

GAME PROFILE

MOSCOW CAMPAIGN

An Appreciation of a Perennial

by Lt. Perry Moore

I've received some complaints recently about not paying enough attention to some of SPI's earlier efforts — particularly those games that are of the not-glamorous, but sturdy variety. *Moscow Campaign* is such an item — and while this short profile by Perry Moore will not quell the clamor, it may spark some of you to generate a more extensive piece on such a game. —RAS

Sept. 30-Oct 2. The Moscow Campaign explodes as German forces tear a 70 mile gap in Soviet lines in the south and 100 miles wide in the north in their drive for Moscow.

Oct. 10-Oct. 12 German Panzers race toward Moscow, wrecking all Russian rail lines.

Oct. 14-Oct. 16 German 9th, 8th, 2nd and 6th Armored Divisions approach Moscow, while fifteen more armored and motorized divisions are 50 miles behind in the mud. The Soviets wait. German High Command orders its forces not to take Moscow, but to wreck the rail net.

Nov. 20 German Panzer units are 20 miles out of Moscow. 10th Panzer Division proceeds under orders to slip through enemy lines and cut rail lines 100 miles east of Moscow.

Nov. 22 10th Panzer is surrounded; 8th Panzer Division slips through Soviet lines. Front lines are now along the Volga River and 50 miles east of the Oka River. Moscow, its garrison destroyed, is Germany's.

Nov. 25 Thirty Soviet divisions pin ten German divisions in the forests southeast of Smolensk.

Dec. 7 German Panzer divisions press on, 30 miles east of Moscow. Out of supply in harsh winter weather, German forces go on the defensive.

Dec. 30-Jan 4 Germany still occupies Moscow. Soviet forces attack repeatedly; several holes in the German line are exploited by Soviet armor brigades. The Germans thin their lines. The Soviets manage to cut supply lines in the north and at Smolensk.

Jan. 10-Jan. 12 German units hastily ring Moscow. German Command decides to retreat the armor from Moscow, leaving infantry to defend. Gaps 70 miles across have appeared in the northern lines. German has lost 18 motorized and armor divisions, 31 infantry; the Soviets have lost 88 infantry divisions and 13 armor.

The Soviets had a marginal victory. Had the German lost less armor, he would have had a fairly strong victory. By early April, Moscow would return to the Russians; the Germans had retreated 100 miles west of Moscow to

re-group. The retreat at Moscow was a final blow. Out of 17 divisions, only 3 armor escaped, leaving 14 to die. Only 13 divisions remained of Germany's attack force.

That is a typical action of the SPI game, *Moscow Campaign*. It is one of those games (like *Panzergruppe Guderian*) that can be played endlessly for the excitement of the German sweep into Moscow before the rains and mud come, for the tense battles as time becomes a hindrance to the German, for the continual struggle to maintain supply.

Game Systems

The game map of *Moscow Campaign* depicts some 200 miles west of Smolensk to 100 miles east of Moscow. This area is filled with swamps, forests, rivers, rail lines, towns and fortifications.

The game system is double impulse for the German motorized units, single for the Russian. ZOC's are rigid (for Russian supply) and controlled (for movement — if there's a hole in your line, any motorized unit could slip through). Russian ZOC over Germans are the same for movement, but supplies can be traced through (a German unit must be totally surrounded to be unsupplied). There are two combat result charts. The German must have at least 3-1 odds before having any good effect. The Russian must have 4-1 odds. This difference reflects the weaponry and manpower.

Weather especially hinders the German, causing long delays. In most cases, it halves movement and/or attack (if a German unit is unsupplied in winter, his attack strength is halved twice — once for being unsupplied, the other because it is winter). Weather effects are: rain, mud, freeze and winter. Supplies must be within 12 hexes for the German and 6 hexes for the Russian. They must connect to unbroken rail lines.

In order to repair a rail line, a EB unit (rail repair) must end its movement in the broken rail hex. Combat is the standard rules common to most games. Overrun is achieved at 11-1 odds. A unit inverts the defender and the overrunning unit may attack another unit, then move, thus destroying two units.

Special units include broken rail markers, Soviet trains, EB units, and fortification destroyed markers. The game contains 24 different scenarios, each with a different OB and starting season.

Tactics

The German player:

The German offensive power is their Panzer divisions (6-8, 5-8, 4-8, 3-8, 2-8). If too many are destroyed, the German will lose. He should use this power in the opening week,

when the weather is good. He can cause severe losses if concentrated, and he can even arrive in Moscow before the rains. It is essential that these units break out and cut as many rail lines as they can, weakening the Soviets and causing higher losses. When the armor arrives at Moscow, the German player must decide whether to attack or not. If he does and loses, it is very costly. Or he may continue east of Moscow and hope to cut as many lines as he can (he may find himself promptly surrounded). Still he could sit there, waiting for the infantry before attacking. The latter is best, for the infantry will take the losses. The problem here is that they rarely arrive earlier than mid-November. Cutting supply is the key to both sides. Also, punching as many holes in the front line as one can (you get 1 VP for each hole each turn) is important. In December, the German must be in good defending position against the increasing Russians.

The Russian Player

A glance at the Russian OB is depressing. All units are either 1-4 or 1-10, except a few 5-10, 3-10 and 4-10 in December. The Russian should concentrate on cutting supplies and attacking weak units, and just getting in the way. The Fortifications are a good defense only if the German attacks that way; if he attacks from the south, they are useless. In any case, defend Moscow.

The [1]-10 units must be stacked with other non-bracketed units in order to be useful. They are valuable for slipping through holes in the line and raising hell, though they are easily destroyed by German units. Moscow is important for, if the German succeeds in cutting rail lines east of Moscow and captures the city, then no more EB units are available. This makes the rail lines permanently dead, further weakening the Soviets.

As long as the Soviet player destroys several armor units and their KG counterparts, he will have a good chance. His finest hour comes in December, when his heavy armor arrives. For the first six turns, he should retreat from the clear areas, for he'll only be destroyed (forests are excellent defenses). Both sides should protect their EB units. In December, the Soviet player should concentrate his armor on unsupplied victims, engulfing them. Then he should send armor through the numerous holes in the German line to destroy any supply routes. If the German continues to survive, just keep at it, bit by bit.

Final

That is basically the game system and tactics. It is an exciting game for both sides, and the rules are clear and work well.

(continued on page 26)

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.
- V. Lettow-Vorbeck, *Napoleons Untergang 1815*. Mittler, Berlin, 1904.
- Carl v. Plotho, *Der Krieg des verbundeten Europa gegen Frankreich im Jahre 1815*. Amelang, Berlin, 1818.
- Robert Quimby, *The Background of Napoleonic Warfare* . . . Columbia University, New York, 1957.
- J. C. L. Regnault, *La campagne de 1815, mobilization et concentration*. Fournier, Paris, 1935.
- H. C. B. Rogers, *Napoleon's Army*. Hippocrene, New York, 1973.
- William Siborne, *History of the War in France and Belgium, in 1815*. Boone, London, 1848.
- Strategy & Tactics*, various issues. Simulations Publications, New York.
- Jac Weller, *Wellington at Waterloo*. Crowell, New York, 1967.
- Walter Wood, ed., *The Despatches of Field-Marshal The Duke of Wellington* . . . Dutton, New York, 1902.

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."