



HELL FREEZES OVER - THE RUSSIAN FRONT





WEIRD WAR TWO: THE RUSSIAN FRONT™

BY THE EVIL POLISH BROTHERS

(DAVID M. NIECIKOWSKI, JOHN P. NIECIKOWSKI, EDWARD F. NIECIKOWSKI)

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL & EDITING BY JOHN R. HOPLER

CONCEPT AND ADDITIONAL MATERIAL BY SHANE LACY HENSLEY

COVER BY CHRIS APPEL

LOGOS BY CHRIS APPEL

INTERIOR ART BY SCOTT DROUIN

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HEADERS, FOOTERS, AND GRAPHIC DESIGN BY CHRIS LIBEY

EDITING AND LAYOUT BY JOHN HOPLER

COVER DESIGN BY ZEKE SPARKES

AUTHOR'S DEDICATION: TO OUR POLISH ANCESTORS AND THE POLISH PEOPLE, WHO ENDURED RUSSIAN AND GERMAN OCCUPATION IN THE 1800'S AND TWO DEVASTATING WORLD WARS, AND COMMUNIST OCCUPATION IN THE 20TH CENTURY.

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Prologue

The snow-covered forest reminded Captain Georgi Sobelnsky of a Snegurochka glass ball his father gave him on Christmas when he was ten years old. It was a magical item at that age and he would violently shake it just to watch the snow fall on the tiny meadow with the pretty little snow maiden in it. But that time seemed like ages ago. Pulling his white, quilted jacket close to his body, he spat on the ground and cursed the day the Germans invaded his country.

Shifting his weight in the saddle he glanced over his shoulder at Commissar Mikova and his Siberian companion. The little man with Eskimo-like features was dressed in some sort of Siberian ceremonial garb, which included a drum, baton, apron, numerous pendants, caftan, soft headdress, and a staff. How the man stood the cold of the most brutal winter in 150 years was a mystery. Georgi turned his horse and trotted over to the pair.

"Well Comrade Commissar, are you enjoying our little outing," Georgi said as he placed the butt of his Tommy gun on his thigh.

Mikova grinned. "At least we are better off than the Germans outside of Moscow."

Georgi could see that the Commissar was a city boy. The skin on the young

man's face was blistering because of the extreme cold. He pulled a tin from the right pocket of his jacket and tossed it to Mikova. "Put some of this on your face."

Mikova twisted the top off the tin and smelled the paste inside. "Ugh." He turned his head and wrinkled his nose in disgust.

"Your choice, but the scars the cold leaves on a man's face last a life time. I'd hate see that pretty face of yours ruined."

Mikova rolled his eyes in disapproval then started to apply the lard-like salve to his face.

"One of your scouts returns," the Siberian said, speech thick with his native accent.

Georgi glanced over his shoulder at the path and saw no one. Moments later a scout rounded a bend in the forest trail. Georgi gave the Siberian an uneasy look.

The scout pulled his horse to halt. "An SS detachment has taken up a defensive position in a village about 2 kilometers north of here."

Georgi scratched his thick black beard. "What the hell are they doing so far out here?"

Mikova pulled a map out. "Did you see any insignias Private?"

"I believe they are elements from Das Reich."



Mikova handed the tin of salve back. "Das Reich was last reported near Kaluga." He paused, then quickly folded the map. "My friend and I need to see these Germans up close."

The 50 men under Georgi's command glanced at each other in apprehension.

"That may be a bad idea Comrade Commissar."

Mikova became annoyed. "And why is that Captain?"

"Some of these men have families in that village. Our presence could accelerate the situation and cause the Germans to act rash."

"They will kill those people," Mikova flatly stated.

"Yes. But it is almost night and the village is warm and has ample supplies of food, so the Germans will take comfort before they begin their dirty deeds," he looked at his men. "I think tonight the Nazis should have nightmares."

The men smiled and Mikova raised an eyebrow toward the Siberian, who acknowledged the plan with a nod.

Wooden buildings dotted the gently sloping glen, split in half by a frozen stream. Small gardens, fields and a pasture filled the rest of the area. In the middle was the village. Sentries patrolled on the outer edge of the settlement. Georgi crawled away from the tree line and joined his comrades.

"They've locked up the villagers in the largest barn," a private handed him a bottle of Vodka and hard jerky. "But there is something odd going on in there."

"How so," Mikova asked.

"There is a strange, but faint green glow coming from it."

The shaman began placing objects down on the snow in a pattern.

Georgi took a big swallow, then tore a chunk of jerky off. "What's he up to?"

"It's for good luck Captain."

Georgi eyed the Commissar. "Sure." He took another drink then motioned for a man to get the sergeant. "Wonderful war we have here. Eh, *Commissar*?" He overemphasized the word Commissar.

Mikova looked at the Georgi with narrow eyes. "So what outfit were you with before you became a partisan?"

"6th Cavalry Corps."

"General Pavlov was your commander?"

"If you want to call him a commander."

Mikova grinned. "Well he paid for his failures."

Georgi took a swig. "Should have shot him sooner. Might have saved some lives."

"You don't like Commissars, do you Captain?"

He held the bottle of vodka up. "When we were trapped in the Smolensk pocket the thing we needed the most was ammunition. So what does STAVKA send us? Vodka. Cases and cases of vodka. So, excuse me if I am a little bitter. Nothing sobers a man to the facts of war than seeing desperate men slaughtered while charging tanks with Molotov cocktails."

Mikova picked up a bottle and took a long drink. "I was at the siege of Kiev."

Georgi smirked. "To fallen comrades."

They touched bottles, then drank.

Georgi looked at his watch, then up at the night sky. The moon was full, but partly obscured by clouds. Commissar Mikova tapped him on the shoulder.

"What are we waiting for?"

"1:30. The Germans rotate their sentries at 2 AM. We have found that they are sleepy around this time." He glanced down at his watch again. "Close enough." He signaled for the attack to begin. "So, Commissar, what is so important about *these* Germans?"

"State secret Comrade."

Georgi cocked his Tommy gun. "And the Siberian?"

"He will observe."

Georgi didn't like Mikova's answer, but he knew arguing with the man would be a waste of time. He had learned the hard way that political officers had agendas of their own. His job was to keep his men alive; should the Commissar prove to be a liability, a stray bullet would fix that problem. One advantage of working so far from the lines was lack of accountability. As far as STAVKA was concerned, results were all that mattered.

Long, silent minutes passed as the scouts worked their way toward the sentries. Georgi glanced over at Mikova and noticed the man's gaze was transfixed on the large barn. Suddenly flares burst into the air, gunfire erupted, and the thump of exploding grenades broke the silence of the night. Georgi leapt to his feet and screamed the order to charge. From the woods, forty horsemen broke into the open ground.

Georgi ran for his horse as mortars rained shells in advance of the horsemen. MG-34s sprang to life, their murderous fire tearing a hole in the partisan advance. These were quickly silenced by sniper fire from the scouts. Georgi broke into the open, Tommy gun in one hand, a sword in the other. More flares flew into the air. Mortar shells leveled a number of small houses at the edge of the village. Half-dressed Nazis piled out from other





Prologue

buildings and many were cut down by machinegun fire from the horsemen.

In the shadowy light of the flares and burning buildings, Russian and Germans engaged in brutal hand-to-hand combat. Many of the partisans carried swords and they quickly hacked their way through the first line of Nazis. As the battle rolled into the center of the village, German halftracks put up a wall of machinegun and 37mm cannon fire, tearing the flesh from both horse and men. From rooftops, scouts tossed Molotov cocktails onto the Germans, breaking up the counterattack.

Georgi galloped into the village and urged his men to finish the job. His eye caught the movement of Germans on his left and he spun his horse, Tommy gun blazing. The Nazis, caught in the open, died instantly. A grenade exploded near his horse, and Georgi could not leap away from the crippled beast as it toppled over. Hitting the ground, Georgi had the wind knocked from his lungs. Gasping for air, he tried to free himself.

Pausing to catch his breath, Georgi noticed a German officer opening the double doors to the large barn. From the structure, the villagers emerged. His men, concerned for the well-being of the villagers, slowed their fire. The Germans took advantage of the lull and retreated. Sensing the escape of their prey, the partisans moved forward. As they did, the villagers moved to intercept them.

What Georgi saw next turned his stomach. The villagers, moving in a machine-like manner, attacked. They grabbed the nearest soldiers, forced them to the ground, and began to tear flesh from the screaming men. Georgi cried out in terror and desperately tried to free himself from his dead horse. The Germans halted their retreat and waited for soldiers to break free from villagers. When one did, he was quickly shot dead.

Georgi swung his Tommy gun toward the villagers and cut down men, woman and children. His eyes filled with tears as he did. Rifle fire pelted the ground around his horse. He tossed a grenade in the direction of the Germans, but it fell well short.

Out of the darkness a huge white creature tore into the Nazis. Legs, arms and heads flew into the air. The Germans screamed in terror and tried to run, but the creature was incredibly quick. It roared in pleasure, killed all the Nazis, and then turned its attention on the villagers.

From behind Georgi heard a strange chant and the banging of a hand drum. Out of the shadows Mikova crawled. "You are safe now Comrade."

Georgi blankly nodded. "What the hell is going on?"

"Nazi blood magic."

Georgi stared at the Commissar in disbelief. "This must be a dream."

"It is not my friend." Mikova peeked his head out from behind the horse and yelled. "Comrades! The creature is our friend. Do not shoot it or it may mistake you as the enemy."

After the creature killed the Germans, it went after the villagers. Assisted by sniper fire, the situation was quickly brought under control. Georgi shook his head at the carnage. Horses, legs shot off, whined and rolled around the ground in agony. Wounded German and Russian soldiers groaned in pain and some slowly died where they lay. The villagers, some of them without limbs, continued to struggle toward the living. They were quickly killed by a shot to the head by the handful of partisans still alive. Out of the darkness the Siberian appeared. He commanded the creature to lift the horse off of the Captain.

Georgi stared at the white, 12-foot tall, hairy ape-like creature in awe. "What is it?"

"A Yeti," Mikova said as he lit a cigarette. "Impressive wouldn't you say?"

Georgi stood up and rubbed his bruised leg, then walked toward the dead villagers. "These poor people. What did those damn Nazis do to them?"

Mikova followed Georgi. "We knew the Germans were experimenting with raising the dead, but we had no idea they were so far along."

Georgi turned and stared at the Commissar in disbelief. "You're serious?"

Mikova nodded. "Unfortunately, yes."

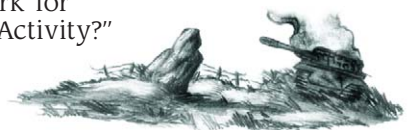
The Yeti roared an alarm. The Siberian came over to the Georgi and Mikova and pointed toward the porch of the general store. "Blood mage."

The SS man, with staff in one hand, put his cap on, clicked his heels and gave the Russians a Nazi salute. "We shall meet again Shaman," he yelled in Russian. Then he tapped the staff on the porch and disappeared.

Georgi shook his head and rubbed his eyes in disbelief. Taking a deep breath, he turned to the Commissar. "Who are you?"

Mikova let the crackle of burning wood and the sharp crack of pistol fire fill the pause before his answer.

"Well Captain, my name is Boris Mikova and I am a Commissar, but I am not with the NKVD. I like how you and your men operate. We could use a man of your talent. How would you like to work for the Soviet Office of Paranormal Activity?"





Chapter One:

Comrades in Arms

"Kill a German, kill him soon—and anytime you see one, kill him."

—poem from Konstantin Simonov

Any discussion of events in Russia is best titled, "A History of Misery." From the first skirmishes the native tribes had with Viking explorers, to the boyars (Russian nobles) fighting amongst themselves to see who could have the honor of surrendering to the Mongols (for their troubles, the "lucky" nobles had a wooden platform built on top of them and were crushed to death while the Mongol chieftains celebrated on top of them), to the scorched earth policy carried out by Russian generals as they retreated in front of Napoleon's armies, the common Russian people have suffered repeatedly at the hands of foreign invaders and their own leaders. World War II was no different. Millions were killed by the German invaders, but millions more were killed or dislocated by Stalin's policies.

In comparison to the Western Allies, Russia did most of the fighting in World War II for 8 out of every 10 German soldiers killed were slain by a Russian. When looking at all the countries involved, Russia, without a doubt, suffered the most in terms of loss of human life and property damage. Out of a total prewar population of 193 million, it is estimated that the Russians had 7.7 million dead or missing military personnel

by the end of WWII, twice as many as the Germans, and a huge amount compared to America's 405,399 deaths. There are conflicting statistics, but around 5 million soldiers were wounded and 13.6 million Russian civilians died.

Some might argue that Russia was just as evil as Germany but one cannot entirely blame either population for the ruthless acts of dictators Stalin and Hitler. Sadly, the Russian people were suffering even before the war, when the paranoid Stalin had millions killed so that no one would question his authority. Although widely announced during the war, the threat of punishment or death for retreating or not cooperating, fighting, or meeting production quotas was mostly unnecessary in central Russia, but it was needed in the satellite states populated by people forced into the Russian empire in the previous two hundred years. Regardless, whether they fought out of patriotism or fear, the Russians faced extermination at the hands of the Nazis. The people of Russia are heroes because they devoted what little property and money they had, their sons and daughters, their labor and their own lives, to not only save Mother Russia but a world in which they could not share its freedom.

Ivans

"[The Russian soldier is]willing, undemanding, suitably trained and equipped, and above all brave and endowed with a self-sacrificing devotion to duty."

This quote from a German officer was rarely true from 1941 to 1942. During the last six months of 1941, Russian soldiers, referred to as "Ivans" by the Germans, fought with old rifles with which they were poorly trained and which were in short supply. Prior to Stalingrad, January 1943, troops from worker and peasant backgrounds were often hastily thrown into combat with little training to try and stop the German advance. Some marginally better trained troops, formerly stationed in the East to defend against a possible Japanese attack that never came, were sent to Moscow in the fall of 1941 to participate in the first Russian Winter Offensive. Regardless of the situation, according to German Field Marshal Ewald von Kleist, "The [Russian] men were first-rate fighters from the start. They became first-rate soldiers with experience."

Although the Russians at first lacked weapons and ammo, the Russians did not lack manpower. The Russian High Command (Stavka) knew this and was not afraid of spending this resource freely to slow the German advance. Frontal attacks, otherwise known as human wave assaults, were often implemented by Russia's inexperienced officers. They didn't learn to remove this costly, and often ineffective, attack from standard practice until 1944.

Russian Officers

The Great Purge ordered by the paranoid Stalin began in 1937. It resulted in the death of almost half of the Russian officer corps, some 35,000 experienced officers, including most of Russia's experienced generals. Many of the remaining 35,000 officers, mostly of lower rank, were killed during the first six months of the war. Some were shot by their assigned commissar for not following orders or failing in their assigned tasks.

By the end of the war, over 1 million officers had lost their lives and another million had been wounded. The officer corps was so in need of new blood that by the summer of 1941 thousands of former "spies" detained during the Great

Terror were released from Siberian labor camps. (Non-officers were also released but only into penal regiments that cleared German minefields.) It wasn't until after Stalingrad, January 1943, that the officer corps improved in both experience and quantity.

Gender

Women won equal rights after the Revolution but had to labor both as mothers *and* alongside men as factory workers. With so many men fighting on the front, women were vital to the war effort as factory workers, munitions manufacturers, and civil defense workers. Construction "brigades" were also formed that rebuilt factories, roads, and railroad stations. Malinovskaya summed up her wartime efforts in this way, "...the fascists bombed us. My two little girls were killed. I am avenging my daughters by my work."

Unique to Russia, women also served in the military as partisans, infantrymen, snipers, and pilots. However, there were no female military officers.

Pilots

Russia lost 7,500 aircraft and thousands of Red Air Force pilots in the first 3 months of the war. In 1942, three all-women Red Air Force regiments were created and served over Stalingrad, Kursk, and the western advance toward Berlin. In September 1942, Valerya Khomyakova became the first woman in air warfare history to shoot down an enemy plane. The top female ace, Lydia Litvak, achieved 12 air-to-air kills before dying in action in 1943.

One female regiment was called the "Night Witches." They were a night bomber regiment that flew around 24,000 night missions. Most of these missions were flown in obsolete PO-2 aircraft, relics from 1927 made of wood and canvas that could only reach a maximum speed of 60 mph. Despite the planes' slow speed, their mostly non-metallic construction often allowed them to escape enemy radar and approach the target undetected.

The intrepid female pilots learned to run these old crates silently. Just before approaching a target, a pilot turned off the engine and glided in, dropping light bombs or hand grenades. They created more of a nuisance than actual damage. However, they affected the readiness and morale of the German troops by causing a loss of sleep and a sense of paranoia that they could be attacked at any time without warning.



Russian Uniforms

Until after Stalingrad, the first Red Army infantry "uniforms" consisted of a tunic or greatcoat, belted over the soldier's pants. "Backpacks" often consisted of canvas or cloth tied off in way that served as shoulder bags. Puttees and ankle boots were used during boot shortages. The soldier had to make do with flannel straps wrapped around the feet and ankles instead of socks. Caps were worn in the summer, with earflaps in the winter. Steel helmets were not available until later in the war. Felt boots, *valenki*, and camouflaged, white cotton, quilted uniforms, *telogreika*, were added in the winter.

Around the time of Stalingrad, the issuance of khaki cotton shirts and breeches also became more common. After Kursk in July 1943, "Guard" uniforms and designations were reintroduced from the old Tsarist days as a way of enhancing morale. Officers proudly displayed epaulets, sashes, ribbons, and gold braid on their once drab officer uniforms. Some officers wore blue breeches with a red stripe and single breasted tunics.

Russian tankers wore khaki overalls with black cloth helmets. The cloth helmets were later replaced in 1942 with padded leather helmets. Cavalrymen wore lambs wool caps called *papakha*.

Food

Hot food for the Russian soldier was a rarity on the front line. When it was available, it mostly consisted of tea and cabbage soup. Common everyday food was cold, made up of cold, cooked grain, hardtack, and salted fish. In addition to daily food rations, soldiers also received a 100cc. tot of vodka to ease their nerves and fight the cold. Grain diets became the norm.

However, if the soldier or a family could afford the asking price, the black market could supplement rationing with scarce butter, vegetables, bread, coffee, and fruits. Shellfish, fine wines and venison were only available to the very rich.

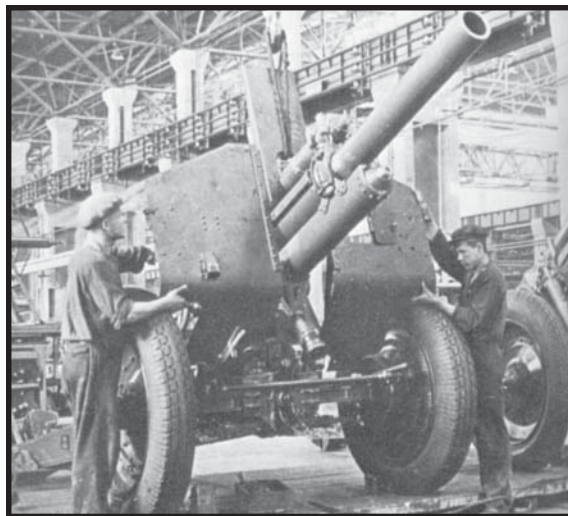
Needless to say, supplementing rations in this way was frowned on by the commissars (although the less ideologically pure could be convinced to look the other way if the food was shared with them). Being found guilty of black-marketeering often resulted in the death penalty.

Hitler's Orders

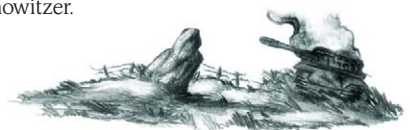
To help achieve his goals of depopulation, Hitler told his generals that neither the Rules of War of the Hague Convention or the Geneva Convention's treatment of prisoners would have to be followed since Russia had not signed these agreements. In May 1941, Hitler issued two orders, the Commissar Decree and the Barbarossa Jurisdictional Decree. The Commissar Decree stated, "Commissars of the Red Army are not to be recognized as prisoners of war and are to be liquidated." The Barbarossa Jurisdictional Decree made it legal for German soldiers to mistreat or kill Russian civilians without fear of prosecution under rules of military conduct. Commanders were encouraged to take "collective violent measures," and if necessary, destroy an entire village's population if one of its members attacked a German soldier. Hitler justified the decrees to his army, navy and air force commanders:

"The war against Russia will be such that it cannot be conducted in a knightly fashion. This struggle is one of ideologies and racial differences and will have to be conducted with unprecedented, unmerciful, and unrelenting harshness. I insist absolutely that my orders be executed without contradiction. The commissars are the bearers of ideologies directly opposed to National Socialism [Nazism]. Therefore the commissars will be liquidated. German soldiers guilty of breaking international law. will be excused."

By the end of the war, some 13.6 million civilians within Russia were dead.



Russian workers assemble a 122mm howitzer.



Stalin's Orders

To try and turn the tide of German victories, Stalin issued two orders. Order No. 227, issued on July 18, 1941, forbade Russian commanders from retreating or face possible execution at the hands of NKVD machine gunners. Order No. 270, issued on August 16, 1941, forbade Red Army soldiers from being taken prisoner or risk being branded a traitor and having food rations for their family reduced.

Communist Bureaucracy

At the local and regional levels of the Communist bureaucracy, there are so many positions available that it makes capitalist bureaucracy look like a high school student council meeting. This is due to the fact that there is no private enterprise in a Communist government. Everything is owned by the State and, therefore, must have someone "elected" by the local Communist Party organization, or appointed by the elected, to administrate it.

Positions worth mentioning at the local level are administrators known as the Soviets of Working People's Deputies. Deputies directed the work of the organs of administration subordinate to them, ensured the maintenance of public order, the observance of the laws and the protection of the rights of citizens, directed local economic and cultural organization, and developed and drew up the local budgets. Unfortunately, once elected, some Deputies used lack of choice ("elections" were often limited to one candidate and only candidates from the Communist Party), corruption, and intimidation to maintain their positions, with the hope of some day rising to national prominence within the Politburo, Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, or the Soviet of People's Commissars. However any inefficiency, incompetence, or disloyalty to Stalin eventually drew the attention of higher-ranking communists who either relieved the government worker of his or her duties, sent him to the Gulags, or declared him a traitor and executed him. These accusations, whether factual or fictitious, often came from subordinate Communists who were encouraged at the national level to uphold loyalty to Stalin. The norm was that so long as production quotas were met and the people proclaimed the greatness of Stalin, a Communist official could enjoy a more comfortable living than the workers who were supposedly his or her equal.

Soviet Office of Paranormal Activity (SOPA)

By 1934, Stalin had killed or exiled many of his old Bolshevik comrades to become the unchallenged leader of both party and state. During the Great Purge of 1937-1938, anyone with independent thought was assassinated, executed, tortured and/or slandered for fear they might lead a coup or opposition movement. By 1938, 8 to 13 million Russians had lost their lives and millions more were sent to Gulags in Siberia. As a result, and to their dismay, the Sons of Solomon no longer had a presence in Russia except through a US or UK diplomat. In fact, Stalin is on the short list of possible candidates who may become the Beast.

Felix Ivanov

The Sons of Solomon were under the impression that no one from their secret order lived through the Great Purge. However, one late middle-aged archeologist/geologist by the name of Felix Ivanov betrayed the Sons of Solomon oath of secrecy in order to be released from the Gulags. Soon after the German invasion of Poland, SOPA was created when Ivanov appealed directly to Stalin's superstitious streak and very real fear of Hitler's attempts to master and obtain arcane magic and artifacts. If the Sons of Solomon learn that Felix is still alive and of his betrayal, his assassination will be ordered.

Felix is never alone, however, since a young, loyal, Stalinist commissar, Simeon Golemanski, is always at his side, acting as Stalin's eyes and ears. Not fully trusting Ivanov, Stalin has made it clear that if anything should happen to Golemanski, he would meet the same fate. Despite this threat, and knowing that he can never show his face publicly or face the wrath of the Sons of Solomon, Ivanov has resigned himself to serve Stalin loyally and has formed a good working relationship with Golemanski.

As reports of Nazi weirdness turn from a trickle between 1939 and 1941 to a flood after Barbarossa, Golemanski has privately realized that Communist doctrine must be temporarily suspended on occasion to meet SOPA's goals:



1. Save the Motherland from military and supernatural defeat.
2. Obtain arcane knowledge, especially rune magic and supernatural artifacts and treasure.
3. Kill or capture Nazi blood mages.

Breaking the Sons of Solomon tradition at Stalin's command, Ivanov and Golemanski want to gather and catalogue all possible arcane knowledge. Both believe, perhaps naively, that it will be put to good use to protect Mother Russia from current and future danger. Who knows, however, how this knowledge will be used during the Cold War. To further this goal, like the spy network that obtained secrets on the American Manhattan Project, SOPA has OSI informants based in America and Britain.

A Slow Start

From 1939 to summer 1941, only Stalin knew of SOPA's existence. It consisted of only 3 people: Ivanov, Golemanski, and a female secretary named Svetlana Maxkov. Even the NKVD (secret police) was unaware of its existence. During this time, the sole purpose of SOPA was to advise Stalin on any supernatural threats to Russia. They read copies of all memos and reports from Communist factions based in Europe, Southeast Asia, and the Americas. Unfortunately, little information was gleaned since none of these Communists actually worked for SOPA.

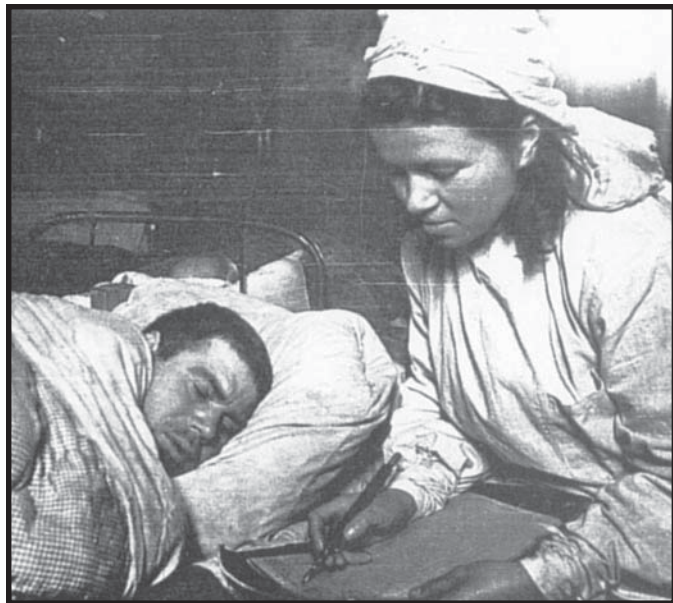
This changed after Barbarossa when reports from survivors caught behind enemy lines or who witnessed Einsatzgruppen atrocities led by blood mages were forwarded to the SOPA office. Soon after these reports, Stalin permitted Golemanski to be present during his commander level "cabinet" meetings. During these meetings, Stalin passes Golemanski off as a personal aide and even requests his presence at future meetings with Churchill and Roosevelt. Golemanski knows his part well and only listens, communicating to Stalin in whispers as if he is passing on "just received" information.

SOPA and OSI activity at these conferences between the world leaders is at a fever pitch, as each side tries to determine what the other knows about the supernatural threats posed by Hitler. These meetings can serve as ideal cloak-and-dagger type adventure settings for both Russian and Western characters. Perhaps they have to work together to stop a supernatural assassin dispatched to kill the world leaders.

SOPA Recruitment

SOPA is much smaller at the start than the OSI, but makes up for it by the end of the war in arcane knowledge acquisition and experience. In a sense, SOPA is like the Red Army, which engaged and killed more Germans than all the other Allies combined. So too, does SOPA engage more blood mages operating out of hedgehogs (fortified towns and cities), concentration camps, and secret bases in the path of the Red Army's post-1942 advance. It is SOPA that foils the Nazi's vampire plans and first learns of the Nazi's Hollow World Nation.

Like the OSI, SOPA recruits personnel who have witnessed Nazi supernatural activities. However, it is not enough to just have witnessed the event. Heroes must have taken action to defeat the weirdness without reports of cowardly behavior. From Barbarossa to the beginning of Stalingrad, Golemanski personally handles all SOPA recruitment. After the fall of 1942, Golemanski delegates recruitment to high-ranking operatives, perhaps even to player characters. Contact is either made in person where the event took place, so that more facts can be gathered, or possible recruits are flown SOPA headquarters in Moscow in cases where the weirdness took place in areas under Nazi control. Occasionally, as described in the Prologue, contact is made following a successful joint mission with surviving Red Army or partisan troops.



A SOPA agent, disguised as a nurse, takes the story of a soldier attacked by Nazi reanimants.



Chapter One

SOPA Clergy

Russia's Communist government is officially atheist. However, SOPA began an unofficial alliance with the Russian Orthodox Church in the fall of 1941, when Nazi weirdness in Leningrad brought the two groups together. Since then, SOPA has taken every opportunity to keep the Russian Orthodox Church informed. This non-Stalinist approach of sharing knowledge immediately pays off later when the Russian Orthodox Church sends gifted clergymen to SOPA in the beginning months of 1942. This alliance is one of the reasons that Stalin eventually allows the Orthodox Church to appoint a new Metropolitan.

Prior to 1942, there are no clergy present in the ranks of SOPA. Players who wish to play one of these character types may, but they must keep their powers well-hidden to avoid persecution.

SOPA Strategy

Like their OSI counterparts, SOPA personnel are bound to secrecy and must not reveal any arcane knowledge or face death. However, OSI and SOPA differ in one area, SOPA does not attempt to suppress witnesses of supernatural occurrences. Drawing on the Russian peoples' more superstitious tendencies, SOPA effectively uses these occurrences as demonstrations as to why the Nazis must be defeated. Propaganda writers stress that the evil Nazis are working with the devil and witches.

For the first two years of the war, most SOPA missions are carried out under covert situations or under the pretense of a special investigation unit sent from Moscow. As described in the Prologue, joint missions may be carried out with platoons of Red Army or partisan soldiers who have no idea that they are about to experience some weirdness.

After Kursk, Golemanski convinces Stalin to create a SOPA Battalion of 500 men and women made up of proven and battle hardened officers and troops who have experienced the supernatural. It is this battalion that is called upon to liberate concentration camps and assault centers of Nazi supernatural activity; specifically Hitler's Bunker, Vlad's castle, and the Nazi's Hollow World Nation.

Golemanski is always present as an advisor during battalion missions. He also assigns experienced SOPA personnel to assist. Due to injuries he sustained while in the Gulags, Felix rarely leaves his Moscow office.

Eastern Front Characters

As is to be expected, heroes on the Russian Front have a variety of new skills, feats, and character classes available to them. Let's take a look.

New Skills

We've got a handful of new skills for use in defense of the *rodina*.

Ammo and Explosive Manufacturing (Int; Trained Only)

Unlike the Germans, Russia immediately mobilized its entire population toward the war effort. (Germany wouldn't start making greater demands on its civilians until 1944, but by then it was too late.) Using state provided raw materials and small, mobile hand-operated machines, civilians, partisans, and soldiers not on duty worked around the clock to provide essential ammunition and explosives. It was a patriotic affair that helped turn the tide despite having to work in musty cellars, sewers, and caves in such places as Leningrad, Sevastopol, and Stalingrad. For partisans, ammo and explosive manufacturing was essential when raiding alone failed to maintain combat effectiveness.

Check: Obviously, to even attempt manufacturing, depending on the item, the proper equipment and raw materials must be available such as shell casings, empty cartridges (these can be recycled), gasoline, and gunpowder. The DCs listed below are for a half hour's worth of work with proper tools and materials.

Task	DC
6 Molotov cocktails	5
2 small satchel charges	10
1 large satchel charge	10
1 dozen bullets	5
6 artillery shells	7

Retry: Not allowed since failure usually results in damaging the item beyond repair or in an unknown dud or explosion if the skill check roll is a natural 1.

Special: Two people working together can increase their combined production output by 50%. If allowed by the War Master, available enchantments such as *bless weapons* can be cast during the ammo and explosive manufacturing.



Characters

Knowledge: Politics (Cha; Trained Only; Commissars and NKVD only)

This is a required skill for Commissars and NKVD. At every opportunity, party members on the front preached in person, over loudspeakers, or in print the glory of Stalinist Communism and its roots in Leninism and Marxism. The main purpose was to indoctrinate non-Russian born troops and to “encourage” Russian born troops.

In addition, since Communism was Russia's only legal “religion,” civilians and soldiers were reminded with these daily “sermons” that their efforts were for Mother Russia and that only by working together could the Fascists be defeated. Except for the few great military minds that Stalin respected, such as Zhukov, independent thinking was discouraged. Stalin was the boss and it was political suicide (and possibly true suicide) for those who forgot this.

Check: A successful DC of 15 allows Commissars and NKVD to “motivate” Russian soldier NPCs to carry out their orders without the threat of force or imprisonment. Common knowledge that death is the punishment for disobedience is what makes verbalization of the threat of force unnecessary.

Retry: If an order is disobeyed or ignored (e.g., NPCs are running away) a Commissar or NKVD must follow through with a threat of death. Just announcing the threat allows another skill check (DC 15) with a +5 bonus if any disobeying person is used as an example.

Special: A character or NPC may countermand an order with true or bogus political verbiage of their own if his or her skill check beats the skill total of the person who gave the original order. For example, whether it's true or not, a character could mention that just received orders from the Russian high command countermands the order just given. Thus, this skill may prove essential when the players need to circumvent stubborn Commissars on a SOPA mission.

Skiing (Dex)

This skill is used whenever a character uses skis for movement over snow. Traveling over flat packed snow allows double base movement but only half base movement over deep or uneven snow. A skier's Dexterity bonus to Armor Class is halved, rounded down while moving on skis.

New Skills

Skill	Key Ability	Notes
Ammo Manufacturing	Int	Trained only
Knowledge: Politics	Cha	Trained only; Commissars & NKVD req.
Skiing*	Dex	
Winter Survival*	Wis	

*Considered class skills for Red Army Grunts, Medics, Resistance Fighters (Partisans), and Scouts.

New Feats

Feat	Prerequisite
Assault*	Suppressive Fire
Hand-to-Hand Combat*	Improved Unarmed Strike
Tank Immobilization*	None
Katyusha Rocket Proficiency	None
Street Fighting*	40 hours of street fighting experience
Suppressive Fire*	Firearms Proficiency

*These can be taken as Grunt bonus feats.

Weird Feats

Weird Feat	Prerequisite
Below Zero Resistance	Extreme cold
Bullet Proof	War Master's discretion
Propaganda Prophet	War Master's discretion
Vodka Healing	War Master's discretion

Check: Skill checks are usually made under the following circumstances:

Task	DC	Notes
Slope Jumping	15-30	DC depends on the slope and height of the hill.
Sudden turn	10	Usually used to avoid danger or stop.
Downhill	10, 20, 30	Depending on the degree of slope, base movement speed can triple, quadruple, or even quintuple but the DC becomes more difficult.



Chapter One



Firing	15	Failure results in falling. The skier also incurs a -5 to hit penalty.
Moving uphill	10	Speed is reduced to a quarter to half speed.

Retry: Not allowed since failure usually results in a fall and 1d6 points of subdual damage. If the DC roll is a natural 1, the character may a broken bone or concussion at the War Master's discretion.

Special: Every 4 ranks of Skiing provide a +1 synergy bonus to Handle Animals when operating domesticated elk, horse, or dog pulled sleds and sleighs.

Winter Survival (Wis)

For five months of the year (October to March) most of the Russian front was covered in snow. This skill can help a character and his or her comrades avoid starvation, frostbite, hypothermia, and getting lost and freezing to death.

Check: A skilled person can keep him or herself and up to three others safe and fed in winter conditions.

Task	DC	Notes
Winter foraging	10	Check must be made daily.
Construct shelter	10	Protects from frostbite, hypothermia, freezing temperatures, and fatigue due to loss of sleep.
Treat frostbite	15	Must have adequate clothing. Treatment prevents loss of extremity if the victim makes a Fortitude save (DC 15).
Avoid getting lost	12	Especially useful in blizzard conditions.
Detect ice hazards	12	Examples include thin ice and ice covered routes.

Retry: A check can be made every 24 hours or whenever a situation calls for a new check such as when treating a different patient for frostbite, constructing a second shelter, or coming upon a different area covered in ice.

Special: Every 3 ranks of Wilderness Lore provide a +1 synergy bonus on Winter Survival checks. Every 5 ranks of Intuit Direction provide a +1 synergy bonus to avoid getting lost in blizzard/heavy sleet or snow conditions. Every 2 ranks of Combat Medicine provide a +1 synergy bonus to frostbite treatment.

New Feats

We've also got a foot locker full of new feats for would-be heroes.

Assault (General)

There are three major factors that made Russians the masters of the assault by the end of the war. First, up until 1944, poor and uncreative Russian leadership relied on human wave attacks. Second, after 1941, the Russians were mostly equipped with short range sub-machine guns that made long range fire fights difficult. Thus, the Germans had to be engaged at close range. Third, the worst city and street fighting took place on the Eastern Front. Assaulting was often the only way to dislodge fortified and better equipped German positions.

Prerequisite: Suppressive Fire Feat

Benefit: Allows a character attacking with a sub-machine gun to move at half speed toward a target area against which he or she is conducting a full round suppressive fire attack.

Hand-to-Hand Combat (General)

Soldiers occasionally have to resort to more primitive means of attack when assaulted or when they run out of ammo.

Prerequisite: Improved Unarmed Strike

Benefit: Provides a +1 attack bonus to Charge, Bull Rush, and Grappling attacks and a +1 bonus to escape pins. A character also does not provoke an attack of opportunity when making these types of attacks.

Katyusha Rocket Proficiency (General)

A character with this feat has been trained on how to load and fire Katyusha rockets (Germans referred to them as "Stalin's Organs" for the sound they made when fired). See Chapter 2: Ordnance and Equipment for more information.





Characters

Prerequisite: None

Benefit: Katyusha rockets fired without this feat may result in harm to the untrained character or in friendly fire casualties.

Party Member (General)

Your hero is a card-carrying, active member of the Communist Party.

Prerequisite: None

Benefit: Being a member of the Communist Party is a benefit to anyone looking to move up in the Soviet bureaucracy. This feat grants a +2 bonus to Diplomacy checks made to interact with other loyal Communists. It also provides a +2 modifier to all promotion rolls.

Street Fighting (General)

The worst street fighting in modern history occurred on the Eastern Front. A character with this feat has learned techniques that give him or her an edge on surviving future street battles.

Prerequisite: 40 hours of street fighting experience

Benefit: The following benefits apply when the character is engaged in a fire-fight or sneaking within or around buildings and streets such as those found in Stalingrad or Berlin: +1 to Hide, Spot, and Listen checks, +1 AC bonus, and +1 on Reflex checks.

Special: The bonuses do not apply in villages or small towns with few buildings.

Suppressive Fire (General)

A character with this feat can make an improved suppressive fire attack to pin down enemies while their comrades move into flanking positions or make an assault or withdrawal.

Prerequisites: Automatic Weapons Proficiency

Benefit: A character with this feat adds +2 to his suppressive fire check.

Tank Immobilization (General)

A character with this feat is trained at using Molotov cocktails, flamethrowers, explosives, grenades, and anti-tank weapons to target an armored vehicle's suspension.

Prerequisite: Weapon proficiency when applicable.

Benefit: To immobilize an armored vehicle, a character must first hit the target. Then a d10 is rolled on the Vehicle Hit Location table (see page 108, *Blood on the Rhine*) to determine which area of the vehicle was hit. This feat modifies the hit location die roll by -1.

If the weapon used in the attack hits the suspension and overcomes the suspension's Armor Value, then the feat adds +10% to his d100 roll on the Suspension Critical Damage table (see page 107, *Blood on the Rhine*).

Special: This feat may be gained multiple times. Attacks on suspension cannot be made against a vehicle that is in a hull down position in relation to the attacker.

The Russian Winter

Centuries of living in the extreme cold contribute to Russian strength, endurance, patience and a bleak outlook on life. The Russian winter can be encountered in all five of Russia's major climate zones. Starting in the north, extremely cold *tundra* can be found year around with its semi-frozen soil, lichens, mosses, and shrubs. Next comes the largest in land area and least populated of all five zones, the *coniferous forests*. *Mixed forest* and *wooded steppe* continues further south bordering the actual treeless and flat *steppe*. Some snowfall may reach the steppe and the higher elevations of the last climate zone, *semi-desert* and *desert* areas where the rich fertile soil of the steppe gives way to the desert areas of Central Asia.

Year-round winter conditions exist in northern Russia and Siberia. In other areas, the rains come in September, turning the roads and open spaces into quagmires of impassable mud. The first frost comes in late September. Rain turns to snow showers during the first week of October when the temperature begins to plunge, on average down to minus 22° Fahrenheit. Between November and February the temperatures can sometimes fall below minus 50° Fahrenheit. Blizzards were a problem as mentioned in this account near Moscow during the first Russian winter in 1941 by Nazi soldier Harry Mielert:

[After] a few minutes the most well-trodden path and trails are obliterated, whole villages are totally snow-covered, you can't orient yourself on anything...no one can find their way...We are in a terrible situation. Nothing more is to be seen of our trenches...You can only tell where the bunkers are by sighting a straw flag in a pole stuck above them. Every path, every trail is gone within a few minutes."

"Rasputitsa" refers to the great thaw of mid-March, signaling the final days of the Russian winter that finally ends in April. Fed by melting snow, rivers flow quickly. The melting ice also makes the roads become impassably muddy.





Weird Feats

Weird Feats are only available to characters at the War Master's discretion. Weird Feats are beneficial supernatural abilities that may have associated disadvantages. A character may not "discover" that she has a Weird Feat until an unusual circumstance triggers awareness of the feat, perhaps even frightening comrades and/or civilians who witness the event of discovery. Characters with Weird Feats will sooner or later come to the attention of SOPA recruiters.

Below Zero Resistance

Did your hero fall through thin ice and climb out of the freezing water as if it were a warm spring? Ever since this event, does your hero now shun clothing on below zero winter days because he feels too hot? Does your hero now have to worry about heat stroke on days when the temperature is above 40° Fahrenheit?

Prerequisite: Exposure to extreme cold.

Benefit: A character is immune to the damaging effects of the cold. He takes no damage from exposure to extreme cold.

Disadvantage: A character with Below Zero Resistance in moderate weather (40° to 80° Fahrenheit) must make a Fortitude saving throw each hour (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or sustain 1d6 points of subdual damage each failure. In weather conditions above 80° Fahrenheit, the character must make a Fortitude save every 10 minutes (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1d6 points of subdual damage each failed save.

Special: Fortunately, for a character with this feat, arctic conditions exist in Siberia and northern Russia year around. Although against military dress code, a character could venture out into 50° to 60° climates wearing next to nothing.

Bullet Proof

Do bullets bounce off your character during combat?

Prerequisite: War Master's discretion

Benefit: Noncritical hits with bullets or shrapnel less than 20mm harmlessly bounce off the character.

Disadvantage: A character with this feat may develop a false sense of security since bullets or shrapnel 20mm or greater or enchanted bullets do normal damage. In addition, critical hits from less than 20mm bullets and shrapnel do normal damage. All other attacks, such as fire, acid, gas, melee, etc. inflict normal damage as well.

Special: If it comes to their attention, German scientists and blood mages may want to have a word with a character with this ability and try to reproduce the feat in the lab as a drug or spell.

Propaganda Prophet

Using stories of courage, words of encouragement, and even scapegoats, a character with this feat has the uncanny ability to sway all those who can hear him speak.

Prerequisite: War Master's discretion

Benefit: After a speech of at least 2 minutes duration, the character has the power of *mass suggestion* (see page 226 of the *Player's Handbook*) on all those who can hear his words.

Disadvantage: If a character is not careful in what he says or does not pay respect to those in current positions of power or the Communist system, the character may be deemed a threat and killed or imprisoned. The order might even come from Stalin, especially if the character makes a habit of not mentioning the greatness of Stalin.

Vodka Healing

It is modern and historic fact that the consumption of vodka is to Russian culture what baseball and apple pie is to American culture. During the war, vodka was always available even when there were ammo and weapon shortages. Vodka was even used to clean wounds. Perhaps a hero learns of vodka's medicinal effects on his life-threatening wounds after sharing what was suppose to be a farewell drink.

Prerequisite: War Master's discretion

Benefit: Heals 1d6 points of damage per 12 fluid ounces of vodka consumed.

Disadvantage: For each 12 fluid ounces consumed, the character must make a Fortitude save (DC 15 +5 for each additional 12 fluid ounces consumed within an hour beyond the first) or lose Dexterity, Wisdom, and Intelligence modifiers. A failure by more than 10 points results in the player becoming sick and unable to do anything other than lie down or stumble around in a drunken stupor. A failure of more than 15 points results in the player passing out for 3 to 9 hours in a drunken coma.

Special: A player under the influence in combat conditions may aim so badly that his or her attacks strike comrades or may even mistake a comrade for an enemy. Over time, vodka abuse may lead to liver damage, physical addiction, and emotional dependency.





Old Character Classes

There are a number of new character classes available for heroes serving on the Eastern Front. Some are modifications of existing classes and others are entirely new ones. We'll start off by looking at new twists on old classes.

Dog Handler (Grunt, Medic, or Scout)

Like Germany, the United States and Britain, Russia used dogs to guard military installations and the front, deliver messages, pull sleds of ammo, aid in search and rescue, clear mines, and locate hidden enemy positions and explosives. Rescue dogs were trained to lie near a wounded soldier until its dog handler caught-up; the handler often making use of the bandages and dressings carried in the dog's packs. During the winter, dogs vastly improved wounded soldiers' odds of not freezing to death or being lost under falling snow by locating and pulling them on sleds to receive medical attention. Dogs also pulled sleds equipped with machine guns, soldiers on skis, and Russian snipers to critical areas of the front.

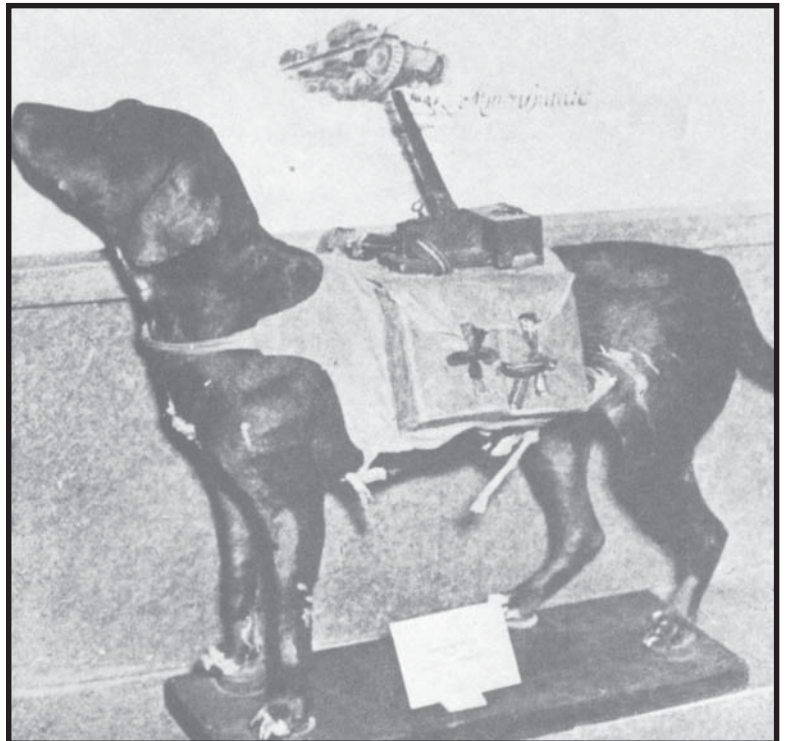
However, one unique and horrific use of dogs by Russia was their training as suicide dogs to blow up Nazi tanks. At least 50,000 dogs were used for this purpose. Suicide dogs were equipped with saddle-like packs of explosives and a trigger that was held in its mouth. During training, half starved dogs ran under tanks and dropped the trigger to eat food that was placed there. Obviously, in combat, there was no food under Nazi tanks and the trigger was "live" resulting in the death of the dog and destruction of the tank. In one day, these canine tank destroyers managed to eliminate 9 Nazi tanks and 2 armored cars. The Germans learned to fear the sound of barking dogs and sometimes turned their tanks and headed back to their own lines.

Dog Handler Specialty Requirements

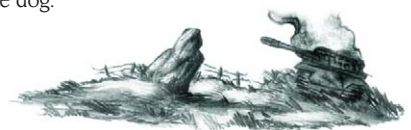
The dog handler specialty isn't a new class. It's actually a new specialty that can be combined with the grunt, medic, and scout classes to give these characters some new abilities.

The dog handler specialty is only available to Grunts, Medics, and Scout character classes. A Grunt dog handler has an ally with a superior set of eyes and ears for use in guard duty and search and destroy missions or who is trained to sniff out mines or explosives. A Medic dog handler has a companion with superior scent that proves invaluable in locating the wounded in even the worst weather conditions. A Scout dog handler is able to send messages from a forward position to a command center more quickly than via a two-legged friend. A team of dogs hooked to sleds can help a unit traverse ice and snow more quickly or lessen the load. Finally, in times of desperation, a Grunt mine dog handler can command his half-starved mobile bomb to change an impending German victory into a rout, saving his comrades.

To become a dog handler specialist, a Grunt, Medic or Scout one must spend the points necessary to acquire at least one rank in the Handle Animal cross-class skill and undergo 4 weeks of crash course training with his or her dog companion. A character is able to issue simple dog commands in Russian such as "heel," "stay," "fetch," and "come" at DC of 5. More difficult commands such as "seek" (mines, explosives, the wounded or "food" under an advancing German tank or



A Russian mine dog.





Class Specialization and Service

Specialization	Service	Primary Weapon ¹	Required Skill	Required Feat
Air Crew	Air Force	TT34	None	None
Airborne ²	Army	PPSh-1941	None	Parachute Proficiency
Artillerist/Rocketeer ³	Army	PPSh-1941	Artillery	Katyusha Rocket Pro.
Combat Engineer/Sapper	Army	PPSh-1941	Demolitions	Flamethrower Pro.
Antitank Team	Army	PPSh-1941	None	Rocket Launcher Pro.
Ground Crew ⁴	Air Force	TT34	Mechanic	None
Infantrymen	Army	PPSh-1941	None	None
Mechanic ⁴	Army	PPSh-1941	Mechanic	Wheeled Vehicle Pro.
Mortar Crewman	Army	82mm BM obr. 37 PPSh-1941	Artillery	Forward Observer
Party Member ⁵	Any	TT34 and/or PPSH-1941	Knowledge (Politics)	Party Member
Pilot	Air Force	TT34	None	Single Engine Aircraft Pro.
Tank Crewman	Army	PPSh-1941	Driving	Tracked Vehicle Pro.

¹ Rifles (Model 1930G) were primarily used in the beginning of the war. By Stalingrad, winter 1942, most troops were outfitted with sub-machineguns (PPSh-1941). Thus, any character created after 1942 begins the game with the Automatic Weapons Proficiency feat due to Russia's heavy use of automatic weapons. Also, the Machinegunner specialty listed in *Blood on the Rhine* (page 25) is not a separate Russian specialty.

² Russia never attempted a paratroop drop again after a failed nighttime attack in the fall of 1943.

³ Artillerist also trained to fire Katyusha rockets.

⁴ In general Russian mechanics and ground crew did not produce, carry, or have access to many spare parts. As a result, mechanics and ground crew often had to strip the best parts from debilitated tanks and planes to service less damaged or worn counterparts.

⁵ Party Member is unique to Russia. Commissars and NKVD security forces must have this specialty.

armored car), "pull" or "return" (deliver message) would require a DC of 5 to 15 depending on combat and weather conditions.

Once the dog handler has finished his training, the Handle Animal skill is treated as a class skill as well as the Animal Empathy skill. The War Master will keep secret or reveal a dog handler's companion's vital statistics at her discretion. In the case of a dog's death, especially dogs of a mine dog handler, characters receive a new dog but do not have to go to "dog school" again. However, command checks given to the new dog are modified by -5 for the first week, -4 for the second week, and so forth until the modifier reaches zero after the 5th week. This modifier represents the time a dog needs to adjust to a new owner after having been either reassigned from training school or a previous dead owner. In *Weird Wars*, it is possible that a dog's spirit could return to help a loving owner or seek vengeance on an abusive, cruel master.

NKVD (Grunt or Officer)

"The German Army in fighting Russia is like an elephant attacking a host of ants. The elephant will kill thousands, perhaps even millions of ants, but in the end their numbers will overcome him, and he will be eaten to the bone."

—Colonel Bernd von Kleist

German reaction went from exultation at the beginning of the war, to disbelief, and then to a certain haunting disquiet at the willingness of the Russian to trade ten lives for one German. This needless sacrifice was achieved in part by Russian security detachments of NKVD machine gunners that prevented unauthorized withdrawals.

Characteristics: An NKVD soldier is recruited to identify subversive and anti-communist elements, to disseminate propaganda, and to use coercion to encourage informants (such as neighbors





Characters

spying on neighbors). An NKVD soldier has no qualms about shooting former comrades who do not follow orders or who question Communist authority. An NKVD soldier can be a member of one of three branches: internal forces, military forces and Smersh.

Background: As far back as Ivan the Terrible in 1565, who used black-clad cavalymen, Russia has had some form of security police. After Lenin survived a British-organized assassination attempt in 1918, Lenin created a police organization named Cheka (All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for the Suppression of Counterrevolution and Sabotage) to combat and punish “spies, traitors, plotters, bandits, speculators, profiteers, counterfeiters, arsonists, hooligans, agitators, saboteurs, class enemies and other parasites.”

In other words, the purpose was to protect Soviet leaders from all domestic and foreign enemies. By 1934, what was once known as Cheka (also known as GPU and OGPU) became to be called NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs). In addition to Cheka's mission, the NKVD was also responsible for supervising detention locations (e.g., Gulags and internment facilities) and monitoring the civilian police. Stalin reorganized Cheka to carry out his assassinations of political enemies.

Genrikh Yagoda served as the head of NKVD on December 1, 1934 after Stalin ordered the assassination of the original Cheka chief. In September 1936, a former Red Army Commissar, Nikolay Yezhov, was appointed and helped carry out Stalin's purges that also resulted in the death of 3,000 NKVD senior officials under Yagoda's tenure, including Yagoda himself. On December 1938, Yezhov was relieved for supposedly letting interrogations go too far. He was replaced by the former head of Georgian (Stalin's native country) secret police, Lavrenty Beria, who served as the head of NKVD throughout the war. Under his tenure the NKVD became an even more powerful and feared security organ.

Soon after taking office, Beria had his former boss, Yezhov, sent to a psychiatric institute, where he was found dead, having hung himself in his room. In 1939, Beria continued Stalin's waning purges in their final year but continued his own purges of any remaining NKVD leadership from the Yezhov and Yagoda eras. Most agents who refused recall back to Moscow were hunted down by

assassination teams and shot. One such team was responsible in 1940 for finding and killing Stalin's chief political rival, Leon Trotsky. They caught up with him in Mexico and killed him with an ice pick.

During the war, Beria became one of Stalin's most important lieutenants in that he and the NKVD were trusted with internal security matters, protecting and monitoring Kremlin leadership, and maintaining Red Army loyalty. Beria and his agents were also responsible for gathering foreign intelligence (espionage) and protecting Soviet diplomats in Britain, Canada, and the United States. It was Beria's agents who stole secrets from the Americans on how to manufacture an atomic bomb. The only one who watched the watchers was Stalin.

To help ensure loyalty in the Red Army, *Smersh* (abbreviated from *smert' shpionam*, meaning “death to spies”) was formed from April 14, 1943 to March 16, 1946 as a separate agency under the State Committee of Defense. Headed by Stalin, its purpose was to kill or imprison any Red Army soldiers or officers who even thought of defection or not serving the Motherland to their fullest. Smersh officers had supremacy over regular NKVD internal and military forces.

Even before the start of the war, there were at least 8 million men and women in the Gulags who had to work 10 to 16 hours daily under harsh Siberian weather, with little food and brutal guards. NKVD operated internment facilities outside of Moscow that were filled with scientist and engineer prisoners forced to design and invent under sentences of death if they did not cooperate.

NKVD internal forces did not fight in battles but focused on counterespionage and prison monitoring and transportation. There were about 250,000 Gulag guards alone. Internal forces were also responsible for relocating whole populations of ethnic groups (e.g., Chechens) deemed Nazi sympathizers to Central Asia.

Using machine guns placed behind Red Army human wave assaults, NKVD military forces prevented unauthorized withdrawals but this practice was nearly eliminated from 1943 to 1945. In June 1941, there were 58 NKVD combat regiments organized into 15 divisions made up of about 100,000 men. NKVD military rifle, cavalry, convoy, and rear security units took part in almost every major battle, including the defense of Moscow, Stalingrad, Leningrad, and the North



Chapter One



Caucasus. Destroyer Battalions were formed in Soviet cities and towns as rear area security to hunt down enemy parachutists and agents. Both internal and military NKVD troops filled an important roll in setting up state security services in "liberated" East European nations. All NKVD units wore uniforms but reported directly to NKVD and not the Red Army high command.

Game Rule Info

Both Grunts and Officers can be members of the NKVD. All the rules that apply to these classes are still in effect with the exception of the differences described below.

War Master's should carefully consider allowing players to make NKVD characters. The players are meant to be heroes, and many actions of the NKVD—machine gunning fleeing troops, interning dissidents, guarding Gulags—are decidedly unheroic. This specialty is presented for the sake of completeness and is probably best left as an NPC class. However, the ethical questions faced by NKVD

characters can lead to some interesting roleplaying opportunities for a mature group.

NKVD Requirements: A starting NKVD soldier must take the Party Member feat and have at least one rank in Knowledge (Politics). All NKVD soldiers gain a +2 bonus to Intimidate checks against non-NKVD soldiers and civilians due to their reputation.

NKVD Class Skill List: The following skills are available as class skills to the Military NKVD branch: Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Demolitions (Int), Driving (Dex), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), *Knowledge (Politics) (Cha), Leadership (Cha), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Search (Int), Spot (Wis) and Swim (Str).

* At least one skill point must be devoted to this required skill.

In addition to the skills above, the following skills are also available as class skills to Smersh and Internal NKVD officers: Bluff (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), and Ride (Dex).

Starting Equipment

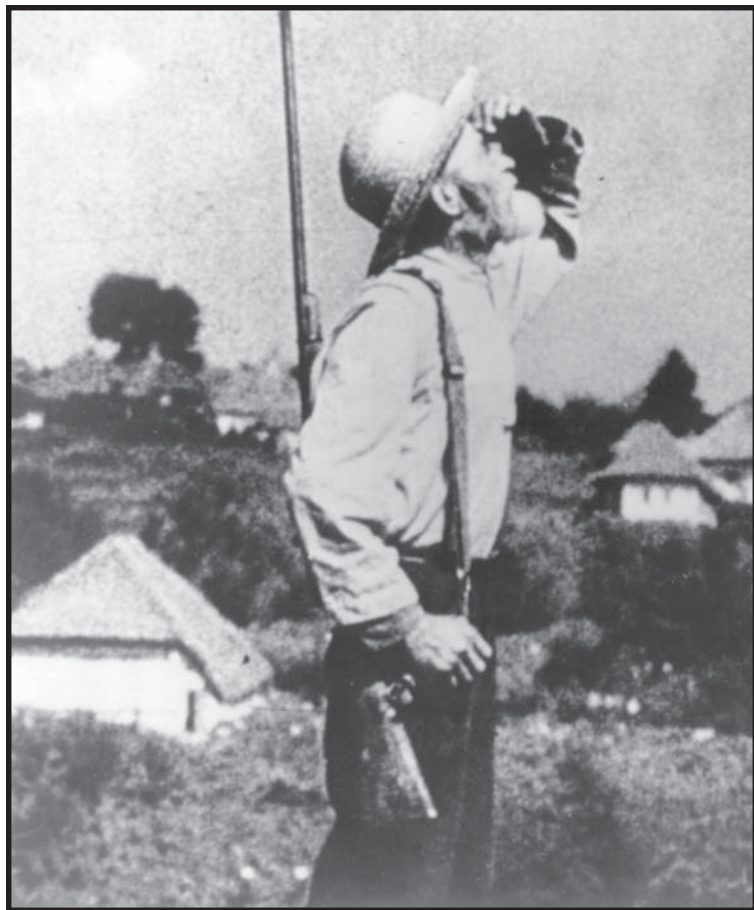
Peaked blue caps, black boots, socks, khaki cotton shirt, khaki breeches, PPSH-1941 and 2 magazines of ammunition.

Partisan (Resistance Fighter)

At first, many civilians in the Ukraine and Belorussia welcomed the Germans as liberators but soon learned that German occupation was worse than life under Communism. The life of a partisan was hard. They often lived in primitive conditions and risked not only their own lives but also those of their friends and relatives to German reprisals.

Characteristics: Partisans are either civilians or Red Army soldiers of any character class trapped behind enemy lines as a result of the Barbarossa Blitzkrieg (June 22, 1941 to December 1941). Like their Western counterparts, partisans needed to be adept at sneaking. Partisans organized themselves into military units operating away from the comforts of home in nearby marshes, swamps, and forests. Due to more frequent combat situations, the hazards of the environment and threat of starvation, a partisan must have strong Constitution, Strength and Dexterity attributes.

Background: Mostly operating out of the Ukraine or Balkans, an individual, small group, or battalion may carryout any one of the following duties as a partisan:



A partisan keeps tabs on German aircraft movements.





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Gather and Communicate

Intelligence: Partisans observed enemy movements and interrogated captured enemy personnel. Russian Partisans supplied invaluable field intelligence on German positions and movements. The Germans, in contrast, had very little idea what was going on behind the Russian lines and had to make assumptions based on suspect field intelligence.

Escort: Deliver captured enemy personnel to Red Army lines and ensure delivery of supplies and special agents from Red Army supplies to partisan bases.

After building their own airstrips, by 1943, supplies and advisors, such as demolition experts, were flown in to assist partisan groups. Supplies included handheld weapons, explosives, radios, anti-tank guns, mortars, light artillery and printing presses.

Sabotage and Raid: Partisans disrupted communications and transport links (roads, bridges, rail lines) by way of demolition, laying mines, or vandalism. They also stole weapons and food supplies from the enemy.

The geography of the front spread the German armies farther and farther apart as the invasion advanced toward Moscow. This provided partisans the opportunity to harass German flanks. Partisans always situated themselves near German supply networks of roads and rail lines. When moving from their base to another location, partisans learned to hide out in the drier parts of swamps. Forests and swamps provided so many hiding places that entire communities and weapon caches remained hidden from German anti-partisan sweeps. From these locations, partisans destroyed supply depots and bridges, cut telephone and telegraph lines, and derailed trains. Wires were set across roads to topple motorcyclists, tanks parked in the woods were surrounded by fire, and wooden bridge beams were sawed through to collapse when enemy vehicles crossed.

At first there was a lack of radios and arms, especially heavy support weapons. Partisans made use of handmade Molotov cocktails, scavenged battlefields for weapons, and raided German convoys and supply dumps. Eventually the Russian High Command alleviated the lack of vital equipment in some areas with airdrops. Consultants were also sent but many partisans were Red Army soldiers and officers caught too far behind enemy lines.

In terms of food and medical supplies, at times potatoes were hidden and stored in burned out villages. Dead horses were eaten and mushrooms and rowanberries were gathered in the woods. Many suffered from malnutrition and lice and developed scurvy and pellagra. Medical supplies were scarce, wounds were often bound in reused bandages and disinfected with vodka. Sometimes when the wounded could not be carried with them, they were shot to avoid enemy capture.

Harass, Support the Red Army and Attack: Partisans conducted hit and run attacks and assassinated enemy officers and communications personnel. Beginning with Kursk, they timed sabotage and hit and run attacks to coincide with major battles/Russian offensives. They fought alongside Red Army troops during Operation Bagration (June 23, 1944) and beyond (Berlin).

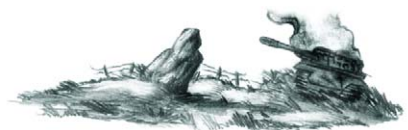
Due to a lack of equipment for the first two years of the war, partisans rarely fought sustained firefights, employing instead surprise hit-and-run tactics. When the equipment shortage was alleviated with the help of Moscow, the partisans actually liberated German controlled villages and towns as the tide turned in 1944.

Moscow recognized partisans as a branch of the Red Army. Some partisan brigades numbered 1,000 strong. Partisan brigade commanders could reach the rank of full colonel and wore the Red Army uniform and insignia when available. Partisan officers were encouraged to reward fellow guerillas for bravery with medals flown in from the home front.

Recruit: Partisans visited local villages to recruit all able-bodied men, women, and children and to execute any German collaborators.

Not all locals helped partisans with food or shelter for fear of German reprisal. The Nazis set up gallows in every village and practiced public hangings. One hundred local inhabitants, usually randomly selected, were shot for every German soldier's life lost. In addition, suspected partisans and their supporters were tortured for information before death by having had their fingers broken, soles of their feet burned, or breasts amputated.

Despite German retaliatory efforts, there were at least 30,000 partisans by the end of 1941, 150,000 by the summer of 1942 and over 200,000 by the summer of 1943. The highest concentrations of partisans were encountered by the Germans in the forests and the Pripet Marshes.



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Game Rule Info

Except for some minor changes noted below, Partisans use the same rules as Resistance Fighters. A Red Army soldier who joins a partisan unit out of necessity, choice, or by way of Moscow order, must add the Resistance Fighter as a second class after 3 months of service with or as a Partisan. However, the -20% XP penalty does not apply for uneven levels. After obtaining at least one level as a Resistance Fighter, it is up to the player as to whether to advance his or her character's primary class or the Resistance Fighter class.

Hit Die: d8

Rank: Partisans more often than not had a rank structure, especially groups with Red Army soldiers trapped behind lines or with advisors sent from Moscow.

Cell: A cell may include an entire Partisan squad, platoon, or brigade.

Forged Papers: This skill is less useful on the Russian front since the Germans viewed Slavs as inferior people to be used as slave labor or to be eliminated. Unlike the Western Front, often there was nothing to forge since the peoples of Poland, Yugoslavia, Ukraine, and Belorussia were not allowed to venture forth from their villages (if still standing) and given strict curfews. Money was usually useless, as the economy became barter. However, the conditions in Romania, Czechoslovakia (Slovakia), Bulgaria, Albania, and Hungary were similar to Western Europe in terms of economy and needing papers for movement.

Safe House: Not only may this include friendly houses, but entire villages or hidden partisan bases in nearby forests, marshes, or mountains.

Starting Equipment

Almost any common civilian, German or Russian made weapons. Clothing may be a combination of civilian and Red Army uniforms.

Roll 1d6 on the table below for the character's starting weapon. The hero starts with 3d20 rounds of ammunition for his weapon.

Roll	Weapon
1	Model 1930G
2	PPSH-1941
3	Kar 98K
4	MP40
5	Civilian rifle
6	1-3 Single-barrel shotgun, 4-6 Double barrel shotgun

New Character Classes

The different nature of the fighting on the Eastern Front requires a few new character classes.

Cavalryman

Russian cavalymen are the dashing heroes of the steppes, charging to glory against the German invaders. Despite their archaic nature, the cavalry provided much needed mobility in some of the harsh terrain found inside Russia.

Characteristics: Cavalrymen are trained infantry skilled with using a horse to travel over harsh terrain to reconnaissance, serving as a mobile reserve or engaging German patrols deep behind enemy lines.

Background: Russia was the only nation to have a significant cavalry force; 40 divisions that included a total of 210,000 cavalymen (about 5,000 men and 5,128 horses per division). A Red Army cavalry squad often consisted of a 100 men with heavy, light, and medium machine guns, an anti-tank gun, and light, medium and/or heavy mortars. The small steppe horses could travel 60 miles in a night. Until 1944, when Lend-Lease vehicles were supplied in significant numbers, most supplies and artillery were moved by way of horse.

However, this mobility could not prevent heavy casualties suffered in direct confrontations with armor and heavily armed infantry. For the first 3 months of the war, when the first T-34s were introduced, almost all Russian tanks were obsolete and only assigned as infantry support units. Thus, the cavalry were the only mobile troops in the Red Army and were vital later in the war in traversing Eastern Front marshes, forests, and mountains, terrain that made tank movement slow and sometimes impossible.

Horses also made it possible to move in poor weather conditions that created snow and muddy conditions that often stopped vehicles in their tracks. For example, Siberian ponies can withstand minus 33 degrees Fahrenheit, temperatures that froze the moving parts in vehicles. Horses and their riders were also easier to conceal than their mechanical counterparts. Sappers were at times called upon to clear barbed wire barricades with wire cutters for advancing cavalry.





Characters

Game Rule Info

Abilities: The ability to ride and perform horse related feats depends on Dexterity and is therefore the cavalryman's most important attributes. A character must have at least one rank in Ride Skill and the Mounted Combat Feat to be a cavalryman.

Alignment: Any

Hit Die: d8.

Class Skills

The cavalryman's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Animal Empathy (Cha), Balance (Dex), Handle Animal (Cha), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Knowledge: Nature (Int), Listen (Wis), Ride (Dex), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Use Rope (Dex), Wilderness Lore (Wis), and Winter Survival (Wis).

Skill points at 1st level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4

Skill points each additional level: 4 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the cavalryman.

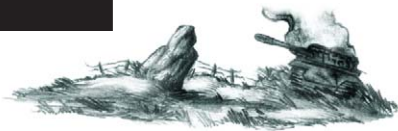
Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: All cavalrymen are proficient with simple weapons, firearms, and light armor.



Russian cavalrymen make a charge.

Bonus Feats: Like grunts, cavalrymen gets bonus feats at 1st level, at 2nd level and then every two levels thereafter that must be selected from the following list: Ambidexterity, Automatic Weapons Proficiency, Combat Reflexes, Expertise (Improved Disarm), Eye For Terrain, Improved Critical, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Mortar Proficiency, Mounted

The Cavalryman					
Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+1	+2	+0	Bonus Feat
2	+2	+1	+3	+1	Bonus Feat
3	+3	+2	+3	+1	Horse Shield
4	+4	+2	+4	+1	Bonus Feat
5	+5	+3	+4	+2	Vault
6	+6/+1	+3	+5	+2	Bonus Feat
7	+6/+2	+3	+5	+2	
8	+7/+2	+4	+6	+3	Bonus Feat
9	+7/+3	+4	+6	+3	
10	+8/+3	+4	+7	+3	Bonus Feat
11	+8/+4	+5	+7	+4	
12	+9/+4	+5	+8	+4	Bonus Feat
13	+9/+5	+5	+8	+4	
14	+10/+5/+1	+6	+9	+5	Bonus Feat
15	+10/+6/+1	+6	+9	+5	
16	+11/+6/+2	+6	+10	+5	Bonus Feat
17	+11/+7/+2	+7	+10	+6	
18	+12/+7/+3	+7	+11	+6	Bonus Feat
19	+12/+8/+3	+7	+11	+6	
20	+13/+8/+4	+8	+12	+7	Bonus Feat





Cossacks

During the time of the Czars, Cossacks (a Turkish word meaning "free man") were runaway serfs who settled on the frontiers of the Russian empire. To control these famous horsemen and fighters, Czars recruited them as elite troops that proved themselves as vital assets in helping expand the Russian empire during the 1800s.

Although wiped out and disbanded after the Revolution due to their allegiance to the Tsar, many Cossack ancestors still living in the Caucasus region were recruited for the Red Army cavalry ranks due to the fact that they spent so much of their time in the saddle. However, some old enough to remember what the Communists did to their kind or who were raised to hate Communism, joined the German Army instead.

Combat (Mounted Archery, Trample, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge), Point Blank Shot (Far Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Shot on the Run), Power Attack (Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Sunder, Great Cleave), Quick Draw, Tactician, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting (Improved Two-Weapon Fighting), Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialization.

Note that some of these feats cannot be gained until the cavalryman has gained one or more prerequisite feats.

Horse Shield: At 3rd-level, the cavalryman gains the Horse Shield ability. This allows the hero to hang off one side of his horse and use it as a shield from enemy fire. This grants a +7 cover bonus to AC and a +3 Reflex save bonus. The cavalryman can only use this ability when not threatened. The hero may use this ability while charging into melee combat and still attack normally. However, once the hero attacks, he is considered to have righted himself in the saddle and no longer gains the cover bonus to his AC.

Multiclass Restrictions: Cavalryman characters can only multiclass as scouts and officers (if offered a commission).

Rank: A cavalryman character beginning the game at 1st-level receives the rank of Private.

Vault: At 5th-level, the cavalryman gains the ability to vault into the saddle as a free action.

Starting Equipment

Horse, saddle, riding boots, khaki cotton shirt, royal blue breeches, socks, shoulder waist belt with side arm holster and ammo pouches, saber, and TT34 Automatic Pistol and PPSH-1941 with 2 magazines of ammunition for each gun.

Commissar

"The commissar is a political worker, a revolutionary. The military leader answers with his head for all his activity, for the outcome of military operations, and soon. If the commissar has observed that there is danger to the revolution from the military leader, the commissar has the right to deal ruthlessly with the counter-revolutionary, even to the point of shooting him."

—Leon Trotsky, June 7, 1918

A military commissar's purpose was to check military officers' and soldiers' obedience to Stalin and the Communist Party.

Characteristics: Like a military officer, a commissar or *Zampolit* is more educated than the enlisted ranks, often not in the ways of war but definitely in the ways of Communist doctrine. A commissar is assigned to an officer to reduce a commander's workload by concentrating on political work, to make sure all soldiers and the people of Russia followed Communist doctrine and the wishes of Stalin to the letter. Together with the commander, he bears full responsibility for the military unit's accomplishment of the combat mission.

Background: The commissar system was introduced shortly after the Russian Revolution, since four-fifths of Red Army officers had served under the last Czar. Up until November 1942, a Communist Political Officer (commissar) served as party watchdog assigned to an officer, coequally sharing military power. All military orders had to be approved with a signature by the commissar and a commissar could countermand an officer's order. An officer could even be shot for not following orders. Commissar Vashugin said to a Russian commander, "If you occupy Dubno by this evening, we will give you a medal. If you don't, we'll shoot you."

This inefficient, dual-layered command system and its effects on morale (there were many too many reports of commissars liberally executing frightened soldiers) was privately attributed in part to the very public military failures of the first year of the war. As a result, Stalin issued a decree in November 1942 reducing the power of the commissar to an advisory role; they became "political deputies," with no veto power over orders. From then on, commissars took on roles as welfare officers, giving lectures to





Characters

boost morale and addressing soldiers' problems. With the assigned officer, a commissar was still held responsible for a unit's fighting abilities, readiness, and political reliability.

As before, to achieve this goal, political work was organized and carried out and combat and political training was planned and executed. Through real and fictitious propaganda, stories of the success of Communism and the reasons the Germans were to be hated were promoted. Commissars led two sessions daily with troops not in combat, lecturing and reading Communist doctrine aloud. Question and answer sessions were held several times a week, where "correct" responses were awarded with privileges and amenities and incorrect replies brought restrictions and assignments of "reeducation" with more enlightened comrades.

Commissars arranged sports and entertainment, such as films and theater companies. Commissars also made sure soldiers wrote home, helping the illiterate ones. Commissars on the home front made sure that the soldiers received letters back. Both front line and home front commissars served as the army's censors, making sure that letters were politically correct and morally uplifting.

As the war progressed into "liberated" territory, a commissar's role further expanded in the areas of indoctrination and inoculation of soldiers against corrupt influences (Capitalism and luxury). Commissars did engage in combat, either voluntarily or as a matter of survival.

Game Rule Info

Abilities: Commissars maintain their power over the soldiers in their command through force of will and the backing of the monolithic Soviet state. Charisma is the primary ability of the commissar. A high Charisma aids with both Diplomacy and Intimidate checks and helps ensure that the commissar is able to make Will saves so he does not show cowardice in combat himself.

Alignment: Any Lawful
Hit Die: d8.

Class Skills

The commissar's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Diplomacy (Cha), Driving (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Wis), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Knowledge: Geography, History, Local and/or Nobility (Int) and *Knowledge: Politics (Cha), Leadership (Cha).

* At least one skill point must be devoted to this required skill.

Skill points at 1st level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4

Skill points each additional level: 4 + Int modifier

Class Features

Commissar 'Ranking' and Reporting:

Commissars do not have ranks but positions/levels held in the Communist government. A 1st and 2nd level character would more than likely serve as a staff



A commissar instructs the troops about true Communism.



Chapter One



member to a regiment level (see below) commissar. At 3rd-level, a commissar may be assigned to a Lieutenant counterpart. A loyal and reliable commissar, who was not so over zealous as to risk getting shot by his own comrades could expect to either:

- Rise in position as his assigned officer rises in military rank;
- Be reassigned to a new military officer if his current assignment proves incompetent or he fails to execute orders and is justifiably shot;
- Be assigned to an officer of a higher rank for averting a catastrophe or being credited with a great success.

Think of commissar character levels as a measure of seniority when compared to other commissars.

Commissars assigned to officers below the regiment level (Lieutenant Colonel and below) were expected to report to regiment and division level Commissars who in turn were supervised by the Chief Political Administration of the army. At least once a year, a commissar was asked to testify as to the political loyalty and reliability of all officers in the unit. A junior officer seeking party membership or senior officers up for promotion needed a favorable review from his assigned commissar. Like their soldiers, Red Army officers had to be in line with

party policy and doctrine under the supervision of a commissar.

One commissar may be responsible for more than one junior or enlisted officer (see Russian Military Ranking sidebar). For example, a regiment of 2000 men would have a commissar assigned to the colonel in charge of the regiment and four or more commissars of lower level assigned to keep an eye on the battalion lieutenant colonels, company majors/captains, platoon lieutenants and squad sergeants and privates.

In addition, like military officer staffs, there would be just as many lower level commissars or civilian party workers serving as support staff, especially in the areas of communications and propaganda, e.g., publishing unit newspapers. Keep in mind that during the war the number of available commissars fluctuated, especially before 1943, due to battle losses, enemy targeting (Hitler's Commissar Decree required that all Communist officials be shot on the spot) and revenge (prior to November 1942 commissars who shot soldiers and officers too frequently were killed by a "stray enemy" bullet).

Executioner: The commissar has the power of life and death over the soldiers in his assigned unit. If convinced that the soldier is acting in a cowardly fashion or in a way harmful to the state, the commissar may execute the soldier on the

The Commissar

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+0	+0	+2	Party Member, Executioner
2	+2	+0	+0	+3	Bonus Feat, Intimidate
3	+3	+1	+1	+3	
4	+4	+1	+1	+4	
5	+5	+1	+1	+4	Bonus Feat
6	+6/+1	+2	+2	+5	
7	+6/+2	+2	+2	+5	
8	+7/+2	+2	+2	+6	Bonus Feat
9	+7/+3	+3	+3	+6	
10	+8/+3	+3	+3	+7	Control
11	+8/+4	+3	+3	+7	Bonus Feat
12	+9/+4	+4	+4	+8	
13	+9/+5	+4	+4	+8	
14	+10/+5/+1	+4	+4	+9	Bonus Feat
15	+10/+6/+1	+5	+5	+9	
16	+11/+6/+2	+5	+5	+10	
17	+11/+7/+2	+5	+5	+10	Bonus Feat
18	+12/+7/+3	+6	+6	+11	
19	+12/+8/+3	+6	+6	+11	
20	+13/+8/+4	+6	+6	+12	Bonus Feat





Russian Military Ranks

Russia's military ranks can be broken down into officer and enlisted categories.

Officer Rank	Russian Name	Promotion
Generalissimo*	Generalissimo	NA
Chief Marshal	Glavniy Marshal	NA
Army General/Marshal	General Armii	NA
Colonel General (3-star)	General-polkovnik	NA
Lieutenant General (2-star)	General-leitenant	NA
Major General (1-star)	General-major	NA
Colonel	Polkovnik	Max PC officer rank
Lieutenant Colonel	Podpolkovnik	40
Major	Major	35
Captain**	Kapitan	30
Senior Lieutenant	Starshiy Leitenant	25
Junior Lieutenant	Leitenant	20
Enlisted Rank	Russian Name	Promotion***
Master Sergeant	Starshina	Max PC Enlisted Rank
Senior Sergeant	Starshiy Serzhant	30
Sergeant	Serzhant	25
Junior Sergeant	Mladshiy Serzhant	20
Private 1st Class	Efreitor	15
Private	Krasnoarmeets/Ryadovoy****	10

* The highest military rank. Held by Stalin.

** Note that it was rare to promote a junior officer (Captain) to senior officer if he was not a member of the Communist Party and who did not receive favorable testimony from his Commissar as to his political loyalty and reliability.

*** Russia had less enlisted ranks than the western allies but the number to obtain promotions is kept at the 5 point increment per rank to simulate the fact that the Red Army had an officer shortage due to pre-war purges and casualties attributed to costly frontal assaults and Nazi POW murder.

**** The *ryadovoy* rank was used after 1943.

spot without any worry about repercussions (other than the possibility of retaliation by the soldier's friends).

Party Member: Commissar heroes begin play with the Party Member feat.

Intimidate: At 2nd-level, the commissar gains a +4 bonus to Intimidate checks against non-commissars.

Control: Senior commissars project such an aura of power that at 10th level, they gain the Control ability. The commissar can target a single person with this ability and must win a contest of his Knowledge (Politics) versus the target's Will save. If the commissar wins, the target is affected as if by a *suggestion* spell.

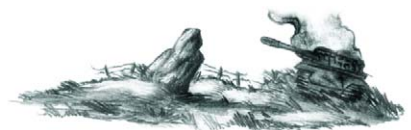
Starting Equipment

Army Commissar: Black boots, socks, khaki cotton shirt, khaki breeches, peaked cap, belt with pouch for ammo and sidearm holster, TT34 Automatic Pistol and 2 magazines of ammunition.

Siberian Shaman

The Siberian shaman is a new magic-using class for *Weird Wars*. Unlike the other magic-using classes, the shaman is not a prestige class. This is because the way of the shaman is not something that a person can be taught in a boot camp, it's a way of living. For this reason, shaman heroes must start in this class. They may not switch to other classes later, either.

Characteristics: A shaman can leave his body, transcend the material world and harness power through guardian (familiar) and helping spirits of the animal spirit world. Shamans are often the most intelligent, healthiest, and strongest amongst their peers. Shamans serve an important role in their communities as the one who can, through trances, focus psychic-supernatural energies to heal, strengthen, promote fertility, and





Russian Medals

Order of the Red Star

Issued: April 6, 1930

Conditions: Awarded to all ranks for outstanding service in the defense of the Mother Country.

Rank Modifier: +2

Order of Bogdan Khmelnitsky

Issued: October 10, 1943

Conditions: Awarded to commanders of partisan units for outstanding merit.

Rank Modifier: +3

Order of the Patriotic War 2nd Class

Issued: May 20, 1942

Conditions: Awarded to any military personnel (including partisans) regardless of rank for lesser personal valor in action.

Rank Modifier: +3

Medal for Bravery

Issued: October 17, 1938

Conditions: Awarded to all military ranks, citizens and foreigners for bravery in the defense of Soviet borders and for stopping spies and subversive elements. This award can be received more than once.

Rank Modifier: +3

Order of the Patriotic War 1st Class

Issued: May 20, 1942

Conditions: Awarded to any military personnel (including partisans) regardless of rank for skillfully commanding their comrades in action.

Rank Modifier: +4

Order of Glory

Issued: November 8, 1943

Conditions: Awarded to junior officers and below for glorious deeds.

Rank Modifier: +6

Order of the Red Banner

Issued: August 1, 1924

Conditions: Awarded to military personnel of all ranks who exhibit

exceptional courage and valor during combat.

Rank Modifier: +6

Order of Lenin & Star of a "Hero of the Soviet Union"

Issued: April 6, 1930

Conditions: The highest Soviet Union decoration. Awarded for outstanding civilian service or exemplary military service. For receiving the award a 2nd time, the recipient would have sculptured bust built in the town of their birth.

Rank Modifier: +10

Battle and Campaign Medals

Medal for the Defense of Odessa

Issued: December 22, 1942

Conditions: Awarded to servicemen and civilians who, despite German capture of Odessa, defended the city while under a 73-day siege from August 10, 1941 to October 16, 1941.

Rank Modifier: +3

Medal for the Defense of Sevastopol

Issued: December 22, 1942

Conditions: Awarded to servicemen and civilians who, despite German capture of the city, defended Sevastopol for 250 days from November 5, 1941 to July 4, 1941.

Rank Modifier: +3

Medal for the Defense of the Soviet Arctic

Issued: December 5, 1944

Conditions: Awarded to servicemen and civilians who defended the Soviet Arctic from Finnish and Germans who began their attack on June 19, 1941.

Rank Modifier: +2

Medal for the Defense of the Caucasus

Issued: May 1, 1944

Conditions: Awarded to servicemen and civilians who served in defending the Caucasus for at least 3 months between July 1942 and October 1943.

Rank Modifier: +1

Medal for the Defense of Leningrad

Issued: December 22, 1942

Conditions: Awarded to servicemen and civilians who took part in defending Leningrad during the 900-day siege from September 8, 1941 to January 27, 1944.

Rank Modifier: +1

Medal for the Defense of Moscow

Issued: May 1, 1944

Conditions: Awarded to servicemen and civilians who took part in the defense of Moscow from October 19, 1941 to January 25, 1942.

Rank Modifier: +1

Medal for the Defense of Stalingrad

Issued: December 22, 1942

Conditions: Awarded to servicemen and civilians who participated in the defense of Stalingrad from July 12, 1942 to November 19, 1942.

Rank Modifier: +2

Additional Medal Worthy-Acts

Rank Modifier	Act
+2	Character leads frontal assault.
+10	Character holds key position vital to the front against overwhelming odds.
+6	Character reveals spy, insurgent or traitor.





Characters

prosperity, find lost items, bless hunting expeditions, persuade game to move into his tribe's area, prevent war, control weather, and predict the future.

Background: The word shaman originates from hunters and reindeer herders in Siberia known culturally as Evenks and first documented by Russian researchers in the 18th century. Shamans have been labeled by outsiders as madmen or medicine men but to the Evenks of Siberia they are a vital part of their society as mystics, healers, and social and religious leaders. Shamanism has been called a hunter's religion since a shaman is needed to negotiate with an animal's soul when it is killed for food. Unlike more popular religions, shamanism has no recorded doctrine, church, holy book, or official authority such as a pope or patriarch. Russian rock carvings have been dated and show that shamans have been a part of Siberian tribal culture since before 5,000 BC. Some shamans believe they are descendants from a half-bear, half-human race.

Siberians believe that the mortal world is linked with several others that can be accessed in an astral trance by way of sacred objects, dress, songs, and movement. The Earth is the middle way visited by good spirits from above and bad spirits from below. A mythical tree ties the worlds together and is climbed by a shaman to reach each level. Unlike shamans in other cultures, the Siberian shaman is not possessed by a spirit to enable travel but can initiate his or her own travel. However, lack of control over spirits that exist in these worlds can lead to insanity or death.

Usually only males are born with the gift of shamanism, often descended from a long line of shamans. This gift is not apparent, however, until adolescence, when his eyes indicate a far-seeing brightness and he begins having visions and seeks solitude over the company of others. In one of these journeys to the spirit world he is destroyed, all human characteristics are erased, and the adolescent is reborn a shaman if his soul survives the reconstruction done by animal spirits. (An adolescent who does not survive this reconstruction often exhibits some type of mental illness.) With the help of a shaman elder, a shaman initiate begins to learn how to navigate the geography of the spirit world through trance and with the aid of sacred objects. The elder also teaches magical techniques and traditional shaman songs,

Russian Decoration Table

20 Roll	Russian Decoration	XP
1-20	None	0
21-24	Order of the Red Star	250
25-27	Order of the Patriotic War 2nd Class /Order of Bogdan Khemelnitsky	500
28-29	Order of the Patriotic War 1st Class	750
30-31	Order of Glory/Order of the Red Banner	1000
32+	Order of Lenin	2000

lore and poetry that cannot be mastered immediately. Over time, his powers become so awe-inspiring that few seek his friendship; he is often alone, sought only when needed.

Recruitment: Beginning in the fall of 1941, Siberian shamans are recruited directly into SOPA. Like their other SOPA counterparts, shamans are only used in small-scale/covert operations. Often the shaman has a vision of evil threatening the balance of the Earth and seeks out SOPA. On a few occasions, SOPA agents must venture into Siberia to recruit a shaman, explaining why Hitler is not only a threat to Russia but his village as well. Through dreams and visions, a shaman may have to temporarily return to his village, perhaps violating orders, to care for a sick villager, bring good weather, etc.

Game Rule Info

Abilities: Being a character who channels divine forces, Shamans need a high Wisdom attribute.

Alignment: Any good

Hit Die: d6.

Class Skills

The shaman's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Animal Empathy (Cha), Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intuit Direction (Wis), Knowledge: Nature and Planes (Int), Listen (Wis), Ride (Dex), Spell Craft (Int), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Use Magic Device (Cha), Wilderness Lore (Wis) and Winter Survival (Wis).

Skill points at 1st level: (3 + Int modifier) x 4

Skill points each additional level: 3 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of Siberian shamans.

Siberian Shaman Dress Requirements: Shamans channel divine energy from helping and guardian spirits through their



Chapter One



dress, sacred objects, songs and movement. Except for the pendants, all manners of dress and objects are made to reflect and imitate the shaman's guardian spirit. For example, a shaman with a bear guardian spirit wears a headdress and caftan made of a bear's hide and head. Shoes and gloves are constructed out of actual bear's paws. A shaman is powerless without the following, which he receives at 1st level (with the exception of his staff):

Baton & Drum: Required for any spell with a verbal (V) or somatic (S) component.

Apron/Caftan: Required or lose guardian spirit benefits.

Headdress: Required for any spell with focus (F) or divine focus (DF) components.

Gloves: Required for any spell with a range of touch.

Shoes: Required for any spells dealing with movement or travel.

Staff: Fashioned in the image of the guardian spirit at 5th level, the staff permits the shaman to *polymorph self* into his guardian spirit's form once per day. The staff also has *shillelagh* making it a +1 weapon that inflicts 1d10 points of damage. At 10th level a shaman can cast *spell staff*.

Helping Spirit Animal Pendants:

Made of either feather, bone, fur, leather, wood or metal, these small objects attached to other objects or dress enable the shaman to channel helping spirit animal spells (see section below).

The shaman never kills an animal to obtain dress materials. To make use of an animal, the shaman must conduct a binding/blessing ceremony (taught at 1st level initiation) over the corpse of an animal that either died of old age or of unnatural/evil causes. Only then does the shaman have permission to use the animal's body in construction of his garments and objects. To do so otherwise causes the shaman to suffer the same penalties as OSI Chaplains' suffer when they sin (see page 121 of *Blood on the Rhine*). Due to their magic-like qualities, all shaman objects and garments receive a +4 on saves against destruction or damage.

Guardian Spirit and Domains: Within a month after an adolescent's spirit is reconstructed as a shaman, he must enter into a solitary, all night vision quest to contact his guardian spirit. Unless the War Master allows the shaman to pick, roll a d20. The guardian spirit should be determined when the character is first created.

The Siberian Shaman

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	0	+2	0	+3	Guardian Spirit, 1st-Level Domains
2	+1	+3	+1	+4	Helping Spirit
3	+1	+3	+1	+4	Helping Spirit, 2nd-level Domains
4	+2	+4	+1	+5	Helping Spirit
5	+2	+4	+2	+5	Helping Spirit, Staff, 3rd-level Domains
6	+3	+5	+2	+6	Helping Spirit
7	+3	+5	+2	+6	Helping Spirit, 4th-Level Domains
8	+4	+6	+3	+7	Helping Spirit
9	+4	+6	+3	+7	Helping Spirit, 5th-Level Domains
10	+5	+7	+3	+8	Helping Spirit, Spell staff
11	+5	+7	+4	+8	Helping Spirit, 6th-Level Domains
12	+6/+1	+8	+4	+9	Helping Spirit
13	+6/+1	+8	+4	+9	Helping Spirit, 7th-Level Domains
14	+7/+2	+9	+5	+10	Helping Spirit
15	+7/+2	+9	+5	+10	Helping Spirit, 8th Level Domains
16	+8/+3	+10	+5	+11	Helping Spirit
17	+8/+3	+10	+6	+11	Helping Spirit, 9th-Level Domains
18	+9/+4	+11	+6	+12	Helping Spirit
19	+9/+4	+11	+6	+12	Helping Spirit
20	+10/+5	+12	+7	+13	Helping Spirit





Characters

Beginning at 1st level, a shaman draws their spell powers from all 5 domains listed below. Shamans only receive a Domain's granted power if it's the same as the shaman's guardian spirit. Domain spells can only be cast once per day. Shamans receive the next domain spell on all 5 lists every 2 levels. For example, a 1st-level Shaman can call upon the animal spirits to cast *calm Animals*, *protection from evil*, *cure light wounds*, *divine favor* and *obscuring mist*. At 3rd level, he gains *hold animal*, *aid*, *cure moderate wounds*, *augury* and *wind wall*.

Soul Travel Domain

Granted Power: Daily *guidance* allows the shaman to choose a skill check, attack, or saving throw type in which he or she can receive a +1 modifier in a 24-hour period.

Spells:

1. Divine Favor
2. Augury
3. Speak With Dead
4. Divination
5. True Seeing
6. Ethereal Jaunt
7. Plane Shift
8. Foresight
9. Astral Projection

Weather Domain

Granted Power: The shaman casts weather spells at +1 caster level.

Spells:

1. Obscuring Mist
2. Wind Wall
3. Heat or Chill Metal
4. Ice Storm
5. Control Wind
6. Chain Lightning
7. Control Weather
8. Sunburst
9. Storm of Vengeance

Helping Spirits: In addition to the spells a shaman receives from the five domains, helping spirits also provide spells that can be cast once per day and sometimes other benefits to the shaman by way of animal pendants. Beginning at 2nd level, and every level thereafter, a shaman receives his first "calling," roll a d20 on the chart on the following page. Once determined, the shaman then fashions a pendant to be attached to either his or her drum, baton, caftan/apron, headdress, glove or shoes in order to channel the helping spirit's granted powers. The pendant must be a piece of the actual animal such as fur, bone, claw, or mummified portion. Remember, a

Guardian Spirit Table

Roll	Guardian Spirit	Shaman Domain
1-5	Siberian Gray Wolf	Animal*
6-9	Eurasian Reindeer	Good*
10-14	Brown Bear	Healing*
15-19	Arctic Tern	Soul Travel
20	Yeti	Weather

*These domains can be found in the *Player's Handbook*.

shaman never harms a living creature to obtain the necessary materials and cannot use any granted power without the pendant. Pendants can be replaced if lost.

This is only a sample of helping spirits and their granted daily spell(s) and any benefits. Other helping spirits and their spell-like powers may be negotiated at the War Master's discretion.

Note that a shaman who has an Arctic Tern guardian spirit can have an Arctic Tern helping spirit as well. It is possible for a shaman to have multiple helping spirits of the same type. In this case, he may cast any granted spells once per day per spirit.

Class Restrictions: Devoted to their animalistic faith, Siberian shamans are not permitted to multi-class or add a prestige class.

Rank: Siberian shamans are not the outgoing, charismatic types that make good officers. Also, since their exposure to regular Red Army soldiers is to be kept at a minimum, shamans are considered civilian advisors with no rank. Amongst each other, shamans are like commissars in that experience and age determine "ranking."

Starting Equipment

See above under Siberian shaman dress requirements. Shamans may at times be required to wear civilian dress or a military uniform due to the requirements of the mission. Whenever this occurs, the shaman is temporarily out of contact with both his guardian and helping spirits. He may not cast spells and he loses any benefits granted to him by his helping spirits.

A few shamans have refused to do this. Due to the extraordinary powers that they possess, SOPA has been willing to accommodate them as long as they continue to work for the organization. It is up to the player as to whether his shaman is willing to do this.



Chapter One



A German lookout peers through a storm conjured by a Siberian shaman.

Old Prestige Classes

A few of the prestige classes from *Blood on the Rhine* need a few tweaks.

Commando

The Russians had no elite commando forces like the Western Allies. On the Russian Front, the commando prestige class is only available to Russian partisans and Red Army advisors sent to train partisans.

OSI Adept, OSI Operative & OSI Chaplains

All of these classes exist on the Eastern Front, except that they are called SOPA adept, SOPA operative, and SOPA clergy, respectively. All *Blood on the Rhine* rules for these classes apply, with the following exceptions:

1. Only the SOPA Operative can be recruited from the ranks of NKVD Internal forces and Smersh.
2. SOPA Clergy did not take part in operations until the beginning months of 1942—the Red Army did not have chaplains. Moral and spiritual support was the job of commissars, for Communism was the official state “religion” despite overtures from Stalin to the Russian Orthodox Church in the fall of 1941. During the war, most work of the clergy was done on the home front, blessing tanks for instance as they came off factory assembly lines.

Although SOPA does not try to cover up Nazi supernatural activity so it can appeal to the normally superstitious nature of the Russian people, it does discourage SOPA agents from blatant displays of their supernatural powers. It's hard to accuse your enemy of consorting with the devil when your own troops are displaying the same powers.

This restriction especially applies to SOPA clergy. Although SOPA will do anything necessary to win the war, it doesn't want to undermine the subsequent peace by causing the people to question Communism's strictly atheistic doctrine.

Helping Spirits

Die Roll	Helping Spirit	Daily Spell(s)/Benefit
1	Arctic Fox	Detect Snares and Pits Pass Without Trace
2	Arctic Hare	Expeditious Retreat Invisibility to Animals
3	Arctic Tern	Find the Path Know Direction
4	Brown Bear	Sleep Toughness Feat
5	Cat	Feather Fall
6	Jump Elk	Daylight +5 bonus to Swim skill
7	Earthworm	Soften Earth and Stone
8	Eurasian Badger	Move Earth
9	Eurasian Beaver	Rock to Mud Wall of Thorns
10	Eurasian Reindeer	Silent Image Traverse Ice (no slipping)
11	Hawk	Fly Hold Animal
12	Lynx	Invisibility
13	Muskrat	Endure Elements Reduce
14	Omul	Water Breathing Water Walking
15	Siberian Gray Wolf	Speak with Animals Summon Nature's Ally I
16	Siberian Husky	Animal Friendship Resist Elements
17	Snowy Owl	Tree Stride Alertness Feat
18	Spider	Spider Climb Web
19	Weasel	Confusion
20	Wolverine	Greater Magic Fang





New Prestige Class

Lastly, we've got one new prestige class for your chilly Siberian heroes.

Guardisman

Guardsmen are elite troops that were first used at the Battle of Stalingrad. As mentioned in other parts of this book, during the first two years of the war, most grunts were conscripted farmers who received poor or little equipment and training. The guardsman distinction was created to boost morale, introducing uniforms that gave veterans pride. Guardsmen units were very successful against the Germans. They were better equipped, not sent on frontal assaults, had more experience, better leadership, and were generally not abused as much as their regular Red Army counterparts. Guardsmen divisions also tended to be motorized, with armored support.

Hit Die: d12.

Requirements

To qualify to become a guardsman, a character must satisfy the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: 4+

Dexterity : 12+

Wisdom: 12+

Feats: Assault, Street Fighting, Suppressive Fire

Class Skills

The guardsman's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Ammo & Explosive Manufacturing (Int), Artillery (Int), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Demolitions (Int), Driving (Dex), Heal



Guardisman assault a German-held village.

(Wis), Hide (Dex), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Leadership (Cha), Listen (Wis), Mechanic (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Search (Int), Skiing (Dex), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Wilderness Lore (Wis), and Winter Survival (Wis).

Skill points each additional level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

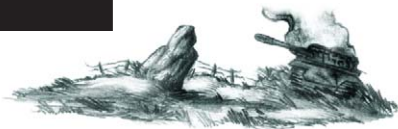
All of the following are class features of the guardsman:

Bonus Feats: Starting at 1st level, and every two levels thereafter, the guardsman receives a bonus feat. These feats may be chosen from the list of bonus feats provided for the grunt in Blood on the Rhine. In addition, all feats listed in this book are also available to the guardsman class.

Equipment: Guardsmen had more distinct, striking uniforms, reminiscent of Tsarist days, received the best equipment, and were given plenty of ammo.

The Guardsman

Table with 6 columns: Level, Attack Bonus, Fort Save, Ref Save, Will Save, Special. Rows 1-10 showing progression of bonuses and special features.





Chapter Two: Ordnance & Equipment

The war in Russia was a war of numbers: in miles, men, and industrial capacity. The Russians had all of these things in abundance and they weren't afraid of expending them to stop the Fascist invaders despoiling their Motherland.

When the war began, the Soviets traded men and miles for an even more precious commodity: time. Time to move the vital armament industries in western Russia to safe locations east of the Urals. Entire armies were encircled and destroyed and hundreds of thousands of soldiers were taken into captivity by the advancing Germans. The invaders soon discovered, however, that for every Russian soldier they killed or captured, there seemed to be two more to take his place.

The enormous distances of the Russian steppes made a mockery of the Wehrmacht's rapid advances. Despite the enormous success of the German Blitzkrieg tactics, the rapid collapse of Russian resistance that Hitler was counting on did not happen. The immense territory that the invading forces had to cover simply dispersed their strength and bought the Russians time to marshal their reserves and prepare to make their stand. To compound the Germans' problems, roads that appeared as thick black lines

on their maps were little more than dusty tracks that transformed into muddy quagmires with the first rains.

At the outset of the war, the modern industries in Germany outproduced those of the Soviet Union, but this quickly changed. After a short period of denial, Stalin recognized the mortal threat to his nation and mobilized the entire population with a single purpose: the defeat of Germany. By mid-war, despite the massive disruptions caused by the relocation of over 1000 industrial facilities to locations east of the Urals, Soviet tank production was far outstripping that of Germany. The entire population worked for victory, with old men, women, and children working long hours in factories to supply the troops at the front.

In contrast, Hitler didn't put the German economy on a total war footing until the Wehrmacht had already suffered its first defeats in Russia. Even near the end of the war, with defeat a very immediate threat, the Führer refused to consider allowing women to work in factories, preferring to depend on an inefficient and sabotage-ridden system of slave labor.

Numbers don't lie and they were there to be seen from the start. Hitler and his cronies were simply too blinded by hate to notice them.



Russian Equipment

The Russians built two basic tank chassis throughout the war: the T-34 and KV chassis (the IS series tanks used a modified KV chassis, so one could argue that three chassis designs were used.) This allowed the Russians to mass produce their armor while keeping the cost and construction time low, something the Germans failed to do. Better still, the tanks were solid, very reliable, and interchangeable. By the beginning of 1941, the Russians had more armored fighting vehicles (AFVs) than any country in the world: 30,000.

When the Germans invaded Russia in 1941, the Germans found the Russians to be "blind" and "dumb" in combat. The Russians had poor leadership and lacked knowledge of combat tactics. Their tanks lacked radios and the Russians had little to no spare parts.

The Germans (and Finns), with their greater experience and superior tactics, took advantage of the Russian shortcomings. By December 1941, the once large force of 24,000 Russian tanks was quickly depleted to 4,500. Of that initial 24,000 only 1,500 were competitive and not obsolete. In addition, only 27% worked at any time.

The lessons of 1941 were not lost on the Russians, however. The Russian tactics and experience improved and the Russians started to close the gap with the Germans. Additionally, the Russians believed in quantity over quality. While the German tanks were technically superior (but more costly and time consuming to build), the Russian built over 70,000 T-34/KV/IS tanks, which were excellent tanks themselves.

In short, the Russians out-produced the Germans and by sheer numbers and learned tactics, overpowered them. This is a classic case of KISS (Keep It Simple, Stupid). The Russians benefited from this philosophy while not settling for an inferior tank. Even when the Germans countered with better tank designs in 1943, it was too late. By 1943, the Russian factories were producing over 2,000 chassis a month.

The Soviets also had help from abroad. Convoys from the United States and England ferried a steady supply of vehicles and ammunition to Russian ports year round.

Lend Lease

Among other equipment, the Russians received Sherman M4 tanks, jeeps, halftracks and the famous "Deuce-and-a-half" truck from the United States. In total, the United States supplied Russia over 6,300 tanks, 14,000 aircraft and 432,000 trucks. While the Russians belittled the Western tanks, it is clear that the mobility gained from the AFVs that were sent to Russia played a significant role in helping the Russian war effort. The Lend Lease program also allowed Russia to concentrate production on tanks instead of truck and personnel carriers. For game purposes, listings for the United States jeeps, M3 halftracks and trucks should be used for the Russian transport vehicles. A side note: The U.S. trucks were so commonplace, locals sometimes thought the "USA" stenciled on them stood for "Ubiyat Sukinsyna Adolf." Loosely translated, it meant: "Kill that Son-of-a-bitch Adolf."

Hazardous Duty

The Russians were resourceful with their AFVs, often times mounting extra fuel and ammunition on the rear decks of their vehicles. This gave the tanks up to 33% more range and extra ammunition either for combat or for supplying other armor units. In essence, the Russians used their tanks like supply trucks. The only danger, however, was the added vulnerability due to the external cargo. If players wish, on rolling a natural 20 to hit the side or rear of a tank carrying ammunition and/or external fuel, the tank explodes and becomes a burning wreck. The crew is automatically eliminated. Anyone within 5 yards of the side or rear of the tank must roll a Reflex save (DC15) or take full damage (6d10). Those who save take only half damage.

Communication Gap

Through October 1943, most (if not all) Russian tanks, assault guns, and tank destroyers were not equipped with radios. Even then, only some of the active tanks would be fitted with communication devices. To account for this "oversight," from 1941 through October 1943, whenever the commanders of different armored vehicles wish to communicate with each other, they must expose themselves through the commander's hatch. Russian tankers normally used a combination of flag and hand signals to communicate between tanks.





Russian Vehicles

The following list of Russian armor contains the most commonly used designs. The Soviets fielded a wide variety of light tanks—more than can be detailed here.

BA-64B

The BA-64B was one of the Soviet Army's primary reconnaissance vehicles. It consisted of an armored hull mounted on a GAZ (the Russian equivalent of the jeep) chassis. The car had highly sloped armor to provide protection against small arms fire. This reduced the room inside the vehicle and limited it to a crew of 2.

The BA-64B entered service in 1942. The main difference between the B version and earlier models was the width of the suspension. Early models were prone to tipping. When using one of these vehicles apply a -1 circumstance penalty to all Driving checks.

Armor Class: 15, **Damage Points:** 50, **Size:** Large, **Cruising Speed:** 65, **Range:** 350 miles, **Weapons:** DT 7.62mm (turret), **Ammo:** 7.62mm 1260, **Crew:** 2 (Driver, commander/gunner), **Armor-Turret:** 12/12/12, **Upper Hull:** 20/10/10, **Lower Hull:** 7/7/7, **Deck:** 6, **Suspension:** 30

IS-2

The IS-2 (Josef Stalin) was mounted on a KV chassis and used a redesigned KV hull and turret. Its main drawbacks were that it only carried 28 rounds and it had a slow rate of fire. Early prototypes of the IS mounted an 85mm and a 100mm gun. However, the 122mm was used on production models due to its better HE capability and ease of manufacture. The IS-2 was used between March 1944 and the end of the war in 1945. An "M" series tank, released in July 1944, matched the armor protection of the King Tiger. For playability purposes, substitute the King Tiger's damage points and armor statistics for the IS-2M.

An IS-3 series tank was produced, but never saw actual battle. Released in November, 1944, it had armor protection that exceeded any tank in WWII. Its radical new turret and pointed hull gave rise to the nickname the "Pike." The IS-3 caught the attention of the West and influenced post-war Western tank designs.

Armor Class: 12, **Damage Points:** 125, **Size:** Huge, **Cruising Speed:** 30, **Range:** 95 miles, **Weapons:** 122L43 cannon (turret), DT 7.62mm (coaxial front), DT 7.62mm (turret rear), **Ammo:** Max 28 (HE 16, AP 12), 7.62mm 2500, **Crew:** 4 (Commander, gunner, driver and loader), **Armor-Turret:** 180/115/115, **Upper Hull:** 140/114/95, **Lower Hull:** 115/90/80, **Deck:** 30, **Suspension:** 30, **Special:** Range includes three 90-liter external fuel tanks. If these tanks are excluded, decrease Range to 65 miles.

ISU-122

The success of German self-propelled guns like the Stug III caused the Soviets to experiment with designs of their own. After the development of the IS series tanks, it was decided to create a self-propelled gun using the IS chassis. The original plans called for arming the vehicle with a 152mm gun, but due to a shortage of these weapons, a version armed with a 122mm gun was also developed. This went into production as the ISU-122.

The first widespread use of this vehicle occurred during Operation Bagration, the Soviet's summer offensive of 1944. The ISU-122s proved devastating against German armor, but their internal ammo capacity of only 20 rounds was a marked liability.

Armor Class: 12, **Damage Points:** 125, **Size:** Huge, **Cruising Speed:** 30, **Range:** 90 miles, **Weapons:** 122L43 cannon (upper hull), **Ammo:** Max 20 (HE 10, AP 10), **Crew:** 4 (Commander, gunner, driver and loader), **Armor-Turret:** NA **Upper Hull:** 105/75/90, **Lower Hull:** 105/90/90 **Deck:** 30, **Suspension:** 30



An IS-2 picks its way through the rubble of a German city.



Chapter Two



KV-1s advance across the Russian steppes.

ISU-152

The ISU-152 is the ISU-122s big brother. They are essentially the same vehicle, just armed with two different guns. The ISU-152 has a bigger punch, but suffers the same flaw of low internal ammo capacity.

Armor Class: 12, **Damage Points:** 125, **Size:** Huge, **Cruising Speed:** 30, **Range:** 90 miles, **Weapons:** 152mm cannon (upper hull), **Ammo:** Max 20 (HE 10, AP 10), **Crew:** 4 (Commander, gunner, driver, and loader), **Armor-Turret:** NA, **Upper Hull:** 105/75/90, **Lower Hull:** 105/90/90 **Deck:** 30, **Suspension:** 30

KV-1

The KV-1 was a pre-war tank design. The Soviet Army had 639 of them when the war with Germany began. The KV-1 was a heavy tank that could only be reliably destroyed by a German 88 or 105mm howitzer. At the beginning of the war, more KV-1s were lost to mechanical problems than to enemy fire. There are numerous accounts of solitary KV-1s holding up entire German divisions.

Armor Class: 15, **Damage Points:** 100, **Size:** Huge, **Cruising Speed:** 30, **Range:** 115 miles, **Weapons:** 76mm cannon (turret), DT 7.62mm (coaxial), DT 7.62mm (bow), DT 7.62mm (turret rear), **Ammo:** 76mm Max 114 (HE 60, AP 54), 7.62mm 3000, **Crew:** 5 (Commander, gunner, driver, assistant driver, and loader), **Armor-Turret:** 75/70/80 **Upper Hull:** 85/75/90, **Lower Hull:** 85/75/90 **Deck:** 30, **Suspension:** 30

KV-1S

The KV-1S was a stripped down version of the KV-1 (the "S" stands for "skorostnoy" (speed)). The armor protection was reduced but it allowed for a three-man turret and better mobility in a heavy tank. The KV-1S was 5 tons lighter than the KV-1. The KV-1S was used between November 1942 and the end of the war in 1945.

Armor Class: 15, **Damage Points:** 100, **Size:** Huge, **Cruising Speed:** 35, **Range:** 100 miles, **Weapons:** 76L41 cannon (turret), DT 7.62mm (bow), DT 7.62mm (coaxial front), DT 7.62mm (turret rear),

Ammo: Max 102 (HE 60, AP 42), 7.62mm 3000, 5 (Commander, gunner, driver, loader, and assistant driver), **Crew:** 5 (Commander, gunner, driver, loader, and assistant driver), **Armor-Turret:** 80/75/75, **Upper Hull:** 76/60/60, **Lower Hull:** 65/60/60, **Deck:** 30, **Suspension:** 30.

OT-34

The OT-34 is a flame-throwing tank that mounts a 76mm gun in its turret in addition to a bow-mounted flamethrower. Used between 1942 and 1945, the OT-34 used the standard T-34 chassis.

Armor Class: 16, **Damage Points:** 75, **Size:** Large, **Cruising Speed:** 45, **Range:** 150 miles, **Weapons:** 76L41 cannon (turret), Flamethrower (upper hull), DT 7.62mm (coaxial), **Ammo:** Max 76 (HE 52, AP 24), 7.62mm 3750, **Crew:** 4 (Commander, gunner, driver, and loader), **Armor-Turret:** 70/60/60, **Upper Hull:** 65/50/55, **Lower Hull:** 75/45/65, **Deck:** 20, **Suspension:** 30.

SU-100

Used between November 1944 and 1945, the SU-100 used a high-velocity, 100mm naval gun as its main armament. This tank destroyer was very successful at knocking out German armor at any range. While only 1,675 were built, the SU-100 carried the most potent Russian anti-tank weapon available.

Armor Class: 15, **Damage Points:** 75, **Size:** Large, **Cruising Speed:** 40, **Range:** 90 miles, **Weapons:** 100L62mm cannon (upper





Ordnance

hull), **Ammo:** Max 34 (HE 15, AP 15, Heat 4), **Crew:** 4 (Commander, gunner, driver, and loader), **Armor-Upper Hull:** 115/50/70, **Lower Hull:** 80/45/65, **Deck:** 20, **Suspension:** 30, **Special:** Range includes three 90-liter external fuel tanks. If these tanks are excluded, decrease Range to 60 miles.

SU-122

The SU-122 was one of the first Russian designs imitating the German Stug III. It was based on the T-34 chassis and armed with a 122mm howitzer. The SU-122 could deal with most German armor, especially when using the 122mm HEAT round.

Armor Class: 16, **Damage Points:** 75, **Size:** Large, **Cruising Speed:** 45, **Range:** 95 miles, **Weapons:** 122mm howitzer cannon (upper hull), **Ammo:** Max 40 (HE 25, AP 12, HEAT 3), **Crew:** 5 (Commander, gunner, driver, assistant driver, and loader), **Armor-Turret:** NA, **Upper Hull:** 65/50/55, **Lower Hull:** 75/45/65, **Deck:** 20, **Suspension:** 30.

SU-152

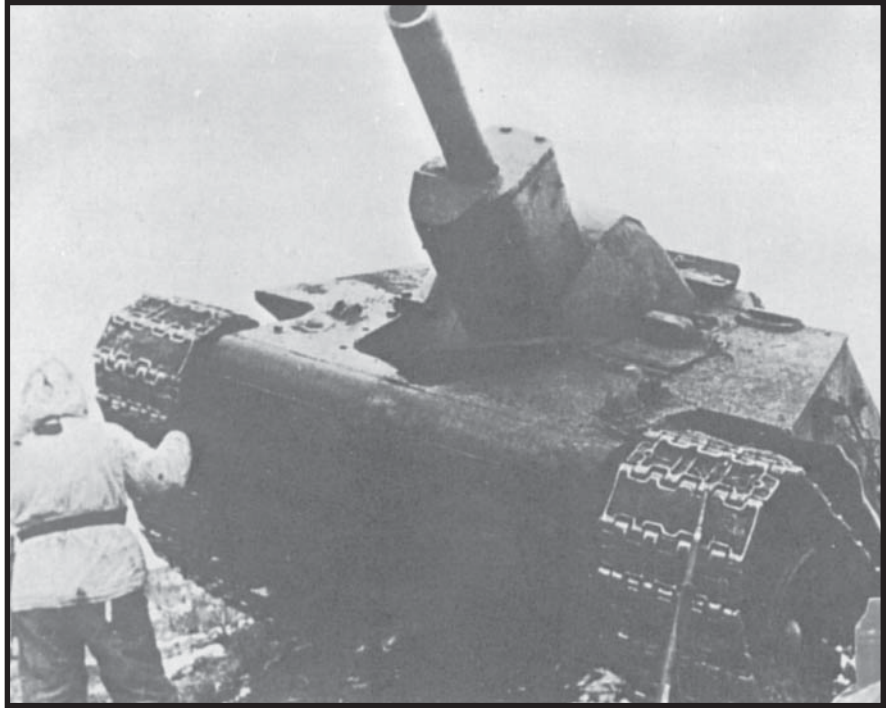
Nicknamed the "Zvieboy" (Animal Hunter or Conquering Beast), the SU-152 was an assault gun designed to combat the German Tiger at long range. Introduced at the battle of Kursk in 1943, the Zvieboy successfully dealt with the German Elephant, Tiger, and Panther tanks.

Its biggest drawback was that it only carried 20 rounds of ammunition (Ouch! Don't miss!). The SU-152 used a KV-1S chassis and was used between July 1943 and 1945.

Armor Class: 12, **Damage Points:** 100, **Size:** Huge, **Cruising Speed:** 35, **Range:** 100 miles, **Weapons:** 152mm cannon (upper hull), **Ammo:** Max 20 (HE 5, AP 15), **Crew:** 5 (Commander, gunner, driver, loader and assistant driver), **Armor-Upper Hull:** 80/65/60, **Lower Hull:** 70/60/60, **Deck:** 30, **Suspension:** 30, **Special:** Range includes three 90-liter external fuel tanks. If these tanks are excluded, decrease Range to 75 miles.

T-34 M43

The T-34 Model 1943 was the must numerous of the T-34/76 series. It was a roomier and more reliable version as well. In all, the Russians produced over 35,000 T-34/76 series tanks, the most of any tank produced by the Russians during the



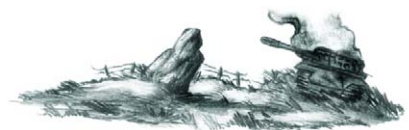
An SU-122 clears an obstacle.

war. Used between October 1942 and 1945, the T-34 M43 was a mainstay in the Russian tank corps.

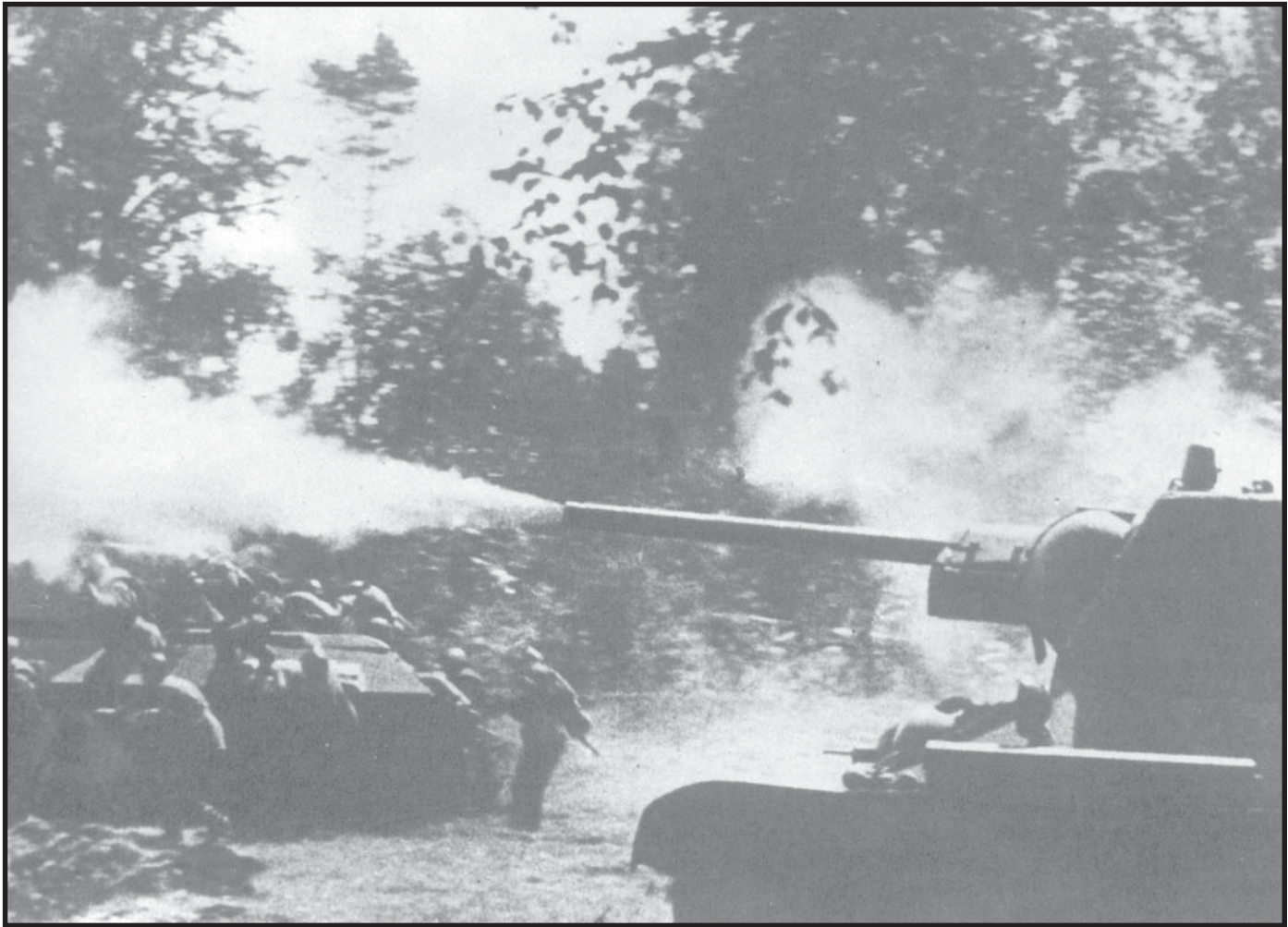
Armor Class: 16, **Damage Points:** 75, **Size:** Large, **Cruising Speed:** 45, **Range:** 150 miles, **Weapons:** 76L41 cannon (turret), DT 7.62mm (bow), DT 7.62mm (coaxial), **Ammo:** Max 77 (HE 52, AP 24), 7.62mm 2898, **Crew:** 4 (Commander, gunner, driver, and loader), **Armor-Turret:** 70/60/60, **Upper Hull:** 65/50/55, **Lower Hull:** 75/45/65, **Deck:** 20, **Suspension:** 30, **Special:** Range includes two 90-liter external fuel tanks (the third often carried additional motor oil). If these tanks are excluded, decrease Range to 100 miles.



An SU-152 transports infantry into battle.



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A T-34 gives fire support to advancing Russian infantry.

T-34/85

With Germany's development of newer Panther and Tiger tanks, the Russians realized that their T-34/76 tanks were out-gunned. The 76mm gun on the older T-34s could only penetrate the Tiger's front armor at ranges of less than 200 yards. To counter the newer German armor, Russia mounted a more powerful gun on their T-34 chassis. Produced between April 1944 and 1945, over 29,000 T-34/85 tanks were built.

Armor Class: 14, **Damage Points:** 75, **Size:** Large, **Cruising Speed:** 45, **Range:** 155 miles, **Weapons:** 85L48 cannon (turret), DT 7.62mm (bow), DT 7.62mm (coaxial), **Ammo:** Max 55 (HE 36, AP 19), 7.62mm 1827, **Crew:** 5 (Commander, gunner, driver, loader, and assistant driver), **Armor-Turret:** 100/80/50, **Upper Hull:** 90/60/65, **Lower Hull:** 90/45/65, **Deck:** 20, **Suspension:** 30, **Special:** Range includes two 90-liter external fuel tanks (the third often carried oil). If these tanks are excluded, decrease Range to 115 miles.

Trucks

The Soviet Army was not highly motorized before the war began, but this changed rapidly once the US Lend-Lease program began. Thousands of tanks and hundreds of thousands of trucks arrived in Russian ports during the course of the war. American armor was generally thought unfit for front-line service by the Russians (the T-34 was a much superior tank to the Grants and Shermans supplied by the US), but the American trucks were widely used for transporting supplies and troops. Many of the troops defending Stalingrad arrived there in the backs of American Studebakers. The trucks supplied through Lend-Lease gave the Soviets an ever-growing mobility advantage over the Germans.

Armor Class: 12, **Damage Points:** 40, **Size:** Huge, **Cruising Speed:** 60, **Range:** 165 miles, **Weapons:** None, **Ammo:** None, **Crew:** 1 (Driver), **Armor-Upper Hull:** 2/2/2, **Lower Hull:** 2/2/2, **Deck:** 20, **Suspension:** 20





Russian Weapons

The Russians had very few weapon variations. They would rather roll over a Fascist with a big bad tank! That's why they built so many of them. However, no army can survive on tanks alone, and the Russians were no exception. Listed below are the most common types of small arms and infantry support weapons.

Pistols

The Soviets had two standard pistol models they relied on.

Nagant Model 1895 Revolver

This 7.62mm caliber pistol originated in Belgium and had an unusual design in that a gas tight seal was achieved between the cylinder and barrel (the common revolver accepts gas leaks as inevitable). The effect of the seal added an increase in muzzle velocity of 50 feet per second. Some argue that the added complexity to achieve the seal was not worth the benefit. Nonetheless, the Nagant was adopted in 1895 by the Imperial Russian Government and produced throughout WWI.

The Nagant revolver was standard issue to officers in the Tsarist and Red Armies. To some extent, it was also issued to specialist personnel such as NCOs, messengers, and machine gunners. However, with the vast expansion of the Red Army, its use decreased during World War II because the government thought it was quicker and easier to provide sub-machineguns.

Of possible interest to War Masters running a more clandestine campaign, unlike you see in the movies, the Nagant revolver is the only revolver that can be effectively silenced. Most revolvers allow gas to escape around the sides of the cylinder, creating noise that negates the silencer. The tight gas seal around the cylinder on the Nagant eliminates this noise.

On a side note, a modern Soviet target pistol that is used for international competition shooting uses the same gas-seal system and cartridge.

Tokarev Model TT33 and TT34 Automatic Pistol

Adopted in 1933, the Tokarev 7.62mm pistol was based on the John Browning design as exemplified by the US Colt M1911 pistol. It used the same swinging link system of locking barrel and slide

together. However, there was no grip safety, and the firing pin, hammer, and lock mechanism were in a removable sub-unit. The pistol was very reliable and less prone to malfunctions and misfeeds because the feed lips were machined into the pistol frame. In most other automatic pistols, this feature was part of the magazine and when the magazine was dropped, damage could occur to the feed lips.

There was no difference between the two models other than the fact that the TT34 incorporated a design that simplified and speeded up production. Go figure! The pistol was general issue to infantry officers although there is evidence that large numbers were not produced. As mentioned already, the sub-machinegun was the weapon of choice with the Red Army—the more firepower the better!

The Tokarev was a powerful weapon, despite its small caliber, and causes considerable damage. However, the pistol was light and was a rather violent weapon to shoot (i.e. recoil was very nasty).

Rifles

The Russian infantry primarily used a single model of rifle, the Mosin-Nagant. It was highly accurate and fired a powerful 7.62mm round.

Model 1930G Rifle

In 1931, the Soviet Army introduced the 1930G. Based on the Mosin-Nagant Model 1891, the 1930G had improved sights and its design was simplified to make production easier. (Again with that simplicity!) It became the standard infantry rifle and remained so throughout the war. The 1930G was eventually supplemented, of course, by sub-machineguns that were a lot cheaper and quicker to make—and a lot more fun to use!

The Model 1930 (sometimes called the 1891/30) was another rifle based on the Mosin-Nagant Model 1891. This version was fitted with sighting telescopes for use by snipers.

Tokarev SVT-40 Automatic Rifle

Generally issued to NCOs of infantry regiments, the STV-40 suffered from an inability to withstand the rigors of active service unless carefully maintained. They were later withdrawn from general service and the majority of them converted to sniping rifles.



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Sub-Machineguns

With the exception of sniper units, Soviet doctrine did not stress marksmanship. Instead, firepower was seen as the key to winning infantry battles. Thus many Russian units were equipped with simple, easy-to-produce sub-machineguns.

PPSh-1941

The PPSH (Pistolet Pulyemet Shpagin) was developed in 1940-41 to replace the PPD 40 model because the PPD 40 was not suited to fast production in large quantities. An even nicer benefit to the PPSH-1941 was that it was made from old and reserve Mosin-Nagant rifle barrels. The Russians cut one rifle barrel to make two PPSH-1941 barrels. This saved time, resources, and machinery. Simply put, the PPSH-1941 was robust, simple to use, and

cheap to make. During WW II, over five million were made. In fact, whole divisions were armed with nothing else. The weapon was well suited for the way the Russians approached production and it fit their tactics (go after your enemy head on).

The Germans captured a large number of the PPSH-1941 and converted them to fire 9mm ammunition by altering the magazine housing to take the standard MP-38 magazine. The PPSH sub-machinegun came to be almost the badge of the Red soldier, much as the MP-38 was that of the German.

PPS 1942

The PPS was designed and put into production inside of and during the siege of Leningrad because weapons were in short supply. This went against the Russian philosophy of selecting one



A Maxim machinegun on a typical "Sokolov" mount.





design and mass-producing it to the exclusion of every other. However, the Russians were in dire need of weapons and ended up producing a reliable weapon that was very effective. Some say that this was the cheapest weapon of any type ever produced, which was evident by the rough finish, "dirty" welds, and visible grind marks. There was no provision for a single shot.

Machineguns

Like the Germans, much of the Soviet infantry tactics were based around the firepower of the machinegun.

Maxim 1910

There is a lot to be said for settling on a good design and then sticking with it, which is just what the Russians did with the Maxim gun. It was used extensively in the war, benefiting from a firing mechanism that was one of the most reliable. The weight, however, made it difficult to move but contributed to the weapon's reliability. For comparison purposes, the British Vickers and the German Maxim 1908, which were basically the same guns as the Russian Maxim, weighed 9 kg and 5 kg respectively less. The Russians developed their unique wheeled 'Sokolov' mount, a tubular steel trail into which the gun was mounted and which acted both as a carrying cart and a firing mount.

In the winter, the wheels could be replaced with a pair of sled runners allowing the gun to be towed by ski-troops. The weight of this variant was 73.8kg, which equals approximately 162lbs.

DP 1928 Machinegun

Adopted in 1928, the DP 1928 became the standard light machinegun of the Soviet Army. The DP was a very good design and particularly well suited to the Soviet Army. With six moving parts, it did not demand highly skilled labor or complex machinery to manufacture. The DP was also simple to operate and extremely robust.

There were two disadvantages to the weapon. First, because the drum magazine was made of thin sheet steel, there is a 40% chance that the magazine is damaged (becoming useless) if dropped or handled roughly. Second, the weapon is prone to overheating during prolonged firing thus damaging the return spring. Therefore, if the weapon is fired for six consecutive rounds, in the seventh and later consecutive rounds, there is a 66% chance

per round that the return spring is damaged due to overheating—rendering the weapon useless. If damaged, the weapon does not fire for that round or any other round until repaired.

Consecutive firing can be avoided if the weapon is "rested" for one round in seven.

A variant, used in tanks, was the DT (Degtyarev Tankovii). The barrel was heavier and not quickly changeable, and the magazine carried 60 rounds. A bipod was provided as an accessory so that the weapon could be used as a ground machinegun.

DShK 1938 Machinegun

This heavy machinegun used a 12.7mm cartridge. Adopted in 1938, this weapon doubled as an effective anti-aircraft gun. This was accomplished with a tripod that could be erected some five feet high.

SG 43 Goryunov Machinegun

In the early 1940s, it became apparent that the Maxim 1910 was feeling its age and was not really suited to modern warfare. So, in 1943, a new machinegun was adopted—the SG 43. Originally designed for tanks, the SG 43 was more complex and heavier than one would expect from the mass-producing Russians. However, the gun was very reliable and it fired a 7.62mm cartridge. In fact, the weapon was foolproof and would continue to work irrespective of the gun's attitude: upright, on its side, or upside down.

The SG 43 was acclaimed by one authority (a Russian?) as the most successful air-cooled medium machinegun ever made with the exception of the American Browning. However, it never replaced the Maxim during the war since production could not keep up with demand.

Grenades

The lessons learned in the bloody street-fighting of Stalingrad caused the Russians to stress the use of the grenade in any close quarters combat. When supplies allowed, Soviet infantrymen were prodigiously equipped with grenades.

RPG-43 Antitank grenade

This was the first Russian antitank grenade. It was crude and nothing more than an overgrown stick grenade. It could pierce three inches (approximately 80mm) of plate. The RPG-43 was used extensively throughout the war and it dealt sufficiently with most German tanks.



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F-1 Fragmentation Grenade

This was a conventional “defensive” grenade with the typical serrated body. An external handle and safety pin resembled the Mills pattern: the grenade was grasped, the handle held, the pin removed, and the grenade “hucked” towards the intended target.

The RTD 1942, a newer variant, replaced the F-1 during the war. There were no major differences between the models other than that the RTD was the economy version and was much easier and cheaper to build.

Support Weapons

As always, the Soviets had a couple of standard mortar designs they relied on almost exclusively.

82mm BM obr. 37

Your basic medium mortar, the 82mm was based on the French Brandt. Wheels were provided after 1941 which allowed the mortar to be moved quickly without the need for disassembly. A three-man crew operated it.

120mm BM obr. 38

This was the best heavy mortar of WWII. In fact, it was so good, the German GrW 42 was an almost identical copy. The 120mm was manned by a four-man crew and had to be towed/transported by a vehicle. Due to its wheeled carriage, the mortar could be quickly set up once it reached its destination.

Antitank Weapons

In general, the Soviets used tanks to deal with enemy tanks. Despite this, however, they did have a few outstanding antitank guns that could deal with German armor.

100mm PTP obr. 44

The Russians did not mess around with too many antitank weapons. Heck, that was the tank’s role and why they built so many of them. However, the 100mm was an excellent gun that served as both a field and AT gun. It had a crew of seven and required a vehicle for transport. (HE20/AP30).

85mm obr. 44

The standard Russian field gun, this was a very potent weapon against armor. As such, it was used mainly as an antitank gun. It had a crew of seven and required a vehicle for transport. (HE10/AP40).

AA Guns

The Russians deployed large numbers of antiaircraft guns to deal with the threat from the Luftwaffe. AA batteries were often crewed by female soldiers.

85mm ZP obr. 39

An excellent anti-aircraft weapon, it rivaled the German 88mm. It had a crew of seven and required a vehicle for transport. (HE40/API5).

Rockets

The Russians fired a boatload of them in the following sizes: 80mm, 120mm, and 200mm. When calling in fire, a spotting round is not called, nor can the rockets be adjusted for accuracy or walked; the centering die is not made. Instead, the hero rolls a 3d20 in a d12 direction from the desired target point to see how close to the actual target point the rockets land. Then, the deviation die is rolled for each incoming rocket to determine the final hit location. Fun! Basically, the Russians would line trucks equipped with multiple rocket racks up hub-to-hub and just fire away. The effectiveness of these massive rocket barrages was extremely demoralizing to the Germans.

Russian Aircraft

The aircraft that follow were the primary ones used by the Russians in WW II. In addition, through the Lend-Lease program, the Russians used P-51 Mustangs, B-26 Mitchells, and C-47 Dakotas. Please refer to *Weird Wars: Dead from Above* for additional information on the Lend-Lease planes.

Fighters

Although most Russian pilots were poorly trained, they did have a number of solid fighter designs.

Lavochkin La-5FN

The Lavochkin La-5FN was one of Russia’s best fighters during WWII. Designed with non-strategic materials in mind, the La-5FN was almost entirely constructed of wood. The LA-5 series was used primarily as a fighter-bomber.

Armor Class: 14 (-4 size, +6 speed),
Damage Points: 50, **Size:** Huge,
Maneuverability: +3, **Engines:** 1, **Range:** 475 miles, **Weapons:** 2 x 20mm cannon (mounted on engine, 6 bursts), **Bombs:** 2 x 100 kg., **Crew:** Pilot, **Armor-Wing:** 1, **Fuselage:** 1, **Cockpit:** 2, **Engine:** 4.





Mig-3

The Mig-3 was designed to overcome some of the deficiencies of the earlier Mig-1 model. The Mig-3 performed best at high altitudes, it was noticeably less maneuverable at lower heights. To reflect this in the game, reduce the Mig's Maneuverability by -1 when it has a position of 3 or less.

Armor Class: 14 (-4 size, +6 speed), **Damage Points:** 50, **Size:** Huge, **Maneuverability:** +3, **Engines:** 1, **Range:** 740 miles, **Weapons:** 1 x .50 cal machinegun (6 bursts), 2 x 7.62mm machinegun (mounted in nose, 20 bursts each), **Bombs:** 6 x 80mm rockets or 2 x 100 kg. bombs, **Crew:** Pilot, **Armor-Wing:** 2, **Fuselage:** 2, **Cockpit:** 4, **Engine:** 4.

Yak-3

The Yak-3 proved to be an extremely capable dogfighter and quickly took a serious toll on the Luftwaffe. It demonstrated outstanding maneuverability and a very high rate of climb. The Yak-3 was to become the bane of Luftwaffe fighter pilots for the remainder of the war.

Armor Class: 16 (-2 size, +8 speed), **Damage Points:** 50, **Size:** Huge, **Maneuverability:** +3, **Engines:** 1, **Range:** 559 miles, **Weapons:** 1x 20mm cannon (mounted on engine, 6 bursts), 2 x 12.7mm MG (1 per wing, 25 bursts), **Bombs:** None, **Crew:** Pilot, **Armor-Wing:** 3, **Fuselage:** 4, **Cockpit:** 6, **Engine:** 8.

The Yak-9D

Yak-9s were superb aircraft that could outfight the German Bf109s. The Yak-9 proved to be the master of German fighters in all respects except armament.

Armor Class: 16 (-2 size, +7 speed), **Damage Points:** 50, **Size:** Huge, **Maneuverability:** +3, **Engines:** 1, **Range:** 825 miles, **Weapons:** 1 x 20mm cannon (mounted on engine, 6 bursts), 2 x 12.7mm MG (1 per wing, 25 bursts), **Bombs:** 2 x 100 kg. bombs, **Crew:** Pilot, **Armor-Wing:** 3, **Fuselage:** 4, **Cockpit:** 6, **Engine:** 8.

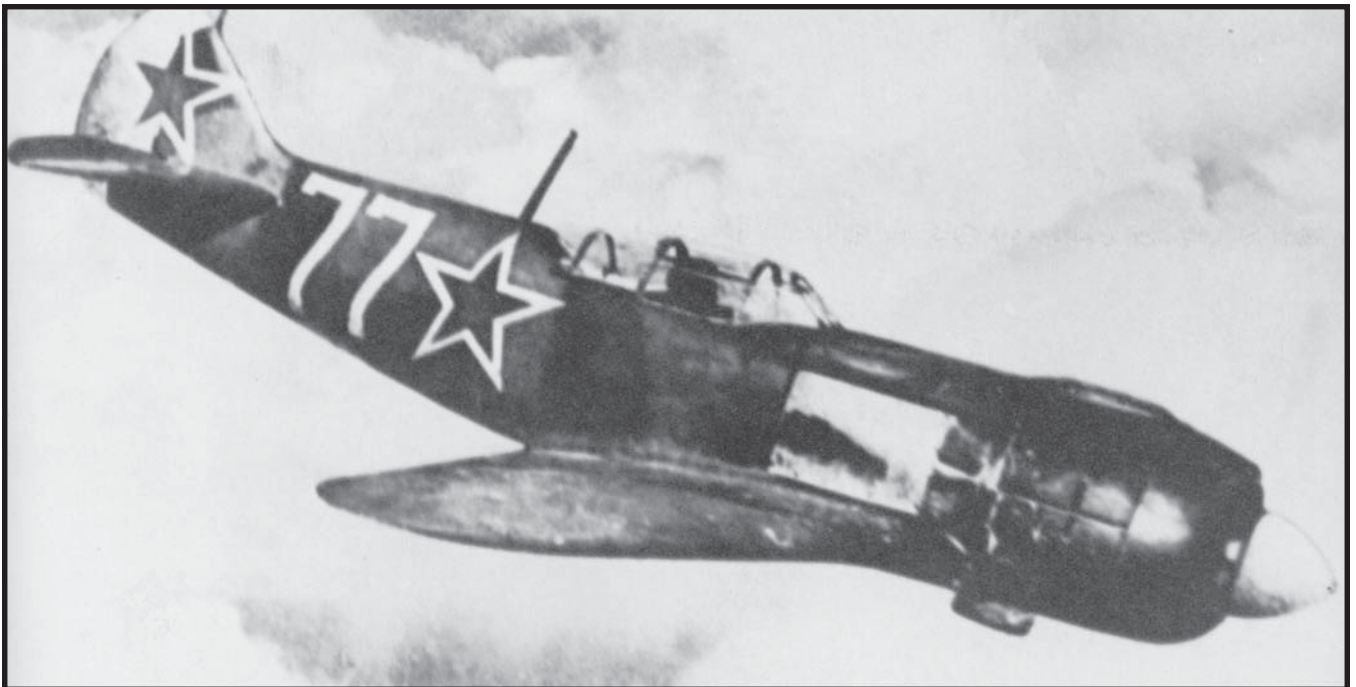
Close Support Aircraft

The Soviet Air Force possessed a ground attack aircraft that terrified the Wehrmacht as much as the Stuka did the Russian ground forces.

Ilyushin Il-2 Shturmovik

Designed as an antitank/ground attack craft, the unexciting Il-2 was built in greater numbers than any other single aircraft type during WW II. Approximately 36,000 were built at a rate of about 1,200 per month. When added to the Il-10 (a direct re-development of the Il-2) production figures, the total built is closer to 42,330.

The Il-2 was an all-metal construction plane with the whole cockpit/engine reinforced with steel armor, thereby affording superb ground fire safety to the



An LA-5 dives to attack.



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pilot and aircraft. The Shturmovik's very heavy armament of 20mm ShVAK cannons and 7.62mm guns meant that it could pierce every single German armored vehicle, even the renowned Tiger tank. Later in the war, the Russians made things worse for the Germans by updating the armament to an even harder hitting 20mm YVa cannons and/or the 37mm YVa cannons.

Armor Class: 13 (-2 size, +5 speed), **Damage Points:** 80, **Size:** Huge, **Maneuverability:** -2, **Engines:** 1, **Range:** 475 miles, **Weapons:** 2 x 20mm cannon (1 per wing, 6 bursts), 2 x 7.62mm MG (1 per wing, 25 bursts), 1 x .50 cal machinegun (rear, gunner, 8 bursts), **Bombs:** 8 x 82mm rocket, 4 x 100 kg. bombs, **Crew:** Pilot, co-pilot, **Armor-Wing:** 5, **Fuselage:** 6, **Cockpit:** 10, **Engine:** 10.

Bombers

Unlike the Western Allies, the Soviets did not engage in large-scale strategic bombing. Their bombers were used primarily for softening up objectives prior to a ground offensive.

Ilyushin Il-4

The Il-4 was one of the most important Russian medium bombers of the war. It was optimized for ease of production and field maintenance. See, even the Russian planes were simple and quick to build.

Armor Class: 13 (-2 size, +5 speed), **Damage Points:** 120, **Size:** Huge, **Maneuverability:** +0, **Engines:** 2, **Range:** 1616 miles, **Weapons:** 1 x 7.62mm MG (nose gunner, 25 bursts), 1 x 7.62mm MG (dorsal turret, 25 bursts), 1 x 7.62mm MG (rearward-firing in vertical hatch, 25 bursts), **Bombs:** up to 2,205 pounds in bombs, **Crew:** Pilot, co-pilot, bombardier, rear gunner, **Armor-Wing:** 4, **Fuselage:** 4, **Cockpit:** 8, **Engine:** 8.

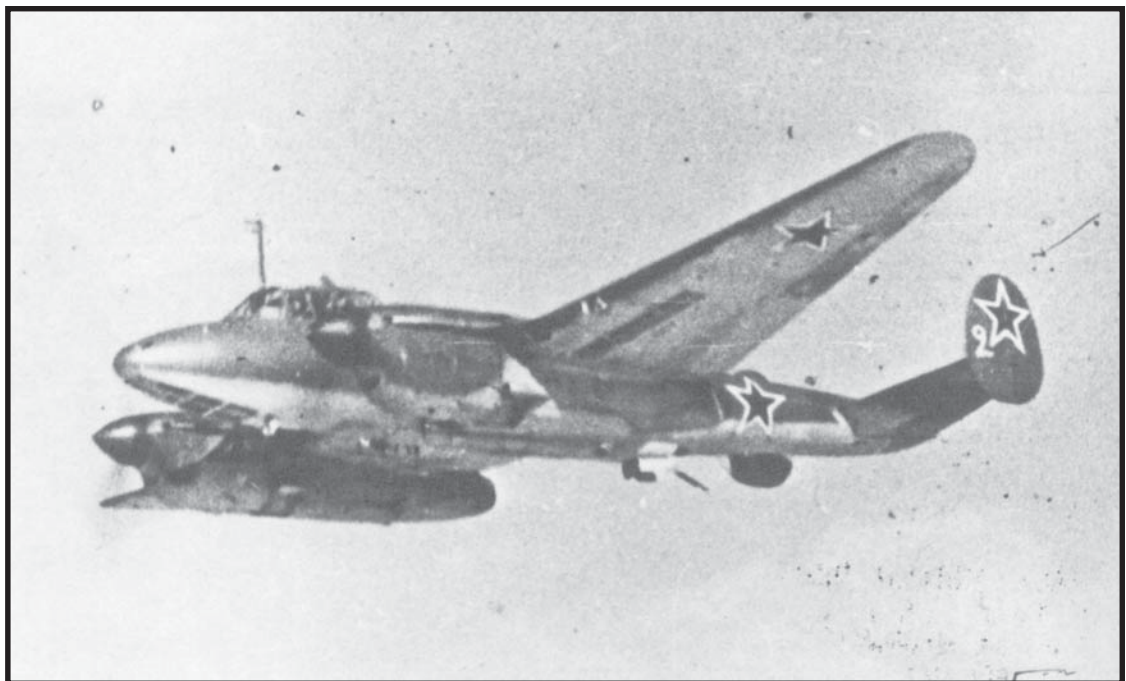
Petlyakov Pe-2

Often referred to as the "Russian Mosquito," the Pe-2 was a versatile medium bomber that was also used as a dive-bomber (close ground support bomber), heavy fighter, and long-range reconnaissance aircraft.

Armor Class: 14 (-2 size, +6 speed), **Damage Points:** 60, **Size:** Huge, **Maneuverability:** +0, **Engines:** 2, **Range:** 932 miles, **Weapons:** 2 x 12.7mm MG (fixed forward firing, 25 bursts), 1 x 7.62mm MG (rearward-firing in dorsal turret, 25 bursts), 1 x 7.62mm MG (trainable rearward-firing in vertical position, 25 bursts), **Bombs:** up to 3,527 pounds in bombs, **Crew:** Pilot, co-pilot, rear gunner, **Armor-Wing:** 2, **Fuselage:** 2, **Cockpit:** 4, **Engine:** 4.

Tupolev Tu-2

The Tu-2 was one of the best high-speed bombers of the Second World War. It possessed excellent operational capabilities in terms of performance, strength and versatility.



A Pe-2 on patrol.





An LA-7 prepped for flight on a snowy airfield.

Armor Class: 12 (-2 size, +6 speed), **Damage Points:** 100, **Size:** Gargantuan, **Maneuverability:** -3, **Engines:** 2, **Range:** 1305 miles, **Weapons:** 2x 20mm cannon (fixed forward firing in wing roots, 6 bursts), 1 x 12.7mm MG (rearward-firing in rear of cockpit, 25 bursts), 1 x 12.7mm MG (rearward-firing in dorsal turret, 25 bursts), 1 x 12.7mm MG (in vertical position, 25 bursts), **Bombs:** up to 8,818 pounds in bombs, **Crew:** Pilot, co-pilot, 2 rear gunners, **Armor-Wing:** 4, **Fuselage:** 6, **Cockpit:** 8, **Engine:** 10.

Germany

The Germans suffered from several problems throughout the war. First, their AFV designs were not standardized. Consequently, the German AFVs cost more to build and took longer to produce in comparison to that of the Allies. This eventually crippled the Germans in the later years of the war because they could not keep up with the flood of Allied AFVs that were produced. By the end of the war, for example, the Germans had produced approximately 22,500 Panzer III-VI models while the U.S. had cranked out over 50,000 Sherman tanks.

Second, the Germans "over engineering" increased the complexity of the design. This added to the cost and production time problems and led to greater difficulty in repairing AFVs that malfunctioned/broke in the field. At

times, the complexity contributed to AFVs breaking down in the field, which ironically was cured as newer versions were designed. Moreover, in the earlier years of the war (1939 through 1942), the constant shortage of German AFVs led to their constant use, which increased the wear and tear and, consequently, the chance of an AFV breakdown.

Finally, the proliferation of the variety of AFVs led to problems in repair and supply chains, not to mention exasperating the standardization problems. For example, there were at least seventeen different types of tank destroyers used in combat while the PzKpfw IV saw no less than seven versions.

On the other hand, the German AFVs, when they were working, performed extremely well. The new variants were produced with thicker armor, better weapons, and corrected mechanical flaws. By 1943, the Germans had superior tank designs, but lacked the capacity to gain quantitative parity with the Allies.

German Vehicles

While most of the German vehicles are covered in the book, *Weird War II: Blood on the Rhine*, some armor and guns used by the Germans in their campaign against the Russians were not covered. These are listed here with additional background information that applies to the Russian front for German units detailed in the *Weird War II: Blood on the Rhine*.



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A Panzer III (F1) lights up the enemy.

Previously Referenced German Vehicles

Hummel

The Hummel was used from July 1943 through 1945. It first saw action at Kursk. A "sister" of the Hummel was the PzJg III/IV, which was called the Rhino (Nashorn). The Rhino is exactly the same as the Hummel except that the mounted weapon was an 88L71. It also had an optional MG34 on top. Increase the Ammo to 30 rounds (HE 15, AP 15, Smoke 0), add 1000 7.92mm rounds and reduce the crew to 4.

Hetzer

The Hetzer saw action from August 1944 through 1945, most of it on the Eastern Front. Very few, if any, saw action at Normandy.

Jagdpanzer IV

The Jagdpanzer IV saw action from March 1944 through 1945.

Jagdpanther

The Jagdpanther saw action from June 1944 through 1945. This was a rare tank as only 390 were built.

Marder III

The Marder III saw action from May 1942 through 1945.

PzKpfw IV

The PzKpfw IV design changed throughout the war. Prior to November 1941, the PzKpfw used a less effective 75 as its main armament instead of the 75L48 used in the F and later versions. This was the German countermeasure to the Russian T-34 and KV, which made the PzKpfw III tank and the PzKpfw IV 75 armament obsolete. By Kursk, the 75L48 was the standard gun on the IV.

PzKpfw Panther G

The Panther was the better German answer to the Russian T-34. The problem was that the Germans did not completely learn from their study of the T-34 because the Panther was built with the usual German complexities. At their debut at Kursk, the Panther suffered more losses due to mechanical failure than to the Russian guns. The Panther's drive-train and suspension were overstrained and the engine overheated and caught fire. By 1944, most of the mechanical issues were solved.

In *Weird War II: Blood on the Rhine*, a correction should be made. The Panther's main armament should be changed from a 75mm cannon to a 75L70 cannon.

PzKpfw VI Tiger

The Tiger saw action from December 1942 through 1944.

PzKpfw VI Tiger II

The King Tiger saw action on the Eastern Front from June 1944 onward.

Wespe

The Wespe (Wasp) saw its first action at Kursk. It was used from July 1943 through 1945.

New German Vehicles

There are a few additional German tanks that need to be detailed if you wish to run an early war campaign.

PZKPFW III (F1)

An upgrade of the II (F1), the III (F1) had better armor, a more powerful flamethrower, and close quarter infantry protection. The PzKpfw III (F1) first saw action at Kursk and was developed out of the German's experiences at Stalingrad.





Ordnance

Armor Class: 14, **Damage Points:** 50, **Size:** Large, **Cruising Speed:** 35, **Range:** 95 miles, **Weapons:** Flamethrower (turret), MG34 (upper hull), MG34 (coaxial), **Ammo:** Flame 65 Bursts, Smoke 4, 7.92mm 3750, **Crew:** 5 (Commander, gunner, driver, loader and assistant driver), **Armor-Upper Hull:** 65/30/45, **Lower Hull:** 65/30/45, **Deck:** 18, **Suspension:** 30, **Special:** Smoke Mortar; Flamethrower range 40-50 yards.

PzKpfw III.

The PzKpfw III series was the original mainstay of the German panzer divisions but soon became obsolete to the Russian T-34, which outgunned and out armored the III. While some of the III series appeared in Normandy as command tanks, others were converted to observation vehicles. An interesting side note is that some were modified for Operation Sea Lion to travel under water. The L version is listed here, which is an up-armored and up-gunned version of the earlier III series tanks.

Armor Class: 14, **Damage Points:** 50, **Size:** Large, **Cruising Speed:** 35, **Range:** 110 miles, **Weapons:** 50L60 cannon (turret),

MG34 (bow), MG34 (coaxial), **Ammo:** Max 92 (HE 45, AP 45, Smoke 2), 7.92mm 3750, **Crew:** 5 (Commander, gunner, driver, loader and assistant driver), **Armor-Turret:** 65/35/30 **Upper Hull:** 50/30/45, **Lower Hull:** 55/30/45, **Deck:** 18, **Suspension:** 30.

StuPz IV

Dubbed the Grizzly Bear, the Sturmpanzer IV was designed to be effective against well-fortified buildings, a lesson learned at Stalingrad where the smaller caliber assault guns had little effect. The Sturmpanzer IV first saw action at Kursk and later, on all fronts, including Anzio and in the Ardennes.

Armor Class: 14, **Damage Points:** 50, **Size:** Large, **Cruising Speed:** 30, **Range:** 130 miles, **Weapons:** 150L/12 Howitzer (upper hull), optional MG34 (bow), optional MG34 (pintle mount), **Ammo:** Max 38 (HE 30, HEAT 6, Smoke 2), optional 7.92mm 600, **Crew:** 5 (Commander, gunner, driver, loader and assistant driver), **Armor-Upper Hull:** 130/50/35, **Lower Hull:** 85/30/30, **Deck:** 20, **Suspension:** 30, **Special:** The 150 for the StuPz IV is a short barreled howitzer.



Panzer IIIs in a bivouac area are readied for battle.



Chapter Two



Pistols

Weapon	Damage	PV	Critical	Range Inc	Ammo	Type	Action	Weight	Damage Type
Nagant Model 1895	2d6	-10	19-20/x2	35	7C	7.62mm	Revolver	1.7 lbs.	Piercing
Tokarev TT33/34	2d6+2	-10	19-20/x2	30	8D	7.62mm	Semi-auto	1.8 lbs.	Piercing

Rifles

Weapon	Damage	PV	Critical	Range Inc	Ammo	Type	Action	Weight	Damage Type
Model 1930G	2d8	-5	19-20/x2	120	8M	7.62mm	Bolt	8.7 lbs.	Piercing
Tokarev SVT-40	2d8	-5	19-20/x2	120	10D	7.62mm	Semi-auto	8.5 lbs.	Piercing

Sub-Machineguns

Weapon	Damage	PV	Critical	Range Inc	Ammo	Type	Action	Weight	Damage Type
PPSh-1941	2d8	-10	19-20/x2	30	71Dd/35D	7.62mm	Semi/Auto	8.1 lbs.	Piercing
PPS 1942	2d8	-10	19-20/x2	30	35D	7.62mm	Auto	7.5 lbs.	Piercing

Machineguns

Weapon	Damage	PV	Critical	Range Increment	Ammo	Type	Action	Weight	Damage Type
Maxim 1910 *	2d8	-5	19-20 x2	120	250B	7.62mm	Auto	52 lbs.	Piercing
DP 1928 **	2d8	-5	19-20 x2	120	47Dd	7.62mm	Auto	20.5 lbs.	Piercing
DShK 1938 **	2d10	5	19-20 x3	200	50B	12.7mm	Auto	78 lbs.	Piercing
SG 43 Goryunov	2d8	-5	19-20 x2	120	50B	7.62mm	Auto	30 lbs.	Piercing

Ammo Notes: The type of magazine/ammo feed for each weapon is denoted by a single letter following the ammo supply: B = Belt, C = Cylinder, D = Detachable Magazine, Dd = Detachable Drum, M = Internal Magazine.

* If used with the 'Sokolov', add 57 lbs. to the gun's listed weight; ski-mounts add 110 lbs. to the gun's listed weight.

** If used with a tripod, add 30 lbs. to the gun's listed weight.

Hand Grenades

Weapon	Damage	PV	Primary Burst	Range Increment	Weight	Damage Type
RPG-43 Antitank	6d6	40	5	15	2.75 lbs.	Piercing/Fire
F-1 Fragmentation	6d6	0	4	15	1.25 lbs.	Piercing/Fire

Mortars

Weapon	Damage	PV	Burst	Range Increment	Minimum	Weight	Damage Type
82mm BM obr.37	6d8	10	6	250y	100	125 lbs.	Piercing/Fire
82mm shell						8 lbs.	
120mm BM obr.38	8d8	10	8	300y	150	150 lbs.	Piercing/Fire
120mm shell						9 lbs.	

Antitank Guns

Weapon	Damage	PV	Burst	Critical	Range Increment	Action	Damage Type
100mm PTP orb.44							
AP	9d12	170/6	0	x2	200y	Breach	Piercing
HE	9d8 / 8d8	70/2	8	x2	200y	Breach	Piercing/Fire
85mm obr.44							
AP	7d12	95/5	0	x2	200y	Breach	Piercing
HE	8d8 / 6d8	20/3	6	x2	200y	Breach	Piercing/Fire





Anti-Aircraft Guns

Weapon	Damage	PV	Burst	Critical	Range Increment	Action	Damage Type
85mm ZP obr.39							
AP	7d12	95/5	0	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing
HE	8d8/6d8	20/3	6	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing/Fire

German Vehicle Weapons

Weapon	Damage	PV	Burst	Critical	Range Increment	Action	Damage Type
50L60 Cannon							
AP	6d10	75/5	0	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing
HE	5d8/4d6	12/1	4	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing/Fire
150L12 Howitzer							
HE	12d8/10d8	35/1	10	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing/Fire
Heat	12d8/5d8	95	6	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing/Fire

Russian Vehicle Weapons

Weapon	Damage	PV	Burst	Critical	Range Increment	Action	Damage Type
76L41 Cannon							
AP	8d10	75/5	0	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing
HE	7d8/5d8	12/1	6	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing Fire
85L48 Cannon							
AP	7d12	95/5	0	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing
HE	8d8/6d8	20/3	6	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing/Fire
100L62 Cannon							
AP	9d12	170/6	0	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing
HE	9d8/8d8	70/2	8	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing/Fire
Heat	10d8/4d8	125	4	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing/Fire
122L43 Cannon							
AP	10d12	150/9	0	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing
HE	10d8/9d8	75/2	8	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing/Fire
152mm Cannon							
AP	12d12	115/5	0	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing
HE	12d8/10d8	85/2	10	x2	200y	Breech	Piercing/Fire

Russian Vehicle Secondary Armament

Weapon	Damage	PV	Critical	Range Inc	Ammo	Type	Action	Weight	Damage Type
DT 7.62mm	2d8	-5	19-20 x2	120	60Dd	7.62mm	Auto	26 lbs.	Piercing

Fire For Effect

Artillery	Damage	Burst	Deviation	Shots/Round	Duration
82mm mortar	6d8	4	2d10	1d6	1d6+4
120mm mortar	8d8	8	2d10	1d4	1d6+2
76mm howitzer	5d8	6	2d10	1d4	1d6+4
100mm howitzer	8d8	8	2d12	1d3	1d6+1
122mm howitzer	9d8	8	2d12	1d3	1d6
152mm howitzer	10d8	10	2d20	1d2	1d6
80mm Rockets*	6d8	6	2d20	16	5d10
120mm Rockets*	8d8	8	3d20	12	4d8
200mm Rockets*	12d10	15	4d20	8	3d6

* The number of rockets can be increased/decreased according to the battle size and time period. As the war went on, the Russians increased the number of rockets fired. These values approximate an average battle.





Chapter Three:

The Great

Patriotic War

Now that you've seen the new character types and drooled over some of the new toys of destruction available to players, it's time to take a look at what actually happened during the war in Russia and give you War Master types some ideas for how to inject some Weirdness into the festivities.

This chapter is intended primarily for War Masters, but you may want to have your players read the relevant sections so they have some idea of what their heroes have been up to during the time leading up to the first adventure.

As always, use these historical facts as a springboard for your adventures and feel free to play around with them a bit if it better suits your game. You're playing to have fun, not create a historical docu-drama! Campaign ideas set around pivotal events in the war can be found throughout the chapter. War Masters who are hard up for adventure ideas should also take a look at the Random Mission Generator included at the end of the chapter.

Heroes on the Eastern Front will find it very different from fighting in the West. War in the East was a brutal, take-no-prisoners affair. Besides fighting all manner of creepie-crawlies and the Nazis, they also may find themselves at odds with their own side.

Prelude to Barbarossa

The West never forgave the Bolsheviks for pulling out of WWI. This move made it more difficult for the Allies to defeat Germany because it allowed the Germans to concentrate all of their armies on the Western Front. The Western powers also feared Communism, whose goal was to eliminate Capitalism and Democracy. They had reason to, since Comminterns were set up in every industrial country to establish a "workers' paradise." This homegrown Communism throughout the world took orders from Moscow. Overall, the West didn't trust Russia and Russia didn't trust the West, especially considering the West's failed attempts to overthrow the Bolsheviks in 1918 and the West's delay in diplomatic recognition.

Formal ties were finally established with France, Britain and the United States in 1933 and Russia was admitted into the League of Nations in 1934. During the 30's, Stalin predicted Hitler's potential to start war and unsuccessfully tried to set up mutual assistance pacts with France and Britain. Russia even sent advisors and equipment to the royals in Spain to try and defeat the Nazi-backed military coup in 1936. Realizing Russia was alone, and to delay an inevitable conflict, Stalin felt he

Chapter Three



had no choice but to sign a Non-aggression Pact with his avowed enemy, Germany, on August 23, 1939. The pact pledged mutual cooperation and neutrality when either went to war against another country.

Japanese Truce & Soviet Non-Aggression Pact

Starting in 1938, Russia prepared for the possibility of simultaneous attacks by the Japanese and Germans. The size of the Russian army was increased from 2 million in 1939 to 5 million in 1941. Factory production was stepped up to produce 700 aircraft, 4,000 mortars and artillery guns, and 100,000 rifles.



A Soviet howitzer responds to the German onslaught.

The possibility of war with the Japanese was real. Both sides battled at Lake Khasan in mid-1938 and the Soviets occupied land on the Manchurian border in May 1939. Zhukov led the first use of Russian armor and 112,500 troops in August 1939 to remove the Japanese. The battle resulted in a Russian-Japanese truce that was agreed to on September 15, 1939.

Both Stalin and Hitler were aware of each country's potential for military conquest. In an effort to delay what Stalin correctly predicted would be a future German attack on Russia, the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty was prepared on August 23, 1939. The public section of the document openly declared that Germany and Russia would not go to war with each other and would instead promote bilateral trade. In exchange for Russian coal, food, and oil, the Germans provided machinery to the Soviet Union. The secret section of the treaty outlined a division of Eastern Europe. Each country was to share Poland, but the Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia were allotted to the Soviet Union. Russia was also allowed to take the province of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina from Romania.

This treaty gave Hitler the confidence to invade Poland on September 1, 1939 without fear of Russian interference. Russia invaded its portion of Poland on September 17—two days after the Russian-Japanese truce ended hostilities on the Soviet-Manchurian border.

The Non-Aggression Treaty was amended by a second document called the Boundary and Friendship Treaty on September 27, 1939. Under this agreement, the Germans gave Lithuania to Russia's sphere of influence in exchange for territory in Eastern Poland. As a result, the River Bug served as the dividing line between German/Russian-occupied Poland. Stalin was quoted as saying, "Hitler is thinking of tricking us, but I think we've got the better of him."

Although suspected by the ever-paranoid Stalin, Hitler hid his true feelings, "My pact was only meant to stall for time. We will crush the Soviet Union!"

In preparation for this predicted future war with Germany, Stalin scared the governments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into signing mutual assistance treaties in the fall of 1939. They allowed the Russian army to build bases in their countries. By June 1940, these once independent countries were made Soviet Republics and their governments Communist.





Russian Invasions (1939-1941)

Taking advantage of the peaceful situation with Germany, Stalin made good on his threats with Finland to establish a Soviet-Finnish government and invaded on November 30, 1939. Over a million Russian troops were committed during the four-month war. By March 1940, this "Winter War" cost Russia 200,000 soldiers and gained Russia only a border further north of Leningrad. The Finns lost a tenth of their land in the peace treaty signed March, 1940. The campaign was so costly to the Russians a Soviet general said, "We have won enough ground to bury our dead."

The Finns retained their independence, but used Russia's attack to justify their invasion of Russia in 1941. To discourage further Soviet ambitions, Hitler made a treaty with the Finns that eventually led to the presence of German troops.

On June 15-17, 1940, the Russian army occupied Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Beginning on June 26, 1940, as part of the secret portion of the Non-Aggression Pact, Stalin annexed northern Bukovina and Bessarabia from Romania. Not surprisingly, Germany sent troops into Romania and to the Lithuanian border.

All these prewar actions taken by Stalin were done to buffer Russia from eventual conflict with Germany. In less than a year, Stalin added 175,000 square miles and 20 million people. In fact, Stalin played with the idea that Russia would be the first to break the Non-Aggression Pact since he incorrectly assumed that Hitler would want to finish off Britain before turning his war machine on Russia. Even if Germany attacked first, Stalin believed in an unrealistic military Soviet doctrine, that preached the Red Army would repel any attack and crush the enemy on his own territory.

Directive No. 21

As Germany's panzers were closing in on Paris in June 1940, Hitler ordered Colonel Bernard von Lossberg to detail a plan to attack Russia. Once Western Europe was secured, the German High Command tweaked Lossberg's 30 page report and submitted it for Hitler's approval. Chief of Operations General Alfred Jodl urged Hitler to sign the directive authorizing the attack and said, "The Russian colossus will prove to be a pig's bladder. Prick it and it will burst."

Lebensraum

Hitler wanted Russia's resources, rich agricultural lands and its territory for German colonization, "Our goals in Russia: Crush armed forces, break up State. This is a war of Extermination!. The conquest of new living space in the East and its ruthless Germanization."

Hitler even made his obsession for living space known 16 years before Directive no. 21 in his book *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), "...to guarantee to the German nation the soil and territory to which it is entitled on this earth, we are bound to think first of Russia and her border states." Stalin obviously wasn't a big reader.

Once conquered, Russia would be colonized after the Jews, gypsies, and Slavs were depopulated and some Ukrainians and Belorussians were Germanized. According to Hitler, the Slavs were a racially "*degenerate, inferior race*" and a "*mass of born slaves*" for the Germans to exploit. Furthermore, Hitler preached that the country's political system was hateful—Bolshevism was a Jewish plot,

To help achieve his goals of depopulation, Hitler ordered in May 1941 the Commissar Decree and Barbarossa Jurisdictional Decree. He also permitted Heinrich Himmler and Reinhard Heydrich to create the Einsatzgruppen immediately before the invasion of the Soviet Union with the main purpose to liquidate (murder) Jews, Romany (gypsies), and political operatives of the Communist Party.

Hitler Ignores Generals

Hitler's generals warned him not to repeat the mistake of fighting a two front war as Germany had done in WWI. Joseph Goebbels commented, "Germany has never had the luck in a two front war. It won't be able to stand this one in the long run, either."

Hitler countered Goebbels and his generals' concerns by pointing out that Britain was weak and Russia would only grow stronger the longer he waited, perhaps even aiding Britain. Thus, Hitler reasoned the best time to strike was in 1941 while Russia was still recovering from the Soviet-Finnish War and Stalin's Great Terror. He also argued that it would take only 8 to 10 weeks to conquer Russia and then Britain would sue for peace. Hitler said, "Just kick in the door and the whole rotten structure will collapse."





Rescuing Mussolini

The attack on Russia would have happened sooner if it weren't for an Italian screw-up. Benito Mussolini attacked Greece from Italian-occupied Albania on October 28, 1940 without notifying Hitler. British-supported Greek forces made it so difficult that an angry Hitler had to divert troops from the Russian front preparations to assist the incompetent Italians.

A problem also emerged in nearby Yugoslavia when Prince Paul's agreement to enter into the Tripartite Pact was voided on March 27 when General Simovic led a coup d'etat. Hitler had no choice but to simultaneously invade both Greece and Yugoslavia on April 6, 1941. Yugoslavia capitulated on April 17 and Greece on the 23rd but partisan warfare, especially that waged by Tito's Yugoslavian forces, raged on throughout the remainder of the war. These Axis victories delayed the Barbarossa start date, shortening the number of days before the Russian winter.

Unfortunately, Hitler did not listen to his Generals and launched Germany into the greatest and longest land battle in the history of man. Surprise was on the side of the Germans, for Stalin did not believe they would attack what he considered the greatest military power in the world. As a diversionary measure, Hitler had even offered Russia a chance to join the Tripartite Pact signed by Japan, Italy, and Germany on September 27, 1940. Stalin refused, but nonetheless the Germans would not have had surprise if the stubborn Stalin had paid attention to numerous warnings.

Warning Signs

In mid-February, an anti-Nazi German printer gave the Berlin Soviet embassy a German-Russian phrase book with instructions on how to say "Are you a Communist?," "Take me to the Collective Farm Chairman," "What is the name of the secretary of the local party committee?," and "Hands up or I shoot." In March, the U.S. handed the Washington Soviet Ambassador Konstantin A. Oumansky a copy of Hitler's invasion plan obtained from anti-Nazis in Berlin. In April, Churchill warned of the attack in a top-secret message. There were reports of huge movements of German troops and material from the west to east. On May 12, Richard Sorge, the Soviet secret agent in Tokyo, revealed that Japan was asked by Hitler to attack Russia simultaneously from the

East. German planes were violating Russian airspace; no doubt on reconnaissance missions. German diplomats and their families packed-up and left the Soviet Union in May as well. It was known on June 11 that the German embassy in Moscow burned official documents. Four days later the Commissar of the Navy reported, "*German ships were pulling out of Soviet ports in a hurry.*"

By June 14, 1941 the people of Russia learned of the rumors and TASS (the official Soviet news agency) dismissed the rumors of German invasion as U.S./British propaganda. After four days of transmitting the complete message by radio, on June 18, 1941 the Soviet secret agent in Switzerland named Alexander Foote summarized Operation Barbarossa as a surprise invasion to quickly destroy the Red Army and make Hitler master of all Russian territory west of the Urals. Last, but not the least, a German deserter wanting to escape a reprimand for striking an officer warned of invasion on June 18, 1941.

Stalin believed that the buildup was a ploy to divert attention from Germany's invasion of Britain. He also miscalculated that like Poland, Russia would receive a series of demands before a German attack; perhaps being asked to cede territory. Stalin welcomed such a warning in exchange for giving up a little land or supplying more resources. In theory, German demands would tip-off Stalin of an impending attack, but Hitler issued no demands.

Stalin publicly denied the possibility of a German attack and took special care not to provoke Germany, at least not until Russia was better prepared to go to war. Between February 1940 and June 1941, while intelligence poured in about the impending attack, Russia kept its part of the Non-aggression Pact and sent Germany 2 million tons of petroleum products, 1.5 million tons of grain, and large amounts of chrome and manganese ore. Copper was even bought from the U.S. and passed onto the Germans. In addition, Stalin ordered no defense preparations.

As a result, no Russian troops were ready for the attack. Tractors and trucks used to tow guns were away building fortifications. The Red Air Force was fatigued and low on fuel from night training. Only the Kiev military district was prepared. Before the attack Hitler sent this message: "[the] greatest force in world history is now going into action in order to save the whole of European civilization and culture."





War Begins in the East

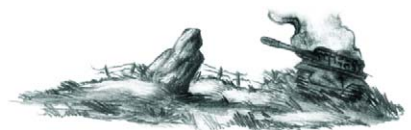
Operation Barbarossa begins. The Wehrmacht committed nearly 80% of the German army to the attack that began at 0200 hours, Sunday, June 22, 1941. More than 3,500 tanks, 600,000 vehicles, 2,700 aircraft, 7,100 artillery, 3 million soldiers and 12 Romanian, 3 Hungarian, and 2.5 Slovakian divisions took part. An additional 18 Finnish divisions joined from the north three days later. Three Italian and one Spanish divisions would also take part later. Four main army groups made up the attack along a 2,000-mile invasion line that stretched from the Barents Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south:

Army Group Center, under Field-Marshal von Bock, attacked between the Pripet Marshes and the Suvalki Peak, commanded 49 Divisions that included 9 panzer, 6 motorized, and 1 cavalry division.

Army Group Center was to attack from Poland across the Bug River and from East Prussia, split into two wedges toward Minsk and Smolensk and encircle parts of the Russian army. It was then to advance toward Moscow, Russia's transportation and communication hub. Colonel-General Guderian, commander of Panzer Group 2 and Colonel-General "Papa Hoth," commander of Panzer Group 3, would conduct the encirclement. Both would form a duel-edged *Schwerpunkt* (a blitzkrieg term meaning spearhead, the point of maximum concentration) within Army Group Center. Hoth was north of Guderian's position.



A Russian city devastated by the German blitzkrieg.



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Army Group North, under Field-Marshal Ritter von Leeb in East Prussia, was comprised of 29 divisions that included 3 panzer and 2 motorized divisions. The goals of Army Group North were to attack from northeast Prussia toward Leningrad and secure the Baltic Sea. Hitler wanted Leningrad because it was the gateway to Russia's northern ports and because it was named after the Hero of the Russian revolution.

Army Group South, under Field-Marshal von Rundstedt, was comprised of 42 Divisions that included 5 panzer and 3 motorized divisions. In addition, south of the Pripet Marshes, the 11th German Army supported a large group of Hungarians and Romanians. Attacking from southern Poland across the Bug River, the immediate goal was the fourth largest city in Russia, Kharkov. Army Group South would then advance across Ukraine to Kiev and secure the Soviet Union's breadbasket and the industrial, coal rich basin of the Donis River. Overall, Hitler wanted the Ukraine's agriculture and industry and believed that German control of the south would wreck the Soviet economy and cause the people to turn on their Communist government.

White Nights

The night of June 21-22 has the shortest night of the year and in northern Russia it is a night when the sun never sets. There are only two or three hours of real darkness. As a tradition, many Russian officers and soldiers were up late celebrating the midsummer season. During the darkness, saboteurs planted months before cut telephone lines, murdered sentries, and disabled Soviet vehicles. Before the attack a German unit

walked across a Soviet-held bridge on "urgent business" and killed the unsuspecting frontier guards. The Germans took every needed bridge along a 500-mile length of the Bug River.

The Attack Begins

At 0315 hours, 6,000 German gun flashes lit the eastern dawn. Twenty minutes later the first wave of Stuka dive-bombers went in. At 0415 hours advance units of panzer divisions crossed the Bug River. Panzer Group 2 led by Guderian began to uncoil like a giant snake. Eight hundred tanks, spewing diesel fuel into the crisp morning air, shattered feeble Russian defensive positions. The Red Army was reacting like some prehistoric monster caught in a net. It struggled desperately, but it was far too slow to cope with the German's blitzkrieg attack perfected in the West.

Field Marshal von Rundstedt, commander of Army Group South, concentrated elements down the relatively narrow gap between the southern edge of the Pripet Marshes and the northern foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. A German Lieutenant of the 29th Motorized Division summed up their success with this statement, "...the Russian defenses might have been a row of glass houses."

The speed of the panzers, the tireless menace of the Luftwaffe, and the brilliant use of combined arms gave the Germans an aura of invincibility. The flat terrain lent itself to German blitzkrieg and the weather was perfect for the Luftwaffe. The Nazi's developed the blitzkrieg technique because the German army could not afford a long drawn out war. Oil and fuel shortages were always a problem. The capture of railroad lines was a top priority since much of the army relied on horse-drawn supply vehicles. The attack was so fast that German motorcyclists came upon a group of Red Army recruits undergoing drill instruction. German infantry marched up to 30 miles a day and engineers put up bridges in less than 9 hours. Confidence was so high that only one-fifth of the invasion force was outfitted with winter clothing.

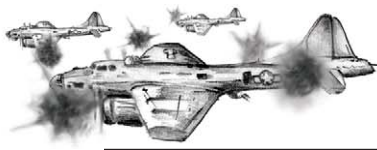
Hitler's propaganda machine justified the attack to the German people and the rest of the world by accusing Russia of failing to deliver goods promised in the Non-aggression Pact, breaking neutrality in secret negotiations with Britain, and building forces along its western borders for an attack on Germany.

Brest Fortress

Brest Fortress is located on the banks of the River Bug, Guderian was about to attack it again after having captured it two years ago from the Poles. It was given to the Russians as part of the September 27, 1939 Boundary and Friendship Treaty.

The fortress was bombed for a week and German infantry assaults were repelled. On June 29, 7,000 Russian troops, wives, and children surrendered after the fortress was practically destroyed by 4,000-pound bombs. However, some small groups remained in fortress labyrinths refusing to give up. On the plaster walls, a soldier by the name of Ivanov wrote, "The Germans are inside. I have one hand grenade left. They shall not get me alive."





Russian Forces Overwhelmed

The Red Army was the world's largest with 5 million soldiers, but it was poorly equipped and inefficient. German intelligence believed the Red Army was made-up of 213 divisions but the actual number was 360. The Russians faced the Germans with around 3 million troops stationed on the front and another 1 million scattered east of Moscow. This combat strength was divided into 150 infantry-cavalry divisions and 40 armored-motorized brigades, broken up into 5 military districts; Leningrad, Baltic, Western, Kiev and Odessa.

Although Russia was the only nation to field a heavy tank at the time of Barbarossa, the Soviets seemed ignorant of the rules of mechanized-combined arms warfare. Whole divisions assembled and marched toward the sounds of German guns. Russian tank brigades took on fuel and ammunition and attacked in piecemeal formations.

Luftwaffe interdiction and a stubborn adherence to a hopelessly outdated strategic plan doomed many of the Russian armies. Stalin did not permit Russian aircraft to fly until four hours after German bombing of over 60 Russian airfields. By midday, 1,200 Russian planes were destroyed, 800 of which were destroyed on their airfields. Bombers were ordered into battle without fighter escorts. Aircraft flew in from central Russian airfields, in tactically foolish formations, and were slaughtered. By midday, the Luftwaffe lost only 10 planes. Luftwaffe Field Marshal Albert Kesselring commented that the picking off the Russian bombers was as easy as "*infanticide*." In the first two days Russia lost over 2,000 aircraft.

Overall, 80% percent of Russia's 12,000 airplanes were obsolete such as biplanes with top speeds of less than 300 miles per hour. In contrast, Luftwaffe planes could fly at speeds more than 350 miles per hour. Most planes lacked radios and communication was achieved by way of wing wagging. Old planes were not maintained and replaced when new ones arrived.

In Moscow, Stalin received only fragments of the situation due to a general breakdown in communications and his subordinates' fear of reporting bad news. Once the attack started, as required by Stalin himself, Russian officers not in

Campaign: Barbarossa

It is tempting to begin a Russian Front game with Operation Barbarossa but War Masters must keep in mind that during the first 5 months Russian equipment, leadership and training were sub-standard and in short supply, millions of Russians were killed and captured, most of Russia west of Moscow was conquered or under siege, and the NKVD and commissars were shooting their own comrades for retreating and not following orders.

However, through a benevolent War Master, players could narrowly escape the German blitzkrieg or encirclement. The night of June 21-22, characters could chance across German saboteurs or a German engineering squad attempting to secure a key bridge on the morning of the 22nd. After surviving the Blitz, characters could regroup for a counterattack that ultimately fails. This could then provide the opportunity for characters of varying backgrounds to come together and form the core of a partisan brigade based out of the Pripet marshes. The players could then begin the difficult tasks of recruiting and training other partisans, securing weapons and supplies, and conducting missions of sabotage and harassment. Specifically, characters could come across an empty village and mass grave—the product of an Einsatzgruppen. Perhaps one survivor is a Gypsy or Jew that makes an ideal SOPA Adept. Eventually, the players may establish communication with Moscow to receive supply drops and advisors.

Another starting point is the Kiev military district, the only district that did not ignore the overwhelming reports of an impending German attack. Players could help prepare the areas defences and escape the encirclement and capture of the city. Or perhaps, the players are captured and must escape the march to a POW camp or the actual POW camp that becomes their new home. Perhaps partisans can aid in their escape in either case.

Instead of the trapped behind enemy lines scenario, the players might find themselves part of the defense of Sevastopol, Leningrad, or Moscow. See other adventure seed boxed sections for more information.

the middle of an attack or retreat called in for their orders. Stalin ordered that no actions be taken and forbade artillery to open fire. Pavlov's Deputy General, Bodin, shouted into the phone after having received Stalin's orders, "Its not possible! Our troops are retreating. Whole towns are in flames. Everywhere people are being killed."

By 7:15 am, four hours after the initial attack, Stalin finally issued the orders to fight the invaders but not to cross into German territory even if they could.



Chapter Three

Success?

After the first few days of success, the Germans began to encounter problems of their own. Much of the German infantry divisions were on foot and used horses and mules to move heavy equipment; 750,000 horses were used for artillery and supply units. Motorized divisions that had been re-equipped with captured French trucks began to breakdown. Supply lines stretched for long distances and were vulnerable to wandering bodies of Russian soldiers. A captain in the 18th Panzer Division wrote, "There was no feeling, as there had been in France, of entry into a defeated nation. Instead there was resistance, always resistance however hopeless."

The Russian resistance baffled the Germans. In the West, enemy troops put up a tenacious defense and when the outcome seemed predetermined, they surrendered. Soviet western commander, Pavlov, was taken back to Moscow and shot for cowardice because under his command, two pockets of Russians surrendered a total of 300,000 prisoners, 2,500 tanks and 1,500 guns.

On the German side, friction in the command structure began to rear its ugly head. Forward panzer commanders

continued to push their armored spearheads into the interior of the Russian frontier, while slow-moving infantry columns had to deal with the pockets of Russian units without tank support. Guderian, the best of the German tank generals, believed the tanks should keep moving since they were vulnerable only when they stopped. On the other hand, Guderian's and Hoth's superiors disliked seeing the panzers so far forward and threatened both men with a court-martial.

The Advance Continues

By the second day of July, 21 fresh infantry divisions struggled desperately to halt the German advance. The infantry were forced to deploy through the railway junction at Yelnya and Roslavl because the Russian army lacked vehicle mobility.

This created a battle of position which on paper favored the Germans. However, German intelligence, which had been fairly accurate about the roads in Russian occupied Poland, completely misjudged the conditions on the original Russian frontier: Ukraine and Belorussia.

Some roads were really tracks or didn't even exist. Most roads were unpaved, often deeply rutted with areas of loose sand that made traction difficult. In dry conditions, dust rose as high as houses, clogging engines, choking soldiers and horses, and reducing visibility. In contrast, good roads, called *rollbahns* in German, were available during the invasion of France.

Scorched Earth

Stalin was not heard or seen by the Russian people for eleven days after the opening of Barbarossa. Rumors spread that he was either dead, driven mad with anger, lost in depression, or in a drunken stupor.

Stalin's first public speech after the invasion came on July 3, 1941. In the speech, Stalin ordered a scorched earth policy and guerilla warfare:

"The enemy must not be left a single engine, a single railway car, a single pound of grain, a single gallon of fuel. All valuable property that cannot be withdrawn must be destroyed. Sabotage groups must be organized to foment guerilla warfare everywhere, blow up bridges and roads, set fire to forests, stores and transport...In



Russian soldiers defend against an air attack with only their rifles.



the occupied regions the enemy and all his accomplices...must be hounded and annihilated at every step and all their measures frustrated."

Many comrades heard Stalin's call, including women and children. On more than one occasion, teenage girls were found dead on the battlefield with automatic weapons in their young hands. In terms of the scorched earth policy, when possible, Russian soldiers destroyed infrastructure that might fall into enemy hands and shot any owners that resisted the demolition attempts.

Driving On

By July 10, the Germans were 300 miles in from their original start position. Poland, Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Western Ukraine were under Nazi control. The German front ran from the mouth of the Dnieper on the Black Sea to Narva on the Estonian frontier. In the center, the spearheads of Guderian and Hoth created an ominous "S"-shaped bulge in the line. The Russian salient created an extra front over 150 miles long on the exposed flanks of Army Group Center.

By July 22, Guderian and Hoth encircled the Russian salient. As they had since the start of the campaign, they repeatedly turned their forces toward each other in a succession of encircling battles. The Russians, despite being chewed to shreds by these movements, continued to fight with a crude heroism and savage determination that wore down the men and weapons of the Wehrmacht.

Directive No. 33

Hitler, already suspicious of the professional soldiers of the Wehrmacht, began to assert his will by issuing Directive No. 33. He ordered the methodical destruction of the enemy forces in the field, regardless of any overriding geographical or political objectives.

To their disappointment, the order stopped Guderian's and Hoth's march toward Moscow and forced them to support the infantry until the flanks were secure. However, by August 8th, except for Kiev and a garrison protecting the Ukrainian Black Sea port city Odessa, the Germans took all Ukrainian territory west of the Dnieper. The Russian Army lost another 103,000 prisoners, 300 tanks, and 800 guns. Seventy thousand Russians

were killed, wounded, or in unorganized retreat. Unfortunately, the German success could only be considered a local tactical victory and not a strategic one. The battles cost the Wehrmacht time, position, equipment, and men. More significantly, they increased the mistrust and rivalry between the German High Command and the field commanders. Now with major pockets of Russian resistance removed, on July 30, 1941, Hitler ordered Hoth north toward Leningrad and Guderian south toward Kiev.

Stalin's Orders

Not to be outdone by der Führer, on July 28, Stalin issued his Order No. 227. This order forbade commanders from retreating, even if only a temporary withdrawal. To ensure compliance NKVD machine gunners were placed behind attacks to mow down any cowards. Commissars applied further pressure by convincing the common soldier that Hitler's Commissar Decree applied to them as well; that they too would be tortured or executed by the Germans if captured. Thus, it became common knowledge in the Red Army that nothing would be gained by surrendering.

To the Germans' horror, when the Russians did retreat against orders, they quickly regrouped and often fought to the death, especially when trapped. At times, a rearguard remained behind and fought to the last man to cover a larger force's withdrawal.

The Smolensk Pocket

The salient around Smolensk known as the Smolensk pocket was destroyed two weeks after the Guderian and Hoth encirclement. The actual city fell on July 16, but 300,000 Russian soldiers, 3,200 tanks and 3,100 artillery pieces east of the city were captured despite a failed liberation attempt by newly raised and poorly prepared Red armies.

The loss did mark two interesting events. One, the Katyusha rockets were used for the first time and two, Stalin's son from his first marriage, Red Air Force First Lieutenant Jacob Dshugashvili, was captured on July 19, 1941, on the outskirts of Smolensk. He was imprisoned near Berlin in the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. He was supposedly later shot while trying to escape in 1943. There are rumors that he actually committed suicide, probably due to the fact that Stalin accused him of being a Nazi spy.





Adventure Seed: Stalin's Son

A number of possible adventures can be built around the capture of Stalin's son.

Rescue: Maybe Stalin isn't completely heartless. He orders the players, who are now part of SOPA, to rescue Jacob with the assistance of OSI agents and anti-Nazi Berliners. A very difficult mission indeed when one considers how far the camp is behind enemy lines, the fact that Jacob is under special watch because of his status, and the problem of how to get inside and escape without detection before the entire German army stationed in Berlin is put on alert to recapture Jacob.

Assassination: No matter how harsh it may seem, Stalin would not give a second thought to ordering the assassination of his own son if he was a Nazi spy. Perhaps Jacob provided sensitive information that aided the Germans in Operation Barbarossa and, before his death, served as a source of information for the 1942 attacks in Crimea, Stalingrad, and Caucasus. In cooperation with allied OSI and anti-Nazi agents in Berlin, SOPA player characters could be ordered the difficult task to infiltrate Jacob's POW camp and make his assassination look like an accident. One method of infiltration might be to purposely be captured and, with the behind the scenes help of an anti-Nazi German officer, be assigned to Jacob's camp as fellow POWs. Whatever the method, the difficulty of carrying-out the assassination pales in comparison to trying to escape from a camp more than 1,000 miles behind enemy lines. A wrench could be thrown into the whole situation if the players discover that Jacob isn't a spy by choice because of blood mage magic or Nazi medicine. If so, the players may question their orders, to the disagreement of an NPC Commissar, and attempt to rescue Jacob instead.

Revenge: Whether by suicide or death at the hands of the Nazis, blood mages resurrect Jacob and "program" him with the sole purpose of killing his own father. The Nazis free him near the front lines (anywhere from Leningrad down to Kursk) in the hopes that he would see his father before being executed or sent to the Gulags. The players might be the ones to find Jacob and are given the honor of escorting him back to Moscow. Through his unusual behavior of not eating, obsession with seeing his father, inability to engage in normal conversation, and uncanny ability to sense any weird thing that the players come across on their way to Moscow, the players may start to wonder if there is something wrong with Jacob. No doubt their timely rescue of Stalin would earn the players a position in SOPA and Stalin's trust; something that few ever earned from the dictator.

More Orders

At Stalin's will, the State Committee of Defense on August 16, 1941 issued an order (Order No. 270) forbidding any Red Army soldier to be taken alive or risk being branded a traitor. Surrender, even when there was no ammunition, was outlawed, and liberated POWs would be imprisoned in labor camps or killed. Families of POWs could lose their ration cards and face possible starvation.

Those that disobeyed the order were either killed outright or starved to death by the Nazis. By the end of the war, almost 6 million Soviet soldiers were captured, of whom only about 50% made it back home. Over 500,000 POWs did not survive their first day because they were either classified as Communists or Jews. By the end of the war, 2.7 million Russian soldiers had survived German concentration camps, but Order No. 270 resulted in about half of them being retransferred into the Russian gulag system.

Whether it was the threat of punishment or death or courage to save their homeland, Russian soldiers became fanatics. The Germans faced Russian pilots willing to crash their damaged planes into Nazi convoys rather than bail out and crews of burning tanks who crashed their moving coffin into enemy positions and burned to death. Other Germans complained that the Russians fought dirty, sometimes pretending to be dead or surrender. As a result, Nazis as they approached, shot Russian bodies. They also often shot any Russian trying to surrender.

On the other hand, members of the Red Army sometimes shot German soldiers after they had surrendered. The invaders of the Motherland could expect no mercy from her defenders. German prisoners were also abused like those at the Tomvos prison near Moscow. According to Guy Sajer in his memoir, *Forgotten Soldier*, food was denied to those too weak to work and if there were more prisoners than needed they:

"...were simply killed; a favorite method of execution was to hammer an empty cartridge case into the nape of the prisoner's neck. It seemed that the Russians often distracted themselves with this type of sport."





Leningrad

In the north, the battle for Leningrad took on a distinctively different character. Where the southern and central sectors consisted of huge battles of encirclement, Leningrad was laid siege. This was due partly to the lack of German military strength and also the impossible task of removing and liquidating 3 million civilians. Even Hitler understood that a massacre on this scale would need a little explaining.

The Siege of Leningrad

The offensive toward Leningrad began on August 8. Leningrad was prepared for an all out attack. Every park and square contained anti-aircraft guns. Guns were mounted on the roofs of the tallest buildings and the islands on the Neva River. People were trained in grenade throwing and street fighting. At least a million people of all ages were mobilized for 12 hours a day to construct bunkers, anti-tank ditches, roadblocks, and air raid ditches. Some old and young were evacuated, but refugees arriving from the west just as quickly replaced their numbers.

All bridges, factories, and ships were wired to blow up with a single electric circuit. Volunteer guards were formed but lacked enough rifles so they used spades instead. Main roadways into Leningrad were blocked by concrete, steel pillboxes (Voroshilov hotels) and barbed wire.

However, Hitler had different plans, a siege; a contingency not planned for by Leningrad. No surrender would be accepted nor the city occupied militarily.

By September 8, land access to Leningrad was cut off. The only way to reach the city was by air or water. German artillery attacks began on the city on September 4, with 227 more attacks by the end of November. German incendiary bombing began on September 6th. German dive-bombers had even sunk a Russian battleship in Leningrad's harbor but its long-range guns still remained above water to be fired against German positions.

One Leningrad citizen reported that on the way to work, "One has to get off the trolley car three or four times to take cover in the trenches, hallways or shelters...We waited, we prepared—but did anyone think that it would be like this?"

A 10 PM curfew was enforced and the police patrolled for imaginary enemy agents.

Zhukov took charge of the defense of Leningrad on September 9. He issued to the armies defending Leningrad on September 17 a no-retreat-or-face-the-death-penalty order. However, on October 7, Zhukov left Leningrad to defend Moscow. Leningrad was no longer threatened by an all out assault and forces that could be used to lift the siege had to be diverted to defend Moscow.

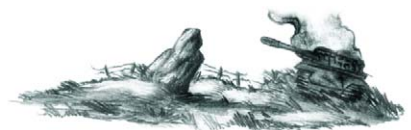
Hunger and Cold Takes its Toll

On September 2, bread rations were reduced to 600 grams a day and to 500 grams a day by September 12. Almost 300,000 improper ration cards were discovered during a compliance sweep on October 12. These illegal cards were either forged, belonged to people who no longer remained in Leningrad, or who were dead. From then on, valid cards had to have an official stamp. On November 20, rationing hit an all time low of 250 grams of bread a day, only a tenth of adult requirements.

Meat, sugar, fat, and cereals were a rare commodity. Glue, sawdust, wallpaper paste, cattle and horse feed, and botanist approved plants were eaten. Traps were laid to catch dogs, cats, rats, and birds. Even a large supply of sheep guts were consumed. There were instances of people being robbed of their rations, but there were no food riots for the people knew that such behavior would be punishable by death.

At least 11,000 people died of starvation in November and 53,000 in December. The dead were brought to the cemetery and left unburied because people were too weak to dig graves in the frozen ground. Decaying bodies littered the streets and filled cellars. Army engineers blasted out pits with dynamite for mass burials. Some bodies were discovered with missing pieces of flesh. Cannibalism was usually practiced on the dead but there were stories of children and well-fed soldiers disappearing. Meat cakes appeared on the black market and rumors spread of cannibal gangs that roamed the city. Gold teeth and grand pianos were bartered for extra rations. Anyone who looked too healthy was under suspicion.

By the beginning of October, nearly all the oil and coal was consumed so there was no central heating. Wooden houses and the nearby woods were used for fuel. When the pipes froze, people had to obtain water by bucket from the muddy River Neva that runs through the middle of the city.



Chapter Three



Campaign: Leningrad

The first nine months of the siege of Leningrad offers many unique opportunities to expose beginning characters to the real and weird horrors of war. For example, during the month of August, characters could help prepare Leningrad's defenses for the German onslaught that never comes; although during the 900-day siege the outskirts of the city experienced frequent skirmishes with the Germans. Once the state of siege becomes obvious, after August 20, the players could take on the role of securing air and boat food shipments during the months of August, September, October, and November while under daily German air and artillery attacks.

Once the lake begins to freeze over on November 17, the players could be ordered to find a safe route across the lake for food convoys. During their exploration and subsequent convoy escorts, the players could encounter ice ooze (see page 141) and other monsters, such as the frost worm or winter wolves (see *Monster Manual*), in addition to dealing with enemy fighter attacks and thin ice accidents. As part of the effort to increase food supplies, the players could take part in the attack to recapture the Tikhvin rail link or help construct the 200-mile long road from Zaborye.

Players could assist in ration card compliance sweeps, curfew enforcement, and citizen evacuation. Players might also investigate the origins of the mysterious black market meat cakes. Are the cakes made from missing children and soldiers or are they the remains of dead citizens? Are people missing because of a monster lurking in the Neva Canal or wandering cannibal gangs? During the investigation, reports of missing flesh on bodies brought to the overflowing cemeteries might introduce a new problem relating to undead occupying nearby cellars, sewers, and crypts.

Finally, on January 24, increases in food shipment, deaths, and evacuations allowed for rations to be increased to 400 grams a day. By March, food and starvation were no longer a problem and the residents of Leningrad received as much rations as the rest of the country. An oil pipeline and a cable to supply electricity were laid across the lakebed. The worst was over but during the 900-day siege some estimates put the number who died from starvation at 1 million. Another 300,000 died from enemy fire. By the summer of 1942, newspapers, theaters and movie houses were once again enjoyed. However, the siege didn't end until January 27, 1944 when the German army retreated from an overwhelming

Russian offensive. The Germans never conquered Leningrad and the battle had little effect on the outcome of the war.

Getting Food to Leningrad's Residents

Nazi and Finnish forces saw to it that Lake Ladoga was the only route by which food could be sent to the residents of Leningrad. Between September and October most food relief was sent by barge or airdrop. Only 45% of the needed supplies were shipped by barge over the still unfrozen waters of Lake Ladoga. The trip took 16 hours and 24 barges were sunk. Divers were sent to some of these sunken barges to bring up the nutritious, but moldy, grain. Only a small amount of dehydrated food arrived in the city by airdrop.

By December 6 the construction of a 200-mile long road from Zaborye through uninhabited bogs and small villages was completed around German positions. Trucks usually covered only 25 miles a day since the new "road" was more of a path littered with steep hills and slippery snow surfaces. Fortunately, the Tikhvin rail link was recaptured on December 9. Both routes increased the amount of supplies that were then brought across Lake Ladoga to Leningrad.

On November 17, Lake Ladoga was frozen enough to allow surveyors on foot—wearing life belts and attached by ropes—to mark a path across a 20-mile length of the lake. On November 19, the ice was thick enough to support light cars. Beginning on November 20, horse-drawn sleds began moving dehydrated food across the ice. On November 22, the ice was thick enough to support trucks. Eventually, 400 trucks made the trip daily but at least 1,000 trucks fell through the ice, were lost in blizzards and their crews frozen to death, or were bombed and machine gunned by German air attacks. On their way back, the trucks evacuated 11,000 residents in January, 117,000 in February, 221,000 in March, 163,000 in April and 500,000 in the summer of '42.

Hitler Heads South

In 2 months of fighting, half of Ukraine was lost, a million Russians were captured and 700,000 killed or wounded. Moscow was little more than 200 miles away along one of Russia's few concrete highways. Against the advice of his generals, on August 21, Hitler laid the groundwork for an attack in southwest Russia and not Moscow.





On the 23rd of August, Guderian flew back to Berlin to try and convince Hitler that the attack on Moscow, Russia's nerve center was more important than seizing Ukraine's industrial areas. Hitler argued that Ukraine's raw materials and agriculture were needed to feed Germany's war machine and that Russia couldn't fight without resources, especially if the Caucasus oil fields were obtained. Further, Hitler wanted to take Crimea and deny Russia its use as an air base to attack Romanian oil fields. Although the field commanders backed Guderian, no one at German Headquarters dared disagree with Hitler. Hitler got his way and said, "My Generals know nothing about the economic aspects of war."

The defeated Guderian swung his panzer group south. The drive toward Kiev into exhausted Russian forces began on August 25. Nearby Russian troops in fixed defensive positions around Kiev offered no help. German mobility and Russian ignorance were repeating themselves all over again.

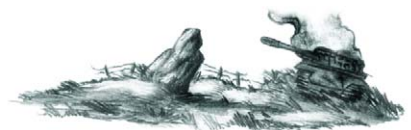
By the end of August, like Army Group Center, Army Group South was faced with long supply lines (the distance from Moscow to Berlin was 1500 miles) and bands of Russian partisans disrupting lines of communications. The lack of converted European gauge railway track, the Russian scorched earth policy, and the vastness of the Ukraine created unforeseen problems for the Germans. Despite these issues, a major German victory was achieved at Kiev. But by the end of August, 440,000 German soldiers were out of action, 94,000 permanently.

Iran Invaded

Iran's ruler, Reza Shah Pahlavi Kabir, was suspected of being pro-Nazi. There was also evidence of Nazi agents turning Iran's powerful tribal factions against the already resented British. Churchill did not want to lose the British managed Abadan oil fields and refinery and control of the Persian Gulf waterway. Both Russia and Britain agreed that the trans-Iranian rail link from Abadan to the Russian border



Russian soldiers labor to prepare their position prior to a German offensive.



Chapter Three



town of Juffa was a safer transportation route for Lend-Lease product as opposed to the Arctic shipping routes from Britain to Murmansk.

On August 21, the Shah of Iran refused to join the Ally effort and desired to remain neutral. On August 25, stating that Iran's security was threatened by German agents, the British landed and secured Abadan. They then linked up with Russian forces coming down from the north. Putting up little resistance, Iran surrendered in three days. By the end of the war, almost 4 million tons of equipment was sent to Russia over the trans-Iranian railway.

Kiev Captured

By September 11, Marshal Semyon Budenny radioed Stalin that he must withdraw to avoid encirclement in Kiev. Stalin ordered, "Not a step back! Hold out and if necessary, die."

Buddeny was flown out and replaced and reinforcements from other areas were sent toward Kiev. But that didn't matter for by September 16 the now infamous panzer encirclement surrounded Kiev. The Soviet High Command finally gave permission to withdraw but it was too late. The Russians had neither the ammunition, fuel, nor coordination to even attempt a breakout. Some trapped Russians had to fight without weapons as Stalin's recorded speeches blared over loudspeakers hung on trees. The few who did escape were relentlessly pursued through nearby forests. Confusion ensued when Kiev's top commanders were killed. Thousands of Russian trucks, tanks, and cars were destroyed on the roads leading away from Kiev.

The battle for Kiev finally ended on September 26. Over 1 million Russians were killed, captured, wounded, or missing. According to German reports, over 665,000 soldiers, 3,718 guns, and 886 tanks were captured. In the short term, Hitler proved his doubting generals wrong. All of Ukraine was soon in Germany's hands, including the Donnets Basin where 60% of Russia's coal, 75% of its coke, 30% of its iron, and 20% of its steel was produced.

Conditions at the Front

Overall, throughout the Eastern Front, it is estimated that the Russians lost two and a half million men, 22,000 guns, 18,000 tanks, and 14,000 aircraft. German losses were around a quarter of their Southern strength. More importantly there was overall wear and tear on all three German

army group's equipment and a lack of adequate supplies. From the Wehrmacht's standpoint they had largely fulfilled the first strategic objectives of Hitler's battle plan. Leningrad was isolated and the Ukraine had been opened up to the German economy and denied to the Russians.

While the battles on the front ground relentlessly forward, partisan warfare behind the front began to take its toll. German reaction to this activity was an intensification of terror toward the Russian people. Gradually it dawned on the Germans that the war would not be over soon and that their actions had completely alienated the population. Hospital trains were derailed, wounded soldiers were burned, and water supplies were poisoned. No quarter was given and none was taken.

Operation Typhoon

Once Kiev fell, Hitler finally ordered the attack on Moscow.

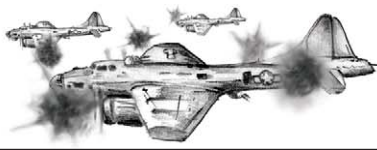
The battle for Moscow began on October 2, 1941. It lasted about a month on a 250-mile wide, 180-mile deep front. About 500,000 poorly equipped and trained Russians stood-up to the German drive. For example, a battalion of 675 men had only 295 rifles, 145 pistols, 120 grenades and 9 machine guns but 2,000 Molotov cocktails. Some soldiers were unable to read instructions because of illiteracy.

When the weather permitted, the Germans had air superiority with over 1500 planes. Confidence from the German High Command was so high that Guderian's request for winter clothing was not fulfilled because it was considered unnecessary.

Orel fell on the 3rd and the Russian cities Vyazma and Bryansk soon followed. The Leningrad-Moscow railway was also captured. By October 14, the German Army was 70 miles from Moscow. Stalin recalled Zhukov from Leningrad and ordered him to, "Organize the Western Front quickly and act!"

Zhukov called up 90,000 reservists as worker battalions who worked 24 hours a day creating defenses for each of Moscow's 25 districts, but equipment shortages limited the effectiveness of these new units. On October 16, when word spread of Nazi successes and proximity, Moscow's citizens began to flee. For three days roads leading eastward were clogged, public transportation barely ran, and shops and houses were looted.





Adventure Seed: Russian Zombies?

At the front, spiteful determination began to change the conduct of war as both sides began to limit medical services and food to prisoners. A German soldier wrote:

"Several of them [Russians] burnt by flamethrowers, had no longer the semblance of a human face. They were blistered shapeless bundles of flesh. A bullet had taken away the lower jaw of one man. The scrap of flesh which scaled the wound did not hide the view of the trachea through which the breath escaped in bubbles accompanied by a kind of snoring. Five machine-gun bullets had threshed into pulp the shoulder and arm of another man, who was also without any dressings. His blood seemed to be running out through several pipes...I have five campaigns to my credit, but I have never seen anything to equal this. Not a cry, not a moan escaped the lips of these wounded, who were almost all seated on the grass...Hardly had the distribution of supplies begun than the Russians, even the dying, rose and flung themselves forward...The man without a jaw could scarcely stand upright. The one-armed man clung with his arm to a tree trunk, the shapeless burnt bundles advanced as quickly as possible. Some half a dozen of them who were lying down also rose, holding in their entrails with one hand and stretching out the other with a gesture of supplication...Each of them left behind a flow of blood which spread in an ever-increasing stream."

After having been indoctrinated into the SOPA, the players decipher the above entry from a dead German's diary, suggesting, and unknown to the Wehrmacht soldier, that blood mages are creating zombies from dead Russians. As described in the Prologue, a blood mage has found a way to resurrect the dead as zombies that attack anyone and anything. Being in the area of one of the first tests, the Wehrmacht soldier wrote the diary entry shortly before he died, when the blood mage could not control his creations. The players learn of this by interviewing a German POW found half dead in the same area where the diary was found. The prisoner provides the blood mage's name and with the help of anti-Nazi intelligence in Berlin, the players learn that the blood mage has been reassigned to Poland-Belorussia, no doubt to carry on his experiments.

With this lead, the players are ordered to hook-up with a partisan unit, supported by the Siberian Shaman and SOPA Commissar from the Prologue, who have already liberated what was left of a Belorussian village occupied by the same blood mage carrying out zombie experiments on villagers. Together, the players, the NPCs, and partisans must hunt down and capture or eliminate the blood mage and discern how he is creating zombies. After the capture of several German soldiers, it is learned that the blood mage is stationed at the Sobibor extermination camp, located in eastern Poland. After having almost been captured by the partisans, the blood mage has picked a more secure location that also happens to contain plenty of practice subjects until he can find a way to control his zombie creations. After consulting with SOPA command—who fears that the blood mage may be close to meeting his goal—the players are ordered to act quickly to capture the blood mage and any of his research materials. If necessary, they are to liberate the camp to add to the confusion. Anything the players cannot carry must be destroyed. However, it may prove difficult to prevent the partisans from taking revenge on the blood mage who has killed their loved ones in his first experiments.

Order was reestablished on October 19 by a midnight to 5 AM. curfew, roadblocks, and NKVD police units. Worker battalions once again began building trenches, antitank ditches, and barbed-wire obstacles.

Zhukov, was determined to hold the flanks in order to keep the dreaded pincers of Hoth and Guderian apart. He also rescinded the order of standing fast regardless of the consequences because the Russian army could no longer afford to trade lives for space. Behind Moscow, Siberian units and units from the Far East gathered. However, Zhukov was determined not to use these fresh troops

until winter arrived, since many of them were trained and equipped to fight in the bitter cold. The only problem with this plan was that winter was six weeks away and the strain on the front was great.

While the Russians waited for winter, the Germans dreaded it. To compound the problem of the coming cold, the German High Command had not planned on the campaign going into December. Hitler and his staff believed that the army would take Moscow by December and German troops quartered in a major city and would therefore not need winter equipment or supplies. It was only October and the German troops were tired





Russia's Ally, the Weather

The combat and weather conditions became worse as described by the German General Bayerlein:

"After unceasing rainfall the ground became soggy and afterwards intermittently, lightly frozen. According to the map good roads should have been available. This turned out to be an illusion. The Ruza-Voronzovo highway went over a bad forest road and was only usable in the beginning...The tanks could only labor forward step-by-step in the sticky morass. The movement of wheeled vehicles was impossible. The attack, however, had to be pressed forward under all circumstances.

After only about 10 km, near Panovo, even the tanks were stuck...The Pioneers had to build a corduroy road of saplings over a 15 km stretch from Voronzovo to Panovo, but even on this, because of its unevenness, travel was only possible for full or half-track vehicles...it took several days to bring up the infantry and secure Modenovo against counter-attack.

The Russians would attack during the night...and it was necessary that the task group be constantly on the alert defensively. In order to do this it was necessary to maintain the tanks' engines at the right temperature. Every four hours the motors were run for 10-15 minutes until they had reached a temperature of 140 Fahrenheit. These periods commenced for all tanks at exactly the same second in order to minimize interference with the forward listening posts, whose task was aggravated by the dense ground mist that rose from the marsh, particularly at nighttime. We discovered that the transmissions must also be operated while the engine is idling; otherwise by a sudden start the metal parts of the power train from the engine to the drive sprockets would be damaged [because of the low viscosity of the oil at those temperatures].

For the tanks' crews it was the beginning of a bad time. The constant confinement to the inside of the tank was not possible without a reduction of the combat efficiency of the soldiers, in as much as it was narrow and cold.

Earthen bunkers could not be constructed in the ever-soggy and muddy ground. The wooden houses, which were made available as billets, were in the course of time systematically destroyed, one after another, by enemy fire, and burned to the ground.

The supply difficulties took on formerly unheard-of proportions. Through the constant warming of the engines there was a higher rate of gasoline consumption. Constant defensive combat caused a profuse ammunition expenditure. For days on end there were no hot meals for the combat troops-intestinal diseases and disorders were the result."

and much of their equipment was in need of repair and refit. Added to that there were periodic snow showers that melted quickly and made movement off-road impossible because of mud. Mud was at times 3 or more feet deep. Soldiers lost their boots and vehicles and horses sank to their axles or bellies. Over many miles, trees were felled and used to make log roadways over the mud roads. When the temperature dropped the mud froze and the trucks had to be chipped free with pick axes. Food, fuel, and ammunition was often stuck in the rear delaying attacks and weakening troops. The German army also had to contend with the superior Russian T-34 and the swampy woodlands around Moscow.

The Germans' difficulties were compounded by congestion on the actual front because only three major approaches were usable for large-scale attacks. The secondary routes were narrow, vulnerable, and weather-bound for days. Engineers had to fix one paved section of road between Orel and Tula, both southwest of Moscow, when it crumbled from the weight of Guderian's tanks. Troops and horse-drawn artillery took the slower, open country routes. On October 27, weather and congestion halted the German advance.

Advance in the South Continues

In mid-October, Army Group South made its way toward the Caucasus oil fields. Kharkov, a Russian tank production site, soon fell. By October 29, the German Army reached the Crimea Peninsula. With its west side to the Black Sea and support from the Black Sea fleet, Sevastopol's citizens and soldiers created three lines of defense to the east, south, and north of the port city. The first line was 6 to 8 miles away with countless minefields. The second line guarded the northern approach to the city with concrete and steel machinegun nests. The last line of defense ringed the edges of the city with many antitank ditches and pillboxes. The first German assault managed to take only the Balaklava Hills to the south of the city thanks in part to five heroic Russian sailors. After running out of ammunition, the sailors strapped grenades to themselves and each threw their bodies under a tank, disabling five panzers.

Except for Sevastopol and the Kerch Isthmus, the entire area was occupied by mid-November and the major port city of





Don fell on the 20th of November. Odessa, Kharkov, and Sevastopol were the last strong points in Ukraine. Sevastopol, the last of the three, would not fall until July 3, 1942.

Although never a significant strategic factor, the Russian Black Sea fleet had its share of tactical successes. During both the sieges of Odessa and Sevastopol the fleet brought in supplies and reinforcements. More importantly, the fleet was able to evacuate from both ports Russian forces that would live to fight another day.

Lend-Lease

In November, 1941 the Lend-Lease Law of the United States was extended to Russia. The U.S. and Britain sent food (Spam for example) and equipment (jeeps, munitions, and machinery). Both countries needed Russia to occupy the German armies until another front could be opened in the West. British convoys, supported by a few Russian destroyers and submarines, braved German submarines in the Arctic on the way to Murmansk, a northern warm water port that did not freeze during the winter. Murmansk was located only 30 miles from the Finnish and Norwegian borders but the Germans were never able to advance on the port due to a strong Russian military presence.

Overall, the Americans provided goods equal to one-fifth of Russia's gross domestic product. However, most of the equipment sent by Britain and United States was considered unfit for combat but soft goods, trucks, and aircraft were welcomed because they enabled the Russian economy to concentrate on weapon production. The NKVD even made it an offense to praise American equipment, punishable by consignment to a labor camp. Despite this help, due to the loss of the Ukraine and other Western territories, the Russian population was on rationing beginning in July. The NKVD reduced Gulag provisions by more than 30%; some 622,000 penal laborers died between 1941 and 1945.

The Russian Winter Offensive

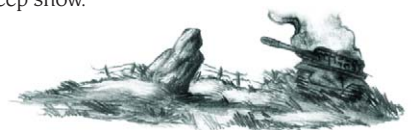
On November 12, a staff conference was held at the headquarters of Army Group Center. This conference produced one of the most decisive moments in the history of the German army. Many of the German generals believed the attack on Moscow should be stopped and winter positions taken up. This would entail some minor withdrawals in order to straighten out the front. Fortunately for the Russian offensive, German arrogance, political infighting, personal ambition, and Hitler's intransigence won out over practical considerations.

Unfortunately for the Germans, Zhukov had gathered reserves and new recruits in the Urals more quickly and in larger numbers than the Germans thought possible. Even wounded "volunteers" were sent back to the front.

In addition, Nazi intelligence never understood the extent of the Russian reserves in Siberia positioned to face off against a possible Japanese attack. When Russian intelligence sources in Tokyo learned in October that the Japanese were planning to attack U.S. forces in the Pacific and not Russia, Stalin ordered almost 750,000 troops back from the Far East by rail to the Urals. Reserve forces had strong cavalry, tank, and air support, but the new recruits were often ill-



German halftracks struggle through deep snow.



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equipped and under-trained and led by inexperienced officers. They were, however, experienced in dealing with the Russian winter.

On November 15, the Germans began their final lunge for Moscow. By November 17, Zhukov's Siberian divisions began to make themselves felt in the battle. The German line divisions, already working under impossible conditions and lacking proper winter clothing and weapons, cracked under the attack of Siberians lavishly equipped with white, quilted uniforms, Tommy guns, grenades, and riding on top of T-34's. By the end of November the full force of Zhukov's winter offensive was put into action against the worn out Germans. The suddenness of the attack fragmented the German positions and forced them into a desperate defensive position. Frozen German soldiers were forced to retreat across the open steppes in fierce weather that took a heavy toll on them.

German soldiers paint a terrible picture of the conditions at the front in their journals and letters to home. A doctor with the 276th Division wrote:

"The Russian (who was) completely at home in the wilds. Give him an axe and a knife and in a few hours he will do anything, run up a sledge, a stretcher, a little igloo...make a stove out of a couple of old oil cans. Our men just stand about miserably burning the precious petrol to keep warm. At night they gather in the few wooden houses, which are still standing. Several times we found the sentries had fallen asleep...literally frozen to death. During the night the enemy artillery would bombard the villages, causing very heavy casualties, but the men dared not disperse far, for fear of being picked up by marauding horsemen."

Guderian reported that the temperature had fallen on occasion to minus 63° Fahrenheit and stated, "Many men died while performing their natural functions, as a result of a coagulation of the anus." He also reported that axes rebounded off of horse meat as if it was stone and butter was being cut with a saw. Almost 100,000 horses died, but their icy carcasses fed the under-supplied German troops.

Moscow Attack Abandoned

Since the beginning of Operation Barbarossa, the Germans had lost 25% of their soldiers and about 66% of their tanks. During the first week of December, Operation Typhoon came to a halt after having advanced only 100 miles in two months. Moscow was less than 10 miles away, its furthest rural areas reached, but the German Army could no longer follow Hitler's orders to move on. German commanders for the first time during the war ordered their troops into defensive positions. To the Red Army's surprise, these same commanders often yielded ground without a fight.

Hitler blamed his generals instead of taking into account the weather, terrain, tenacity of the Russian people, and resource limitations. On December 8, Hitler called off the Moscow offensive but did not issue orders for an organized retreat: "They must dig into the ground where they are and hold every square yard of land!"

Again, some of Hitler's commanders disobeyed and made limited withdrawals to take up defensive positions. By the end of December, the Soviets pushed back the Nazis as much as 50 miles west of Moscow.

Under the double impact of the blizzards and the Russian attack, Army Group Center was in desperate peril. Field commanders and foot soldiers trembled at the reality that faced them and they would have been routed had it not been for Hitler's order of "No withdrawal!" Commanders that disobeyed this order were dismissed. A total of thirty-five corps and divisional commanders were sent home in varying degrees of disgrace, including Guderian. In the end, although he created the situation, Hitler's iron grip saved the German army from being cut to pieces had they retreated across the drifting snow fields of Russia as Napoleon had done in 1812.

During the limited retreat, the wind sometimes created temperatures 40° below zero and froze equipment. Deep snow often prevented movement. At times even horses couldn't travel in snow, especially when they sank up to their rumps in snowdrifts. Tanks could only move when hitched to horses and hundreds of tanks had to be abandoned. For the first time, the Red Army captured many German supplies and equipment. German railroad





engine boilers, truck oil, and gun grease froze. Machineguns would not fire. Over 100,000 cases of frostbite, of which no fewer than 14,357 required amputation, were reported by the Germans. In general, the German soldiers dared not wear the heavier quilted Russian jackets for fear of being mis-identified and shot.

Scorched Earth

The Germans practiced their own scorched earth policy as they took up defensive positions. German officer Wilhelm Pruller wrote on December 7:

"Yesterday we had 32 degrees below zero. It will get worse. The villages lying in front of us are burned down now, so that the Russians can't use them against us. Behind us on hills bunkers will be constructed as a winter defense line. Probably we shall burn down all these villages behind us."

The Russians quickly learned that any building left standing housed Germans and made easy targets to surround and attack.

Even after the German High Command knew their soldiers had to fend for themselves in the wilderness, Hitler ordered that ammunition and fuel be given priority shipment. As a result, camouflaged white, cold weather uniforms were very rare. Most German soldiers had to make do with multiple layers of blankets and captured Russian female winter coats and silk underwear.

The Russian Advantage

Having experienced Russian winters growing-up, Russian troops, especially the Siberians, knew how to adapt and withstand the harsh winds and freezing cold. For example, Siberian troops were experts at making shelters. First they dug away the snow to ground level and laid fresh fir branches on the floor. A tarpaulin served as a roof and an oil drum stove with piping provided warmth between the packed snow walls.

Russian troops were better equipped. They had white, camouflaged, sheepskin winter clothing, quilted pants, fur hats and felt boots that allowed them to move silently through the snow. Some were also equipped with skis. Cavalry units, doubled up on saddles, crossed frozen rivers with sleds full of supplies. Tanks also pulled large sleds carrying fresh infantry.

Campaign: First Winter Offensive

From November 17, 1941 through early April 1942, a War Master has many wartime and weird war situations from which to choose. In terms of non-weird war situations, the players could be part of the first attacks that pushed the Germans back into their defensive hedgehog (city) positions, capturing abandoned equipment and supplies in the process. Over the next 5 months, the players could be part of the futile attempts to capture a hedgehog or more realistically, sabotage a hedgehog supply dump or acquire items from a supply dump. Around February, the players could be part of the failed attempts to eliminate two separate encircled German armies.

Regardless of whether the players are part of SOPA, Weird War situations could be introduced with the **Adventure Seed: Amputation Mystery** provided on the following page. When relaxing in a Russian bath house, the player's could encounter a mischievous bannik (see page 131). Last but not least, the players could witness a Siberian shaman save the day with a yeti under his control. Perhaps then, the players, being the only survivors, join SOPA and with the shaman, investigate Nazi blood magic experiments being conducted from within a hedgehog.

Unlike the Germans, the Red Army had short supply lines fed by rail routes from every direction out of Moscow.

At the end of December, the Nazis took up defensive positions in towns taken during Operation Typhoon. Fortifications were built around Demyansk, Rzhev, Vyazma, Bryansk, Orel, and Kursk. These fortified positions were referred to as "hedgehogs." Each town had supply dumps that were resupplied by the Luftwaffe when resources ran low. The Russians lacked artillery to take these positions but gained surrounding territory with cavalry and troops equipped with skis and sleds. Heavy losses were incurred by the Russians when a hedgehog was attacked.

Life inside the hedgehogs was difficult for the Germans. The bad weather made the Luftwaffe supply flights erratic at best and supplies of food and ammunition often ran low. The civilian inhabitants of these cities and towns were not sympathetic to their conquerors and took every opportunity to hinder them. Despite this, conditions were better than defending out on the open steppe.



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Hitler Takes Control

Hitler achieved complete personal ascendancy over the ruling class of the German army and saved it from destruction at the outskirts of Moscow (although he was the one who put it in that situation in the first place).

Stalin and the Red Army, conversely, had survived and stopped the most powerful army in the world. What the Russians learned during the first crucial months of Barbarossa would come back to haunt the Germans to the very end. However, in secret, Stalin tried to sue for peace with Hitler through a Bulgarian Ambassador. To stall for time in preparation for a future counterattack, Stalin was willing to give up all current German-occupied territory. However, the Bulgarian ambassador refused to carry the message.

Adventure Seed: Amputation Mystery

So desperate were the Nazis for winter clothing, that the bodies of 73 dead Russian soldiers were dug out of the snow for their felt-lined boots. To remove the boots, the frozen legs had to be sawed off below the knee and thawed in ovens.

Perhaps as their first introduction to weirdness, the players stumble upon these bodies and are ordered to investigate. Discovering a German unit wearing Russian boots in camp would not be extraordinary, but on closer examination, the players observe a Nazi medical officer amputating a German soldier's destroyed or frostbitten leg below the knee and successfully replacing it with a stolen Russian leg. Have the Nazis perfected a bone transplant experiment, giving them an edge in medical treatment?

Under the guidance of a SOPA NPC or by way of their own initiative, the players could attempt to capture the doctor. If captured alive, the doctor reveals under interrogation that bone, muscle, and nerve regeneration and bone transplant experiments are being perfected at Ravensbruck concentration camp for women located 56 miles north of Berlin. He dies under torture before revealing the technique. If killed during the raid, the players might find papers divulging the same information.

Regardless of how the information is gleaned, SOPA may recruit the players into the organization and order them to carry out the difficult task of infiltrating the concentration camp. They are to steal documents describing the medical techniques and kill or capture key Nazi personnel related to the experiments.

The World's First Military Airlifts

As a result of the first Russian winter offensive, two separate groups of Germans were encircled northwest of Moscow. One group that numbered 100,000, survived Russian attacks in large part due to supplies flown in on German Junkers. Near the town of Kholm, another group numbering 5,000 could only be supplied by way of a field that lay between the German and Russian lines. Both sides engaged in hand-to-hand combat in the field to control the supplies. Both German groups were eventually rescued. This gave Hitler a false notion that an encircled group could be successfully resupplied by air. This belief contributed to Hitler's later decision to turn down Paulus' request to withdraw from Stalingrad in late Fall of 1942.

Winter Offensive Ends

By January 31, 1942, Nazi dead, wounded and missing exceeded 918,000; by February the Germans were pushed back 100 to 150 miles from Moscow. But it was the Red Army who now had long supply lines hampered by weather and who was out in the open having to deal with temperatures of 50° below zero.

A German unit reported finding Russian men and horses standing frozen solid. Like the Germans two months before, Russian tanks were not immune to freezing and Russian troops were tired and hungry. Along a 300-mile front, a stalemate situation occurred. The last Russian winter attack took place near Vyazma in early April. It failed. The Russian general who led the attack, Yefremov, shot himself to avoid being taken prisoner.

After three months of intense fighting the Russian divisions from the Far East were mere skeletons of their December strength. More serious was the Red Army's tactic of the old, clumsy, frontal assaults. Adding to this problem was the end of the worst winter in 140 years. As the temperature rose and the days lengthened, the Wehrmacht's advantage in battlefield tactics began to offset the Russians' strength of numbers.

The Red Army had put everything it had into their winter offensive. Even after the Russians had surrounded German positions, they had neither the artillery to reduce them nor sufficient strength in the air to prevent resupply by the Luftwaffe.





The weather also hampered Russian operations and their formations had insufficient power to produce deep penetrations. In the end, like the Germans, the Russians were worn out from the battles that had begun back in June.

Although the winter offensive had limited tactical success it had great impact on Russian morale and world opinion. The Western powers' prediction of a quick defeat of Russia was proven wrong. For the first time, the invincibility of the German army was challenged; the Red Army saved Moscow and pushed back the fascists.

1942

As 1942 began, the German High Command debated the question of how to continue the war. A majority of the professionals favored a limited summer offensive campaign because they believed the chance of knocking the Russians out of the war with one broad stroke was highly unlikely. Hitler disagreed with his generals and stressed economic factors as the reason behind his strategic objectives. He complained that his generals did not understand the strategic complexities of fighting a war. He intended to smash the Russians once and for all with a campaign in the southeast, the seat of the Russian economy.

On the production side of the war, the industrial capacity of both countries was running at about equal levels. German front line strength was superior to the Red Army, but the distance from Germany was hampering the Wehrmacht's ability to attack on a broad front. Because of this problem, the Germans were forced to take up static positions in the northern and central sectors and ruthlessly stripped these areas of mobile elements for the attack in the south.

The Russians were also ruthless in their practice of reorganizing front line divisions. Additional units were freed up in the Far East when the Japanese committed to the Pacific and Indian oceans. During the first 10 months of the war, Russia's losses in manpower greatly exceeded Germany's but these were more easily absorbed due to Russia's large population. By the end of winter, Russian factories had caught up to German armament production levels. The time it took to produce a tank was reduced from 110 hours to 40. Tank crews often drove their own unpainted T-34s off the assembly line.

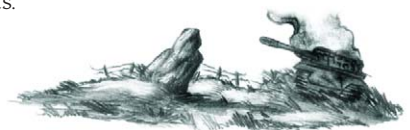
The Crimea

Led by Manstein from the Caucasus, the German effort to finally take the Crimean Peninsula and the city of Sevastopol began with an attack on the Russian held eastern side of the Kerch Isthmus that divides the Black Sea from the Sea of Azov. Despite a 16-foot deep, 33-foot wide, water-filled, antitank ditch, land mines, barbed wire, and pill boxes, the Germans broke through poorly led Russian divisions, using flanking maneuvers that took the Russians by surprise and portable bridges constructed by German engineers.

By May 17, the eastern side of the Kerch strait adjacent to the Caucasus was taken along with 170,000 Soviet troops, 250 tanks, and 1,100 pieces of artillery. As a result, Lieutenant General D.T. Kozlov and Deputy Defense Commissar Lev Z. Mekhlis lost their commands. Mekhlis also lost the prestigious Deputy Defense position and was assigned an insignificant noncombat post. These and other failures provided Stalin with more reasons to head the Commissar of Defense on July 19, 1941.



A Stuka searches for targets.



Chapter Three



Sevastopol

By May 19, all Russian resistance was eliminated on the Kerch Peninsula and constant bombardment of Sevastopol began again. Soviet supplies brought by ship from the east coast of the Caucasus dwindled to almost nothing due to bombing by the Luftwaffe.

To overcome the fortified city with its 106,000 Red Army soldiers and its 16 concrete forts—one of which was 900 feet long and 120 feet deep with 12-inch guns—the Germans brought in heavy artillery by June 2. Two hundred and eight artillery batteries with 1,300 barrels surrounded the city. They were aided by 24-hour Luftwaffe bombing runs made up of about 300 planes. Never before had the

Germans massed as much artillery. Most guns were the 88mm variety but one such piece was capable of firing five-ton shells up to 29 miles. It took a crew of 1,500 twenty minutes to load. There was also a 24-inch mortar that fired 4,800 pound shells. To the German's dismay, as would happen in Stalingrad in future months, the Russians effectively fought from ruined forts and buildings.

After five days of bombardment, Manstein ordered two Rumanian and seven German divisions to attack the city's forts and maze of machinegun, mortar, and artillery emplacements. By June 9, the first line of defenses was overcome. Fort Stalin was overrun on June 13 with only four Russian survivors who surrendered after their commissar committed suicide. The three-story fort Maxim Gorky I did not fall until June 17. German engineers were brought in to fight for every inch of its underground labyrinth that was sealed off in places by steel doors. Out of 1,000 Russian defenders, only 50 wounded prisoners were taken alive.

Elsewhere, four other forts fell on the same day. Despite Russian reinforcements from across the Severnaya Bay, the Germans took out the last major northern fort and an adjacent rail tunnel that guarded the northern route into the city on June 20. The Germans controlled most of the northern portion of the city that was divided by a bay whose widest part was no more than 3,200 feet. Also on June 20, the second Soviet line defending the southern route into the city was overrun.

To avoid costly house-to-house fighting through a maze of hundreds of pillboxes and mines, the Germans reinitiated intense bombing of the Russian controlled southern portion of the city on July 1. As a result, the Russians withdrew to the west onto Cape Kherones. Once there, Russian submarines from the Black Sea fleet evacuated high-ranking leaders and as many of the wounded as possible.

Over the next two days, during the evacuation, Manstein recalled one scene:

"Whole masses of them rushed at our lines, their arms linked to prevent anyone from hanging back. At their head, urging them on, there were often women and girls of the Communist Youth, themselves bearing arms...[The Russians] fought until the last man and the last round."

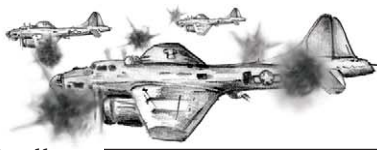
Adventure Seed: Sevastopol Cave Infestation & Tunnel Wonders

To escape German bombardment, Sevastopol citizens took refuge underground in cellars, tunnels that spread out all over the city, and in nearby caves, many of which doubled as weapon and ammunition manufacturing facilities to resupply the defense lines. Everyone worked, including children, nursing mothers, and the injured—for example, a woman who had lost her hand to a bomb. If not already part of the city's defensive forces (See **Campaign: Sevastopol** later in this chapter), the players as SOPA agents could be brought in on a Black Sea Fleet ship or submarine to take care of a tatzlwurm or gremlin infestation. Alternatively, since Sevastopol was built near a 421 B.C. Greek colony, new tunneling has uncovered never before seen Greek ruins that contain treasure and magical artifacts guarded by one or more Colossi. If word was leaked to the Nazis by way of spies or interrogation of a captured civilian, Nazi commandos led by a blood mage might try and beat the players to the unknown treasure.

As a possible related event, on June 28, 1942, rather than surrender, the occupants of an underground arms factory housing thousands of civilians and wounded within a cliff overlooking the Chesnaya River, killed themselves. According to Manstein:

"Just as our troops were entering the Inkerman [fort near the cliff] the whole cliff behind it shuddered under the impact of a tremendous detonation, and the 90-foot wall of rock fell in over a length of 900 yards, burying thousands of people beneath it."





The 247-day siege for Sevastopol finally came to an end on July 3. Although 100,000 Russian soldiers were taken prisoner and the city was lost, Russia had successfully diverted the German 11th Army far from the front and prevented many divisions from reentering combat for weeks due to casualties and wounds. Most importantly, the Red Army's stiff resistance in this area managed to slow down Hitler's attempt to secure the Caucasus oil fields in the summer of 1942.

Offensive at Kharkov

For the first third of 1942 Stalin prepared for a German attack on Moscow that never came. Stalin also incorrectly believed that the Red Army was ready to take the offensive as had been done in the winter of 1941. On May 12, 1942 more than a 500,000 men, 1,000 tanks and Commissar Khrushchev were sent to retake Kharkov. At first the Russians achieved tactical success against weak Romanian positions, then discovered that German confidence and tactical reflexes were very different when the thermometer was not reading 40 below. The battle showed that the Russians were not yet capable of carrying out large-scale armored operations.

In five days the Red Army penetrated 70 miles into German territory with little resistance. Khrushchev correctly sensed a trap but Stalin refused the request to take up defensive positions 12 miles east of Kharkov. As ordered, the Red Army drove into what happened to be a pocket of Germans reorganizing for a summer offense to be called Operation Blau. On May 18 the Germans launched a pincer counterattack that bagged 200,000 Russian soldiers. Hitler declared, "The Russian is dead!"

By May 19th, the Russians relented to the German counterattack and ordered the front line commanders to salvage what they could. This ill-timed offensive weakened the Red Army and paved the way toward German success in the summer.

Operation Blau

Operation Blau was launched in the Spring of 1942. Hitler hoped that the success of the operation would allow the German army to continue on through Iran and link up with Rommel's Afrika Korps at the Suez Canal. During the operation, German forces would continue the siege of Leningrad and the stalemate outside of Moscow.

Campaign: Sevastopol

A campaign in this area could start after the players escaped the Barbarossa Blitzkrieg and the Kiev encirclement. During the first days of October, while reorganizing Kiev's stragglers with Sevastopol's garrison, the player's should be present during a commissar speech on how Sevastopol cannot fall, that the Caucasus oil fields must be protected. During the month of October, the players could supervise citizen construction of Sevastopol's three defensive lines and/or serve as forward observers when the German army arrives on October 30. The players could then be assigned as part of the defenses around Balaklava Hills. Despite the efforts of the players and Sevastopol's defenders, all of Crimea, except Sevastopol and the Kerch Isthmus, is occupied by the Germans by December 1941.

By mid-December, the Germans shrink Sevastopol's defensive lines to within 5 miles of the city and begin their constant bombardment of the city. As a result, the players could be part of the effort to relocate Sevastopol's citizens into the tunnels, cellars, and caves under the city and maybe encounter a little weirdness.

The players can also help set up weapon manufacturing facilities, secure supplies from the Black Sea fleet, train new reinforcements, or continue to defend the city's perimeter. On December 31, 1941, the players could take part in the Russian amphibious landing to the east of the city on the Kerch Peninsula. Once there, fortifications need to be constructed. However, by May 17, 1942, the Germans, thanks in large part to local Russian command incompetence, overrun them and the players have to escape back to Sevastopol through enemy lines.

During the last two weeks of May, the players could be called upon to undertake a dangerous mission to sabotage one or more of the huge German guns bombarding the city. Perhaps, the guns are firing weird shells that contain blood mage manufactured spores that turn any dead body within 100 yards of the impact into flesh-eating zombies. The players must destroy the shells, learn how they are constructed, and assassinate or capture the responsible blood mage.

The Germans stop bombardment of the city in the first week of June to tackle the northern portion of the city's defenses. The players could be assigned as part of the first defensive line that is overrun and then take part in the defense of any of the city's northern forts that begrudgingly fall to the Germans by June 17.

By July 3, helped by the guiding hand of the War Master, do the players evacuate, surrender, or escape? Perhaps because of the players' SOPA status, the players are evacuated on a Black Sea submarine. Alternatively, the players must remain behind on Cape Khersones and protect the withdrawal of the wounded and high-ranking officers.

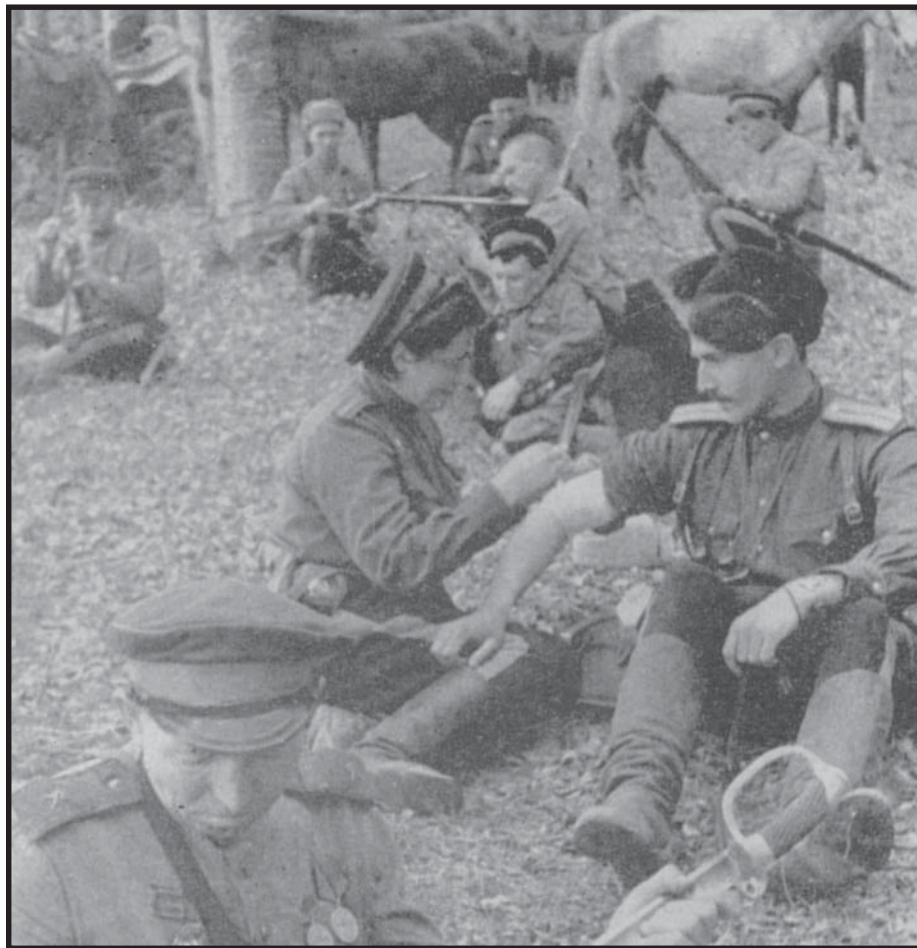


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However, the Russian failure at Kharkov delayed the start of Operation Blau to the end of June. On June 28, German armies were sent toward Voronezh, a Russian city and mining basin located 100 miles east of the Don River, south of Moscow and northwest of Stalingrad. The idea was to take that city and then Stalingrad to protect the drive south into the Caucasus and seal off Moscow to the north. The Germans expected more resistance. As a correspondent with the *Volkischer Beobachter*, a German newspaper, wrote:

"The Russian, who up to this time had fought stubbornly over each kilometer, withdrew without firing a shot. Our advance was only delayed by destroyed bridges and by aircraft. When the Soviet rearguards were too hard-pressed they chose a position, which enabled them to hold out until night...It was quite disquieting to plunge into this vast area without finding a trace of the enemy."



A female medic tends her comrades wound.

The Russians had learned from previous mistakes and let the Germans extend their supply lines to occupy the empty space. Still believing Moscow was the target, Stalin reinforced Voronezh since it was only 300 miles south of Moscow, buying time for Stalingrad to prepare its defenses. The Nazis never advanced beyond Voronezh but the city was almost totally destroyed.

Rostov

In early July, German forces headed toward Stalingrad, but Hitler, growing impatient with the need to capture the Caucasus oil fields, halted the advance and split the attacking forces into two groups, delaying again the planned attack on Stalingrad. Less than half of the total German army and supplies in the region were assigned to Group B with the mission of occupying Stalingrad to the east. Group A was given fuel priority and headed south toward the Caucasus. The closest oil field was within 100 miles and

the farthest was 700 miles away and over the Caucasus Mountains. Group B had to wait 18 days to resupply its fuel. By splitting the German forces and creating two separate supply lines, Hitler had laid the foundation for Germany's worst defeat six months later.

Army Group A met little opposition on its way to Rostov. Like the summer before, the German armored divisions penetrated deep into the Soviet lines. A Sergeant in the 3rd Panzer Division wrote:

"It's quite different from last year. It's more like Poland. The Russians aren't nearly so thick on the ground. They fire their guns like madmen, but they don't hurt us!"

However, once in the city, the German encountered fanatical street fighting for the first time during the war. Open field blitzkrieg techniques were useless in house-to-house fighting that involved snipers, cellar ambushes, Russians who feigned death, barricaded





streets, and Molotov cocktails.

Nevertheless, Rostov was secured by the end of July. It was a grim preview of what Army Group B would encounter in Stalingrad.

As the Germans advanced into the Caucasus, the Russians set fire to the wells and destroyed equipment. Ironically, fuel had to be flown and trucked in from Romania and eventually brought across by slow camel caravan to save expenditure of fuel. The distant supply lines slowed the advance to a crawl and Army Group A advanced as far as Mount Elbrus, the Caucasus tallest peak, by the end of 1942; Russia still controlled the oil fields south of the mountain range. This was the farthest south the German army would occupy in Russia during the war.

German officer, Kliet, described the regional differences in Russian resistance:

"In the early stages. I met little organized resistance. As soon as the Russian forces were bypassed, most of the troops seemed more intent to find their way back to their homes than to continue fighting. That was quite different to what had happened in 1941. But when we advanced into the Caucasus the forces we met there were local troops, who fought more stubbornly because they were fighting to defend their homes. Their obstinate resistance was all the more effective because the country was so difficult..."

The Führer was in a happier mood than any time since the fall of France and the Chief of Staff was convinced that Russia was finished. Despite Kliet's experiences, the German High Command considered the entire oil-bearing region of the Caucasus as attainable. They ordered the 6th Army, under Paulus, to move on to Stalingrad.

Hitler wanted to occupy Stalingrad simply because it was named after his archenemy. But there were strategic reasons as well. At the time, Stalingrad was Russia's third largest industrial city, manufacturing 25% of the Red Army's tanks and vehicles. It also had important rail links and over 500,000 citizens. Geographically speaking, Stalingrad occupied a 30-mile long stretch of the western bank of the Volga River; the Don River lay only 40 miles to the east. Its position between the two rivers and central location in western Russia made it an ideal distribution center of oil from the Caucasus.

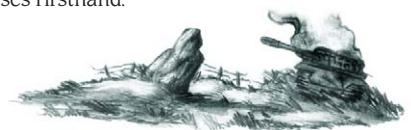
Stalingrad

At the same time Rostov was secured, Army Group B', under the command of Friedrich Paulus, advanced on Stalingrad and took the town of Kalach, northwest of Stalingrad. 70,000 Soviets were captured but Paulus wasted two weeks clearing pockets of resistance while Stalingrad prepared defenses only 40 miles away. On August 21, he finally sent his 250,000 soldiers, 500 tanks, and 7,500 guns and mortars toward Stalingrad. He planned to take the city in one day but, because of the continual delays, it was now heavily fortified and filled with determined defenders. The Germans hoped by capturing Stalingrad to cut the Soviet Union in two by controlling the Volga River.

While Paulus advanced at an agonizingly slow pace, the Red Army was having problems reviving the morale of its troops. Russian High Command rushed reserves to the front as fast as the overburdened rail system permitted. Orders were issued that front line commanders protested, but Stalin's commissars were there to see that Moscow's edicts were obeyed. Their stern countenances and the occasional execution of disobedient soldiers served to hold the line.



General Paulus surveys Stalingrad's defenses firsthand.





1942: Changes in Red Army Tactics

General Chuikov wrote the following after receiving orders to carry out a 125-mile forced march:

"To carry them out in the time given was impossible, as parts of the Army which were to carry out these tasks had not yet arrived...Colonel Rukhle immediately, without reporting to anyone, with his own hand altered the date for the occupation of the line of defense from July 19 to July 21. I was astounded. How could the officer in command of operations, without the knowledge of the Commander, change the date of the operation? Who was in command of the Front?"

Unlike 1941, the Russians retreated when their flanks were pierced, did not trade lives for ground, and avoided ruinous encirclements. But the long withdrawal across their burning homeland was more difficult on the troops than the vigor of an inflexible defense. A Russian officer described a personal reconnaissance:

"I came across two divisional staffs... they consisted of a number of officers traveling in some three to five trucks filled to overflowing with cans of fuel. When I asked them where the Germans were, and where they were going, they could not give me a sensible reply...It was clear that to restore to these men the faith they had lost in their own powers and to improve the fighting quality of the retreating units would not be easy."

On the other hand, Russian veterans from 1941 noted the following:

"The German tanks did not go into action without infantry and air support. On the battlefield there was no evidence of the 'prowess' of German tank crews...they operated sluggishly, extremely cautiously and indecisively.

The German infantry was strong in automatic fire, but... no rapid movement or resolute attack on the battlefield.

When advancing they did not spare their bullets but frequently fired into thin air. Their forward positions, particularly at night, were beautifully visible, being marked by machinegun fire, tracer bullets, often fired into empty space, and different-colored rockets. It seemed as if they were either afraid of the dark, or were bored without the crackle of machineguns and the light of tracer bullets."*

*Could the Germans be shooting into "thin air" as result of some sort of supernatural threat?

Bombardment

The first German tanks entering Stalingrad's northern suburbs came under ineffective artillery fire. As it turned out, when the tanks reached and destroyed the artillery positions, they were operated by female Russian factory workers. In the coming months, Stalingrad's women would not only care for the wounded and work in the factories, but fight in combat as well.

On the nights of August 23rd and 24th, the Luftwaffe burned down nearly every wooded building on the outskirts of the city. These were pure terror raids, reminiscent of the first Blitz of Barbarossa in June 1941. The results of the attacks were so damaging that it was possible to read a paper at night forty miles away. An estimated 40,000 civilians died. With satisfaction Wilhelm Hoffmann, of the 267th Regiment, 94th German Division, noted the following, "The whole city is on fire; on the Führer's orders our Luftwaffe has sent it up in flames. That's what the Russians need, to stop them resisting..."

Siege

On August 25th the Regional Party Committee of the Communist Party proclaimed a state of siege with this message:

"Comrades and citizens of Stalingrad! We shall never surrender the city of our birth to the depredations of the German invader. Each single one of us must apply himself to the task of defending our beloved town, our homes, and our families. Let us barricade every street; transform every district, every block, every house, into an impregnable fortress."

Bombs Away!

The tremendous battle for Stalingrad began after the Luftwaffe bombed the northern end of the huge tractor factory. Russian Commander, Vasily Chuikov wrote:

"The Germans obviously thought that the fate of the town had been settled [after the Luftwaffe bombing]. We saw drunken Germans jumping down from their trucks, playing mouth organs, shouting like madmen and dancing on the pavements."





It was at the tractor factory that the Germans discovered that the city would not be taken in one day. Amazingly, during the night of the fire-bombing, a nearby hill was fortified with anyone capable of handling a weapon. In fact, unpainted T-34s rolled off the assembly line and into the battle. Despite heavy shelling and bombing, the tractor works would produce about 200 tanks by the end of the 5-month battle.

Street Fighting

Over a 20-mile long, 3-mile wide section of the city 50,000 Russians and 100 tanks faced-off against 100,000 Germans and 500 tanks. Accustomed to open field lightning attacks, the Nazis were no match for the outnumbered Soviets. Soldiers fought in a giant petrified forest of blackened chimneys, piles of rubble, concrete buildings, sewers and twisted steel. On occasion, combat devolved into hand-to-hand duels with knives, pick axes, clubs and bricks. Men jeered and cursed each other from across streets and often in adjacent rooms of buildings. Individual combat sometimes lasted from dawn to the dark, smoky twilight of dusk. Like WWI trench warfare, German General Doerr described how the war went from strategic to tactical:

"The time for conducting large-scale operations was gone forever; from the wide expanses of steppe-land, the war moved into the jagged gullies of the Volga hills with their copses and ravines, into the factory area of Stalingrad, spread out over uneven, pitted, rugged country, covered with iron, concrete and stone buildings. The mile, as a measure of distance, was replaced by the yard. G.H.Q.'s map was the map of the city.

A bitter battle was waged for every house, workshop, water tower, railway embankment, wall, cellar, and every pile of ruins...The distance between the enemy's army and ours was as small as it could possibly be. Despite the concentrated activity of aircraft and artillery, it was impossible to break out of the area of close fighting. The Russians surpassed the Germans in their use of the terrain and in camouflage and were more experienced in barricade warfare for individual buildings..."

Ferries

If there was a tactical pattern to the battle it revolved around the ferries on the Volga River. These were the lifelines for the Red Army. Small arms ammunition, mortar bombs, the evacuation of wounded, replacements, and provisions of rations and vodka flowed across river. On the east bank the Russians had placed their heavy and medium artillery. In peacetime, 500,000 Russians called Stalingrad their home, but by January only 1,515 civilians remained. Most crossed the Volga to safety, but many died fighting alongside the 62nd Russian army or merely trying to survive in the rubble of their homes.

The Wehrmacht was slow to realize the value of these crossings and with typical German extravagance simply battered away at Russians from one block to the next. In the minds of the Germans, Stalingrad would finally prove the superiority of the German Teutonic race to the subhuman Russians. However, German officer Wilhelm Hoffmann's mind reveals a different reality:

September 1st: "Are the Russians really going to fight on the very bank of the Volga? It's madness."

September 8th: "...insane stubbornness."

September 11th: "...fanatics!"

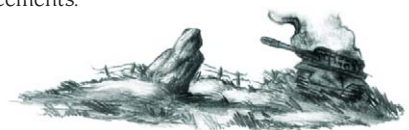
September 13th: "...wild beasts."

September 16th: Barbarism.[they are] not men but devils."

September 26th: "...barbarians, They use gangster methods."



A Russian ferry loaded with vital reinforcements.



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There is no further comment for a month on the quality of the enemy. During this time the entries are filled with gloom at the plight of the writer and his comrades in arms.

October 27th: "...The Russians are not men, but some kind of cast-iron creatures; they never get tired and are not afraid of fire."

October 28th: "Every soldier sees himself as a condemned man."

In *Weird Wars*, could some of these comments actually be attributed to the interference of hate feeders (see page 137) or some form of SOPA program (undead soldiers or perhaps mind control)?

Holding On

As the spirits of the front line troops alternated between frenzy and depression, the clash of personalities within the command staffs increased. Like the

winter battles of Moscow, Hitler removed men who he believed were defeatist in their beliefs. Hitler found an officer, Paulus, with unwavering loyalty but who was slow-witted and unimaginative to the point of stupidity.

Unlike his German counterpart, General Ivanovich Chuikov, Stalingrad's local commander assigned on September 12, quickly weighed all his options and never hesitated. From a bunker inside Stalingrad, he promised his superiors charged with the entire Stalingrad front, Yeremenko and Khrushchev—stationed safely on the other side of the Volga—"We shall hold the city or die there."

On one occasion Chuikov ordered a major with 100 men and 1 T-34 to protect a landing area for 10,000 elite Russian Guard reinforcements: "Rally your men around the tanks and hold the approaches to the port. If you don't hold out, I'll have you shot."

The major died in the German attack but the mission was a success.

Rattenkrieg

Slowly, and at a tremendous price, the Germans inched their way into Stalingrad's great buildings, across factory floors, around and over the inert machinery and through the foundries, assembly shops, and offices. "The war of the rats" (*rattenkrieg*) emerged; a German term used to describe the Soviets use of cellars and sewers to get behind German positions.

A German lieutenant of the 24th Panzer Division wrote:

"...Stalingrad is no longer a town. By day it is an enormous cloud of burning, blinding smoke; it is a vast furnace lit by the reflection of the flames. And when night arrives, one of those scorching, howling, bleeding nights, the dogs plunge into the Volga and swim desperately to gain the other bank. The nights of Stalingrad are a terror for them. Animals flee this hell; the hardest stones cannot bear it for long; only men endure..."

"...We have fought during fifteen days for a single house, with mortars, grenades, machine-guns and bayonets. Already by the third day fifty-four German corpses are strewn in the cellars, on the landings, and the staircases. The front is a corridor between burnt-

War of the Rats

Compared to the Nazis, the Russians followed a different code and that was survival. They had no grand plans other than destroying the Germans and as a result they became masters in the technique of house-to-house fighting. Chuikov explains:

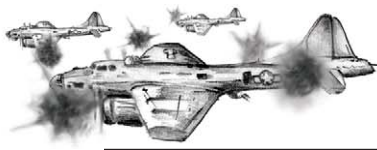
"Experience taught us: get close to the enemy's positions; move on all fours, making use of craters and ruins; dig your trenches by night, camouflage them by day; make your build-up for the attack stealthily, without any noise; carry your Tommy-gun on your shoulder; take ten to twelve grenades. Timing and surprise will then be on your side.

...Two of you get into the house together-you, and a grenade; both be lightly dressed-you without a knapsack, and the grenade bare; go in grenade first, you after; go through the whole house, again always with a grenade first and you after.

...There is one strict rule now-give yourself elbow room! At every step danger lurks. No matter-a grenade in every corner of the room, then forward! A burst from your Tommy-gun around what's left; a bit further-a grenade, then on again! Another room-a grenade! A turning-another grenade! Rake it with your Tommy-gun! And get a move on!

Inside the object of attack the enemy may go over to a counter-attack. Don't be afraid! You have already taken the initiative, it is in your hands. Act more ruthlessly with your grenade, your Tommy-gun, your dagger and your spade! Fighting inside a building is always frantic. So always be prepared for the unexpected. Look Sharp!"





out rooms; it is the thin ceiling between two floors. Help comes from neighboring houses by fire escapes and chimneys. There is a ceaseless struggle from noon to night...

From story to story, faces black with sweat, we bombard each other with grenades in the middle of explosions, clouds of dust and smoke, heaps of mortar, floods of blood, fragments of furniture and human beings. Ask any soldier what half an hour of hand-to-hand struggle means in such a fight. And imagine Stalingrad; eighty days and eighty nights of hand-to-hand struggles. The street is no longer measured by meters but by corpses..."

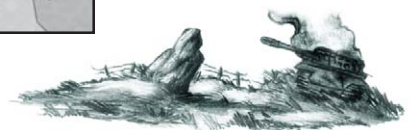
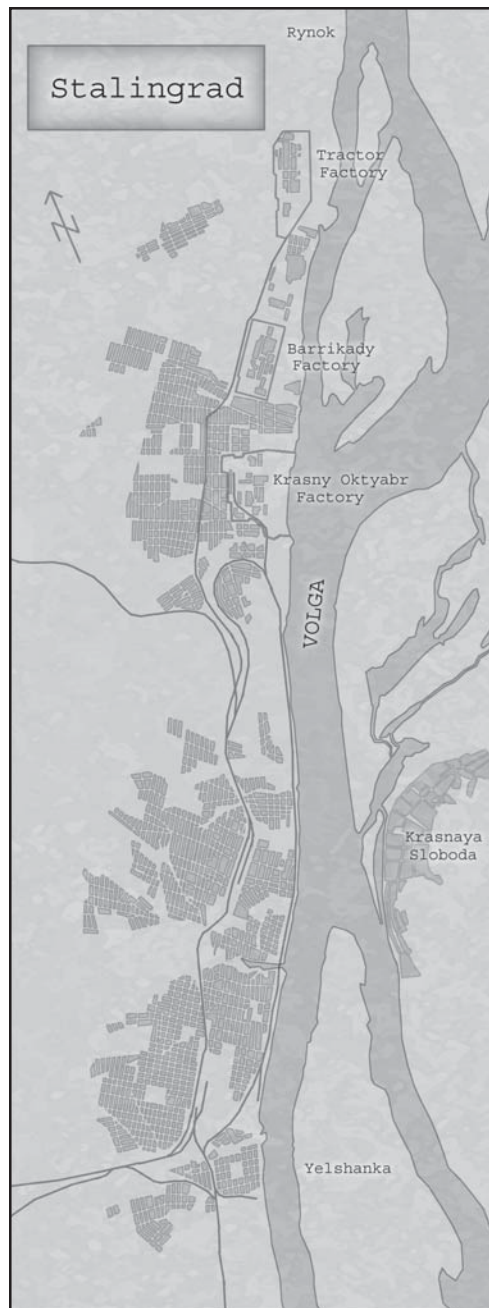
Occasionally an uneasy silence settled over the battlefield. A German soldier wrote,

"Sometimes a silence more disturbing than the roar of explosions spread over the town, which seemed like a dead place. But it continued to watch, although no-one could distinguish night from day any longer. Even in the short periods of calm, each factory, each destroyed house, observed everything with intensity. The piercing eyes of the sniper spied upon the slightest movement of the enemy. The supply units, loaded with mines and shells... hastened along the ditches, which zigzagged between the ruins. From the height of the highest floors artillery observers were on the watch. In the cellars the leaders bent over maps, orderlies tapped on their machines, papers circulated, the soldiers were given directions. The miners, busy at their dangerous work, dug galleries and tried to find out those of the enemy."

The sniper dominated these quiet days. It was an art the Soviets excelled at. Their best was Vasily Zaitsev, a deer hunter from the Ural Mountains, who once killed 40 Germans in a ten day period. As a result, the Germans sent in SS Colonel Heinz Thorwald, head of the Berlin sniper school, to personally kill the Russian sniper. Vasily eventually beat out the master.

Sniper Duel

The duel between Zaitsev and Thorvald has inspired both a book and a movie: *War of the Rats* and *Enemy at the Gates*. Both of these sources take some liberty with the historical facts but can serve as a great source of inspiration for a similar adventure for your heroes. Perhaps the Germans send in a supernatural power to deal with the ongoing sniper problem plaguing their troops. The heroes could be assigned to find and deal with the horror that seems to be taking an inordinate toll on the Red Army's most revered sharpshooters.



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Thin Red Line

By the end of October, superior numbers and equipment allowed the Germans to capture almost 90% of the rubble city. Russian positions in Stalingrad had been reduced to a few stone pockets along an 8-mile long, 2-mile wide portion the Volga river—even the tank factory was in German hands. These last islands of resistance, hardened by months of combat, would not fall. The intense fighting took its toll on its leaders. Paulus developed a facial tick and Chuikov came down with nervous eczema on his hands and arms. Chuikov described his opponent's army:

"The Sixth Army... was no ordinary army. It contained twenty-two divisions with reinforcements, more than twice the size of a normal army. Hitler boasted about its maneuverability and its power as a shock-force, its personnel-officers and men. The divisions of the army were composed of 'Pure Aryans'... The prisoners themselves told us that one in every five soldiers was a Nazi Party member."

However, the 6th Army was spent. It had lost the momentum of the summer and had suffered painful casualties in the inferno of the city; 7,700 dead and 31,000 wounded. Formidable German divisions, so brilliant in the mobile battles on the plains, were ground into skeletons of their former selves. Hitler would not be satisfied until every square inch of the city was occupied. Ranz Halder, German Chief of General Staff wrote:

"Hitler's decisions had ceased to have anything in common with the principles of strategy and operations as they have been recognized for generations past."

On November 9, Paulus flew in 2400 combat engineers for what he believed would be a winning assault on November 11. Despite their expertise in the demolition of large fortifications, the assault ultimately failed as the Russians fell back to another line of defense. The Germans began to realize that they would spend another winter fighting, but this time it would be house-to-house. The weary soldiers began to desperately look for buildings in which they could establish winter quarters.

Had the battle been simply another struggle for some unknown far away place, the Germans would have withdrawn to a winter line that was more defensible. However, the world was watching, and Hitler believed that a retreat would be an admission of defeat, thus disproving his assertion of the German as the Master Race. Frustrated by being halted so near complete victory, the Germans began to sense the foreboding of the coming winter. A German soldier wrote:

"The days were shortening again, you could definitely sense it. And in the mornings the air was quite cool. Were we really going to have to fight through another of those dreadful winters? I think that was behind our efforts. Many of us felt that it was worth anything, any price, if we could get it over before the winter."

Operation Uranus

Hitler's stance was clouded by the lack of accurate intelligence regarding Soviet troop reserves and front line strength as well as the German commander Paulus' misleading battlefield reports. A more serious error lay in the lack of supervision of the Romanian, Hungarian, and Italian forces on the flanks of better-trained German divisions. These forces were unenthused, ill-equipped, and unsuited for independent operations against the Red Army.

The Germans would have abandoned their preparations for the last push against Stalingrad had they known that for Operation Uranus the Russians had concentrated over half a million infantry, 900 new T-34's, 230 regiments of field artillery, and a 115 regiments of *katyusha* rocket artillery on an attack front of under forty miles. The Germans expected a small offensive, but mistakenly believed the Russian winter offensive would again take place near Moscow. To keep the buildup a secret from the Germans, units were brought in at night without their lights turned on. During the day, vehicles, soldiers, and artillery were hidden from the Luftwaffe's reconnaissance missions under camouflaged nets in forests and ravines.

Keeping the buildup a secret from the Germans also meant keeping Chuikov in the dark and frustrated. As decided in secret by Stalin and Zhukov in September,





Chuikov received only minimal reinforcements and supplies to pin down Paulus' 6th Army. Supplies were further limited when ice began flowing down the Volga.

However, relief of a different sort came at 7:32 AM on November 19. Operation Uranus began with 80 minutes of heavy bombardment across a bridgehead to the far northwest of Chuikov's positions. Snow and fog grounded the Luftwaffe and hid Russian soldiers dressed in white. With tanks guided by compasses, the Russians quickly defeated the Romanians guarding Paulus' flank—many succumbed to "tank fright." Paulus sent 104 panzers to help but only 42 made it, due to electrical failure. It seems mice had gnawed the electrical wires when the panzers were dug in with straw to protect them from the cold. There were too few German reinforcements and the Russians penetrated 50 miles on the first day. The attack on second day from the south of Stalingrad had similar results and yielded 10,000 German prisoners.

In *Weird Wars*, this timely weather and the "mice saboteurs" could be a result of Siberian shaman activity.

Encirclement

On the night of the 18th of November, the thunderous barrage of the Russian winter offensive signaled the turning point of World War II. From this point forward, the Red Army held the initiative on the Eastern Front. Paulus faced over 1 million soldiers, 13,451 artillery pieces, 900 tanks, and over 1,100 planes. Unfortunately for the Wehrmacht, Hitler took personal control of the tactical situation.

Upon reaching the forward positions on the 21st, General Manstein, pulled from Leningrad, was informed that it was impossible to move any formations larger than a battalion without first referring to the Führer. On that same day, the Russians moved thirty-four divisions across the Don, and began to build an iron ring around Stalingrad. Paulus miscalculated Russia's intent to encircle and took up defensive positions to protect the city instead of breaking-out. On the 23rd, units from the northern and southern Russian attacks met at the small town of Kalach, west of Paulus' forces. By the night of the 24th, the Russians had over 1,000

antitank guns dug in around the 250,000 soldiers of the entombed 6th Army. The Russians paid a high price of 100,000 casualties, but killed 95,000 Germans and took 72,000 prisoners.

"Help is Coming"

Hitler ordered Paulus to hold Stalingrad and said, "Sixth Army must know that I am doing everything to help and to relieve it. I shall issue my orders in good time."

Soon, German commander Manstein was directed to form a new army and relieve Paulus' 6th Army. Paulus did the one thing he could afford not to do—nothing—as the Russians reinforced their positions.

Hermann Goering of the Luftwaffe promised the impossible, that he could airlift Paulus' daily minimum requirements of 500 tons. To meet this goal, Goering would have to fly 1,000 fully-loaded Ju-52s transports daily. The Luftwaffe had only 750 spread out from Africa to Norway. Those that made the trip faced Russian anti-aircraft fire. For example, on November 29, only 25 of 59 planes made it to two German airstrips. Both airfields were in need of repair and caused crashes. Mistakes were also made; 8,000 right shoes were delivered but no left shoes. It was no wonder that Goering seldom delivered more than 100 tons a day and an average of 85 tons a day by mid-December. Supplies of food and ammunition began to run dangerously low in the encircled army. Paulus' cold, battle-weary soldiers kept one eye fixed nervously to the west looking for signs that the help Hitler had promised was indeed on its way.



A Soviet antitank gun fights in the rubble of Stalingrad.



Chapter Three



Manstein's Coming!

This became the mantra of the German soldiers inside Stalingrad. It was the only small sliver of hope they had of leaving the city alive.

The battle began to resemble a 12-round boxing match where neither side could achieve a knockout blow. Zhukov's options were limited. The majority of his forces were tied up between the Volga and Don rivers. His corps commanders, many new to the front, had neither the flexibility nor the imagination to carry out a sustained, deep, mobile penetration. Back and forth they danced, while at the center of it all stood a defiant Paulus and Hitler.

At one point, Hoth, sent from Army Group Center in the summer, and his 4th Panzer Army got to within thirty-five miles of Stalingrad on December 20. German General Balck, commander of probably the finest armored formation of the Eastern Front, the 11th Panzer, mauled every Russian column it came up against. However, weather hampered operations. Low ceilings and snow blizzards all but grounded the Luftwaffe and a temperature of 20 below made large-scale operations to relieve the 6th army extremely difficult. It was *déjà vu*. Like the Moscow winter of '42, Hitler had expected Stalingrad to fall in the summer and the 6th army lacked winter clothing. Thus, the Russian material advantage, lack of German

supplies, and bad weather nullified the superior leadership and fighting ability of the Wehrmacht. Balck wrote:

"We were fortunate that after the hard fighting in previous campaigns all commanders whose nerves could not stand the test had been replaced by proven men. There was no commander left who was not absolutely reliable."

Reliability to follow Hitler's orders was Paulus' weakness. He refused to breakout without orders from Hitler and link up with Hoth's forces under Manstein. Paulus complained that he did not have the strength to reengage the Red Army. Paulus said he could hold out if he received supplies and Hitler was content to let him stay there. But Hitler failed to deliver the amount of needed supplies. By December 9, the first two German soldiers died of starvation. On Christmas day a blizzard hit the rubble city with 50-mile-an-hour winds and Russian bombardment killed 1,280 German soldiers. Daily rations were at 2 ounces of bread and watered down soup. By January 1, starvation and illness spread throughout the German 6th Army.

Pitomnik

On Pitomnik airfield the ugliness of the long Stalingrad siege began to take its toll on German 6th Army morale. A Nazi soldier recalled the following scene:

"There were about thirty of us on the plane, mostly wounded, with stretcher cases piled on top of each other all over the floor. There were also some people, couriers and the like, who were quite unharmed—the sort of people who always, it seems, get themselves out of the tightest scrape by the use of their wits. We started trundling across the ground at an ever-increasing speed, with clouds of snow blowing back from the propellers; at intervals one wheel would drop in a crater with a terrible crash. Then to our horror the engines cut and we could feel the brakes coming on. The pilot turned round and started taxiing back..."

A Lieutenant of the Luftwaffe came through and said that we could not get airborne because of the ground, and that we would have to shed about 2,000 kilos...

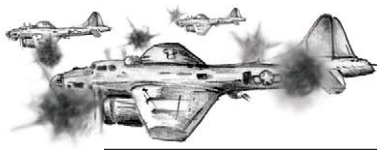
"Every seven seconds a German dies in Russia."

Russian planes dropped this message in leaflets and commissars broadcast this message over loudspeakers. Russian field kitchens were set up in places where the prevailing winds would carry the aroma of cooking food to positions of starving German. It is speculated that some German soldiers even turned to cannibalism.

It was absolute suffering as a German in Stalingrad recalled:

"Only twenty to thirty cartridges were distributed daily to each man, with the order to use them solely to repulse an attack. The ration of bread was reduced to 120 and then 70 grams—a slice only! Water came from melted snow. Because of a lack of potatoes a kilogram box had to make do for fifteen men. There was no meat; we ate our horses at Christmas."





twenty men would have to get out. At once there was the most terrific din, everybody shouting at once, one man claimed that he was traveling by order of the Army Staff, another from the SS that he had important Party documents, many others who cried about their families, that their children had been injured in air raids, and so on. Only the men on the stretchers kept silent, but their terror showed in their faces..."

Sometimes the wounded would have to wait for days at the edge of the airfield in the safety of open trenches, where some froze to death overnight. Attempting to escape the madness, some men tried to force their way onboard air transports and were shot. German doctors discovered men with self-inflicted wounds, a capital offense on the Eastern Front. Around January, the Russians took the Pitomnik airfield. Now Paulus had no way to evacuate the wounded or receive supplies.

1943

The first days of 1943 started out much the same as 1942, with the Germany Army in great peril. The Red Army had started an offensive called Operation Star to trap Army Group A in the Caucasus. As a result, Manstein broke off his attack to relieve Paulus so that he could help the strategically more important Army Group A avoid entrapment.

Elsewhere along the front, from the frozen Baltic down to the Orel, enormous minefields and permanent emplacements of logs, concrete, and earth fortifications had hardly been altered in twelve months. These troops had plenty of food, clothing, fuel, and regular mail deliveries. Their bitterest enemies were the cold and the huge bands of roving partisans. The front was often quiet and used as a rest area for worn out divisions and as a training ground for the Russians.

In the South, where the three great rivers of the Ukraine flowed, the war seemed to grind on endlessly. The outnumbered Germans were still better led and trained than the Russians. The Soviets, ruthless in equipment standardization, had two types of trucks, two tanks and three artillery pieces but were desperately short of good officers. What they lacked in leaders they made up with numbers, toughness and bravery. Unfortunately, up to now it had cost them over 4 million men.

Campaign: Stalingrad

War Masters may want to view the movies *Stalingrad* and *Enemy at the Gates* for inspiration. Since it is the turning point of the war, Stalingrad may be the best place and time to begin an Eastern Front Campaign. Characters can begin the game with some experience, perhaps even starting out as Guardsmen or as SOPA agents investigating weirdness, such as the appearances of brutes, reanimants, twisted Hulks and all three types of hate feeders on the battlefield. Stalingrad can also easily fit into a current campaign in which the players have survived the First Winter Offensive near Moscow, Leningrad, and/or Sevastopol.

Regardless, there is plenty of opportunity for the players to experience desperate war and weird situations such as:

- Enforcing communist doctrine and the no retreat, no surrender policies.
- Defending and recapturing the tank factory and defending the Volga landing with little ammunition and reinforcements.
- Evacuating Stalingrad citizens.
- Stealing or capturing German supplies and equipment.
- Delivering and distributing the few supplies that made it across the Volga River.
- Scouting enemy positions.
- Dueling snipers; a fext sniper would be quite dangerous.
- Repelling 2400 German combat engineers on November 11.
- Protecting Chuikov's headquarters from being overrun or infiltrated by supernatural enemies.
- Sabotaging German land lines (communications) or laying or repairing Russian land lines.
- Infiltrating Paulus' headquarters to assassinate or capture a blood mage or to gain information on enemy battle plans (Paulus would not be the target of assassination since he is more valuable alive, screwing things up for the Germans).
- Discovering a secret Nazi research base within the ruins run by blood mages summoning and creating weird manifestations such as exploding corpses.
- Making a temporary truce and alliance with the Germans to defeat some supernatural threat.
- Engaging in day-to-day street fighting, using sewer and cellar movement to get behind enemy positions, encountering gutter ranks.
- Participating in the encirclement of the German 6th Army in Operation Uranus.
- Capturing the Pitomnik airfield.
- Accepting the surrender of Paulus and the remains of his 6th Army; perhaps preventing a blood mage plot to turn all 91,000 into brutes, reanimants, zombies, and exploding corpses.



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Surrender

Zhukov demanded the surrender of the 6th Army. Paulus, still in touch with Hitler by short wave radio, would not consider surrender without the Führer's permission. On January 22, Paulus sent this message to Hitler:

"The Russians are advancing on a six-kilometer frontage. There is no possibility of closing the gap. All provisions are used up. Over 12,000 unattended wounded men in the pocket. What orders am I to issue the troops who have no ammunition left?"

Hitler responded:

"The troops will defend their positions to the last. The Sixth Army has thus made an historic contribution in the most gigantic war effort in German history."

Since no German field marshal had ever surrendered in battle prior to this time, Hitler promoted Paulus. When Paulus surrendered himself and 91,000 soldiers anyway, a dismayed Adolf Hitler was quoted as saying:

"This hurts me so much because the heroism of so many soldiers is nullified by one single characterless weakling—and that is what the man is going to do now. You have to imagine, he'll be brought to Moscow, and imagine that rattrap there. There he will sign anything. He'll make confessions, make proclamations—you'll see..."

Only 6,000 of 91,000 captured ever made it back to Germany due to mistreatment. 35,000 wounded Germans were evacuated but 125,000 Nazis died during the course of the battle and siege. After the surrender it was discovered that there were too many German bodies to bury so they were stacked between layers of railroad ties and burned. Khrushchev wrote:

"I went once to watch but I didn't go a second time. Napoleon or someone once said that burning enemy corpses smell good. Well, speaking for myself I don't agree. It was a very unpleasant smell and altogether a very unpleasant scene."

On the other hand, 750,000 Russians died in the Battle of Stalingrad. Unlike the Germans, the Red Army could absorb these losses. The state newspaper, *Pravda*, radio, and posters declared to all people of Russia that Stalin was the man behind the victory. American media depicted Stalin as "Uncle Joe," the relative the family welcomes and loves to have over for dinner.

A Turning Tide

Kharkov, west of Stalingrad, and Kursk, north of Kharkov, were recaptured during Operation Star's efforts to trap Army Group A in the Caucasus. After a tense face-to-face meeting at Zaporozhye, Ukraine between Hitler and recently promoted southern commander Manstein, Hitler accepted Manstein's plan to withdraw from the area and then launch a counterattack.

Hitler allowed his generals to trade space for time, reversing his "hold at all cost" orders of the year before. He changed his mind believing that new super weapons would be developed and used to achieve a stalemate that would in turn allow him to exploit a diplomatic front. However, by the second week of February, the Nazis had retreated two hundred miles along the entire southern front. They devastated the countryside and razed towns. A Russian observed the following:

"The Germans had burned villages down to the ground, laid low the orchard trees, trampled on the cultivated fields, effaced every sort of evidence of human occupation. In the farms they had taken the ploughs, reapers, mowers, made a pile of them and then blown them up."

In January, the Eastern Wehrmacht had only about 600 tanks available and by March were short 470,000 men. In the meantime, Russia was out-producing Germany with its tank factories in the Urals.

In terms of the Soviet Army, the Germans were no longer facing uniformed peasants. Morale improved, as did numbers and strength; the Red Army swelled to more than 16 million officers and men in July 1943. More importantly, Stalin trusted officers who had proved themselves in battle and were promoted; loyalty to the Communist Party was no longer the most important factor. The





Halftrack mounted nebelwerfers are prepared to fire.

Soviets were also becoming increasingly more mobile since 183,000 Lend-Lease trucks had been shipped to Soviet ports by mid-1943.

The Russians for the first time were implementing a large-scale offensive war of movement. A tank commander explained, "At the beginning of the war everything was done in a hurry and time was always ticking. Now we calmly went into action." However, the fluidity of this type of combat was hindered by cold weather, poor communications, inexperience with the maintenance of traffic density for deep penetrations, and the increased distance away from supplies and reinforcements. This aided the Germans in making their retreat and escaping destruction on the snow-swept steppes.

A Short Reprieve

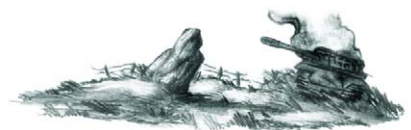
On February 21, 1943 Manstein's counterattack halted Russia's second winter offensive and Kharkov was retaken in mid-March. Manstein's counterattack shocked the Russian High Command who believed that his forces were in full retreat and incapable of offensive operations. Manstein ordered, "The Soviet Sixth Army is to be defeated."

Although it didn't happen according to Manstein's plans, during the attack the Soviets were demoralized by the appearance of the PzKpfw VI Tiger with its powerful 88mm gun and thick, slab-

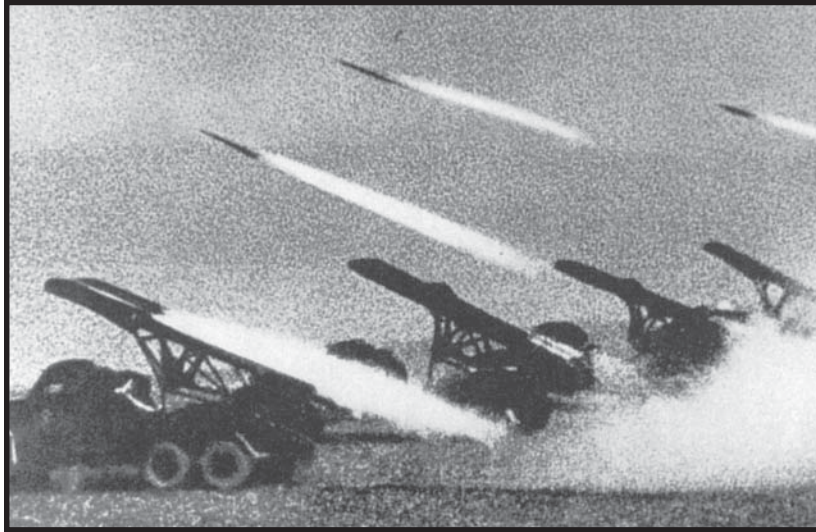
sided armor. The T-34's role as the undisputed queen of the battlefield had ended. The Red Army, low on fuel and weary of the German propensity for achieving the unimaginable, withdrew across the Donetz River and halted the Wehrmacht at almost the same line it had been at the previous summer.

Manstein's forces did manage to bag 9,000 prisoners, kill or wound 100,000 Russians, and destroy 615 tanks, 400 artillery pieces, and 600 antitank guns. Not only was the Russian offensive stopped and Kharkov recaptured, but Army Group A escaped entrapment in the Caucasus. Fortunately for the Russians, the spring thaw finally arrived in the third week of March, cutting short Manstein's advance because of gooey roads and fields. "General Mud" had taken over as soldiers liked to say.

At the end of March both armies were content in their defensive positions and began to build up forces while waiting for the spring thaw to end. Germany had failed to deny Russia the Caucasus oil supply and the cost of the war was beginning to be felt in the home manufacturing sector. So much manpower was being diverted to the Eastern Front, that Albert Speer, Minister of Armament and War Production, requested more foreign labor. Nazi administrators were only too happy to comply and thousands of slave laborers were shipped to factories inside Germany.



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Katyusha rockets in action during the battle of Kursk.

Kursk

In 1941, Hitler vied for all of Russia. In 1942, he wanted the Caucasus. Now in 1943, Hitler simply wanted a victory at the Kursk salient. The Wehrmacht realized that it would be almost impossible to defeat the Russians—who were growing stronger daily—and that the best strategy for the summer of '43 lay in forcing the Russians into a draw, with Nazi losses kept to a minimum.

Despite the length of the front and Wehrmacht's reduced strength after the winter of '42, a defensive posture was out of the question to Hitler if it meant withdrawing. Hitler knew he needed a great military victory to prevent his allies from withdrawing from the war and, hopefully, to convince Turkey to join the Axis. Despite the abysmal performance of their divisions during Operation Uranus, the Romanians disagreed as to who should take the blame at Stalingrad. General Franco requested that the Spanish "Blue Division" be relieved. Hungary wanted its three divisions kept away from the fighting and stopped taking German orders.

Disregarding Manstein's urgings to let the Russians take the offensive, Hitler ordered Operation Citadel on April 15, a German offensive on the Kursk salient by Army groups Center and South, to begin when the weather improved. Kursk became the largest tank battle in history up until the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and involved 6,000 Russian tanks. At its height, close to 3,000 tanks were on the move at the same time.

Lucy

The Russian High Command was tipped-off about Operation Citadel in early April by "Lucy," a Swiss agent named Rudolf Rossler who had connections to anti-Nazi officers in the German army. It was this agent who helped the Soviets win the battle of Moscow back in '41:

"Information of such an accurate and incredibly well-informed nature streamed to Moscow that suspicions were aroused that this was merely an agent of the Abwehr engaged on an elaborate process of disinformation, aimed at luring the Soviet command into a giant trap. In what remains an astonishing performance, and one finally accepted by Moscow as genuine, 'Lucy' supplied up-to-date data on the German order of battle, with day-to-day changes, as well as being able to answer enquiries about high-level matters dealing with the German Army. Such was Lucy's role that one highly valued Soviet agent considered that in the end Moscow very largely fought the war on Lucy's messages."

After confirming the vital information regarding Kursk with independent sources, "Lucy" had once again come through for Russia. With Zhukov's blessing, Stalin ordered forces around Kursk to take on a defensive posture and adopt a primary objective of destroying German armor. Without panzer divisions, the Soviet leaders were correct in assuming that Germany would never be able to take the strategic initiative again on the Eastern front.

Build Up

The Red Army had a golden opportunity to defang the Wehrmacht. Hitler deployed 3,332 tanks along Barbarossa's 930-mile front in '41; for Citadel he committed 1,850 panzers and 533 assault guns along a 60-mile front. For the first time the Nazis would have Tiger tanks superior in armor and firepower to the Russian T-34s. The first Tiger was captured on December, 1942 and the Russians quickly decided to improve the T-34's gun size to 85mm. But the revamped T-34 did not make it into the battle of Kursk. Regardless, the Germans had to



contend with Russian artillery deployed in large numbers never before experienced in modern warfare. The tactic of "Breakthrough Divisions" made-up of 356 guns on a firing line or *katyusha* divisions were developed in late 1942.

At the end of April, the Stavka sent Zhukov and the veteran armies of Stalingrad into the Kursk pocket. Rokossovski, the commander of the northern corner of the salient, had already reinforced this area with over 20,000 guns and mortars, 6000 76.2mm antitank guns, and 920 *katyusha* multiple rocket throwers. A Red Army Captain described how his brigade prepared for the imminent German attack:

"We anticipated five possible places where they [the Germans] may strike and at each of them we know alongside whom we shall be fighting, our replacements and command posts. The brigade is stationed in the rear, but our trenches and shelters are ready up in front, and the routes by which we are to get there are marked out. The ground, of which we have made a topographical survey, has been provided with guide marks. The depths of fords, the maximum loads of bridges are known to us. Liaisons with division have been doubled, codes and signals are arranged. Often alerted by day or night, our men are familiarized with their task in any eventuality..."

Under the direction of army engineers, the Russians built up a complicated integrated defense with the help of 300,000 civilians. Almost 3,100 miles of trenches were dug within eight defensive belts at a depth of 110 miles along the front.

The Attack Starts Late

The Germans suffered continual delays. The attack was delayed three weeks while additional tanks were produced. Hitler was determined that the new Panther tanks should participate in the battle. Due to the delays, Manstein believed the success of the operation was no longer feasible but a united General Staff persuaded Hitler that German firepower and mobility made taking Kursk achievable. As already mentioned the delay and intelligence from "Lucy" allowed the Russians to build enormous defensive emplacements. The

Germans knew the Russians were dug-in and yet still decided to attack. Like 1941, the Nazis underestimated the Red Army's ability to stand up to the might of the German Army. One day before the attack on the 4th of July, while suffering a Russian bombardment of their forward positions, the German army received a personal message from the Führer:

Adventure Seed: Is Lucy in Danger?

With the use of blood-mage-summoned cipher imps (*Afrika Korpse*, page 127), the Nazis know that "Lucy" is somewhere in neutral Switzerland. The player's learn of this by intercepting a German transmission or message that speaks of mobilizing a small, but elite, Nazi commando team, led by a blood mage, to find Lucy's exact location, capture him, and then send out an erroneous message at a critical time to the Russians.

The problem is that Switzerland is at least 1,500 miles away from the Russian Front and SOPA estimates that the players have only two weeks until the Germans find Lucy. To save time, the players may be parachuted into Rumania, and then, with the help of pro-communist partisans, the players must hike, bike, and use train and motor vehicles to travel an additional 600 miles through occupied Romania, Hungary, and Yugoslavia to the Swiss border. In every country along the way there are anti-Nazi partisan forces, some led by Russian or British advisors.

Pro-Russian Swiss agents meet the players at the border and inform the players of the results of their surveillance of the Nazi team and whether the Nazis have already captured "Lucy" or not. If not, then the players must shadow the commandos, avoid detection, and thwart the capture of Lucy. If he has been captured, he is probably being held over in some Swiss château. The players will have little time to rescue him before he is killed. If Lucy is rescued or the attempt to capture him is thwarted, the players have orders to escort him back to Russia, or if necessary, to France, so that his contacts can continue to feed him vital information. A wrench could be thrown into the rescue situation if Lucy is already dead and the Nazis allow a doppelganger spy to escape with the characters.

Another rescue possibility is to meet up with British or American forces in Italy. Over the next year, this could allow the possibility for joint SOPA and OSI missions in Italy, France, or the Ukraine. SOPA would be delighted to cooperate, secretly ordering the players to steal any OSI secrets for the good of the Mother Country.



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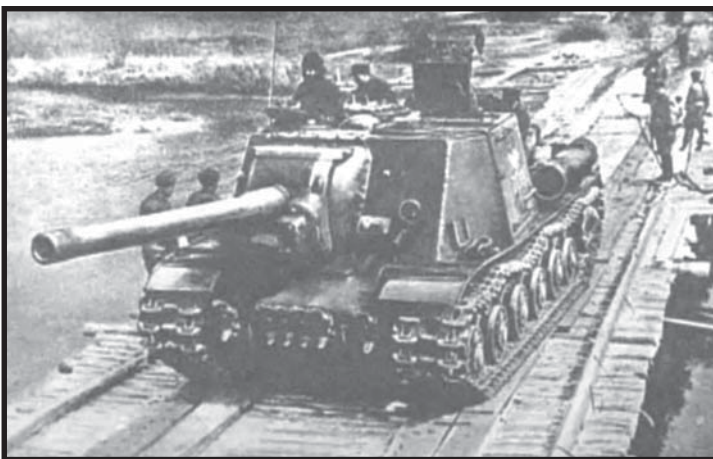


"Soldiers of the Reich! This day you are to take part in an offensive of such importance that the whole future of the war may depend on its outcome. More than anything else, your victory will show the whole world that resistance to the power of the German Army is hopeless."

Thanks to Lucy, strategic surprise was impossible when Hitler decided to launch Citadel on July 5. Stalin's commanders were on high alert for they knew the attack would be launched between July 3 and 6. On the evening of the 4th, a German sapper caught trying to remove Russian mines revealed under interrogation that the offensive would begin at 0330 hours. Russian artillery, mortars and *Katyusha* units opened up at 0220 hours hampering German units moving into position. As a result, the German attack began an hour late at 0430 hours.

The Germans responded with a barrage that fired more shells than had been fired during the entire Polish and French campaigns combined. On this first day, over 500 aircraft took part in the largest air battle in the history of the war. By the end of the battle, more than 2,000 German sorties were flown.

The lack of German imagination and adaptability of the Citadel plan in the face of the massive Russian preparations doomed the attack from the start. Once again the old blitzkrieg formula was relied on: Stukas, short-intense artillery bombardment, massed tanks and close support infantry kicked off the assault. A radio operator in a Tiger wrote:



An ISU-122 trundles across a pontoon bridge.

"As we advanced the Russian artillery ploughed the earth around us. 'Ivan,' with his usual cunning, had held his fire in the weeks before, and even that morning when our own guns were pounding him. But now the whole front was a girdle of flashes. It seemed as if we were driving into a ring of flame. Four times our valiant 'Rosinante' shuddered under a direct hit, and we thanked the fates for the strength of our good Krupp steel."

The Germans believed the Russians would fall once the panzers achieved a breakthrough and hit the open country beyond their defenses. To achieve this goal and maintain momentum, the following order was given, but it was a virtual death sentence to the panzer crews when taking into account the density of Soviet antitank guns:

"In no circumstances will tanks be stopped to render assistance to those which have been disabled. Recovery is the responsibility of engineer units only. Tank commanders are to press on to their objective as long as they retain mobility. Where a tank is rendered immobile but the gun is in working order (e.g., from mechanical failure or track damage), the crew will continue to give fire support from a static position."

German tactics revolved around the *Panzerkeile*. This was an armored wedge where the Tigers bunched at the tips and the Panthers and PzKpfw IV's fanned out behind. Directly behind the tanks were lightly-armed, close support infantry, followed by heavier forces in halftracks.

The Russians countered this with a tactic known to the Germans as a *Pakfront*. It was based on the use of up to 12 well-camouflaged antitank guns and one commander, who would concentrate their fire on a single target. Troops in antitank positions were trained in panzer vulnerabilities and to control their "tank fright." Khrushchev demanded that the weaknesses of the Tiger be known as well as the "Lord's prayer was once known." Often, camouflaged Russians let the German tanks and assault guns move by and then fired their antitank rifles or lobbed Molotov cocktails from behind.





Minefield layouts channeled the Germans into these *pakfront* corridors. Advancing German soldiers looking for cover soon learned that more than 40,000 mines had been placed and were now hidden by in-season wheat and sunflower fields. Antitank mines averaged 2,400 per mile and anti-personnel mines averaged 2,700 per mile. A panzer that hit a mine usually only had its tracks blown off but this left it a sitting duck.

When the Germans discovered the density and depth of the *pakfront* they tried to move their heavy infantry into the attack. The Russian guns, protected by machinegun and mortar nests and under orders only to fire to support their own batteries, decimated the German infantry. Often there was little cover on the steppes that German tanks could use as protection from the Russian guns.

The Next 7 Days

By the morning of the 5th, the German infantry, after tremendous exertions, mastered the first belt of the Russian defenses. However, they were finding it impossible to make headway against the second belt, which was the strongest. The Russians had also moved up tanks during the night; this meant that on the second day they had almost as much firepower as the first day. Weather also hampered the German advance. Intermittent thunderstorms fed the small streams bisecting the fields.

Elsewhere, as part of the Russian battle plan, partisans disrupted communication and supply routes with attacks on roads and railways behind German lines. These attacks not only destroyed war materials but tied up Nazi troops conducting anti-partisan sweeps.

Even though the Germans had local air superiority, the Germans encountered constant artillery and mortar bombardment and air attack every day of the battle. The Russians may have had superior numbers, but the German Tigers ruled the battlefield at long range. One German tanker recalled:

"On separate slopes, some half-mile apart, the forces faced one another like figures on a chessboard, trying to influence fate, move by move, in their own

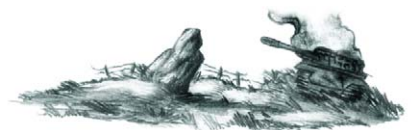


Tank-mounted infantry sweep in to counterattack.

favor. All the Tigers fired. The combat escalated into an ecstasy of roaring engines. The humans who directed and serviced them had to be calm; very calm, they aimed rapidly, they loaded rapidly, they gave orders quickly. They rolled ahead a few yards, pulled left, pulled right, maneuvered to escape the enemy crosshairs and bring the enemy into their own fire. We counted the torches of enemy tanks which would never again fire on German soldiers. After one hour, twelve T-34s were in flames. The other thirty curved wildly back and forth, firing as rapidly as their barrels would deliver. They aimed well, but our armor was very strong. We no longer twitched when a steely finger knocked on our walls. We wiped the flakes of interior paint from our faces, loaded again, aimed, fired."

T-34s could only penetrate Tiger armor within 500 meters compared to the Tiger's 1500-meter effective range. As result, many T-34s were dug in at certain sectors of the front. On July 7, Khrushchev assembled the areas commanders and said:

"The next two or three days will be terrible. Either we hold out or the Germans take Kursk. They are staking everything on this one card. For them it is a matter of life or death. We must see to it that they break their necks!"



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So many shells were fired during the tank battles that took place in the ravines, steppes, hills, gorges, gullies, and settlements that a haze-like smog hindered the sun. Russian Lieutenant General Dragunsky recalled:

"Toward the evening of 8 July, one regiment had only ten tanks left. The adjacent brigade had to withdraw to another sector. Our tank regiment was no longer able to hold its position. Communications to the battalions were interrupted and we were running out of armor-piercing shells. Also, there were many wounded. One would think we were on an island in the midst of a sea of fire. It was senseless to stay in this sector any longer. We had to make our way to the main forces of the Brigade."

Like the mobile battles after Stalingrad, neither side could achieve a knockout blow. The brutal struggle taxed men and machines and littered the battlefield with

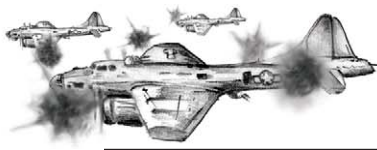
thousands of dead bodies and burning equipment. The Germans believed that once they cleared the defensive belts and hit open ground they could destroy the Russians as they had in '41' and '42. But they came to realize that the Soviets had learned from the past and finally understood the advantage the Red Army possessed in equipment and men. A Panzer soldier wrote:

"We had been warned to expect resistance from Pak [fixed antitank guns] and some tanks in static positions, also the possibility of a few independent brigades of the slower KV type. In fact we found ourselves taking on a seemingly inexhaustible mass of enemy armor. Never have I received such an overwhelming impression of Russian strength and numbers as on that day. The clouds of dust made it difficult to get help from the Luftwaffe, and soon many of the T-34's had broken past our screen and were streaming like rats all over the old battlefield..."



A Stuh 42 self-propelled gun in winter camo. Its 105mm gun provided heavy fire support for advancing infantry.





By July 10, the Germans had lost over 400 tanks and 50,000 men and had penetrated less than 10 miles. On that same day, the Allies landed troops in Sicily.

Another Crippling Defeat

The last large-scale armor attack by the German army on the Eastern Front took place on July 12. 600 German tanks faced 850 Russian tanks as dive-bombers from both sides flew in and out of the smoky battlefield. Destroyed tanks emitted oily smoke that made sighting difficult for gunners. On a few occasions, a Russian crew deliberately rammed their vehicle into a German tank causing a concussive fireball explosion that was felt across the battlefield. A Russian soldier recalled:

"The sun came to our aid. It picked out the contours of the enemy tanks and blinded the German tank men. Our first echelon at full speed cut into the positions of the German troops. The appearance on the battlefield of a great number of our tanks threw the Germans into confusion. Control was soon disrupted. Our tanks were destroying the Tigers at close range, where the Germans could not use their armament to advantage in close combat. We knew their vulnerable spots, so our tank crews were firing at their sides. The shells fired from very short distances tore large holes in the armor of the Tigers. Ammunition exploded inside them, and turrets weighing many tons were flung yards away."

After eight hours, the Germans retreated. As darkness fell, 300 German tanks managed to escape. That evening the Russians took possession of the battlefield with its valuable treasure of disabled tanks, guns, and trucks. Russian officer Rotmistrov described:

"More than 700 tanks were put out of action on both sides in the battle. Dead bodies, destroyed tanks, crushed guns and numerous shell craters dotted the battlefield. There was not a single blade of grass to be seen; only burnt, black and smoldering earth throughout the entire depth of our attack—up to eight miles."

Campaign: Kursk

With Stalingrad encircled, a Kursk Campaign could begin in early January 1943 when the players take part in Operation Star to capture Kharkov, west of Stalingrad, and Kursk, north of Kharkov, by mid-February. Unfortunately, due in large part to German General Manstein, Operation Star's efforts to trap Army Group A in the Caucasus failed and the Germans recaptured Kharkov on March 15. The players could witness Tigers with their 88mm guns devastate the now outdated Russian T-34s. Backtracking a little, perhaps the players could have been part of the operation to capture a Tiger in December of 1942.

To avoid another surprise counterattack, the players, with the rest of the Red Army in the area, take up defensive positions. Once Lucy tips off Stavka in April that the Germans will launch a major offensive on Kursk in July, the players could help supervise 300,000 civilians construct Kursk's eight defensive belts throughout the months of April, May, and June. The players could also receive training in the Tank Immobilization feat. Two weeks prior to the attack, the players could be sent to organize partisan attacks on German communications, supply routes, roads and railways behind German lines so as to tie up the Germans in anti-partisan sweeps. Or the players could remain and participate in the 9-day battle, perhaps being the ones responsible for the capture and interrogation of the German sapper on the night of July 4.

In terms of weirdness, out of desperation, the blood mages may have found a way to summon uncontrollable twisted hulks and flugzeuggeists (see Afrika Korpse pages 131 and 139) or are sending out exploding corpses (see page 134). Perhaps one or more hate feeder manifestations make an untimely appearance. After the battle, a haunted German tank, refusing to give up the fight, wreaks havoc on the players and a group of Red Army engineers sent to scavenge the field for useful German gear.

Once Hitler calls off the battle on July 13, the players could take part during the months of July and August in the recapture of Orel and Kharkov, help push back the Nazis to the west of the Dnieper River in September, and liberate Kiev by November 6. If not reassigned to aid and advise partisans, the players could then, in the months of December 1943 and January and February 1944, help liberate most of Western Ukraine.

Taking into account high German armor losses, three days earlier on the 9th, Zhukov and Stalin were confident that the offensive against the German Orel salient could proceed up north. The Orel offensive



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began on the 12th. On the 13th, Hitler, realizing that losses were too high to continue, had no choice but to call off the battle of Kursk.

Orel fell by the 23rd. For Germany it was the beginning of the end with roots extending back to Stalingrad. 645 German tanks and 207 assault guns were lost by the end of July. Due to the Soviet counteroffensives another 527 tanks and 143 assault guns were lost in August. By October, only one-third remained of all the armor that was available in the battle of Kursk. At Hitler's insistence, replacement crews were ordered to the front with less training than their

predecessors. Some motorized divisions had no vehicles and used horses instead.

Soviet armor was down 50 percent, but these losses could be more easily replaced than German losses. Although 34,000 Soviets were taken prisoner and sent off as slave labor, it marked the last time prisoners were taken in any significant numbers. Hoth commented to Manstein, "The Russians have learned a lot since 1941. They are no longer peasants with simple minds. They have learned that art of war from us."

The defeat caused the Nazi hierarchy to retreat further into the world of absurdity. The General Staff became spineless "yes" men to the Führer. Goering just stopped showing up and spent his time collecting art, hunting and shopping. Hitler, pumped full of drugs* and suffering from Parkinson disease, became more uncontrollable and incoherent.

* In *Weird Wars*, could these drugs have some other purpose, perhaps pre-vampire preparation? (See page 124.)

Adventure Seed: Blood Mage Suggestion

Although more costly, frontal attacks in force was still the preferred method attack by many inexperienced and less skillful Russian officers. When 500 Russians attacked his artillery company, Siegfried Knappe noted in his diary that:

"We could see them moving about 4 kilometers away... [and] opened fire on them, but they kept coming. It was just suicide, because they were out in the open and they had no tanks or artillery or protection of any kind. They got as close as 200 meters before they were completely decimated... Hundreds of dead and wounded lay in the reddened snow, horribly mangled and spattered with blood, their eyes growing dim as their lives ran out."

Perhaps the use of frontal assaults is not always a result of an inexperienced officer but blood mage suggestion magic. For example, the players could be meeting with an officer to coordinate some future mission when the officer suddenly stops in mid-sentence and orders the troops under his command to charge a nearby enemy position.

The players know it will gain nothing but the officer's troops, in an almost zombie-like state, follow his orders as he leads his men into the suicide charge despite any character attempts to convince the officer otherwise. Perhaps the characters notice during the ensuing carnage, a Nazi officer or familiar slip away from his hiding place. The characters are at a loss to explain the weird event and report back to SOPA and find that similar reports are coming in throughout that area of the front. Realizing that it may be the work of a blood mage, SOPA command then orders the players to investigate and either find a way to protect the Red Army from future attacks or eliminate or capture the blood mage propagating the suggestion attacks.

Operation Rumantsyev

On August 23, 1943, Kharkov was recaptured again by the Russians in Operation Rumantsyev. So much was brought to bear in Operation Rumantsyev that Hitler gave Manstein permission on September 15 to retreat most units behind the Dnieper river. Ukraine's steppe geography provided few natural defensive positions and the river was the only major obstacle capable of slowing the Russian advance.

From September 26 to December 20, the Red Army forced most of the remaining German units away from the east bank of the Dnieper River. By mid-October, the Soviets managed to secure some footholds on the western banks. During the next four months, the Red Army continued its offensive as the Germans retreated; a retreat that would not end until 20 months later in Berlin. Attacks along the front from Finland to the Black Sea were switched from one location to the other to keep the Germans off balance.

New Patriarch

In September of 1943, to increase morale among the civilians, Stalin put the word out that it was permitted to openly participate in the Russian Orthodox Church. Up until that time, religious worship was outlawed and replaced with the "religion" of Communism. As a result, the church collected money for the war





effort and blessed tanks as they left the factories. The church benefited from this new relationship when Stalin allowed for all other Christian faiths to come under the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church. The new Patriarch Aleski declared Stalin as Russia's "God Given Leader."

Kiev Liberated

Kiev, west bank of the Dnieper River, had to be taken by conventional means after a failed nighttime paratroop drop into a panzer division. A long-term result was that the Russians never attempted a paratroop drop again in the war. Not all Ukrainians were happy to see the Russians again. In April 1944, anti-Soviet partisans killed General Vatutin, commander of the 1st Ukrainian Group.

At the front, Manstein desperately tried to halt the Russian advance. His situation was further complicated by having to now ask permission from Hitler to use SS units. In the meantime, Russian tank strength had gradually returned to its pre-Kursk numbers. By late October, the Russian winter was rearing its ugly head again. Its coming permeated the German Army with despair and a dull conviction that the war was lost.

The Teheran Conference

On November 28, 1943, Teheran, Iran served as the location for a conference between Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt.

Despite British preferences for Mediterranean fronts, Stalin agreed with Roosevelt that preparations for the landing on France in May, 1944 must continue. Stalin understandably wanted the Western Allies to step up and contribute their share to the fighting. Stalin also agreed to Roosevelt's proposal for a future United Nations and formally promised to declare war on Japan after the defeat of Germany. The timetable for the attack on Italy was discussed as well as postwar border and independence issues regarding Finland, Poland, China and Korea.

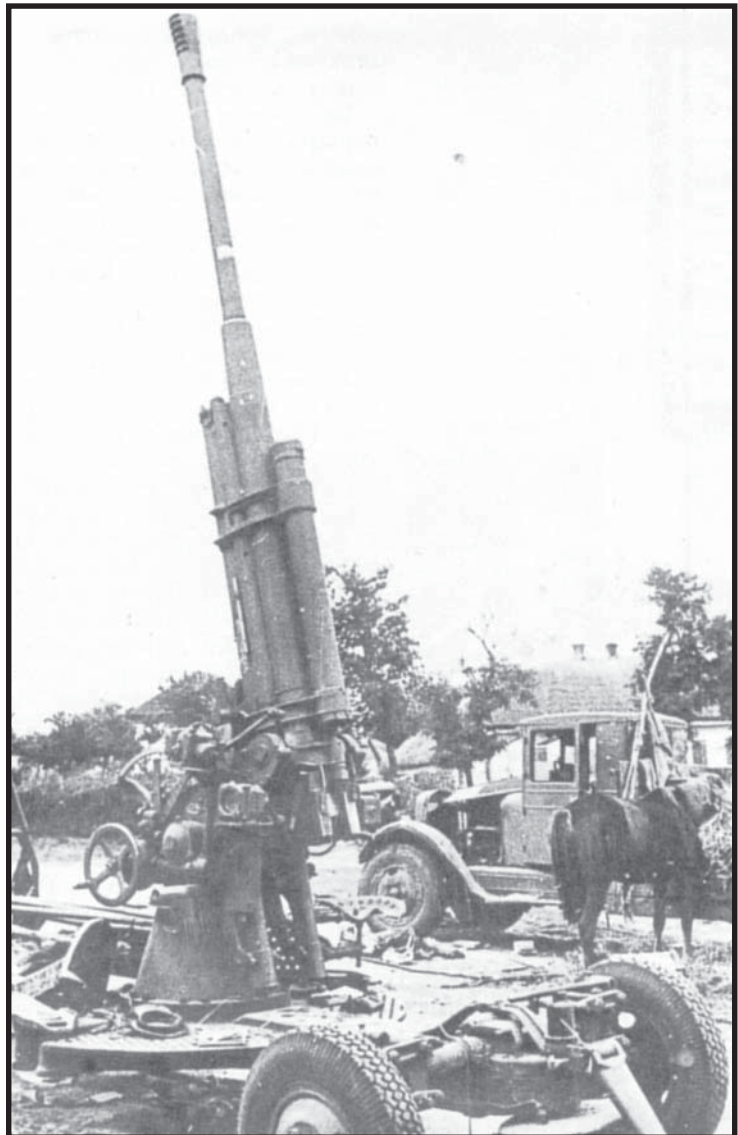
Ukrainian Offensive

On December 24, the Russians launched a fresh offensive to liberate the Ukraine. For the next 10 weeks, Russia's third winter offensive successfully liberated most of the Ukraine west of the Dnieper river to the borders of the Carpathian Mountains of Romania and the

Pripet Marshes of Belorussia and Poland. However, to the north, the Germans still controlled everything west of the Estonian border and north of the Pripet Marshes.

For the German soldier the war had become a long retreat across a bleak and hostile landscape. They were always outnumbered, perpetually short of fuel and ammunition, and constantly having to overexert themselves and their machines. Major Gustav Kreutz, an artillery officer with the 182nd Division wrote:

"Towards the end of the month we at last got some replacements, new assault guns up to battalion strength. They were mostly young chaps from the training barracks



One of the ubiquitous Russian 85mm anti-aircraft guns.



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The Luftwaffe slowly lost control of the skies over Russia.

Adventure Seed: Penal Battalion Revenge

To their horror, the Germans witnessed Russia's continual willingness to sacrifice lives to win. Russian penal battalions were marched to the German front lines to remove land mines, sometimes as a human wave as noted by Guy Sajer in his memoir *Forgotten Soldier*,

"The minefield exploded under the howling mob, and we sent out a curtain of yellow and white fire to obliterate anyone who had survived. The fragmented cadavers froze very quickly, sparing us the stench which would otherwise have polluted the air over a vast area."

Despite the inhumanity of the situation, the players witness or order one such human wave prior to an afternoon assault. After the successful assault to push back the German front line the players turn in for the night while a few take-up nighttime guard positions.

Unless the players think to bury the parts of the penal battalion, that night a blood mage sneaks into the area of the dead and decimated penal battalion. It now happens to be behind Russian lines near the new front line. The mage resurrects them as zombies to seek revenge. Once the zombie assault is stopped, as required under SOPA objectives, the players must hunt down and eliminate or capture the blood mage.

with a few officers and NCO's who had seen action in Italy. In no time they were complaining about the cold. They kept fires going during the day as well as at night, and were breaking up a lot of wooden outhouses for fuel, which would have been valuable later. I had occasion to speak sharply to them about this and one of them answered that on that day the thermometer had fallen to ten below, and was this not abnormal? I told him that soon he would count himself lucky when the thermometer was not ten but twenty-five degrees below, and that in January it would fall to forty below. At this the poor fellow broke down and sobbed."

Throughout the last half of 1943 the German Army in the East was in a steady decline. Following Kursk, Manstein's Army Group suffered 133,000 casualties and received only 33,000 replacements, the Italians went home, and the Hungarians and Romanians were more interested in fighting each other. The equipment situation continued to deteriorate and the SS was hoarding everything it could get its hands on.

The Red Army, in contrast, was reaping the benefits of its simplified arms production and aid from the United States, especially trucks and halftracks. These vehicles put the Red Army on wheels for the first time in its history and allowed for deeper and longer assault penetrations. In addition, no country had as many artillery pieces as Russia.

Leningrad Relieved

Taking advantage of the frozen Gulf of Finland and rivers on German flanks, the Russian Leningrad army group finally liberated the city from its long, 900-day siege. South of Kiev, the Russians managed to encircle eight German divisions.

By the beginning of the year, the German retreat turned from an organized withdrawal to a rout. Several supply dumps were abandoned undamaged. The Germans also had a shortage of medics. Many wounded died waiting for care or due to a lack of medical supplies or were killed by the Red Army or partisans while being evacuated in trucks or trains.

Like rats abandoning a sinking ship, Nazi party officials shipped their loot back to Germany, in a false belief that a





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diplomatic solution with the West could be achieved. They rationalized their actions by claiming that they were fighting the threat of Communism. But German atrocities could no longer be hidden and the West was unmovable in its demand for an unconditional surrender. Despair turned to fear, which in turn led to desperation.

German Army in Peril

A Russian account of the capture of Pyolichatka in southern Ukraine illustrated the state of German affairs on the front:

"It was like a garage. Vehicles of all makes and all models were lined up in close ranks on the streets, in the courtyards, and the cherry orchards. They had come from all the countries of Europe. From large Demag seven-tonners which carried an entire mechanical workshop to small Renault tricycles, from the luxurious Horch to old Citroens. All were camouflaged in preparation for the road journey. In the sidings were long strings of trucks loaded with flour, salt, munitions, tanks, and petrol. Before a grain elevator, a train was loaded, ready to depart. The destination was written on the trucks: Koln-Tilsit-Konigsberg."

A Belgian with the SS Wallonia Brigade described the retreat from the Koval-Korsun, Crimea area:

"In this frantic race vehicles were overturned, throwing wounded in confusion to the ground. A wave of Soviet tanks overtook the first vehicles and caught more than half of the convoy; the wave advanced through the carts, breaking them under our eyes, one by one like boxes of matches, crushing the wounded and the dying horses . . . We had a moment's respite when the tanks got jammed in the procession, and were trying to get clear of the tangle of hundreds of vehicles broken beneath their tracks."

Later when the Germans were halted by a river:

"Eight meters broad and two meters deep the artillery teams which had escaped destruction

plunged first into the waves and ice floes. The banks of the river were steep; the horses turned back and fell into the current. Soon hundreds of soldiers, completely naked and red as lobsters, were thronging the other bank. Many soldiers did not know how to swim. Maddened by the approach of the Russian armor, which was coming down the slope and firing at them, they threw

Adventure Seed: The Sword of Stalingrad

At the Teheran Conference, Churchill gave to Stalin a ceremonial sword created at the command of King George VI. Inscribed on the 50-inch gilded bronze blade in English and Russian was the following: "To the steel-hearted citizens of Stalingrad, the gift of King George VI in token of homage of the British people."

In *Weird Wars*, could this sword have mystical powers? After examination by SOPA advisors to Stalin it is decided that the sword could serve a greater purpose in the destruction of Nazi monstrosities, such as fext, wehrwolves, vampires and hate feeders than on display at some museum near Red Square, Moscow. Any player that loses or damages the sword would be advised to shoot him or herself. Or perhaps SOPA has no idea of the sword's value until Nazi agents steal it right out of Moscow. SOPA may even be tipped off that the Nazis plan on stealing something out of the museum and order the characters to take up guard positions. If the sword is stolen, the players must now recover the sword, discover its value, and save the honor of the Mother Country and those who died at Stalingrad.



Chronic shortages forced the Germans to use captured equipment.



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"General Mud" made life miserable for Russians...

themselves pell-mell into the icy water. Some escaped death by clinging to trees, which had been hastily felled... But hundreds were drowned. Under the fire of tanks, thousands upon thousands of soldiers, half clothed, streaming with icy water or naked as the day they were born, ran through the snow towards the distant cottages of Lysianka."

For the next year-and-a-half the German supply system became very unreliable. Obtaining food became a major concern for many German soldiers along the front. German soldiers became hunters, trappers, nest robbers, and plant gatherers. Abandoned horses became supper and amputated limbs were considered by two soldiers as reported by Stephen Fritz in his book *Frontsoldaten*:

"There was simply nothing at all to eat... Rase still has all his limbs and was constantly out and about... He brought leaves, grasses and herbs and... knew what could be done with them... Rase seized up my good leg and drew to my attention what a waste it was that I had not brought along the sawn-off leg as reserve supply... There would certainly have been a usable joint of some kilos left above the knee... And so the only

bit of hope remaining for me and Rase was that when the follow-up amputation was done on my leg, some extra kilos of flesh could be cut off and saved for consumption."

Spring Offensive

On March 4, 1944, the Belorussia front was created by Soviet troops. This marked the beginning of the spring offensive that divided the German front into north and south sections. With the capture of the railroad junction at Chernovtsy, Ukraine, north of Romania, the Nazis could no longer move forces from Poland to southern Ukraine. Since

December '43, except in Crimea, German losses over the entire front were light because of Manstein's leadership and Russian caution.

Air Strategy

Air attacks from both sides seldom decided the fate of land battles due to the front being so long. Russia had no effective strategic bomber force; there were just too few. A bombing run on Berlin was done for publicity purposes. Medium bombers were used mainly as army support.

Russian fighter aircraft had a lot of freedom since only a third of their time was spent combating German aircraft in the air or on the ground. By January '43, Russia had almost 13,000 aircraft, three to four times as much as the Germans. British, and US. Strategic bombings of Germany, the Italian front, and the impending Allied invasion necessitated that less than 25% of Luftwaffe was available on the Eastern Front. As a result, less important areas of the front had no air support. Even when concentrated, the Luftwaffe was still outnumbered. German mechanics still had to work in unheated workshops. Both sides built secondary and reserve airfields that allowed the planes to be deployed in depth. To make matters worse for the Germans, replacement pilots received much less training than earlier recruits.





Hungary Occupied

Out of all his allies, Hitler trusted the Hungarians the least. For the most part, Hungary had refused to give up its Jewish population to the Final Solution. The Jews had still faced economic and political repression, however.

Momentum to drop out of the war was at its greatest after the Hungarian 2nd Army was practically eliminated in January near Stalingrad; 40,000 killed and 70,000 wounded. Awareness that anti-Axis sentiment was growing too strong and the fact that its government was protecting over 700,000 Jews prompted Hitler to move German units into the country and install a pro-Axis government. Soon after, Eichmann arrived with Gestapo Special Section Commandos who then began deporting Jews to the death camps in Poland.

Crimea Liberated

During the months of April and May Soviet forces moved to liberate the Crimean peninsula. Striking from the north and east, 120,000 Germans were crushed by the Red Army and the Wehrmacht fell back in disarray.

Unfortunately, many Germans were evacuated by sea to a Romanian port. However, Russian submarines and aircraft managed to drown at least 8,000 Nazis. Now all Black Sea ports were in Russian control again, including Odessa, Ukraine, which was abandoned by the Romanians without a fight.

Hitler's dream of a future offensive from Crimea would never be realized. The arrival of spring rains and muddy conditions ended the Russian spring offensive but the losses in Crimea caused Hitler to relieve another group of senior generals, especially those who questioned his military strategies, such as Manstein. He replaced them with those who would nod their heads to his unrealistic demands. This led to greater dissatisfaction among Hitler's generals.

Over the next month, the Red Army regrouped and resupplied in preparation for the third summer offensive, Operation Bagration, named after a Russian prince who died at the hands of Napoleon's armies. By June 1, the Red Army consisted of 476 divisions, 93 artillery divisions, 37 mechanized corps, and 14,787 aircraft. On June 6, the Western allies landed in Normandy. Now Germany was involved in a three-front war in France, Russia, and Italy.

Finnish Offensive

With the Germans pushed back from Leningrad, five Russian armies advanced up the Karelian Isthmus. After the capture of Vyborg, a cease-fire agreement was reached by Finland and the Soviet Union on September 19. A peace treaty soon followed in which Finland agreed to help remove the Nazis from their homeland.

Summer Offensive

Eastern Europe was about to change hands, but not before one more round of atrocities was committed. Hitler refused to believe that the Russians were getting stronger and based his strategies on undeveloped super weapons and enemy blunders. Hitler said to his General Staff, "Unlike the Greek gods, the Russians do not become stronger every time they fall!"

When preparing for the inevitable Russian summer offensive, Hitler hoped for a careless Russian attack on Army Group North defending northern Ukraine because it offered the best direct route to



...and Germans alike.



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Berlin. Hitler dreamed of a major reversal and concentrated most German forces in northern Ukraine. Hitler's gamble was based on geographic reasoning, that the Soviet forces would avoid an attack on Army Group South through the Carpathian Mountains and Army Group Center through the Pripet Marshes.

However, on June 22nd, two weeks after D-Day, the Russians renewed their attack on the Nazis with 118 infantry and 43 tank divisions, a total of 1.7 million troops. The blow fell on the unsuspecting Army Group Center in Belorussia, located directly north of the Pripet Marshes and south of Lithuania and Latvia. In terms of military success, it was Operation Barbarossa in reverse.

German Forces

Army Group North was strengthened at the expense of Army Group Center. With 400,000 soldiers, there were only about 150 combat soldiers with 2 or 3 artillery pieces and 1 or 2 assault guns along every mile of the Belorussian front. However, the

Germans had time to construct three to five trench lines three to four miles deep with a great deal of minefields and barbed wire barriers. Concrete and antitank fortifications were few, but panzerfaust antitank weapons were a plenty.

In terms of armor, unlike 1941, when 80% of German armor was in the East, now less than half remained on the Eastern Front. In anticipation of the Allied landing in France, seven Panzer divisions were pulled out and committed to France. Out of the 4,740 tanks available on the Eastern Front, Army Group Center had only 553 and 480 of them were only StuG III infantry support tanks.

Allied bombing had reduced oil supplies and production. This forced the Germans to cut back on training and increase the use of rail transport to reduce fuel consumption. By May 1944, encounters with Allied fighters reduced the Luftwaffe pilot numbers by 40 percent and destroyed 100 percent of its fighter planes. As a result of ever-increasing



A Russian artillery battery is cunningly camouflaged against air attack.





Allied bombings, the Eastern front lacked sufficient planes and antiaircraft artillery as they were pulled back into Germany. Specifically, the Eastern Front lacked long-range reconnaissance aircraft, and had only about 26 aircraft in the Belorussian area. Regardless of the numbers, spring clouds and Russian air superiority limited fly overs. Even worse, the Luftwaffe had only 40 fighters in the area of Operation Bagration.

Like the winter of '42 near Moscow, Hitler had his German armies create "hedgehogs" or *feste platzen* around major cities. These strong points were ordered to hold out until relieved; no tactical retreats were permitted. Any request to retreat was viewed as defeatism and a lack of will to fend off the Russians. This would have been fine if there were substantial reserve units to relieve one of these defensive positions. However, Hitler expected his units to fight to the last man and to seek authorization for even the smallest withdrawals. As a result, the German Army lost its tactical flexibility. Because of this and Hitler's stubbornness, within five weeks after June 23, 75% of Army Group Center was taken out of the war. Overall, the Germans suffered their greatest numerical losses ever, 17 Wehrmacht divisions were destroyed and another 50 shattered.

The Russian War Machine

To deal with Belorussia's poor terrain of marshes, swamps, and woods that Hitler believed would forestall a Russian attack, six cavalry divisions were brought to bear and were often paired with mechanized divisions to forge ahead and secure key bridges. The Soviets attacked with 2,715 tanks and 1,355 assault guns manned by experienced crews. In terms of artillery, 400 guns were massed per mile along the attack front. Total artillery numbers included a total of 10,563 artillery pieces, 11,514 mortars and 2,306 rocket launchers. The Russians also brought to bear 5,327 aircraft, about 40% of which were light and medium bombers. The Russians were fond of saying, "Quantity has a quality all its own."

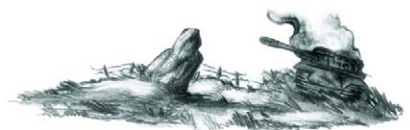
Special engineer battalions were deployed to take care of the extensive German minefields and fortifications. Numerous bridging units were also brought in to ford the areas many rivers, streams, and swamps. In addition, infantry units were trained in river-crossing techniques and equipped with four-man LMN rubber rafts and oars, and one-man

MPK and PK inner-tubes with hand paddles (some of which included built-in rubber trousers to withstand cold waters). Some tank units carried ramps and fascines to traverse swamps.

Besides numeric advantages of troops, tanks, artillery, and aircraft, Belorussia was also an area that contained the greatest concentration of partisans—about 270,000 organized into over 150 brigades and over 80 smaller units. Nearly 15% of the German forces were preoccupied with dealing with the partisans, who destroyed railway cars, tanks, vehicles, and communication lines. The Germans may have controlled the towns, cities, and roads in the area but not the countryside, forests, and swamps. Most importantly, partisans operating out of the Pripet marshes, which bisected the Eastern Front, had specially inserted Red Army scouts called *razvedchiki*. They provided invaluable intelligence and coordinated simultaneous attacks with the main Russian offensive. Attacks on German held railways were also planned.

In terms of leadership, unlike the first three years of the war, the Red Army was now strategically led by experienced and competent officers that had cut their teeth since Stalingrad '43. Over time, since the beginning of the war, in contrast to Hitler's megalomaniacal micromanaging, Stalin's confidence grew in his highest-ranking generals such as Zhukov. Stalin listened to their advice, and unlike the first two years of the war, allowed them a great deal of freedom—but never too much for one single general. Now Stalin merely approved plans, but always, since Stalingrad, took credit for military successes and kept any failures away from the masses with the state-controlled media.

The Russians had learned from World War I to keep encrypted radio transmissions to a minimum for fear of enemy interception. As a result, the Soviets relied almost exclusively on secured land line telephones. To German intelligence's frustration, this allowed the Russians to maintain almost absolute radio silence. This, together with the Red Army aircraft strength, nearly prevented German reconnaissance. What information the German's did receive was what STAVKA allowed. These communications aimed at deceiving the Germans unknowingly played into Hitler's delusions that the summer offensive would take place in northern Ukraine against Army Group North. For example, false





dispatches of large troop movements were purposely leaked and German reconnaissance aircraft were allowed to fly over certain northern Ukraine areas containing deceptively strong troop and equipment concentrations. Elsewhere, to hide the massing of the Belorussian front, troops and equipment were brought in at night. The Nazis still believed the Russians as inferior and incapable of conducting a successful deception campaign. To the Germans, previous Russian success was not based on skill but attributed to luck and numbers.

Operation Bagration Begins

As planned, partisan units began their attacks on German railways and communications on the 19th, but the main attack on Army Group Center was delayed four days by congested railways feeding into the front. At 0500 hours, the Russians began the attack with a two-hour, double rolling, artillery barrage to a depth of 4 miles, at an intensity never before seen on the Eastern Front. German artillery units that counter-fired were soon engaged with long-range artillery and destroyed. However, early morning fog and dust from the artillery barrages limited the use of Russian aircraft for the first day of the battle. Following the artillery barrages Russian infantry began to insert themselves into the battle, foregoing the mass charges conducted during the first three years of the war. They used new techniques as described by a German soldier:

"The enemy adopted completely new tactics. He no longer attacked as in the past on a broad front with very heavy artillery support, but instead employed concentrated groups of infantry supported by highly concentrated and well-controlled fire from heavy weapons. He went first for good tactical ground to establish favorable initial positions. Behind these assault groups, undisclosed until needed, lay tank forces to follow on and break through."

By the afternoon, using techniques acquired from the Germans, Russian units made pincer movements and trapped four German divisions defending Vitebsk, the second most northern city on the 400 plus mile front. The Germans managed to

destroy all but one bridge leading into the city. Hitler finally approved a limited withdrawal from the city on the evening of the 24th but by then it was too late. Nearby units ordered to support the breakout were also surrounded by the Russian armies. Russian air superiority prevented resupply from the air.

By the 27th, few of the 28,000 German troops defending the heavily bombed city managed to escape the Russian encirclement. Those who did faced partisans in the countryside who took no prisoners. Despite the loss, the German High command still believed the main Russian attack would come in Northern Ukraine. As they waited, Russian cavalry and mechanized units sped past encircled German fixed positions. Although not suited to take on a large number of German units head on, the Russian partisan units did quite well in destroying smaller German units who managed to escape encirclement.

One of the most important objectives of the battle was the capture of the Moscow-Minsk highway stretch from Smolensk to Orsha. Being the best—and practically only—modern road in the area, the Germans heavily mined and fortified the highway. It was here that the Russians faced the greatest concentration of German troops and best equipment. Groups of ten T-34's fitted with mine rollers were brought in and followed by heavy tank regiments that could engage German armor at long range.

The first part of the highway's defenses were soon overcome and the encirclement of Orsha, south of Vitebsk, was completed on the afternoon of the 26th. A train bearing German wounded was dispatched too late and destroyed by T-34s. Orsha easily fell on the night of June 27 due to the German commander's breakout from the city to a river west of the city; he may have disobeyed Hitler's orders to hold firm but his troops escaped the fate of those at Vitebsk.

Even with the capture of Orsha's important railway junction, and Minsk within Russia's grasp, the German High Command still classified the attacks as a minor Russian offensive. They still believed that the main offensive in Northern Ukraine was yet to come. Only some forces that were taken in May were shifted back toward Army Group Center. One such force was 29 Tigers sent by rail to Borisov, the only remaining city along the highway between Orsha and Minsk. The fresh troops witnessed a large





number of German soldiers, many without their weapons, who had fled their positions from the east.

Along the Berezina River, a tributary of the Dnieper River and east of Bosisov, German vehicles and equipment dotted the river crossings, having been abandoned to Red Air Force attacks. Ironically, the German troops were following the same route used by Napoleon in his retreat from Moscow. The Russians were close behind in an effort to control the Berezina river crossings. By June 30, the German reinforcements were too few to stop the Russians from crossing the river and Bosisov was liberated after some intense street fighting. Now no major geographic or enemy obstacles stood between Bosisov and Minsk.

To the south of Bosisov, the city Bobruisk was also encircled by June 27 thanks to Hitler's "hold fast" orders. Nevertheless, futile attempts to breakout were attempted. In one such attempt, the Red Army and Air Force killed 10,000 German soldiers and another 6,000 were captured. Out of the original 40,000 troops defending the city, only 15,000 managed to make their way out, with extremely demoralizing consequences. The city finally fell on the 29th; the 3,500 wounded left behind to defend the city had no chance. The Bosisov forces then made their way north to link up the Russian forces heading toward Minsk.

Incredibly, by late June, Hitler withheld reinforcements still believing that the main Russian offensive was yet to come in Northern Ukraine. As a result, Minsk was forced to defend itself with 1,800 demoralized and disorganized troops that survived the attacks to the east. All the Tiger tanks were lost and Goering mistakenly assigned lumbering high altitude bombers to make low level attacks.

After 25% losses, Goering ordered them to make high-altitude bombing runs but a shortage of high-octane fuel made such missions impossible. As a result 15,000 unarmed stragglers, 8,000 wounded, and 12,000 Army Group Center staff tried to escape by train on July 2.

In a span of only two weeks, Operation Bagration was a devastating blow to the Germans; about 350,000 German soldiers were taken out of the war at the expense of 178,507 Russian casualties. The Russian forces could now more effectively turn their attention on the separated German forces of Army Groups North and South.

After the fall of Minsk and the encirclement of most of Army Group Center east of the city, Vilna and Grodno were soon liberated, opening the way to East Prussia. To the west, Russian army groups made their way toward Warsaw; Brest-Litovsk, a western Belorussian city between the Minsk/Warsaw rail link, was liberated on July 28.

The Lvov-Sandomierz Offensive

Hitler and his command staff were correct that an offensive would occur in the Northern Ukraine area but failed to predict when. Over a million Russian troops, 1,600 tanks, 14,000 artillery, and 2,800 aircraft attacked in mid-July. They faced about 900,000 German troops, 900 tanks and assault guns, 6,000 artillery, 700 aircraft, and a defensive belt 20 miles deep. Unlike Belorussia, many towns in the area were heavily fortified to carry out a protracted defense. Despite this, the Soviets managed to overcome Army Group Center's more determined counterparts



A view from atop an Su-152.



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Campaign: Operation Bagration and Beyond

For inspiration, the War Master may want to see the hard to find movie *Cross of Iron*. The players could take part in this summer offensive with the Red Army or partisan brigades. If part of the Red Army, players can scout out enemy positions to be targeted by Russian artillery. Perhaps a German spy must be hunted down before he escapes to warn Hitler that a major Russian offensive is being staged in Belorussia and not in northern Ukraine as Hitler incorrectly predicted.

In terms of weirdness, if not already encountered in past visits to the Pripet Marshes, the players could come upon the Babba Yagga and corrosive rot for the first time. In addition, if not already stumbled upon west of Moscow or in the Ukraine, a character could be cursed by a grave bane. The War Master may also want to incorporate the **Adventure Seed: Forced Blood Transfusions** found later in this chapter.

Regardless, beginning on June 23, the players participate in Operation Bagration and liberate important cities in Belorussia. They then either take part in the liberation of most of the Baltic region or the Balkans. If participating in the Baltic offensive, the players may be called upon to help liberate concentration camps, recover any blood mage research materials, and capture Nazi scientists, medical doctors and blood mages. If a character has a Polish or gypsy background, he or she may hide more personal reasons and convince SOPA to allow the characters to assist the Warsaw uprising, which begins on August 1.

and push back elements of Army Group North to the west banks of the Vistula River, just east of Warsaw. By the end of August, the Germans controlled only the northern tips of Estonia and Latvia and the western parts of Lithuania, Prussia and Poland. Realizing that Poland's plains would serve as an excellent highway to Berlin, the Germans re-fortified the lines along the western portion of Poland's Vistula River. Needing rest and resupply, the Russians would not resume operations for the final lunge toward Berlin until January 12, 1945.

When the Red Army resumed their advance, German navy, fishing, and passenger vessels evacuated over 2 million German soldiers and refugees trapped in East Prussia from the Gulf of Danzig between January 23, 1945 and May 8, 1945. This was the largest sea

evacuation in the war—dwarfing the Dunkirk evacuation—and was mostly conducted without air support.

Attempt on Hitler's Life

Many of Hitler's officers (Rommel for instance) knew that Germany faced impossible odds, that a two-front war was impossible to win. Hitler still continued to rant about victory and would never agree to the Allies' demands of an unconditional surrender. Unfortunately, Lieutenant Colonel Klaus von Stauffenberg's briefcase bomb failed to kill Hitler on July 20, 1944. As a result, Hitler had almost 5,000 officers and Nazi party members executed, thousands more than those who were actually involved in the plot. Supposedly, some of the sadistic executions were filmed and watched by Hitler.

Continued Resistance

In August, German weapons output continued to rise, despite the hammer of Allied air attacks. This remarkable feat was achieved by the vicious and cruel exploitation of slave labor. The two sectors of the economy which were running out of resources were fuel and men. The age for army conscription was lowered to sixteen and half and only one month's supply of fuel was in stock. Amazingly, German factories delivered more single-seater fighters to the Luftwaffe than during any previous month of war. Unfortunately, there weren't enough pilots or petrol to fly them. Despite the situation the German Army and nation fought on. (Perhaps in *Weird Wars*, blood mages have developed a method to enchant planes to fly without pilots or to bind the souls of dead Luftwaffe pilots, pleased to carry on the fight for their Führer, to the planes.)

The fantasy world in which the Nazi hierarchy lived reached its peak as the Red Army neared the Polish border. Rail transport, short in supply and on the point of collapse, was diverted as Hitler and Himmler tried to complete the Final Solution. They even went as far as to order the SS to destroy any evidence of the massive death camps in Poland. Stalin, on the other hand, understood the political importance of allowing the Germans a free hand in their terror campaign. The more the Nazis destroyed, the easier it would be for the Communist Party to install puppet governments throughout newly "liberated" Eastern Europe.





Warsaw Uprising

As the Red Army neared the Polish capital, the "Home Army" or AK, which was controlled by the democratic Poles in exile in London, was ordered to cooperate with the advancing Red Army. The Russians, fearing the AK, began to disarm these units and have their officers taken away.

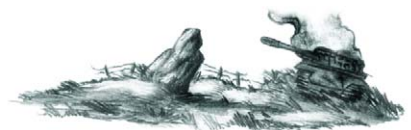
Aware that the Russians were close but unaware of Stalin's decision not to help, at 5 PM on August 1, 40,000 soldiers of the AK that had not yet been disarmed, began the Warsaw uprising. For the Soviets, it could not have come at a better time. They had begun to have difficulties with supply and reinforcements and they couldn't take the city without help. Thus, they waited, as the uprising would distract the Germans and destroy the remaining strength of the

AK. All the same, the Poles, without help, nearly pulled it off, but failed by October 2, 1944. The few who survived were rounded up and executed in a series of brutal reprisals.

It was during this battle that the Drilewanger SS Brigade fought its last battle. The unit was made up of German convicts on probation. They used sheer terror and violence to extinguish the enemy. Prisoners were burned alive with gasoline; babies were impaled on bayonets and stuck out windows like flags, and women were hung upside down from balconies in rows. Rape and murder was carried out as the Germans advanced. Wounded civilians were used as living tank barricades. Polish males were rounded up and shot. Doctors and nurses at captured hospitals were raped and killed. Bach-Zelewski described what he saw:



German troops defend a hastily-constructed roadblock.



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"...Wild masses of policeman and soldiers, shooting civilians. I saw the heap of dead bodies splashed with gasoline and set afire."

Operation Yeatsty-Kishniev

On August 20th, Operation Yeatsty-Kishniev, the Soviet offensive into the Balkans began. As during Operation Bagration, Hitler refused to allow units to withdraw, including those stationed in Yugoslavia and Greece. The Soviets took advantage of the situation and launched the Balkan offensive across and around the Carpathian Mountains to trap these German units. In a weeks time, a German and Romania army was eliminated and the Danube River was reached. This river formed the southern border of Romania

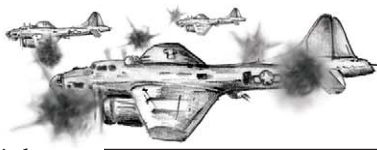
and the northern border of Bulgaria. It is the second largest river in Europe and the only major river to flow from west to east. After Romania's king surrendered in defiance of the Hitler-supported government, the abandoned German 6th Army was destroyed. On the 26th, German-controlled Bucharest, Romania was liberated. By the end of September, all of Romania was controlled by the Russians, including its oil and wheat resources.

In early September, Russian forces moved northeast to neighboring Hungary and southwest into Bulgaria. Bulgaria soon surrendered and allied itself to Russia. Almost immediately, Bulgarian forces in Greece attacked German units who were already facing Greek partisans. These German units and those from Albania managed to escape and join the German army holding Yugoslavia. These



Armorers work to salvage a damaged T-34.





combined forces then protected the right flank of Army Group South that had been pushed out of the Ukraine and was now trying to resist a Russian offensive into Hungary. By mid-October, the Red Army entered Yugoslavia where Tito's partisans had already liberated Belgrade. Together they ended German occupation on October 20, 1944

Warsaw

The Red Army advance toward Warsaw finally began on September 10. Six days later the Russians managed to penetrate Praga, a suburb of Warsaw. Judging that the AK had shot its last bolt, Stalin ordered his own indoctrinated Poles, under the command of General Zymierski, to enter the battle. The Germans at this point had prepared an ample defense and defeated Zymierski. While Stalin said his regular Red Army forces had to rest before liberating Warsaw, 300,000 Poles died. With the Russian-Poles and the AK defeated, Stalin could reconstitute the country under Russian terms; Stalin wanted no future political and military trouble. Warsaw would not be liberated by the Red Army until January 17, 1945.

Hungary

Although not too happy with the pro-Nazi puppet government, the remaining Hungarian troops fought alongside the Germans in defense of their homeland against the Rumanians who had allied with the Russians a week earlier. Eventually, however, in the face of overwhelming odds, Hungary agreed to end hostilities with Russia on October 15. The country was put into political chaos when the Germans removed the puppet government they could no longer control. The Germans retreated to the north, destroying railroad and communication systems on their way out. The last stronghold of Germans held out near Budapest for seven weeks before their defenses collapsed on February 13, 1945.

The Last Push

By January, 1945, the Red Army was more than 9 million strong with additional troops from Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria. During the last half of 1944 the Germans had lost 800,000 soldiers in the East and 400,000 in the West; the Nazis had only about 2 million soldiers left on the Eastern front. The new offensive led by Zhukov could have begun in December but Stalin waited

Adventure Seed: Forced Blood Transfusions

In one reported example, a war correspondent in Kluge, Estonia saw the charred remains of at least 2000 Jews who were recently shot and burned on bonfires. One Russian soldier in central Belorussia near Parichi village, south of Berezina River port city Bobruysk, recalled:

"The enemy put up a desperate resistance, but we pushed them into a pocket and went at them with our katyushas. That was when a farmwoman came running to our forward line. Tears streaming down her face, she said 'Sons, come and see what those monsters have done!' We went.

In the village, by a house that had served the Nazis as a field hospital, she showed us a pit that had been covered over by soil. That soil still breathed... We shoveled it away and the sight of what was beneath filled us with horror. The pit was full of the bodies of little boys and girls between ten and 12 years. We learned that the Nazi butchers had used them to give blood transfusions to their wounded officers and then had thrown them in the pit. I sincerely wish that no one ever feels what we did at that moment."

Reports of the incident draw the players' attention and they must determine if the act had any supernatural overtones. After visiting the site and interviewing the few survivors, the players can only conclude that a blood mage was involved. One survivor, now gray beyond her years, remembers that before she passed out, one officer's hair regained its youthful color and he then lifted an iron stove with little effort to the delight of the other officers present. The players must capture or eliminate this blood mage and if possible, learn how adolescents' blood was imbued with rejuvenating and strength enhancing magic.

for better tank weather when the mud froze. The Soviets began the offensive with a superiority of 5 to 1 in soldiers and tanks, 7 to 1 in artillery and 17 to 1 in planes. The first success of the offensive occurred when Warsaw was liberated on January 17 and the last was when Berlin was captured on May 2.

At the front, Russian tank formations roamed freely on the battlefield and found devastation. In their retreat west toward Berlin, the Nazis carried out a scorched earth policy in Poland slaughtering livestock, blowing bridges, and destroying all types of buildings, including churches.





Adventure Seed: Nazi Hollow World Nation

Eisenhower learned in February of the possibility that Hitler and the fanatical SS might withdraw to the German National Redoubt located in the Alps of southern Bavaria, western Austria, and northern Italy to make a last stand. It was in rugged terrain that could only be taken by the Allies at great cost. Frequent bad weather and high altitudes would have limited Allied air power. Hitler never actually made this move but the rumor caused Eisenhower to direct forces led by Patton away from Berlin toward the area to prevent such a move and discover if the area actually existed. By April 29, two divisions of the U.S. VI corps found no evidence but did capture the ski resort of Garmisch-Partenkirchen. The U.S. 3rd Division was the first to reach Hitler's Eagle's Nest estate in the town of Obersalzberg, near Berchtesgarden, Germany on the Austrian border.

Perhaps the reason it was never found was because it was located inside the Alps. After the invasion of Poland, German engineers, tunneling into the Alps to create a bomb and storage shelter, discovered a natural cave system. After exploring the cave system that led for many miles into the earth, battling strange monsters on the way, the Nazis discovered a massive continent populated by savages they could enslave and thought-to-be-extinct dinosaurs. In secret, Germany established a colony to explore the continent in the hopes of finding a lost Thule society. That was 4 years ago, now with the end near, the Waffen SS and their families have populated the colony with over 500,000 persons and stocked the colony with Germany's best equipment. The SS realize that the war may be lost but a new German nation with advanced technology and new super weapons will arise from the depths of the earth and secure its place as the Master Race.

The Western Allies have no idea that the Nazi Hollow World nation exists. The Russians were the first to reach Berlin and obtain the information as to its existence. It is unlikely Stalin would want to share the information and may conduct searches for other entrances to the Hollow World in southeast Russia so that Russia could gain a foothold on the continent before attacking the Germans. Players may make up part of the search team for a different entrance or form a reconnaissance team using the Alps entrance. Their mission is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Nazi Hollow World Nation and explore as much of the continent as possible for future Russian exploitation.

Just the opposite was encountered when the Red Army crossed into Germany. In Silesia and Pomerania, they found a countryside rich with food and comfort; comforts such as toilets that some rural Russians thought were used for potato peeling. Until now, these areas and all other areas of Greater Germany felt the least impact of the war. It was here that the Soviets began to take their vengeance, equal to what the Germans had inflicted during the first few years of the war. Shops, houses, and farms were plundered and set alight. Civilians were casually shot down for the possessions they carried and women were raped.

Hitler's heroic ideal of the war soon lost its appeal for the German people. At least 2.5 million German civilians were killed during the final stages of the war. Over 20 million people fled the advancing Russian army toward the River Elbe—controlled by the Western Allies. Stalin was quoted as saying, "Only the unborn are innocent." Marshal Zhukov did not call for discipline and in fact permitted soldiers to send packages back to Russia that no doubt consisted of loot taken from the Germans.

Throughout January and February the Russians hammered away at the desperate Germans. The *Volkssturm*, "Home Guard," drafted into service in November and December of '44, were thrown into the slaughter. These old men and invalids, poorly armed and trained, were no match for the battle-hardened Soviets. The SS, on the other hand, fought with such fanatical spirit that commanders of the Red Army took caution.

Hitler's Lunacy

Starting in 1944, a desperate Hitler began the practice of putting officers who retreated in front of firing squads. He also made it known that the families of retreating officers would be punished as well. As if it could get any worse, the division between the Wehrmacht and the SS became further defined when Himmler established a separate SS Army HQ.

By January, the madness in the Führer's bunker in Berlin could only be described as a dark comedy. Hitler ranted and raved about the failure of his generals and how his strength of will was all that the German people needed to win the war. He looked at situation maps and moved divisions around, which in some cases had a combat efficiency of one tank. His self-appointed command staff were "yes-men" who worshiped him with god-like





History

reverence. On February 15th the German Army launched its final offense of the Second World War. It lasted four days and achieved nothing.

In Germany, the madness of the front began to spread amongst the civilian population. People were executed on the spot for stealing food or committing minor crimes. Deserters and their families and black marketers were hung without trial. Slaves overpowered their guards and took vengeance on any civilians who remained. One German described one such scene:

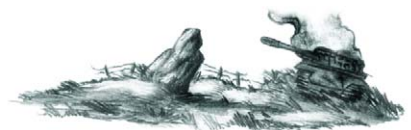
"...a group of Hiwi's mounted on horseback... had broken into a deserted Hohenzollern castle which has been preserved as a museum and looted it indiscriminately. They were all drunk and had draped themselves with golden tapestries, carrying spears and armor, and pulling a covered wagon loaded with

priceless pictures and objects d'art into which the snow was blowing in gusts..."

On March 28th, 1945 Hitler dismissed Guderian. With Guderian's removal, the last rational independent military leader was gone. Hitler had finally made himself the master of the German Army. Even with the Russians knocking on the gates of Berlin, the Nazi hierarchy carried on as if it was just an inconvenience to the Thousand-Year Reich. However, some of the SS had enough of the Russian onslaught. They divested themselves of the once-dreaded black uniform and made their way West. Some of the fleeing SS and their Wehrmacht counterparts were later turned over to the Soviets. Over 50,000 were imprisoned as war criminals for up to 10 years. During the 4 years of the war, more than 6 million Germans were taken captive by the Russians, half of whom died in captivity.



Russian soldiers raise the Soviet flag over the Reichstag in Berlin.



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Berlin Falls

High casualties were taken by the Red Army in order to beat the US and Britain to Berlin. Hitler still hoped for a miracle. 75,000 German troops defended Berlin with a fanatical frenzy. Their numbers were supported by Hitler Youth soldiers as young as 12 years old, foreign legions, special police companies, out of work guards, *Volkssturm*, party leaders and their staffs, and housewives trained to fire panzerfaust antitank weapons.

However, 75% of the city had already been destroyed by around-the-clock Allied bombing raids and Russian shelling. Over the course of the battle, over 2 million Russian shells were lobbed onto Berlin and 1,000 Allied bombers were sent on Hitler's Birthday (April 20). Siegfried Knappe noted the following in his diary while his artillery division within the city tried to hold off a Russian bridgehead east of Berlin,

"We had to drive through continuous artillery fire, now including heavy artillery. It was a feeling akin to terror, with heavy artillery shells exploding all around us, and roof tiles, window frames, and chunks of street pavement flying through the air. It seemed as if the whole world were exploding around us. Artillery fire in a city is much more frightening than it is in the open. Whenever a shell hit something above us and exploded there, it sprayed shrapnel and fragments of whatever it hit all over."

Like Stalingrad, the Germans made defenses within the rubble. German snipers were everywhere, inflicting huge losses in the Russian engineering ranks. The defenders of Berlin, however, had few tanks and guns and limited ammunition, food, and fuel. Many civilians starved due to a lack of rations. Fearing that the Russians would use Berlin's railroad tunnels to their advantage, and thinking the civilians who took shelter there not worthy, Hitler flooded the tunnels—killing thousands of German citizens.* In total, 500,000 German lives were lost defending the city from 1.2 million Russian soldiers.

* [With the aid of blood mage magic, the water used to flood the tunnels was laced with a substance that turned the dead citizens into zombies. Perhaps the players discover the situation or are called

to help put down an uprising of flesh-eating citizens that attack anyone and anything that explores the sealed tunnels.]

The Germans built three flak towers that withstood both Allied bombing and Russian artillery. They were 13 stories tall, with 5 stories below ground and concrete walls 8 feet thick. Each mounted a hundred 128mm AA guns on its roof and sheltered 15,000 people. Each tower had a vault that contained either Berlin currency reserves or museum treasures (and perhaps some supernatural artifacts and books of lore).

The Fat Lady's Singing

By April 1945, Hitler had located himself 50 feet below the Chancellery in the *Führerbunker*. The bunker had two separate floors with about 30 rooms. Hitler had sleepless nights, constantly replaying the battle of Stalingrad in his head. During daily meetings, Hitler issued delusional orders to defeat the unstoppable Russians with armies that were either destroyed or that had already retreated west to surrender to the Americans. Hitler expected Germany to fight to the death.

On April 22, a frustrated Hitler declared that the army was treasonous and corrupt and full of liars and failures. Hitler refused* his staff's request to escape to the southeast to the Bavarian Alps near Berchtesgaden and continue the fight. Nearby Obersalzberg was the site of Hitler's residence, the Berghof or "Eagle's Nest." He allowed staff members who wished to leave make the trip protected by a convoy of trucks and planes. Most left but the extremely loyal remained: top aide Martin Bormann, SS and military aides; two secretaries; soon to be wife Eva Braun; and Joseph Goebbels, his wife, and his six children. Never giving up the fight, Hitler made a public announcement that he would stay with the brave people of Berlin and dictated his last political statement,

* In *Weird Wars*, Hitler only refused to leave because he was still undecided as to whether he should become a vampire. If the War Master desires to take the war beyond May 8, 1945, then Hitler and Eva become vampires and escape to the Nazi Hollow World Nation located in the Alps. (See *Adventure Seed: Nazi Hollow World Nation*.)

Even to the end Hitler blamed the last six years of war on the Jews and stated the following in a political statement dictated from within the bunker:





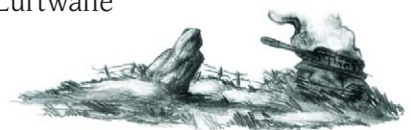
April 25th, 1945: U.S. and Russian forces meet at Torgau on the Elbe.

"It is untrue that I or anyone else in Germany wanted the war in 1939. It was desired and instigated exclusively by those international statesmen who were either of Jewish descent or worked for Jewish interests. I have made too many offers for the control and limitation of armaments, which posterity will not for all time be able to disregard for the responsibility for the outbreak of this war to be laid on me. I have further never wished that after the first fatal world war a second against England, or even against America, should break out. Centuries will pass away, but out of the ruins of our towns and monuments the hatred against those finally responsible whom we have to thank for everything, International Jewry and its helpers, will grow. Above all I charge the

leaders of the nation and those under them to scrupulous observance of the laws of race and to merciless opposition to the universal poisoner of all peoples, International Jewry."

The next day Albert Speer, Minister of Armaments arrived to inform Hitler that he had refused to carry out the scorched earth policy. Hitler's reaction was silence. But later he was enraged to receive a Berchtesgaden telegram from Goering wishing to take command of the Reich. On April 25, Hitler had the SS arrest Goering for high treason and spared him the death penalty because of his long service.

On April 26, Russian artillery hit the Chancellery buildings above the bunker. Hitler demanded that nonexistent armies relieve Berlin. That night, a female test pilot, Hanna Reitch, defied the odds and landed a small plane containing Luftwaffe



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General Ritter von Greim in the street near the bunker. Hitler wanted Greim to receive his promotion as Goering's successor to the Luftwaffe. But there was little left to command. The Luftwaffe was short on pilots and fuel and hopelessly outnumbered against the almost constant Allied aerial bombardment. As early as 1944, the Allied bombing was so intense within Germany that the Allies destroyed 3.37 million homes, injured 917,000 civilians, and killed 600,000 to 1 million German people.

Et tu, Himmler?

Two days later Hitler learned that another trusted friend, "faithful Heinrich," was negotiating the surrender of German armies in the west to the Americans. In a fit of rage, Hitler ordered Himmler's arrest and had Heinrich's SS representative at the bunker shot. The man whom he had trusted the most had betrayed him and Hitler ranted the following:

"Nothing now remains! Nothing is spared me! No loyalty is kept, no honor observed; there is no

bitterness, no betrayal that has not been heaped upon me; and now this! It is the end. No injury has been left undone!"

Before midnight Hitler married Eva Braun. Hitler dictated the following in his Last Will:

"As I did not consider that I could take responsibility, during the years of struggle, of contracting a marriage, I have now decided, before the closing of my earthly career, to take as my wife that girl who, after many years of faithful friendship, entered, of her own free will, the practically besieged town in order to share her destiny with me. At her own desire she goes as my wife with me into death. It will compensate us for what we both lost through my work in the service of my people."

Hitler Checks Out

By midday April 29, the Red Army was less than a mile away from the bunker. News was received of Mussolini's execution. Preparing for his own death, Hitler tested the poison he would consume on his favorite dog Blondi. Around noon on April 30, the Russians were less than a block away from the bunker. At about 3:30 PM Hitler shot himself in the right temple and his wife poisoned herself. Both bodies were carried up to the surface, repeatedly burned with gasoline for over 3 hours, and then buried within a canvas inside a shell crater. On May 1, Goebbels and his wife poisoned their six young children and then both went above the bunker where as ordered, an SS man shot them in the head and burned them.

The Reichstag

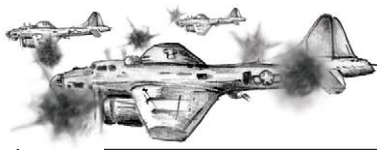
On April 30, after artillery and Katyusha bombardment, elements of the Red Army began the assault on the Reichstag, the symbol of Nazi power since 1933 and the last symbol of Nazi resistance in Berlin. Over 5,000 SS, Hitler Youth, and *Volkssturm* made the Russians fight for every room, hallway, and staircase. Besides the flooded antitank ditch in the front of the building, the lower floors were reinforced with steel rails and concrete. The windows were bricked over, allowing only for small firing

Campaign: Battle for Berlin

The Battle for Berlin could begin with players participating in the earliest bridgehead across the Oder River on January 31, 1945. From there, the players carry out special orders to retrieve and protect any artifacts and treasures from being looted by regular Red Army soldiers. Only a few psychotically loyal, but ultra powerful, blood mages remain to unleash the supernatural in full force since it no longer matters what the world learns. These same blood mages may try and flee to the Nazi Hollow World Nation.

Once Berlin is reached, no doubt twisted hulks and hate feeders make their presence felt. War Masters should not forget to include the flooding of tunnels and Hitler becoming a vampire options mentioned earlier and the **Adventure Seed: Nazi Hollow World**. In terms of combat highlights, the players could participate in the liberation of Warsaw, the assault on Berlin's three flak towers to recover any artifacts and treasure hidden in their bowels and the assault on the Reichstag on April 30. Finally, the players could find Hitler's body as ordered and escort it back to be examined by Stalin. During the trip back, Hitler's vampire medicine takes full effect. His body quickly heals within his coffin in back of the players' truck and he escapes along with Eva. Maybe the players should decide to escape before Stalin has their heads or sends them to gulags for this failure?





slits. After two days of fanatical fighting, 2600 of the defenders were taken prisoner—maybe not so fanatical after all.

Unconditional Surrender

In his Will, Hitler had named Karl Doenitz, commander of Germany's nearly destroyed Navy, the succeeding Führer of Germany. For six days Doenitz tried to broker a separate peace treaty with the Western Allies in the hopes of evacuating as many German soldiers and citizens from the Russian zones of occupation as possible. Eisenhower refused and would only accept unconditional surrender to all Allies.

The war may have ended on May 7 for the German, Eastern European, and Russian people, but not the suffering. In the year that followed tens of thousands died from disease, starvation, and persecution. In Berlin alone, thousands of unwanted births and suicides plagued the capital. Hitler's Thousand-Year Reich had lasted only 12 years.

Berlin was divided into four occupational zones. Each was administered by one of the four major Allied powers: England, France, the US, and the USSR.

War in the Far East

On August 8, 1945 the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. Although this wasn't really necessary, Stalin was honoring his promise to go to war with Japan once Germany had been dealt with. More importantly, to Stalin at least, was that Russian involvement against Japan, however brief, increased Soviet influence in the region. After Japan's surrender, this move allowed Russia to win southern Sakhalin and the Kurile islands.

The Cold War

Despite a tremendous loss of 21 million people, Russia emerged from World War II stronger both militarily and politically. With satellite nations now under its control, Russia, along with United States, became one of the world's only two super powers for the next 44 years. Despite having fought a devastating war as allies, these two nations now engaged in an intense and long-running competition for world influence. Although the US and the USSR never became involved in a shooting war against each other, numerous wars waged by their proxies flared across the globe and sometimes raised the horrible specter of nuclear war.

Campaign: The Mother Country of all Campaigns

It's possible to run a massive campaign that takes the players' characters through every major battle on the Eastern Front. Here is one possible general timeline that easily incorporates all the adventure seeds and campaign ideas described in this chapter:

June, July, 1941: Escape the German blitzkrieg OR assist in the relocation of Ukraine's industry to the Urals.

August, September, 1941: Try to defend Kiev and escape encirclement OR help secure Iran as Lend-Lease shipping route.*

October-December, 1941: Discover and investigate Weirdness in Leningrad and the ice route.*

December, 1941-April, 1942: With Siberian shaman, investigate Weirdness, assault German hedghogs.

May-July, 1942: Investigate Weirdness in Sevastopol and escape capture by July 3.

July-August, 1942: Train and assist partisans in Belorussian/Pripet marsh area.

September, 1942-January, 1943: Help defend Stalingrad and take part in the encirclement of German 6th Army.

February-May, 1943: Investigate and prevent German vampire acquisition plot in Romania.

June-July, 1943: Help prepare for and win Battle of Kursk.

August-December, 1943: Take part in liberation of Kiev and most of the Ukraine OR train and assist partisans in Belorussian/Pripet marsh area.

January, 1944: End siege of Leningrad.

February-May 1944: Prepare for summer offensive by helping to secure Chernovtsy railroad junction and the Crimean Peninsula.

June-July, 1944: Take part in Operation Bagration with Red Army or with partisans in summer offensive to liberate Belorussia.

August-October, 1944: Assist in liberation of Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia OR Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Help put down anti-Communist forces in the latter OR investigate vampire weirdness in the former.

January-May 1945: Help capture eastern Germany and take Berlin. Liberate and investigate weirdness at POW and concentration camps. Secure Nazi treasure and secret bases. Find Hitler's body.

June 1945- ? : Begin assault on German Hollow World nation. Hunt down Hitler the vampire. Capture Nazi scientists. Steal secrets from Capitalist Dogs! Take part in 1 week war with Japan in August.

* After either of these two encounters, the player's characters may be transferred to the newly created SOPA division.





Adventure Seed Generator

Having trouble coming up with new ideas? Make two percentage dice rolls to randomly determine an adventure idea or simply choose from the list. Roll for more than one determination or choose more than one for interesting combinations. The list also doubles as a general index to wartime, and some weird, situations.

Roll	Adventure	Roll	Adventure
01-04	Assault 01-75 Enemy fortification, building, or position 76-00 Hedgehog	26-27	Encounter, Weird 01-24 *Ancient village not of this time period 25-49 Lost soldier 50-74 Reincarnated spirit 75-00 Time displacement
05-06	Assassinate/Sniper 01-65 Blood mage or German officer 66-80 Hitler 81-00 Traitor or spy	28-31	Escape 01-24 Blitzkrieg 25-84 Encirclement 85-89 Interrogation 90-94 Gulag 95-00 POW Camp
07-11	Capture 01-05 Airfield 06-09 Agent 10-12 Battle plans 13-15 Blood mage 16-21 Bridge 22-50 City, town, or village 51-61 Equipment 62-65 "Medical" doctor 66-68 New technology 69-72 Officer 73-76 Scientist 77-90 Soldier 91-00 Supplies	32-33	Escort 01-20 Communist official 21-39 Communication 40-80 Factory relocation 81-00 Officer
12-13	Clear 01-85 Pocket of resistance 86-00 Minefield	34-36	Enforce 01-05 Conscription 06-14 Communist doctrine 15-24 Curfew 25-39 No retreat policy 40-54 No surrender policy 55-69 Rationing 70-89 Scorch earth policy 90-00 Worker program
14-17	Create/Construct 01-05 Airfield 06-15 Bridge 16-60 Fortification 61-65 Minefield 66-70 Road 71-84 Shelter 85-00 Weapon	37-38	Explore 01-75 Hollow world entrance 76-00 Ancient castle
18-19	Deliver 01-50 Food and/or supplies 51-80 Lend-Lease equipment 81-00 Message	39-40	Infiltrate 01-40 Allied ranks as spy 41-79 Enemy ranks 80-00 POW camp
20-23	Destroy/Sabotage 01-25 Communications 26-30 Research facility 31-35 Secret weapon 36-49 Supply depot 50-00 Transportation	41-42	Intercept 01-40 German delivery of plans 41-00 Enemy radio transmission
24-25	Discover 01-14 Empty village 15-29 Enemy battle plans 30-34 Frozen troops 35-69 Mass grave 70-94 Saboteur 95-00 Tomb	43-46	Investigate 01-25 Monster, weird device, or weird situation 26-35 Cannibalism activity 36-60 Disappearance of town, units, or person 61-70 Location of last transmission 71-89 Mysterious sound, smell, and/or glow 90-00 Origin of new super weapon
		47-52	Liberate 01-45 City, town, village, and/or country 46-55 Concentration camp 56-00 Encircled units





History

53-58 Participate

01-05 Air drop
06-10 Amphibious landing
11-20 Bridgehead
21-29 Counterattack
30-44 Defensive/offensive preparations
45-54 Evacuation
55-69 Flanking maneuver
70-79 Pakfront
80-00 Street fighting

59-65 Protect

01-14 Bridge, road, railway, port, or landing area
15-44 City, town or village
45-50 Communist official
51-59 Factory/production site
60-69 Home or hometown
70-74 Officer
75-84 Position lacking ammo, weapons, and/or fuel
85-94 Retreat/withdrawal as rearguard
95-00 Secret base

66-67 Prevent

01-20 Assassination of Churchill
21-50 Assassination of Stalin
51-59 Assassination of Zhukov
60-00 Enemy scorched earth policy

68-69 Put Down

01-30 Anticommunist uprising
31-40 Looting
41-55 Defection/mutiny/AWOL
56-69 Prisoner uprising
70-00 Unauthorized evacuation

70-76 Recapture

01-50 City, town, or village
51-75 Fort, factory, or important building
76-90 Rail link
91-00 Road

77-79 Recruit

01-20 Gypsy
21-30 Siberian shaman
31-90 Partisan
91-00 Communist

80-81 Recover

01-10 Hitler's body
11-40 Information from enemy base
41-89 Nazi treasure
90-00 Religious or magical artifact

82-86 Repel

01-05 Air drop
06-35 Breakout, advance, salient
36-65 Flanking maneuver
66-79 Overwhelming odds
80-89 Surprise attack
90-00 Enemy relief effort

87-88 Rescue

01-05 Downed pilot
06-50 Prisoner, *e.g., Stalin's son, Jacob Dshugashvili
51-60 Communist official
61-80 Comrade or ally
81-85 Forced laborer
86-90 Officer
91-98 Spy
99-00 Relative

89-91 Repair

01-10 Airstrip
11-25 Bridge
26-30 Damaged land line
31-55 Factory
56-79 Railway
80-89 Road
90-00 Vehicle

92-93 Scout

01-34 Enemy action
35-67 Enemy facility
68-00 Enemy position

94-95 Take Revenge

01-45 Village wiped out
46-79 Comrade or family killed
80-95 Death of officer
96-00 On traitor

96-97 Test

01-60 New technology
61-95 Stolen technology
96-100 Arcane technology

98-00 Train

01-20 Civilian
21-60 New recruit/learn new skill
61-00 Partisan



Il-2 Sturmoviks returning from a mission.





Chapter Four:

Eastern Opposition

Your budding Heroes of the Soviet Union won't have much to do with someone to oppose them. This chapter covers all the enemies your heroes may encounter on the Eastern Front, both mundane and supernatural.

Additional German Opposition

All of the German troops provided in *Blood on the Rhine* can be encountered on the Russian Front. The Wehrmacht made up the bulk of the German forces encountered by the Russians. This included the majority of the mechanized Panzer groups that spearheaded the drive into the Soviet Union, encircling entire Russian armies during offensive operations in the first two years on the Eastern Front. After the Battle of Kursk in July of 1943, the Panzer divisions strength was greatly reduced. Rather than acting offensively, the panzers were used as mobile "fire brigades," rushing to wherever they were most needed. Following this battle, the German army was no longer on the offensive and the momentum switched to the Soviets. The Wehrmacht began a series of fighting withdrawals that eventually ended on the outskirts of Berlin in January 1945.

The Waffen SS

A War Master should keep in mind that the Waffen SS had their own infantry and mechanized units. Historically, the Waffen SS were probably the first large scale use of an elite fighting force. They were so hated by the Russians that no quarter was given. To the dismay of the SS, they found the Russians to be just as tough, brave, and cunning as themselves (e.g., Stalingrad).

The SS were always provided the latest and most advanced weapons Germany built. Being well equipped offset the Soviet advantage in numbers but it also involved them in every critical battle on the Eastern Front. In addition, the Fuhrer only fully trusted SS divisions in combat. In Hitler's mind, the men of the SS were Teutonic knights and the defenders of the Reich. As a result of being Hitler's trusted favorites with the best equipment, SS losses were so great by the end of Kursk that Himmler was forced to open ranks to an increasing number of non-Germans.

By the fall of 1943, aware of the grave situation on the Eastern front, the SS began hoarding equipment and supplies. Wehrmacht commanders, such as Manstein, became increasingly frustrated, having to now ask Hitler's permission to



use and move SS units. This division between the Wehrmacht and the SS was further defined in the fall of 1944 when Himmler established a separate SS Army HQ.

Einsatzgruppen

The Holocaust genocide began not in the camps or in the gas chambers but with four small groups of murderers known as the Einsatzgruppen (Einsatzgruppe is singular meaning one Special Action Group. Einsatzgruppen is plural referring to several Einsatzgruppe). Formed by Heinrich Himmler and Reinhard Heydrich immediately before the invasion of the Soviet Union, the main purpose of the Einsatzgruppen was to liquidate (murder) Jews, Romany (gypsies), and political operatives of the Communist Party. Four paramilitary units were established: Einsatzgruppe A, B, C, and D. All four groups operated exclusively on the Eastern Front in territories captured by the Germans. With the cooperation of German army and local militias, the Einsatzgruppen murdered over a million men, women, and children in the Ukraine and the Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. These were murders of civilians, not partisans.

Einsatzgruppen were used during the invasion of Poland in 1939. Accompanying the invading armies, the Einsatzgruppen performed similar tasks, such as the arrest or liquidation of priests and Polish intelligence. However, unlike the Einsatzgruppen created for the invasion of the Soviet Union, the ones used in Poland were not given the task of mass murder. In fact, the Einsatzgruppen used in the invasion of the Soviet Union were new units and not connected to the Einsatzgruppen that existed during the invasion of Poland.

There were between 600 and 1,000 men in each Einsatzgruppe, although many were support staff. The majority of the active members of an Einsatzgruppe were Waffen-SS, the military arm of the SS. The other members came from various military and non-military organizations of the Third Reich. For example, the active members of Einsatzgruppe A were 340 Waffen-SS, 89 Gestapo (secret state police), 35 SD (security service), 133 Order Police, and 41 Kripo (local and state criminal police). Additionally, each Einsatzgruppen was further broken down into operational sub-units known either as Einsatzkommandos or Sonderkommandos.

Otto Ohlendorf was the commander of Einsatzgruppe D and Stahlecker was the commander of Einsatzgruppe A. Kurt Lindow was the person responsible for receiving the Activity and Situation Reports (or "Situation Reports") and distributing the Operational Situation Reports (or "Operational Reports"). The Situation Reports were the monthly compilations of the activities of all of the Einsatzgruppen. The Operational Reports were detailed reports from the various units giving the precise number of murders committed and the property stolen. Paul Blobel was a commander of Sonderkommando 4a. He was responsible for the massacre at Babi Yar and was subsequently given the Iron Cross, Germany's highest award for valor.

The killing method employed by the Einsatzgruppen was to shoot people. By using various pretexts, victims were rounded up and transported to a central killing ground where they were shot and left in mass graves. For example, at Babi Yar, the Jews of Kiev were informed by placards, which were posted around the city by Ukrainian militia, to assemble on September 29, 1941 at a cemetery near a railroad siding for "resettlement." They were told to bring food, warm clothing, documents, money, and valuables. After being processed, the victims were lined up at the edge of a ravine and gunned down by teams of machine gunners. A total of 33,700 people were killed.

A watchmen of the cemetery recalled how Ukrainian police in the service of the Nazis:

"...formed a corridor and drove the panic-stricken people towards the huge glade, where sticks, swearings, and dogs, who were tearing the people's bodies, forced the people to undress, to form columns in hundreds, and then to go in the columns in twos towards the mouth of the ravine. they found themselves on the narrow ground above the precipice, twenty to twenty-five meters in height, and on the opposite side there were the Germans' machine guns. The killed, wounded, and half-alive people fell down and were smashed there. Then the next hundred were brought, and everything repeated again. The policemen took the children by the legs and threw them alive down into the Yar."





The Opposition

By evening the Germans collapsed the wall of the ravine burying the dead and many people still alive. The ground was said to have been moving into the night as the living struggled in vain to dig themselves out.

Around December 1941, the Nazis began to experiment with vans designed by Dr. Becker using the exhaust from the van's motor. However, the Einsatzgruppen thought this method to be slow. It was also not popular with them because of the added mental strain caused by unloading the corpses. Thus, throughout the Einsatzgruppen reign of terror, shooting would continue to be the primary means of execution.

Otto Ohlendorf, commander of Einsatzgruppe D, described his task force's killing methods,

"The unit selected would enter a village or city and order the prominent Jewish citizens to call together all Jews for the purpose of resettlement. They were requested to hand over their valuables and, shortly before execution, to surrender their outer clothing. The men, women, and children were led to a place of execution, which in most cases was located next to a deeply excavated antitank ditch. Then they were shot, kneeling or standing, and the corpse thrown into the ditch."

An Einsatzgruppen soldier recalled that,

"after the first wave of shooting it emerged that the men, particularly the officers, could not cope with the demands made on them. Many abandoned themselves to alcohol, many suffered nervous breakdowns and psychological illness; for example we had suicides and there were cases where some cracked up and shot wildly around them and completely lost control. When this happened Himmler issued an order stating that any man who no longer felt able to take the psychological stresses should report to his superior officer. These men were to be released from their current duties and would be detailed for other work back home."

After both witnessed a group of SS execute a hundred Jews, General Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski told Himmler,

"Look at the eyes of the men in this Kommando, how deeply shaken they are! These men are finished for the rest of their lives. What kind of followers are we training here? Either neurotics or savages!"

As a result of the damage done to SS combat effectiveness and the slow rate of Jewish destruction, Himmler looked to gassing in concentration camps. It is said that Himmler himself almost fainted at the sight of the mass executions.

Einsatzgruppen Soldier

Einsatzgruppen Soldier: CR 6: Medium-size Human; Class: Grt 6; hp 44; Init +1; Spd 10 yds; AC 12 (+1 Dex, +1 Armor); Atk MP35 +10/+5 (+1 Dex, +1 Weapon Focus, +1 Victory Runes); AL LE; SV Fort +6 Ref +3 Will +2; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +3, Driving +2, Heal +2, Hide +5, *Intimidate +6, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Search +6, Spot +6; Automatic Weapons Proficiency, Far Shot, Firearms Proficiency, Light Armor Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Rank: SS-Grenadier (Private) to SS-Sturmscharfuher (Command Sergeant Major), Simple Weapons Proficiency, Weapon Focus: MP35 (+1 attack bonus), Weapon Specialization: MP35 (+2 damage), Wheeled Vehicle Proficiency. (*) not a normal key Grunt skill.

Special Qualities:

Devotion: The devotion of SS members to the Nazi Party gives them a +2 morale bonus to Will saves. The Deathshead emblem on their uniforms and reputation gives Einsatzgruppen soldiers a +4 on Intimidation DC.

Possessions: MP35 and 4 magazines of 9mm ammunition, 2 Stielhandgranate 24, helmet, uniform, and victory runes (+1 attack bonus, +1 Will save vs. fear).

Einsatzgruppen Officer

Einsatzgruppen Officer: CR 9: Medium-size Human; Class: Ofr 9; hp 53; Init +6; Spd 10 yds; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 Armor); Atk PPK +13/+8/+3 (+2 Dex, +1 Weapon Focus, +1 Victory Runes); AL LE; SV Fort +5 Ref +5 Will +7; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12.



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Skills and Feats: Climb +2, Concentration +5, Demolitions +3, Diplomacy +7, Driving +4, Heal +2, Hide +4, Intimidate +12, Leadership +10, Move Silently +3, Search +6, Sense Motive +10, Spot +10, Swim +2; Automatic Weapons Proficiency, Command, Command Voice, Far Shot, Firearms Proficiency, Improved Initiative, Light Armor Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Rank: SS-Untersturmführer (2nd Lieutenant) to SS-Standartenführer (Colonel), Simple Weapons Proficiency, Weapon Focus: PPK.

Special Qualities:

Devotion: The devotion of SS members to the Nazi Party gives them a +2 morale bonus to Will saves. The Death'shead emblem on their uniforms and reputation gives Einsatzgruppen officers a +4 on Intimidation DC.

Possessions: Walter PPK, 2 spare magazines of 9mm ammunition, helmet, uniform and victory runes (+1 attack bonus, +1 Will save vs. fear).

Hitler Youth

Facing a personnel shortage and two Allied fronts closing in on Berlin, Hitler drafted "soldiers" as young as 12 years old. Many had been indoctrinated into Nazi ideology through the Hitler Youth. Although young, they often fought with the same tenacity as older units.

Hitler Youth

Hitler Youth: CR: 1: Small-size Human; Class: Grt 1; hp 9; Init +1; Spd 10 yds; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +1 Armor, +1 Size); Atk Kart 98 +3; AL CN; Sv Fort +1 Ref +1 Will -2; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 8, Int 8, Wis 6, Cha 10.



Officers of an Einsatzgruppe scour the countryside for undesirables.

Skills and Feats: Climb +2, Hide +5, Spot +2, Far Shot, Firearms Proficiency, Light Armor Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Weapon Focus: Kar 98

Special Qualities:

Young: Inexperience and age gives Hitler Youth a -2 morale bonus to Will saves.

Possessions: Kar 98k with 20 rounds of 7.92mm ammunition, helmet, and uniform. Roll percentage dice to determine additional equipment (01-50) 1 Panzerfaust 30 (51-00) 1 Stielhandgranate 24.

Volkssturm

Poorly armed and trained old men and invalids made-up the *Volkssturm* or "Home Guard or People's Attack." They were primarily drafted into service in November and December of 1944 to defend Berlin but Hitler issued the call on September 25, 1942 to all Germans 16-60 years of age who could bear arms.

Volkssturm

Volkssturm: CR 1: Medium-size Human; Class: Civilian; hp 4; Init -1; Spd 8 yds; AC 9 (-1 Dex); Atk (see below) -1; AL LN; Sv Fort -1 Ref -1 Will +1; Str 10, Dex 8, Con 9, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Firearms Proficiency.

Special Qualities: None.

Possessions: Besides normal clothing, roll percentage dice to determine Volkssturm equipment (01-25) Civilian Revolver with 6 rounds of 9mm ammo, (26-60) Civilian Rifle with 2 magazines of .30, (61-00) Single Barrel Shotgun with 10 rounds of 12 gauge. There is also a 50% chance of possessing a Panzerfaust 30 and a 50% chance of possessing 1 Stielhandgranate 24 or 1 Molotov cocktail.

Finns

The Finns were as well trained and equipped in small arms and support equipment as the SS. The Finns fanatically fought with patriotism to save their homeland from the Russian invasion during the Fall of 1939 and then again with 18 divisions, on June 25, 1941, 3 days after the start of Barbarossa, to retake land lost to the Russians two years earlier.

Like the Russians, the Finnish were at ease in harsh winter conditions. Unlike the Germans, the Finns did not have a taste for conquest and rarely took the offensive once they regained their historic





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borders north of Leningrad. Therefore, the Finns mainly took up defensive positions and assisted the Germans in the siege of Leningrad.

When the war with the Finns came to an end after a Russian Karelian Isthmus offensive from Leningrad on September 19, 1944, the government agreed to help remove any Nazis remaining on Finnish soil. In *Weird Wars*, this could prove to be a problem since Nazi archeological digs are still being conducted in northern Finland after the discovery of a Thule outpost and the Runes manuscript in 1936.

Finnish Soldier

Finnish Soldier: CR 2: Medium-size Human; Class: Grt 2; hp 16; Init +1; Spd 10 yds; AC 12 (+1 Dex, +1 Armor); Atk Sturmgewehr +4 (+1 Dex, +1 Weapon Focus); AL LN; Sv Fort +3 Ref +1 Will +0 (does not include Homeland bonus); Str 12, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10. Skills and Feats: Climb +3, Heal +3, Hide +4, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Spot +3, *Wilderness Lore +3; Automatic Weapon Proficiency, Eye For Terrain (+2 ambush Spot checks, +2 Hide), Firearms Proficiency, Light Armor Proficiency, Rank: Private equivalent, Skiing, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Weapon Focus: Sturmeweher 44 (+1 attack bonus). (*) not a normal key Grunt skill.

Special Qualities:

Homeland: Finnish troops defending their homeland receive a +3 morale bonus to Will saves. Due to strong individual psyches, Finnish troops could often rally themselves from demoralizing conditions without the help of an officer.

Possessions: (German gear is used to simplify game play) Sturmeweher 44, 3 magazines of 7.92k ammunition, 2 Stielhandgranate 24, helmet, uniform, and winter clothing when necessary.

Finnish Officer

Finnish Officer: CR 5: Medium-size Human; Class: Ofr 5; hp 36; Init +1; Spd 10 yds; AC 12 (+1 Dex, +1 Armor); Atk Sturmgewehr +7 (+1 Dex, +1 Weapon Focus); AL LN; SV Fort +4 Ref +2 Will +5 (does not include Homeland bonus); Str 12, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12. Skills and Feats: Climb +3, Concentration +3, Heal +4, Hide +4, Leadership +8, Move Silently +5, Search +4, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5, Swim +2, *Wilderness Lore +8; Automatic Weapons Proficiency, Command, Firearms Proficiency, Light Armor Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Rank: 2nd

Lieutenant to Captain equivalent, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Tactician (+2 initiative on successful counter leadership check, +2 ambush Spot check), Weapon Focus: Sturmgewehr (+1 attack bonus). (*) not a normal key Officer skill.

Special Qualities:

Finnish troops defending their homeland receive a +3 morale bonus to Will saves.

Possessions: (German gear is used to simplify game play) Sturmeweher 44, 3 magazines of 7.92k ammunition, 2 Stielhandgranate 24, helmet, uniform, and winter clothing when necessary.

Axis Minor Allies

War Masters should use the following stats to represent generic troops from Spain, Rumania, Hungary, Slovakia, and Bulgaria. Italian troop statistics can be found in the *Afrika Korpse* campaign book. Twelve Romanian, 3 Hungarian, 3 Italian, 1 Spanish, and 2.5 Slovakian divisions took part in Operation Barbarossa. None of these troops were as well equipped, trained, or disciplined as their German allies. They also seldom fought with the same intensity due to a lack of enthusiasm for Hitler's plans. Their governments sent many of these soldiers as a forced tribute to Hitler and to share in the spoils of a German victory. Once it became painfully obvious that Hitler blundered (post-Stalingrad), the government's of each country permitted their commanders to refuse German orders and placed their troops in rear areas as reserves.

Axis Minor Soldier

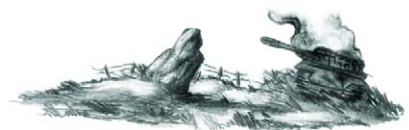
Axis Minor Soldier: CR 1: Medium-size Human; Class: Grt 1; hp 10; Init +0; Spd 10 yds; AC 11 (+1 Armor); Atk Kar 98 +2 (+1 Weapon Focus); AL LN; Sv Fort +2 Ref +0 Will +0; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Heal +1, Hide +3, Move Silently +3, Search +3, Spot +3; Firearms Proficiency, Light Armor Proficiency, Rank: Private equivalent, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Weapon Focus: Kar 98k (+1 attack bonus).

Special Qualities:

Axis allied troops were more likely to surrender and less skilled in tactical retreats and regrouping.

Possessions: (German gear is used to simplify game play) Kar 98k, 30 rounds of 7.92mm ammunition, uniform, and helmet.



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Axis Minor Officer

Axis Minor Officer: CR 1: Medium-size Human; Class: Ofr 1; hp 8; Init +0; Spd 10 yds; AC 11 (+1 Armor); Atk PPK+2 (+1 Weapon Focus); AL LN; SV Fort +0 Ref +0 Will +2; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Heal +2, Leadership +3, Move Silently +2, Intimidate +3, Search +3, Spot +3; Command, Firearms Proficiency, Light Armor Proficiency, Rank: 2nd Lieutenant, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Weapon Focus: PPK (+1 attack bonus).

Special Qualities:

Axis troops were more likely to surrender and less skilled in tactical retreats and regrouping.

Possessions: (German gear is used to simplify game play) Walter PPK, 2 spare magazines of 9mm ammunition, uniform, and helmet.

Incorporating *Monster Manual* Creatures

Before the new monsters are introduced, the following ideas should help War Masters who wish to incorporate creatures from the *Monster Manual* into the Eastern Front.

Barghest, Chuul, Gray Render, Owl Bear, Tendriculas and Worg: Could all be encountered in Western Russia marshes and forests.

Centaur, Dryad, Nymph, Satyr, and Treant: These secretive creatures could request or charm players to protect their hidden forest home from a German scorched earth engineering unit. In return for their service, the players might receive valuable information or a powerful magic item.

Dinosaurs, Magmin, Mind Flayer, Purple Worm, Roper, and Umber Hulk: All are perfect creatures to populate a Hollow World situation in which the Nazis have discovered and are attempting to use as sanctuary for the Master Race toward the end of the war.

Carrion Crawler, Ghoul, Shadow, Skeleton, Wight, and Zombie: These creatures inhabit abandoned battlefields, mass graves, graveyards, city catacombs, cellars and sewers.

Bodack and Mohrg: The former could be seeking revenge for an evil death and the latter could be the corpse of a Nazi mass murderer.

Dire Animals and Lycanthropes: These can be found anywhere where their less dangerous cousins exist.

Doppelganger and Homunculus: These make ideal spies under the command of a Nazi blood mage.

Dragon and Tarrasque: Either of these could be awakened from their slumber during a battle. An evil dragon or Tarrasque would attack both sides of a battle and then rest in their once hidden refuge. The Nazis could then try and take control of either monster by way of blood magic. A good dragon would refuse to cooperate and could be captured and used for Nazi twisted experiments.

Elementals, Golem, Hell Hound, Invisible Stalker, and Shield Guardian: Depending on the type listed, a blood mage could create or summon one to guard himself or a high ranking Nazi official, protect a Nazi secret base, or carry out some evil task.

Ettin and Troll: Both of these could be found in Ural mountain region caves near relocated industrial complexes moved from the Ukrainian region. It would be especially interesting to have a troll guard a remote but key bridge in a post-1943 Russian offensive.

Frost Worm and Winter Wolf: Both of these inhabit Northern Russia and Siberia. A Frost Worm could be encountered during relief efforts for Leningrad or in protection of the Murmansk Lend-Lease receiving port.

Hag and Night Hag: Either of these could be taking advantage of the carnage or in league with a Nazi blood mage.

Vampires

Vampires have a prominent place in Eastern European folklore, so we should say a few words about them here.

Transylvania

Hitler wants to capture a vampire and become one himself so that he can rule all 1,000 years of the Third Reich. One of the key areas in the Nazi search is Transylvania. Historically, as an effort to control part of Hungary's foreign trade, Hitler allowed Hungary in August 1940 to retake the northern half of Transylvania (including the city of Cluj) lost to Romania at the end of WWI. This created even more hostility between Hungary and Romania. Romania was being punished for siding with the Allies in WWI. (In *Weird Wars*, these actions allow Hitler to keep both Hungary and Romania at odds and distract them from discovering the true nature of the area's Nazi occupation.)

Although the Russian annexation so close to Transylvania is unsettling, the





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Nazis used the situation to justify an even stronger presence; 12 German divisions started arriving in October 1940.

Historically, after the battle of Stalingrad in the last half of 1943, Hungary and Romania began fighting each other. By March 19, 1944, a peace-seeking Hungary was completely occupied by the Nazis. On August 20, 1944, the Russians crossed the Romanian border and the Romanian government surrendered 3 days later.

The Germans continued to defend Romania until the country was completely lost at the end of September. Then Hungary was invaded, but the Nazis managed to hold the northern part of Hungary, specifically Budapest, until April 4, 1945 despite the Hungarian Nazi puppet government surrendering to the Russians on October 15, 1944. In *Weird Wars*, although east of Transylvania, maybe the defense of Budapest is not just a matter of Nazi fanaticism.

Vampire History of Interest

Vampire is a word with roots in the Slavic language to *wampir* (Romanian) or *upir/upyr* (Russian). According to Russian and Romanian folklore, a vampire could be created by way of improper burial, unnatural death, being a seventh son, being bitten by a vampire, excommunication, suicide, witchcraft, immorality, being conceived on certain days, birth curses or defects (tail), and leaving a corpse unburied on the windy Steppes.

One of the earliest mentions of blood sucking comes from the Babylonians 5,000 years ago in the form of a female demon called Lilitu. She looked normal but fed on the blood of babies. The Greeks had a name for female demons—*Lamia*—that removed their eyes at night after feeding on blood. Like the Babylonians, the Romans had a creature called *Stirges* that fed on the blood of babies and looked like a bird with a head of woman.

Dracula

Modern vampire myth can be traced to the infamous Romanian Vlad Dracula, son of Vlad Dracul. His surname, Dracul, means devil or dragon in Romanian. Born in 1431, Dracula ruled Walachia, part of Romania near the Carpatian Mountains; a densely forested area near the Black Sea ("trans-silva" means "over forest" in Latin).

Dracula achieved a zero crime rate in the area and successfully defended his subjects from the Turks and Hungarians by earning the nickname Vlad Tepes, "Vlad the Impaler." Vlad impaled 40,000 to 100,000 victims, about one-fifth of Wallachia's population, on stakes. Along border roads, he created an impaled forest of pregnant women, children, and the young and old. They were impaled through their buttocks up to the throat or top of the head or impaled through the navel, heart, stomach, or chest. He was suspected of practicing cannibalism, eating the limbs of those he killed or drinking their blood. Like Hitler, he practiced his own sort of social purification. In one such event, Vlad purged the countryside of beggars, elderly, lame, sick, blind, and poor by inviting them to feast in a hall, giving them new clothes, and then lighting the hall on fire with the doors locked.



This weary patrol is loaded down with garlic-laced grenades, hoping to find a vampire for der Führer.



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Dracula rebuilt a ruined castle in **Tirgoviste**, Romania, about 155 miles southeast of Cluj on the base of the Transylvania Alps/Western Carpathian Mountains and about 50 miles northwest of Bucharest. Local folklore speaks of a secret passage in the castle that leads into the adjacent mountainside where a special treasure stolen from murdered nobles was hidden. At times it produces a golden flame that lights up the night sky.

Vlad was supposedly killed by a Turkish spy in 1476, but he is said to have lived two hundred years. Regardless, he is rumored to be buried at Snagov (near Bucharest), an ancient monastery on an island in the middle of a still lake. Before his death, he rebuilt the monastery (he also built several other monasteries) into a fortress with cells where he tortured and impaled his victims. Vlad kept stolen boyar (noble land owners) treasure there, but monks threw the treasure into the lake to avoid tempting the Turks. Any hidden treasures are said to glow with a bluish light, like the color of wine spirits, on St. George Day, April 23. It is also a day of occult meetings, celebration of witches, and when the Sabbath is put into practice.

Supposedly Vlad attended the Scholomance, a school 110 miles northwest of Tirgoviste and 60 miles south of Cluj in the mountains near the town of Sibiu. It is here where the secrets of nature, language of animals, and magic

spells are taught by the devil himself. Only ten scholars are admitted at a time. Nine are released at end of training but a tenth is kept as payment to the devil and is mounted upon an Ismeju (dragon) and becomes the devil's aide. The school overlooks a nearby lake that is immensely deep. There is said to be a dragon sleeping under it.

Erzebet Bathory

Erzebet Bathory, born in 1560, was a Hungarian countess who believed drinking and bathing in the blood of girls would maintain her beauty. Bathory's servants lured village girls to her castle on the pretense of maid work but, instead, imprisoned and murdered them in the dungeon. Her deception was discovered in 1610, but not before 50 to 600 girls were killed. Her servants were executed and the countess was locked away until she died in 1614.

Peter Plogojowitz

Peter Plogojowitz was the first person to be documented as a "vampire" after his death in 1725 in the Siberian village of Kisilova.

Nine villagers died of a mysterious 24-hour illness after claiming on their deathbed that Peter tried to take their spirit and blood during the night. As witnessed by a German officer stationed in the village, the villagers dug up his body, shoved a stake through his heart, and burned his corpse.

Arnold Paole

Johannes Fluckinger, an Austrian medical officer in 1732 investigated a "vampirism epidemic" in the Siberian village of Medvegia. According to his report, Arnold Paole died in 1727 after falling off a hay wagon. Soon four villagers felt ill and died after Arnold Paole supposedly visited them in the night. Cattle's blood had also been sucked. According to Fluckinger:

"They dug up this Arnold Paole...and they found that...fresh blood had flowed from eyes, nose, mouth, and ears. The shirt, the covering, and the coffin were completely bloody. The old nails on his hands and feet, along with his skin, had fallen off, and new ones had grown. And since they saw from this that he was a true vampire, they drove a stake through his heart... whereby he gave an audible groan and bled



A SOPA team approaches a suspected vampire lair—with a flamethrower.





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copiously. Thereupon they burned the body the same day to ashes and threw these into the grave."

In 1731, 17 villagers died within weeks of each after having eaten the meat of the cattle attacked by Paole back in 1727. They were suspected of being vampires. All their graves were dug up and 12 of the 17 looked like Paole's grave back in 1727. Their heads were cut off, bodies burned, and ashes thrown into a river.

Nachzehrer

From Silesia and Bavaria (part of modern Poland and Germany), a Nachzehrer is a ragged corpse that opened only one eye and ate its own grave shroud. Then it ate itself starting with its hands and feet but it might leave its grave in the form of a bloodsucking pig.

Strigoi

In Romania, a Strigoi, "dead vampire," is a corpse with two hearts that drinks blood when it runs out of milk. It normally attacked animals but might go for people the night before St. Andrew's Feast (December 13 on the Orthodox Christian calendar or November 30 for others).

Vrykolakas

A Greek and Macedonia legend speaks of Vrykolakas, a plump smelly corpse that smashes the insides of homes, turns over furniture, extinguishes lamps, embraces people from behind, plays tricks, or knocks on doors calling out the name of someone living inside, only to return later and suffocate that person by sitting on their chest. Knots in windows or seeds left outside are said to stop Vrykolakas who spends time untying the knot or picking up the seeds instead of attacking the home's occupant.

Superstitions

There are a number of superstitious practices the players might see but not understand without a Local Knowledge check (DC15). These include Tar Crosses painted on doors to ensnare vampires and prevent them from entering the house and European hawthorn, dog rose, or blackthorn branches with thorns placed in doorways, windows, or over graves to catch on undead shrouds to keep them in place and from escaping. Perhaps the players could come across a vampire stuck on one of these traps (or maybe an unfortunate human falls into one of these and is mistaken for a vampire).

Vampire Adventure Seeds

A War Master can make use of the above history in several ways:

Option 1: A year before the invasion of Romania in August 20, 1944, in a joint collaboration with SOPA and OSI, players must find and destroy a Romanian vampire (perhaps Vlad himself) before the Nazis can locate him. The players could be parachuted into the area or cross into the area through enemy lines. Is Vlad in his ruined castle, monastery or at the Scholomance?

Option 2: The invasion of Romania has yet to occur. The Nazis already have a vampire and are conducting archeological digs for magical artifacts under the vampire's direction. As SOPA agents, the players must kill the vampire and either destroy the artifacts or capture them for their superiors.

Option 3: As a connected post-mission to options 1 or 2, the players are ordered to destroy the ancient Scholomance where blood mages are learning from the Devil himself.

Option 4: During the invasion of Romania, the players take refuge in Vlad's castle or learn of the hidden treasure in the mountains near Vlad's castle.

Option 5: The players come across a vampire village in Siberia or northern Russia, perhaps led by Peter Plogojowitz or Arnod Paole.

Option 6: The players witness a similar vampire purging ritual as conducted in Medvegia and the players are pleaded with to help end a vampire epidemic.

Option 7: SOPA players learn of German commandos lead by a blood mage posing as Russians and visiting the Siberian villages Kisilovaand and Medvegia. Have the commandos found Peter or Arnod or a secret vampire society?

Incorporating *Blood on the Rhine* Monsters

Many of the creatures described in *Blood on the Rhine* should not be excluded from the Russian Front:

Brutes & Reanimant: The use of either of these creatures becomes more common as Hitler becomes more desperate after Stalingrad.

Fext: The squad of Fext mentioned in the *Blood on the Rhine* could be encountered during one of Hitler's delusional attempts to turn the tide of the war at Stalingrad or the Battle for Berlin.





A Russian elder tries to warn his neighbors of the danger lurking in their village.

Gremlin: Russian equipment was more reliable than German but Gremlins could change that advantage in one particular area. In addition, Gremlins could be responsible for manufacturing delays in the Ural relocated factories.

Sluagh: These bird spirits could attack partisan or regular army players ordered to scavenge a battlefield for equipment and supplies.

Tatzlwurm: The Russians made great use of fortifications, especially at Moscow, Leningrad, Kursk and Sevastopol. Usually civilians dug these fortifications but there could be at least one occurrence when the disappearance of some civilians might need investigating.

Wehrwolves: As mentioned in *Blood on the Rhine*, soon after the invasion of Russia, Nazi hunters captured a Russian partisan with Lycanthrophy disease. SS volunteers who became hybrid human/werewolves could be sent on a mission after the defeat of Stalingrad or Kursk to assassinate Stalin or Zhukov. SOPA may wish to find the location of the imprisoned Russian partisan and destroy him.

Incorporating *Afrika* Korpse Monsters

Here are some ways to use *Weird War II: Afrika Korpse* monstrosities.

Corpse Mine: Blood mages in Africa have passed on their techniques of making corpse mines to the blood mages assigned to the Eastern Front. Some of these same blood mages who survived the May 1943 defeat in Africa may be reassigned to the Eastern Front.

Flugzeuggeist & Twisted Hulk: Either of these can be encountered at any time, but definitely during the July 1943 air and tank battle of Kursk

Sand-Rot Mummy & Ghul: These two monster types can be encountered during the German 1942 summer invasion of the Caucasuses (south of Stalingrad and east of the Black Sea to the base of Mt. Elbus) up until the January, 1943 German withdrawal.

Supply Rat: These critters can be encountered near any supply dump, city sewer, or rubble while scavenging for dead meat.





The Opposition

New Monsters for the Russian Front

New front, new monsters. Russia and Eastern Europe have a rich folklore filled with all sorts of colorful creatures. In addition, the physical conditions on the Eastern Front also play host to a wide variety of nasty monstrosities with which you can torment...uh, challenge, your heroes.

Babba Yagga ('The Bony-Legged One')

Medium-sized Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice: 5d8+10 (33 hp)

Initiative: +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: 18 (+3 Dex, +5 Natural)

Attacks: 2 claws +8 melee

Damage: Claw 1d4+3

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5ft.

Special Attacks: Frightful presence, gaze, spell like abilities

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., regeneration 10, scent, SR 50

Saves: Fort+3, Ref +7, Will +8

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 20, Cha 15

Skills: Alchemy +11, Bluff +11, Knowledge (Arcana) +11, Listen +10, Move Silently +7, Sense Motive +10

Feats: Alertness, Brew Potion, Craft Wand, Improved Initiative, Simple Weapon Proficiency

Climate/Terrain: Always near a river or forest

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: Standard coins; double goods, double items

Alignment: Always lawful evil

Advancement: By character class

The Babba Yagga is one of three ancient witch sisters, centuries in age, disguised as an old maid from Russian folklore. She loves to eat people, especially children, after roasting them in her oven. When not out luring children with false promises and treats, she lives within a remote forest clearing near a river in a small hut atop chicken legs and dog heels that can rotate and walk at her command. The perimeter of the clearing is lined with stakes topped by decapitated victims. If the surroundings don't cause a trespasser of Russian descent to flee from fear, his or her odor alerts the Babba

Yagga from within her hut and she delightfully cackles for all to hear, "Fie! Fie! I smell a Russian bone!"

Those who dare enter through the flap of the 30 ft. by 30 ft. feather and dog hair covered hut find it illuminated by eerie green lights that glow with an unnatural flame. They also immediately notice the Babba Yaga's head resting on a table and her headless body either tending a stove, grinding something in a large cauldron with a pestle, lying on a bed, or concocting something on a stocked alchemist cabinet counter.

Combat

The Babba Yagga avoids physical violence and direct conflict, preferring instead to use her Frightful Presence, Gaze, and Spell-like abilities to render her potential victim paralyzed and harmless. Only then does she cook the victim after removing his or her clothes.

If outnumbered by obviously hostile opponents she flees and uses *detect thoughts* to determine the intentions of those that have dared to enter her home. Those that seek her advice are only safe if her attempts to immobilize them fail. In this case, she acts as if she had nothing to do with any of the heroes' friends ending up in a paralyzed state. Even so, the characters had best not try her patience—her mood can change quickly.



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Bone Wand: Babba Yagga has a bone Wand of Hold Person (50 charges at 15th ability level) that she uses to defend herself or when all but one person in her presence has resisted her other attempts at immobilization.

Cauldron: Not only does the Babba Yagga use her cauldron and pestle to boil victims and concoct potions, but it also serves as a method of transportation. When sitting in the cauldron and using the pestle to navigate, she can reach speeds of 60 ft. per round at good maneuverability.

Hut: Due to enchantment, the Babba Yagga's hut resists all magical attacks and can resist 10 hit points of structural damage per square foot (9000 damage points). As mentally commanded by the Babba Yagga, using its dog heels and chicken legs, it can rotate and move 15 ft. per round. It can also hermetically seal and submerge itself in water to avoid destruction and make its escape up or down stream. Thus, the Babba Yagga always situates her home near a deep river.

Sisters: If her life is threatened or angered enough to take revenge, the Babba Yagga summons her two sisters who arrive in 6 to 12 hours; too long to provide immediate help as they try to avoid hunting in the same region. Of course, if they are too late, they seek revenge on those responsible.

Darkvision 60 ft.

Frightful Presence (Ex): A player who views the Babba Yagga in dismembered form within 30 ft. must pass a Will check versus Fear (DC 15) or be frozen in place for 10 rounds minus the witness' Will bonus.

Gaze (Su): Persons within 30 ft. who do not avoid looking into her eyes must make a Will check vs. Paralyzing (DC 15) each round eye contact is made. Failure means the person is paralyzed for 15 rounds, minus his or her Will bonus.

Scent (Ex): The Babba Yagga can determine most natural odors within 60 ft. but she has the knack of detecting Russian "bones" up to 120 ft.

Spell Like Abilities: At will—*detect thoughts*; 1/day—*light*, *command*, *message*, *protection from good*, *hold person*, *continual flame*, *water walk*, *sleep*; *change self*, *ventriloquism*, *burning hands*, *expeditious retreat*, *spider climb*, *fog cloud* and *misdirection*; 1/week—*bestow curse*.

These abilities are as the spells cast by a 12th-level Sorcerer (save DC 12 + spell level).

Adventure Seeds

The Babba Yagga's origins can be traced to actual Russian folktales used to scare children into not talking to strangers or venturing too far from home. In *Weird Wars*, the Babba Yagga actually exists, inhabiting the forests and marshes of western Russia, Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Northern Ukraine. All three sisters move from one region to another to avoid too much scrutiny and possible reprisal, especially when a child disappears from a nearby village.

There are a number of situations in which the players can encounter the Babba Yagga:

They stumble upon her hut while in retreat or while scouting out enemy positions; they seek her out for information; they approach her hut after a villager pleads with the players to help find her lost child; or she is hunted down as a blood mage collaborator. Under the last two situations the players would probably have to eliminate her, especially to save the child. If they are successful, it brings down the wrath of her two sisters.

The first two situations provide excellent roleplaying opportunities. For example, the Babba Yagga may propose an alliance to help save her two sisters captured by blood mages or to take revenge on the Nazis for killing her sisters. Being many centuries old, she angrily recalls how the Germans tortured and killed over 100,000 "witches" in the 16th and 17th centuries. As payment in advance, she provides the players with magical bone wands or potions. If the players need information from her, she provides it with no tricks, after the characters help her.

An even more challenging scenario for the heroes might be to recruit the Babba Yagga's (and perhaps her sisters') help for the war effort. Although the old hag is a malevolent figure in Russian myth, she is Russian, after all. The powers she and her hut possess could make her a powerful ally in the war against the Germans.

Such help doesn't come cheaply, however. The Babba Yagga might demand a regular offering of young children for her pot, for instance. Given that all resources are being mobilized for total war, the high command at SOPA might actually agree to such a demand in order to gain such a valuable ally. If the players are detailed to participate in a "tribute mission," or inadvertently witness one, it might cause some serious second thoughts about the cause for which they fight.





The Opposition

Bannik (Bath Spirit)

Medium-sized Outsider (Chaotic)

Hit Dice: 4d8+4 (2 hp)

Initiative: +1 (+1 Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 20 (+1 Dex, +9 natural)

Attacks: 2 claws +8 melee, bite +3 melee

Damage: Claw 1d4+4, bite 1d6+4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Fear aura, spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., fire subtype

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +5

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 6

Skills: Hide +10, Listen +8, Read Lips +7, Sense Motive +9, Spot +7

Feats: Mobility, Spring Attack

Climate/Terrain: Russian bathhouse only

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always chaotic neutral

Advancement: By character class

The importance of bathhouses in Russian culture must be understood before explaining the origins of the bannik. Sweat bathing is a popular Russian (and Finnish) pastime; especially during the winter months from September through April.

Based on their construction, there are several different types of banias. Black banias refers to rural northwestern Russian bathhouses made of logs and covered in moss for insulation. White banias describe bathhouses made of concrete in the northwestern cities that are usually very steamy due to low water pressure. Southwestern bathhouses are similar to Islamic and ancient Roman construction. Banias fashioned by the nomadic tribes of central and eastern Russia resemble that of North American Indian sweat lodges. Even in material shortage areas of Siberia, bath houses with dirt or straw covered floors can be found manufactured out of clay or turf or dug into the sides of cliffs.

A missionary described what he saw at a bania in 1113:

"I saw the land of the Slavs, and while I was among them, I noticed their wooden bath-houses. They warm them to extreme heat, then undress, and after anointing themselves with tallow, take young reeds and lash their bodies. They actually lash themselves so

violently that they barely escape alive. Then they drench themselves with cold water, and thus are revived. They think nothing of doing this every day and actually inflict such voluntary torture upon themselves. They make of the act not a mere washing but a veritable torment."

In an effort to protect a Russian's soul from evil, the bania was prominent in Russian birthing, wedding, and death ceremonies. These saunas also provided hard working peasants a rare opportunity to relax and an effective method of folk medicine. Sweat bathing was so important in Russian culture that a person would rather lie in a large cooking oven adapted for the purpose than go without the preferred communal bania.

In regards to the bania's healing powers, William Tooke, an Englishman and member of the St. Petersburg Imperial Academy of Sciences, wrote in 1799 that:

"It is not to be doubted that the Russians owe their longevity, their robust state of health, their little disposition to certain mortal diseases, and their happy and cheerful temper, mostly to the baths."



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After the Revolution Lenin's government began a bania construction program to combat the sanitation and hygiene neglect that had spread disease during the Revolution. City bathhouses were made to serve 5 to 300 people and 10 to 50 people in rural areas. Some bathhouses were less "bath like" and more like disinfection centers in which visitors took showers, had their dry clothes disinfected and clean underwear issued. During the war, trains and dugouts were fitted with showers and portable showers were numerous.

The bannik haunts the bania. This mischievous spirit is said to look like an old man with long-nailed, hairy paws. Hiding behind the stove or under the benches, it punishes disrespectful bathers who have intercourse, lie, boast, swear, sing too loud, or talk excessively. The Bannik is also known to pick on visiting strangers and newcomers.

A knowing Russian (but not a good Communist!) makes the sign of the cross to protect him or herself from the Bannik and never enters a bathhouse when purring noises are heard. This is when the Bannik is entertaining unnatural guests, perhaps the devil himself. Thus, it is no wonder that groups of witches liked to gather in the bania to contact the supernatural and prophesy the future.

Combat

When angered, the bannik may throw red hot rocks from the stove or boiling water or change steam into poisonous coal gas (if the stove uses coal instead of wood).

Worse, the bannik was known to skin bathers and wrap their bodies around the stove. The bannik uses all of its powers to avoid direct conflict, but since it cannot leave the bania, it fights to the death if given no alternative. One alternative, in return for its life, is that it provides each character a premonition of some future event or 10 rounds of contact with a lost loved one. If the bania is burned down or destroyed, the bannik returns to its plane of existence and only returns if a new bania is created over or near the site of the old bania.

Darkvision 60ft.

Fear Aura (Su): At will, the bannik can cause all those in the bania who fail a DC 10 Will save to flee and not want to even look at or enter another bania for a week. Those who pass the check may attribute the check to the wind, in a non-concrete bania, or even state that the bannik is present and unhappy. Those who pass the check are immune to additional fear auras generated by the Bannik for the remainder of the day.

Fire Subtype (Ex): Fire immunity, but suffers double damage from cold unless the bannik saves.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*Grease, ghost sound, magic hand, ventriloquism, detect thoughts, invisibility (self only), pyrotechnics, sound burst, suggestion, Tasha's hideous laughter, tongues, emotion, dominate person, mind fog, and open/close*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 6th-level Sorcerer (save DC 11 + spell level).

Adventure Seeds

Besides providing a place to relax and put aside the fears and horrors associated with the war, the bania heals an additional 1 point of damage once per day for a character who spends at least one hour per day sweating there. Players only encounter a bannik in a bania if proper etiquette is not followed (see above) or, on rare occasions, if they are first-time visitors to the bania. Also, as alluded to above, perhaps the players stumble upon a bania behind enemy lines that is being used by a group of blood mages to contact the supernatural or prophesy the future. In this case, they may end up rescuing the bannik, not fighting it.



The Opposition

Corrosive Rot

Huge Plant

Hit Dice: 16d8+80 (152 hp); tentacles 40 hp each

Initiative: -1 (-1 Dex)

Speed: 5 ft.

AC: body 10 (-1 Dex, -2 size, +3 natural); tentacles 15 (+5 natural)

Attacks: 6 tentacles +19 melee, bite +14 melee

Damage: Tentacles 0 damage, bite 1d6 + 4d8 acid

Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 20 ft./5 ft. (40 ft. with tentacles)

Special Attacks: Constrict, improved grab, corrosive damage

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 15/-, blindsight, plant

Saves: Fort +19, Ref +4, Will +5

Abilities: Str 28, Dex 8, Con 20, Int 4, Wis 12, Cha 3

Skills: -

Feats: -

Climate/Terrain: Marsh, swamp or forest

Organization: Solitary or Brood (2-3)

Challenge Rating: 7

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 16-20 HD (Huge); 21-34 HD (Gargantuan)

Corrosive rots are related to shambling mounds but lack their vision, intelligence, speed, and fire and electricity immunity. However, they are considerably more deadly due to their size, Damage Reduction, and corrosive excretion. Like shambling mounds, rots prefer to lie submerged in shallow parts of marshes, usually near well-worn paths and roads. They extend their tentacles to detect the vibrations of approaching prey. Those who have seen the corrosive rot from above, perhaps in a tree having escaped its reach, describe it as a slimy, green and brown, humanoid shape with large vine-shaped tentacles.

Combat

Once an object or lifeform of equal or lesser size, capable of producing a vibration, comes within 40 ft. of the corrosive rot's tentacles, the plant tries to grab the target, constrict it, and draw it into its gaping mouth. It may attack small vehicles.

Due to its low intelligence, the corrosive rot always attacks the largest of multiple targets and ignores anything that is less than Small size—unless, of course, a Tiny, Diminutive, or Fine target moves across its mouth.

Blindsight (Ex): Man-sized vibrations can be detected up to 120 ft. from the corrosive rot's tentacles or body. This range is quadrupled for vibrations created by vehicles.

Constrict (Ex): 2d8+9 damage is dealt each round with a successful grapple check against Huge-size or smaller targets.

Corrosive Damage (Ex): A corrosive rot's mouth secretes strong acid enabling it to digest the minerals and protein it needs from iron, rock, or flesh targets.

Improved Grab (Ex): The corrosive rot automatically uses this ability when it successfully hits a Huge, Large, Medium, or Small size target with a tentacle attack. Targets are dragged toward the corrosive rot's mouth at 10 ft. per round. A living target must make a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid dropping anything that it is holding at the time. Once brought to its mouth, constrictive damage is still applied as the plant tries to munch on the target. Every time a hit is scored with the rot's mouth, full acid damage is applied unless a living target passes a Reflex save (DC 15). A critical hit results in the target losing an extremity.

Plant: Immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, polymorphing, critical hits, and mind influencing effects.

Adventure Seeds

The most likely place to encounter a corrosive rot is in the Pripet Marshes of Poland and Belorussia and the Lithuanian swamps. As partisans or partisan advisers, the players may come across the plant while scouting enemy positions or on the way to or from a mission. The plant may also be encountered during a retreat right after the start of Operation Barbarossa. Perhaps the players could be "saved" from a Blitzkrieg column of German tanks and armored cars by the attack of these creatures.

On June 30, 1941, Commissar Vashugin led a tank unit into a swamp, losing half his tanks; Vashugin promptly shot himself rather than face the wrath of the NKVD for losing valuable resources through incompetence. Perhaps they were lost, not because of his carelessness, but because of a corrosive rot attack. Later in the war, during Operation Bagration, a tank brigade led by the players through the Pripet Marshes might encounter a brood of rots. These creatures may have been larger in size than normal because they have feasted on the bodies and vehicles of some errant unit that wandered into their swamp.





Exploding Corpse

Medium-size Undead

Hit Dice: 2d12 (13 hp)

Initiative: -1 (-1 Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural)

Attacks: 2 claws melee +4 melee, bite -1 melee

Damage: claw 1d6+1, bite 1d4+1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Explode 12d10

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., firearm/shrapnel absorption, +4 turn resistance, undead

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 2, Cha 1

Skills: -

Feats: -

Climate/Terrain: Any land or underground

Organization: Solitary, gang (2-5), squad (6-10), mob (11-20)

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: None

Blood mages who served in North Africa have passed on their techniques of creating corpse mines to blood mages assigned to the Eastern Front. These blood mages, working out of concentration camps, leading an Einsatzgruppen patrol or assigned to a

front line combat situation, have advanced the research to create flesh hungry corpses that explode once their chemically and magically enhanced bodies absorb a certain amount of small arms fire.

Only corpses that have not lost body parts or suffered massive damage are used. Unfortunately, whole corpses are not always readily available and blood mages have ordered the death of civilians (especially those suspected of aiding partisans) and made use of gassed concentration camp prisoners.

Blood mages are not yet able to control exploding corpses and often cast the final enchantment from a distance on chemically prepared bodies lying out in the open or hidden in rubble or trenches when advancing enemy troops approach. When retreating from a location, after raiding or infiltrating behind enemy lines, blood mages may also cast the final enchantment on corpses locked within buildings, tanks, or sewers, to be discovered by unsuspecting enemy units as they advance.

Drained of all blood and pressurized, exploding corpses are obviously bloated in appearance, pale yellow, and stink more of formaldehyde, gasoline, and glue than of rotting flesh. A character who makes a successful Wisdom check (DC 15) may notice the smell at up to 15 ft. away (30 ft. away upwind or 7.5 feet away downwind). The putrid stench may even permeate building doors, tank hatches, and manhole covers.

Combat

Unlike zombies, exploding corpses like to feed on the flesh of the living using their claw and bite attacks. When an exploding corpse is attacked, players within 30 ft. notice that wounds inflicted with slashing and piercing attacks, and firearm attacks greater than 20mm, excrete a yellowish molasses. Bullets and shrapnel less than 12.7mm (.50 cal.) rarely pass through an exploding corpse and the molasses seals up the wound to maintain pressure. Bludgeoning attacks do not cause fluid seepage. As designed by the blood mages, the absorbed bullets and shrapnel are ejected when the creature explodes.

Explode (Ex): When an exploding corpse loses all hit points it explodes in a 20-ft.-radius sphere for 12d10 damage. A Reflex save for half damage is allowed at a DC 13. A chain reaction is possible if other exploding corpses are caught in the blast.





The Opposition

Firearm/Shrapnel Absorption (Su):

Exploding corpses are filled with an alchemical fluid that resembles molasses. This fluid absorbs the impact of small arms fire and shrapnel and plugs any holes made by these projectiles. The corpse is immune to all damage caused by firearms of less than 12.7mm (.50 cal.) and takes only half damage from shrapnel-causing weapons like grenades.

Darkvision 60 ft.

Undead: Immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromantic effects, mind influencing effects, critical hits, subdue hits, ability damage, ability drain, energy drain, Fortitude saves and massive damage.

Adventure Seeds

As mentioned above, an exploding corpse is most likely to be encountered when players come across a wiped out village, scavenge a battlefield for weapons and supplies, attempt to use the sewers to get behind enemy lines in a city battle such as Stalingrad, liberate a concentration camp, or scout too closely to a blood mage conducting field tests. Specifically, the players could be escorted by a partisan familiar with the area who becomes the first victim of an exploding corpse when he or she realizes too late that a loved one doesn't want a welcome home kiss but a piece of his or her face.

Grave Bane

Huge Undead

Hit Dice: 5 hp/dead body

Initiative: +0

Speed: 0

AC: 10

Attacks: None

Damage: None

Face/Reach: NA

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Turn immunity, undead

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +0, Will *

Abilities: Str -, Dex -, Con -, Int -, Wis *1
pnt./dead body, Cha 10

Skills: -

Feats: -

Climate/Terrain: Any land

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always lawful neutral

Advancement: None

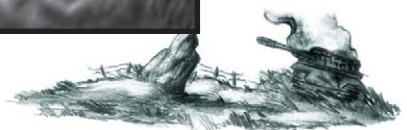
The Nazis often lined up undesirables (Jews, Slavs, and Gypsies for example) facing the edges of open pits and trenches and shot them in the back or head. From 1939 to 1943, efforts were often

made to hide evidence of these atrocities by covering the open pits and trenches with dirt. However, during the last two years of the war, in efforts to hastily implement the Final Solution, the Nazis, in their withdrawal back to Berlin, often left mass executions unburied and exposed to the elements. A grave bane is one such open pit or trench filled and stacked with up to 100 decomposing victims that cannot achieve peace in death until justice is carried out.

Combat

A grave bane's only "attack" is a *Bestow Curse* spell-like ability that it casts on every person that falls into or takes shelter in its domain. Those who fail a Will save (DC 14) are cursed to hunt down and bring back the highest ranking officer present during the execution of the grave bane's occupants.

Whether the officer is dead or alive and no matter the distance, the cursed player feels a mysterious pull in the direction of the perpetrator. Willfully ignoring the pull, by traveling in any other direction more than a mile, results in the player hearing a hundred different voices haunting him or her to enact their vengeance. The voices impose a -4 penalty to all checks requiring concentration and listening. The grave bane uses its Nightmare spell-like ability



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on sleeping cursed players and forces them to experience over and over again the terror of being murdered by Nazi gunfire. A character that refuses the will of the grave bane for 5 consecutive days, must make a Will save (DC15) or go insane.

The character's curse is *only* removed once the officer's live or dead body is thrown into the grave or all occupants of the grave bane are given a proper burial (see below). If the former is carried out, the character(s) then witness the spirits of the grave bane smother the officer and send his soul to hell and then view the spirits ascend to the afterlife. If cursed and noncursed characters carried out their task with honor, the grave bane Blesses the character(s) with a permanent +1 ability score improvement of their choice.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will, once per person—*Bestow Curse* (save DC 14), *Ability Score Bless*; Once a night, per person—*Nightmare* (save DC 15). These abilities are as the spells cast by a 5th-level Sorcerer. The effects of the *Bestow Curse* and *Ability Score Bless* are described above under *Combat*. The effect of *Nightmare* is described on page 232 of the *Player's Handbook*. A character can only be cursed by a grave bane once in their lifetime.

Turn immunity (Su): The grave bane cannot be turned, but a proper burial for each victim/body, followed by Russian Orthodox or Judaism burial rites (frowned

on by most commissars), ends the curse. However, finding someone to carry out the rites may prove more difficult than finding the responsible Nazi officer.

Undead: Immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromantic effects, mind influencing effects, critical hits, subdue hits, ability damage, ability drain, energy drain, Fortitude saves, and massive damage.

Adventure Seeds

After the battle of Kursk in the summer of 1943, the Red Army began its nonstop western drive toward Berlin. Up until spring 1945 and even after the war, the discovery of open mass graves outside villages, towns, and cities were all too common. For added drama and horror, the players could unknowingly take refuge in a mass grave to escape a German artillery attack. Only after the shelling, when the dust and smoke dissipate, does the smell and sight of lying on decomposed bodies become apparent to the players who must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) to avoid vomiting.

In order to avoid the health threatening nightmares and constant pull of the curse, a character or characters cursed by the grave bane may have trouble convincing their noncursed comrades to disobey their current orders and possibly venture behind enemy lines. SOPA players would be smart to first explain the situation to their superiors who may be sympathetic and allow the diversion if the players' past conduct within the organization is nonsuspect. In fact, SOPA may welcome the opportunity to capture the officer and interrogate him before he is brought back for justice by the grave bane.

Gutter Rank

Tiny Aberration

Hit Dice: 1/2d8-1 (3 hp)

Initiative: +4 (+4 Dex)

Speed: 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (good)

AC: 16 (+4 Dex, +2 size)

Attacks: Touch +4 melee

Damage: -

Face/Reach: 2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.

Special Attacks: Attach, gaseous injection

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort -1, Ref +4, Will +2

Abilities: Str 3, Dex 18, Con 8, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 4

Skills: Hide +9, Listen +5, Spot +9

Feats: Weapon Finesse (Touch)

Climate/Terrain: City sewers

Organization: Solitary, Clutch (3-5), Colony (12-18)





The Opposition

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: None

No one is quite sure where these foot-long, kidney-bean-shaped creatures came from, but reports of their existence date as far back as when the first sewers were constructed in India 4,000 years ago. Requiring sewer gas for flight and its injection attack, the gutter ranks make their homes within sewers, sometimes near drainage pipes, to prey on curious cats, dogs and birds. Otherwise, rats serve as their usual meal. The creature's "head" and mouth—filled with a thousand tiny teeth—is located on one end of its leathery colored and textured body. On the other end is its 4-inch long stinger.

Combat

Traditionally, gutter ranks hunt small prey in clutches, but they aggressively defend against any creature that disturbs their nest. Using its mouth, a gutter rank attacks by first attempting to attach itself near a target's heart, stomach, lungs, liver, or brain. Then, using its stinger, it attempts to inject stored sewer gas to cause the rupture of the target's vital organ.

Attach (Ex): The gutter rank successfully attaches itself to the unarmored portion of a target's body (face, head, chest, or back) with a successful touch attack. On a critical hit, the creature has latched on to a vital location like the head or over the victim's heart. The only way to detach a gutter rank is to kill it or burn it.

Darkvision 60 ft.

Gaseous injection (Ex): On the round following attachment, the gutter rank injects sewer gas. If the gutter rank injects gas into the target's heart or brain, the target must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or die immediately. When the gutter rank injects gas into any other vital organ, the target has 2 to 4 rounds to live if it fails a Fortitude save (DC 15). If the target passes its save, the gutter rank harmlessly detaches its now raisin-like self from the target and falls to the ground. If the target fails its save, gutter rank begins to feed on the victim's lymphatic fluids with its mouth and draws in sewer gas with its stinger for flight and future attack. Either way, the gutter rank is not able to attack or fly for 10 minutes.

Skills: A gutter rank receives a +5 racial bonus to its Hide, Listen, and Spot bonus when hunting in a sewer.

Adventure Seeds

Being of low animal intelligence, gutter ranks are only dangerous to humans when their nest is disturbed. The players could come across one such nest in the sewers of Leningrad, Sevastopol, Stalingrad, or Berlin. The players could be using the sewers to get behind enemy lines or, as in the first three examples, helping establish civilian shelter and workrooms. Perhaps a fight between the Nazis and the players disturbs a nearby nest and the gutter ranks attack both sides without prejudice.

Hate Feeders

Hate feeders are a type of spirit that can take three different forms.

Hate feeders have been historically responsible for haunting old and abandoned buildings (poltergeists), 'demon' possessions and exorcism events (possessors) and rare 'demon' sightings (manifestations). They are not undead, but evil souls allowed to remain on Earth (poltergeists) or sent from the depths of Hell (possessors). Both are drawn to each other and once united into a manifestation, it attempts to open the Gates of Hell by capturing 666 mortal souls.

Poltergeist

Small Outsider (Evil)

Hit Dice: 1d8+3 (8 hp)

Initiative: +4 (Dex)

Speed: fly 40 ft. (perfect)

AC: 16 (+1 deflection, +1 size, +4 Dex))

Attacks: none

Damage: none

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Incorporeal, Turning Resistance

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +5

Abilities: Str -, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 12

Skills: Intuit Direction +8, Listen +8, Spot +8, Disable Device +17

Feats: Quicken Spell (Telekinesis)

Climate/Terrain: Any land or underground

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: None

A poltergeist is an evil spirit that takes pleasure in its task of keeping a place free of human habitation, waiting for the day to unite with a possessor. A poltergeist is only created when a person



Chapter Four



with a disturbed or evil soul is punished in the same location where he or she carried out despicable acts of violence. Thus, in many villages, towns, and cities, there is always one abandoned building where such an event occurred and is said to be haunted.

It is no coincidence that sad but true stories of a sick man or woman who once baited and killed people in their home are passed down from one generation to the next as local folklore. Fortunately for the living, a poltergeist cannot leave its place of crime and punishment, usually a small home, mansion, or castle and has no trouble scaring away any potential occupants or visitors refusing to believe the area's folklore. In rare circumstances, a local person of evil alignment might help protect the poltergeist's haunt in the hopes that he or she will draw the attention of a possessor and gain favor in an afterlife of Hell on Earth.

Combat

Poltergeists enjoy scaring, and when possible, tormenting and killing anyone foolish enough to remain more than a round after the Poltergeist makes its presence known. It uses its less dangerous spell-like abilities first and unleashes its full wrath on the stubborn and righteous. Poltergeists cannot afford

to have anyone living in its place of haunt for fear that an aura of good might be created and prevent union with a possessor (see Possessor below).

Incorporeal: Poltergeists and possessors (when not in control of a host) are always incorporeal. Having no physical body, poltergeists and possessors can only be harmed by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or greater magic weapons, spells, spell-like abilities and supernatural abilities. In addition, except for magical force attacks such as a *magic missile*, all attacks from a corporeal source have a 50% chance of inflicting no damage. Hand attacks from a host ignore the armor benefits of non-magical armor. In terms of movement, being incorporeal permits passage through non-force, solid objects. Movement is also totally silent. Even with a Listen Check a Poltergeist and Possessor cannot be heard, but this benefit is not passed onto a Manifestation or host.

Spell-Like Abilities: At Will—*Telekinesis* (100 lb. limit); 1 time per day—*animate objects*, *bane*, *chill metal*, *command*, *control winds*, *emotion*, *feeblemind*, *ghost sound*, *gust of wind*, *levitate*, *open/close*, *pyrotechnics*, *random action*, *shout*, *shatter*, *sound burst*, and *Tasha's hideous laughter*.

These abilities are as the spells cast by a 4th-level Sorcerer (save DC 11 + spell level).

Skills: Poltergeists receive a +8 racial modifier to Intuit Direction, Listen, Spot, and Disable Device.

Turning Resistance: Being associated with ancient evil, the poltergeist and possessor can be turned. Whether physically destroyed or destroyed by turning, a Poltergeist return in 1 to 4 days to its place of haunting and a Possessor in 1 to 7 days in its spawned location. *Dispel evil* or more powerful spells forever destroy either type of Hate Feeder. In addition to *dispel evil*, a poltergeist can be sent to its deserved resting place in Hell if its haunt/building is completely burned to ashes and *bless* is performed on the property. A manifestation cannot be turned and can only be destroyed as described in its Regeneration section below.

Possessor

Medium-sized Outsider (Evil)

Hit Dice: 2d8+8 (16 hp); + Host hit points

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

Speed: fly 30 ft. (average) Possessor; as Host



The Opposition

AC: 13 (+3 Dex) as Possessor; as Host
Attacks: none as Possessor; as Host
Damage: none as Possessor; as Host
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; as Host
Special Attacks: Possession; spell-like abilities in Host, Host special attacks
Special Qualities: Incorporeal as Possessor; damage reduction 5/+1 in Host, Host special qualities
Saves: Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +5; + Host saves
Abilities: Str -, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 11; Uses Host strength
Skills: Escape Artist +4, Knowledge (Religion) +13, Listen +4, Search +4, Sense Motive +8, Spot +4, plus Host Skills
Feats: Endurance + Host Feats
Climate/Terrain: Any land or underground
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 4+ (depending on Host)
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always chaotic evil
Advancement: None

Sent as an agent from the depths of Hell, a possessor lies waiting within a 100 yards of its spawning location to take a control of a human host. A possessor cannot move more than a mile from its spawned location until it has control of a host. A spawning location is always void of any good, usually places of destruction and death such as a rotting cellar, musty tomb, exposed grave, cemetery crypt, or a burned/bombed out building. Once joined, the possessed human is drawn to the haunt of the nearest poltergeist, no matter the distance, so as to join with it and manifest (see Manifestation below).

Combat

A possessor is essentially harmless until it incorporeally envelops and controls a human. Possession, as described below, is its only attack. Unless spells of detection are invoked, such as *true seeing* and *detect evil*, the Possessor attempts to deceive the host's friends and associates that all is well and only goes missing when his or her friends are not venturing in the general direction of a poltergeist haunt. If discovered, the possessor uses any of its and the host's abilities to carry out its goal of manifestation.

Damage Reduction (Su): When occupying a host the possessor creates an incorporeal barrier around the host's body that reduces all weapon attacks not inflicted by a +1 or greater weapon by 5 points. A host may have trouble explaining to witnesses why he or she

seems to come out of combat situations without a scratch.

Possession (Su): Once per day, a possessor may attempt possession when it comes into contact with a human with a dark soul (evil alignment), who is weak (low on hit points), who is mentally ill, who is depressed, or who questions their faith, i.e., rejects their deity. The potential host must make a Will save (DC 18) or become under the control of the possessor. A person who resists the attempted invasion (makes his or her Will save) only feels dizzy for a round. The soul of an evil host, such as a blood mage, may actually welcome the possessor and no Will save may be necessary. A host who welcomes the possessor or who fails his or her save, immediately passes out for 1d4 rounds for no apparent reason.

When controlling a host, the possessor adds its hit points, initiative bonus, save modifiers, skills and feats to the host's. For example, a human with 15 hit points and Listen +8 skill now has 31 hit points and a Listen skill modifier of +12. The possessor can no longer fly when in a host and, therefore, does not pass on its flight capability to the host. Except for the host's, a Possessor has no natural Strength ability.

Places of good (such as a church), joy, and happiness and actually repel a host, who exhibits outward signs of sickness, even vomiting. Perhaps surprising the host's friends and associates (unless the host is a blood mage or other evil person), the host is not affected, and may even exhibit signs of pleasure, when witnessing the nastiest and most disgusting acts of cruelty. A host may try to secretly eliminate, by way of an unfortunate accident or misdirected bullet, any character or NPC who grows suspicious of the host's change in behavior and invulnerability to minor damage.

There are three ways to exorcise a possessor from a host:

The possessor/host fails its Will save against *dispel evil* or a more powerful spell.

The host is killed. The possessor has one chance/one round to possess another human before it is instantly teleported back to its spawning location.

The possessor is destroyed by turning (see above).



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Spell-Like Abilities: A Possessor can only use its spell-like abilities when controlling a host. 1 time per day—*cause fear, death knell, desecrate, doom, hold person, inflict serious wounds, jump, repulsion, spider climb, and water walk*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 6th-level Cleric (save DC 13 + spell level). A possessor may invoke or memorize host spells if it has no connections to goodness.

Manifestation

Huge Outsider (Evil)

Hit Dice: 16d8+600 (666 hp)

Initiative: +3 (-1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 ft. (can't run)

AC: 17 (-1 Dex, -2 size, +10 natural)

Attacks: 4 melee appendages +25, 4 melee bites +20

Damage: Appendage 1d6+14, bite 1d10+14

Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Amorphous, damage reduction 10/+1, fear aura, regeneration 5

Saves: Fort +17, Ref +9, Will +16

Abilities: Str 28, Dex 8, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 16

Skills: Combined skill modifiers of poltergeist, possessor and host.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Sunder

Climate/Terrain: Any land or underground

Organization: Solitary or pair (very rare)

Challenge Rating: 10

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: None

Once a poltergeist and possessor come into contact, a 20 ft. by 20 ft. by 30 ft. high vortex is created with the host at its center. For as many rounds as it takes, the vortex draws in 666 hit points of dead human and animal flesh up to a mile away to manifest itself as a 10 ft. by 10 ft. by 20 ft. high monstrosity made up of various dead human and animal parts. The vortex can absorb a maximum of 111 hit points per round. During this time of dead flesh absorption, nothing can harm the vortex except a *dispel evil* or more powerful spell. Thus, to reduce the time of vulnerability, the possessor tries to join with the poltergeist only when a sufficient amount of dead bodies are available near the poltergeist's haunt. Once manifested into a tall pillar of bleeding and blue heads, torsos, arms, legs, and organs, the Manifestation immediately goes about its task of capturing 666 souls so that the Gates of Hell can be opened.

Combat

A manifestation has 8 melee attacks per round. Up to 10 ft. away it can hit with an appendage or bite made up of various dead human and animal parts. It uses its spells to engage ranged targets. It craves human souls and captures one when an appendage or bite kills a human target. Targets killed by way of spell damage do not lose their soul.

Amorphous (Ex): Since it has no discernable front or back, a manifestation is immune to critical hits and cannot be flanked.

Damage Reduction (Ex): Unless +1 magical weapons, such as, the Sword of Stalingrad are used, all nonmagical damage inflicted on the manifestation is reduced by 10 points.

Fear Aura (Su): As an automatic free action, a manifestation instills paralyzing fear in any person or animal that views it and fails a Will save (DC15). Another person can shake the person free of the fear. The effect ends if the manifestation leaves the victim's line of sight.

Regeneration (Ex): A manifestation regenerates 5 hit points each round. A manifestation cannot be turned and can only be destroyed with a *dispel evil* or more powerful spell after it has been reduced to -10 hit points or less. Players must act quickly, though, before it regenerates above -10 hit points. When successfully destroyed, both the poltergeist and possessor are forever sent back to Hell. The host only survives the ordeal if he makes a Fortitude save (DC 20). If successful, he is unconscious for 24 hours.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1 time per day—*cloud kill, confusion, Evard's black tentacles, reverse gravity, and slow*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 10th-level Sorcerer (save DC 11 + spell level).

Adventure Seeds

A poltergeist could be encountered in a single adventure when the characters take refuge in a poltergeist's haunt or learn of local folklore, but a series of adventures can be built around the goal of Hate Feeders to open the Gates of Hell. To begin with, a War Master must decide whether a possessor possesses an evil NPC, such as a blood mage, an NPC associated with the players, such as a high-ranking officer, or one of the player characters. Do the players find out about the possessed person before it reaches a poltergeist? If so, does the host escape, forcing the players to engage in a manhunt?





The Opposition

Regardless of who it possesses, unless a War Master allows the players to find a Rune or object that can *dispel evil*, the party have access to an NPC OSI Chaplain, SOPA Clergy, or Siberian Shaman of at least 9th level who knows the *dispel evil* miracle. With religion banned and Communism promoted as the only "religion," the Russian Orthodox Church kept a very low profile up until September 1943 when Stalin, in a morale boosting gesture, permitted a patriarch to be appointed. This is not a coincidence, since this move came a year after Stalingrad and Kursk, when Hate Feeders make their first appearance. The first Hate Feeder could make its appearance during an intense Stalingrad street battle. No matter where or when the manifestation appears, plenty of NPCs will be needed as well as access to armor, grenades, Molotov cocktails, satchels and flamethrowers.

Ice Ooze

Huge Ooze

Hit Dice: 10d10+40 (95 hp)

Initiative: -1 (-1 Dex)

Speed: Crawl 10 ft., roll 40 ft., climb 5 ft., swim 10 ft.

AC: 12 (-1 Dex, -2 size, +5 natural)

Attacks: Envelope +16, slam +16, or ice tentacle +16

Damage: 1d8 acid or tentacle 2d4+9

Face/Reach: Flat 25 ft. by 25 ft./10 ft.; ball 10 ft. by 10 ft./40 ft.

Special Attacks: Acid, slam, suffocation

Special Qualities: Blind sight, bludgeoning damage resistance, camouflage, cold immunity, ooze, piercing damage

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will -2

Abilities: Str 28, Dex 9, Con 18, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1

Skills: -

Feats: -

Climate/Terrain: Any cold land or iced waterway

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 7

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 11-16 HD (Huge); 17-32 HD (Gargantuan)

Ice ooze is a cousin of other types of oozes found in the *Monster Manual*. Like its relatives, an ice ooze operates on instinct, living only to consume nonvegetable, organic material. Its favorite meal is animal and fish flesh. Vegetable material is digested, but it does not nourish the monster. The creature resembles the white and blue shades of the surrounding ice and snow.

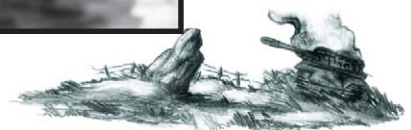
Combat

Lying over the top of ice sheets and snow (although not preferred since it may be easily detected) ice ooze can capture up to two medium-size targets or a small car or sled. Sometimes it may lie over broken parts of ice and use the icy water as an attempt to freeze fleeing prey to be eaten later. It may also disguise itself as a floating ice sheet amongst other floating ice chunks floating downstream. When not on the water, it spends one round to form into a ball and use its slam attack to envelope fleeing prey. If really hungry it may venture into civilization, lying out on roads as black ice, or uncovered portions of building walkways and sidewalks or within frozen fountains. It may even climb into a frosted tree or hang from an ice covered rock outcropping. Wherever and however it hunts, the ice ooze attempts to envelope its target, suffocate it, and devour it with digestive acid.

Acid (Ex): Ice ooze acid does 1d8 points of damage to organic material only. The acid does not harm inorganic matter.

Blind Sight (Ex): Ice ooze can detect small vibrations up 120 ft. and up to three times this distance if vehicles create the vibrations.

Bludgeoning Damage Resistance (Ex): Bludgeoning weapons do not harm ice ooze.





Camouflage (Ex): Ice ooze is almost impossible to distinguish from surrounding ice. Only someone who has survived a previous ice ooze encounter may perform a Spot check (DC 20) which may be modified by as much as -10 under snowing or blizzard conditions.

Cold Immunity (Ex): Intense cold naturally or magically created does not harm an ice ooze. However, fire attacks deal double damage.

Ice Tentacle: The ice ooze may extrude up to four tentacles to deal with more stubborn prey (or to fight off the prey's friends while it digests him). It allows the tips of these tentacles to freeze and uses them as ice daggers against its opponents.

Piercing Damage Reduction (Ex): Piercing attacks on ice ooze do 2 less hit points of damage per die rolled. Note that an enveloped victim may be hit for half or full damage with any piercing or slashing attack inflicted on an ice ooze (50% chance).

Suffocation (Ex): An enveloped victim cannot do anything that requires movement or talking. A character can hold his or her breath for 2 rounds per point of Constitution. Reduce this number in half if the ice ooze caught the character by surprise. After this 'grace' period of time, the character must make a Constitution check (DC 10) in order to continue holding his or her breath. The save must be

repeated each round, with the DC increasing by +1 each new round. The first round in which a character fails one of these Constitution checks, suffocation begins. The character falls unconscious and is reduced to 0 hit points. The character then begins to die, losing 1 hit point per round.

Ooze: Immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, polymorphing, critical hits, flanking, and mind influencing effects.

Adventure Seeds

Obviously, ice oozes are only encountered in areas that contain ice and/or snow. Some areas of Russia, such as Siberia, meet this criterion year round (for example, the vital Lend-Lease port of Murmansk). Other parts of Russia, such as Leningrad and Moscow, only get ice and snow during the Russian winter months. The Volga River that cuts through Stalingrad even ices up during the winter.

Specifically, the players could encounter an ice ooze while exploring a route over Leningrad's Lake Ladoga, constructing the relief road to Leningrad, or near the Neva canals that crisscross the city.

Yeti (Chuchuna—"Ape Man")

Large Magical Beast

Hit Dice: 4d10+20 (42 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 14 (-1 size, +5 natural)

Attacks: 2 claws +11 melee, bite +6 melee

Damage: Claw 2d4+6, bite 1d10+6

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Augmented critical, paralyzing howl

Special Qualities: Cold immunity, darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, scent, spell-like abilities

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +3

Abilities: Str 22, Dex 10, Con 20, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 10

Skills: Climb +7, Hide +5, Jump +7, Listen +5, Move Silently +6, Search +5, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +4

Feats: Track

Climate/Terrain: Any cold land or underground

Organization: Solitary or pairs

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: Standard in lair

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 5-8 HD (Large); 9-16 HD (Huge)





The Opposition

This giant, hairy, ape-like beast has white hair in the winter and dark brown hair in the spring and summer. It is believed to have originated in the Himalayas. Supposedly, the Red Army caught a Yeti or 'man beast' in the Daghestan Mountains (North Caucasus) in 1941. According to Colonel V.S. Karapetyan, it was covered with shaggy hair with the "eyes of an animal." However, the yeti is not a mindless beast as its appearance suggests, but an intelligent animal with its own language.

Combat

Being meat eaters, yetis normally hunt medium-size game such as deer but will hunt man or even attack remote villages with little population when food is very scarce. Otherwise, a yeti avoids contact and uses its spell-like abilities to escape pursuit. It fights to the death when its lair (usually a cave) is violated. Whether hunting or defending itself, the yeti uses its paralyzing howl first and then attacks those who made their saves but were foolish enough to remain behind, with its claw and bite attacks.

Augmented Critical (Ex): A Yeti deals double damage on a natural attack roll of 18, 19 or 20.

Cold immunity (Ex): Intense cold naturally or magically created do not harm a Yeti. However, fire attacks still deal *normal* damage.

Darkvision 90 ft.

Low-Light Vision

Paralyzing Howl (Su): Any animal or beast of less than 4 hit dice, or character of less than 5th level, that is not deaf and within a 100 feet of the yeti, must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be paralyzed for 20 rounds minus the target's Constitution score. Thus, a target with a 20 Constitution is immune to the paralyzing howl attack. Having a Dex and Str score of 0, a paralyzed target cannot move but may take mental actions.

Scent (Ex): A yeti can detect the odor of an enemy up to 90 feet away (45 feet away downwind and 180 feet away upwind). The range may double for especially strong odors such as a rotting pit of dead bodies.

Skills: A yeti receives a general +16 racial bonus to distribute amongst its skills.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3 times a day—*invisibility*, *pass without trace*, and *jump*; 1 time per day—*sleet storm*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 6th-level Druid (save DC 10 + spell level).

Adventure Seeds

Below are some possible circumstances under which the characters are likely to encounter a yeti:

- 1) Seeking shelter from a blizzard or artillery fire, the characters stumble into a yeti's lair.
- 2) In the Ural region, a small manufacturing relocation town has failed to deliver its weekly production quota and cannot be reached by radio. The characters are sent to investigate, and find one hysterical survivor. He relates how the other 50 workers were torn to shreds by a pair of "beast men." The characters have no tracks to follow, but the survivor remembers them heading in the direction of nearby caves. The yeti attack may have been due to the humans encroaching on their hunting grounds, attacks on the yeti by local hunters, or the creatures may be starving due to local game being driven away by the establishment of this new factory town.
- 3) The characters witness their first use of a Yeti summoned by a siberian shaman when things go bad during a small raid.
- 4) A small group of yeti have been driven from their mountain lairs by Germans advancing into the Caucasus. They are scared and not in the best of moods and wish to avoid human contact. However, while moving through unfamiliar terrain they are inadvertently sighted. The heroes are dispatched to look into these reports.

Depending on the circumstances of the encounter, the heroes may be forced to fight the creatures or they may be in a position to aid the yetis. While the beasts mistrust humans, if the heroes can establish non-violent contact with them, it is possible to conduct some sort of rudimentary communication.

Heroes who gain the yeti's trust may be placed in a difficult position. If SOPA views the creatures as a threat, they may order the heroes to eliminate them. If they are viewed as a potential resource, the heroes may be tasked with convincing (or tricking) these reclusive creatures into aiding the war effort.





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