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**DESIGNER'S DEDICATION**

*Dark Crusade* is dedicated to our Second World War allies – the Soviet peoples – who suffered, endured and triumphed so greatly.

**DESIGNER'S NOTES**

Among family and friends here in Juneau and in the Lower 48, "Lou and his complicated games" have been a source of both awe and amusement. Accordingly, *Dark Crusade* is intended for my many non-wargamer friends who have tried to share my historical gaming interest, but who have been put off by what is to them the staggering complexity of typical "military simulation games".

The basic design objectives of *Dark Crusade* are economy of components and price, simplicity and brevity of play, historically realistic strategy-making and overall enjoyability. Although my initially crude roster of units ultimately gave way to developer Tyrone Bomba's persuasive urgings between his Axis and my Soviet orders-of-battle – I believe the provision for an introductory level game should satisfy both game-players and simulationists. Indeed, *Dark Crusade* may prove to be a valuable introduction to military boardgames for time-pressed military historians and professionals.

My game design philosophy is best described in the designer's notes in *Sturm Nach Osten* (I Shturmy Na Zapad!) which was my first game to be published – also by 3W. Although at about the same unit level as *Dark Crusade* and about the same subject, *SNO* is a typical military boardgame utilizing a mapsheet with a hexagonal grid. Al-

though considered highly playable by its devotees – like our publisher himself – I consider *SNO* to be a complex game with its multitude of variables and detail. My simpler, army level game – *Russia's War* – has replaced *SNO* as my own favorite simulation of the Great Patriotic War's military operations.

*Dark Crusade* is an even simpler game, structurally. Its graduated, point-to-point network intrinsically resolves questions of movement direction and terrain obstacles. It does lack the local detail and amoeba-like line-against-line character of broad front warfare in the Second World War which *SNO* and *Russia's War* depict. However, as a strategic level simulation of the Russo-German Front, it may actually be more realistic, because it enables its player-commanders to concentrate better on the most important strategic variables of the campaign.

Basically, a strategic commander is/was concerned with the following aspects of a military campaign: war production, sequence and timing of campaigns, determining strategic objectives and avenues of attack (or defense), and, finally, allocation of resources and regional "fight or flight" advance or withdrawal authorizations. (As the war progressed, Hitler meddled in Wehrmacht operations all the way down to battalion level. Security and initiative were lost – as was his war itself.) A game necessarily generalizes historical situations. Thus, the less tactical and specific – i.e. the more general – a military simulation is, the more realistic it can be as well.

Wargaming acquaintances have commented about my "obsession" with the Russo-German Front as a game design topic. There are two reasons for this. First of all, The Great Patriotic War is historically significant and fascinating. It may have been the most decisive contribution to the Allies' defeat of the Axis powers. The vast human and natural resources of the Soviet Union could have fueled the final conquest of the entire globe by Axis militarism. Nothing drained the strength of the most dangerous Axis war machine, Nazi Germany, as much as its death struggle to the east. No other campaign had such a broad-front expanse which so enabled the sweeping armored operations envisioned by Fuller, Guderian and Tuchachevsky. Tragically, it was also a struggle of genocidal savagery entirely alien to civilized and humanitarian values.

The second reason for my focusing on this campaign is something about which other designers have remarked. My chief interest in war-game designing has become the development of ever better – i.e. more realistic and simple – game systems, not new historical subjects. Indeed, unlike many "simulation designers", I myself am a game player who wants (like any other player) a game which simply, vividly and enjoyably projects me into an historical decision-making situation – however abstracted. If a game can't telescope a satisfactory spate of historical second-guessing into a brief evening of recreational gaming, I start conjuring up revisions for it or a better one.

The most crucial component of *Dark Crusade* is, of course, its map. The open steppes of southern Russia do not narrowly channel movement like the Ardennes forest of Belgium. By a combination of major and/or long-reaching lines, the bounding advances toward the most battleworthy city objectives of the campaign through this open terrain can be cogently depicted.

When designing the map, I tried to use as few points as possible to fit the corps-in-army unit scale. Time and again, I found that the points had multiplied like lemmings, and I had to start all over with a clean map and a cleared mind. This continual re-examination may be typical of any composition process. Otherwise, if someone becomes absorbed into a set of assumptions, mechanics and details, he can quickly lose track of his original objectives.

Some historians may wonder where the Soviet mechanized corps which appeared in late 1942 are. They are reflected in the superior unit status of cavalry-mechanized groups and of the Guards tank armies available in 1943. Also, using tank corps units for the 1941 mechanized corps is a not unrealistic expediency, considering how quickly those units burned (or just wore) away. The 1st Moscow-Motorized Rifle Division was a showcase unit upon which the best equipment and some very high hopes were lavished.

If game-balance proves to be a problem between players, I recommend modifying (or eliminating) the first turn's production of Soviet infantry replacements. Beginning players should probably take the Axis side.

I really enjoy getting questions, comments, suggestions and/or criticisms about my games – a good antidote to "cabin fever" up here – and my address and telephone number are:

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