

OH NO—ANOTHER STALINGRAD VARIANT!

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The Avalon Hill Game Company's **Stalingrad**, as we all know, is a wargame of Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of Russia, "the most gigantic military campaign the world has ever known." Despite the title, **Stalingrad** actually covers only the first two years of the War in the East, from June of 1941 to May of 1943. The game ends in the spring of '43 because, according to a letter from Avalon Hill in response to my question on this point, if the Germans did not win it by then, they never would. Anyway, **Stalingrad**, as if we all did not know, uses the 1960s standard Avalon Hill four pages of rules plus a Battle Manual with examples of play. Unlike **AH D-Day** and **Battle of the Bulge**, **Stalingrad** lacked any advanced Tournament or Optional Rules.

Stalingrad was my first wargame, and it was a fine introduction to the basics of wargaming: movement, combat, zones of control, and tracing lines of supply. It also had something to show about such military principles as concentration (you needed to get those 3/1 odds), objective (the Germans had to take those Russian objective cities), and surprise (the latter made possible by the ability to shift a good chunk of your center of mass via rail movement). And **Stalingrad's** relatively "clean" map gave a sense of a vast campaign stretching across the steppes. Yet despite all this, **Stalingrad** suffered from deficiencies which became obvious after several play throughs. These can be summarized as:

1) **The lack of mobility on the front.** Units can advance after combat only when the defender is doubled, and then only one hex. This, combined with the relatively high defensive strength of Soviet units, makes it impossible for the Germans to have any kind of blitzkrieg in Russia. Instead, the front line is pushed back one hex at a time in a manner more reminiscent of the First World War than the Second. The static front makes it possible to deploy all units "up front" in contact with the enemy, and gives players no reason to maintain reserves.

2) **The Soviet order of battle.** The Soviets (or "Russians" as they are called in the rules) start the game with 24 infantry, 7 armored and 3 cavalry corps. The majority of the Soviet infantry corps are 4-6-4s or 5-7-4s (attack-defense-movement). In comparison, German infantry corps are mainly 4-4-4-s. There are several things wrong with this, the first being that this is only a fraction of the number of corps the Soviets actually had in June 1941. The second is that this evaluates a Soviet corps much too strong in comparison with the German (at this stage in the war, the Germans were vastly superior in terms of leadership, training, battlefield coordination and fire support). Finally, the Soviets abolished the corps echelon of organization in the wake of the invasion! Fortunately, there is an easy fix for this one, as will be seen below.

3) **The air war.** There is none in **Stalingrad**. But the struggle in the skies above the battlefields was in many ways just as critical as that on the ground. The Germans gained air superiority from the start of the campaign and generally kept the edge until early 1943 (i.e., the end of the game). The Luftwaffe was not merely a close support force (which could conceivably be factored into unit strengths) but also an operational force, striking deep into the Soviet rear to affect the entire campaign.

4) **The Finnish front.** The Finns are too weak vis a vis the Soviets. One gamer strategy has been to concentrate the Soviet army on the Finnish front in the early part of the campaign, destroy the Finns in the first couple of turns, and then shift the Red Army south to deal with the Germans.

5) **Economic objectives.** The three German objective cities in the game are Leningrad, Moscow and Stalingrad. Holding them for two turns in a row gives the Germans victory. These cities also provide the Soviet replacement points. This in itself is not bad, one can always argue that these three cities were the centers for Soviet industry and mobilization. But this does not give the Germans any reason to attack into the Ukraine or the Caucasus oil fields, which were economic critical objectives and determined the course of much of the original campaign.

*Being your usual wargamer, I decided it was time for me, too, to do a **Stalingrad** variant. But it wasn't to be just any other variant nor, especially, a redesign (of which there are numerous others on the market). My objective was to turn **Stalingrad** into a reasonably faithful historical simulation using the types of game systems available to Avalon Hill in the 1960s. The idea was to turn out a game which could have been done way back when, making **Stalingrad** a true classic. Readers will note that the rules here are drawn largely from Avalon Hill **Battle of the Bulge**, **D-Day**, and **Blitzkrieg**. Also, as per the original **Stalingrad** rules, I use the term "Germans" for Axis forces in general, and "Russians" for the Soviets.*

So here we go...

ORDER OF BATTLE

1) **Russian.** All Russian infantry and cavalry corps are now considered armies (this makes their factors work out about right). All Russian armored units are considered corps in 1941 and armies in 1942 (the tank armies the Soviets organized in 1942+ were actually corps sized formations).

2) **Russian stacking.** The Russians can stack only two units per hex (the Germans can still stack three).

3) **Initial Setup.** The Russians set up first. They place the following units anywhere to the east of the startline (in the USSR): 9 x 4-6-4, 13 x 5-7-4, 4 x 4-6-6, 3 x 2-3-6, 1 x 4-6-6, 1 x 5-7-6. The remaining Russian units (2 x 7-10-4, 1 x 6-9-6) are put aside and received as reinforcements later in the game.

4) **Soviet Reinforcements.** The Soviets receive the following units as reinforcements in December of 1941: 2 x 7-10-4, 1 x 6-9-6. These units may be placed in any combination on any Soviet replacement cities. These units do not require replacement points, they are for "free".

5) **German Reserves.** The German player deducts the following units from his initial set up: 1 x 6-6-6, 5 x 5-5-4 (i.e., all German units with an "R" after their designation). These units are received as reinforcements on the July 1941 turn. They are placed anywhere west of the Axis-Soviet border in hexes not occupied by enemy units or zones of control. These units do not require replacement points.

(Comment: The Russian reinforcements represent the various shock and guards armies organized in the wake of the German invasion, as well as Soviet forces transferred from Siberia. Their appearance at the point of the game when the Germans ought to be approaching Moscow can be decisive. German reinforcements represent units which were held in reserve during the opening days of Barbarossa and committed later. Incidentally, the "R" on the German [not Rumanian!] counters stands for "Reserve"—I queried Avalon Hill on this point once.)

HOW TO WIN

In addition to the standard game victory conditions, the Germans can win if they occupy four of the six total Russian replacement hexes for two consecutive turns (see below for replacement hexes).

RAILROADS

1) **Clearing Rails.** The Axis player has his rail movement bonus reduced to 5 hexes per unit (instead of 10) on perfect weather and mud turns until the first perfect weather turn of 1942, at which point it becomes the normal 10 hexes per turn. This does not apply to Axis rail movement

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which is conducted entirely west of the Axis-Soviet frontier, which is still 10 additional hexes (the five hexes would apply to a rail move which combined movement on both sides of the frontier).

2) **German first winter.** On all snow turns from November 1941 to March 1942, the Axis player may not use any rail movement bonus in Russia. This does not apply to Axis rail movement entirely west of the frontier (which would be 5 hexes per turn, as per the Weather Card).

3) Soviet units may never use rail movement west of the Axis-Soviet frontier.

4) These changes affect only rail movement, not rail supply (below). Railroads may always be used to trace supply, regardless of location or weather or side of the frontier.

(*Comment: This represents the time needed to convert rail gauges and otherwise repair the railroads, as well as the abysmal German preparations for the winter of 1941-42.*)

MOVEMENT AFTER BATTLE

1) The attacker may "advance after combat" if he succeeds in eliminating or retreating all defending units in a hex, and there are no other enemy units in the hex attacked (which might occur owing to the way soak-offs work). Advance after combat is resolved immediately upon resolution of combat and before the next combat is begun. Only the attacker may advance after combat; the defender may not (the defender still retreats normally).

2) If the attacker obtains an Exchange, D Back 2, or D Elim result on the CRT, he may always advance one hex into the vacated defender's hex. An advance may occur regardless of the type of terrain the defender occupies (a change to the original rule where an advance could happen only where the defender occupied doubling terrain).

3) Mobile units. Certain units are considered to be "mobile units". These include:

a) All German panzer (armor) and panzergrenadier units at all points in the game.

b) Russian armored units beginning in the first snow turn of 1942 and for the remainder of the game thereafter (regardless of weather).

4) The number of hexes that mobile units may advance depends upon the type of combat result obtained:

Exchange: the attacker may advance 0 or 1 hexes.

D Back 2: the attacker may advance 0, 1 or 2 hexes.

D Elim: the attacker may advance 0, 1, 2, or 3 hexes.

5) Advance is always at the attacker's option. It may involve some, none or all of the attacking units, up to the allotted number of hexes.

6) Units may advance in any direction according to these restrictions:

a) The first hex advanced into must be the defender's vacated hex.

b) Advancing units must stop on the first hex that contains mountain or unfrozen swamp

c) An advancing unit may move into an enemy zone of control but must stop in the first enemy zone of control entered (a unit may advance out of an enemy zone of control if that is the hex it initially occupied). Units which advance adjacent to enemy units may not attack again, but this may be useful in cutting off enemy retreat results.

d) An advance may never be made into an enemy occupied hex or prohibited terrain. Stacking limits must be met at the end of the advance. (And no, you can not use rail movement in advance after combat.)

e) If the defender is entirely surrounded by zones of control, then the attacker still rolls on the CRT and uses the result gained to determine the number of hexes which can be advanced. 7/1 odds or greater is an automatic D Elim.

7) **Weather.** Mobile units may advance a maximum of 2 hexes in snow turns if they get a D Elim result; otherwise, they may advance a maximum of 1 hex in mud and snow turns.

(*Comments: (a) The restrictions on Russian mobile units advancing after combat represent the training and organizational deficiencies of the Soviet army in the first part of the war. They gain full capability to advance in late 1942 on what will be usually a randomly determined turn owing to the vagaries of the Weather Table, thereby giving the German player something of a surprise, as happened in the first great Soviet mobile advance during the original Stalingrad campaign. (b) This rule makes placement of reserves critical, since they can be used to block enemy breakthroughs. (c) Among other things, players can use advance after combat to place the enemy in an untenable position. For example, a multi-hex advance can end in the zone of control of an enemy unit in a critical city, thereby forcing the enemy to counterattack in his next turn, or withdraw. This is intentional and demonstrates the shock effect of mobile warfare in World War Two.*)

FINNISH UNITS AND COMBAT

1) Finnish units which are defending in clear terrain hexes in Finland have their defense factors doubled.

2) Finnish units which are attacking Russian units which are defending in clear terrain hexes in Finland have their attack factors doubled.

REPLACEMENT HEXES

1) The following are Russian replacement hexes: Leningrad, Moscow, Stalingrad, Kiev and Maikop (Maikop is still treated like a minor city for other game purposes).

2) Soviet replacements are received at the following rates (note they start in July 1941, not September):

July – November 1941: 4 defense factors per hex per month

December 1941 – April 1942: 6 defense factors per hex per month

May 1942 unit the end of the game: 8 defense factors per hex per month

3) **Axis replacements.** The Germans receive their basic 4 attack factors per turn of replacements, but can gain extra points by occupying Soviet replacement hexes. The Germans gain 1 extra replacement point per Soviet Replacement hex he occupies each turn. These extra replacements are received if an Axis unit occupies such a hex at the start of the German turn; if the Soviets recapture a hex, then, obviously, the Germans cease receiving the extra replacement unless they in turn capture it again. Additionally, for the German player to gain these extra replacement points, the captured city may not be in an enemy zone of control, and the German player must trace a line of hexes from it free of enemy units and zones of control back to Warsaw. All Axis replacements are still placed only at Warsaw.

(*Comment: Kiev represents the center for critical industrial areas in the Ukraine, and Maikop the Caucasus oil fields. The additional Soviet replacement capability will be needed in light of the additional losses they will receive owing to the advance after combat and Airpower rules.*)

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*Stalingrad Variant**(Continued from page 4)***ISOLATION AND SUPPLY LINES**

- 1) Change the provision that the Russian supply line must lead to the East map edge. Instead, Russian supply lines may terminate on any major city Replacement hex (Leningrad, Moscow, Stalingrad, and Kiev, but not Maikop). These hexes continue to function as supply and replacement sources even if surrounded. However, if a supply hex is Axis occupied or in a German zone of control, then it no longer functions as a Russian supply source.
 - 2) Change the provision that the length of a line of supply is an unlimited number of hexes. Instead, the length of a supply line is as follows:
 - Perfect Weather turns: 10 hexes.
 - Mud and Snow turns: 5 hexes.
 - 3) A line of supply must be traced to either: a supply city (as above for the Soviets, Warsaw, Bucharest or Helsinki for the Axis), or a railroad which can be traced back to a supply city, along an unlimited number of contiguous rail hexes. Rail hexes in enemy countries may be used to trace supply. Weather does not limit the tracing of supply along railroads.
 - 4) A line of supply is blocked by enemy units, enemy zones of control, and prohibited terrain.
 - 5) Captured enemy supply cities may not be used as friendly supply sources.
- (Comment: This rule makes the tracing of supply lines more realistic--no more convoys across the Arctic wastes and the enemy rear area! It also makes it easier for the Russians to make cities such as Leningrad into fortresses even when cut off.)*

AIRPOWER

- 1) Airpower is represented by Air Factors. Air Factors are recorded separately on a piece of paper. Players can use their Air Factors for one of four missions:
 - a) Tactical attacks
 - b) "Strategic" attacks
 - c) Air Supply
 - d) Interception
- 2) Whenever a player uses an Air Factor, it is expended. (For ex: a player begins a turn with 15 Air Factors. He uses 10 in that turn. He ends up with 5 remaining.) Air missions are always conducted on a one at a time basis. For example, a player does not have to declare all his "Strategic" Attacks at the start of combat, he can make one attack, determine its outcome, then do more if he so chooses.
- 3) Starting Air Factors (June 1941):
 - a) German: 20
 - b) Russian: 0
- 4) **Air reinforcements.** Players receive additional Air Factors in the course of play. These are added to the current total. A player may accumulate any number of Air Factors. Air reinforcements may not be exchanged for land unit replacements; they are in addition to them.
- 5) **German Air Reinforcements.**
 - a) The Germans receive these Factors only if they occupy Warsaw free of enemy zones of control.
 - July - November 1941: 12 factors per turn
 - December 1941 - May 1943: 8 factors per turn
 - b) In addition, if the Germans occupy Maikop, they receive 1 extra Air Reinforcement point per turn. In this case, Maikop may not be in an enemy zone of control and must be able to trace a line of hexes free of Russian units and their zones of control back to Warsaw. (The Germans do not gain additional Air Factors for occupying other Russian replacement hexes.)
- 6) **Russian Air Reinforcements.**
 - a) The Russians receive these Factors by occupying Russian Replacement hexes free of enemy zones of control.
 - July - November 1941: 1/2 factor per Replacement hex
 - December 1941 - April 1942: 3/4 factor per Replacement hex
 - May 1942 until the end of the game: 1 factor per Replacement hex
 - b) Drop any fractions after determining the total number of Air Factors the Russians receive in a turn. (For ex: on July 1941, the Russians occupy five Replacement hexes. This would give the Russians 2 and 1/2 Air Factors, but the fraction is dropped, so they end up with 2.)
- 7) **Weather.** During Snow and Mud turns, players HALVE the number of Air Replacement factors they receive each turn. (Comment: The Russians start with no Air Factors representing the Luftwaffe's incredibly successful strike on Soviet airfields at the opening of the campaign, as well as the general lack of Soviet coordination at the start of the war.)

TACTICAL AIR ATTACKS

- 1) The player adds Air Factors to the attack strength of friendly ground units. (For ex: the German player is using an 8-8-6 to attack a Russian 2-3-6. Normally the odds would be 2/1 but by adding 1 Air Factor to the attack, the odds are increased to 3/1.)
- 2) Air Factors can only be added to attacks, not to the defense. They can not be used by themselves to attack ground units (i.e., no soak-offs using tactical air alone). Note that Air Factors are NOT otherwise affected by the outcome of ground combat and can not be taken in place of ground units as losses in exchanges.
- 3) Tactical attacks do not negate the effects of rivers or other terrain for defense.

"STRATEGIC" AIR ATTACKS

- 1) The German player only may make "Strategic" air attacks against Russian ground units. "Strategic" air attacks may be executed at any time in the German combat segment. The German player selects a target hex, expends 1 or more Air Factors, and rolls on the "Strategic" Air Attack Table (below). The result is applied immediately. The German player may make any number of "Strategic" Air Attacks as long as he has the requisite air factors to expend.
- 2) "Strategic" air attacks may not be made against enemy units in German zones of control. They may not be made against units which were attacked by land combat in the same turn (which might happen owing to retreat or unit elimination).
- 3) "Strategic" air attacks may be made no further than 5 hexes from a German unit (must be German, not Axis allied).

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- 4) A single hex may not be attacked more than once per turn via "Strategic" air attack.
 5) Terrain does not affect the outcome of "Strategic" attacks.

(Comment: "Strategic" attacks are actually operational level interdiction, but since Avalon Hill used the term "Strategic" in the 1960s I decided to keep it. Interdiction represents losses to ground units as well as disruption of their logistical support by air attacks. The "interdict" result can be critical in paralyzing enemy reserves which could otherwise fill gaps in the line. And why can't the Russians make "Strategic" attacks? In 1941-43 the Soviet air force lacked the coordination to make effective deep strikes.)

STRATEGIC AIR ATTACK TABLE

die roll	Number of Air Factors committed			
	1	2	3	4+
1-2	Interdict	Interdict	Elim 1	Elim 1
3-4	N/E	Interdict	Interdict	Interdict
5-6	N/E	N/E	N/E	Interdict

Results:**Elim 1:**

- a) Eliminate one enemy land unit in the attacked hex (attacker's choice, must be armor if present).
 b) All other units in the hex are interdicted (see below).

Interdict: Any surviving units in the hex are interdicted:

- a) Interdicted units are flipped face down. They may not move in their following turn.
 b) Interdicted units remain interdicted until the end of the movement segment of their next immediate turn, at which point all friendly interdicted units are flipped face up and restored to normal. (for example, a Russian unit that receives an interdiction result on the June 1941 German turn would rain interdicted until the end of the June 1941 Russian movement.)

N/E: No effect, the attacked units are not affected.

AIR SUPPLY

- 1) The German player may conduct Air Supply. Only Axis units occupying major and minor city hexes may receive air supply. At the beginning of the German turn, expend 1 Air Factor per ground unit to be air supplied. This puts those units in supply for the remainder of the turn. If there is a choice of units to be isolated owing to partial air supply in hex, the German player can choose which one is out of supply.
 2) Air supply applies only to units in major or minor city hexes *per se*. The hex itself does not become a source of supply.

INTERCEPTION (Optional)

- 1) After a player has committed Air Factors to any mission, the other player may declare Interception. Interception is done on a 1 for 1 basis of Air Factors: each intercepting Air Factor expended eliminates one enemy Air Factor. This occurs after the Air Factors are committed but before they resolve their mission.
 2) Once a player has declared the number of Air Factors he is committing to Tactical or Strategic attacks, or to Air Supply, he may not add additional factors after interception has been declared. Intercepting Air Factors may not be in turn be intercepted.
 3) The attacker may utilize more Air Factors than he needs for a particular mission in the hopes that some will survive the defender's interception. For ex: the German player might commit 2 Air Factors to Air Supply a hex containing one land unit in the event that if the Russians intercept, they will eliminate only 1 factor and the surviving factor will execute the mission.

Once more into the East

I'd like to express my appreciation to Lou Coatney and a lot of other wargamers for their invaluable commentary on Stalingrad over the years. I'd appreciate any comment on this variant. E-mail: jamiranda@umahexagon.com Reg. Mail: 18404 Vincennes St., #28, Northridge, CA 91325

Mr. President

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cards and those added during the game. Each party then adds up the number of states they campaigned in. Whichever party campaigned in more states then gets a number of undecided voter cards equal to the difference; all remaining undecided voter cards are divided equally among the parties. These cards are then freely, but still secretly, played. Finally, the votes are tallied up, the electoral votes awarded, and a winner determined.

The greatest strength of Mr. President is undoubtedly the internal balancing. The quest to tie up the big states is balanced by the need for a wide campaign. The candidates themselves are well balanced; candidates with particularly strong campaigning ability are nearly always weak in other areas, almost exclusively displaying poor debating skills. And the cards are themselves well balanced – choosing which big states to work to capture is crucial, and allows for some bluffing.

Mr. President is certainly not without its weaknesses. It's out of date, as a result of which I'm somewhat surprised at election time when they show Florida with more than 17 electoral votes. Luck can play too large a factor, too - particularly with the event deck. With four players (one playing the presidential candidate and one the vice president candidate for each party), it's not the most engaging game, as both of the players on a team have the same goal; at some points, the second player on the team becomes truly superfluous.

However it can be played in an hour, is almost always close (unlike the real thing, usually), and remains one of my favorite two player non-wargames. I'll admit, for me part of the joy of playing comes from nostalgia; I first played the game as a teenager when a friend and I were looking for new games, and went through his parent's collection. Since then, I've played it nearly as many times as any game, and it's still enjoyable.

It's worth noting that the game as I've described it above is one of at least three different 3M versions of the game; there is a 1971 release, with 1972 electoral vote totals, and a 1967 version with 1968 electoral vote totals. There is also a 1965 version, which I believe uses popular vote totals; it is one of the more highly sought 3M games, regularly going for about as much on Ebay as a wooden tile copy of Acquire. From what I've seen and heard, either electoral vote version is probably the best choice to play. Either can be found readily and reasonably inexpensively.