrad in 1942. But when 2nd Shock Army was surrounded and annihilated in that botched offensive, Vlasov refused evacuation, was soon betrayed and captured, then turned traitor himself and became the famous leader of the Russian Liberation Army. This was the 600,000strong force of Russian soldiers fighting against the Soviet Union for Nazi Germany. Captured by the divisions, SS Division Das Reich, and two other Americans at the end of the war, he was handed over motorized divisions, plus all their supporting infantry to the Soviets who predictably hung him and a dozen divisions. This is the area where Situation 19 takes other traitors in 1946. Yet he's still honored every





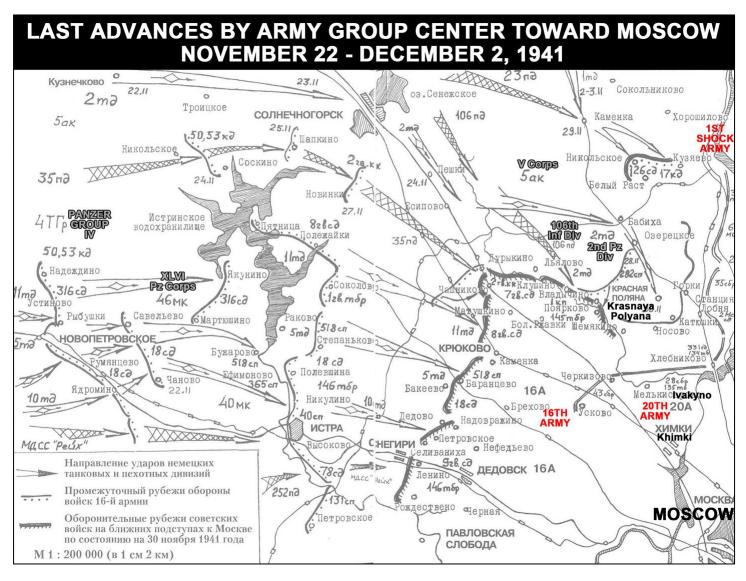
Easter by the congregations of Russian Orthodox churches in New York. "Treason," it seems, is always in the eye of the beholder.

Here, however, Vlasov was still a loyal soldier for Mother Russia. His line was steadily pushed back by the weight of Hoepner's gasping tanks, which soon took the town of Krasnya Polyana (Red Glade), just 32 kilometers from the Kremlin. This works out to about 20 miles, which led some officers of the 2nd Panzer Division (XLVI Panzer Corps, Hoepner's forward most units) to claim they could see the gleaming golden spires of the Kremlin through their powerful artillery-spotter field glasses from the bell towers of a 1941, a "motorcycle reconnaissance group" reached local church. Honestly, this story is debated by some historians, since the spires of the Kremlin may or may not have been "golden" at that time, instead repainted and camouflaged as a measure against German bombers which had been hitting the city for months.

Whatever the case, Hoepner was not done. The spearhead of the XLVI Panzer Corps (the 2nd Panzer Division and the 106th Infantry Division) continued to push south. They soon reached a line at Ivakyno, braced to the east by the southern tip of the Klyaz'minskoye Reservoir. This is only about 25 kilometers north-northwest of the Kremlin, and only about 13 kilometers from the outskirts of Moscow in those days. This is the furthest south Hoepner's front line ever reached, and the "official" high-water mark of the German invasion.

But even this isn't entirely true. On December 2, another seven kilometers south to the outskirts of Khimki, a small town where two bridges (one rail, one road) spanned the Moscow-Volga Canal.

What happened here is a matter of conjecture to this day. Sources can't even seem to get the German







unit correct, citing "the 62nd Panzer Engineer Battalion connected outposts. of the 2nd Panzer Division." Well, there is no 62nd Panzer Engineer Battalion in the 2nd Panzer Division. maps found at the RKKA site. The 38th Pioneer Battalion had halftracks, not military maps made up during or immediately after motorcycles. Russian and German sources agree it the war, archived as part of the Soviet Army's official was a motorcycle unit (or at least contained motorcycles), suggesting either the 2nd Panzer Division's Motorcycle Battalion 2 or Reconnaissance Battalion 5.

In true German fashion, this was probably a "kampfgruppe" made up of pieces from several or all of the above-listed units. Remember just how depleted German divisions were by this stage of the campaign, and how mixed units were often thrown together for carrying out specific missions at hand. Many historians hotly debate whether this action ever happened, stating that the Germans never took Khimki. But of course, no one's saying they took Khimki, only that they reached it. Again, details are very blurry. According to Soviet Storm, World War II in the East, there are two versions, one in which the German motorcyclists are all killed, "one where they are forced to beat a hasty retreat." But surely legends of German reconnaissance troops stopping in Khimki train station and buying a non-stop tram ticket to Red Square (only 20 kilometers away) are probably There's a famous memorial erected at nonsense. "Kilometer 23" in Khimki, made up of "Czech hedgehog" style tank obstacles (presently across the street from an IKEA warehouse of all things), which many historians think was put up to mark the furthest advance of German forces. But one entry one historian who's actually visited the memorial points out that it was erected to commemorate the beginning of the Soviet counteroffensive on December 5.

Meanwhile, critics of the Khimki story say there is no way German motorcyclists could just drive through the front line at Ivakyno and "road trip" another seven kilometers south. But the fact is, they probably could. This part of the line, almost ten kilometers long, is held only by a Russian rifle brigade and a tank battalion. That's about forty counters to cover about sixty PanzerBlitz hexes (two complete boards . . . lengthwise). Clearly this part of the line was no line at all on either side, only two sets of loosely-

For us, the deciding factor came from our Soviet These are Soviet staff reporting and history. Here, we see a vague dotted arrow extending south from Hoepner's front line at Ivakyno, reaching just north of Khimki. Clearly the Soviets are admitting that some Germans got at least close to Khimki, but didn't stay, and so the "official" front line was never extended.

In any case, whether it was at Krasnaya Polyana, Ivakyno, or Khimki, the Germans definitely got to within sight of Moscow, and possibly within range of their big corps-level artillery pieces (if the 2nd Panzer had any such pieces available, which it didn't). This sector of the 2nd Panzer Division, XLVI Corps, Panzer Group IV would go down in history as the closest German troops would ever come to Moscow, and final victory in the dramatic "Barbarossa" "Typhoon" campaigns of 1941.

Situation Design: This situation was somewhat difficult to design because it was such a break from our usual PanzerBlitz Barbarossa norm. The first thing one notices looking at the situation card is how small the game is, definitely the smallest in the series. This isn't so much a battle as a skirmish between a German reconnaissance force and a Soviet screening force, featuring very small and light forces that have to be exceedingly careful not to expose their vulnerable units to too much enemy fire. One thing this definitely is not is an assault or a "stand and die" defense. Players who approach Situation 19 as simply a smaller version of previous Barbarossa games will quickly find themselves on the losing end of the score sheet.

The first task to be undertaken was the research. Fortunately, RKKA maps show clearly which units were generally in the area. We have 2nd Panzer Division for the Germans, and the 28th Rifle Brigade and 135th Tank Battalion for the Soviets. The question then boils down to this: how much of each unit o represent in the game?

For the Soviets, this was tougher than first assumed. The problem arose from the RKKS maps,





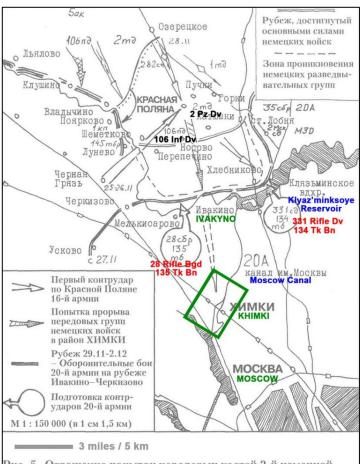


Рис. 5. Отражение попыток передовых частей 2-й немецкой танковой и 106-й пехотной дивизий прорваться к Москве с севера в период с 25 ноября по 2-3 декабря 1941 г. на солнечногорском направлении

which showed the "135 Tb" or "135 mb," which was originally mistaken to signify tank brigade. Only when we found listings for these units of 20th Army in a detailed book listing the Red Army's order of battle for the Battle of Moscow did we realize this was a tank battalion, which of course made a huge difference. The original game was actually designed around roughly one third of a brigade rather than a battalion. This caused further threw the whole design out of whack because by the time the Germans were given enough units to even stand a chance, their order of battle stood far in excess of what could reasonably be imagined to have actually been at Khimki that day.

With this problem resolved, the ratio of Soviet forces to the total strength of the 28th Rifle Brigade and 135th Tank Battalion was relatively simple to estimate at one third. This is derived from typical Soviet doctrine of deploying their units in threes, with two elements holding the line and a third element in reserve. Since the town of Khimki and the vital simply grabbed a handful of units from several likely

behind the line, bridges are reconnaissance force makes contact with this reserve third, not the main line of contact up at Ivakyna.

The Germans were a little tougher to work out simply because the historical records are so shaky on what units were actually there (some historians maintain still none were there at all, and that this whole engagement is a myth). Whatever the case, we know the engagement was very small, and that the Germans should really have no chance of "assaulting" Khimki or getting across that bridge. Victory conditions were designated for holding hexes of Khimki or even crossing the bridge in the off chance that the German player manages (by some miracle) to attain these goals, but this is more for color and to tantalize the German player that just maybe he can "get into Moscow after all." This puts him in the vicarious boots of the German commanders, who swore they could see the "golden spires of the Kremlin" in the shimmering distance. After all, as you set up this game, remember that Moscow's outer limits are only 60 hexes of so off the board (within range of the longest-reaching German artillery units), and Stalin's office is only 125 hexes (11½ miles) from that bridge counter in the center of the board.

But again, if the German player really gets a foothold in Khimki (represented by the board town of Volklesu) or, even worse, gets anyone across that Board 9 canal, the Soviet player has probably done something very wrong.

Speaking of Board 9, this board had to be created for this situation. The river on Board 5 (The River Styx) just doesn't look anything like the Moscow-Volga Canal, especially with all those forks and islands. Board 9 (Styx and Stones) is a simpler river, with minor bends and fluctuations in width, just like the real canal. Of course, the board was created as a river so it could be used in future PanzerBlitz games as well. Creating a custom board for a single *PanzerBlitz* situation is just too much work and bad design.

Since sources cannot agree on exactly what elements of the 2nd Panzer were at Khimki (outside of the nonexistent "62nd Panzer Engineer Battalion"), we've gone with the "kampfgruppe" theory and



Panzerbiitz, Bardarossa



Reconnaissance Battalion 5. One on-line source has the Infantry Regiment 304 operating aggressively along the Ivakyna line, so a handful of them are included. This way, at least, the German player has something to stack his engineers with (the 38th Pioneer Battalion, in deference to the "panzer engineers" that were reportedly present). The secret here was to use a very small sample of each unit to keep this recon task force as light as possible, and if we indeed included anyone who shouldn't be here, at least the error will be a small one.

Playtesting: As stated in the design section, this is situation requires a different mindset than the usual high-velocity violence of PanzerBlitz Barbarossa. The units involved are so small, and their vulnerability so high, that players are going to have to keep their more aggressive urges in check if they want to squeeze out a victory in this one.

Unlike most situations, this one was actually run three times (like Situation 03) because the first design of the game was completely out of whack in regards to both historical accuracy and game balance. The second and third trials of this situation went much better, and will stand as the standard two playtests of each Barbarossa scenario.

In both games, the Soviets concentrated their defense, predictably, around the Board 9 town of Volklesu (Khimki). Set up is very important to the Soviet player since they have such limited mobility in this game. The two batteries of the 517th Artillery Regiment were staged back in Krasnayavets, with their trucks beneath them. This allowed them to move if required, or (more likely) send the trucks across the bridge as emergency stop-gaps to prevent German intrusion into the back hexes of Khimki or even across the canal bridge. Two of the IPs were set up in 9N8 and 9Q7, thus bracing the shoulders of the town against the canal and safeguarding against any possible "back door" blitzes toward the bridge. The Soviet player must remember how fast those armored cars, halftracks, and motorcycles are, after all. The last IP is staged in hex 9N10 to cover the woods to the

candidates. We know it was motorcycles were there, west of Khimki, and thus secure the town's "blind so units from Motorcycle Battalion 2 are present, spot." Other than that, the Soviet set up was pretty along with a handful of light recon vehicles from standard, with light artillery in the town's forward hexes for direct fire against advancing Germans, while infantry and tanks (if you really want to call them that) were set up behind as a mobile reserve. The wagons were staggered through the hexes of Kharavvets, Shpaga, and Molkanova as spoilers and speed bumps, hopefully causing the German player a few headaches with stacking limitations and unloading his artillery. Either the Germans would be delayed a turn or two getting themselves on-line for an assault onto Board 9, or their haste would cause them to get sloppy and offer the Soviets a cheap pop on German infantry in trucks.

> But of course, Situation 19 is not about an assault on Volklesu. Historically, such an assault never really took place, so the Germans are not required to mount one to fulfill their victory conditions. This is a "bump and run," a skirmish between recon elements. Anyone looking for an Iron Cross or Order of the Red Banner will likely only get a big fat "L" burned into their forehead.

> Accordingly, the Germans took their sweet time, using the woods and gullies of Board 7 to screen their advance toward Volklesu. The 120mm mortar unloaded and started dropping blind artillery missions on Volkesu, but the Soviets were polite enough to soon open fire on advancing Germans with the 37mm AA battery, 76.2mm infantry gun, and 12.7mm HMGs, thus giving German spotters concrete But the best the Germans could do was suppress these units, forcing the Germans (in their mind) to mount a rush on the western shoulder of Volklesu.

> This wasn't handled terribly well. Because of how the trucks and halftracks were forced to approach, the engineers arrived well in advance of the rifle platoons. This meant that the engineers didn't get the CAT bonus (Panzer Leader rule VII.e.5) and thus defeated the whole purpose of having engineers in the game to begin with. Meanwhile, Soviet tanks swung around to the northeast and soon had the 120mm mortar battery spotted in hex 7P3. Although the Soviet 76.2mm divisional guns could never quite kill the



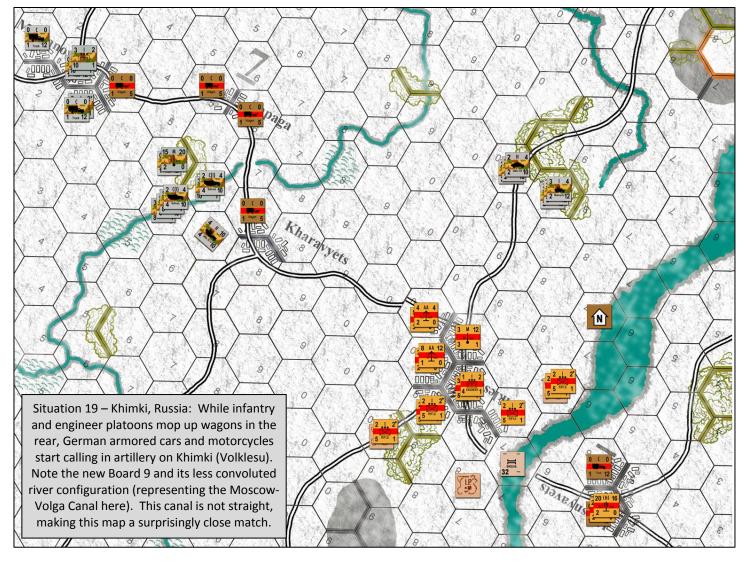
contention.

With no mortars pinning down the Soviet AA and infantry guns, they soon rallied from their dispersed status and poured a vicious, point-blank fire into the German platoons still struggling to open up a hex into Volkesu. The HMG platoon was killed straight away, as was a rifle platoon. Meanwhile, a German spotting force sneaking around the southwest corner of ridge 9N9-9J8 (to get eyes on the Soviet artillery in Krasnayavets) was hit by long-range Soviet rifle fire (the Germans forgot that Soviet rifle platoons have the 2* range factor, too). A motorcycle was pinned down the Soviet light tanks spotting for the artillery missions, but lost an armored car in the process (when else will a T-60A really kill anything?) To their credit,

battery in the town hex, they kept it pinned through their constant artillery on the German 120mm mortar most of the game and thus removed it from finally lifted, this battery soon lifted and the Soviet tanks were wiped out by combined mortar fire, armored car fire, and even 20mm rounds from the SdKfz-10/4 flaktrack.

> But it was too late. As the Germans tried a belated withdrawal from Volklesu, they lost another rifle platoon to a lucky "1" on the 2-1 column, while engineers were pinned by a CAT attack and then slammed by another artillery mission when they failed to rally. In the end, the Germans lost 7 units compared to 5 Soviet units lost, giving the Soviets a solid marginal victory.

In the second game, the Soviets changed their set and soon destroyed. Armored cars went to chase off up a little. The CP was staged up in the wooded hilltop 9Z8 to call in fire missions (thus embracing the radical concept of actually using a unit for its intended purpose), while the tanks were set up down in though, when the Soviet tanks were dispersed and Voroniva to provide artillery eyes on the south end of



Panzer Blitz.

SITUATION 19

THE SPIRES OF THE KREMLIN - KHIMKI, RUSSIA (02 Dec 1941): Even as the weather deteriorated and Soviet resistance continued to stiffen, the exhausted vanguard of Army Group Center still ground inexorably toward Moscow. While the main battles of this last German drive took place directly west of the city, other units to the north would actually draw even closer to Moscow. The closest recorded position of any German unit to the Soviet capital was at Khimki, a small town on the Moscow-Volga Canal just 11 kilometers northwest of the city's outskirts and 23 kilometers from its center. However, these German reconnaissance units could not take Khimki or maintain their forward positions, and were quickly driven back with heavy losses.





RUSSIAN FORCES
28th Rifle Brigade and
135th Separate Tank Battalion
20th Army, Western Front
(Morale C)



Rear Battalion, 28th Rifle Brigade



Headquarters and Support, 28th Rifle Brigade



Elements, 135th Separate Tank Battalion

2 A 3 2 I 2 4 T-60 A 10 3 T-40 9 2

Batteries,

517th Artillery Regiment



SETUP: Russians set up anywhere on the board. A "permanent" bridge is set up on hex 907. This bridge cannot be moved or destroyed. The Germans enter anywhere along the northwestern edge of Board 7.



JEL GERMAN FORCES

Reconnaissance Kampfgruppe, 2nd Panzer Division, XLVI Pz Corps Panzer Group "Hoepner" Army Group Center (Morale B)



Vanguard, Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion 5 and Motorcycle Battalion 2



Advanced Detachment, Infantry Regiment 304



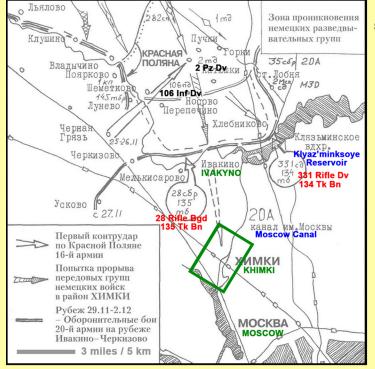
Vanguard, Pioneer Battalion 38



VICTORY CONDITIONS: Both sides get 1 point for each enemy unit destroyed (not including trucks and wagons). Germans also get 2 units for each hex of Volklesu (Khimki) occupied at the end of the game, and 5 points for each unit (if any) that might get across the bridge and survive on the far back until the end of the game.

- Win with high score: MARGINAL Victory
 Win by 6 or more: TACTICAL Victory
- Win by 6 of more: TACTICAL Victory
 Win by 10 or more: DECISIVE Victory





SPECIAL RULES

- Russian activation rolls: Roll 1-4. At the beginning of each movement phase, Russian units must roll a d6. On a result of 1-4, the unit can move and operate normally. On a result of 5-6, the Russian unit cannot move, overrun, or enter the board (units entering the board who fail this roll can try again next turn). This does not include "motionless" CATs.
- Russian tanks must always be stacked at least two deep. If a stack takes losses, the "lone" Russian unit has one movement phase to rejoin another armored unit. If that can't do it, chooses not to do it, or fails its activation roll, the unit is eliminated.
- Russian units may NOT use Split Move and Fire.
- Flat Terrain: Ignore all slopes and hilltops on Board 7.
 Only gullies, swamps, woods, and towns apply.
- Low Hills: On Board 9, use all elevation rules on the TET except halving attack factors when resolving direct fire uphill.
- Place a "permanent" bridge counter on hex 907. This bridge cannot be destroyed, and is the only way across the Board 9 river.
- Note that entry into the bridge hex 907 is only possible through town hex 908.





first, since the Germans were under observation and artillery fire from the moment they drive onto the Unfortunately, the German armored cars quickly pinned and destroyed the CP up on Hill 115, and the triple-stack of Soviet tanks could never move because at least one of the three units would fail its activation check (thus, moving would automatically "destroy" one Soviet tank and hand the Germans a free victory point).

This time the Germans were much more careful, missing not a single detail in their entrance, deployment, and approach to Volklesu. Their engineers and rifles walked onto the board, stacked together and instantly clearing the annoying wagons from Molkanova hexes through CAT attacks. each two-platoon attack force was also stacked with a halftrack, so the first unit could immediately load and move on the second turn, leaving the remaining platoon alone and ready to be loaded into trucks that were one hex behind.

After killing the CP, German armored cars and motorcycles swung around to tree line 9V8-9V10, where they managed an impressive fire against light Soviet units stacked in the eastern shoulder of Volklesu. Pinning the 82mm mortar and .50 caliber HMG section, they left the infantry gun and 37mm battery to a strike by the 120mm mortars. This pretty much suppressed the whole town, and allowed a hurry-up German infantry/engineer advance to strike southeast on Turn 7 act actually clean out a hex, killing the 37mm and 76.2mm batteries via CAT. Soviet tanks (which had finally activated, chasing a lone German halftrack away from the dangerous southwestern tip of "Volklesu Ridge" again) managed to refill the hex, although at a cost of one of their platoons thanks to a failed activation check.

Meanwhile, the Germans continued to pour HE and I-class fire from their tree line, continually playing "panzerbush" with their split move and fire capability and denying the Soviets a spotted target. Needless to say, the SdKfz-10/4 was particularly effective in this role, virtually a "King Tiger" on this very small battlefield. But digging enemy units out of town hexes is never easy, and even if not spotted, the

the board. This set up seemed to work pretty well at Germans were susceptible to blind artillery missions called by the Soviet howitzers. One finally got lucky, and killed one of the motorcycle platoons and one of the armored cars. Lastly, two lucky heavy mortar strikes killed both Soviet platoons in the northern IP, almost opening the back door into Volklesu and the ultimate prize, a chance to sneak a unit across that bridge for an almost guaranteed decisive victory. But the Germans mastered the urge to make that rush, recognizing that the bridge over that canal is just a cruel mirage teasing the German player into throwing away the game.

> In the end, the Germans walked away with the marginal victory here, killing 8 Soviet units while losing only 6 of their own. With both the Soviets and the Germans winning +2 marginal victories, Situation 19 is recorded as an dead draw overall.

Situation 20 Zhukov Hits Back Kryukovo, Russia **7 December, 1941**

Summary: With the German drive on Moscow at last ground to a frozen halt, the Soviets unleash a carefully-timed counterassault on their forward positions north and south of the Soviet capital. Their objective is nothing short of the encirclement of all of Army Group Center. While the Soviets fail in this aim, they nevertheless deal a shocking defeat to what had hitherto been the "unbeatable" Wehrmacht. Here, Major General Katukov's 1st Guards Tank Brigade, reinforced with a battalion of Lend-Lease Matilda IIs, helps a guards rifle and cavalry troops assault Kruyukovo, an important road junction anchoring the southern wing of Hoepner's Panzer Group IV.

Background: The opening days of December 1941 saw the German invasion of the Soviet Union at last grind to a frozen, bloody, exhausted halt. The exact reasons are innumerable and the importance of each as compared to all the others is still debated today, but the basics are beyond argument. The Wehrmacht had been pushed too far, suffered too many casualties,



anzerbiitz, Barnarossa



reinforcement or replacement since Barbarossa were Union, inflicted upwards of six million casualties on their enemies, and suffered over 800,000 of their own. Not only had the OKH not allocated enough supplies for a war they'd hoped would be over by now, but the primitive infrastructure of the Soviet Union at the time could not effectively carry the supplies they did have.

from lubricants to fuel to clothing to weapons to even now dying by the tens of thousands. The 1st Shock the rubber in their tires, everything broke down as the Army alone twelve specially equipped ski battalions Russian winter hit with full force. Although November had actually been warm by local regular line divisions). standards, and October had actually seen slightly less rainfall than usual, in December the cold arrived with counterblow against the invader. Zhukov and his a vengeance and the bottom simply fell out of STAVKA colleagues had foreseen this situation and thermometers across the country. temperatures would fall as low as -30C, and that's word) for such an offensive as early as the opening before the wind chill factor. Whole units froze to death weeks of November. True, the STAVKA would not in place, both German and Soviet. The wounded in have quite as many forces available as originally particular faced bleak fate, since the terrible cold hoped, since many reserves had been committed to would cause the victim to slip into a coma, hypothermia, and finally death. Frostbite claimed fingers, toes, noses, hands, feet, and finally whole arms and legs. Fingers would freeze to bloody triggers, faces would freeze to goggles and gun sights. Reduced blood flow combined with the soldiers' understandable terror of unwrapping clothes or bandages, sending the infection rate for even the most minor of injuries through the roof.

Meanwhile, as Zhukov committed the very last of his November reserves in the last desperate defensive battles around Moscow, a fresh wave of divisions was finally reaching him from the Central Asian and Far Eastern military districts. These were commonly called the "Siberian divisions." History usually numbers them around 40, but as we've seen, Zhukov had been forced to commit many if these divisions as soon as they stepped off the train. The 32nd Red Banner Rifle Division, as we saw in Situation 16, had to be committed in the middle of October. In truth, during the first week of December, Zhukov had about

and had received next to nothing in the way of 19 of these divisions at his disposal, although some from Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Since June 22, the Germans had pushed Manchurian border with the Japanese Empire, and between 900 and 1,200 kilometers into the Soviet were thus not truly the white-clad ski-trooper "Siberian" of popular mythology.

However, some of them admittedly fit this mold precisely. They were used to the cold, and more importantly, equipped for it with proper cold weather gear. The oil in their weapons did not bead up or freeze. The tires on their vehicles did not crack and crumble like black chalk. Their horses were tough Even the supplies they had were not the right kind, Siberian ponies, not Bavarian draft horses who were (ski troops were never assigned throughout the

> Clearly, the moment had come for a decisive Nighttime had in fact been planning (perhaps hoping is a better save Moscow from the last lunges of the Wehrmacht. Furthermore, with Soviet factories still being transported eastward and re-built in the Urals, the Soviets were having a difficult time supplying the few units they had. Orders of battle and tables of organization continued to change, brigades and divisions continuing to shrink in size and shed motorized sub-formations that the Red Army just didn't have right now. American Lend Lease was just getting started, and British aid would never amount to more than a trickle.

> > Nevertheless, on November 29, Zhukov contacted the STAVKA and asked permission to launch his attack. Permission was granted and the assault was scheduled to open on December 5. Over the next three days successive units would join in a phased expansion, until on December 8 Zhukov hoped to have the Western front, along with sizable elements of the Konev's Kalinin Front and Timoshenko's Southwest Front, all in motion.

Overall, the plan was relatively simple. In the





hold the Germans of von Kluge's Fourth Army in place. To the south, the 43rd, 49th, and 50th Armies would smash into Guderian's exposed Second Panzer Army from the north, while the 10th and 3rd Armies would hit Guderian in the side from the east. The far south of the offensive would eventually include the 13th Army of Timoshenko's Southwest Front.

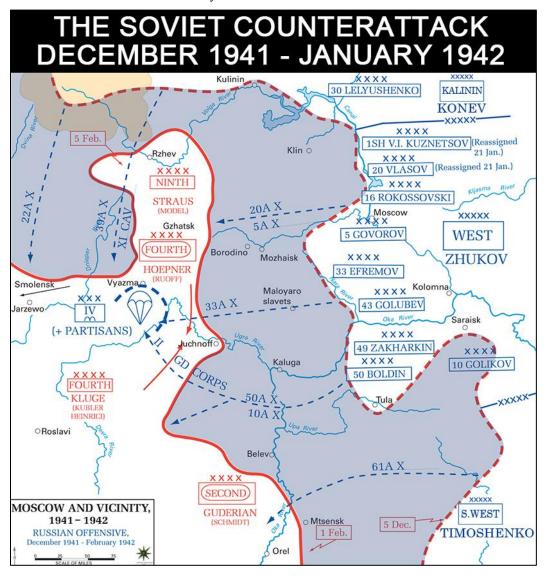
To the north of Moscow, meanwhile, Zhukov's right fist would smash headlong into Panzer Groups III and IV. Rokossovsky's 16th Army and Vlasov's 20th Army would hit Hoepner's Panzer Group IV, Kuznetsov's 1st Shock Army and the 30th Army could cave in Reinhardt's Panzer Group III further north. Still further north, Konev would support with a body blow aimed at Strauss' Ninth Army, committing the 31st and 29th Armies in a drive for Kalinin and the 39th Army driving toward Rzhev.

The overall aim was for these two great arms to meet at Vyazma, over 150 behind kilometers present German line. Stalin was hoping to encircle all of Army Group Center, although how feasible such prospect seemed **STAVKA** generals Vasilevsky, Shapashnikov, and Zhukov remains less clear. Regardless, massive damage could be done to the German forces facing Moscow, and the threat to capital the decisively ended.

On the dark, misty, and snow-shrouded morning of Friday, December 5, 1941, the war on the Eastern Front changed forever. Konev opened his offensive southwards, smashing into the frozen Landsers of the Ninth Army. By 1600 that

center, the 5th and 33rd Armies would attack, fix, and day, Zhukov joined with his 5th Army against von Kluge's line in front of Moscow. December 6 saw the 30th, 20th, and 1st Shock Armies join the fray, while to the south the 10th and 13th Armies went after Guderian's exposed right wing. On December 7, Rokossovsky sent in his center and left wing of his 16th Army, and on December 8, the rest of Rokossovsky's army, along with the 3rd and 50th Armies and Belov's Operational Group right in front of Tula, all had leapt into the whirlwind. From Yelets in the far south (not far from Kursk) all the way to Rzhev (halfway between Moscow and Leningrad), a front of over 650 kilometers was in violent, fiery motion.

> The Germans, quite simply, shattered. With their last hopes hung on the sadly inaccurate assumption that the Soviets had committed the very last of their reserves, freezing, starving, unable to move or in many cases even to fire, their line crumbled and







evaporated. In many places, German troops fought Barbarossa since June 22. with tremendous skill, courage, and tenacity, they just didn't have the tools to do it with very effectively. German generals began pulling back when and where they could, prompting the predictable screaming fits from Hitler. But too many generals simply had no choice. From hilltop to river to town, the Germans fell back to successive defensive strongpoints and did their superhuman best to hold back the immense Soviet tide.

Part of Rokossovsky's attack, naturally, was his premiere armored force, Major-General Mikhail E. Katukov's 1st Guards Tank Brigade. In addition to the reinforcements he already had (a battalion of border guards), he'd also been given an independent reconnaissance (another of Katukov's trademark battalion of Lend-Lease Matilda IIs from Great Britain. These were odd machines, with two engines installed to push their immense bulk, thick armor but only a small 40mm 2-pounder gun. Already the Matilda was on the verge of obsolescence in North Africa, but in the even deadlier environment of the Eastern Front they were damned near death traps. Although they could take a hit (80mm of armor plating along the front), this armor was not sloped for maximum protection. Furthermore, the Matilda's large size and ponderous speed (just 15 mph on a good road) made it an easy target.

Thus, when Katukov got his orders from on November 12. Rokossovsky on December 3, he knew he had his hands full. His mission was to attack northwest and assist the 8th Guards Rifle Division and the 44th Cavalry Division against part of the XLVI Panzer Corps' line, specifically the Kryukov crossroads held by the 5th Panzer Division. The 5th Panzer was a tough outfit, having fought in Poland and France as part of Hoth's XV Panzer Corps, where it had been part of the force sealing the historic pocket at Dunkirk. Like the 2nd Panzer Division (portrayed in Situation 19), the Barbarossa, having not been committed until October Accordingly, some sources list the 5th Division as least as compared to other threadbare panzer

Whether or not this is true, the fact stands that the 5th Panzer, together with the supporting 35th Infantry Division, gave Rokossovsky's attack force a rough ride when they tried to take preliminary jump-off positions on December 5 and 6 (as stated, Rokossovsky's main attack didn't begin until December 7). We can only imagine that the Matildas had a terrible time in the Russian snow, and Katukov admits that all his experience thus far had been in defensive warfare. As a whole, the Red Army officer corps was still much more shaky when it came to going over to the offensive.

Making the most of personal battlefield qualities), Katukov tried again on December 7. This time he had better luck, cracking the German line and taking the town of Kryukov. Together with a similar tank-infantry task group under General Rezimov, Katukov's survivors drove toward the larger town of Istrin. On December 14, this spearhead again cracked the German line near the Istrin Reservoir and pushed the Germans back again. Rezimov's group was then subordinated to Katukov's, who again formed Rokossovsky's spearhead when 16th Army drive toward Volokolamsk, near where Katukov's earlier "spoiling attack" had hit the Germans at Skirmanovo Katukov hit Volokolamsk on December 19 from the south and southeast, routing the Germans, killing 1200 of them and smashing "a large number of combat vehicles and equipment" according to Rokossovsky's report to STAVKA. Still not done, Katukov then pivoted west and hit a fortified German line trying to stabilize itself along the banks of the small Lamoi River on December 20. Apparently, Katukov had quickly absorbed the lessons of sustained armored attack.

Thus, it is perhaps no surprise that by April of 5th Panzer had missed the opening phases of 1942, Katukov would be named commander of the Red Army's 1st Tank Corps. In September, he was (they were being refitted after heavy action in Greece). invited to sit down for a very nervous meeting with Stalin himself, where Stalin asked for forthright having a greater proportion of its original strength, at appraisals of Red Army tank design, deployment, and operational use. Clearly, Katukov was now regarded divisions which had been at the front end of as a hard-eyed and pragmatic expert in tank warfare.





He was then given command of the 3rd Mechanized needed. Google Earth confirmed that even in 2012, we give you command of a tank army, can you handle it?" Participating in the titanic battle of Kursk and the massive Soviet counterattack that followed, Katukov's 1st Tank Army was often given thankless and brutal defensive work while more vaunted tank formations like Rotmistrov's 5th Guards Tank Army was brought to the fore. Finally, Katukov's army was upgraded to the 1st Guards Tank Army in April 1944, designated its rather belated designation as the Red Army's top armored field formation for the rest of the war. When the end finally came, Katukov's tanks had rumbled brigade is the reinforcing battalion of beneath Brandenburg Gate and was 200 meters from the Reich Chancellery. By then Katukov had won Hero of the Soviet Union twice, four Orders of Lenin, and even a DSO from Great Britain. After the war, he became commander of all mechanized forces of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, and later Inspector General of the Army. He died on June 8, 1976 at the age of 75.

Situation Design: After the ambiguity of Situation 19 and the large degree of education guesswork required in its design, it was nice to get back to solid documentation with highly-detailed, granular sources from which to work.

The primary sources for this situation were Richard Armstrong's Armored Guards: Red Army Commanders and our usual treasure trove at Armchair Strategist's RKKA website. Armstrong tells us where Katukov's brigade was reinforced with a separate battalion of Lend-Lease Matilda IIs, how the preliminary "positioning" attacks of December 5 and 6 did not go well, and how Katukov's tankers ran into German minefields (note the mines given to the German player). Finally, Armstrong also tells us how this combined assault finally managed to crack the line at Kryukovo on December 7. The RKKA maps fill in the details, showing where the 44th Cavalry was deployed to the left, the 8th Guards Rifle Division to the right, and the individual artillery battalions stacked up behind the Soviet line of contact.

Other sources filled in additional details where

Corps for operations along the Kalinin Front. In the area immediately southeast of Kryukovo was January 1943, Katukov was again sitting nervously in heavily forested, prompting us to use Board 1 for the Stalin's office, where he was asked point blank: "So, if right hand board of the situation playing map. This also fits well with what we see on the RKKA maps, which show Katukov's brigade oddly broken up into smaller spearheads of individual battalions. Why would he do this? Looking at the satellite photography of this area, and then at PanzerBlitz Board 1 (the "woodsiest" board we have), it seems obvious that the Soviets found it too troublesome to push the whole brigade through these woods up a single route of advance.

> Another oddity of Katukov's Matilda IIs. These beasts are wellfamiliar to anyone who's played any Desert Leader, where these "Queens of



the Desert" crushed virtually any Italian unit (and most German ones) that got it its way. Their DF of 8 seemed insane at the time, but of course this was in the "minor leagues" of the Mediterranean, bring them onto the battlefields of Russia and those same values don't seem so impressive. This is just one more example of how these games can "show" rather than "tell," and teach real historical lessons about the battlefields of World War II.

The Matildas are subject to a special rule that might need explaining for people unfamiliar with Desert Leader. The gun in these tanks, the standard 40mm British 2-pounder, could only fire solid shot. They had no HE or frag shells whatsoever. This made them completely useless against anything unarmored, except in an overrun. This was a critical weakness that was compensated for by including specially armed Matildas and Crusaders (packing a breechloading mortar) in with the regular Matildas, but the shortfall wasn't totally rectified until the arrival of the Grant, the Sherman, and the newer British tanks with 6-pounder (57mm) guns. This, plus their crippling slow speed (British "infantry tanks" were meant to support infantry, and thus designers saw little need for them to move much faster than a man could walk), are likely to make the Matildas almost more trouble than they're worth.



anzerbiitz, Barbarossa



Katukov's brigade faces other obstacles, as well. respect. In a telegram from Colonel-General Hoepner brigade mean that the 1st Guards was strictly surrender and do not fear death." concentrated), the real strike element on this field propaganda articles). seems to have been the 8th Guards Rifle Division.

RKKA maps reveal some interesting details. For one, exactly what regiments were involved on this particular field. Usually, we know the division and after that, pretty much guess at the regiment. With Situation 20 we had much more detail to work with, was the exact units comprising the airpower. We reestablished in 2011. know the ground attack regiments that were supporting the Western Front for this offensive, we simply had to pick one and hope for the best.

Other details can be gleaned by "reading between the lines." Note that the regiments in question here are the 1073rd and 1075th Rifle Regiments (1077th seems to be in a second-echelon reserve, which fits with what we've read about Soviet division-scale deployment doctrine). These is the old name for the regiment (as opposed to the 19th and 23rd Guards Rifle Regiments). The same is true for the 1077th Rifle Regiment and 857th Artillery Regiment, and other "non-guards" component sub-formations. It seems that the 8th Guards (formerly the 316th Rifle Division, upgraded only 19 days ago on November 18) was still in the process of transitioning to full guards status. One Russian website suggests that this isn't complete until February 1942.

Nevertheless, we're building the 8th Guards Rifle Division as a full guards-level outfit, and with a morale of B, no less. All through October and November, Red Army commanders all the way up to STAVKA were writing glowing reviews of this unit's performance in slowing the progress of Typhoon. Even the German generals held this division in of any games, it may only happen to one or two

As much as we'd like to highlight these tankers as the to Field Marshal Fedor von Bock, he writes: "... it is a "stars of the show," this terrain and the manner in division of savages, its soldiers fight in violation of all which the forced the deployment of Katukov's rules of engagement . . . they are fanatical, never deployed in a supporting role here. Looking back at journalists heard of this, they went to the divisional the RKKA map for the assault on Kryukovo (note the commander, Major General Ivan Panfilov, to tell him battalions of the 1st Guards are spread out, not the news (and doubtlessly get his comment for further During the course of the interview, German mortars hit the clearing and Speaking of the 8th Guards Rifle Division, our Panfilov was killed. Forever after the division was nicknamed "Panfilov's Men," and even has its own the scale of the map allows us to measure out a music, March of the Panfilov Division. During the war, precise PanzerBlitz map board, and thus drill down they won a staggering total of 32 Heroes of the Soviet Union, 29 Orders of Lenin, 371 Orders of the Red Banner, 2 Orders of Kutuzov, 8 Orders of Suvorov, 53 Orders of Alexander Nevsky, and hundreds of other decorations. After the breakup of the Soviet Union in about the only thing we had to guess on (as usual) 1991, the division was disbanded up in 2003 was Clearly this is a famous formation with a tremendous tradition of fighting spirit. Teaming these guys up with Katukov's 1st Guards Tank Brigade should indeed make for a formidable combination.

> Another interesting thing to notice is the placement of the artillery regiment, the 857th. Note that it is well behind the 8th Guards' rifle brigades. This means that we will place it "off board" like we usually do with the German batteries, which in turn requires that these have to be at least 122mm in caliber. After all, with a game RF of 16, 76.2mm divisional guns couldn't shoot across the 20-hex board without some kind of cumbersome special rules. Suffice it to say that the 76.2mm guns have been left out, it's not like the Soviets are hurting for firepower in this one.

> Meanwhile, the Soviet 44th Cavalry Division has the 51st and 54th Cavalry Regiments on the field. Tash.mv.ru webpages list the 35th Horse Artillery Regiment as the supporting guns, while the 45th Cavalry Regiment is in second-echelon reserve. These guys use the usual Soviet cavalry rules (non-cossack rules, that is), with a morale of C.

> Speaking of morale, note the new "German Panic" special rule. We doubt this one will change the course



PanzerBlitz, Barbarossa



platoons in what is admittedly a very large game.

A few other "special rules" aren't really that special any more, pretty much standardized for the *PanzerBlitz: Barbarossa* series. These include tank riders (just not on BT-7s), cavalry movement rules, Soviet activation checks, and Soviet tank stacking rules.

In all, this is definitely a big one. In terms of the sheer number of counters involved, it might be the biggest situation in all of PanzerBlitz Barbarossa. It also stands the usual Barbarossa conventions on their head. Where the Germans were running roughshod over the board and Soviet "victory" was measured just by how much they could slow the Germans down, now the boot is decidedly on the other foot. The disparity of forces is admittedly daunting, with a full panoply of Soviet guardsmen, cavalry, tanks, heavy artillery, and even aircraft thrown against a German force one sixth its size. Just take a look at the victory conditions. The Soviets have to take *town hexes*, a lot of them. There are 31 on Board 8 (it's Board 8 town hexes that count), and the Soviets have to take well over half of them to win even a marginal victory. So yes, they have a titanic edge in manpower in Situation 20, but given their mission, they're going to need every bit of that edge to meet or exceed the historical results of this battle.

Playtesting: When setting up this game, players might take a look at the board and presume the Soviets are going to crush right through the Germans like the proverbial "red steamroller." In keeping with the setup parameters and trying to get the Soviet jump-off points as close to their as possible, the Soviet player will almost certainly build a wall of guards infantry and cavalry from one end of Board 1 to the other. Then there's a wall of tanks behind that, a wall of off-board artillery behind that, and Soviet aircraft behind that...

Not so fast, Marshal Zhukov. Before you break out the caviar and vodka and fire up the Internationale on your iPod, consider the limitations of this massive force and the difficulty of the mission you face. The Soviets have to set up on Board 1, within 7 hexes of the eastern edge of the board. Without transport, this means that all the guards infantry will have a very

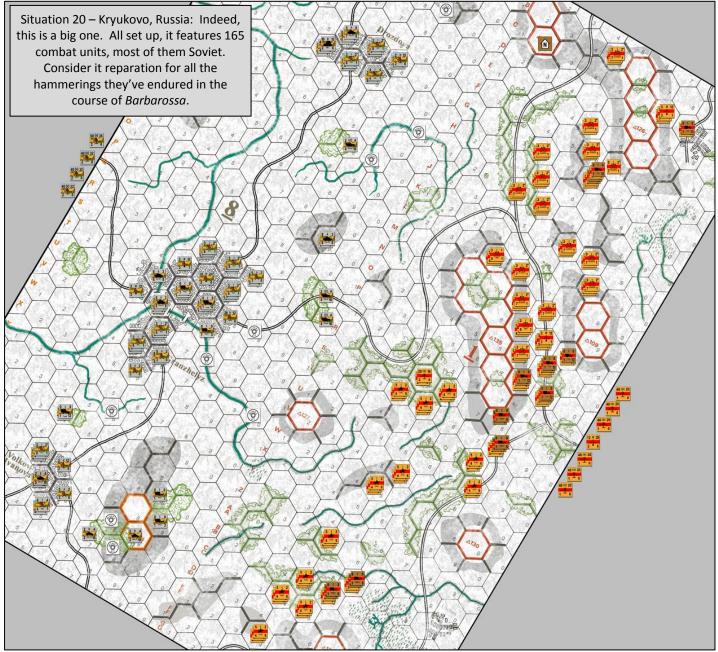
difficult time getting to the town hexes of Granzhelyz, Volkhov-Ivanova, or Drodzdova in any kind of hurry. Stacking limitations and activation checks will usually cause this assault to fracture and crumble. Use of the "quick march" rule will be bloody in the face of the German opportunity fire the Soviets will undoubtedly face, not that the difficult terrain will allow the Soviet to make much use of this rule anyway.

Lastly, the Germans get to set up first, which means that a savvy player will put OPs in places like 8Q10 and 8R10 (empty halftracks do nicely here), to say nothing of wooded hilltop 8DD9. Why? Remember the standing rule that the player setting up second is not allowed to set up in the LOS/LOF of any enemy unit. This means that the German can "back up" the Soviet set up by placing pickets and scouts in front of his main line of resistance. Isn't it great when real-life military tactics have a real effect on game play? Even a few expendable armored cars on bare slopes further north can help back up the 8th Guards Rifle Division, and these are the guys that are going to have the toughest time closing the distance to the target.

As for the Soviet player, there's going to be a little more too this than simply setting up a line, blowing the whistle, and yelling "Za Rodinu!" On the Soviet left, the 44th Cavalry is going to be able to close much faster than the 8th Guards on the right. But if you do this, you run the risk of the cavalry being cut to ribbons before the infantry can close up to support. Supporting with the tanks is a good idea, but many of them are very slow and besides, are tanks the best weapon with which to assault a town anyway? Careful use of mines can break up the approaches to the towns, and the Germans do have some powerful units with which to strike back (note their own formidable array of off-board artillery). Setting up a gun line along the wooded heights of Hill 135 looks tempting, but the Soviets are only going to get one or two cracks with any weapons here before German artillery blows the top off that hill.

Finally, consider the victory conditions. Anyone who's played a lot of *PanzerBlitz*, especially with the *Liberation* rules (largely imported from *Arab-Israeli Wars*) knows just how tough it is to take a town hex.





through artillery. Cleaning out a town hex via CAT here. As we said in the background section, Situation attack simply allows the Germans to reoccupy it 20 is almost the reverse of the typical PanzerBlitz afterwards. And remember how many town hexes the Soviets have to take. With 31 on the board, and with with the massive advantage, but also very demanding the Germans winning if they hold onto at least 12 of victory conditions they must fulfill if they want to win them, means that the Soviets have to take at least 19 the game. town hexes. This means they have to take practically more likely approach of attacking in at least two or three different directions simultaneously. Only by taking big pieces of Granzhelyz, Volkhov-Ivanova, and Drodzdova do the Soviets really have a shot.

The only way the Soviets will ever really get it done is the Soviets have such a massive edge in firepower Barbarossa situation so far. This time it's the Soviets

As usual, this game was played twice, and yes, all of Granzhelyz (yeah, right), or adopt the much playing it twice took almost an entire weekend. The Soviet player in particular will likely wear out his arm rolling activation dice, but the historical results make the effort worthwhile. After all, everyone's read about how the Soviets had a hard time coordinating Sound impossible? Not really, it's just the reason and concentrating their large forces, even when the





what Situation 20 is trying to portray. Simply getting this massive force together, aligned, aimed the right way, and moving with any kind of speed will be a massive chore for the Soviet player. The good news onslaught should do the rest of the work for him.

In the first game, the Soviets went after Drodzdova edge of the town before the game ended. and Granzhelyz, and completely ignored Volkhov-Ivanova. This might have worked, if the they had better managed their guards infantry. The problem was that they sent too many guards infantry at Drodzdova, and only the tanks and cavalry at Granzhelyz. The cavalry was butchered too quickly by German light artillery, HMGs, and fire missions, and counter-CATs mounted out of the Granzhelyz town hexes. The German 88 killed a whole stack of simultaneously. This may sound counterintuitive, but BT-7s with a lucky "1" on the 2-1 table at 9 hexes away (math = [20/(3+3+3=9) = 2:1 column]). By the time the tanks could really help, the cavalry were Granzhelyz, along with most of the tanks and half the mostly annihilated, and tanks can't dig into city hexes on their own. True, Soviet artillery did a number of several Granzhelyz town hexes, but the Soviets didn't concentrate very well, hoping to clear three and four hexes at a time when they should have been going for towns got artillery support, but the Soviet guns hit one or two.

Meanwhile, up north, the Soviets had sent so many guards rifle platoons at Drodzdova that they literally started getting in each other's way. They stacked up doomed by its isolation.

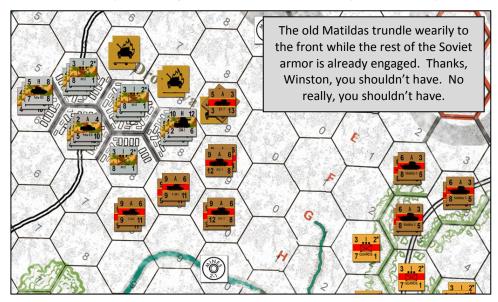
guns, and HMGs picked all the engineers out of their stacks. They also concentrated on dispersing rather than killing the platoons closest to the town hexes, thus preventing more Soviet platoons from rushing up to conduct CATs. The Soviets were forced to envelop around the town from the north and south, all while still taking horrendous losses to artillery and direct fire. With most of the Soviet artillery trying to support the attack on Granzhelyz, the attack on

war was going well for them. This is a big part of Drodzdova was more or less "raw," carried out by the guardsmen and nothing else. In the end, the 8th Infantry couldn't even take all of Drodzdova, one hex remained at the end of the game. Meanwhile, the Soviet player had belatedly detached some of his is, if he manages all this, the sheer weight of the infantry to march south to support the attack on Granzhelyz. But it never got close to the northern

> Still, the sheer weight of the Soviet attack meant that they did considerable damage. The Germans lost 17 town hexes, leaving them with 14, thus handing them a solid marginal (almost a tactical victory). Losses on both sides were predictably grim, with the Germans losing 40 combat units and the Soviets losing 56.

> In the second game, the Soviets hit all three cities it worked. Half the Soviet cavalry went after Volkhov-Ivanova. Half the cavalry went after infantry (better deployed to make a direct thrust at the center as opposed to attacking in the north and then pivoting left). Meanwhile, half the infantry went after Drodzdova, along with all the air support. All three only two hexes a turn and switched between the three towns per turn.

In the south, Volkhov-Ivanova was pretty much Soviet cavalry CATin the open field east of the town and got shelled with destroyed the German OP on Hill 134 on the first turn pitiless intensity. Meanwhile, German GW-1, infantry of the game. The town eventually fell but only after a



PanzerBlitz.

SITUATION 20

ZHUKOV STRIKES BACK - KRYUKOVO, RUSSIA (07 Dec 1941): With the German drive on Moscow at last ground to a frozen halt, the Soviets unleashed a carefully-timed counterassault on their forward positions north and south of the Soviet capital. Their goal was nothing short of the encirclement of all of Army Group Center. While they failed in this aim, the Soviets nevertheless dealt a shocking defeat to what had so far been the "unbeatable" Wehrmacht. Here, Major General Katukov's 1st Guards Tank Brigade, reinforced with a battalion of Lend-Lease Matilda Ils, helps a guards rifle and cavalry division assault Kruyukovo, an important road junction anchoring the southern wing of Hoepner's Panzer Group IV.



RUSSIAN FORCES Leading Assault Elements, Left Wing, 16th Army Western Front (Morale B, C)



FORCE A (8th Guards Rifle Division, Morale B) 1073rd and 1075th Rifle Regiments



857th Artillery Regiment (off board)

40 (H) 20 12 M 20 12 M 20 17 M

589th Separate AA Artillery Battalion

8 AA 12 10 AA 12 0 0 0 1 1 Trux 12 2 1 3

Elements, 597th Sapper Battalion

1 . . . 2 4 ENGINEER 1

FORCE B (44th Cavalry Division, Morale C)

51st and 54th Cavalry Regiments 35th Horse Artillery Rgt (elem.)

20 (H) 16 3 H 10 0 C 0 2 0 2 0 1 Wagn 5

FORCE C (1st Guards Tank Brigade, Morale B) - reinforced



Sorties, 43rd Ground Attack Aviation Regiment



2 4

SETUP: Germans set up anywhere on Board 8. Russian Force A sets up on Board 1, rows A-P, within 7 hexes of the east side of the board. Russian Force B sets up on Board 1, rows R-GG, within 7 hexes of the east side of the board. Russian Force C enters along the east edge of the board on Turn 1. Russian aircraft arrive on Turn 6.

#

JEL GERMAN FORCES

5th Panzer division, XLVI Pz Corps Panzer Group "Hoepner" Army Group Center (Morale B)



ĺΝ

Remnants,



Remnants,
Panzer Regiment 35
2 H 4 2 H 4 3 | 4



Remnants, Infantry Regiments 13 and 14



Remnants, Pioneer Battalion 89



Batteries, Artillery Regiment 116 (off board)

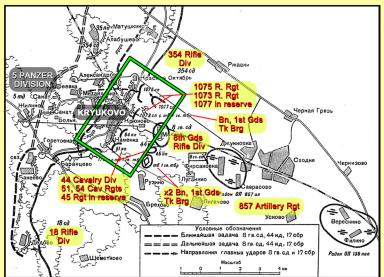


2/55 AA Company, Infantry Gun Company 704, attached batteries from FlaK Regiment 133, Antitank Battalion 53



VICTORY CONDITIONS: Determined by how many town hexes on Board 8 the Germans hold at the end of the game (31 hexes in all).

- Germans hold 5 or less: Russian DECISIVE Victory
- Germans hold 6-8: Russian TACTICAL Victory
- Germans hold 9-11: Russian MARGINAL Victory
- Germans hold 12-14: German MARGINAL Victory
- Germans hold 15-17: German TACTICAL Victory
 Germans hold 18 or more: German DECISIVE Victory



SPECIAL RULES

- Russian activation rolls: Roll 1-5. At the beginning of each movement phase, Russian units must roll a d6. Refer to previous Barbarossa situations for details. This includes Russian units entering the board (units that fail can try again next turn) and Russian aircraft. This does not include "motionless" CATs.
- Russian tanks must always be stacked at least two deep. Refer to previous Barbarossa situations for details.
- Russian units MAY use Split Move and Fire.
- German 88s may not engage aircraft. Only halftracks can tow them.
 They double their AF vs. armored targets out to 5, not 2.
- German panic: Any German unit which rolls a "6" while trying to recover from being dispersed is immediately removed from the board and considered destroyed.
- Russian cavalry uses cavalry movement rules. Refer to previous Barbarossa situations for details.
- Tankoviy Descant: Russian Guards, SMG, and Engineer units can ride on tanks, but only KVs, T-34s, or Matildas (not BT-7s).
- Matildas cannot engage unarmored targets AT ALL except via overrun.
- German AA attacks against Sturmoviks must take a +1 DRM. Only German 20mm SdKfz 10/4 can engage aircraft as an "AA" unit.





Soviet cavalry platoon were killed.

In the north, Drodzdova imploded as well, the last Shock Armies. hex being overrun on Turn 8. This time the Soviet infantry didn't get in each other's way so much. Also, the artillery support was much more concentrated and effective (having been called in by thick-skinned tanks parking right next to the town on their way to Granzhelyz, so the artillery would hammer the town a little before the infantry broke into the open). Finally, the Pe-2s and Sturmoviks pummeled the town's back hexes (spotted by swift BT-7s which had bypassed the town to the north) which allowed the BT-7s to sneak in the town's back door.

In the center, Granzhelyz stood like the castle it always does. German minefields had been placed just right so Soviets could never really mass the CATs effectively on exposed hexes. But still, one Soviet artillery had cracked the first couple of hexes, the big KV-1s rumbled in there and then dared the PzKpfw IIIs to come dig them out of their new town hexes. Yeah, like that's gonna happen. Even the Matildas got some good use here, useless against infantry but doing reasonably well in point-blank street fights with halftracks, and PzKpfw IIIs . . . a pair of them even managed to flame out a PzKpfw IV (albeit not in a town hex). In the end, the Germans could hold only 11 town hexes, just barely giving the Soviets a marginal victory. Casualties this time were 40 German units lost (the exact same as the first game) against 51 Soviet units lost.

With a German +2 marginal victory balanced against a Soviet +0 marginal victory, the overall situation goes down as a German marginal victory.

Situation 21 Defending a Path of Retreat Dyatlovo, Russia 14 December, 1941

Summary: As Zhukov's winter offensive gathered stream, German forces fell back from the gates of Moscow with ever-increasing speed. A morbid fear of German soldiers and commanders was the threat of encirclement, a nightmare that almost came to pass

tough fight in which a great many of those fragile west of the town of Klin. Here, German units of Panzer Groups were hit on all sides by the 30th and 1st The most dangerous threat came where the a Soviet mobile group of the 1st Shock Army almost cut the Klin-Volokolamsk road at Dyatlovo, 35 kilometers behind the collapsing German line. An emergency German kampfgruppe blocked the effort, and thus saved the Klin garrison's line of retreat.

> Background: By December 10 1941, Zhukov's counteroffensive at Moscow was in full swing and the shattered German line was in retreat along a 600kilometer front. Popular myth has exaggerated the size of this initial offensive, and declassified Soviet documents put Zhukov's total strength at only 388,000 troops, 5,635 guns, and 550 tanks. But they were hitting a line held by only 240,000 Germans, and these were freezing, malnourished, undersupplied. As David Glantz puts it, both forces were clearly "at the end of the tether." However, the Soviet enjoyed near-total surprise since German intelligence had insisted that the Soviets had finally hit the bottom of the barrel on their reserves. Well, at the end of November this had probably been correct, but newly-arrived formations from further east (19 divisions instead of the "legendary" 40) had made this intelligence assessment tragically obsolete. And while "only" 19 reinforcement divisions might not be that much for an Eastern Front offensive, it was 19 more than the Germans had.

> Putting the right numbers on the Soviet offensive is by no means meant to diminish their accomplishment. If anything, the exact opposite is true. The usual picture of this offensive depicts an endless wave of Soviet infantry sweeping over the Germans and winning through simple default of numbers. The fact is that Soviet numbers weren't that large, and the success of Zhukov's offensive is due to a fair amount of planning, nerve, and operational skill. That being said, the Red Army, having been lobotomized by Stalin's cruel purges of the 1930s, had just learned some of the basics of modern defensive warfare, modern offensive warfare presented a whole new set of challenges with which the understandably struggling.





this onslaught. As we saw in Situation 20, German formations were proving themselves as apt in defense as they had in attack. As best they could, they used what remained of their mobility to cover and parry Soviet assaults many times their size, usually from multiple directions at once. But they had little fuel or oil, vehicles and artillery which barely worked under these conditions, no winter clothing, short rations, and no air support. General Raus, commander of the 6th Panzer Division, recorded daily temperatures as frigid as -38C (-36F) in his diary. More than 130,000 cases of frostbite were reported among German soldiers. Frozen grease had to be removed from every shell (artillery rounds were usually packed in grease during this period) and vehicles had to be heated for hours before use.

Under these conditions, fighting a mobile defense is almost impossible. Accordingly, the German line was compelled to fall back, in some places by as much as 250 kilometers. Wherever German forces did hold (thanks to a river or large town), the flanks almost immediately caved in and the Germans were soon facing the grim specter of encirclement. In a war where prisoners were often not taken, and even POWs suffered a 90% fatality rate in the camps of both sides, getting encircled was a virtual death warrant. German units became intermingled, either in retreat or as they were squeezed together by remorseless Soviet pressure. Commanders lost track of some units and "picked up" new ones, companies and battalions, regiments and whole divisions blown loose from their higher headquarters and frantically looking for the first officer with a coherent order.

One such sector where the Germans faced the prospect of encirclement was at the city of Klin. This large town anchored the large bulge that Panzer Groups III and IV had pushed north of Moscow during the closing weeks of November. The bulge was hit from two sides. From the north, the 30th Army smashed down on the left flank of Reinhardt's Panzer Group III. The 30th Army was commanded by Major-General Dmitri Danilovich Lelyushenko (see situation 13), another of the Red Army's future guards tank army commanders. Reinhardt's problems only got just short of the Klin-Volokolamsk road, and slowed

Credit is also due to the German units who faced worse when Kuznetsov's 1st Shock Army hit him directly from the east, forming the second great jaw biting down on the Klin bulge.

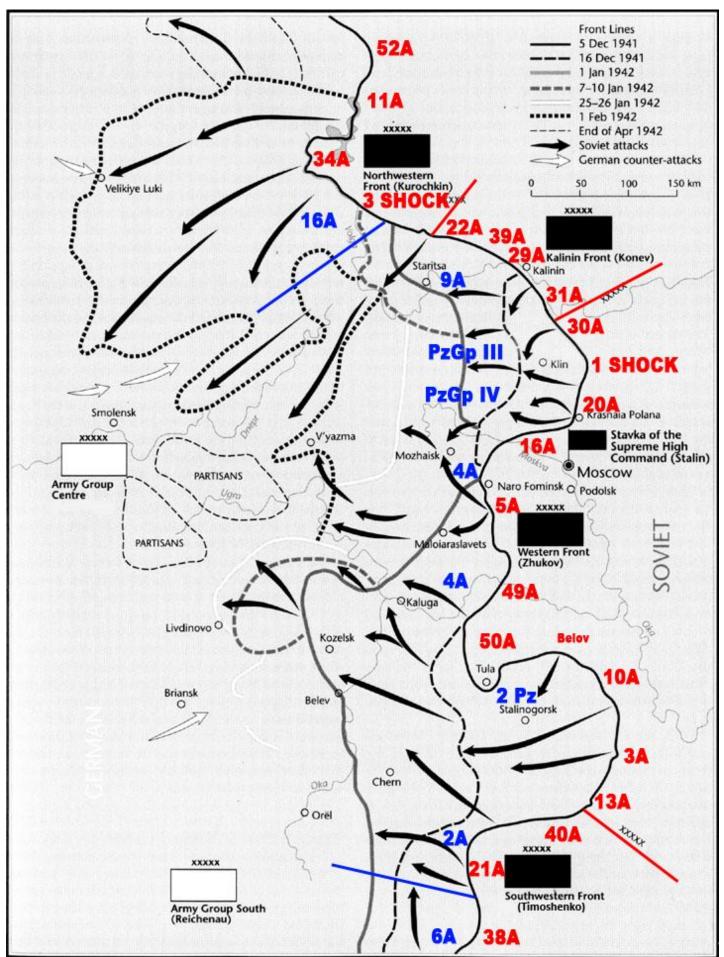
> Immediately, German commanders knew that Panzer Group III was in desperate trouble. Reinforcements were sent up from Hoepner's Panzer Group IV immediately to his south, but of course the "Old Cavalryman" had his own had full with Vlasov's 20th Army and especially Rokossovsky's 16th Army. On Reinhardt's other wing, Strauss' Ninth Army was being hammered by Konev's 29th and 31st Armies, pushing for Kalinin and Rzhev. Nevertheless, the commander of the German Army Group Center (Field Marshal von Bock) gave Reinhardt's sector priority and sent orders that "the last bicyclist" should be sent north to help Reinhardt.

> But it was probably too late anyway. Already the 30th Army's spearheads were crashing down from the north, penetrating west of Klin, while 1st Shock Army had fixed its front was curling advanced units around to the south. Soon the two would meet and all of Panzer Group III would be encircled at Klin. expedite this aim, Lelyushenko formed a "mobile group" based around the 107th Motorized Division (basically, the cannibalized remnants of what used to be the 107th Tank Division), along with the 18th and 82nd Cavalry Divisions. Their mission was to race ahead, pushing south past Klin's western perimeter, and cut the Klin-Volokolamsk road. This highway, leading southwest from Klin toward Volokolamsk, was the only realistic way Panzer Group III could escape the trap. The mobile group was under the command of Colonel P. G. Chanchibadzhe, and by December 12 he had units just northeast of the Lotoshino road center (a collection of tiny villages like Andreykovo, Palkino, and Kotlyakovo. Here he fouth elements of the 2nd Panzer Division and pushed further south, now actually angling back east to meet up with elements of the 1st Shock Army.

> But at the tiny (and man, do we mean tiny, Google Earth can barely find this place) village of Dyatlovo, Chanchibadzhe's leading elements were intercepted by withdrawing units of the 14th Motorized Division and the 6th Panzer Division. This encounter took place

PanzerBlitz, Barbarossa









Group III to escape. They were already pulling out, the very next day the frontal divisions and brigades of 1st Shock Army hit Klin from the east and the town collapsed like a house of cards. The German units formerly defending it were already running back to the new Volokolamsk-Ruza line, where the Germans hoped to make a stand behind the Ruza River.

The fight at Dylatovo between Chanchibadzhe's mobile group and the withdrawing elements of 6th Panzer and 14th Motorized Divisions is what we will try and recreate with our last PanzerBlitz Barbarossa game. It is a desperate fight for the Germans, not for victory, but escape and survival. As for the Soviets, this is no drive for victory, but annihilation. Truly the boot was on the other boot, with the Soviets striving to close encirclements and the Germans hoping only to run away fast enough to form a new, stabilized line of defense.

Historically, Chanchibadzhe never reached the road and Reinhardt's Panzer Group III would fight another day. Losses were steep, of course, and the Germans had been forced to abandon a hefty stockpile of weapons, vehicles, and equipment.

Meanwhile, the Germans were in very bad shape across the rest of the front, as well. Rokossovsky's 16th Army had caved in Hoepner's Panzer Group IV, and only when Hoepner's engineers blew up the dams holding the Istra Reservoir was Rokossovsky halted in his tracks. The rest of von Kluge's Fourth Army soon had no choice but to give ground to the 5th and 49th Armies. If von Kluge didn't withdraw from his line immediately west of Moscow, he risked having his left wing turned now that Reinhardt and Hoepner were in full retreat. Further northwest, Strauss' Ninth Army was falling back through Kalinin, although they held at Rzhev (and thus set up an appalling meat grinder campaign that would last for over a year and claim almost as many lives as Stalingrad).

To the south of Moscow, the German position was even worse. Virtually all of Guderian's Second Panzer Army was crammed in the immensely encircled by Belov's cavalry-motorized group and the map

Chanchibadzhe just enough to allow most of Panzer officer corps was still largely inexperienced at largescale offensive operations allowed most of Guderian's formations with escape the trap. To the south, Schmidt's Second Army was similarly shoved back, the Timoshenko's Southwest Front retaking Yelets, Livny, and just reaching the outskirts of Orel. In a separate offensive to the far south, von Kliest's First Panzer Army even lost the Black Sea port of Rostov, which had just been taken after a horrendous fight and wouldn't be retaken until the "Case Blue" offensive of June, 1942.

> Yet even with all of this, the Soviets were just getting started. The latter stages and long-term effects of the Moscow counteroffensive will be covered in greater detail later, but for now it's sufficient to say that the Germans were in for a very long . . . and very brutal . . . winter season.

> Situation Design: For our last PanzerBlitz Barbarossa situation, I wanted to finish with something of a flourish, one last unusual setup of units, rules, and victory conditions to highlight one of this particular campaign's more unusual aspects.

> David Glantz came through in fine style in his Operation Barbarossa, where he makes mention of Chanchabadzhe's drive at the vanguard of 30th Army, digging deep behind the collapsing front of Panzer Group III to almost cut the Klin-Volokalamsk road. While I was hoping to highlight more of the 1st Shock Army's action (if for no other reason than to use of Kuznetsov's ten independent ski battalions), I could find next to nothing about specific actions of the 1st Shock Army in the assault on Klin, and nothing on any of the ski battalions. Order of battle, tables of organization, origins, doctrine, tactics, equipment, everything seemed to be available except what battalions fought where.

So I was compelled to take the Chanchabadzhe engagement as a design basis for Situation 21. Luckily, I found an old Red Army map online that highlighted the 30th Army's drive against Panzer Group III's northern flank in even greater detail than the maps featured on the "RKKA in World War II" vulnerable salient around Tula, and he was nearly Armchair Strategist website. The resolution on the isn't the greatest, and translating newly-formed 10th Army. Only the fact that the Soviet Chanchabadzhe's name from Cyrillic was a pain, but I





eventually found where this mobile group had out of Klin and down toward Volokalamsk. actually engaged twice, once against 2nd Panzer, and again further to the southeast. Looking at these maps, it becomes clear just how close Panzer Group III really came to encirclement, as Chanchabadzhe's tanks and cavalry damned near went 180 degrees clear around Klin just to get to the highway in question. Although the roads aren't labeled on the map, and the town of Dyatlovo can't be made out (again, this town is terribly small even in 2013), clear designations of 14th Motorized and 6th Panzer Divisions allow an easy matchup with Glantz's text to pinpoint where this action took place.

situation design. terrain, with some heavy woods to the northwest. To the southeast the ground is slightly more open, but bulk of their 11th Panzer Regiment being made up not also higher. Accordingly, I used Board 4 to simulate the higher "shelf" of ground, and a flattened Board 2 (no slopes or hilltops) to represent the partiallywooded flatlands to the northwest. Note the special which these tanks would be used, at rules where all town hexes are ignored except for least before conversion into Marders, Bednost, which represents the historical town of Hetzers, or other vehicle types. Dyatlovo.

Next came the units. For Mobile Group Chanchabadzhe, the Red Army map shows the 107th Mechanized Division and 82nd Cavalry Division, the 18th much have been tied down in fighting further back. This seems likely because we know there was already a prior engagement against withdrawing elements of the 2nd Panzer further northwest, and because the distance between this engagement (east of Lotoshino) and Dyatlovo is completely covered in thick woods. Even in 2013 the area is a Russian national forest. For the Germans, of course, we have the 14th Motorized Division to the north and 6th Panzer Division to the south, or at least what is left of at the 30th Army's operation map, we see where them.

What makes this situation particularly interesting is the directions from which the different forces are The Soviets are coming in from the coming. northwest,

I made the admittedly arbitrary guess that the 107th Mechanized would have outdistanced the 82nd Cavalry slightly, especially considering that the 107th Mechanized contained the 143rd Tank Regiment. For this reason, no KVs are included, only the faster Soviet tanks and armored cars would be here for the final dash on the highway. In all honesty, we've just had a big cavalry battle in Situation 20, and I left them out of this one simply to keep Situation 21 small and to highlight an actual tank battle in our last PanzerBlitz Barbarossa game.

This brings us to our units. Once again, I wanted As usual, the map was the first big part of the to use one last handful of seldom-used units to end Dyatlovo sits is relatively clear the *Barbarossa* series in style. The 6th Panzer Division was most accommodating in this regard, with the

> of the staple PzKpfw-IIIGs, but the old Czech PzKpfw-38(t)s. This is probably one of the last battles in



But the star of the show in Situation 21, at least so

far as rarely-used units, is the Soviet ski battalion. I will admit up front that including these guys is a bit of a stretch, at least according to the research I was able to uncover about



In 1941, these units were strictly battalionsized, assigned at Army level, to scout and screen for larger tank, infantry, and cavalry formations. So far as we can tell, in this sector all of them were assigned to the 1st Shock Army (in December, 1941, two were with 54th Army, two were with 4th Army, and eleven more were with 1st Shock Army). However, looking Chanchabadzhe's spearhead at Dyatlovo actually came very near to the spearheads of 1st Shock Army coming to meet them the other way (within 15-20 kilometers, in the neighborhood of Vysokovsk). So odd byproduct of encirclement it's not hard to imagine advance elements probing operations. Meanwhile, the Germans are coming in ahead through this chaotic battlefield where stable from the northeast, not meeting the Soviets head on so front lines had ceased to exist. Could ski trooper much as sideswiping them as they try to withdraw recon elements of 1st Shock Army have gotten near





Dyatlovo while the 107th was engaged from the mobility (for a change). But as we saw in situation 20, northwest? Who knows, but again, I really wanted to include at least a taste of these ski units so iconic to the 1941 Moscow offensive.

them. Effectively they move like cavalry, getting no double bonus for roads, moving through green hex sides and slopes at +1 MF penalty. Giving ski troops a downhill speed bonus was just too tempting to resist (they get to ignore the slope penalty if moving off an orange hilltop hex), but who knows if it will ever come into play.

counts and Soviet units escaping off the southeast marshes in the way). Again, this is intentional to edge of the map. This represents units actually reaching the Klin-Volokolamsk highway. If enough units can do it, the highway is considered cut and Panzer Group III (or at least large parts of it) dies in a "mini-Stalingrad" at Klin.

Playtesting: This first time this game was run, it looked as if I had yet again "overstacked" the Germans, underestimating their defensive resiliency in the face of faltering Soviet attacks. But as the game wore on, the tide turned with startling quickness and the overall result was much more balanced than originally feared.

Because of the rather specific entry parameters and victory conditions (Soviets units have to break through a specific hex to earn points), neither side really has a lot of options here when it comes to deployment or approaches. The Germans have to get in front of 4Q10 with respectable speed, before those T-34/cs loaded with infantry bolt over the Board 4 ridge and through the "goal hex." They also can't hang around their own entry hexes very long, lest they get swarmed with ski troops from the 1st Shock Army which are practically using the same entry hexes on Turn 4. This won't pose too much of a problem for those PzKpfw-38(t)s, but the usual "backfield" units like mortars with weak DFs, this threat can be deadly. The end result is that the Germans will probably wind up fighting a 180-degree semi-circle battle to the north, northwest, and west, with their backs to the southeast edge of the map.

they will suffer under the usual burdens of attack, compounded by specific Soviet handicaps like activation rolls, tank company rules, and tank riding Of course, some special rules had to be built for infantry (unloading these guys without violating stacking rules and Soviet two-tank stack requirements is a royal pain). While these can be understandably frustrating, these handicaps are in place to confront the Soviet player with the kinds of challenges endemic to the Red Army at this stage of the war. The Soviets are also challenged by the fact that their entry zone is pretty bad (there are no good roads leading from Victory conditions are a fairly typical mix of kill- 1A10 through 1M10, and there are also woods and reflect the difficult terrain the Soviets just pushed through on the way from Lotoshino. The Soviets are further handicapped by the fact that their forces don't all come on at once and come in through different sectors of the map, hampering their ability to concentrate.

> All this notwithstanding, the Soviets have an awful lot of hardware, and the German force is anemic to say the least. These are fragments of two German divisions (from different corps, no less) in full retreat, so there's no off-board artillery pre-staged to back them up. Those PzKpfw-38(t)s just aren't going to stand up to T-34/cs, and those Stumoviks are going to eat them for breakfast if they're not under cover on Turn 7. Note how a PzKpfw-38(t), even at double AF for point blank fire, only gets a 1-1 on a T-34, and how a Sturmovik neatly scores a 2-1 by using its guns on a PzKpfw-38(t).

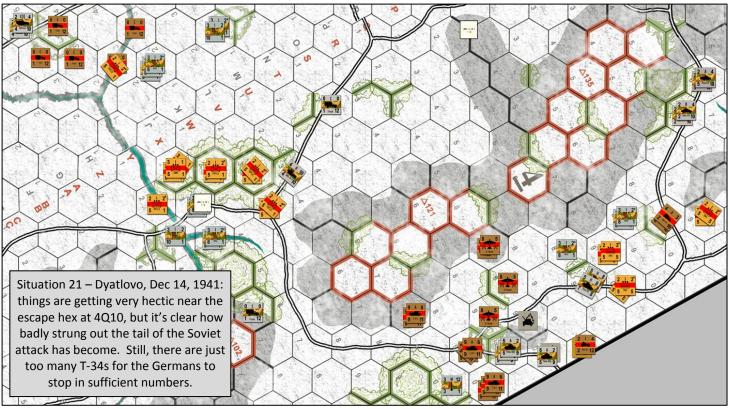
> Despite all this, in the first game the Germans actually did pretty well. Disastrous Soviet activation rolls caused their attack to break down almost immediately, with T-34s scattered in a long line down the gullies of western Board 1 in an attempt to unload their infantry. They did this too soon, and those infantry platoons never stood a meaningful chance of getting off the board or even participating in the battle for the exit hex. The ski troops did no better, one platoon failed the first three activation checks and thus didn't get on the board until Turn 7.

For their part, the Germans set up an aggressive, As for the Soviets, they have a lot of firepower and forward defense. A key move was taking the high



PanzerBlitz, Barbarossa





ground of the Board 4 ridge and the road junction at 4Z3 (remember this is woods for this situation, not a town hex). That flaktrack and HMG platoons were great at keeping Soviet trucks at bay, and thus ensuring that the Soviets would score no "cheap" points by getting light artillery off the board.

In the second half of the game, however, the Soviets starting to get their game together. After a repulse at the 4Z3 road junction, the tanks simply swung around this obstacle, ducked over Hill 102, and swooped in behind the Board 4 ridge at Hill 121. It's amazing, really, just how fast T-34s can go when they make their activation checks. The hapless PzKpfw-38(t)s never stood a chance, even lurking in the woods and ridges right next to the exit hex, they weren't able to inflict a great deal of damage on the Soviet tanks when they made their break. Speaking of this break, the Soviets also took their time and waited until all their tanks were in position, thus making one big break instead of two or three smaller ones, further minimizing any losses they would take in the process. In the second half of the game, the Soviets started making much better activation checks, they finally got some eyes for artillery missions behind the Board 4 ridge, and made very efficient use of their Sturmoviks when they arrived on Turn 7.

Still, the Soviets also squandered their ski battalion, which was pretty much massacred by German rifle platoons and a pair of PzKpfw-IVs staged in 4O9. Their light artillery was also butchered, accomplishing nothing besides adding to the German's kill score. Their infantry managed to consolidate into a nasty firefight with two German companies in the woods and gullies around the 4Z3 junction, where the Soviets were the beneficiaries of some very charitable dice (bad German rolls for CATs, good Soviet rolls). But even with Lady Luck, artillery support, and a 3-1 numerical superiority, this Soviet rifle battalion was roughly handled by a handful of German rifle platoons and some engineers.

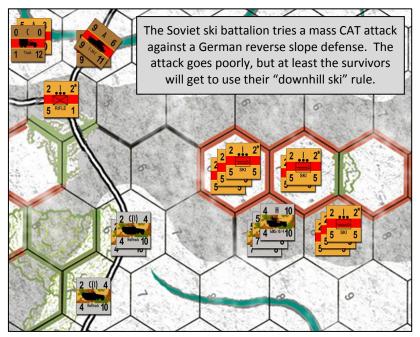
In the end, the game was a very close call. The Soviets killed 15 German units and got 8 units off the board for a total of 31 points. The Germans, meanwhile, killed 26 Soviet units, thus yielding a +5 Soviet victory. Honestly, the dice seemed to save the Soviets on this one, which seemed to take pity on Mother Russia after a heartbreaking first few turns of activation rolls.

For the second game, the Soviets tried a different avenue of approach, taking advantage of their relatively high speed and the small number of German units with any kind of decent range. They



PanzerBlitz, Barbarossa





tried to swing left, crossing over the east end of the Board 4 Ridge (near where the village of Novo normally stands, only a copse of trees in this situation). Again the Soviets were plagued by bad activation rolls, and they had a hard time getting their assault organized. The Germans did a much better job this time responding to the attack, pulling their forces back to meet the threat further east.

One particularly nasty reverse for the Soviets came when they launched a costly CAT with their ski battalion, over the crest of Hill 116 into the teeth of a reverse slope defense of PzKpfw-IVs and SdKfz 10/4 flaktracks. After taking steep losses to opportunity fire, the Soviets then rolled poorly on the CAT, allowing the Germans to remain in good order and fall back to the lower ridge at hex 4I8, essentially

"retreating by recoil" and making the Soviets pay in blood for every hex. Another nasty turn came two turns later when that same flaktrack actually drove off a Sturmovik (the Germans can't actually destroy them because of the "cement bomber" rules for Sturmoviks).

Still, the Soviets endured the horror until the last three turns of the game. Like last time, here is where the game turns hard in the Soviets' favor. Between big fire missions of off-board artillery and Sturmovik air strikes, there are only so many woods hexes in which the Germans can hide. The PzKpfw-38(t)s took heavy losses again, and the Soviets finally managed to get three platoons of T-34s

through the escape hex. Two more tanks failed activation checks, though, and were destroyed by a miracle CAT by German rifle and engineer platoons on the very last turn of the game.

In the end, the Germans actually managed a marginal victory here, proving that they *do* have the firepower to stop the Soviet attack if they play with conservative aggression and the dice hang with them at least a little. The Germans killed 25 Soviet units, while the Soviets only killed 15 German units with three units escaping off the board. This gave them a score of 21, thus yielding to the Germans a +4 marginal victory. With a +5 Soviet marginal victory balanced against a +4 German marginal victory, this last situation of our *Barbarossa* series is chalked up as a very narrow Soviet win.



PanzerB

SITUATION 21

DEFENDING PATH OF RETREAT - DYATLOVO, RUSSIA (14 Dec 1941): As Zhukov's winter offensive gathered stream, German forces fell back from the gates of Moscow with ever-CIN increasing speed. A morbid fear of German soldiers and commanders was the threat of encirclement, a nightmare that almost came to pass west of the town of Klin. Here, German units of Panzer Groups were hit on all sides by the 30th and 1st Shock Armies. The most dangerous threat came where the a Soviet mobile group of the 12 1st Shock Army almost cut the Klin-Volokolamsk road at Dyatlovo, 35 kilometers behind the collapsing German line. An emergency German kampfgruppe blocked the effort, and thus saved the Klin garrison's line of retreat.



RUSSIAN FORCES 107th Mechanized Division Mobile Group Chanchibadzhe 30th Army, Western Front

Western Front (Morale B)



FORCE A (Leading Elements, 107th Mechanized Division) Vanguard, 120th and 237th Motorized Rifle Regiments



Elements, 109th Separate **Antitank Artillery Battalion**



Main Body, 143rd Tank Regiment and 20th Reconnaissance Battalion



Batteries, 118th Artillery Regiment (off board)

Elements, 61st Separate

10 AA 12 8 AA 12 0 C 0 0 1 0 1 Truck 12

Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion



Vanguard, 6th Independent Ski Battalion (Scouting Elements, 1st Shock Army)



Sorties, 31st Ground **Attack Regiment**





JEL GERMAN FORCES

14th Infantry Division (mot.) and 6th Panzer Division, LVI Pz Corps Panzer Group "Reinhardt" **Army Group Center (Morale B)**



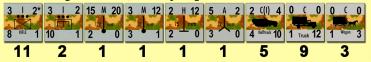
Withdrawing Remnants, 11th Panzer Regiment



Withdrawing Remnants, 57th Reconnaissance Battalion



Withdrawing Remnants, Infantry Regiments 11 and 53



3/46th Antiaircraft Company

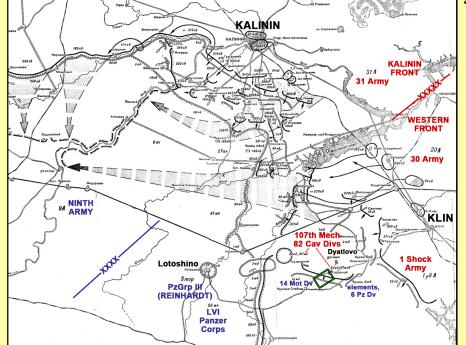


SETUP: Germans enter first (Turn 1), along the northeastern end of Board 4. Russian Force A enters on Turn 1 along the northwestern edge of Board 2, through hex rows A - M. Russian FORCE B enters on Turn 4, through any hex along the northeastern end of the map (Board 2 or 4). Russian airpower arrives on Turn 6.

VICTORY CONDITIONS: Germans get one point for each Russian unit destroyed. Russians get 1 point for each German unit destroyed, plus two points for each Russian unit that leaves the board through road hex 4Q10.

• Win with high score: MARGINAL Victory • Win by 6 or more points: TACTICAL Victory • Win by 12 or more points: DECISIVE Victory

Germans move first Turn 6 9



SPECIAL RULES

- Russian activation rolls: Roll 1-5. Refer to previous Barbarossa situations for details.
- Russian tank companies: Russian tanks must always be stacked at least two deep. Refer to previous Barbarossa situations for details.
- Improved tactics: Russian units MAY use Split Move and
- German panic: Any German unit which rolls a "6" while trying to recover from being dispersed is immediately removed from the board and considered destroyed.
- Tankoviy Descant: Russian rifle and SMG units may ride on T-34s.
- "Cement Bomber": German AA units attack Sturmoviks at a +1 DRM.
- Flaktracks: German 20mm SdKfz 10/4 can engage aircraft as an "AA" unit.
- Russian wilderness: Except for Bednost, consider all towns on the board as woods hexes instead. Gray hex sides are treated as green hex sides.
- Russian flatlands: Ignore all hilltop and slope hexes on Board 2 only. Board 4 elevation rules are normal.
- Ski troops: Ski troops do not double MF on roads. They pay 2 MF to move through green hexsides and slopes. EXCEPTION: Ski troops pay only 1 MF for a slope hex if moving off a hilltop hex. Quick march rate is 8.
- Ski troops cannot call in artillery (different army HQ)



<u> Panzerblitz, Barbarossa</u>



BARBAROSSA **EPILOGUE AND RETROSPECT**

Bearing in mind everything that's been covered in Situation 20 and 21, it's easy to see where Zhukov's famous Moscow counteroffensive is considered the first real defeat suffered by the Third Reich in world War II. Many historians are quick to dispute this, however, citing the Battle of Britain. But whereas that engagement was certainly a setback for the Germans and precluded and further westward expansion, it didn't really cost them anything they already had. The Luftwaffe was back up to 1940 strength by the time Barbarossa started, and of course the Germans still occupied practically all of western continental Europe. But the Battle of Moscow actually cost the Germans dearly. Swaths of territory had been lost, up to 160 miles deep in some places. Casualty estimates vary widely (mostly depending on what is considered a casualty), but generally fall with the 200,000-400,000 mark, a hideous number no matter how one looks at it. Where the Battle of Britain proved that the Third Reich couldn't simply take anything it wanted, the Battle of Moscow proved that enemies could take the fight to *them* and actually wrest something back.

Contrary to what many people think, German commanders all the way up to Hitler recognized the gravity of the situation almost immediately. Even before Zhukov's artillery opened up, Hitler had issued Directive 39, consenting to a defensive posture for all German forces in the east. Once Zhukov's offensive hit, however, German troops were unable to organize a solid defense at their present locations and were forced to pull back to consolidate their lines. On December 14, Colonel-General Halder (OKH chief of staff) and Field Marshal von Kluge (Commander, Fourth Army) authorized a limited withdrawal behind the Oka and Ruza rivers, not bothering to ask for Hitler's approval. A week later Hitler countermanded this withdrawal, ordering that German soldiers to stand and fight where they stood, using howitzer shells to dig improvised holes if necessary.

examination of the evidence shows that this of command on December 10, while Zhukov's assault

determination actually helped stabilize the German line. Far from a defense of Hitler's military "genius," however, this seems to be more of an example of a broken clock being correct twice a day. As individual German units (still tactically superior to the Soviet conscripts and with far better low- and mid-echelon leadership) fought for every patch of ground, the Soviet offensive soon began to break up, largely under its own weight and relative lack of high-level coordination. However, the grim determination of the German landsers helped create the slow, stalled, and bitterly-fought conditions under which these Soviet weaknesses could truly manifest to their cost.

Not that the German troops in the snow were getting much support from their superiors. Guderian was soon fired (on Christmas Day, no less) after one argument too many with Hitler. Strauss (Ninth Army) soon followed him after the withdrawal from Kalinin, along with the "Old Cavalryman" Colonel-General Hoepner (commander, Panzer Group IV). Hoepner would never be fully rehabilitated into the German command structure, and instead became a leading figure in the plot to kill Hitler in July, 1944. Implicated and arrested, the Old Cavalryman was hung soon afterwards.

Field Marshal Fedor von Bock would also be canned for his "failure" at Moscow, his position as commander of Army Group Center taken by von Kluge. He was only called back into service in 1942 when the commander of Army Group South at that time died (Reichenau). He was made a scapegoat for the disaster of Stalingrad and again fired, this time for good. After Hitler's death in 1945, he was summoned to Hamburg where Karl Doenitz (Hitler's designated successor) was trying to form a new government. But his car was strafed by British fighter bombers on May 4 1945, and he was killed along with his wife and daughter. Von Bock has the dubious distinction of being the only German field marshal in World War II to die of enemy fire.

Yet another German commander to be sacked for Moscow was the Chief-of-Staff of the German Army, Many would-be historians point to this as yet Walther von Brauchtisch. He and Hitler had bickered another example of Hitler's lunacy. More careful constantly since 1936, and finally Hitler relieved him



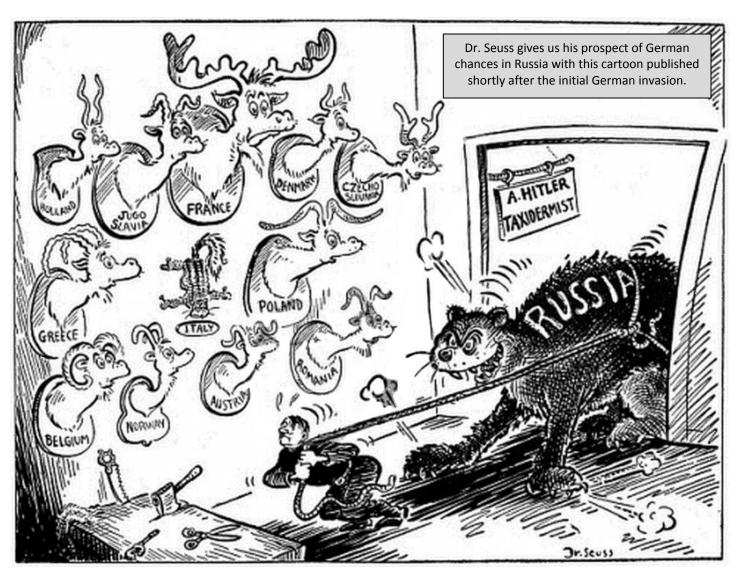


further during the war, and died in 1948 before he Ukraine, leaves a shadow over his record. could be brought to trial for war crimes.

would be fired, relieved, or placed on "sick leave" for the failure of the German army to take Moscow in December of 1941. Many commanders would be recalled into service, like Gerd von Rundstedt, the original commander of Army Group South. The aged von Rundstedt would be fired and recalled so many times during the war that it's almost funny (especially since he was technically retired before World War II even started). Yet he'd perform admirably throughout the war as late as the Battle of the Bulge promoted to the Army chief-of-staff, but was fired (he was a key operator in the German victory over the again in March of 1945 for arguing with Hitler . . . yet Allies' Operation Market-Garden). officer, his reputation remains high as the "grand old he wrote on his experiences. Panzer Leader was his

was still in full swing. Hitler replaced Brauchtisch man" of the German army. His acquiescence to Nazi with . . . himself. Brauchtisch never did anything war crimes, however, especially in Poland and the

Another German general who would be back was In all, over 30 German field marshals and generals Heinz Guderian. The "Father of the Blitzkrieg" was recalled in early 1943 as the newly-created Inspector-General of the Armored Troops. In this role, he was tasked with the revamping of the panzerwaffe with the new generation of equipment typically exemplified by the PzKpfw V Panther and PzKpfw VI Tiger. He took the job just in time to see Operation Citadel fall on its face during the Battle of Kursk, and fought to hold the German tank force together during the unbroken string of disasters that followed. He was eventually As a military again. This time he was gone for good. After the war,







both regarded as required reading for many western army officers. Although Panzer Leader is unabashedly self-serving (thus marking Guderian as the prima donna he really was), it can't be denied that he really did invent large parts of the German blitzkrieg, and had a tremendous influence on how wars were fought in the Twentieth Century.

As for the Soviets, their experiences in December 1941 declined faster with every day the Moscow offensive was maintained. In some sectors, progress was never that spectacular, especially in the center near Naro-Fominsk (liberated by the Soviets on December 26). Kaluga was retaken on December 28 and Maloyaroslavets on January 2, only after a week and a ahlf of heavy fighting. The offensive ran out of steam overall on January 7, 1942, with the Soviets having failed of course to encircle and destroy Army Group Center. The Germans had stood and fought with skill and determination (at least wherever possible). Whatever their operational and strategic blunders, tactically they had proved themselves as skillful in defense as in attack, an accomplishment made particularly noteworthy given the disastrous conditions under which the German soldier was forced to fight.

accomplishments of December 1941 and January 1942. They had done what half a dozen other Allied nations had failed to do utterly, including the Poles, the French, the Greeks, the Belgians, the Norwegians, and the British . . . twice. They had met the Germans in the open field, stopped them, and finally hurled them hack with tremendous losses in manpower and equipment, actually taking back a swath of territory larger than the nation of Ireland. During Zhukov's counteroffensive alone, the Germans are estimated to have lost 103,000 killed and wounded, three times what they lost in Poland and far more than they lost taking France. This figure only covers December 5 through January 7. The Germans lost up to 400,000 including all of the Battle of Moscow (considered to have started in October) and just short of an even commander of the 10th Panzer Division, wrote that million killed and wounded since June 22.

post-war companion to his pre-war Achtung Panzer, ghastly losses themselves. Estimates vary widely, and history buffs have to be careful to note the exact timespan to which a given casualty figure applies. Most reliable and unbiased estimates land somewhere near 650,000 killed and wounded for the defensive phase of the fight (October and November) and 370,000 for the counteroffensive (December 5 through January 7).

The Soviets lost heavily not only in quantity, but also quality. Many of their best soldiers fell during the Battle of Moscow. We have already discussed the death of Major General Ivan Panifov, famous commander of what would become the 8th Guards Another notable loss was Major Rifle Division. General Lev Dovator, killed on December 21, 1941 (see Situation 09). Crawling forward for commander's reconnaissance, cut down by German machine gun fire. Zhukov himself was reported to have lamented the man's loss as a significant blow to the Red Army. Also killed was Sergeant Dmitri Fyodorovich Lavrinenko. A member of Katukov's elite 1st Guards Tank Brigade (and the 4th Tank Brigade before its upgrade to "Guards" status), he's recognized as the top Soviet tank ace in World War II. He only fought for 2½ months, but in 28 engagements is credited with 52 German tank kills. This makes him the top tank This is certainly not to detract at all from the Soviet commander not only the Red Army, but of any Allied army in World War II. Had he had the opportunity to fight for years like German tank aces Michael Wittman and Otto Carius, he certainly may have approached or even exceeded their tank kill scores. But as it was, Lavrinenko died in combat on December 18, 1941, during 1st Guards Tank Corps' assault back against the reeling German line. He was posthumously decorated with the Hero of the Soviet Union in May, 1990.

Whatever the cost, the fact could not be denied that the Soviet Union had won a shattering victory over the invaders. German forces had been driven from the field in what Glantz calls "unprecedented disorder." Survival had replaced idealism and victory in the minds of the German landser. General Schall, German troops were discarding their weapons and This is not to say that the Soviets did not take instead leading livestock or dragging sleds loaded



Panzerbiitz, Barbarossa



with potatoes. Never again would there be a serious into account. battles like Stalingrad or Kursk. Field-Marshal Wilhelm Keitel certainly agreed. During the Moscow surely determined that they would not win it.

PANZERBLITZ BARBAROSSA OVERVIEW

These twenty-one PanzerBlitz games were played between February and August, 2013. While many were played "live" against actual opponents, much of the playtesting had to be done solitaire. A few of the salient points learned through the course of this series are listed below.

PanzerBlitz Liberation Rules: Situations in this series *have* to be played with "Liberation" house rules. These rules break Soviets down into platoon-sized units (as opposed to PanzerBlitz as originally published, where they are designed as company-sized units). They also adopt all the applicable features of Arab-Israeli Wars (latest generation of the PanzerBlitz game series), including adjustments to the WEC, corrections to artillery procedures, revisions to the for towns, IPs, and fortifications, introducing morale rules. These are not simply interesting changes to the classic PanzerBlitz model, but critical elements that have to be included if any of these situations are to work at all.

The reasons for this are relatively simple. qualitative differences between the Red Army and the Wehrmacht were never so pronounced as they were in 1941, and any game that seriously tries to portray engagements of this period have to take these factors

Original PanzerBlitz just wasn't possibility of an outright German conquest in the east, equipped to do this, as is clearly apparent with and thus a German decisive victory in World War II. Ramiro Cruz's attempt with his article PanzerBlitz Thus, some historians regard the Battle of Moscow as 1941 (Avalon Hills' General Magazine, Volume 13, the real turning point of the war, instead of later Issue 3, Sept-October 1976). Although Cruz did an admirable job given the information available at the time and the limits of hard-copy publishing and Nuremburg Trials after the war, he stated flatly that commercial distribution, his five 1941 situations only Moscow was when he knew the invasion of the Soviet take very broad attempts to address many of the Union had failed. And since Eastern Front was the factors that made 1941 very different from subsequent center of gravity around which the rest of World War years on the Eastern Front. His counters are great, but II revolved (a function of its sheer scale if nothing because he had to stay inside the rather flawed else), it follows that the Battle of Moscow was truly PanzerBlitz "out-of-the-box" rules, his situations leave one of the war's watershed moments. While battles something to be desired. Particularly disappointing is like Stalingrad and Kursk might have determined that the "somewhere in Russia" format of many of the the Third Reich would lose the war, the Battle of situations. Specific divisions, corps, or even armies are never mentioned. Again, Mr. Cruz hardly had the best information available, and certainly none of the Russian websites available to us. Of course, Ramiro Cruz would later come out with his far-superior Panzer Leader 1940, which has been played and detailed in another reference.

> Activation Rolls: In addition to morale rules and new "1941-era" counters, another way we recreated Soviet difficulties was with the "activation rolls" special rules. While I admit that making these rolls is a big drag on game play and immensely frustrating to the Soviet player, the results on the board cannot be What happens to a Soviet attack in a PanzerBlitz game is exactly what happened to Soviet attacks on the battlefield. It comes apart, strung out along its path of advance, and is immensely hard to keep concentrated and coordinated. Too many times, a Soviet attack in a Barbarossa game will break up into "waves," which the Germans can shoot up almost at their leisure. Attacks that are set up from more than one direction don't coordinate or converge correctly, with some units lagging behind. Air support doesn't show up on time. Artillery missions scatter because units that were supposed to move into spotting position don't make it.

> These are all symptoms that come up time and time again in source material of the period. The Red Army was hobbled by a critical lack of experience within the Soviet officer corps, a cumbersome and





of obsolete vehicles, and a chronic lack of communications equipment. Supplies, fuel, and spare German guns, but simply abandoned. parts meant that their massive mechanized formations were largely ineffective, especially in the early months of the war.

solution from a gameplay perspective, they definitely undamaged but abandoned Soviet armor (some of its help show what the Red Army was really dealing would even be used by the Germans, primarily for with during these opening months. remember that the real commanders weren't sitting at to break up larger Soviet tank formations by only dining room tables with a god-like view of stacks of knocking out one or two counters per stack. This cardboard counters. The only way they can move reflects the historical practice of shooting at company units was via radio communication, accurate maps, and a quick, flexible, and well-trained command structure. Sadly, the Red Army had none of these things during the dark days of 1941.

Tank Companies: Barbarossa rule that was critical to portraying the behavior of the Red Army in 1941. Only one tank per company had a radio, and the antennae of these tanks clearly marked them as prime targets for German gunners. To command the tanks of their company, Soviet senior lieutenants (a company commander's rank in the Red Army) had to use signal flags, while operating the gun of his own tank (early T-34s had no dedicated gunner). As a result, Soviet tanks always had to stay within easy visual range of their company commander, a critical weakness of the Red Army tank forces that wasn't completely resolved until the end of 1943.

Soviet units as companies instead of platoons (or technically "half-companies" companies were only ten tanks strong), but if there in large masses so tanks can "leap frog" onto one was ever a time these company-scale units made sense, it would be for battles taking place in 1941. But instead of reverting away from the Liberation-style where Soviet tanks always had to stack at least two end of the movement phase.

over-centralized command structure, huge numbers Firstly, the vast number of Red Army tanks lost during the summer and fall of 1941 were not killed by would break down, the crews would get lost and panic, or the fuel would run out. portfolio of photos taken in Russia during 1941 has So while activation rolls are hardly a perfect several shots of German soldiers standing around One must rear area security). It also allows the German player commanders' tanks first, murderously apparent with their radio antennae.

Show me, don't tell me: As with the activation rolls, the Soviet tank stacking rule is admittedly kind This was another special of a pain. Low morale ratings are also frustrating on the game board. Gameplay purists might prefer that these conditions be accommodated by simply reducing the values of Soviet units or building them by companies and not platoons or half-companies. But by taking the extra effort to design and play with more granular rules, we get to see "how" and "why" certain things happened instead of simply being told about it in the designer's notes. As stated above, German players are encouraged to pick off "commanders" of a Soviet attack force, just like German gunners on the battlefield. Soviet players are encouraged to keep their plans simple and direct because of tank stacking rules and activation rolls, just I have always hated the way *PanzerBlitz* portrayed like Soviet commanders had to do with the relatively untrained conscript armies under their command. since Soviet tank They are encouraged to keep their tanks concentrated another and thus reduce losses due to the tank stacking rule.

In other words, PanzerBlitz players are "shown" platoon counters, we instead set up a special rule what happened, instead of simply being told about it. They get to experience the strengths and weaknesses deep. Lone tank counters simply "blow up" at the of the different armies, albeit vicariously, and come up with their own ways to exploit strengths and While this sounds a little silly, careful review of overcome weaknesses. When these measures are then Soviet tank losses in the opening months of found to be very similar to what commanders actually Barbarossa shows this rule to be surprisingly accurate. did on the field, the players have really learned the





else, players get to see just how amazing a machine the T-34 really is (easy to see, once you spend a few afternoons struggling to get something done with T-26s and BT-7s). Players also note just how powerful German artillery and infantry really were, as opposed to the "glory boy" units like panzers and the Stukas.

Winning games, not battles: One aspect that went particularly well throughout the course of PanzerBlitz Barbarossa was game balance. This was always worrisome from a design standpoint, since the Soviets naturally took some of the worst defeats ever suffered by any army in military history during the months in question. The challenge was how to make the game still winnable (and enjoyable) for the Soviet player, balanced against the historical demand that Soviet units be dissected time after time.

Again, the original PanzerBlitz boxed set ducked this challenge be simply having most of their games take place later in the war. Ramiro Cruz was forced to duck it again with his "somewhere in Russia" situation model (thus alleviating the need for actual historical engagements which the Soviets almost always lost).

Fortunately, for *PanzerBlitz Barbarossa* much greater historical material was available, much of it from Russian sources or writers like David Glantz, who's virtually made a career in putting the "Soviet side" of the war back into the historical mindset. combined with German sources like von Mellentin, von Luck, Guderian, and Paul Carell (some of which we've had almost since the day the war ended), allowed a much clearer and more detailed view of the campaign.

My basic methodology was to read an overview of the larger battle in question and find a particular engagement that simply had more information available than the rest. I would then zero in on that engagement through a second round of research, gathering as much detail as I could about what both sides had, the ground on which the engagement was Germans, obviously) exceeded the historical outcome top *Barbarossa* is ambition, scale, or detail.

"how and why" of these engagements. If nothing of the fight, he won a marginal victory. If the he fell short, the defender won a marginal victory. Tactical and decisive victories were simply extrapolated as greater degrees on this same generalized formula.

> The overall idea was to encourage players to fight for historical objectives and reproduce generally historical outcomes (although of course the methods and tactics they chose could be wholly different). If the Soviet player managed to hold the Germans to a generally historical line (as measured in time, space, casualties, or specific objective hexes), the Soviet player could reasonably expect to win the game even as his army was losing the *battle*.

> Again, the results of this approach were remarkably fair. Out of the 42 total games played (each of the twenty-one situations was played twice), the Germans won twenty-one marginal victories and one tactical victory, while the Soviets won twenty marginal victories. Giving one "campaign point" for a marginal victory and two for a tactical victory, this gives the Germans a slight 23-20 overall victory for the Barbarossa series.

> However, when successive playtests aggregated into an overall win for the situation (e.g., a +3 German marginal victory is compared against a +5 Soviet marginal victory to yield an overall Soviet marginal victory), the results come out in a dead tie. The Soviets and Germans both won eight situations (the Soviets winning Situations 02, 05, 07, 10, 12, 16, 17, and 21 - the Germans winning Situations 01, 04, 06, 08, 11, 14, 18, and 20). Situations 03, 09, 13, 15, and 19, meanwhile, shook out as dead draws.

> Evidently, when it comes to game balance, it looks like we were doing something right.

Conclusions: PanzerBlitz Barbarossa was a monster project in terms of the work involved, but it yielded a tremendous amount of fun and gratification. was definitely the most heavily-researched PanzerBlitz/Leader project undertaken to date, and even as a long-time enthusiast in Eastern Front history, I have to say I learned a tremendous amount fought, and what the attacker was able to accomplish of fascinating new history. Suffice it to say we have on a given day. This was set as the "draw-line" for raised the bar on situation design and campaign the victory conditions. If the attacker (normally the research, and further projects will be hard-pressed to



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Playing PanzerBlitz electronically (i.e., with boards and counters presented in Excel sheets instead of physically printed on cardboard) was a massive step forward first taken with the Barbarossa series. Playing this series on a conventional "dining room table" format certainly would have been possible, but immensely more difficult. How many times are players really going to need 36 cavalry counters, or blue Vichy French counters in the Eastern Front? Siberian ski troops or T-35 triple-turret tanks? Simply making physical counters required to support these games would have been an epic undertaking. But on a laptop, of course, it's just a matter of building the png file in Photoshop and inserting the image file into an Excel file, "floating" over another file of the map

board. Even monster games like Situation 14 (Borodino, with 114 Soviet *combat* units combined with 87 German *combat* units for a total of 201) became much more easy to handle.

That being said, players who wish to try any of these situations should be warned that they are not for the faint of heart. They are big, mean, complex, and unforgiving, just like the Eastern Front they hope to replicate. But of course, this was the largest campaign every fought in the annals of warfare, and where the outcome of World War II (and perhaps the 20th Century) was ultimately decided. Any game that hopes to recreate any aspect of this conflict should never hesitate to go all out, and pull no punches on its ferocity, scale, or fateful significance.

