

## Hints and Tips -

# Russian Uniforms 1941-45

By Michael Farnworth

The Russians call the period from 1941 to 1945 the Great Patriotic War. The German's invaded in June 1941 and advanced quickly, almost reaching Moscow. Almost 80% of the army was lost to the German's during Operation Barbarossa. Between 1941 and 1943, the Russians adopted desperate measures to hold back the Germans. The bloody battle of Stalingrad (Nov 1942- Jan 1943) stopped the advance. The battle of Kursk in July 1943 tipped the balance. From 1943 onwards, the Russian army took back ground lost to the Germans.

### Intro

At the start of the war, the Soviet Red Army was nearly five million strong. It was mostly made up of Russian speakers from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. The officer class had suffered heavily in Stalin's purges of the late 1930's. When the German's invaded in 1941, the army was large but had poor leadership. Nearly a million men were killed and three million captured. Of those captured, few survived to return to their homeland.

After the huge losses of 1941 and 1942, the army was rebuilt. It included also ethnic minorities including Georgians, Cossacks, Uzbeks, Lithuanians and Armenians. In the later war years, almost 10% of the armed forces were women.

### Uniforms

Uniforms were basic and colours variable. There is a common misconception that Russian uniforms were yellow brown. The standard colour was an olive shade of khaki, similar to the colour used by Canadian and British forces. In practice the colours varied extensively from olive green through to pale brown.

Winter uniforms were made of woollen cloth and coloured in an olive green khaki. Padded winter jackets (telogreika) and trousers were widely used. Shade differences between jackets and trousers were common.

Summer uniforms were made of cotton and faded to a cream colour.

Scouts (razvedchiki) wore camouflage over suits. The Amoeba pattern was commonly used. This was produced in green with dark brown disruptive print. Amoeba pattern was also made in other colours including tan with brown print. Another pattern was the Leaf pattern which was a three colour mimetic design of green and brown leaves on a beige or grey cloth.

Greatcoats were in theory a dark brown colour, but various shades from brown through khaki to mid grey were used. The classic image of a Russian soldier shows the greatcoat rolled into a bedroll and carried diagonally over the shoulders.

In the early war years, soldiers were equipped with black or brown ankle boots and khaki puttees. In later years, the standard boots were black jackboots. In winter, grey sealskin over-boots were issued to the lucky few.

Helmets were mostly green but the colour varied from a dark olive to a lighter yellowy green.

Metal objects such as ammo boxes were usually olive green.

Pouches and belts were often brown leather or khaki canvas. The main belt was fastened with an aluminium buckle.

## Equipment

The shortage of materials was a huge impediment. Many vehicles and heavy weapons had been lost during Barbarossa. The Americans and British provided huge amounts of equipment through the Lend Lease scheme. The Soviets took delivery of 7,000 tanks, 375,000 trucks, 50,000 Jeeps, 15 million pairs of boots and many more items.

The Soviets concentrated on producing huge quantities of standardised items. The T34 tank was made in vast quantities. From late 1941, 35,000 of the 76 mm version were made and 22,000 of the improved 85mm were produced.

Mortars were used extensively as they were quicker to produce than artillery.

The Maxim heavy machine gun with its characteristic wheeled trolley was extensively used as company support. Squad support was via the DP light machine gun.

At the start of the war, most soldiers were equipped with Mosin Nagant rifles. By 1944, almost a third of the army was equipped with PPSH (or PP43) submachine guns as they were easier to produce than rifles and needed less training.

In the early years of the war, PTRD and PTRS anti tank rifles were commonly used. After 1943, these were no longer effective against the increased armour on German tanks. Panzerfaust were captured in huge quantities from the retreating Germans and widely used by Soviet forces.

## Further Reading

Steven Zolaga ; Osprey Men at Arms 216 - The Red Army of the Great Patriotic War (Osprey Publishing).

Osprey have many titles dealing with the Russian Army. This is probably the most relevant for miniatures collectors and painters.

## Websites

[www.rkka.ru](http://www.rkka.ru)

The rkka website shows original uniforms from the Soviet Army museum.

TMP The Miniatures Page

<http://theminaturespage.com>

TMP is a news forum and discussion site for miniature wargaming of all types. It has a large and active membership and good trade support. It is probably the first site with industry news and new product releases. The forums (Message Boards) are superb and most questions will get useful answers within an hour or two. The Message Boards can also be searched so that you can look up previous threads on a subject.

## Suggested Colours

Greatcoat - GW Scorched Earth  
Winter Padded Tunic - GW Gretchin Green  
Wool Uniforms and Quilted Trousers - GW Graveyard Earth (or Tamiya Khaki)  
Summer Cotton Tunic - GW Desert Yellow  
Helmet - dark version - GW Catachan Green or lighter version - GW Gretchin Green  
Ammo Tins - GW Catachan Green  
Leather belt - GW Bestial Brown  
Metal Belt Buckle - GW Chainmail  
Amoeba Camouflage Green - GW Gretchin Green  
Amoeba Camouflage Brown - GW Scorched Earth  
Gretchin Green is a brand new colour in the pots with the white lids.