

## Setup and Strategy in Hube's Pocket, Part 1

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Joffre said, "Any error can be corrected, except those in the initial deployment of a campaign."

Deployment of major forces is difficult to alter, especially when the majority of your forces must walk to a new destination. True, you can redeploy by rail, but the rail net is limited, both in capacity and the number of destinations you can reach. In particular, even after conducting a major redeployment by rail, your troops need to march out of the rail station and set up defensive lines or offensive groupings, so any action is delayed at least a turn.

### The German Setup

The Germans set up first, so we will start with them. However, the German player should be sure to consider the possible Russian deployments. If the Soviets spot a weakness, they have the forces to exploit it ruthlessly. Remember Stalingrad!

Unfortunately, you are already in trouble, due to the Führer's insistence on holding the Dnepr's west bank. Worse, you have no major reserve forces to deploy, and will have to wait until the game starts to pull units from one part of the line to reinforce another. Take full advantage of what initiative remains to you, though. In particular, identify which divisions you plan to use as your operational reserve and set them up on detainable hexes so you can rail them out quickly to their new destinations without wasting fuel.

Set up the remaining units to do two things: first, prevent a Russian breakthrough if possible, and second, be in position to counterattack. Your line divides itself fairly naturally into four zones.

First, the area north of the Bug, in the triangle Zhitomir-Vinnitsa-Shepetova, offers considerable potential. You have an entire SS panzer corps, a number of backing forces, and a lot of open terrain to use your strength in. True, your forces are still battered and bruised by the pre-game Russian offensive that took Zhitomir and Berdichev, but so are the Russians troops here, and you're in better shape. You can go on the offensive right from the start, if you have enough supply.

Alas, you will probably not have enough supply, unless you're using the balance option that loads up your organic trucks at the start of the game. But it might be worth doing even so; this is the only zone where you have a realistic chance of forcing the Russians to react to your moves. This is extremely important: see the section on strategy (in part 2 of this article).

If you intend to go on the offensive, set up as far forward as possible, taking full advantage of the woods near Berdichev: you want your troops to shelter in the woods, while the Soviets are out on the plains exposed to your tanks. If you can reach Zhitomir and Fastov, you may cut off an entire Soviet Front; you even have a shot at Kiev and a sudden-death German victory if you can pull it off quickly enough (unlikely, against a competent Soviet opponent, but examine the possibility nevertheless). Also, the more space you have, the more of it you can trade for time later in the game.

A defensive setup farther back, anchored on the river lines, makes some sense: it avoids a starting Russian northern offensive that surrounds and extinguishes your entire force, which

despite its quality is not large. Be especially wary of Russian air power, which can blast your reserves before they can attack or even react. Your force is powerful but fragile, and if the Russians can disorganize your major striking units (1st SS, 2nd SS, and 1st Panzer), their numbers will overwhelm you. You can form a fairly solid defensive line from Vinnitsa to Shepetova if you choose this option; be aware that it will be difficult to shift from a defensive to an offensive posture unless the Soviets are kind enough to approach you.

Dangers to consider: The Soviet may make an immediate attack across the Bug and onto the main rail line. Potentially even worse is a Soviet offensive straight west toward Ternopol, cutting off your entire army, not just the northern wing. They will probably not be strong enough for this attack right off the bat, but you have to avoid it at almost any cost. The solution is the same for both cases: guard the bridges, hold Vinnitsa, and have panzer divisions in reserve ready to obliterate the attackers. (And have your trucks somewhere near the center of the board, in position to form an extender to link around any breaks in the rail lines in case you can't eliminate intruders.)

The second sector, the central zone between Uman and Vinnitsa, is wide-open and empty. Fortunately, it's less vulnerable than it looks. Both you and the Soviets are spread very thin, and while it looks like the Bear can drive straight for Uman, there are several subtle traps in his way. Near Uman, you are protected by a river and the lack of roads; south of Vinnitsa, by distance. I would recommend deploying your two panzer divisions (6th and 17th) at each end of this zone. One can move quickly to relieve Uman if there is a Soviet thrust in that direction; the other can protect Vinnitsa and perhaps join in a major counterattack against the northern Soviet wing. The infantry should be deployed to guard bridges.

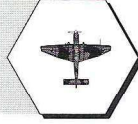
Dangers to consider: A Soviet may execute an armored drive on Uman, or a deep drive to put forces astride the Lvov-Odessa rail line and cut off your southern flank. The troops to counter either move will have to come from here, but be sure to keep an armored reserve in the area, and keep the bridges guarded. A deep Soviet drive early in the game is not difficult to handle if you are properly prepared; you are still superior in a mobile battle, with your hip shots and better action ratings.

The third area, the Korsun Pocket, is a nerve-wracking danger. Your mighty and glorious High Commander has given you a lot of troops. Unfortunately, your obstinate blind short-sighted territory-fixated Leader has also given you the impossible assignment of holding the bank of the Dnepr. That sticks you in a nice big salient with empty flanks, and a lot of Russians on each side. Seems an awful lot like Stalingrad, doesn't it?

Fortunately things aren't quite that bad.

You have two major options here: one is to pack the Dnepr bank with as many troops and as much supply as you can manage, and try to evacuate the rest as early as possible, hoping that the stay-behinds will hold out long enough. The other is to fight for the pocket, hoping that the Russians will break their heads butting into your firm defense. And here you will have to consider the Russian plan: will they try a short





envelopment to just cut off the Dnepr hexes, or a long envelopment to trap the entire pocket? A long envelopment works better for them, since they don't have to butt heads with you in tough terrain, and may end up trapping more units. On the other hand, if you don't guard against a short envelopment, their infantry divisions will just stroll in and cut off the units on the Dnepr bank. Watch out for Russian HQs working as bridges over the Ross River on the south edge of the pocket.

You have one major weakness here: artillery. The SS artillery, while powerful, isn't enough; you need to get more into the pocket as quickly as possible, if you intend to fight. Some other reinforcements would be useful as well; you want the Soviets, when possible, to attack you in good defensive terrain, and there's plenty of it here.

Likewise, you need to consider supply. You will want to position your HQ to ensure that the Dnepr hexes are in trace supply. However, since the Russians may succeed in cutting the Shpola-Korsun rail line early on, you will need to put enough wagons in the pocket to form an extender tracing back to Zvenigorodka. (You need the trucks free, either to form a long extender in case of Soviet adventurism on the Lvov-Odessa rail line, or to truck supply from the south map edge to the pocket or other destinations.) You will want to position some supply in the Dnepr VP hexes (probably the swamp hex, which is ideal for a fortress), so you can hold out in case you are cut off.

Many players abandon Smela as indefensible. This is a grievous error. You must hold the territory south and west of the pocket (approximately the Smela-Shpola-Gorodische triangle) for as long as possible, to prevent the Soviets from threatening your supply lines. As long as you hold Smela, the Soviets will find it very difficult to move infantry past it to seal off the south edge of the pocket.

The 5th SS is your hammer inside the pocket, to keep the Russians from closing it too quickly. You need to keep it available for counterattacks—but it may not be enough on its own, if the Russians attack from both north and south. If you're planning to fight and hold the pocket, you will need reinforcements. You cannot hold out with just your starting forces against a combined Soviet offensive using armor from the southeast to cut the supply lines and infantry driving south and west along the pocket borders to seal it off.

Finally, set up an air base inside the pocket. You probably won't base many bombers there, but you can fly supply in during airbase-to-airbase-only weather, and you can put a fighter or two there from time to time should you feel the need. It's always nice when the Russians have to use artillery instead of air to DG your troops; they eat up so much more supply that way.

Some thought should be given to your hedgehog set-up as well. Smela, Gorodische, and the Dnepr VP hexes need hogs, and you will probably need to form a line along the Rossava River to the north as well — your troops need all the protection they can get against the waves of Soviet infantry likely to be unleashed on them. Consider where the Soviets are likely to attack, and hog up the key spots to slow them down. Mironokva in particular is a vital bottleneck.

The fourth sector, around Kirovograd, is the most likely to

see an opening Soviet attack, but also has the largest and strongest defensive forces. You have a choice between setting up forward to try to deny the Russians the use of the double-track rail line as long as possible, and setting up behind the rivers in the best defensive terrain available. Historically, the German line was fairly far forward, and broke almost immediately under the weight of the Russian assault. It's probably better to set up behind the rivers. By the time the Russians need the rail line, they'll have driven you back to Kirovograd anyway.

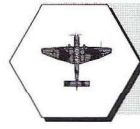
South of Kirovograd you can set up along the river line in strength, with 13th Panzer helping to hold the line. This ties up several divisions, but the Russians are unlikely to attack across a river into a sturdy defense if they have an alternative; the line will likely hold until the Russians break through north of Kirovograd, or until the rivers freeze. A more daring alternative is a light defense along the river, tempting the Russians to attack there, with 13th Panzer held back in reserve. This is risky: if they attack, they might break through. In fact, they probably will. You are gambling on your counterattack, with the GD Division entering the south edge of the map in combat mode, giving the Bear a nose so bloody he'll run away. It can work—and if the Russians don't attack, then you've freed up 13th Panzer for service elsewhere.

Kirovograd itself should be held strongly (or the Russians may take it immediately), but not too strongly. Since it will be a fortress from the start of the game, anything committed to it will never leave. I find it useful to have at least an AR4 regiment plus one or two small artillery units (which can absorb step losses and fire from inside the city, leaving your combat units to man the line) in addition to the fortress brigades. Likewise, be sure to set up a supply dump in the city, since you will not be able to rail or truck supply in once the game starts (unless you're willing to tie up some of your all-too-few transport points in the fortress), and you want to have enough supply for the city to last a few turns after the Russians isolate it.

North of Kirovograd you have two options: set up forward, as close as possible to the rail line, or pull back and hold the river line, perhaps with a few sacrificial regiments out front as a screen to hold the Soviet setup back a few more hexes.

Several possibilities come to mind. At first glance, a single strong line is very attractive: a 5 AR unit and 2-3 REs (3-4 steps) in each hex may be able to blunt the Soviet offensive. The problem is that the Soviets have massive force available, enough to take out almost any single hex if they try hard enough, and if they break through your line and flood through, life will not be pleasant. On second thought, a "breakwater" defense looks more promising: a line of single 4-5 AR units forward, backed by a strong line of infantry and armor/AT guns in the hexes behind. The theory is that the breakwater will absorb the initial force of the Soviet attack, letting the main line of resistance (MLR) hold out for a while longer. Of course, the Soviets may decide to try some overruns if they can do it at huge odds (a Guards tank battalion leading a combat-mode tank corps can crush through a lot of stuff, and then they're adjacent to the MLR and can break through it in the combat phase). Multiple breakwater lines leave you the problem that the Soviets will





just attack everything at high odds and leave you with a lot of dead units. A third possibility is to set up a moderately strong MLR (2-3 steps/hex) backed by a line of single units. This way, the MLR will probably be too strong to overrun, and it can fall back on the secondary line, which should suffice to prevent an immediate Soviet penetration.

You don't have any really good choices. Historically, Kirovograd fell on turn 2. Expect to do better—but don't let your army get destroyed fighting for it.

Finally, you will have to consider from what areas you can pull units to reinforce threatened sectors or form an operational reserve. You can probably pull one panzer division from the northern sector (16th Panzer, slightly stronger than most and in the quiet Shepetova sector, is a favorite), and one from the center (6th or 17th, leaving the other to guard against deep raids). If you pull much more than that, the inevitable Soviet northern offensive will face little resistance. Of course, losing the game in the south while holding intact forces up north isn't very appealing either. You do have a steady stream of reinforcements coming in; the GD division in particular must be thrown into the thick of the fight, and rebuilt as soon as possible when damaged. Infantry divisions can rail to threatened spots; make sure that your cities in the rear are defended by more than just fortress battalions should marauding Soviet armor appear outside them. (The difference between a Do1 result and a DL1o1 result is enormous: Soviet exploitation columns in move mode can probably do the first, but will find it difficult to achieve the second, when trying to take a city from the march. A second step may be the difference between holding a VP city, and not holding it.)

That's it. You will never have a large operational reserve until you can shorten your front line considerably. And that won't be easy to do.

A note on the Luftwaffe. It is difficult to find spots for airfields which are both near the front (so you have fighter cover over the front lines) and in a protected spot (so that the Soviets can't easily run over them, or get adjacent to them). You probably need to have your airfields in at least pairs or trios, so that fighters on one air base can cover another, and you need to decide if you are going to set up your fighters on the north wing or the south wing; they really need to be together, to make it difficult for the Soviets to overwhelm quality with quantity. Try to spare a couple of HQs to provide flak protection for your airbases and keep rebuilding the important ones (if necessary—it may be better to use the supply for combat purposes).

## Soviet Opening: North, South, or Deep?

A great deal of the Soviet setup—in particular, the deployment of the operational reserve forces (those which set up 6 or more hexes from any German unit)—depends on your opening strategy. Several possibilities exist. You must choose between them, since you do not have enough supply to pursue all of them at once. (You can, if you want to, attack all-out on every front. Try it. You will run out of supply about half-way through your Exploit Phase on Turn 1, and the German counterattack will turn you into mincemeat.)

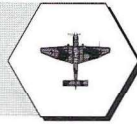
First, you can continue your pre-game offensive up north, hoping to break through to Proskurov and the main German rail line. This is not feasible unless the Germans leave some weak spots in their defenses. If you can surround the majority of their static forces (the infantry and the remnants of 7th and 19th Panzer) and deal with (usually by at least DGing) their mobile forces (1st and 2nd SS, 1st and 16th Panzer, and maybe one of the panzer divisions from the center) all in your opening offensive—if, and only if, you can do all this, do you have a reasonable chance of breaking through and cutting the rail line around Proskurov. Furthermore, you will have to hold the rail line for two or three turns to produce dramatic effects on the southern German deployment—not easy, when the GD Division and recovering German panzer units will be hammering you in a mobile armor battle, your least favorite type of operation, by Turn 2 at the latest.

Also, keep in mind that severing the rail line is not an automatic victory. Supply points can show up on the south map edge roads and rail lines even if they aren't trace supply sources. A clever deployment of extenders may allow the German south wing to stay in trace supply by routing around a break—and you will have to deal with the German counter-attack. Even if you can brush by or break through the starting German forces, you will have a hard time holding onto your gains. Most of your good units are on the east edge of the map and will not be able to reinforce and consolidate successes. Overall, this course is not recommended, but you need to at least consider the possibility after examining the German setup. It can be a real fright to a German player who's not prepared for it, and threatening it will hold forces up north, away from the battle in the south.

This dilemma for the Germans, by the way, ties into one of your main operational goals, which should be to stretch out German lines and get them to deploy units in areas you don't intend to attack... yet. The thinner the lines in front of your main offensive, the greater the odds you can break through and do serious damage. Infantry lines, for instance, can march forward, expending little supply while threatening major offensives if armor suddenly moves to reinforce them and supply arrives.

The second possibility is to try a deep drive south, toward Uman and the main rail line south of Vinnitsa, with the goal of severing the supply line to the Korsun pocket and attacking the German southern wing and its supply lines from the rear. The problem here is that you are extremely short of forces. You can commit four mobile divisions to the operation (6th and 11th Guards, 8th Guards Mech, and 9th Mech) plus a few miscellaneous units (the operational reserve tank corps), but the armor will have to do everything as most of the operation is far out of range of your infantry and not too easy for your artillery to keep up with. The difficulty is that the Germans have at least three mobile formations to oppose you on Turn 1 (6th and 17th Panzer, plus the GD Division when it arrives), and they are still much better than you at mobile operations; you may hold on for a turn or two, but it is likely that everything you commit far forward of your infantry support will be dead in short order. The 1st and 2nd SS, if they start moving in the German reserve phase on Turn 1, can hit you very hard on Turn 2 anywhere





between Uman and Beltsy. And if you drain all the armor from the north, and the Germans counterattack in force up there, it won't be pretty.

Historically, the Soviets had units on the Lvov-Shepetovka rail line on Turn 2. Historically, they were blasted back beyond the Bug very quickly and didn't get onto the rail line again for quite some time (look at the Turn 18 set-up!) Learn from their experience.

This is not to say that deep attacks, going 10+ hexes into the German rear, are not worthwhile, only that you must carefully plan and execute them if you are not to be wiped out by the German counteroffensive before accomplishing anything worthwhile. In particular, you must make sure that German armor in the penetration area cannot effectively counterattack during its turn. See the section on conducting the battle in part 2 of this article.

Then there's the weak spot in this whole approach: you can't just cut the pocket off from supply by severing the rail line north of Uman. A wagon extender at Korsun can reach to the railhead at Novomirgorod and supply the pocket that way, so you still have to cut off at least the south edge of the Korsun pocket.

That leaves the historical course of action: attacking on the southern flank. There are two possibilities: attack and encircle the Korsun pocket, or attack the Germans around Kirovograd. It is usually best not to try both of these at once, since you will rapidly run out of supply trying to support both drives at full throttle. On the other hand, you can work them for mutual support: if you attack the pocket first, the Germans will doubtlessly move a lot of units to its support, weakening the Kirovograd defense, while if you attack near Kirovograd, you can tie up the units that would otherwise be able to relieve the pocket once you start there. You need to have a long-term operational plan, or you may get sucked into attacking where it looks good, and discover too late that you dissipated your effort.

As an example, my usual operational plan as the Russians would look something like this:

1) Attack very heavily east and north of Kirovograd, over the land bridge where the Germans are unshielded by the rivers. (If the rivers freeze, more space opens up). Attract German reserves, suck in their armor, and attrit their forces. Intent: tie up mobile forces so that they will be unable to interfere with step 3. Taking Kirovograd is unnecessary and in fact counterproductive: I want to tie down defending German forces as far forward as possible. Try to maintain as long a line as possible. This threatens to either come around the flanks of the German line or force them to extend further to prevent that from happening, which sucks in more units or else thins out the center and allows a breakthrough.

2) Simultaneously with (1), probe around the edges of the Korsun pocket. Try to pocket German units if possible (particularly infantry around Mironokva/Boguslav), but mostly this operation is intended to secure Smela and either Mironokva or Boguslav as jump-off locations for the step 3 offensive. When you've secured them (and picked up any easy plums the German left lying around), shut down and wait.

3) Once the German mobile reserves are unable to interfere, launch a long envelopment of the Korsun pocket, driving south along the west edge of the pocket, and westwards south of the Ross River, attempting to seal as many units as possible inside. (The more units, the faster they'll eat any supply dumps.) 8th Guards Mech and 11 Guards Tank may be needed to help seal the western flank and interfere with any German armor in position to attack in and rescue the trapped troops. Do not attack into the pocket directly: attack into the void on each side of it. It's an interesting study to see how little supply is actually necessary.

4) Once you have sealed the pocket, ignore it (unless you are in dire need of the victory points) and keep advancing. Let it starve. Rush most of the infantry southwest towards Zvenigorodka and Buki to threaten Uman. You won't get there quickly since there are two rivers in the way. The goal is to force the Germans to put someone in front of you to stop the advance. With Kirovograd-area forces tied up, most likely the necessary forces will come from the north. (If the Germans do withdraw forces from in front of Kirovograd and Novo-Ukrainka, laugh maniacally and replace step 5 with a renewed offensive in the south.)

5) While these operations are proceeding, build up supply stockpiles in the north. About 10 SP of your starting allotment, and 2 SP per turn, should go to the north flank. Resist the temptation to tap it for operations down south. All your quality reinforcements (4 AR infantry, 5th Guards Cavalry, and 20th Tank) should go north as well. I usually use 5th Mech, 16th Tank, and any 13-3-3 and 12-2-2 infantry divisions to replace losses down south. (Still, one should always be open to the situation. Sometimes throwing the new reserves into the southern battle can make a decisive difference there. Never be a slave to your plan.)

6) Once the southern offensive has run out of steam, or when you detect significant forces being pulled out of the north, strike hard. Tie up German armor with infantry and air power north of the Bug while your mobile forces scythe across the Bug south of Vinnitsa to sever the rail lines supplying the German southern wing. An alternative operation, if the Germans are strong around and south of Vinnitsa, might try to pocket German units around Lyubar and then drive toward Ternopol and perhaps Shepetova.

7) Subsequent operations would be directed by the course of events, but would follow the same basic plan: heavy attack in one area to attract reserves and tie up or grind away the panzers. Then, and only then, unleash your armor, either to pocket German forces left vulnerable by the absence of armored reserves, or to drive deep for undefended targets in the rear.

Two caveats: First, never hesitate to alter or advance the timetable in one area if you can safely pocket a significant number of German forces, or if a vulnerability opens up that allows you to deal a major blow. But it must be a significant blow, not merely a passing tactical advantage. (Completely destroying a panzer division, without risking a major counter-attack, is about the right temptation to fall for.)

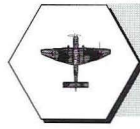
Second, carefully examine the entire situation before decid-

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*They were blasted  
back beyond the Bug.*

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ing on your operational plan. The most effective attack is the one that the other player isn't prepared for. One of these days I intend to try opening with a major drive towards Uman just to see if it can be made to work.

## The Soviet Setup

Once you have decided your strategy, proceed to deploy your forces. Some general guidelines first. If you are planning to stay on the defensive in an area, set up a little back from the enemy line: 2-3 hexes, enough so you can reach them quickly when you attack, but are not exposed to hip shots unless the Germans advance into your jaws. Take advantage of defensive terrain whenever possible. You don't want your troops getting ground under by panzer assaults.

Where you are planning to attack, set up as close to the enemy line as possible, and consider how you can attack effectively and quickly. Be sure to deploy some forces back from the enemy line to form reserves; these will magnify the weight of your attack tremendously as they follow up the main combat phase and attack shattered enemy units. Note that infantry divisions form a perfectly good reserve attacking force! In fact, they will frequently have more combat power per supply token expended than move-mode armor (which is about as strong as combat-mode infantry in the open, but must be fueled as well as supplied for combat.)

In the north, assuming you are not planning to attack, you should probably set up to take advantage of the woods as much as possible: it's harder for the panzers to attack you in the trees. Any units in the open should definitely be stacked with tanks or anti-tank units. 9th Mech's 4-3-6 tank battalions work very well for this purpose. You want some armor reserves (just on general principles), and probably an artillery division from the operational reserve as additional protection in case the Germans attack (which they may well do, trying to distract attention from your other offensives). The Guards corps are worth considering. 6th Guards should probably be the Front reserve: set it up somewhere near Zhitomir (important because the road running off the map edge here is likely to be your main supply source for this front until you get the rail lines repaired) or Berdichev (a nice central location where it can support multiple offensives when you're finally ready to launch them). 8th Guards Mech and 11th Guards have more freedom in setup. Near the northwest end of their deployment zone they can support a drive toward Vinnitsa or Lyubar, though this has the problem of heading into the teeth of the German armor. Near the southeast end, they can support a drive on Uman, or race east and help close a deep envelopment of the Korsun pocket. Or they can drive southwest for the main rail line (though see my comments on that strategy earlier).

The units north and east of the Korsun pocket have almost no armor; if you plan to attack with them early, you will probably want to deploy the armor (4th, 5th, and 7th Guards Tank Corps—be sure to consolidate these as much as possible) from the operational reserve in support. You will need one of the artillery divisions as well, for either defense or offense.

Look for weaknesses in the German setup you can exploit: German infantry near Tarasum, Boguslav, or Mironokva can often be pocketed by determined attacks on Turn 1, and there are very few panzers nearby to rescue trapped units. If 5th SS does head north to do so, it's not interfering with your operations south of the pocket. If 6th or 17th Panzer drive north from the center, they will be very vulnerable to counterattack next turn.

A word here about rear area security: Garrison the major cities. In particular, garrison Kiev and the bridges and roads leading up from the south toward it. I lost one game of HP on Turn 2. I sent the infantry north of the pocket charging forward on Turn 1; Scott responded by moving three more panzer divisions into the Korsun area to join 5th SS. Turn two, the rivers froze. I won initiative and decided to go second. One of the panzer divisions blew a hole through the infantry line; one blew away the (8)-3-1 UR brigade guarding the road south; the last two exploited north and captured Kiev, which was guarded only by four UR brigades. End of game.

Do not let this happen to you. You may want to put one or two of the Turn 1 reinforcement divisions in Kiev. Once you

have dealt with the pocket, you can rail them forward. Likewise, make sure to guard the Dnepr bridge at Cherkassy and the road and railroad going off the east map edge. On the safety of these three points your entire southern flank depends, and while the German may not want to risk the game on an

attempt to take them, you definitely don't want to risk losing them. Keep troops with some anti-tank capability in the open hexes to the south (especially given the vulnerable off-map air base from whence you can fly extra supply); make sure that you have a wagon extender near Cherkassy so you can supply your troops around there (you will not be able to reach troops near Smela or in the woods beyond it from the HQs near the southern railhead.)

Last come your strong forces south of the Dnepr. Here there are several factors to consider. First off, how much artillery do you want? You have two divisions, but one of them (11th Artillery) is half-strength. I recommend using it to support the operations around Smela, while the full-strength 17th supports the Kirovograd operations. I would also allocate one artillery division from the operational reserve to this sector. 3rd Guards Rocket is not a bad choice; it can move into position next to Kirovograd on Turn 1, and flip and fire on Turn 2. Since the Katyushas cannot move in combat mode, you want them in a position where the enemy will be stationary for some time; locations where they can cover both Kirovograd and the gap between the rivers just north of it fit the bill quite nicely. The second artillery division allows you to cover the entire theater with artillery and still have enough to concentrate force in the decisive sector, or have one division support the combat phase and the other, perhaps in move mode, supporting exploitation.

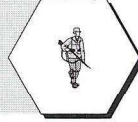
Attack ferociously: the idea of the Turn 1 offensive is to so batter the German line that he will have to spend all of his half of the turn recovering, so it will be safe for you to let him go first on Turn 2, setting up a series of possible double turns. (You don't want to go out on a limb on Turn 1: if you do and the

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*The entire area is a wide-open panzer playpen.*

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## A Frozen Hell: Tactical Challenges

by Jean Jodoïn

Germans win initiative on turn 2, things could go very badly for you.)


One thing to consider: the river lines protect you as much as they protect the Germans. Use them. The German army will never be stronger than it is on the opening turn of the game, so you want to ensure that its counterattacks fall on strong lines, not vulnerable ones. In particular, do not attack south of Kirovograd on Turn 1 unless you have some way to derail the GD division's counterattack. The entire area is a wide-open panzer playpen, and you will suffer severely if you cross the rivers there too early.

A minor note on logistics. I usually deploy five wagons on each wing, allowing extender formation if necessary. Since Cherkassy has no working rail lines at the start of the game, the southern extender usually goes near there (an HQ in Cherkassy can support operations around Smela till you repair the double-track line through it.) Five trucks go in Kiev, where they can shuttle supply to either wing or race to form an extender anywhere on the board. The other trucks and wagons are set up as necessary to move small amounts of supply forward. For the first ten turns of the game, though, you can usually supply everything without trouble from your rail lines. It helps considerably if you have HQs in position to draw and throw directly from the locations where supply enters the map; it saves rail capacity.

I prefer to start three rail repair units in the northern sector. One pushes southeast from Fastov to open up the rail lines supplying the northern flank of your assault on the Korsun pocket (and threatening to drive towards Uman), while two fix the rail line from Fastov to Berdichev (one working southwest out from Fastov, the other coming east to meet it). There's a lot more unconverted rail line up north than down south, and most of the southern theater is well within HQ throw range from the starting railheads anyway. If you put two rail units in the south, they'll quickly fix all the rails in reach and then hang around for several turns doing nothing while you try to clear away the German units squatting on the line in Shpola, Kirovograd, and the Korsun pocket.

And repairing the northern rail network makes it much easier to supply and support a surprise push forward. The more you can threaten that, the more forces the German player is likely to hold up north waiting for an attack while you pummel him in the south. Remember that you want to threaten attacks everywhere, thus forcing the German to try to cover all the possible avenues of attack, which he can't do.

Author's note: I would like to thank Perry Andrus, Kurt Gillies, Stephen Poitinger, James Sterret, Guy Wilde and all the other people on the Gamers' mailing list whose discussion of their **Hube's Pocket** games, and the proper tactics to use, and some appalling disasters, helped me write this article. And above all I'd like to thank the long-suffering Scott Johnstone, who not only beat and was beaten by me, but discussed our relative strategies and tactics at great length.

[Editor's note: This is the first part of a two-part article on **Hube's Pocket**. After reading posts on the gamers-1 list and appreciating the thinking and play experience behind them, I asked Tony to prepare an article. I hope you're all as happy with the result as I am.] 

There are a few situations that present themselves to the players time and time again in A Frozen Hell (AFH). Because of the nature of the terrain this battle is being fought over, I thought that I would review them for the benefit of TCS practitioners, and especially for the newcomers to TCS.

The most daunting scenario deals with an assault against a defended shoreline across a frozen lake. Wily defenders position themselves at the edge of the forest/lake with a clear LOS to the lake and shoot up anything that moves. Frozen lake is billiard terrain, affording defenders a +2 shift on the Area Fire Table, with Russians suffering an additional +1 shift. Being caught on the ice, whether in Move Mode or not, is not an option. How do you cross such an area?

There are two basic ways to effect a safe crossing. The first tactic involves denying defenders a LOS to your assaulting units. This involves the use of smoke or darkness. In both cases, spotting range becomes one hex. Unfortunately, the Russian cannot rely on their artillery while the Finns have very little smoke. This makes waiting for darkness to advance across frozen lakes a valid option. Unfortunately, darkness interferes with the second tactic I suggest.

This second tactic consists of either driving defenders away from the shoreline or suppressing them for the duration of the crossing. Relying on suppression alone is fraught with danger as suppression markers are removed at the end of each turn. Failure to win initiative in the upcoming turn exposes assaulting troops to withering fire.

Driving defenders away from the shoreline involves the use of massive firepower in the form of mortar and artillery. Maneuver units (platoons and machine guns) can be used in a similar role, but require more time as their firepower is inferior to support weapons and suffers from range effects. The best weapons for this task are Russian regimental mortars: 82mm and 120mm. They possess sufficient firepower and do not suffer from the notorious Russian artillery unreliability.

Defenders can respond to such tactics by placing defending stacks one hex inside the forest perimeter. Safely ensconced in the woods, defenders wait until the attackers venture into the open. If they win the initiative, the defenders maneuver onto the edge of the forest to gain a LOS to the exposed assaulting units. Doing so limits defending units' exposure to suppressive fire before engaging the enemy. If they lose the initiative, the defenders await the attacker in the forest. This option foregoes the +2/+3 shift caused by the frozen lake but it affords cover.

An interesting tactic consists of calling an artillery strike onto an empty hex next to your position, in anticipation of an assault. A Good Shoot marker may deter the attacker from advancing that turn. This can be especially effective when delivered onto frozen lake hexes, such as next to the Kivisalmi Bridge. Both sides are caught within the fire mission's peripheral zone, but if the attacker is in Move Mode, with 8+ steps stacked, the odds now favor the defender. The faint of heart should refrain from playing AFH. One reason such artillery tactics can be useful is that units with less than 6 MP have to go to Move Mode one turn prior to moving adjacent to a defensive position in forest. Disrupting such units forces them back to their Combat Mode, prevents them from moving this turn, and