

EASTERN FRONT

A game of WWII by Jason Kline

Winter, 1942, Russia.

Operation Barbarossa has smashed most of the soviet Army, only the snow holds the nigh invincible armies of the Reich from continuing their advance. That, and mud, soil wet with the blood of thousands of soviet soldiers. You, are one of those soldiers.

Character Creation:

To create a major character, like a PC, 48 points are split amongst the 4 attributes. The easiest way to do this is to set each at 12, and then trade points, lowering one statistic to raise another. The minimum for any stat is 3, the maximum is 19.

Cold

Winter makes men hard. This attribute describes how calloused you are, your willingness to sacrifice others, and do what ever it takes. The two most important applications of this statistic is to determine your initiative in combat, and also as a gage of how deformed your soul has become.

Cold is a bit odd, as it is both a blessing and a curse. Those with a high rating preform well in combat, immune to the shock of bullets flying around them. At the same time, they have trouble relating to people when not looking at them down the barrel of a gun. If you see a comrade in pain, you roll against cold to determine if you can simply ignore him, or if you are compelled to help in some way. A person with a cold of one is a saintly humanist who refuses to eat meat and can't stand to see a bird with an injured wing. At the other end of the scale, someone with a cold of 20 would not have second thoughts about shooting an injured friend, taking their coat, and eating their flesh if that was necessary for survival.

Spirit

For the Glory of the motherland! How far will you go to achieve a goal? this is the attribute for doing things that go above and beyond human norms. Anyone can lug about a 30 kilo rucksack or drive a tank (they may complain, or crash a lot, but its possible) but to actually remain steady in the heat of combat, stick you head up, and shoot is quite beyond most people, as is running across a battle field full of mines and shrapnel to help another. A single point of spirit indicates a man who is barely willing to protect his own life, while one with 20 points would be hard pressed to think of why one does not go running across a minefield to save a kitten.

Aptitude

No one who is on the front lines is smart, but some are more able to work than others. Things go wrong in war, and creative solutions must be found. Applying first aid, Fixing a tank, finding camouflaged units and so fourth are all applications of aptitude. Those with an aptitude of one have difficulty determining which end of the knife to hold, while those with an aptitude of 20 make scientific breakthroughs.

Armor

Tanks have layers of steel. Men must be forged of tougher stuff. Mostly used as a measure of ones health

Taking Action:

Roll a twenty sided die, and compare the outcome to the tested attribute. If the roll is equal to or lower than the attribute, you are successful. If the roll is higher, it is a failure.

However, it should be pointed out that these are relative terms, especially when it comes to being Cold. While a high cold is good for going into combat, it also makes one distant and unethical. Once ones cold is high, they need to start making tests if they simply want to be nice, and in this case, a failure is the preferred option.

Sometimes, the action is more difficult than normal. Thus the GM may intercede and subject the attribute to a penalty. Conversely, if the task is simple, the GM should simply allow the action to take place, and avoid rolling. This is a game about survival in trying times, not playing life in Las Vegas, after all.

Difficulty target numbers:

Easy:	Don't bother rolling, just do it.
Hard:	no change
Really	-3
Heroic:	-6

Healing:

Improving ones condition can be tried once each day. Roll against armor, at -1 for each minor wound. If the roll is successful, the wound heals, and is removed from the character sheet. Healing major wounds is a similar process, but it is -3 for each major wound, an a success merely reduces its severity for . If the roll is successful, the wound downgrades to a minor one. Obviously, it is a good idea to heal all of your minor wounds before trying to remove the major ones, lest you get 5 minor wounds and go unconscious.

Combat:

Each combat round is about 20-30 seconds, and grants the character one action.

Sample actions:

Apply first aid	roll against aptitude
Shoot	Roll vs spirit
Run	meters equal to your spirit attribute.

Determining initiative:

Before the first round of combat, Roll 1d20 vs cold.

If less than the attribute, you may act immediately. If not, you do not act in the first round. Those who do not go in the first round must roll again, to see if they can act in the second round. One keeps trying once per round until they can succeed.

Those who are wounded need to roll vs cold to determine if they have the will to keep fighting after being wounded, and to determine their new order.

ATR-d20 cold roll = initiative place. Lowest place goes first, and counts up.

Those who fail the roll don't go at all, but get a chance to roll again at the beginning of the next round to see if they recover and can fight.

Shooting:

Roll d20 under spirit to hit. If struck, the target rolls vs their armor. Different weapons have a modifier to this roll. Provided the roll armor roll is successful, the wound is only minor. On a failure, the wound is major. A person can only take 4 minor wounds or two major wounds before they are incapacitated. They will need the attention of a field medic. A 5th minor wound means they are dieing, and need a hospital in a matter of hours. A third major wound means that they are in several pieces and quite absolutely dead.

	Attribute Mod.	Ammunition
Pistol	-1	3
Submachine gun	-2	2 or 5
Rifle	-3	3
Machine gun	-4	8
Flame	-2 or -4	2
Grenade	-6	
Knife	-2	
Bludgeon	No adjustment	
Fist	+2	

Ammunition:

Rather than keeping track of individual bullets, each gun can fire for a certain number of rounds before running out of ammunition. Each round of 30 seconds would realistically consist of several shots, perhaps dozens, depending on the weapon. This is factored into the weapons damage. (ie, Submachine guns use the same ammunition as pistols, yet do more damage.)

Vehicles:

Vehicles have all the same statistics as people, but they are applied differently.

Cold, is how well the vehicle operates, its reliability. Those with a high cold rating are well maintained, and run smoothly. Vehicles with a low rating are cranky, cantankerous, and possibly unsafe.

Spirit represents the gremlins in the machine, or a lack thereof. A high spirit vehicle will fire accurately, provide a smooth ride, and get where you need to go. Low spirit vehicles

Aptitude is the ability of the vehicle to work in a given situation. High aptitude vehicles continue to work when the radiator is shot out and half the gears are stripped.

Armor is as it sounds. However, unlike with people, the armor of a vehicle is tested with a d12, or for truly tough vehicles, a d10. This means that without high powered weapons, they may seem all but invulnerable. Then again, a tank that can be stopped with a pistol is of little use to anyone.

Vehicles also tend to have many more wounds than people do. A vehicle with maximum minor wounds is disabled or immobilized, while one with maximum major wounds is nothing more than scrap metal.

Sample Vehicles:

Jeep:

Cold: 14	Spirit: 14	Aptitude: 14	Armor: 6
Minor: 4	Major: 2		

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Cold: 12	Spirit: 12	Aptitude: 12	Armor: 12
Minor: 8	Major: 4		
76mm Cannon: -6			

Tiger (PzkPf-VI)

Cold: 8	Spirit: 16	Aptitude: 6	Armor: 18
Minor: 12	Major: 6		
88mm Cannon: -8			

Sample Scenarios:

You are stuck in a small farmhouse, several of your friends are ill, and you can see the fires of the German camp in the distance. Do you leave the others behind and try to make it home, or find some way to slow the Germans so that the sickly men have time to heal?

Another time, another place, but a familiar one. Your home village to be exact. But not as you remember it. The school has burned, the rail way cut by bombs, and all the young men sent to the front. According to the most recent intelligence, the enemy will arrive here in a matter of hours, and you are to raze everything to deny it from the enemy. With the safety of the nation at stake, the inhabitants of this town are insignificant. But can you do anything for them anyway?

Parting Thoughts

For the most part, these rules, even though poorly and hastily written, are everything you need mechanically. This is not a game about mass combat, or saving the day. This is about being a poor, underfed, cold, sick, and scared man who is waist deep in the snow, and is not sure if they will live to see another sunrise. A time where your first inclination upon seeing a dog is who gets first dibs when you eat it. Somewhere out across the frozen steppes, a monster is lurking, and you have barely more than sticks and stones to stop it. Read a book about the siege of Leningrad, or the battles of Kursk and Stalingrad to understand what the players are stuck in. The movie "Enemy at the Gates" is another excellent resource.

Perhaps there is time for joviality in this atmosphere. People need an escape somehow, and sharing bread in these times can be as hard as facing the enemy. Give the players a chance for heroism, and more importantly, give them a chance to role play! How do they feel about fighting for the motherland? Do they really believe in communism, or are they simply afraid of the commissar?

It's worth noting that there are no maximum ranges provided for the weapons listed. While I'm normally a stickler for accuracy in my mechanics and highly skilled characters, we are talking about under trained draftees thrown into the meat grinder. The GM is the arbiter of what can and can't be done. Dramatic license has a part though. Just because there's no table of vehicle hit locations doesn't mean that the characters can't take careful aim to disable it.

This is a 24 hour game, though I still plan on working on it, though technically my time is up. Actually, since I slept and ate, it's probably more of a 6 hour game, but hopefully you can still enjoy it.

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Thank you