

You start by producing a ton of civs and a couple infra on key states (Azerbaijan, mainly).
Early focus priorities:

NKVD primacy (finishing before the purge starts will save you a lot of paranoia)
Great Purge (Finishing this ASAP will result in Officers Purged being removed sooner)
Military Advisors to Spain (the sooner you do this, the more xp you get)
Finish 2nd 5 year Plan (It's only a net loss of 5% construction speed on civs; I actually continue building civs even after finishing this until I start the 3rd 5YP!)
New Soviet Citizen (+20% construction speed is huge, as is the stability from its prereqs Stalin Constitution and Collectivist Propaganda)
Use Emergency Political Power as soon as it becomes available. Highest priority advisor is Shaposhnikov because you need to amass huge quantities of army xp, followed by Khrushchev because he gives you more PP which will always be in short supply until about '41.

Send attaches to China, Republican Spain, and either Germany (if you're feeling cheesy) or Britain (if you're doing MP or following MP rules)

In terms of production, don't bother with armoured cars, T-26, T-28, T-35, or any of the biplanes other than the I-16 and a couple I-5s to replace training losses. High priority early production is Mosins, DB-3s, support equipment, Su-2s once they're available, and SO MANY TRUCKS. Seriously, early barb eats up a lot more trucks and support equipment than you would expect.

Don't switch from Mosins to SVTs or Maxims to DS-39s, it's not worth the efficiency. Just assign newly-created factories to the newly researched stuff. The same cannot be said for T-34s; you should switch BT-7 production to those, and I personally also like to make a lot of KVs because they are just about the only thing which can stand up to Germany in 1941. Begin merging aircraft and materiel plants as soon as you can, since you will need that production efficiency gain when you go onto total mob when Barbarossa starts and start pumping out mils.

On the eve of Barbarossa, may 1st, take Soviet Artillery. Assign at least 24 factories to the resultant anti-tank gun production line, since those new AT guns will be produced at high efficiency and will be absolute lifesavers.

The artillery production line is also good but your artillery was already reasonably good before. The jump from 45mm to 76mm AT guns though is everything.

Remember to request lend-lease from the USA, they will generally send about 9K heavy inf equipment within the first month which helps. In order to survive the first weeks of Barb, you will need to convert at least most of your light inf battalions in the strelk divisys into heavy inf, and get C3I doctrine.

This will probably not delay your second army reform, as you get a lot of XP from June to November of 1941, but even if it does it is still worth it. Without those the Germans will steamroll you before you can even get the reserve divisions (who will be your mainstay as soon as you can get them) to the front.

Also, maintenance and signal companies in every division. Except NKVD and cavalry, which are pretty much useless.