

Stalin's Tanks

By: Roger Damon

STALIN'S TANKS is the second of a series of Microgames depicting tactical armored combat in the Second World War. Where ROMMEL'S PANZERS had you racing across open desert in British Stuarts and German Panzer III's, STALIN'S TANKS has a much wider array of armor in an area with more varied terrain features.

In the four years of the struggle between the German and Soviet armies, a wider variety of armor was fielded by both sides. And though the gently rolling areas of the Russian Steppes were much like the desert, elsewhere in Russia, the terrain emerged in the form of vast forested areas, swamplands the size of Vermont, and hills everywhere.

The terrain of the STALIN'S TANKS MAP lies between these two extremes. There is enough to make it interesting, but not so much that players fight trees more than their opponents forces.

Armor has captured the gamer's fancy. There is some security in knowing that an inch or so of armored plate separates the vital parts of a unit from its enemies. There's also the exhilaration of passing through enemy lines unscathed and roaming around in his rear areas with disastrous potential.

There are a few problems, though. The enemy also has units with an inch or so of armor plate. And, as safe as that inch of armor plate sounds, there are weapons that will pierce it with devastating violence.

With these facts in mind, we needn't go all the way back to square one. We need only proceed back as far as the drawing board, which is exactly as far as Soviet and German tank designers went.

PART 1

If armor becomes vulnerable, design and technology must be employed to make it less vulnerable. One way of decreasing an armor units vulnerability is by increasing its effectiveness. This is done by increasing one, or better yet, all of its basic capabilities: armament, protection, and mobility. In tank terms, that means gun size and effectiveness, armor thickness and slope, and cross country speed. In game terms that means Panther.

Lets go back a little to the proud and triumphant German army of 1941. They swept across Poland and France with their tanks in the lead. It was a feast of glory. And now they were doing likewise in Russia, as armored columns plunged deeper and deeper into the heartland. Then something happened. Something small at first. Just a minor disruption. But it was to set off tremors that would eventually reach all the way back to the German High Command in Berlin and set the stage for a most phenomenal battle of technology that would deeply involve both the German and Soviet war machines for the next four years. That something was the first encounter the German army had with the Soviet T34 and KV tanks.

They would rumble out of forests and literally pass through lines of German tanks while shells bounced off their thick, well sloped armor until the panzers had to wheel about to chase them. They would emerge from cornfields, totally overrun anti-tank gun positions, and disappear, leaving behind settling dust and unsettling feelings.

As the number of encounters with these tanks increased, so did the anxieties of the German commanders, as they harbored the knowledge that their sophisticated anti-tank weaponry and their tanks were fast becoming obsolete. Back at the factories, the Panzer III's and IV's were given better guns. Extra armor was being welded on to their

fronts. Plans were being drawn up for new tanks, better tanks. There were even some suggestions to directly copy the T34, but these were scratched.

The Tiger I was the first completely new tank off the German assembly line to counter the Soviet tank threat. This was the first German heavy tank. It was well armored and it had an 88mm gun (which, up to that point in the war, was the only weapon the German army had that could effectively and repeatedly penetrate the armor of the Soviet tanks). But it was slow. It was also far from its final version, the Tiger II. This tank had even heavier armor, and was armed with the best anti-tank weapon of the war; the 88mm L71 KWK (turreted) Pak 43.

In 1943, another new tank would arrive on the Russian Front from the German factories. This was the Panther. With 110mm of well sloped frontal armor that would deflect most Soviet anti-tank rounds, a 75mm L70 main gun that would penetrate any Soviet armor, and a speed equivalent to the T34, the Panther became the main contender for being the best tank in the world. After initial "bugs" were worked out, this tank became a prime example of the "perfect tank".

It also started to rule the game's battlefield. In the early stages of playtesting, one Panther could hold up and destroy column after column of advancing T34's and KV's, as they often did in real life. However, for purposes of play balance and to eliminate the need for twenty or more T34's to knock out one Panther, the entire combat system was revamped and adjusted around the Panther and its relationship to the other units. Actually, though T34's can knock out Panthers frontally in STALIN'S TANKS, in real life this was extremely rare even at very close ranges. Thus, the German army had caught up with, and even surpassed, its Soviet counterparts. But, alas for the German army, the Soviet tank designers weren't sleeping either.

The T34 was a tank of sound design and years ahead of its time. Yet it underwent constant improvement throughout the war years, until it culminated in the T34/85. The KV's were also improved, with impressive amounts of armor added to their hulls. The Soviets also developed a new tank; the Joseph Stalin. The JSII met most German armor on equal ground. Its successor, the JSIII, was the peak of Soviet tank design during the war, however, none of these tanks were able to reach the rapidly receding front in time to see action.

Perhaps more important than the quality of the Russian tanks was the incredible number of them which could be produced. Almost 20,000 T34/85's alone produced with upwards of 30,000 or more of the earlier models of the T34 coming off the line. The German tank that was most produced was the PzIV, with a total number of all models barely breaking the 5,000 mark. So what if it took ten T34's to knock out one Panther? The Soviets had ten more to back up the first ten, and ten more after that.

With all this in mind, one may wonder how the German army managed to extend all the way to the Volga River. This, I believe, can be explained with one concept--Command Control. Basically, the Germans had it and the Soviets didn't. Those early encounters were sporadic, uncoordinated, and achieved little. It mattered little if ten T34's swarmed out of the night to wreak havoc on a German anti-tank gun company when the bulk of the German division was relentlessly advancing on Moscow.

Even on a smaller scale, Command Control was a problem for the Soviets. In a T34, there were two men in the turret; a gunner-commander and a loader. The gunner-commander had to instruct the driver, watch the battlefield, find targets, track the targets, fire at the target, and watch for flag signals from other tanks in his outfit. He was busy--too busy. With all this going on, any single T34 often did the

wrong thing, went the wrong way, failed to fire, or whatever, rendering the tank far less effective than its qualities would imply.

In contrast, German tanks had three man turrets; a gunner, loader and a commander who was in constant contact with other tanks of his outfit. This, coupled with superior crew training (some Soviet tank crews received only a few days training) and superior optic and tracking ability, the Germans had an edge that lasted until the last stages of the war. By the time the Soviets were catching on as to how to handle armor effectively, their qualitative edge was waning due to the ever increasing number of Panthers and Tigers appearing on the battlefield.

DESIGN--Initially, I wanted STALIN'S TANKS to be totally compatible with my first game, ROMMEL'S PANZERS. My intention was to design it so that one could take a T34 out of STALIN'S TANKS and plop it down in the desert to fight Stuarts. These intentions were not realized for a number of reasons.

There comes a point in designing a game, where the game seems to take on personality of its own. It's uncanny, but I've encountered it more than once. The only way I can describe it is to say the game begins designing itself. (No, I haven't been to the loony bin lately.) I kept getting these urges to change the game--to alter its direction away from its predecessor. I began to realize it was a different game.

Some of the differences were apparent. Translating a ROMMEL'S PANZERS type of combat system into a multi-terrained environment was the most obvious stumbling block. Another problem was the wide variety of armor present in the campaign. I'm not saying this couldn't be represented using combat-odds type system, but it would be difficult to represent the subtle differences in armor and tank gun effectiveness of the varied units without getting into Attack Factors with three digits.

Finally, I wanted a more defined relationship between armor-piercing weaponry and armor.

STALIN'S TANKS is an upgraded ROMMEL'S PANZERS. Ways were sought to improve on the basic system. One automatic improvement was the addition of terrain. It was important, for playability's sake, to keep things general. For instance, when a unit was on a hill, it was automatically assumed that unit was in the best possible position on that hill as far as defensive stance was concerned. It would, in effect be hull down, thus not only presenting a smaller target area, but also presenting its heavier upper hull and turret armor. This called for a Dice Roll Modifier on the "To Hit" roll and an effective increase in the units Armor Class. A unit in the woods may be a little harder to hit (being a little harder to see), but trees would offer little practical defensive value to a unit when super-sonic anti-tank rounds are concerned. By the way, in case you're wondering why tanks can't enter buildings, its because the buildings all have basements.

Another addition to the design was the inclusion of infantry and all that goes with it (HE Fire, Assaults, Overruns). Infantry not only gives armor something else at which to shoot - it gives it something else about which to worry. The size of the infantry units was a problem. It was hard to imagine a squad alone knocking out tanks in assault after assault. It was even harder to imagine a platoon being liquidated by one 75 mm HE round. So squad level units were chosen. Stacking was prohibited for playability purposes only. Plans are in the works for more detailed infantry rules for a later game in this series.

The most questionable addition to the game is Section 14.0--High Explosive Versus Armor. This rule can be abused. Basically, it represents firing either high-explosive shells or smoke rounds in the direction of enemy positions with the intention of

disrupting an enemy's ability to return fire. A "hit" with an HE round indicates that the shell exploded close enough to the tank to raise dust, causes the commander to slink down into the turret, and shake up the crew a bit. The freak hit, indicated by rolling "snake eyes", indicates a direct hit on the vehicle. Since most guns are 75mm and larger, the high explosive content is enough to warp gun barrels, blow off tracks, and flake off hot metal from the inside of the tank (which would be most disquieting to the crew).

Many armor purists will (and have) complained about this rule, especially those who have lost a Tiger II to a "snake eyes" hit from a T34. The rule does help the Soviet player a little more than the German, though, just for laughs, the German player could announce his JagdPanzer VI is firing HE at a T34. It may seem a bit ludicrous to imagine a T34 commander choosing to fire a high-explosive round, rather than an armor-piercing round, at an enemy tank. But if our T34 commander knows, or at least believes, that a target is a Tiger II, he would probably be aware of the slim chance of penetrating its 180mm frontal armor with the 76mm gun at his service. So what does he do? Well, he could pepper it with armor-piercing rounds hoping for a freak hit on the Tigers gun barrel or vision slit (as the long 88 slowly lumbered around towards him), or he could start cranking out HE rounds in its general direction hoping to cause enough chaos (Hail Eris) to disrupt the crews effectiveness long enough for him to either close for a flank shot or get out of the Tiger's way. I'm not saying that Soviet tank commanders did this, but they could do it.

Looking back, I see that this rule should have been optional. To help even this rule out a bit, I offer the following changes: 1) HE Fire Versus Armor has a +3 Dice Roll Modifier instead of the +2. 2) A tank disrupted by HE fire may not fire in the upcoming

fire phase in which it would have been eligible to fire, although it may move normally. 3) Units may only fire HE at armored targets during their turn. These restrictions do not apply to firing HE at infantry. The +3 DRM is only used when firing at armored targets. When firing at unarmored targets, a +2 DRM is used. This is to account for the additional effect machine guns would have on infantry and AT guns.

These changes virtually limit the use of HE versus armor to the Stationary Fire Phase and acts as cover fire by making possible a disruption of an enemy's defensive fire. With the more severe DRM, HE fired at armor in the moving fire phase will be mostly ineffective (a 3 or less being the best available shot). Players should note the facing of disrupted units, especially if they move.

The Optional Rules are basically just extensions of the advanced rules and I strongly suggest that they be used. The Range Attenuation rule definitely favors the German armor and displays the superiority that German weaponry had over Soviet weaponry. It may seem a little slow at first, but when used a few times, it becomes second nature.

The 60 Degrees Full Frontal Face rule indicates the increased effectiveness of armor as the angle of the shot is increased. Just as it was common to slope armor to increase its effective depth, approaching known enemy positions at an angle was also a common tactic.

Overruns should have been an Advanced Game rule rather than an optional one, and players should definitely use it.

The Soviet Suicide Assault represents the occasional mad-dash to overtake an enemy position with almost total disregard for casualties that the German army had to deal with.

The game represents a variety of encounters covering a span of four years. Because of this, I had some problems coming up with

a map. My early intentions were to use three maps; one representing open terrain, one representing close terrain, and one in between. This did not seem very feasible. Not only would it cost too much, but by manipulating set-up and entry hexes for the forces, one map could take on different aspects. A hill that was important in one scenario was useless in another. There are some spots that seem good in almost every scenario. Hex 1517 is one of these. This is a great spot for a Panther or Tiger to cover units coming from the North or South. Otherwise, the terrain is generally balanced, with some nice spots upon which to put the big German guns, some places to sneak by these big guns, and some places to muster a blood-curdling charge across open terrain.

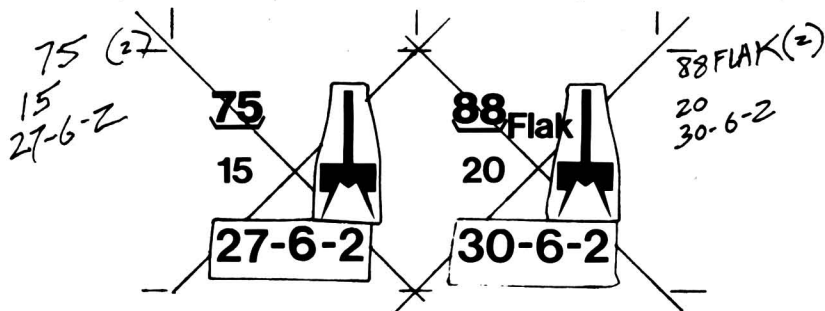
THE UNITS--With such a wide variety of armor available to both sides, some lines had to be drawn on what was to be included and what was not. Units that were common and of the same type but with an incremental difference in either gun effectiveness or armor were included, such as the T34 a, b, and c. Along with these were some not-so-common, but interesting, unit types such as the SU 100 and Elephant.

The German high command was familiar with the BT-7 as the German and Soviet armies had actually worked together on armor design in the 1930's. The classic failure of German Intelligence was when the German army was taken by total surprise by the appearance of the T34 and KV1, the latter of which, along with the KVII, were awesomely heavy tanks for 1941.

The KV II was not included in the game as it was manufactured in small numbers and was primarily used in an infantry support role. Anyone who had access to a picture of this beast is urged to take a look at it. It is an incredibly monstrous and terrifying piece of machinery.

The T34's and KV 1's were armed with a Russian 76.2mm gun. Though this gun was eventually outclassed by the German 75 and 88mm guns, for the period of 1941--early 1942, this was a weapon capable of dealing death blows to any German Tank.

This cannot be said for the early German Medium tanks, the Px IIIe and J, and the IVd. These tanks, with a 50mm and a very short 75mm gun respectively, could meet such lightweights as the BT-7 on equal terms, but were but totally ineffective against



The Light tanks, the PzII and BT-7 represent early models of tanks from both countries, each originating from the 1930's. Though the BT-7 was phased out of Soviet tank production in 1942, the Pz II, in various models, was in production up until 1944. It was primarily used as a recon vehicle in the later years, when it had been totally outclassed as a competent fighting vehicle.

the T34's and KV's. The time came for the German army to develop some heavies.

END OF PART 1

I really hate to do this, but the piece is just too long. Catch the rest in INTERPLAY 3. TH

Stalin's Tanks

Designer's Introduction

by

Roger Damon

Part 2

It takes valuable time to develop and produce a totally new tank. The IIIj model was an early attempt to immediately even up the qualitative odds on the Eastern Front, though it was far from an acceptable compromise. It was simply a Pz III with the longer 50mm L60 gun installed in the turret and the frontal armor upped to 50mm (from 30mm in earlier models). The addition of the longer gun was actually ordered by Hitler himself as he was reviewing troops in Poland in April, 1941.

Initially, the early models of the Pz IV were intended to be used for close infantry support and were not intended as tank fighters. In the campaign for France, they weren't even given armor piercing shot. The need for better anti-tank weaponry prompted the introduction of the longer 75mm L43 (they originally had L24's) into the Pz IV's turret. This was coupled with an overall increase in the tank's armor. The first model of this improved tank was the IVf2. The IV was more readily adaptable than the PIII and was continually improved throughout the war, becoming the German army's main battle tank.

The last version represented in the game is the IVh, which had an even longer 75mm L48 and had a respectable increase in its frontal armor.

A few words should be said about barrel length and tank gun effectiveness. Basically, as the barrel length increased, so did the muzzle velocity. And as the muzzle velocity increased, so did the shell's force. The length of

a gun barrel is its bore size multiplied by its L number. Thus, a 75mm L43 had a barrel 75mm times 43 or 3225mm long, which is about nine feet.

The Tiger I had impressive armor and an 88mm L56. It was introduced in July of 1942 and was the first German tank capable of dealing with Soviet armor. The Tiger I was updated in 1944 when the armor was upped from 100mm to 150-180mm and the devastating 88mm L71 was fitted to the turret. This was the Tiger II, otherwise known as the King Tiger.

Finally, there was the Panther, the pinnacle of German tank design. It was a definitive response to the better Soviet tanks, and in fact, far surpassed them. It had the excellent 75mm L70 gun, excellent sloped armor, and cross country speed equal to the T34's.

The Soviet had a similar improvement schedule, modifying the T34 and KV models with improved armor and weaponry which culminated in the models with the 85mm guns. The Joseph Stalin (JS) line of heavy tanks was a remarkable success. It was the last of the wartime production models with a respectable 122mm L43 gun and armor equivalent to the Panther.

The idea of the Self-Propelled gun originated with the Germans in the mid 30's. The idea was to mount a gun on a self-propelled chassis to be used for close infantry support. Being turretless, they were cheaper, easier to produce and offered a larger fighting compartment.

It was found that bigger guns could be mounted on a specific chassis than on their turretted counterparts. For example; the biggest gun that could be fitted into a Pz III turret was the 50mm L60 of the IIIj. However, Sturmgeschutz's used the III chassis (except for some later models, which used the chassis from a Pz IV) and in these chassis they were mounting guns up to 105mm.

The Self Propelled guns also were situated lower than tanks and offered less of a target area to enemy fire. These SP guns followed a line of development

similar to that of tanks as they were up-gunned and made with heavier armor.

The restrictions applied to SP use in the game represents their relative weakness in a mobile situation. They were generally best in defensive roles. The prime example of their inadequacy in a mobile situation was the disaster the Elephants encountered at the battle of Kursk. That battle alone marked the beginning and end of the Elephant, as they were handily destroyed by flanking fire and infantry assaults.

THE SCENARIOS--The scenarios follow a historical outline, though they do not exactly represent specific historical events. My main intention with the scenarios was to give players a general state of affairs in which certain units were available in certain situations. What's a lot of fun for the Soviet player is the rampant superiority of the T34's and KV's in the first scenario. Their effectiveness dwindles, however, as the scenarios are played, until the big German tanks rule the battlefield.

My favorite scenarios are the ones labeled non-historical. They represent basic tactical situations. They are both tense and exciting firefights. Infantry takes an important role in Scenario 25.6, not only to occupy hills already taken, but also to move in and challenge hills held by the enemy. This scenario often comes down to the wire. Players have much leeway on what hills to go for and how to go for them.

The Guantlet (scenario 25.7) can be fun for the German player especially, as he has the most impressive tanks and SP guns available. This was why I included this scenario: give the German player the best units there are, and then give the Soviet player enough stuff to deal with them.

Scenario 25.1 is a scenario of example; the example being to show the general superiority of Soviet equipment in the early goings. I considered giving the

Soviet armor a +1 Dice Roll Modifier to display their general ineptness at handling armor at this stage of the war. This would probably more accurately reflect the difference in the units; differences that are not as tangible as armor thickness. If players seem to have trouble finding a German victory in this scenario, they may try the +1 DRM. It's a tough scenario for the German player. Much hinges on the first shots. They should be concentrated on the T34's and KV's. The Soviet player might want to try an end sweep with the swift BT-7's, darting them from cover to cover until some interesting flank shots can be worked out.

Scenario 25.2 is one of soft targets versus armor. The German player must get the SU 152's. They will simply devour any AT gun positions. Likewise, the Soviet player should use his 152's (for as long as they last) for cover fire. Once the main AT guns are destroyed, the infantry is virtually helpless.

Scenario 25.3 represents a combined-arms frontal assault on a prepared defense. For the German player, it will be rough going. Find the weak spot and hit it with all you have.

Scenario 25.4 represents the greatest armor free-for-all of the war. Get in there and mix it up!

Scenario 25.5 is a battle of the giants. The German player will need all the help he can get. He must decide whether to get the infantry out of there or stay and fight. Like many of the scenarios, it seems hopeless for the German player. But, just by hanging in there as long as possible, the tide may slowly flow his way.

DESIGN YOUR OWN SCENARIOS--For those wishing to modify the game, I offer the guidelines below for scenarios that may be designed by the players. The scenario force makeup follows no historical precedent. The forces chosen were chosen for play balance rather than to reflect organizational structures of the armies. The

following instructions are based on the organizational structures of the two armies. Units will be organized into platoon level groups with scenario forces representing companies.

A Soviet tank company consisted of three tank platoons of three tanks each plus a command tank for a total of ten tanks. Thus a T34 tank company would have ten T34's. The Soviet army attached infantry to their tank units. In game terms, this would mean that each soviet tank company would have three squads (one platoon) of infantry that would be attached to it. Since there aren't ten of any one type of tank in the counter mix, one tank will represent a platoon, and a Soviet tank company will be represented by four tanks with three infantry squads attached to it.

A German tank company, in 1941, had three platoons of five tanks each plus two command tanks. In the later years, as tanks became scarce, this was cut to four, and sometimes three, tanks per platoon. In game terms, each German 1941-1942 tank company and some 1943 tank companies will be represented by five tanks. This will be cut to four, and sometimes three tanks per company in later year units. Infantry was often nearby in the form of a motorized or panzer grenadier battalion, but it was a separate unit.

German SP guns were organized like the tank companies and are represented by five SP guns. Soviet SP gun companies had three platoons of five tanks each plus a command tank and are represented by a company of five SP guns.

Units are organized into companies because that was how the respective armies organized them. Other than SP gun companies, units of a company are of the same type. The following organizational chart lists companies, their components, the time of their availability, and their average worth, in points.

EARLY	GERMAN	SOVIET
	Pz II Company (4 Pz II) 1/2 pt. Pz III Co. (3 Pz IIIg, 3 Pz IIIj) 3 pts. Pz IV Company (3 IVD, 2 IVf2) 3 pts. Assault Gun Co. (4 Stug b) 3 pts. Note: use the blank counters to represent the missing IVD and IVf2. Use Stug-g's as Stug b's. Infantry Company (4 squads) 1/2 pts.	BT-7 Company (4 BT-7) 1 pt. T34 Company (2 T34a, 2 T34b) 5 pts. KV Company (4 KV1a) 6 pts. Note: Each tank company has three Infantry squads attached to it.

In addition to the forces listed, the Soviet forces suffer from lack of command control in the early and middle time periods. One tank from each tank company (not assault gun co.) must be designated as a command tank. A small pencil mark on the counter may be helpful in keeping track. When a command tank is destroyed, simply replace some other unit of the company with the marked counter. All units of a company must be in the LOS of the command tank, at the beginning of a movement phase to move. A unit that cannot see the command tank (has a blocked LOS

MIDDLE

GERMAN

Pz II Co. (4 Pz II) 1/2 pt.
 Pz III Co. (4 Pz III) 1 Pz IIIg) 4 pts.
 Pz IV Co. (5 Pz IVh) 6 pts.
 Pz V Co. (4 Panth.) 12 pts.
 Pz VI Co. (4 Tiger I) 10 pts.
 Assault Gun Co. (2 Stug 9, 1 Nash) 5 pts.
 Infantry Co. (4 squads, 4 HT) 1 pt.

SOVIET

T34 Co. (4 T34c) 5 pts.
 KV Co. (4 KV1c) 7 pts.
 Assault Gun Co. (1 SU 76, 2 SU 85,
 1 SU 122, 1 SU 152)
 8 pts.
 Note: Each tank company has three
 infantry squads attached to it.

LATE

GERMAN

Pz II Co. (4 Pz II) 1/2 pt.
 Pz IV Co. (4 Pz IVh) 5 pts.
 Pz V Co. (3 Panth.) 9 pts.
 Pz VI Co. (3 Tig 2) 12 pts.
 Assault Gun Co. (1 Hetzer, 1 PzJg V
 1 PzJg VI) 8 pts.
 Infantry Co. Same as middle 1 pt.

SOVIET

T34 and KV Co. same as middle
 T34/85 Co. (4 T34/85) 6 pts.
 JSII Co. (4 JSII) 10 pts. (Use blanks)
 Assault gun Co. (1 SU 100, 2 JSU 122,
 2 JSU 152) 10 pts.
 Note: Each Company has three infantry
 squads attached to it.

to it) may not move until an unobstructed LOS is achieved to the command tank. It may fire normally.

Players now choose a time period in which their scenario is to take place (Early, Middle, or Late). Next, objectives, and set-up/entry hexes are agreed upon. Here, players have a free hand. Perhaps one side tries to take and hold the buildings from the other side, or a small raid can be set up. A game length should be agreed upon by the players. Next, sides are chosen and a point limit (30-40 pts) is set.

Players then secretly choose forces from the time period and start the game. Other units, not mentioned in the above chart, may also be used for some situations. The 88 Flak is an early weapon and the 88 Pak a middle-late weapon. All other weapons are available in any time period.

TACTICS--This section is mainly for players who are new to tactical armored wargames. There are a few basic doctrines to which players should almost always adhere.

1. If at all possible, do not expose your tanks or SP guns to flank fire.

2. Use all available cover when approaching enemy positions.
3. Position units so as to have the most fields of fire.
4. Keep your units with good guns, but light armor, back as far as possible; but not so far back that they themselves have no available shots.
5. Do not advance into enemy positions with SP guns alone.
6. Do not be over-hesitant in advancing your better armored units right into and through enemy positions.
7. Keep infantry, or perhaps a smaller tank, near your threatened SP guns. This will help deter enemy units from approaching your SP gun positions from the flank to avoid fire.
8. Use infantry to assault tanks when possible.
9. Concentrate your tanks on the weakest area.
10. Don't hesitate to take a long shot across the board, especially if it is a flank shot.
11. Don't be afraid to lose some tanks. A lost Panther does not mean a lost game.

As one plays the game, one becomes more and more familiar with the terrain. This can be a crucial factor between an experienced player and one new to the game, even if a newcomer uses sound tactics. General trends, peculiar to the game, have arisen. It seems the southern map area favors the fleet T34's while the northern hills are prime spots for such units as the Nashorn. The center hill (hexes 1517 and 1417) is a hot spot in most scenarios. Getting your best tanks onto that hill is a sound initial objective. The eastern side of the map offers the least resistance, as far as terrain is concerned. By that token, however, it is often a suspected course of an attack. Infantry should strive for hexes with terrain features. Left in the open, they seem to disappear fast. Don't go in the swamp. There is an interesting sighting, discovered by playtester and Line-of-Sight expert Shane Stein, from hex 2132 to hex 0806. This was entirely unintentional.

Those big Soviet SP guns (SU and JSU 152's) should be used more as anti-personnel weapons than anti-tank weapons. You can surprise an unwary German player if you catch his infantry in the open with one of these beasts. As the Soviet player, don't let the Panthers intimidate you (the Tiger II's yes, but not the Panthers). Fire at them. The loss of a Panther can so upset a German player's attack, physically and psychologically, that it may spell doom for him. And, to both sides, don't baby your units. Use them to attack--that was their intention.

Tactical warfare of the era, and games representing it, involves a way of thinking that is different from that used in games covering larger scales. The main concept to be grasped is that of time. A flanking attack may be represented in one move in a company level or larger scale game. But, in a game of this scale, flanking attacks involve a number of moves, usually with depleting forces. So if you decide to send some faster units along one or both board edges, expect it to take some time to develop.

A good defensive position is one that remains intact. If units are falling back to respond to a flanking move, this means that defensive positions are being vacated and units are becoming more vulnerable as they move. Keep in mind how unnerved you might become with an enemy unit roaming behind your lines. Your opponent may well likewise become as unnerved. When attempting mass flanking moves, don't totally disregard losses; simply expect them. The rewards getting a few through can be immense.

ERRATA AND ADDENDA--It is almost impossible to print a game free of error. ROMMEL'S PANZERS suffered from a misplaced Movement Factor and Defense Factor on the counter diagram in the rulebook. Though an obvious mistake made clear to anyone studying the examples, I still wonder if there isn't some gamer out there moving his Matildas 25 hexes per turn.

Fortunately, the errors in STALIN'S TANKS are few and far from critical.

Counters--The Pz III's and IVd should have an armor class of "G" not "6".

Map--Hex 1727 should be a ford hex. A ford hex is treated as clear terrain.

Rulebook--Any reference to the IVfz should read IVf2>

Section 4.0--The parenthetical

note that players may also design their own scenarios is somewhat in error. The method for doing this was not included in the rulebook, but was described earlier in this article.

6.3--Add: except when the optional Overrun rule is used.

14.3 This rule states that unit types don't matter. It should state that Armor Class doesn't matter.