

## STALINGRAD-MURMANSK AND THE NORTHERN FRONT

by Mike Carr

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Unfortunately, when Avalon Hill made their Stalingrad game they had to leave out the city of Murmansk and the approximately 300 miles that separate it from the North edge of the board. In doing so they ignored one of the most strategic operations of Barbarossa, for if the Germans had taken Murmansk the tide could have turned in their favor.

In 1941 Murmansk was a city of 100,000. Its waters, warmed by the last remnants of the Gulf Stream, were ice-free all year. This made it Russia's only access to the open seas year round. Hitler knew that if he took Murmansk and later Archangelsk, he could cut off the Red Army's major source of foreign supply. So it was with haste that he summoned General Dietl to his Headquarters before the invasion. There he told Dietl that he was to cross the frozen rocky wasteland of Northern Norway and Finland and take the port of Murmansk.

However, the task was easier said than done. The Finns had poorly advised the Germans and maps of this remote wasteland were scarce and inaccurate. When the march to Murmansk started, Dietl found that the terrain was a vast wilderness of rocks, boulders, mud and marsh. The artillery found it especially hard going. This together with his extended supply lines, lessened his force considerably.

When Dietl neared the flatlands north of Murmansk, he found a mixed group of Russians dug in. He attacked, and the battle raged for weeks. Except for a few Stukas, air support was nil. No matter what he did he could not dislodge the stubborn Siberians rifle divisions from their positions. Finally, his ranks reduced, Dietl pulled back. The battle of Murmansk was over.

### The Murmansk Extension:

Use this map sheet by attaching it to squares A-34 to A-36 on your Stalingrad board. Add the following corps:

German- Dietl Mtn. Corps 3-3-4

36th German Corps 3-3-4

Finnish- 3rd Finnish Corps 2-2-4

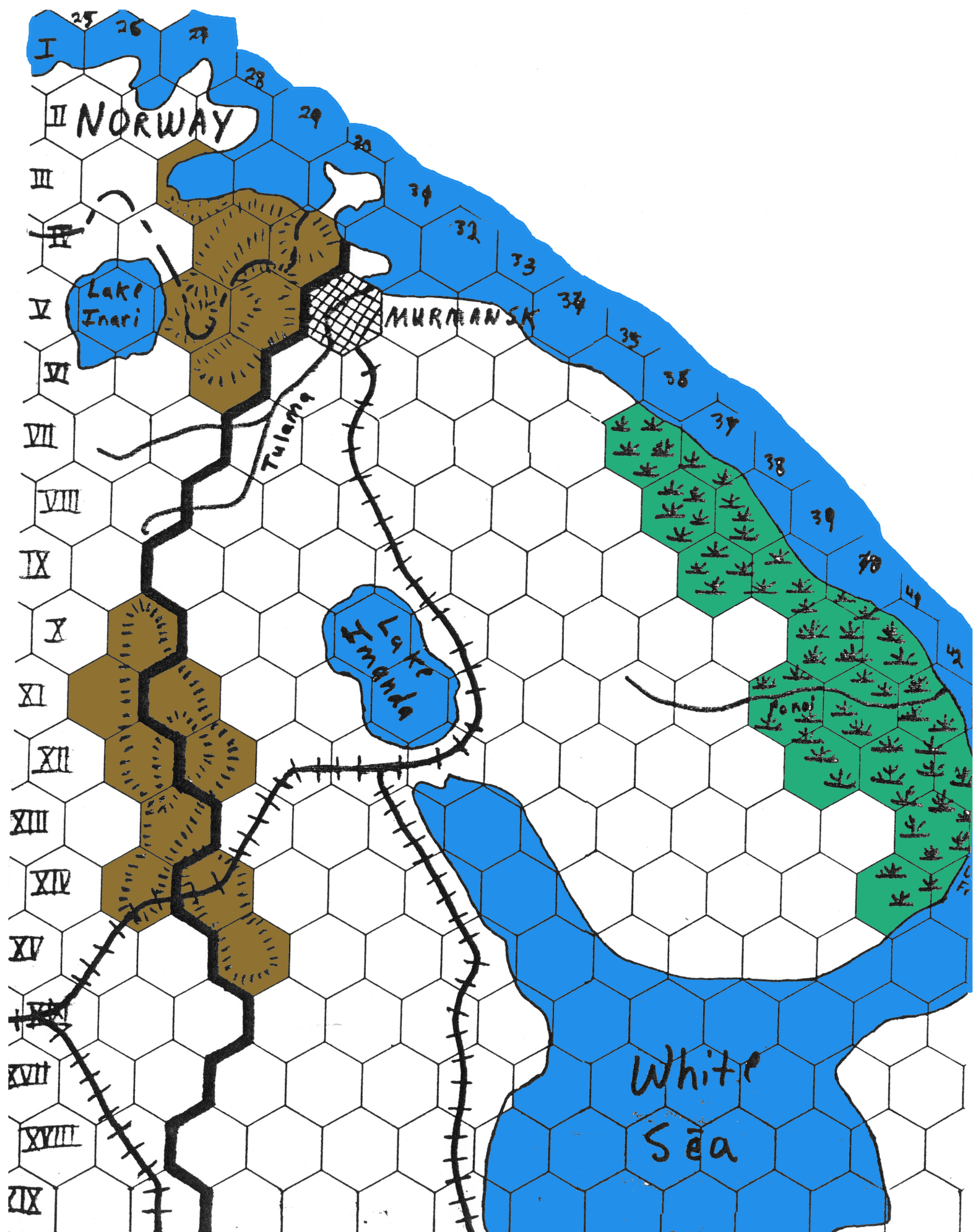
Russian- Mixed group 2-3-4

At the start of the game the Dietl Corps must start in a square that is fully within Norway. The Russian Mixed Group starts at Murmansk. The 36th Corps and 3rd Finnish Corps start anywhere in Finland. The 36th Corps counts as 3 of the eight (8) factors that may be started in Finland.

Weather is the same as in the regular game with the Ponoi and Tuloma Rivers freezing in the snow months. The White Sea west and south of the line on the sheet also freezes over, as do Lakes Inari and Imandra.

Use of the Murmansk extension will alter the strategy of the game considerably. If you like you may use the capture of Murmansk and /or cutting the rail line to decrease the Russian replacement rate. Remember though that Murmansk can serve as a supply port for whatever side holds it, and units there cannot be isolated.

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## THE CAUCASUS by Gary Gygax

The German 1942 summer offensive, Operation Blue, came to grief because of the Caucasus. Hitler's desire to acquire oil for Germany influenced him to divide his forces attacking Stalingrad. The end result was the failure of both forces in attaining their objectives, the annihilation of the 6th Army, and the permanent loss of both a vast area of previously captured Russian territory and the initiative in the struggle against the USSR.

The Caucasus was highly attractive to Hitler for many reasons. First, there were the petroleum areas around Maikop, Grozny and Baku. In fact, the German offensive reached the first two, but the Soviets completely destroyed them. Germany did not hold the territory long enough to replace the equipment and harness the oil to the Nazi war machine. Baku never fell into German hands. Its huge output was vital to the Red Army, and the flow of oil from that Caspian seaport continued uninterrupted throughout the war. Had the fields been taken and held by the Germans the effect would have been to cause a severe gasoline shortage for the Soviets within a few months when their reserves were used. Other sources of oil were far away from the front and would have provided only a fraction of needed supplies. In the same amount of time the Wehrmacht would have begun to reap the benefits of the Caucasian petroleum.

The Soviet Republics of Adzharia, Georgia, Armenia, Nakhicheva and Azerbaijan border Turkey and Iran (Persia) at the southern terminus of the Caucasus. That these and most of the other Soviets in that land were disaffected with the Russians is certain. Some advantage would accrue to the Germans from this once they firmly held the area. The nations that they border were of greater importance, however. It is probable that Turkey would have become a German ally, along with Iran, Iraq and Syria and who knows how many other Arab states. German columns could then have operated against both India and Suez. Troops from the new Allies could have been employed in both Russia and in the southern advances. Keep in mind the positions of Axis forces in North Africa and Burma during 1942, and the seriousness of this threat to the Allied cause can be appreciated.

Finally, German occupation of the Caucasus would have closed the last Black Sea ports to the Soviet fleet operating in that body of water and caused its scuttling. All western ports on the Caspian Sea would also be closed to the Russians, thus further disrupting their communications.

Had Hitler been successful in taking and holding the Caucasus for a period of more than a month or two the entire course of history would have been radically changed.

### CAUCASUS EXTENSION

Attach this map to the Stalingrad board in the east at 00 38 and in the south at XX 28.

No additional units come into play with this extension, but it is recommended that it be used in conjunction with the Murmansk Extension also included in this magazine.

## THE CAUCASUS EXTENSION continued:

Units from either side may not enter Persia or Turkey.

OBJECTIVE: The German player must take the cities of Maikop, Grozney and Baku. If he holds them for three consecutive turns all Russian armored units lose  $\frac{1}{2}$  of their movement factor. If the Germans hold these cities for six consecutive turns all Russian armored units on the board are immobilized, although they still have zones of control, and no armored units may be taken as replacements. The cities need not be garrisoned.

SUPPLY: Russian units receive supply from any Black Sea or Caspian Sea ports and coastal squares which contains a city. German use the normal supply rule.

OPTIONAL: If the German player eliminates all Russian units south of the Kuma and Kuban Rivers and moves three corps up to the Turkish border, Turkey enters the war on the side of the Axis.

The German player receives a Turkish 2-2-6 Cav. Corps and a 3-3-4 infantry corps on that turn which start from any Turkish border squares. A maximum of two additional 3-3-4 infantry corps may be brought in at a rate of one per month in the same manner.

OPTIONAL: Add 10 6-6-4 infantry corps and 5 5-5-6 armored corps which become available to the Russians as of January 1943. These units are only received as replacements and in the usual manner.

OPTIONAL: Once Germany controls all of the Caucasus, the city of Batumi is a supply city which may supply up to 6 corps per turn.

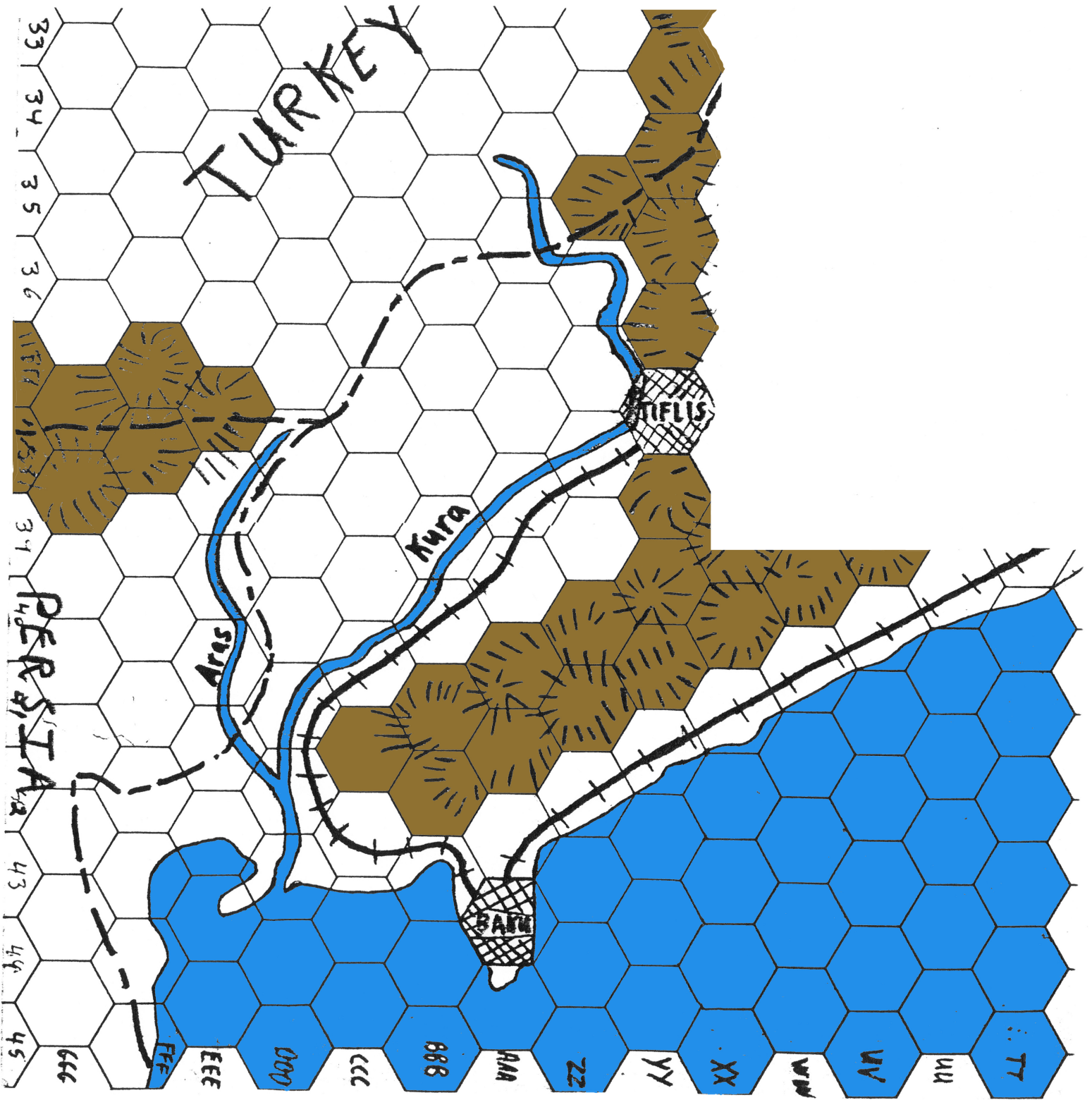
These additions to Stalingrad certainly make it a more interesting balanced and more realistic game.

In playing Stuka Stalingrad, the loss of the oil areas would result in a 25% reduction in Soviet air capabilities after three months, 50% after six months and 75% nine months and after.

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Panzerfaust is published monthly by P.O.W. ( Pennsylvania's Organized Wargamers) in conjunction with their many activities to promote wargaming. P.O.W. is a member of the COMMON MARKET and sells Panzerfaust on that exchange. A 10 issue subscription sells for \$3, samples are available at 50¢ apiece. All issues are 26 pages or more in length. Panzerfaust deals mainly with the Avalon Hill wargamer but contains items of interest for everyone including sports, miniatures, Diplomacy and Gamescience fans as well as articles on gaming in general and all the latest news in Wargaming. Articles from subscribers are considered on a gratis contributory basis, with all authors whose full page article is printed, receiving varying degrees of credit on their subscription in payment. Only back issues available at this time are from June 68 on. Editors include greats as: Donald Greenwood, John Rancourt, Jared Johnson, George Phillies, Mark Goldberg, Gary Gygax, Scott Duncan, Carl Thornton and others too numerous to mention. WRITE TO: PANZERFAUST PUBLICATIONS P.O. BOX 280, RD 2 SAYRE, PA. 18840

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# Counters for the Variants

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Axis Forces

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Soviet Forces