

## OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS

**WURZBURG****Stacking the Odds for the Novice**

by Jack Bludis

There is a problem in recruiting and teaching new players: they tend to get depressed when they are (inevitably) trounced in the first full game that they play. Mr. Bludis attempts to provide a solution to this situation by suggesting the use of what he considers an ideally *unbalanced* scenario from the most popular of the Modern Battles games. Now what do we do for the "expert" who loses his first game to his student? —RAS

The folio game *Wurzburg* (Modern Battles Quad) has been rated steadily as one of SPI's most widely enjoyed games. It is reasonably complex, and it can be played in part of an evening. With four scenarios, it is a game that can be played again and again and enjoyed by beginner and aficionado alike.

Because of the overwhelming advantages of the Russian Player in "Siege of Wurzburg" scenario, it can be used by an experienced player to introduce war gaming to a beginner, and the beginner will have a better than average chance to win.

It's a "hang on" type of game. That is, if the American player can maintain at least one unit in Wurzburg with a line of supply by the eighth move, the American is the winner. But as the game note says, "The Americans have their hands full with this one." It's an accurate statement, and it is therefore suggested that the better player take the American side in this scenario.

The U.S. player will probably find that his best defense is to establish a line from Waldbuttelbrunn in the west to Rottendorf east of Wurzburg, taking full advantage of the special "Shift-four," 2-3-12 city defense units and filling the spaces between with the other units. It is best to hold this line for as long as possible, being careful not to get backed up against rivers with odds that favor the Russian player. That in itself is a tall order, but with skill the American Player can hold onto the north bank of the Main for as long as three moves — as long as five moves if he is particularly skillful or particularly fortunate — but he must know that the north bank has to eventually be given up and his strong line of resistance set up in the hexes just south of the river. The American Player must try for as long as he can to prevent the Russians from turning either flank.

Initially, the artillery units should be placed just north of Wurzburg and used almost exclusively on defense. In subsequent turns, they should be moved to the rough hexes south of the city. The pieces themselves should be used almost exclusively for defensive purposes — since this is where their strength lies. Also, it is *very* important for the American player to remember to use his ground support points. In them, perhaps,

lies his only chance of victory. The special helicopter unit should be used to plug gaps in the line or for sheer diversion. Sometimes Russian units can be slowed down solely by this versatile but expendable unit.

It is the Russian Player who has the overwhelming advantage in this game, however. Russian forces enter the game with six 3-2-12 units, which should be massed with artillery behind them. Used together, they are almost invincible before any American defense. These units can blast a hole in the American defense and surround the American front line, but *they must not permit themselves to be surrounded in the operation*. The best use of these units is by direct frontal attack or along the Main River to the west. Unlike the American artillery, the Soviet artillery should be used almost exclusively on offense. The 1-2-12 units should be used to envelop. If the stronger units are used for a direct frontal attack, the 1-2-12's should be used six along the Main to the east and six along the Main the west in an attempt to surround the Americans. If the 3-2-12's are used along the Main in the west, the weaker units should be massed together in an effort to envelop the Americans from the east.

In the early moves, the Americans must fight for every hex to allow the reinforcements time to take their positions. The Americans must continue to blast up the central road, keeping it free of Soviet units which may cut off the American line of supply. He must also *never* give up his "shift-four" locations unless a Soviet victory is certain. The smart Soviet player will know that a time will come when he should ignore these units, but it's surprising how often a player who should know better will use troops to try to crush them which would better be used by pressing on to Wurzburg or enveloping the American flanks. Conversely, the American player should recognize when the enemy has given up on these units and bring them back into play as soon as possible. They can often be used in a surprise move that pins the enemy against a river or helps surround him with the help of other units.

The Active CRT table should be used by the Russians, not in any special turn, but whenever it seems most appropriate — for example when he has several American units "caught" on the north bank of the main, or even within a hex of it. The Active table should be used by the Americans particularly on the last turn of the game to blast their way back into Wurzburg and to achieve victory that may not otherwise be possible. Another time it might be used by the American is when he has several Soviet power units surrounded, and he has some of his rare superiority with Ground Support Points.

This can be a frustrating scenario for the American when the players are of equal ability. It can be a good training scenario for a new player. The American rarely achieves victory, but when he does, it is particularly satisfying.

One way to even the odds is to cut the game turns from eight to seven or even six according to the relative skill of the players, but that's a whole new ball game.

**True Victory***(continued from page 10)*

John Keegan, *The Face of Battle*. Viking, N.Y., 1976.

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**Moscow Campaign***(continued from page 25)*

In real life, the Germans had a good shot at it. In fact, the only thing that stopped the Germans was the weather — not the Russians. The game victory conditions require that the German achieve a 3-1 ratio for a marginal victory. Any thing below 3-1 will be a Soviet victory. A German decisive victory requires a 6-1 ratio, and at times the German achieves this. In all cases, the German must maintain low attrition of his own forces and *cause* enormous Soviet losses. He must protect his armor and attack with infantry.

The Germans could have taken Moscow and some 40 miles east of it. It would be up to the Russians to surrender or fight. If the Soviets fought, Moscow would probably be retaken unless the German had been supplied from the air (it was not covered in the game). Whether the Russians would have surrendered after the Germans had taken Moscow will always be a "what if."