

Case Blue. The wide open Soviet Steppe. The farthest point from Germany reached by Axis ground forces in World War 2. And if you are the Soviet player, a tough challenge. This article lays out some Soviet campaign game play tips for ensuring history repeats itself. (Note: this article assumes play with both the Case Blue and Enemy at the Gates (EATG) mapsets, and focuses on Scenario 7.8, the German Blau III Summer Offensive, which runs from July 8, 1942 until 29 May 1943.)

Lesson #1 learned by this sadder-but-wiser Soviet player is to appoint an overall commander for each side. Our first game featured one consistent Axis team facing a rotating group of Soviet generals until midway through the game. This caused some real disruption, since there wasn't a coherent and consistent strategy until later. Even then, differences in play style and aggressiveness cause the Soviet steamroller to hiccup and grind its gears. With one consistent conceptual approach, Soviet play will be much stronger.

The Map

This is a BIG game. Consider what the size means for the campaign: as the Axis player advances, his forces must cover an ever-expanding front. They will become very thin somewhere along the perimeter. Starting from the Northwest corner of the play area, the Germans need to conquer most of this map, while keeping the Soviets guessing as to whether they have chosen Stalingrad or the Oil Wells as their target. They will get spread out—if the Soviet player can wear them down and retard their efforts while preserving sufficient force, the time will come for a brutal counterattack.

Look at the map again and note the "Soviet Shields": barriers which can provide refuge for the Red Army as it plots its countermoves:

- **The Don River line** in the north can be crossed, but along most of its length it provides a tripwire that causes double Soviet Reinforcements/Supply and enables building of Hedgehogs to Level 3 & 4. This is a problem the

Germans don't need and usually won't inflict on themselves.

- **The Volga River** is huge and impassable until Heavy Freeze conditions in December cause it to be treated as a Major River.
- **Stalingrad**, with its back to the Volga and ample Ferry crossings, is extremely difficult to capture when fully Hogged and manned. Should "Stalingrad" be the Axis victory objective, they will be scheming how to slice the city's trace supply east of the Volga.
- **The Caucasus Mountain range** provides very rugged terrain across the bottom of the map, crossed only by a few Military Roads (tracks). Unfortunately, all the Oil Well objectives are on the north side of the mountains.

Axis Capabilities

Who doesn't like playing the Axis forces? The Wehrmacht is a proficient and tactically flexible army that possesses an abundance of advantages:

- **Panzer and Motorized divisions**, everyone's favorite multi-unit formations. These units can move 70+ hexes along a road in a double turn with efficient Reserve Marker use, and fight a battle at the end of it. They tend to travel in packs. And they are never without their little flying friends...
- **Luftwaffe air units**, with the powerful Stuka and other bombers, accompanied by tough fighters. They can perform Hipshoots (the Soviets can't) and cause plenty of mayhem. Over time, the operational tempo will wear down this force. The Soviets must keep a stiff upper lip with regards to their special restrictions, which include a 20 hex flight limitations for Fighter Sweep, Barrage and Trainbusting; plus Soviet air units cannot fly during the Reaction phase.
- **Leapfrogging Railroad Repair Teams**. Canny Axis players will set these units to "maximum conversion" and play Strat Move leapfrog, spacing them out so

The Axis must hold Sevastopol and his choice of Stalingrad or the six Oil Well hexes to win



they can convert the most hexes possible. Said canny Axis players will also garrison any hex RR Engineers occupy. The whole game for the Germans is a lesson in logistic legerdemain.

- **Bridging Capabilities.** One of my games featured a "How to Cross Rivers with Bridging for Fun and Conquest" lesson delivered by the German player. Normally HQ's are placed on the top of a stack, so you can easily keep track of your supply network. But they aren't required to be on top (an Attack Capable Unit is required to be the topmost). Snuck up to a river line and hidden under an innocent-looking unit, they can flip to Combat Mode and vault units across and (more importantly) throw Supply as well. We called these "pole-vaulting" HQ's. You have been warned. One of the German HQ's, the 49th Mountain Corps, has a Throw Range in Leg MPs. This can be a game-changer in the Light Mud conditions that prevail in the Caucasus in the autumn. Keep an eye out for this unit, as it often signals an Axis schwerpunkt. Important hexes to consider as potential Axis river-crossing sites include: the Don River crossing at Isimlyanskaya, hexes 26.27/28; the two on-map pontoon Don River bridges located near Nizhne-Chirskaya - hexes 43.03/04 & 44.03/04; the bridge at Serafimovich, hexes 34.12/13 (NOTE: the Soviets should occupy and potentially hog up this important city); K30.11, near the village of Kalinovskaya.
- **Extenders.** Very useful to provide Trace supply to far-flung units south of Rostov. Careful German players often position transport that could convert to Extenders as needed to counter a Soviet Uranus-style offensive at Stalingrad.
- **Alert Battalions.** Used to model German flexibility in the face of Soviet offensives, they multiply like mushrooms after the Soviet Massive Assaults (MA). The counter limit is 20, but the rules as written give the Axis the ability to deploy units equal to two dice in response

to an MA, seemingly out of thin air. My own recommendation is that the Germans should not be able to deploy more than seven Alert Battalions and two of the Alert HQ's on each of the Case Blue, GBII and EATG mapsets, to prevent more than a modicum of magically materializing papertruppen.

- **Fallschirmjaegers.** Soviet players hate these guys even more than Alert Battalions. Fortunately, there aren't many of them. One small unit (a Turkoman ally) comes on per the reinforcement schedule (a good unit but it doesn't stick around on the OOB very long). However, with particularly good reinforcement rolls, it is possible to assemble the entire 7th Flieger Division. Their best use is behind Stalingrad, along the Black Sea coast, or to occupy other supply line choke points.
- **Infantry.** The German infantry divisions are mostly four-step 20-4-3's. These take some killing. They are a must for taking fortified positions or terrain that negates the Panzer's powerful punch. The German infantry is stalwart, but they will find they don't have as much of it as they require. Enlarge that problem for the Axis by targeting these units and over time they can be worn down.
- **Axis Minor Allies.** These have some quirky rules about what HQ's can supply whom, and are most often used in what the Axis believes to be a secondary front. They are (mostly) weaker than the German units—it's no accident that the USSR unloaded Operation Uranus against Team Romania. The more you kill, the harder it is for the Axis to cover all that front line.
- **Supply.** The Axis player does not have enough of it, particularly when moving fast in the early game. If you allow him to build it up, he will. Ask yourself every turn how you can complicate his supply situation and make him burn every 1T.

Soviet Capabilities

Yes, you DO have capabilities! Keep reminding yourself: I am playing the

side that won this war! But it will require neutralizing the Axis advantages and playing to your strengths:

- **Supply.** You don't have "plenty" but you aren't nearly as constrained as your opponent.
- **Artillery.** The Axis player often cannot afford the SP burn to fire their artillery (and if they CAN then you have been slacking off). You can. This is the Soviet version of air superiority—save these units. Few things are as fun as blowing a unit off the map with a Katyusha Barrage, what we called a "date with Katy." (Fine print: Keep multiple artillery reserve stacks behind Stalingrad and any key threatened areas to reduce the attacker effectiveness. They can also pulverize enemy stacks in preparation for an attack.) One thing to note is that when the Russians receive Artillery reinforcements via the reinforcement rolls, those units go into the pool and must be built with Eq units—they don't just show up on the map.
- **The South Box.** Units placed here can materialize in any of the South Map Edge entry zones, be shipped out via Sea cap or make Seaborne Assaults. That is some lovely flexibility. Big piles and obvious activity there should make the Axis antsy. You do need sufficient trucks to move Supply up the Black Sea Coast to support any offensive-mindedness, and those should be shipped down from Astrakhan. For the Russians there is a fine balancing act with available transports in this sector. Near Maikop, we often maintained about 10-12 wagons; ten of which could be quickly deployed into Extenders should they be needed. Another 3-5 trucks were also on hand, forming a supply shuttle between Tuaspe and the South Box. You might add even more.
- **Massive Assaults.** You get several of them (depends on the scenario—three in Scenario 7.8). They turn your possession of "The Hammer" (choosing to move second in a turn) into "The 20-Pound Sledge". Just like you shouldn't elect to

SOVIET PLAY IN CASE BLUE

move first in a turn unless you can get a long way towards winning/losing the game, do not bust out one of these babies to rescue a few units or make a minor foray. A Massive Assault should be freakin' MASSIVE, with enough mulching and mauling activity going on that the Axis player cannot respond to all of it. We learned the hard way: The Axis player will use his flexibility to overwhelm your forces should they attack in only one sector. When you unleash a Massive Assault, he should feel like that moment in Tetris where the game just gets away from him.

- **Seaborne Assaults.** This allows you to plant a force somewhere along the Black Sea coast (or Sea of Azov should you own the Kerch Straits). Threatening Sevastopol is one option, but think carefully about where this landing will do the most good. Use it for maximum mayhem. The Soviet player has several Seaborne Assaults, depending on the scenario (two in Scenario 7.8). Combine them with Massive Assaults for a delicious meal of Fritz fricassee. A viable threat to Sevastopol will certainly draw Axis attention and possibly a diversion of forces. Read the Seaborne Assault (SA) restrictions carefully (CB Rule 3.2): south of xx.17 in the Black Sea and within ten hexes of the Kerch Straits if those Straits are both Soviet-occupied and unfrozen. This 'limit-line' runs just south of Sevastopol. SAs are certainly worthy of creative OCS play.
- **Pontoon Units.** HQ units can downgrade river hexsides. Pontoon units make them go away altogether—even the mighty Volga. The Soviets receive ten of them - an early Christmas present from STAVKA. We usually station them in Kamyslin (C62.18) and Stalingrad to more easily shift units between fronts, and spread the rest out along the Don. The Axis player knows they are likely to turn up near an offensive, so show him some where you aren't planning to attack. Or where you want to LOOK like you don't intend to have an offensive but really

actually do. (I love Fog of War.) Husband your pontoons - never leave them exposed where they might get destroyed by artillery or air barrage.

- **NKVD units.** These are the last ditch defenders of key can't-lose hexes. Stalingrad should have them, as well as any other hex you don't want to give up. They provide a "brain" unit that is the last to be eliminated by combat, so you can take your losses in cannon fodder (the presence of these units requires that all options must be taken as losses, even if the attacker takes his options as a retreat). Go ahead, Axis player, bash your head on the Stalingrad defenses. You can't win a battle of attrition with Russia!
- **Mech and Tank Corps.** These are your offensive power players, and the best of them are close to a Panzer Division in oomph. Save them from harm until your hitting power reaches "game-altering" levels, and then unleash them to crush the foe as they were meant to do. Be aware of a few limitations:
 - o They are powerful, but they aren't up against your 12-2-2's, they are up against 20-4-3's. Compared to the Axis, you must make up your lack of AR differential with mass.
 - o Look at Case Blue Rule 3.5c. Soviet Tank Corps must have all their units adjacent to or stacked with each other, like a litter of puppies. Or they are all DGed. This limits their tactical flexibility.
 - o Some of these units are withdrawn at points in the game, or are treated to Guards Exchanges. Watch the Master Reinforcement list, so your spearhead units don't go "poof" like mine did one turn!
 - o Note how Soviet Tank Brigades cost only ONE Eq Replacement to rebuild. Mwa-ha-ha!
 - o Check out the movement rate differences between Soviet and Axis armor during Mud. Here we find that the Rasputitsa favors the Russians!
 - o If you mass independent tank brigades, they can ALL be fueled for 1 SP via an HQ.

- **Cavalry Units.** You get a lot of them. They are fast. They use Foot MP's, so they don't require fuel and are very maneuverable in Mud or Hill terrain. This makes them excellent for offensive support or use in the Caucasus. Best are the Cavalry Corps. Lavish love and Pax replacements on them. A Soviet Cavalry Division costs 2xPax to rebuild, a very good investment.
- **Cheap Russian Infantry.** Look at CB Rule 1.13a, which gives you an entire Soviet Infantry Division for the cost of the first Pax received in a turn. This is another excellent investment. If you can staunch the slaughter at the start of the campaign, the Soviet player builds up "just plain bulk" over time.
- **RR Conversion Engineers.** Get them to safety instead of using them for cannon fodder. The time will come when you will be glad you have them! Keep them handy near Stalingrad or counteroffensive areas, for any RR hexes that might get liberated.
- **Weather.** Mud is our friend. Mostly (since it slows down our units, too). Mud reduces the operational tempo to the point you can catch your breath. The effect of the wide treads of the T-34s becomes quite apparent here.
- **Reserve Markers.** A favorite German tactic is to Air Barrage them, so keep your Reserve stacks no larger than three RE's as much as possible. If possible, hide them under combat-mode units.
- **Summer of 1942 Special Russian Reinforcements.** I really recommend the Experimental rule that the Soviets can receive two 12-2-2 (or worse) divisions per turn from 29 Jun 42 to 15 August 42 (it is on page 21 of the Case Blue rulebook).

The flow of the Campaign

The campaign unfolds in four stages:

- **Phase 1 - RUN!** Get your best units out in Strat mode, particularly the multi-unit formations, NKVD units, and High AR units. You need a screen to keep the Wehrmacht off them and your Strat Movers must

end their move in Trace (this may mean advancing some HQ's to help out). It is truly a difficult task in the early part of the game. The Soviet player must stay calm and resolute, breakout surrounded troops, get the best units to safety, and fall back in good order. Repeat your mantra: The Axis can go anywhere, but they can't go everywhere! If you see an opportunity to poke somewhere with a small counterattack (units by themselves, infantry without support, other troublesome areas), take it. Axis steps killed now can't be used later. Axis SP's spent on defensive supply can't gas the Panzers. They will crash through all your hasty defensive lines until they reach the Stalingrad area, so try to delay the German onrush as much as possible—DG panzer divisions, drop interdiction markers all over the place, and try to make them spend supply on combat rather than movement, but delay is the best you can hope for. Train your breakout dice to roll well.

- **Phase 2 – HIDE!** Your withdrawal will eventually wind up at the Soviet Shields (the Don, Volga, Stalingrad, and the far end of the Caucasus). Distance, natural barriers and Rasputitsa will take some of the blitz out of his krieg. By the time the mobile tempo slows, you should have Hogged Stalingrad to the limit and built plenty of Air Bases to support your lines in the north. You may still be battling over the Oil Fields at Maikop and the tussles around the approaches to Grozny are just starting. Your campaign of “poking” at the Axis should feel like sharper and sharper jabs that force him to move units that require fueling or expend more defensive supply. More reinforcements are arriving, and you are building up supply. Watch the Axis player's activity carefully to assess his intentions. Where is the bulk of his transport? RR conversion units? Mobile formations? He will be thin somewhere: where are the weaknesses, and where has he posted the Allied armies? A good Axis player will have you guessing for quite a while about whether the

goal is Oil or Stalingrad—taking the city is a brutal grind, but it's a lot closer than the Oil Wells! The Soviets need to maintain a credible armor/mobile force that can jab as needed. Appear to threaten the German flanks. Jump any units you can get a 3:1 on, particularly Germans in Move Mode or in the clear. When conducting these attacks, stick in a 4 AR unit as a “brain” or bring in some air—if you can make about one of these a turn, you will burn 10 SP of German defensive supply between July and October 1.

- **Phase 3 – PEEK-A-BOO!** Now you can start your Maskirovka campaign (the word starts with “Mask” for a reason). Where to you want to look strong or threatening? Where do you want to look innocent and quiet? There may well be some places you still need to slow the Axis down (particularly in the Caucasus), but focus on formulating counteroffensive ideas. You have a hefty Railcap in the north half of the game area, which can translate to big strategic redeployment—a mass of Infantry ostentatiously milling about in area A can quickly move to area B. The Soviet rails are a game unto itself, and a very useful asset for the Red Army—especially when the Mud sets in. As better fighters arrive, you may start achieving air parity in parts of the front. Can you do a Seaborne Assault to draw off some forces? Slip cavalry into his backfield? Jump exposed units? It is worth a serious fight for the southernmost Maikop Oil Field! Put in a Level 2 Hog, 15+ Infantry Divisions, some Tank units, Cavalry Corps, Artillery units, and enough supply that he will be attacking you while DG'ed—you can really go toe-to-toe here. Position units in every pass across the Caucasus Mountains that might be nothing, might be something—one should have a set of guys who can rush the rails below Amavir with HQ and an armored force. German players HATE your ability to obtain Trace Supply from trails in the Caucasus. Make them hate it even more.

- **Phase 4 – POUNCE & POUND!** Payback time. When you start your own Operation Uranus, make it as grim an experience for your opponent as July/August were for you!

Thoughts about Soviet Campaign Play

Appealing mistakes—there are activities that SEEM like the right thing to do, but I would argue they don't help in the long run.

- Going toe to toe. You simply cannot stand in with the Germans in the open field during the Summer of 1942. Don't try. Or, maybe try it once and see what happens.
- Concrete the Steppe. This is the approach of building lots and lots of Hogs. Yes, some are needed. But in my first Case Blue game we spent 100 SP's building Hogs that had Germans sitting in them by October, so what use were they? That's a lot of SP's you can use to inflict pain instead. Some Hogs make sense. A lot of Hogs don't.
- Throwing away men/supplies in the “leave behind” tactic. Again, in some cases this makes sense, and making the Rostov area a tough nut is probably worth doing (maybe with a low-level Hog to blunt overruns). But what are you really gaining? Any SP's the Germans spend to reduce these garrisons can't be used elsewhere, I suppose, but a pitiless “just surround those Russkies and just watch them starve” strategy costs the Axis player nothing. Make the loss of these units into the best possible Return on Investment: attack and kill units or at least force some supply consumption. Those attacks will cost you about 30-40 SP, and that is 15-20 Hog levels that don't get built.
- An Alternative Point-of-View. There is no “one style” of Soviet play, and there are passionate points-of-view on how to do it best. Another approach goes like this: Put blobs of units at key choke points—with a bunch of supply. There were many times the Germans had to wait them out instead of

SOVIET PLAY IN CASE BLUE

expending the supply to kill them (Kotelnikovo held out for a month of game time in our instance). The “many small roadblocks” strategy forces Germans to spend supply to keep moving. The areas you might want to garrison:

- o Sal'sk (G49.21)
- o Kotelnikovo (D37.18)
- o Amavir (G43.01)
- o Pyatigorsk (K2.19)
- o Mineral'nyye Vody (K3.22 and the hexes on either side of it)
- o Belaya Kalitva (D12.27)
- o Nizhne-Chirskaya (D41.34)
- o Kalach (D41.34)
- o Rostov

Things to do as the Soviet Player

- **Spread out the air force.** Build Air Bases and have just one fighter based at each Level 1 airbase, with overlapping Patrol Zones. This forces the Axis to use one fighter to knock down each of yours. Occasionally you will knock one of the Axis planes down. What you really want is to use superiority of numbers to make the Axis fly as many Fighter Sweeps as possible. This costs the Axis supply to refit. Every 1T spent on refit isn't being spent on a panzer overrun. You may get the chance to bomb an Axis airbase, especially inviting if he has left some inactive air units without fighter cover, but that's rare. There will come a point, I promise, when the Axis can't knock down all your fighters—air parity, which happened on the 15 Sept 42 turn in my most recent game around Stalingrad. And there will be a time when you knock down his Patrol Zones over a section of the front and achieve air superiority (early November for us over Stalingrad). By the way, some of your bombers have a (3) Air Combat rating—they can fly missions unescorted at near parity, or stay up to challenge a Fighter Sweep.
- **Flak-em-up!** On one game, our German opponent was relentless in Fighter Sweeping our air bases

then Barraging them in hopes of killing Air Units—but it wore the Luftwaffe down turn by turn, too. One particular hex—Yalta on the Crimea after a Seaborne Assault—was the target of constant raids to reduce the Port Capacity and strand our Amphibious landing force. The brave AA gunners there killed 15 bomber steps over the campaign, and Yalta was designated the “Aluminum Graveyard.” A Level 1 Air Base has a 17% chance of inflicting a Flak hit. Build them to Level 2 and you are at 28%. Level 3 is 42%. Add an HQ for even more fun. Attrition takes time, but this is a long game. By 1 Nov 1942 in one game the Germans had only 14 bomber steps left, and most of the losses were from flak. By 15 Nov they had ten remaining and had basically become a defensive air force.

- **Trainbusting.** Not particularly effective because the 20-hex range limitation for this type of Air Mission places the hexes you really want to hit off-limits, but there were several points where you can get the German player to station a fighter behind the front just to project a PZ over a vulnerable section of track. Or you might spread out a bunch of Trainbusting markers in a wide area just to slow the bad guys down, which is even more aggravating during Mud turns—done right you can limit a Panzer Division to just a hex a turn.
- **“Murphy Dumps.”** We started calling the practice of spreading supply out to your units all along the front “Murphy Dumps” because of Alan Murphy's habit of doing so. I came to appreciate what seemed at first seemed like frenetic truck activity—many units that were suddenly cut off had just enough SP to function for a turn, each Air Base had a few T for Refit, and everybody was happy. Those busy little trucks were pollinating supply all over the place, rather than piling massive ever-higher stacks in just a few locations. Most of the Trucks are concentrated in the north, but give just as much consideration to where YOU deploy the critical

transportation assets. If you intend to mount serious counteroffensives in the south, you need plenty of lift capacity there in advance.

- **Nibble supply with counterattacks.** I have been mentioning this. Think about it. You could spend 2 SP to build a Level 1 Hog (pre-prepared graves for your stay-behind troops once they starve). Why not fund a few attacks with those units? Even a 5:1 -1 in Clear Terrain gives better-than-even odds of killing a step, it burns supply for the Axis and your units didn't go quietly. Gamey? No! Why make his advance easy? Make him feel like he is sliding across sandpaper. If it drives your opponent to distraction, so much the better.
- **Fueling Independents.** Think about how to concentrate the independent units so fewer HQ can fuel them. We had one particular HQ near Stalingrad that fueled 40 steps for just 1 SP.
- **Parallel Problems.** Don't cause the Axis problems “in series,” cause them “in parallel.” This is a big game, and it is easy to slip into a tendency to set up a quiet area and just let it be. One game had a Svoboda Sitzkrieg at the north end of the map where we put a pie plate over the counters because we kept knocking them askew as we leaned in to work the activity near the center of the map. How easy it was just to forget they were there! Ask yourself, every turn, where and how you can badger, bother, or bedevil your opponent. My most recent game featured a series of Don River bridgeheads that launched a regular series of what the Axis players snarled was the “peckerwood offensive.” They got really mad about it. Excellent.
- **Photo Recon.** We got in the habit of taking pictures of the active fronts at the end of every player turn because we were posting them on Consimworld. These turned out to be much more useful than expected! We were able to identify several moves where the Axis player laid traps or otherwise did things they were hoping we wouldn't notice. With Air Recon, we noticed.

- **Fortress Stalingrad.** This is where you DO want to invest SP's in Hogs. Make all the Stalingrad hexes Level 2 Hogs, and think about Beketovka (D51.33), Gumrak (D51.35) and C52.01 as well. You might want to consider a force at Krasnoarmeysk (D52.30) to try and deny the Axis the three rail hexes along the Volga needed to reduce your supply rolls. Think carefully about where you place your supply and HQ's in the Stalingrad area, so you don't inadvertently get cut off from Trace. You probably want artillery and Air Bases on the East side of the Volga (and garrison those airbases, Comrade!)
- **Funnel Forces South.** You won't have enough mass in the Caucasus unless you send it there. Starting on Turn 1, get a pipeline of units moving that way, particularly cavalry.
- **Caucasus Transport.** South of Rostov-Astrakhan the Railcap is two RE's. You will want to augment this with other assets available to you to move SP's and units around the area: your three RE Seacap, Red Air Force transport aircraft, and shifting enough Wagons/Trucks to the area. Inexperienced Soviet players often overlook this, and should be preparing the Caucasus theatre for battle starting on Turn 1.
- **Follow your Opponent's Lead.** It isn't a dance exactly, but the Axis has the strategic initiative during the first part of the game—he decides between victory objectives, chooses the *schwerpunkt* for his advance and generally behaves in an offensive manner. Study very carefully the activities of his units visible to you—it is worth tracking where the mobile formations are to tell you how much weight is being placed behind the push to Stalingrad or into the Caucasus. The Axis starts the game with 34 Wagon points but only 13 Truck points (5 more available for build)—where are they spending their time? In my first Case Blue game, my German opponent did an excellent job disguising his victory objectives until about November, when it became obvious that he wasn't

worried enough at his failure to take Stalingrad (and after we had overcommitted Soviet forces there at the expense of Grozny). If you have played the Drive for Oil Scenario, you experienced an Axis player driving south on fumes—in our game we were not prepared for the strategic shift of trucks to the Caucasus and how it enabled him to mount a major offensive near Grozny. Look at the Rail Network in the following diagram, and note the big hole north/south of the Don between Svoboda and Stalingrad. It also shows why the Soviets need to fight for Sal'sk and Elitsa.

Counteroffensive Possibilities

When at long last you are ready to strike back at the Hitlerite hordes, where is the best place to do so? Look at the diagram below which depicts the rail network on the Case Blue/EaTG maps (the purple line along the Caspian Sea is the Unfinished RR the Soviets can elect to complete 1 Nov 42 per CB Rule 1.12i). East and South of Rostov the lines thin out quite a bit. Only two lines are realistically available to supply the Axis forces near Stalingrad, and only one supports his Caucasus and Oil Well offensive. This affects your planning as well, since operating along a path not supported by rail requires you involve a hefty portion of your transport. Coming south from the Don to surround Stalingrad, as the Soviets did in the actual campaign, cuts "across the grain" of the rail net—you might plan, for example, to break the rail line at Marozovsk (D24.29) by coming south from Bokovskaya (C24.07), reached in turn from either Vishenskaya (C24.13) or Serafimovich (C34.12), which are themselves a distance from the Soviet Rail Net. You will have to measure where supplies needs to be and how they gets there. By November 1942, the Russians have enough to create a Truck Extender that can reach the main German supply routes behind Stalingrad and keep their forces in Trace Supply. Where those trucks are will be really important, back to a de-trainable hex. You will have to think that 'op' out for a 2-3 turn deal—it's probably done in a Massive Assault in a Frost turn—and then you better be ready so you won't get massacred by

the Axis reaction. It depends somewhat on the "hit him where he ain't" factor unique to your game, but consider some of these potential areas:

- Cut the Rostov-Grozny supply line
- Cut the Rostov-Stalingrad supply line
- Drive south or southwest from Svoboda (C02.33, the city where the Don comes in at the north map edge of the EaTG mapset), following the single or double rail
- Seaborne landing aimed at Sevastopol, or even at Kerch to open up the Sea of Azov
- Surround the Axis forces near Stalingrad
- Surround the Axis forces near Grozny
- Advance to Maikop from Tuapse. One comment we received on Consimworld: "I like this Tuapse-Maikop area for early USSR concentration as the terrain suits their way of combat and they should be able to avoid being outflanked. If you let the Germans have the oilfields they will not want to retreat from them, which means the Red Army meat-grinder when you can attack. I quietly build up masses of SPs and units until I am ready then start the steamroller when he is concentrated far away at Grozny." You could explode out of any of the Caucasus Mountain passes with some planning.

Or do you necessarily need to attack? Your style of play may be such that it is best to threaten to attack the German supply line, not actually attack it. Then for example, they will do things like start to use reserve markers to prepare to react to your threat, instead of trying to extend their advances and push forward. Get in a threatening position, and make them move forward and attack you. I have seen this sort of Psyops threat really come to dominate an Axis mindset.

SOVIET PLAY IN CASE BLUE

German Campaign Play

OK, OK, I will add a few pointers about playing the Germans:

- Think like a Soviet as you plan. Read the Soviet notes above and take heed.
- Garrison your backfield. Every OCS player learns this lesson in a painful way, and it certainly applies here. The wise Wehrmacht Field Marshal has sufficient force in rear areas to block a Yalta landing, garrison each waypoint along the road to Grozny, and so forth. Think carefully about the worst your Soviet opponent could do and then position units that could hold off the threat until the cavalry arrives.
- Don't spend 1T more than you have to! Your Panzer Divisions can cover a lot of ground in a turn, so why not move them every other turn? Don't just reposition them a few hexes to "get near the front." In one game, there was a Motorized Division that didn't move for four months of game time (it was under the "cake lid" near Svoboda). Part of developing a good German ground game is to wring the most mileage out of every drop of gas. It's even painful to make your whole Luftwaffe active if they are spread out at a lot of bases! We got this Consimworld comment during one game: "Another way to save supply is to hold off moving those Panzers as much. Let the infantry divisions forge ahead and only use your panzers if a sudden flanking sweep proves beneficial. Remember your motorized forces have one heck of an incredible movement range that goes even further if you add reserve mode to the mix."
- Sometimes you jump, sometimes you creep. The Axis mobile formations excel in "broken field running" on the offensive. But don't get ahead of your headlights when approaching a mass of Soviets, who would love to wade into your units in Move Mode. Approach a Soviet mass such as Stalingrad in Combat Mode . . . very carefully.

- Surround and starve. This is your key to the OCS—an ideal game is to ONLY have to spend Movement Supply, not Combat Supply. Particularly as you advance into the Caucasus, you can encircle nearly every force the Soviets put together. Encircle, park and conduct maintenance on your vehicles as you listen to the wails of hunger from within the kessel. In most cases the Russian player is likely to Breakout making this task very cost effective.
- Army Ants. On some of the minor fronts, you can assemble a nice little "Army Ant" force out of Allied nation troops like the Hungarians and other independent units. Our opponent did this to combat our Yalta landing, and to capture the east side of the Kerch Straits and advance to Novorossiysk.

Axis forces surround Soviet units defending the southernmost Maikop Oil Well

- HQ Bridge tactic. Set up hidden "pole-vaulting" HQ units.
- Kill the high AR Soviet units. The only things that can really hurt the German forces are Soviet armor or their 3 & 4 AR units, so they are prime targets whenever you can get at them. Hunt down and kill the Soviet cavalry and armor.
- Friends and Family. As the German, never have less than three steps in a hex, certainly not less than two. If you have a guy sitting out there by himself, he looks like a target. He is a target.
- You know this, but "The Hammer" (moving second in a turn) REALLY matters. Not just because can fly ALL your planes in your turn and they come back up at the start of your turn. It might enable a knockout blow.
- Conversions. Optimize the rail conversion effort to be as efficient as possible. You can Strat Move conversion units into position well in advance of the railhead and then convert backwards to meet another set coming forward.

- Did I mention Supply discipline? You must be very conservative in burning supply. Don't go all Russian in your barrages or fuel mobile units without absolutely needing to.
- Win the Economic War. The German starts the game with an average of 10 SPs per turn. By late Sept 1942, with all the Maikop wells and the oil engineer in place, average supply increases to 11. If you can secure all the Grozny wells the SPs average moves to 12. That is an average of 2 SP's additional per turn. Capturing the wells means that at the same time the Soviets drop two columns on the supply table from an average of 18 SPs to 14. This can make a big difference in the second part of the campaign. The Russians should not forget to garrison those three critical RR hexes situated on the Volga River, south of Stalingrad; D52.30, D51.30 & D51.31. When these three rail hexes fell, the Soviet supply net gets disrupted further.
- Transport Assets. In one game, the German had every Axis Truck operating in the Caucasus except five which were stationed as a response and could become an Emergency Extender, and two for local movement near Stalingrad. He also found he needed a Wagon Extender near Serafimovich to supply the units holding the Don. At Tscherskaya he planted an HQ ready to help along the Don. Every other Truck was moving supply into the Caucasus. Many of the Wagons also were sent there for local movement.
- 49th Mountain HQ. This is the one with a Leg-move Throw Range. Very useful unit, particularly in difficult terrain.

The Axis player will have his fun. Yours comes later and the revenge is all the sweeter for the delay. Good luck, Comrade!