

"PEACE, LAND, AND BREAD - NOT NECESSARILY IN THAT ORDER"

Playing the Bolsheviks in REDS!

BY ANANDA GUPTA

So you are charged with leading Lenin's revolutionary forces and eradicating the last remnants of tsarist support in Mother Russia. Sounds like a snap, right? Look at those Red armies: four manpower points each, good die roll modifiers, and lots of them to boot. You also have a central position, lots of rail lines to shuttle troops around, and the services of Leon Trotsky, whose magical Red wand will put backbone into the most demoralized army. Your enemy, on the other hand, has many small, irreplaceable, and defensively weak units (you can count the number of White units with a defensive drm better than +1 on one hand). Better yet, he has to risk these units against your numerically superior forces or else the craven Western powers will withdraw their support and leave the counterrevolution to wither on the vine.

Strategic Notes

But it won't be that *easy*. You have another enemy, just as dangerous as the person sitting across the table - that enemy is the clock. Twenty-four turns to take every city in Russia sounds like more than enough time, but keep in mind that unless you receive plenty of Red Leaders from the random events table, only about two-thirds of your forces will activate every turn. The trek from Tashkent (5412) to Krasnovodsk (4423) is 18 hexes — that's *six turns* of marching, assuming you don't have to fight any battles on the way (and Marx forbid that you should lose a battle and have to pause to rally!). Better, if you can, to grab all the resources and export the Revolution through Poland. But which of these victories should you attempt?

That question brings into focus one of the central facts about the game of REDS!: as befits a war characterized by chaos, hope, and dramatic swings of fortune, the random events table can direct player strategy substantially. Specifically, Red Leaders have the most long-term effect. Far more than their ability to allow higher stacking in one or two hexes, Red Leaders provide "free" activations (meaning you don't have to spend one of your discretionary activations on fronts with leaders). Therefore, if you



are going for the historical win, any leader is a good leader, regardless of where he goes. Who cares if it takes six turns to march to the Caspian if you are getting to activate Central Asia every turn without sacrificing your South, East, and West activations?

On the other hand, if your dice seem not to want to add to 10 or higher, then you should strongly consider the "export" victory by conquering Poland and taking all resource cities. That can be accomplished with three activations a turn for almost the whole game, since two of the fronts (Central Asia and North) have no resources at all, and one (East) has resources that are extremely difficult for the White player to take back once you have gotten hold of them (particularly if you use your Red Terrors on them).

Opening Moves

The two major White factions are the Armed Forces of Southern Russia (AFSR) and the Siberian Whites. They start out weak, but gain considerable strength on turn B, when the Germans leave. Therefore, the more you can batter them early on, the better. Most White players will try to seize the People's Gold with their initiative activation, using an assault on Kazan (2910)

screened by the Kappel division. They may also try to place the Red 3'd Army in Perm (3105) OOS, hoping for a logistics draw before you can get it back in supply. You have a good shot at getting the gold back using the 2'd and 5th armies (provided the 2'd has not caught an inconvenient case of Typhus — curse those tsarist germs!). However, you must remember that there is no hurry; you will get that chance regardless of what happens. The fate of the 3'd in Perm is chancier, but it is generally worthwhile to strike in the South before the AFSR can extricate itself.

In the South, you have a good chance to hand the AFSR a solid blow. Use Field Staff or the South chit for this activation, meaning that you will probably get to activate South Front before the AFSR moves. If this happens, you should extricate your two unsupplied armies in Piatogorsk (3224) and Grozny (3523), and attack the Don Cossacks hard in their *krug*. The 11th Army can move to exert a ZOC south of Novochoerkassk (2921, the Don Cossack home *krug*), and the 9th and 10th armies can come down from their starting locations to provide a good 2-1 attack on the Don Cossacks. Since they can't retreat into the German occupied area, the Cossacks will have to retreat through the 11th's ZOC, and take an additional loss. Make sure to leave a garrison in Tsaritsyn (3119), or a turn 2 partisan or cavalry raid could ruin your day.

You should still consider this attack even if logistics comes up first (the 9th might rally, after all) and your two OOS armies are reduced. The 11th's main contribution is its manpower, dice multiplier, and ZOC, not its combat modifier. Once you have occupied Novochoerkassk, the Don Cossacks will not be rebuildable from the deadpile, so they are as good as permanently eliminated. Since the Don Cossacks' *krugis* furthest forward, eliminating them early is especially helpful — of all the Cossacks, they can get the closest to Moscow.

Aside from these specifics, a few general principles apply in the opening game:

1. *If the White player takes risks, make him*

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pay. The White factions are fragile. If your opponent attempts dramatic encirclements, concentric attacks (I use "concentric attacks" to refer to any attack where all the defender's avenues of retreat are covered by ZOCs), or rail line interdictions, he'll have to stick his neck out. Bring down the axe. If he leaves 2-manpower units alone, take the easy 2-1 or 4-1 attacks, and try for concentric attacks yourself. The White player's margin for error is *much* smaller than yours at this stage of the game; exploit that fact. So what if you lose three armies? You'll get them back. But his armies are hard to replace, and they don't have Trotsky to bring them back to full strength.

2. *Make sure to garrison Poland! Don't* forget that fateful third bullet of section 15.2. One of your first rail moves should be to send a reduced army to Smolensk (1916) or Vitebsk (1715) to keep the Poles out of the war (Smolensk is better because it is harder for a quick strike from Northwest Army to kill).

3. *Petrograd is safe, but not that safe.* It is very difficult for the Whites to take Petrograd (1611) without help from the AIF forces in the north. But it only takes one AIF Offensive event for Petrozavodsk (1708) to fall, and with that Petrograd can be starved into counterrevolution. Remember that AIF units still have ZOCs even when their capitalist masters are indecisive.

4. *Complete the rail line to Tashkent (5412).* Recall that the Cossacks in Orenburg (3612) and Uralsk (3414) can't end their moves 00S if they start in supply. And supply is very hard to come by for those guys if you are putting even minimal pressure on the rail and river lines that lead through the Urals to Omsk (4301). So, barring a cavalry raid, you can restore this rail line without much trouble. Whether you need to do so will depend on how the mid-game goes (and particularly how many leaders you get), but laying this groundwork can't hurt. If you decide to go for the historical win, you can send in a regular army to help the Turkestan forces crush the pathetic Islamic Whites in the east.

5. *Your primary early game objective is Minor Withdrawal — don't lose sight of it!* Many Red players get caught up in taking territory or killing White units. Both, particularly the latter, are legitimate aims, but don't lose

sight of the forest from the trees. What you really want is to deny the White player three resource cities on turn C. That way you have a shot at Major Withdrawal on turn D. After all, no matter how well you do after Turn C, if you haven't gotten Minor Withdrawal, the *earliest* you can get the Major Withdrawal is Turn E, which is cutting it close. Accordingly, your goal should be to force the Siberians back to the Urals, where they can't make an emergency thrust at Simbirsk (3012) or Izhevsk (3108). You also need to ensure that the Whites get no more than two of the five Ukraine resources (Rostov 2822, Ekaterinoslav 2423, Kiev 1920, Tsaritsyn 3119, Kharkov 2420). Remember that Minor Withdrawal removes two of the Siberians' best units, so in general it is best to focus on the AFSR early in the game and deny them the resource-rich Ukraine — that way you can kill two counterrevolutionary birds with one stone. The Siberians are much softer after the Czechs have gone home.

It is very hard to deny Ekaterinoslav by Turn C, so settle for a strong position on the Don and ruthlessly punish any White attempts to push forward and take a third resource. And, of course, don't let Petrograd fall to a strike from Northwest Army — or if you do, make sure you can take it back by the end of Turn 7.

6. *Don't push too hard* You have massive rebuilding capabilities, but if you squander your armies, the attrition curve will catch up with you in the end. If you lose three armies on Turn 8, then even if you lose no

more armies until Turn D you will still be playing "short" for two turns. Don't overextend yourself and let the White player cash in on low-risk counterattacks.

In particular, look at the White forces' potential for counterattack. With their high quality units and ability to "shield" reduced units from 'id' combat results by stacking them with full strength ones, they can lash out hard and fast. Target individual stacks and try to put together concentric attacks, knocking off a dotted unit here and there. Early in the game it's almost always better to decimate one White stack than cause incidental casualties across the whole front. This is especially true because many White players may treat the latter as more serious than the former, and thus will retreat to reorganize, thereby declining the opportunity to overextend themselves. If by turn 7 the White player is able to maintain stacks of two and three units across a largish front while still guarding his supply lines, you will have a lot of trouble sustaining offensives, even with several armies.

Mid-Game (Turns 8-14)

Ideally, one of the major White factions has lost several irreplaceable units, Northwest Army has been crushed, and Minor Withdrawal has occurred. If all that has happened by Turn 8, you're in excellent shape. You want Major Withdrawal by turn E at the latest. If it hasn't happened at that point, then unless you have seriously mauled both major White factions and taken out many of their irreplaceable units, you are in for a tough haul. But don't lose heart.

If you are in the ideal situation, now is the time to decide exactly which win you are going for. Conquering Poland at this stage of the game is best done via a simultaneous invasion of the Baltic States with two armies (to trigger the war), and a strike through the Ukraine with at least four infantry armies, the 1st Konarmia, and the Latvians. Naturally, only in the ideal situation will you be able to spare literally half your army, but since the Red Train doesn't work for units in and near Poland, it tempts Fate to conquer Poland on the cheap.

If you still have work to do against the AFSR or Siberians, best to leave the conquest of Poland until the late game. That way you can still waffle a bit on which

Reds!

The Russian Civil War, 1918-1921
Published: 2001 **Nominee:** CSR Awards
Game Design: Ted S. Raicer
Game Developers: A. Lewis & V. Ruhnke
Art Director: Rodger B. MacGowan
Map & Counters: Mark Simonitch

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Contents: 224 Color Counters; One 22x34 inch Map; Rulebook; Two dice; Player Aid Cards; Bookcase Box
Time Scale: 1-2 months per turn
Map Scale: 65 miles per hex
Unit Scale: Army, Corps, Division, Brigade
Players: 1-2

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win to go for. The timetable will be tough but Poland can be conquered in three or four turns, provided you have overwhelming force. The Poles' good armies and 50% rally chance in and adjacent to Warsaw, combined with Trotsky's ineffectiveness in this sector, can turn this campaign into a quagmire. Don't let that happen. Go in fast and hard, with two or three garrisons in reserve to secure supply lines, and show Europe that the future is Red.

Late Game (Turns 15-24)

By now you should be past the Urals, with the White forces dissolving under the pressure of your armies, combined with their lack of replacements and rally rolls hitting only on a T. If Major Withdrawal hasn't happened by Turn F then you'll need to make sure that it might as well have, by overloading the White replacement capability. If Major Withdrawal *has* occurred, then send the aforementioned forces to Poland and knock it out. Use your cavalry armies to penetrate the Vistula and negate the river shift. Make sure you have at least one unit in the north, exerting a ZOC and playing havoc with Polish retreats. Try to trigger the Miracle of the Vistula while the Poles are already relatively untouched, thereby forcing the White player to either give up his automatic rallies or gamble that he'll even be able to use them at all.

If the dice and chits go against you in Poland, and disaster strikes, swallow your pride and make peace. You'll need those armies on the other side of the map as soon as possible, wiping out all the White forces in Russia, so you don't have time to waste (especially since peace with Poland is not automatic!).

Conclusion

In many ways your task is harder than the Whites' since your timetable is not all that flexible, and disasters on one front can multiply. You must carefully balance the resources you assign to each front, and stay ahead of the attrition curve. I have never seen a game where the Whites took Moscow against heavy Red resistance — that is, with several live Red armies in the area. Rather, the Red replacement and rail movement rates get overwhelmed, and there aren't enough time and troops to protect the heartland.

By following the above tips, playing the Reds in **REDS!** can be both a fun and successful experience - peace, land, and bread are indeed within your reach.



If Not Us, Then Who? Playing the Whites in REDS!

BY ANANDA GUPTA

Twenty-four turns of Red Terror await you. You must resist the onslaught and keep your western allies engaged. When their resolve falters, you must protect Poland from conquest and retain strongholds in hard-to-reach areas of the map in order to eke out the "survival win."

You have many advantages, though. Among them are high quality units, good supply lines, Allied naval support, and automatic activation for all your units every turn. You might also have lucked out, and rescued the Tsar from Lenin's mob. Your disadvantages are your low replacement rate, fickle western support, and lots of irreplaceable units.

As the White player your chief objective is to avoid having any of your factions, especially the major ones (the AFSR and Siberians), rendered impotent. If you lose all of the AFSR volunteer divisions before Turn C, it's going to be a long game for you. You don't have enough units to maintain a solid front through the vastness of the Motherland, so every single one you lose hobbles your ability to hold ground.

Given your low replacement rate, concentric attacks are your worst enemy. Don't let the Reds put together a concentric attack on any of your good stacks. And stay concentrated! The Reds love nothing more than to see a spread-out White force, where

weight of numbers can overwhelm superior troop quality. Keep your stacks at manpower value of 3 or 5, so as to deny easy 2-1 attacks with one or two Red armies. Of course, when you are on the offensive, you will have no choice to spread out. In this case, maintain a couple of spearheads, and try to keep the action focused on a small sector of the front. Don't try to advance a long line against scattered Red resistance — you'll overextend yourself and get torn to pieces. When you advance, do so in one place per faction at a time. And when you are on the defensive, try to set up interlocking ZOCs so that your vulnerable stacks are open to attack via only one hex. The Red player may stick his neck out and you can punish him in return.

Conversely, when you can target reduced Red armies (especially on turns right after a Strategic Turn), do so without hesitation. You will not be able to hold out if the Reds are able to stay ahead of the attrition curve. Keep him "playing short" as long as possible — even if he'll get to replace all or almost all of his armies on the next Strategic Turn, it's still valuable to make him play without three or four of them until then. Concentric attacks to take out full strength Red armies can generate a huge advantage, but be careful not to leave your stacks undermanned and vulnerable. Don't be suckered into a trap — that juicy Red army may be begging you to cut it off and crush it, but if the required positioning and advance after combat will leave you with a frontline full of lone or disordered units, grit your teeth and resist temptation. Be especially careful when there is a Red leader in the Field Staff box, as the Red player will be much more able to put together devastating "double turns" on one of his fronts when he enjoys an edge on the initiative roll.

Early Game

Your task in the early game is to survive until Turn B, when the departure of the Germans opens up the Ukraine and substantial new forces rally to the Tsar's banner. You should be extremely circumspect about any kind of major attacks before Turn B, since Red counterattacks or bad dice will allow the Reds to destroy your forces piecemeal. Better to wait until your army is at near-full strength. And when the Ukraine opens up, you'll need to go in fast and grab Rostov and Ekaterinoslav, which in addition to the Gold will stave off Minor