

Battalion Combat Series:

Inflection Point

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Glossary

88	88mm Anti-Tank Gun
Arm	Armor/Armored
Art/Arty	Artillery
AT	Anti-Tank
Aufk	Aufklärung (Reconnaissance)
Bde	Brigade
Bn	Battalion
v.Bdnbrck	von Buddenbrock
Cav	Cavalry
Dannbrg	Dannenberg
Domshk	Domaschk
Div	Division
Eng	Engineer
Esackr	Eisenacker
Fkl	Funklenk (Remote Controlled Vehicles)
Gds/Gd	Guards
HQ	Headquarters
Inf	Infantry
Kamnbrg	Kamenberg
KG	Kampfgruppe (Task Force)
Krd	Kradschützen (Motorcycle Troops)
KV	Kliment Voroshilov (Heavy) Tank
Mat	Matilda Tank (Lend-Lease)
Mdr	Marder
MG	Machine-Gun
Morskja	Morosowskaja
Mot	Motorized
PG	Panzer Grenadier (Armored Infantry)
Pio	Pioneer (Engineer)
PJ	Panzerjäger (Anti-Tank)
Pz	Panzer (Tank)
Rfl	Rifle
Rgt	Regiment
StG/StuG	Sturmgeschütz (Assault Gun)
Stpfld	Stumpfeld
Tk	Tank
Tng	Training
Tzschckl	Tzschöckell
UR	Ukreplennye Raiony (Fortified Region)
Val	Valentine Tank (Lend-Lease)

Introduction

Inflection Point is a pair of games showing the changes in combat on the Eastern Front from the German advance toward the Don crossing at Kalach in late July 1942 and the fighting near the maelstrom of Stalingrad across the Chir River in December. For both sides, the way their armies fight in the East has changed and would never be the same again.

The Red Army learned difficult lessons over the intervening months which dramatically changed its operations against the Wehrmacht and the Germans can no longer run rapid pincer movements that even begin to have the possibility of the huge surrender of pocketed enemy troops as last happened in 1941—this led to a much more German defensive mindset.

In **Kalach**, the Red Army had finally learned to thwart the German pincer tactics to come up empty, avoiding the mass surrender results that were common in 1941. Troops defending Kalach-na-Don bought the forces in Stalingrad time to assemble and prepare before the Germans arrived at the gates of the city.

In **Chir**, the Soviets transcended a mindset of avoiding defeat, evolving into an offensively capable force which would eventually be honed to the point of conquering Berlin two and a half years later. Chir covers the action shown in the SCS game Panzer Battles but with a smaller number of counters and a reduced map area than Kalach, making it an ideal introduction for new *BCS* players.

The Gamers
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Layout

Each game uses its own rules, counters, maps, and sub-systems independent of each other. To do so, there are some rules repeated as they are used in each. Common supporting materials, such as the Glossary and Designer's Notes, are available here.

Kalach is played on Maps A and B. **Chir** is played using the Chir Map.

On the other hand, the entirely separate **Kalach** and **Chir** rulebooks are vital to their game's play.

Scale

The map scale for both Kalach and Chir maps is 1 mile per hex.

Counter Colors and Ownership

German Player. The German player controls all Army (Heer) (Gray) and Luftwaffe (Blue), as well as Estonian Police (Black) and Croatian (White) units. All units in the Axis set ups are German unless designated otherwise. German units in **Chir** apply a **white double line** to identify them from those used in **Kalach** (which have no such line).

Soviet Player. The Soviet player controls all Red Army (Brown), Soviet Guards (Orange-Red), and Naval Infantry (Tan) units. All units in the Soviet set ups are Red Army unless designated otherwise. **Chir** Soviet units use a **red double line** while those in **Kalach** do not.

Inflection Point is dedicated to Dean, whose passion for the series and design continued until his last day. His mentorship allowed the game to complete and continue his legacy.

Designer Notes Why Inflection Point?

By Dean Essig

The concept of the 'Inflection Point' here is between these two sets of styles of warfare. Not all the changes are done, perfected, or even mostly completed, but the difference is obviously between before and after; the tenor has changed.

Kalach and before

Germans... Seek to complete extensive pincer movements by creating pockets where they hope to bag bazillions of Soviet troops. This is done with fast moving mobile formations rapidly taking advantage of local situations and small unit initiative along narrow advances which cut through enemy lines. These pincers link up at some distant point on the other side of the pocket they created. Following infantry units try to set up a complete wall around the pocket which isolates and crushes the enemy's will to resist.

Soviets... Keep the struggling pockets 'in being' as long as possible to delay the Germans. When it has served this purpose as long as possible, its troops withdraw to friendly lines and regroup. Mass surrender is avoided (unlike in 1941).

Chir and after

Germans... Main forces are fighting defensively and desperately trying to hold back the local Soviet bludgeon. When mobile forces attack, they merely attempt to stabilize the line or otherwise take advantage of the local situation to 'collect more points' for the German side. (A whole hog offensive expends itself merely trying to get through enemy lines and creates a salient of one size or another...Kursk, Bulge, etc.). The 'Manstein Back Hand Blow' being an anomaly—being neither fish nor fowl.

Long story short: The Germans could no longer conduct deep, fast, "pincer for pocket" attacks... conducting much more limited and localized uses of mobile troops to beat up threatening enemy forces. Giving rise to Fire Brigade tactics of dealing with local problems.

Soviets... Offensives to blast away wide sections of frontline allowing follow-on forces to execute their 'deep battle' doctrine. This allowed them to push the salient to enormous sizes before the offensive ran out of steam in its "Culminating Point." Then the forces there or elsewhere build up to be ready for the next offensive. Defensive forces are there to keep the assembly areas free from enemy interference and provide a safe bubble for friendly movement and preparations.

Victory Conditions

At first glance the Kalach Victory Conditions seem odd, in that the various Route hexes need not connect in any way to each other. So, you can fully "own" Route A by owning each of the listed hexes, but the Soviets can occupy all the space between them. This works because the actual supply routes to Stalingrad were not fully controlled until after the game period ends, so the route hexes are merely a stepping stone to other tasks which will be accomplished later. Securing these hexes (even in isolation) shows the Germans well on their way to securing the complete routes.

Designing In Dean's Footsteps

By Carl Fung

Above were Dean's Designer notes in the last draft of the game specific rules before he passed in March 2024. I'm sure he meant to fill out the text but didn't have the opportunity to do so. It shows the distinction between the Kalach and Chir games and explaining the unique victory conditions of the former. What I can hope to do is finish his thoughts as the design was completed in his stead.

On the surface, Kalach looked like a straightforward battle to design. A sweeping armor battle on the open Russian Steppes. What Dean and I quickly discovered, however, was that replicating the history proved difficult. While the Soviets knew the German advance was coming, their forces were unable to coordinate a response. Yet the Germans were hampered as well by fuel constraints. Several game specific rules were developed to simulate these things – special maneuver warfare rules, German air interdiction, higher command limitations on the Soviets, and even a drug-crazed German rule. Over time, it was discovered that these rules created too much of a separation in the ability of what the German player could do and the Soviet player could not. The game was very much in a state of flux when Dean passed. Joe Linder and I started peeling back the onion layers and looked at what was needed to balance the historical progress as well as provide options for both players. The battle for Kalach basically devolved into phases – an initial phase where the Germans penetrated deep towards Kalach. In the second phase, fuel troubles slowed the Germans while the Soviets counterattacked with their Tank Corps. Revisions helped show these phases and give options to the Soviet player while still being hampered with inexperienced forces. The Germans, on the other hand, need to remain aggressive with diminishing fuel (via Daily SNAFU DRM) supplemented by whatever air supply they can receive. We kept the spirit of Dean's main theme for the Kalach half of the game.

For Chir, the design grew more organically. After Dean completed the game map for Kalach, I noted that it included the area where the battle along the Chir River was fought. Dean saw the opportunity to "BCSerize" SCS **Panzer Battles**. The original idea was to reuse the left half of map B from Kalach and have a standalone extra scenario with a minimal number of units (he said around 100). Kalach would still be the main campaign, with Chir as an add-on scenario, like the small battle scenarios of **Brazen Chariots** and the Southwind and Spring Awakening scenarios for **Panzer's Last Stand**. After researching and kicking around the scenario, Dean realized that it would make a great complement to Kalach. Chir playtesting went more smoothly than Kalach, with the Soviets more capable in their activations and the Germans on the backfoot. Dean recognized how the nature of fighting between Kalach and Chir differed, and aptly entitled the game **Inflection Point** to reflect that.



Dean Essig
1961-2024

Historical Notes

By Carl Fung

Kalach Fuhrer Directive No. 45

The German Army drove into southern Russia following the success of Case Blue, its 1942 summer offensive. On 23 July 1942, Hitler issued Directive No. 45 that would ultimately lead to what many consider one of the major turning points in WWII at Stalingrad. Army Groups A and B (split from Army Group South earlier in the month) were given objectives in different directions. *Operation Edelweiss* tasked the former to drive due south into the Caucasus. *Operation Fischreiber* (Heron) sent the latter east to take Stalin's namesake city. Part of Army Group B was General Paulus' 6th Army. Before its debacle in the urban fighting at Stalingrad, the plan was to encircle and destroy (*Kesselschlacht*, a.k.a. Cauldron Battle) the Soviets defending the gateway to Stalingrad at Kalach.

With two competing major offensives, much of the supply was diverted to taking the oil fields in the Caucasus. The remaining fuel allotted to Paulus' Army was prioritized to panzer and motorized divisions to drive deep into the Soviet rear to create the cauldron. Even so, not all units were given fuel, and these lagged behind the spearheads. To help bring fuel forward, the Luftwaffe was tasked to drop fuel for the tanks and trucks. The ability for the Luftwaffe to sustain an army in the field proved limited, portending the weak air bridge to Stalingrad when the 6th Army was surrounded in the winter.

The Soviets defending west of Stalingrad consisted of two Armies, the 62nd and 64th. Vasily Chuikov, who would be known for commanding the former army in Stalingrad, was in command of the latter at Kalach. Both armies were initially formed as Reserve Armies in mid-1942 with new formations under them. They had to cover a wide area in the steppes of southern Russia, each division covering from 10 to an astounding 25 mile stretch where textbook frontages would be around 5 or so miles on defense. Compounding the length of the defense was the use of a regiment from each frontline rifle division as a forward detachment. These were sent 12 to 30 miles ahead of the main line to feel out the German drive and delay their advance. When the German 6th Army reached these forward detachments, the forward detachments offered little resistance and lost terribly. The remnants streamed back to their parent formations but effectively these rifle divisions were down to 2/3 of their strength when the main battle for Kalach began.

The opening drives on 23 Jul and the following day showed the prowess of the veteran German mechanized formations. The Germans created a loose pocket containing portions of three Rifle Divisions and numerous attachments. Colonel Konstantin Andreevich Zhuravlev, 62nd Army's deputy chief of staff, was flown in to organize the pocketed units. Limited fuel, not enough infantry to close the pocket, and stubborn defense stymied German efforts along with Soviet counterattacks.

The Soviets had recently formed two tank armies, the 1st and 4th, based on the remnants of the 38th and 22nd Armies, respectively. In total, they consisted of four Tank Corps along with a couple of Rifle Divisions. The total number of tanks would outnumber the Germans by a wide margin. Yet like the Rifle Divisions, the Tank Corps were newly formed and many of its personnel were inadequately trained. They could not bring their full power to bear together, instead attacking piecemeal on 25 Jul when the first units would arrive and be sent immediately into the maelstrom. Making up a lack of training with bravado, they would temporarily pocket the lead German units near Kalach.

Stalin Order No. 227

By 28 Jul, the battle devolved into pockets fighting to break out or reinforcements trying to break in. On that date, Stalin issued his infamous "Not a step back!" decree. The order was known for the creation of harsh enforcement to defend the motherland, like penal units and blocking detachments. But such draconian measures were not implemented quickly enough to see direct impact in **Inflection Point**. Historians have noted, however, that on reading the order to Red Army units, it made an impact on the dire situation in which the Soviet Union had to fight for its existence. It would shape the stubbornness of Soviet soldiers to follow Stalin's edict.

The lines around Kalach started to gel at the end of July. Instead of the Germans creating a cauldron, a salient was formed. The initial drive towards Kalach was expanded and the pocket under Zhuravlev was slowly eliminated. The remaining forces of the 62nd Army remained west of the Don River along with the 4th Tank Army forming a separate salient in the northeast, with the 1st Tank and 64th Armies in between holding the Don from the eastern bank. The failure to encircle and destroy the Soviet forces in one fell swoop prevented a quick dash to take Stalingrad. August would be spent trying to collapse the salient and continue the drive to its ultimate objective. Only by September would the Germans start reaching the suburbs of the city. For the 6th Army, the rest is history.

Chir Battles Panzer Battles

The game's whole story doesn't end there. On 19 Nov 1942, the Red Army launched Operation Uranus which entrapped the 6th Army, parts of the 4th Panzer Army, along with adjacent Romanian and Hungarian forces. The northern and southern pincers met up at Kalach on 22 Nov. The Soviets would press their gains south in early December along the Chir River, establishing a small bridgehead. They had anticipated the upcoming German relief operation, Operation Winter Storm (*Wintergewitter*), and launched a pre-emptive attack from the bridgehead by the 5th Tank Army. The stretch goal was to reach Tormosin, 7 miles south of the map edge. With the need to launch the attack before the Germans did, the Red Army was only able to commit one reinforced Tank Corps backed up by a Rifle Division. A Mechanized Corps would arrive later to expand any gains.

The Germans defending the area were mostly hastily assembled alarm troops, remnants of shattered units, or newly arriving divisions. In the rear was the 11th Panzer Division, having just detrained at Tormosin preparing for its commitment to Operation Winter Storm. Following the initial breakthrough by the 1st Tank Corps taking Soviet state-owned farm (sovkhoz) 79, the 11th Panzer reacted quickly and counterattacked. The result was a quick defeat of the 1st Tank Corps. For nearly two weeks the Soviets would continue pressing along the frontline, joined by the 5th Mechanized Corps. The 11th Panzer Division was the sole fire brigade sallying back and forth to new threats until the Soviets finally called off their offensive.

The 11th Panzer Division's actions have been aggrandized in von Mellenthin's memoir, **Panzer Battles**, and cited for its example of armor in mobile defense by the US Army. It was the subject of the SCS game of the same book title. As much as the Chir River Battles is known among the WWII community, details were scarce in 2014 when research for SCS **Panzer Battles** was done. Fast forward 10 years later while researching **Inflection Point**, it's interesting to see how historical research evolves. More material has been unearthed forming a better picture of events. It's a fascinating journey for anyone comparing these two games.

More than just Panzer Battles

Immediately following my research for the SCS game, Glantz published book 2 of the final volume of his Stalingrad Trilogy. Besides the Soviet drive south of the Chir River, the book details a push to secure the important crossings over the Don River to facilitate the defense against Winter Storm on the opposite bank of the river. To achieve this, the Soviets formed the 5th Shock Army to command existing formations in the region. Its mission was to take the strategic rail crossing near Rychkovsky (30.13) plus bridge and ferry crossings at Verkhnechirsky (27.11) and Nizhne-Chirskaya (22.06).

This new offensive was launched on 13 Dec 1942 with both the 5th Tank Army and 5th Shock Army. This fight is virtually unknown given the attention paid to the 11th Panzer Division's exploits immediately to the west. Chalk this up to pro-German narratives released after the war. The renewed attack was promising, with the capture of Rychkovsky, but the Red Army was unable to make any significant progress and called off the offensive only a few days later.

Inflection Reflection

Comparing the Battle of Kalach and Chir reveals several things. There is a transition around this turning point in the war. In July 1942 the Soviets were still recovering from Operation Barbarossa the year before. Their defense of Kalach was lacking, with ineffective defenses and clumsy counterattacks. By November and December 1942, the Soviets conducted major offensives with confidence. What caused this inflection point?

There were several factors. Certainly amassing against the weaker German-allies contributed to the success of Operation Uranus, but the Soviets were coming full circle in their own right over the span of a few months. Having the right commanders at the top helped, like General Zhukov who planned Operation Uranus. There were also a new crop of commanders who learned and survived fighting the Germans. This was the transition from the purges preceding Operation Barbarossa leaving a vacancy of good commanders from division and above that was still being felt in the summer of 1942. It also helped that Stalin was allowing his veteran commanders to plan and command their troops with less of his interference.

Below the leadership level, the Red Army had time to incorporate new manpower into units instead of wasting them away piecemeal. While the divisions defending Kalach were newly formed, nearly all the divisions participating in Operation Uranus had combat experience. Soviet industry had also been able to keep up with demand, so units received more weapons

that became ubiquitous like the PPSH and T-34. Likewise, the Tank Corps were learning how to fight the Germans. Most of the corps were formed prior to Kalach and had insufficient training and experience. In the intervening months, they gained valuable experience in operational maneuver and would use them to full effect in the deep thrusts to encircle Stalingrad.

As for the Germans, they were unable to recover from Stalingrad. The reason why the 11th Panzer Division bore the brunt of the fighting was because the infantry formations were insufficient to assist. This is in contrast to Kalach where veteran infantry divisions closed behind the Panzer and Motorized Divisions to trap Soviet forces. But these veteran divisions were slowly ground down in the urban fighting and destroyed. Without sufficient replacements, newly formed units would contain remnants of survivors, new recruits, or scratch troops within arm's reach. Hence the reliance on Panzer forces forging ahead with follow on infantry, as Germany had done since 1939, was less effective as the war progressed as seen in late war offensives like in *Last Blitzkrieg* and *Panzer's Last Stand (PLS)*.

If we look at the historical outcome for each of the battles, the results don't appear to match the premise set forth in the title. The Soviets didn't lose at Kalach (but the Germans didn't win either) and the Germans won along the Chir River. Does the inflection point argument still hold? It does because both forces were trending to that inflecting point. The German blitzkrieg thrusts at Kalach weren't as efficient as they were in Poland, France, or Operation Barbarossa. At Chir, Soviet mechanized forces were much improved but were committed piecemeal and faced a formidable enemy panzer force. The progression of the Soviets and regression of the Germans as the war continued is reflected in battles like Kursk, Bagration, Budapest, and ultimately at Berlin in 1945.



Konstantin Andreevich Zhuravlev

Fiddly Bits

Why do some German Panzer-jäger units have Limited AV 2 and others 3?

The Germans started to receive more 75mm L/46 Pak 40 to replace their 50mm L/60 Pak 38. The towed 50mm had served the Germans since Operation Barbarossa but the trend to larger calibers was needed for both tanks (Panzer IV) and towed guns. The formations that had a larger percentage of 75mm guns are rated with the Limited AV 3 while those predominantly with the 50mm have a value of 2.

Why are the Soviet Tank Corps so small?

The Tank Corps formed in early 1942 consisted of two or three Tank Brigades and a Motorized Infantry Brigade. There were no artillery, engineer, anti-aircraft, and in only a few cases, motorcycle (recon) at the corps HQ level. This made for a very barebones formation coupled with a Tank Brigade that was equivalent to a battalion in their Western counterparts. This made for a corps that was about half the size of a Panzer Division. Later, anti-tank, self-propelled assault gun, heavy tank, mortar, and rocket units were assigned to the Tank Corps, increasing their size and firepower.

Why are there battalion-sized regiments for some Soviet Rifle Divisions?

These were the remnants of the forward detachments that were decimated before the start of the battle at Kalach. There was little information on the size of these remnants but there was enough for the regiments to still be accounted for during the battle of Kalach itself. The 33rd Guards Rifle Division looks to have lost the entire 1/88 Rifle Battalion and the other two battalions taking losses so the remnants for this formation are represented a bit differently.

Why does Zhuravlev get his own counter?

Konstantin A. Zhuravlev was flown into the pocket of surrounded Soviet troops on 25 July. They were a hodgepodge of units from the 33rd Guards, 184th Rifle, 192nd Rifle Divisions, 40th Tank Brigade, and various assortments of Tank Battalions, Anti-Tank Regiments, and Artillery units. In normal game terms, these pocketed units without an MSR would face ill effects. But Zhuravlev was able to keep the pocket organized and be a thorn that the Germans had to deal with, which justified having a special marker for him to perform his historic duties.

Why do Soviet AT units return?

This was carried over from PLS. Just like that game, the weak Soviet AT guns are easily outmatched by German AV. But they were nimble enough to never be outright destroyed and the rule prevents German players from hunting down Soviet AT units knowing they may not return.

Player's Notes

By *Lionel Martinez*

The Formation Activation Sequence

We are playing procedural games. The formation activation sequence is explained in *BCS* section 3.0. It seems that this sequence is challenging for some players. What is challenging is the Preparation segment, when the active player increases MSR Blocked marker, removes CTs, removes MSR Blocked marker, places or removes Prep Def, and finally checks if the formation is Mixed. All of these steps should happen before rolling for SNAFU in the strict order outlined by section 3.0. The logistical part seems more complicated to grasp. It should not. It's just a procedure. You just have to strictly follow the procedure step by step.

So: (1) flip your HQ to Used; (2) check its MSR, (i) if it has none and the CTs are already off map add or increase the MSR Blocked marker, (ii) if it has none and the CTs are on the map remove the CTs and place them off map, (iii) if the formation has an MSR, which obviously means that the CTs are on map, remove the MSR Blocked marker; (3) enter, maintain or remove Prep Def depending on the absence or presence of a MSR Blocked marker; (4) check Mixed status and apply Coordination. Note that the MSR Blocked marker appears during the Preparation segment when the CTs are not on the map. Note that it goes away during the Preparation segment, not when the MSR is restored.

An example: during, say, turn 5 the enemy cut the MSR of one of your formations without jumping the CTs. Your formation was already activated during this turn, so nothing happens to your formation. On turn 6, your other formations weren't able to push out the enemy units cutting your formation's MSR, so when your cutoff formation activates, the CTs still on the map go off the map. You can maintain or enter Prep Def. On turn 7, despite the effort of your other formations, the MSR situation is still the same, so when your cut off formation activates, it gains a level 1 MSR Blocked marker, it can no longer maintain Prep Def. On turn 8, one of your other formations succeeds in breaking the encirclement of your cut off formation, so when your cut off formation activates, the CTs are still off the map, the formation is increased to level 2 MSR Blocked marker, no Prep Def is allowed, but during the Activities segment your CTs return to the map, the formation still keep the MSR Blocked marker, of course. On turn 9, during the Preparation segment, if the MSR is still complete, the MSR Blocked marker can be removed and Prep Def can be entered. Gotcha?

This is really important in Kalach, since both sides will probably lose MSRs.

The Germans at Kalach

Ok. I begin with the active side. So, you are in charge of the Germans.

You don't have a big armored group of forces. Instead, there are two motorized divisions entering the map from the north edge (3 Mot, 60 Mot, KG60), one infantry division and one panzer division entering the map from the center of the west edge (113 Inf, 16 Pz), and two infantry divisions entering the map from the southern part of the west edge (297 Inf, 71 Inf). All these guys have to cover a very large sector while advancing through the Soviet forces; it's not an easy task. They get reinforcements the next turn: one infantry in the north (100 Jg) and one infantry (44 Inf) either in the center west sector, or in the south west sector. That's an important decision by the way. They also get reinforcement in the third turn and this time a panzer division (24 Pz) in the south west sector. Finally a last infantry division (205 Inf) arrives during the fifth turn in the north. You are in charge of a pursuit; you see that now? The advice is: **keep in mind what will arrive, when and where.** That's very important, and while this is always important in every situation, it is particularly so in this specific acute situation.

Remember: you are in pursuit, in the mobile phase of an operation. The formations at the tip of the spearhead don't have to care about their flank, and even, depending on circumstances, about their rear. That's the job of the formation behind them. If you want to maintain your momentum and therefore keep the operation mobile, you have to go deep in the rear of the Soviet formations at the front. There is no frontline. There are gaps everywhere. Your job is to find a gap and move through it as deep as possible. And by deep, I mean, really deep. Eight hexes isn't deep. I'm talking of fifty hexes. Yeah. Fifty. That is deep. In this acute situation, remembering very well what will arrive, when and where is really very important. For example, in the north, the Jägers will arrive during the second turn, so the 60 Mot don't have to deal with the Soviet 192 Rfl too long. The advice is: **go deep.**

Therefore, avoid contact with the enemy. Engage the enemy support to enable the Tactical MA units to move around them if you don't have a gap. Don't get stopped by using your second Fire Event on a fruitless Attack by Fire: is an enemy loss worth five more hexes of advance? Probably not. Attack to create gaps if there are none in the formation area of operation. It is often nice to have a Double Objective to gain a +1 combat modifier, but sometimes you need two Objectives placed on the map to Barrage more enemies, to attack at different places, or to make a gap and then conquer a VP hex. Remember that recon units can lay an Objective by using a Fire Event

and take note that most VP hexes in Kalach do not require OBJ. If necessary, use Shock Attacks to keep moving. Remember that Panzergrenadiers can Shock Attack. The advice is: **move around.** You are not supposed to destroy every single step of Soviet infantry and tanks. There are no VPs awarded for the step losses inflicted on the enemy. Don't waste your ammunition. Don't risk losing steps. And more importantly, don't waste your time and fight the battle you can win, not the battle that the enemy wants.

Remember also that no Barrage, no Attack by Fire, no Engagement, no combat means no Fatigue. Fatigue is going to stop you. Well, of course, the Soviets will try to stop you too. They don't need your help for that. The advice is: **avoid Fatigue as much as possible.** Firing Barrage is one out six chances of getting one Fatigue level. Are these Barrages worth one Fatigue level? Most of the time no, in this game, with the mobile formations, no. You have to go deep and as fast as possible.

Your goal is to collapse the defense of the enemy. Collapse. Not bury under steel and earth. So move around and deep. And don't always Jump HQs and CTs. Yeah, that may seem weird, but consider this. Okay, the HQ gets a Coordination marker and the CTs are flipped and it loses its Prep Def. But the HQ relocates wherever the enemy wants: in a Legal hex with MSR, into the pocket. Sometimes, it's just much better to isolate the HQ from its units, and then inflict Isolation losses. Same thing with the CTs: by Jumping it you give the opportunity to your enemy to relocate the CTs in a better location. Okay, they are now flipped and this gives a nasty -1 SNAFU modifier. It's much better if the CTs go off the map. Jump them only when they will go off the map. The advice is: **be clever and do nasty things.** Like cutting all roads and tracks from an enemy HQ and then Jumping the CTs.

All of this also means that you have to deal with the uncomfortable situation of having both flanks open and maybe even no friends in your rear. The advice is: **don't panic.** That's what the situation requires. This is the second world war. Not the first. Don't fight a continuous front battle. That doesn't work in general, and in this game in particular. You have some air supply to partially compensate for your off-map CT SNAFU modifier, to avoid MSR Blocked marker. That's cool. Don't be afraid to lose your MSR if you can grab a new VP hex or keep one you already have. If one of your formations doesn't have a MSR, activate another formation and open a supply road to the isolated one. Your infantry divisions are tough and can do a lot.

The last advice is: **use your infantry formations too, don't be obsessed by your panzer and motorized formations**. Sometimes, you may use the Unprepared move-side of your infantry Bn. Yeah, I know, worse AR, no support, no ZOC, no Prep Def, no nothing. But on tracks, it's sixteen hexes in one Full Activation! That's a lot. If the Soviets are not able to launch a counter-offensive, what's the problem? If it's the first Activation of the formation, maybe it will get a Second Activation, and you will be able to flip back to the Deployed-side.

The Soviets at Kalach

Now, you change sides: you are the Soviets.

The situation is pretty ugly. Your army was in retreat. You have an open flank in the north. Some formations already have Prep Def, but there are many gaps in your line, and some units haven't reached their area of operation. Some formations are still moving towards the front (or retreating): the two divisions in the south. A rifle division will appear in the center of the northern map on turn two and you have to choose where exactly during the first turn.

The first advice is of course: **don't panic**. You're the Soviets. You're supposed to be tough. The situation could be considerably worse. Stay calm, stay cool. Reinforcements are on their way. You don't know when. But they will arrive. Sooner would be better but later would be good enough. You are reacting to the German attack; you're not supposed to do a lot of things.

You're not a German and don't have German resources. So, **don't behave like a German**. It ain't gonna work and will cost you much.

Let the Germans go their way. They could defeat themselves if they don't follow the hints laid out just above. Instead of moving around your units and formations, they could try to push your formations on the whole line: you're going to suffer, but they won't win at the end of the game. Instead of going deep, they could try to digest your isolated formations bit by bit: you're also going to suffer, but again, they won't win. The advice is: **be stubborn**. Hold the ground. Make them pay. Let them destroy themselves in futile attacks, let them become fatigued. Reorganize your defense when the first line is broken. Sometimes retreat slowly. Sometimes cling on key crossroads even when your MSR is gone. Remember that you still have one day of Prep Def when you lose your MSR; the Prep Def cannot be maintained only when the formation gets a MSR Blocked marker. Stay calm.

You're not supposed to do a lot of things, but you can do some nasty things. You have some nice tank corps. The 13 Tk is not the best as you may

see. The 28 Tk, 22 Tk and 23 Tk have a better AR. The Soviet way of doing things is defending in Prep Def, attacking in Prep Def, and if the German tanks are on their Move-side maybe hoping for a Double Objective and rushing forward in a bold dash. The same advice applies: **be clever and do nasty things**. You have a more limited number of options, but you have some. There are a lot of hills and woods. These are terrain which give a nice +1 combat modifier. Minor rivers are hexside terrain, for another +1 combat modifier. Spread your units so that one German Objective would hit only one unit or two. Always set up a second line of defense: you know, you have three battalions per regiment for a reason, right? Reassign your Arty Points to formations that are attacking, to formations without intrinsic Arty Points. Reassign independent units where they are the most needed.

Which implies some planning. You need to know in advance where and when your assets would be necessary. The advice is: **have a plan and stick to your plan**. You need two defensive belts. The first is already in place. The second is up to you. Your armored fist will arrive sooner or later, but it will arrive, and you need to know what you're gonna do with it before it even appears on the map.

One interesting decision is where will the 22 Tk and 23 Tk enter the map. Entry I will reinforce the defense of Kalach and it would be the necessary choice if things are going very badly. Entry J, west of the Don, will allow you to strike back, hitting the MSR of the German spearheads near Kalach, and perhaps also helping some trapped formations. The advice is a conditional one: **if possible, be bold and have fun**. Again, don't behave like a German, your units cannot do that, instead just move to key places and wait for the German reaction.

A last point. Your Support assets are not strong enough. The Germans will engage your Support repeatedly. They will probably end up killing it. That's a problem and a big one. Without Support, your formation couldn't stop Tac movers. You should at this point probably retreat, to buy time for the Support to come back and to reduce your frontage, eliminating gaps. I repeat the first advice here again: **don't panic**.

It's going to be tough but you could manage that whole affair if you keep a cool head.

The Soviets along the Chir River

From the Soviet perspective, the situation is pretty straightforward. You just have to push your way forward. Two VPs are on the frontline in the west and two in the east. Attack these. You have three more in the west and two in the east but behind

the frontline. You need five for a draw and do better than the historical Soviets.

The problem is that some of your formations start already Fatigued, Coordinated and almost Mixed. You therefore have two options: (1) Recover Fatigue; (2) keep attacking while dressing your Blobs. I strongly favor the second option: putting pressure on the Germans on both sides of the map and in the center is clearly what Soviet doctrine calls for. Keep going until you can't. Fatigue 3 is perhaps the limit. Some players stop at Fatigue 2. You have to choose. Take a look at your reinforcement: on the fifth turn, your 7 Tk, initially just an infantry formation, becomes again a tank corps by the arrival of three tank brigades. It could be wise to have this formation at Fatigue 0 at this moment. You have to choose and plan.

You also have to choose your axis of attack in the center: (1) towards the State Farm 79; and/or (2) towards Novoderbenovskiy. You can't go deep unless you open tracks in the frontline to advance your HQ. I'm not sure you need to go deep right from the beginning in this game. A more traditional phase line approach could work. And again it's somehow more in line with Soviet doctrine and Soviet capabilities at this point in the war.

If you look at the German formations you will notice that KGs Stumpf and Adam don't have Support and are therefore exposed to penetration through gaps by Tactical MA units. German formations don't start the game in Prep Def too. So, you have other choices here. Which formations are you going to strike before they activate and enter Prep Def? Adam with the 7 Tk or the 258 Rfl? Stumpf with the 119 Rfl or the 333 Rfl or the 1 Tk? The 7 LW with the 333 Rfl or the 1 Tk? Every possibility has its own advantages and drawbacks.

You also have an unassigned independent KV unit: it will stay here unassigned during the first turn, but for the second turn you'll have to decide with which formation you want it to operate. Don't place all your eggs in the same basket: so maybe don't assign it to the 1 Tk, but rather to the 333 Rfl. It's a nice tool to open pillboxes or break through.

You'll have a mech corps coming in on the third turn. It has really mediocre units. Those AV+AR at 3+3 are not a match for the German panzer battalions. The 2+3 mech brigades seem to be a very bad joke. But they have nine steps. Nine steps, yes. Even engagements at -2 or -3 are worth doing when you can afford to lose a lot of people. That's also somehow the Soviet doctrine. Just in case you wonder, it works; I did it multiple times during the playtest and against different opponents. It's not pretty but it works. You may use the mech corps for that,

or to grab a VP hex by moving through gaps in an unsupported formation's sector. I also saw that during the playtest. Works well too. I advise you to advance in Prep Def however. There is no solid reason to let the German panzer battalions engage your units at +3 or even +4 with a Double Objective. If they want to Engage your tank assets with their tank assets that's okay: any 2 to 5 on the dice will be a Both Losses result. You can afford that. They don't.

Be stubborn. The 11 Pz is gonna hit you hard. It could wipe out the entire 1 Tk and almost destroy the 333 Rfl. But perhaps not much more than that, due to Fatigue and losses. And when the 11 Pz is done, the party is over. Or almost. Chir is a tough fight.

The Germans Defending the Chir River

From a German point of view, nothing looks bright. Two formations have no Support. None are in Prep Def at start. The Soviets have better infantry than you have! KG Stumpfled is over-extended. Surovikino is threatened to be cut off. Half of the 7 LW is still in the rear. There is no secondary line of defense in the center. The three KG Adam battalions near Rychkovskystation are perhaps too exposed. I do not advise you to abandon VPs to the enemy but, depending on the circumstances, relinquishing the control of Rychkovskystation should at least be considered.

Moreover, you cannot do much. Entering Prep Def all along the line seems necessary. Arranging your line could be wise too. You have a single step of independent tank assets. Assign this unit to a formation without Support during the second turn. Adam or Stumpfled. Make a choice. Change your mind and swap its assignment. Don't risk it against an enemy tank, right? Don't do that at all. Don't even think of doing this. It's perhaps the single most important step you have. Rebuild it if it is destroyed. Your infantry needs it.

You cannot do much, but you also don't have to do much. It's a Soviet offensive, isn't it? You're just reacting. Don't overreact. Don't even place an Objective when you activate some formations in Prep Def. Stumpfled, 7 LW, and Adam have only one Arty Point: they cannot Barrage, as it is halved with their (at best) Partial SNAFU Activation. Don't try a Second Activation except if you must. Keep the 336 Inf in good order and maybe extend its defensive sector. Again, maybe don't Barrage and risk Fatigue for very minor tactical gains.

Don't let a minor tactical gain endanger the operational goal. You must defend the line. That's the operational goal. You're not supposed to attack. You're not supposed to attack, even with the 11 Pz.

To be clear, the Germans win if they don't lose

more than four VP hexes. You should fight for them. You should counterattack if they have fallen, if more than four have fallen. You should fight for the VP hexes. You don't have to destroy the 1 Tk or the 333 Rfl or any other Soviet formations. It's perhaps pleasing but gives you no VP, costs losses and Fatigue. So, don't risk increasing the Fatigue of the 11 Pz, except when you have a very good reason to do that.

Don't Engage the enemy tanks if your mech infantry can attack them: if the enemy tanks are deployed in Prep Def a Situational Retreat result would convert into a step loss. Protect your tank battalions behind a solid wall of Supported infantry battalions. Use them of course, but spare them if you can. It's okay if they have one loss: a replacement could recover that. Two losses are not good. Three? Send it back immediately! Or put it in Support. A Red Support is a nice thing to have when you attack.

The 11 Pz is Buddies with everyone. You can garrison its HQ with a battalion of another formation. You can stack CTs. You can also spread the 11 Pz units all across the front, within Command Radius of course, and put the formation in Prep Def to try to bolster defenses everywhere. If the formation enters Prep Def, flip the panzer battalions to their move-side! If they receive a Situational Retreat on their Deployed-side while in Prep Def, they would lose a step and that's exactly what you don't want.

The 11 Pz HQ has a big Command Radius, so the most mobile elements could swing from the west to the east if necessary: for example, after securing VP hexes on the western part with motorized battalions, the mobile part of the formation, the panzer, mech and recon units, could go on the east to stabilize the situation there. The motorized battalions supported with AT and 88 are very tough and can stand their ground. As the Soviet player, I killed the 88 step once in a lucky target drop. If this happens to you, maybe rebuild the 88. This 88 step is important.

I repeat again: it's perfectly okay to just wait, even with the 11 Pz. You're not in a big war-winning offensive. You're just here to fend off the Soviet attacks. The job of the 11 Pz is to strengthen the line, and more precisely, the secondary line. Eliminating penetration. Capturing lost key positions. The burden of receiving the assault of the enemy is the job of the poor infantry guys deployed in the frontline. Every Soviet victory I saw during the playtests happened when the German player destroyed his own resources by futile attempts to eliminate every enemy formation in sight. Don't do that, the 11 Pz cannot eliminate all threats if it goes on an offensive mode.

Chir is a challenging game for the Germans: we're not used to act as a defender with the Germans. It's your chance to learn that in this game.

Order of Battle Notes

By Carl Fung

The Germans

The German ground forces in mid-1942 had suffered greatly in manpower since invading the Soviet Union. Nearly all of their divisions were reduced in strength, yet they remained tactically adept while having logistic limitations and stalling out at the strategic level. The summer offensive of Case Blue was meant to regain the initiative by shifting the direction from Moscow to the oilfields in southern Russia as well as take Stalingrad.

11th Panzer Division – This is the third BCS game to feature this division. It was made famous by the action portrayed in the Chir game. Formed in late 1940 after the fall of France, its actions prior to Chir weren't so much different than other Panzer Divisions since Operation Barbarossa began. But since it did not have to share the spotlight with any other formations, it was able to stand apart from others. Its fighting ability was helped being led by General der Panzertruppe Hermann Balck, who was recognized for his leadership and would be promoted all the way to Army Group command by the end of the war. Its I/15 Panzer Battalion was detached from the division on 14 Sept 1942 and hence not present in the battle. The I/110 had two of its rifle companies equipped with halftracks which was still enough to warrant tracked movement allowance. At this time of the war, all German Panzer Divisions fielded towed Anti-tank guns in their Panzerjäger Battalion, and 50mm L/60 ones at that instead of the more powerful 75mm L/46 guns, which were allocated to the Infantry Divisions first for unknown reasons.

16th Panzer Division – The division was formed in late 1940 by converting the 16th Infantry Division. The Panzer forces needed to double in size, from 10 to 20 panzer divisions, in anticipation for the invasion of the Soviet Union. Like the 11th Panzer, it had a strong commander in General der Panzertruppe Hans-Valentin Hube (of OCS's Hube's Pocket fame). Initially organized without any halftracked infantry, it formed a spare Panzergrenadier Battalion from a couple of companies of the 64th Panzergrenadier Regiment. It was numbered with the division's number but is sometimes referred to by its commander, Mues. There was also a panzer battalion often referred to as Panzer Battalion Strachwitz. This was the I/2 Panzer Battalion under Hyazinth Graf Strachwitz von Groß-Zauche und Camminetz. He had an aristocratic background and had fought in WWI, France, and the Balkans before Operation Barbarossa, with a good reputation as a commander. The division had formed a number of Kampfgruppen - KG Lattmann based on the Kradschützen, Strachwitz's and Mues' Battalions,

KG Witzleben, von Reinisch, KG Strehlke, and possibly also KG Krumpen. The exact composition of these other Kampfgruppe is unknown aside from references of Strehlke based on the Pioneer Battalion.

24th Panzer Division – This division began the war as the 1st Cavalry Division. It converted from horses to panzers in late 1941 but retained its cavalry roots by using squadron (schwadron) instead of company and in the Panzergrenadier Regiment, abteilung instead of bataillon. The division, the sole subordinate unit in the XXIV Panzer Corps, was transferred from the 4th Panzer Army to help Paulus' drive on Kalach. It would arrive two days into the battle along the southern flank, but unable to penetrate past the Soviet defenses.

3rd Motorized Division – Fighting as a leg infantry division in Poland and France, it was given motor transport around the time new panzer divisions were being formed in late 1940. Against the Soviet Union, it would fight from Leningrad to Moscow, and finally south towards Kalach. In the attack on Kalach, there was not enough fuel for the 8th Motorized Infantry Regiment, so it lagged behind and eventually caught up days later after the battle had begun.

60th Motorized Division – Similar to the 3rd Motorized Division's history starting as an infantry division and upgraded in late 1940, it fought in Yugoslavia and Greece before Operation Barbarossa. Like other formations at Kalach, it suffered from fuel shortages and formed a Kampfgruppe 60 which was given fuel priority to penetrate first before the rest of the division could catch up. The selection of III/92 as the motorized infantry element of KG 60 was a guess on my part because no source would say which battalion was assigned. The fighting preceding Kalach had drained its infantry strength and a battalion from each of its infantry regiments was disbanded.

6th Army Infantry Divisions

All the Infantry Divisions that fought at Kalach were formed in 1940 or earlier. They had fought on the Eastern Front since Operation Barbarossa, hence all were veteran and reliable divisions. The exception was the 305th Infantry Division that arrived on the Eastern Front by May 1942. Limited replacements on the Eastern Front started showing its toll on Infantry Divisions given the priority of infantry replacements going to the spearhead Panzer Divisions.

The Infantry Division's strengths ranged from 79% to 40%. Like the 60th Motorized Division, the 100th Jäger Division had disbanded a battalion from its two German regiments to compensate for losses. The other Infantry Divisions had not

started to disband battalions, but would soon do so by the time it reached Stalingrad. This trend occurred across the Eastern Front; having two battalions per regiment was formalized in the 1944-Infantry Division types.

An interesting omission is the III/268 Inf Bn of the 113th Infantry Division. This battalion was not disbanded but rather was detached and sent to North Africa where it became the III/155 Inf Bn as part of the Afrika Division seen in **Brazen Chariots**.

Chir Infantry Formations

With such a deep penetration behind Axis lines following Operation Uranus, the Germans had very little semblance of troops to stop the Soviets. In the sector along the Chir River which intersected the Don River, the Germans had two ad hoc divisional-sized Kampfgruppen, initial elements of a newly formed Luftwaffe Field Division, and a regular Infantry Division.

KG Stumpfeld contained a hodge-podge of alarm units, named for rear area centers that were culled from Kharkov and Morozovskaja (present day Morozovsk) or named after their commanders. One source list units composed of butchers, hairdressers, cooks, and drivers. It was supplemented by a security battalion and an Estonian police battalion. German-occupied Slavic regions formed auxiliary police units that would serve in rear areas, and the 36th Estonian Police Battalion would find itself on the frontline. These auxiliary police reported into Himmler's command, hence the unit having the SS-black background while not being Waffen-SS. Stumpfeld had subordinate regimental-sized Kampfgruppen – Weike, Schmidt, and Selle. Kampfgruppe Adam was similarly composed of alarm units with regimental KG's of Sauerbruch, Goebel, and Mikosch. Sometime in mid-December, it was renamed as the 384th Infantry Division.

Luftwaffe Field Divisions were the brainchild of Hermann Göring to keep the men in his branch from being transferred to the Army when the manpower crunch was cutting into replacement infantry. The 7th Field Division was formed in September 1942 and only deemed ready by December when it was thrust into combat to fill in the gap between KG Stumpfeld and the 336th Infantry Division. Only two battalions were in place when the Soviets struck. It was extremely small with only four infantry along with artillery, flak, and panzerjäger battalions.

The 336th Infantry Division was formed in December 1940 but originally built for occupation duties in France. It would be transferred east where it would participate in Case Blue and find itself as one of the few relatively whole German infantry divisions along the Stalingrad axis. Its pioneer

battalion was detached and sent to Stalingrad in November 1942 as part of Operation Hubertus to take the Barrikady Factory in Stalingrad where it would be trapped with the rest of the 6th Army.

Stalingrad Aftermath

All of the formations depicted in Kalach were destroyed at Stalingrad in January 1943. What handful of survivors (rear echelon not in the pocket or wounded flown out) were used to rebuild these divisions. With the exception of the 100th Jäger Division, the divisions were reformed in spring 1943 on the inactive Western Front. Most were sent to Italy - 16th and 24th Panzer, 3rd and Feldherrnhalle (based on the 60th) Panzergrenadier, 44th, 71st, and 305th Infantry Divisions. The 100th Jäger and 297th Infantry Divisions went to the Balkans for anti-partisan duties. But the demands of the Eastern Front could not be ignored, where the 113th Infantry Division followed by many of the others wind up back on the Eastern Front. For example, the Feldherrnhalle and 44th (with the honorific Hoch und Dochmeister) Divisions both appear in PLS.

The Red Army

One week before Operation Barbarossa began, Stavka (Soviet High Command) issued Circular 01 that reorganized the Red Army. These changes would not take effect until after the major blows befell the army in 1941, but it lay the foundation for how the Red Army was structured and fought in 1942.

One of its directives was to disband corps level of command in addition to slimming down Rifle Divisions (more on that later). In addition, the large and ineffective Mechanized Corps were to be disbanded. These were pre-war organizations similar to German Panzer Corps with two Tank Divisions and a Motorized Division. These would find new life as smaller Tank and Mechanized division-sized Corps in 1942.

The elimination of corps was meant to streamline command and led to armies commanding five, six, or more divisions. This created an ungainly command structure. This was exacerbated by the dearth of experienced division to army commanders who could successfully wield these forces in the face of more efficient German forces.

In the battles of 1942, experience was gained through blood. Surviving commanders gained valuable experience and were promoted. In 1943, Rifle Corps were reintroduced to streamline the command structure to manageable levels. When the Red Army started launching their major offensives to retake territory, their ground forces were very experienced at the strategic and operational level. There were signs of brilliance at the tactical level, particularly with their Tank and Mechanized Corps. In PLS, we see the evolution

of three of the Tank Corps that fought at Kalach and Chir in 1942 to Budapest in 1945 – the 4th Guards Mechanized Corps (former 13th Tank Corps), 9th Guards Mechanized Corps (former 22nd Tank Corps then 5th Mechanized Corps), and the 23rd Tank Corps.

Kalach Tank Corps

The Soviets formed Tank Corps in early 1942 after disbanding Tank Divisions in late 1941. In between, there were numerous but independent Tank Brigades. There was a realization to pool together Tank Brigades along with a Motorized Infantry Brigade into a larger formation to be more effective. The initial iteration of Tank Corps lacked many supporting arms like reconnaissance, anti-tank, self-propelled guns, mortars, and rockets that would be added over time. Hence, it was bare bones and small. Coupled with limited training and, in some cases, inability to fully man the Motorized Infantry Brigades, they were limited in what they could do offensively.

13th Tank Corps - formed in May 1942 with the 65th, 88th, and 89th Tank Brigades and the 20th Motorized Brigade. These tank brigades were detached or delayed in forming and subsequently reassigned to other Tank Corps. By the start of the Battle of Kalach, the Tank Corps had the 163rd, 166th, and 169th Tank Brigades, all seeing combat for the first time with minimal training. Its commander stated crews only had between 3-5 hours of practice driving. The 20th Motorized Brigade only had a quarter of its authorized strength, with reports stating it could field one company. Hence its performance was poor, but still committed itself to counterattack the Germans as best it could. Losses were so severe that in August and September it was reformed twice, receiving new tank brigades and a new motorized brigade. It was pulled off the line where it was reorganized as the 4th Guards Mechanized Corps, reflecting the experience it had gained fighting in front of Stalingrad.

22nd Tank Corps - formed in April 1942, the 22nd Tank Corps participated in the Second Battle of Kharkov in May 1942 where it suffered heavily. It was reformed with new tank and motorized brigades west of Kalach in July. It was assigned to the 4th Tank Army to counterattack against the German northern flank. Its motorized brigade was not fully manned, having one-third its full strength. The Corps was also attached the 133rd Heavy Tank Brigade and an Anti-Tank Regiment for its counterattack mission. It was also unique in having an organic Motorcycle (Recon) Battalion that would later be standard across the Tank Corps. It was reorganized as the 5th Mechanized Corps in September (more on that below).

23rd Tank Corps - Having a similar start as the 22nd, the 23th Tank Corps initially fought at

Kharkov. It was pulled back and reformed with a new set of sub-units when it was committed at Kalach. It contained only two tank brigades and a reduced motorized brigade. Assigned to the 4th Tank Army, its original mission was to attack along the northern axis but was changed to block the German advance south, where the 24th Panzer Division had crossed the Chir River. It was the only Tank Corps fighting at Kalach that was not converted to a Mechanized Corps nor honored with a Guards title, but did become a veteran formation as it fought through Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Hungary, and Austria by 1945.

28th Tank Corps - The last of the Tank Corps at Kalach to be formed, it was completed only a few weeks before the Germans attacked. It had its full complement of tanks and infantry. Despite being new, it displayed aggressiveness in counterattacking across the Don at the German spearheads a few kilometers away from Kalach. It was unable to commit its full strength given typical Soviet breakdowns, reflecting lack of mechanical reliability and a proper logistical chain. Converted to the 4th Mechanized Corps in October 1942, it participated in Operation Uranus. The Corps would perform well enough in the operation to become the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps, ending the war at the Courland Pocket before participating in the offensive against the Japanese.

Chir Tank and Mech Corps

The Tank Corps that participated in Operation Uranus were organized the same as they were in July 1942. That is, small and fragile. Yet they were gaining experience in conducting offensive operations. In September 1942, Mechanized Corps were created after realizing there was a lack of motorized infantry to support the Tank Corps. Five of the first six Mechanized Corps were converted from Tank Corps, two of which fought at Kalach. The early configuration of Mechanized Corps lacked a tank brigade and instead had two tank regiments along with three mechanized brigades and limited independent supporting arms (mainly armored car and/or motorcycle battalions). In 1943, a tank brigade replaced the two tank regiments, with two (then three) tank battalions along with a motorized infantry battalion. Like late-war Tank Corps, Mechanized Corps would be complemented with hodgepodge of independent supporting arms. The Mechanized Brigades follow the same format as seen in PLS, a lowered AV with Track MA on the deployed side and Truck MA on its move side so that its combat potential isn't stronger than that of a Tank Brigade.

1st Tank Corps - The first of the Tank Corps formed in March 1942. It participated in a handful of operations before Operation Uranus, so it may not have gained enough combat experience when it fought in the Chir battle. It was somewhat de-

pleted when it stepped off and confidently took State Farm 79 but was quickly beaten back with heavy losses by the 11th Panzer Division. It was not outright destroyed but most of its brigades were severely depleted. It was supplemented with an independent Motorcycle Regiment (5th Tank Army asset) and an Anti-Tank Regiment as well as the 216th Tank Brigade from the 26th Tank Corps. It was later attached the 102nd Tank Brigade from the 4th Tank Corps to make up the losses it took at State Farm 79 to continue offensive operations. Its 10th Armored Car Battalion contained a handful of BA-64s (not enough to warrant an AV and allow screening), Jeeps, and primarily motorcycles. In 1943, it was merged with a motorcycle battalion as the Corps' recon element.

7th Tank Corps - Created in April 1942 and completed by August 1942, it was formed around the 3rd Guards Tank Brigade. It would participate in the fighting at Stalingrad. Following the breakthrough in Operation Uranus, it was assigned to the newly formed 5th Shock Army to press the attack on the Rychkovsky Rail Station. At the end of December, it would be honored as the 3rd Guards Tank Corps given its performance around Stalingrad. As the 7th Tank Corps was operating closely with the depleted 4th Guards Rifle Division, both were collapsed into a single formation for game purposes.

5th Mechanized Corps - Among the initial group of Mechanized Corps, the corps was formed from the decimated 22nd Tank Corps in September 1942. It was almost exclusively equipped with Lend-Lease Matilda II and Valentine tanks used as medium tanks instead of Infantry Tanks as the British intended. Its performance was shaky at Chir, where an after-action report noted, "5th Mechanized Corps is poorly trained... Staff are picked badly, command and a headquarters with no coaching. As a whole, the preparation of the Corps cannot be used for the decision of missions in operative depth." Despite this, it would continue to fight on and in September 1944, became the 9th Guards Mechanized Corps, the last Mechanized Corps to receive a Guards title.

Other Kalach Formations - The majority of the rifle divisions that fought around Kalach in July started forming in December 1941. While their designations were numbered relatively low (by Soviet standards), nearly all were the 2nd formations of the divisions. They were originally numbered in the 400s, but renumbered after divisions that were destroyed in Operation Barbarossa.

The Red Army continued to transform itself even in war. With the Rifle Divisions, it issued organization changes to balance the logistic and equipment demands of the war with limited commanders capable of leading a division. Rifle

Divisions at the start of Operation Barbarossa were equivalent to Western Infantry Divisions at 14,500 personnel. This proved cumbersome so the Table of Organization & Equipment (Shtat in Russian) was reduced in July 1941 (Shtat No. 04/600) to 10,900 mostly by fully removing Anti-Tank Rifles and reducing supporting arms like Light Machine Guns, Anti-Tank Guns, Anti-Aircraft, Mortars, and Artillery. This proved too much of a reduction so in December 1941 (Shtat No. 04/750) increased the division slightly to 11,600 giving back Anti-Tank Rifles and increasing the number of Light Machine Guns and Mortars. The rifle divisions at Kalach would be organized under these two Shtat. For example, the 112th Rifle Division followed the 04/750 organization while the 204th Rifle Division used the 04/600.

The divisions at Kalach represented a cross-section of the Soviet Union - Russian, Ukrainian, and Tatar conscripts ranging from southern Russia, Siberia, and even the Far East bordering Mongolia. For example, the 112th Rifle Division was made up of Russians from Siberia, 80% older conscripts, 40% of whom were convicts, and the remainder younger conscripts.

The 33rd Guards Rifle Division originally existed as the 3rd Airborne Corps, made up of Airborne Brigades but in total only had a little over 8,000 men. The Airborne fought around Kiev (today Kyiv) and was destroyed twice before being reformed as the 33rd Guards in mid-May 1942. Hence it did not have time to train as a cohesive formation, unlike many of the Guards formations that earned their title.

Overall, there was insufficient time for training as the crisis from Case Blue led them to create a backstop west of the Don River. They were all more or less full strength (less decimated forward detachments) on 23 July 1942. Fighting at Kalach would be their baptism of fire and their inexperience showed.

Rounding out the Rifle Divisions were cadets from Krasnodar that have been variously referenced as Machine Gun-Artillery troops, but invariably used as infantry to buttress the 33rd Guards Rifle Division. There was also a Fortified Region that was committed along the southern flank behind the Don River. It hosted a myriad of Machine Gun Artillery battalions not organic to the UR, but ultimately reporting to it.

Other Chir Formations - By the time Operation Uranus was launched, Russian infantry had gained combat experience since the summer, not just at Stalingrad, but pretty much all along the Eastern Front. The fighting from November into December had been brutal, and all the Rifle Divisions were depleted, with the 119th and 333rd being the strongest around the Chir River with just

around 7000 men each. The remainder - 4th Guards, 47th Guards, and 258th Rifle Divisions had between 4100 to 4900 men. The 3rd Cavalry Corps was worse off, with its three constituent Divisions only being a reinforced battalion size.

Where the Rifle Divisions at Kalach in July struggled to coordinate their actions and conduct any sort of attack, the ones at Chir in December were confident and experienced despite being depleted. This trend would continue into 1943 through to 1945, where limited replacements would bleed Rifle Divisions white.

Armor

A year following Operation Barbarossa had seen changes in the tanks used by the opposing forces. The Germans had upgraded their Panzer III kurz (short 50mm L/42) with the Panzer III lang (long 50mm L/60) as their main medium tank. Each panzer battalion would continue to operate a mix of a handful of obsolete Panzer IIs as reconnaissance, Panzer IV kurz (75mm L/24) as support, and operable Panzer III kurz. In addition, there were a small number of the new Panzer IV lang (75mm L/43) which were more than a match for the thick armored KV-1 tanks. Yet there were only a handful of them in each panzer battalion. The overall AV represents the Panzer III lang which composed two-thirds of the total number of panzers employed. The Sturmgeschütz Battalions assigned to the 6th Army had a mix of StuG III kurz (75mm L/24) and lang (75mm L/43) with more of the latter.

The most interesting German armor are those found in Panzerjäger Abteilung 521. It contained two companies of Marder IIs, a company of PzJg I, and a fourth company of experimental armor. One was the 10.5 cm K gepanzerte Selbstfahrlafette (armored self-propelled gun) nicknamed *Dicker Max*. It mounted a 105mm L/52 heavy field gun (not the 105mm IFH 18 howitzer) on a modified Panzer IV Ausf. E chassis. It was meant to be a bunker buster and heavy tank destroyer. Two prototypes were used at the start of Operation Barbarossa, one caught fire and was destroyed, and the other fought on at Kalach. Its fate after Stalingrad is unknown. The other was the 12.8 cm Selbstfahrlafette auf VK30.01(H), nicknamed *Sturer Emil*. The gun was based on the heavy 128mm L/61 FlaK 40 anti-aircraft gun, different than the late war 128mm L/55 PaK 44 found on the Jagdtiger. It was intended to defeat heavy fortifications but easily used for long range anti-tank duties. The hull was leftovers from a failed submission by Henschel that would eventually lead to the Tiger I. Two were built, *Max* and *Moritz*, named after characters from German children's story. Both would fight at Kalach and *Moritz* would be captured (with 22 kill rings painted on the barrel) by the Soviets and is on display at the Kubinka Tank Museum outside

Moscow. As there were so few *Dicker Max* and *Sturer Emils* in the unit, it was not enough to warrant traits like Breakthrough ability for their huge guns, but it did at least allow for a higher AV and Stand Off capability.

The Soviets had gotten rid of the myriad of early-war tanks at the opening of Barbarossa (fast BT models, light T-26, medium T-28s and batches of T-34s, and the feared KV-1s) to a more standardized set of tanks by 1942. Their medium tank was the ubiquitous T-34 and KV-1 as the heavy tank. Light tanks were T-60s with T-70s slowly replacing them. Armor Value and steps vary depending on the combination and number in each tank unit. Independent Tank Battalions attached to Rifle Divisions had 21x T-34s and 21x T-60s, shown as Red AV 3 on the deployed side and a 5/16 Track MA on their deployed and move sides, respectively. It essentially shows the T-34 AV as the light tanks were almost negligible in their usefulness much like the Panzer IIs. Nominally a pure T-34/76 has a deployed MA of 6, but is lowered because of the accompanying light tanks which had weaker power-to-weight ratios with respect to their ground pressure. Likewise, the Tank Brigades in the Tank Corps at full strength had 32x T-34s and 21x T-60s and/or T-70s along with a battalion of motorized infantry, allowing them to earn a Dual AV and more steps. The independent Tank Brigades fighting at Kalach (40th, 121st, and 137th) are a bit more of a mystery. As the Tank Corps were newly established, they followed the latest July 1942 Tank Brigade organization which did not include a company of heavy but slow KV-1s. The Independent Tank Brigades participated in earlier fighting and were configured to include the KV tanks. Yet there was no data found that could positively identify the number and make up of tanks at the start of Kalach. Instead, scattered reports across May, June, and July 1942 included some KV-1s and others no KV-1s. With this doubt, it was decided to rate these brigades with the base T-34 AV ratings but lower the MA to account for the possibility of some KV-1s present. For the dedicated Heavy Tank Brigades, the 133rd and 158th, these contained all KV-1s, so the units reflect pure KV-1 values.

Overall, the use of single types per tank unit helped the production and logistical strain. The large number of light tanks found in the units was a stopgap measure until more T-34s could be manufactured. This was achieved in late 1943 when Tank Brigades were authorized 65x T-34s and no light tanks. The T-70 factories were switched to making SU-76s.

As Soviet manufacturing was catching up with demand, Lend-Lease tanks helped fill the gap equipping a battalion here and there. The 5th Mechanized Corps was unique as it was entirely composed of Lend-Lease Matilda IIs (designated

by the Soviets as the MK-2) and Valentines (MK-3), less a couple of T-34s and a handful of T-70s. Besides the Tank Regiments labelled as “Mat” or “Val”, the way to distinguish which tank the Mechanized Brigades used is by the deployed MA. Matildas have a 2 MA and the Valentines a 3 MA.

The Steppes

The map was based on period topographical maps from German 1:300k and 1:100k as well as Soviet 1:250k maps. They were useful in showing the Steppe terrain of southern Russia. As open as the Steppe was, there were a number of unique terrain features that broke up the openness. Small hills from rising ground were important tactical objectives as they provided overlooking views around it. The hills shown on the map are labelled by the elevation points in meters. Those highly fought over or noticeable on the topography maps were listed to ensure their importance in the game. Sand, rice paddies, marsh and woods dotted the landscape along the Don River with the river cutting the battlefield in two with very few bridges and ferries to cross it. The Don River was also two different heights on either side, with the west bank averaging 300 feet higher than the east bank, allowing it to dominate the ground if right along the western bank. Besides the other rivers that tracked across the Steppe, there were dry river beds called Balkas that were similar to wadis in the desert.

The road network was typical of rural Soviet Union, few good roads and tracks that would sometimes serve as supply routes. A handful of tracks were thus upgraded to secondary roads to allow continuous MSRs. The terrain and road network were essentially like the North African desert seen in **Brazen Chariots**.

In using a variety of map sources, naming locations and rivers was tricky. Carl Gruber helped with the initial location translations. Germans used their own spelling for locations (e.g. Kalatsch) and various English sources would translate Russian locations. Some ended villages as aya, aia, aja, or sky, skiy, or skij depending on the transliteration used. In the end, Dean and I stuck with aya and sky to be consistent.

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T314 R595 – 11th Panzer Division

T314 R596 – 11th Panzer Division

Terrain Effects Chart

Terrain	Movement Type			Terrain for Combat/Barrage	Blocking Terrain?	Key Terrain?
	Leg	Tac	Truck ⁽¹⁾			
Open	1	1	1	Open	-	-
Sand	1	2	4	Open	-	-
Hill	1	2	3	Yes	Yes	-
Rice Paddy	2	3	P	Yes	-	-
Marsh	All	P	P	Yes	-	-
Woods	1	STOP	STOP	Yes	Yes	-
Secondary Road	1/2	1/2	1/2	-	-	-
Track	1/2	1	1	-	-	-
RR	1	1	1	-	-	-
Major River	+2	P	P	Yes ⁽³⁾	Yes / - ⁽⁴⁾	Yes
Minor River	+1	+3	+4	Yes ⁽³⁾	-	-
Balka	+1	+1	+2	-	-	-
Ferry ⁽⁵⁾	+1	+2	+2	-	-	-
Water Barrier Hexsides	P	P	P	-	-	-
Road Bridge	ot	ot ⁽²⁾	ot	-	-	-
RR Bridge	ot	ot	ot	-	-	-
City	ot	ot	ot	Yes	Yes	Yes
Village	ot	ot	ot	Yes	Yes	-
Point of Interest	ot	ot	ot	-	-	-
Lake	ot	ot	ot	-	-	-

ot	Use other terrain in the hex for this purpose.
STOP	See <i>BCS</i> 4.1e (Unit must have 4 MPs remaining to enter.)
-	No Effect.
Open	The "Hard Red AV in Open" DRM in Combat applies.
Yes	Terrain that applies the effect at the top of the chart.

Notes:

- ⁽¹⁾ Poor Trafficability (**Chir only**): All Truck MAs are HALVED. This effect is NOT cumulative with being halved for a Partial SNAFU result
- ⁽²⁾ A printed Bridge over a Major River **cannot** be used by **KV Tank** units. KV Tanks can **ONLY** cross at a RR Bridge or Ferry. Bridges over Minor Rivers apply to KV Tanks normally. (*Kalach* 3.0d)
- ⁽³⁾ Some hexside features (such as Major and Minor Rivers) provide Terrain for Combat against Attacking Stacks which must cross the hexside to attack the Defender's hex (ignore Assist units in this determination), but as per *BCS* 5.0a, hexside features do not apply to Engagements, Barrages, or Attacks by Fire.
- ⁽⁴⁾ The Major (Don) River is considered Blocking Terrain unless one of the endpoint hexes is adjacent to the west side of the Major River..
- ⁽⁵⁾ In Kalach, only Soviets can use the Ferries(*Kalach* 1.1a). In Chir, both sides can use the Ferries (*Chir* 1.1a)