

KORSUN '44 – PLAY NOTES AND DESIGNERS' NOTES

Table of Contents

- I. Design Notes
- II. Scenario List, Notes and Overviews**
- III. Watchword Freedom**
- IV. Diary Of The Commander Of XLII Corps**
- V. Unit Ratings**
- VI. Bibliography**

I. Design Notes

GAME FOCUS

Korsun '44 focuses on a series of unique battles on the Russian Front where the Germans were reeling back from their failures at Kursk. The primary focus is on the large Soviet pincer movement that pocketed two German corps, along the Dnepr River in early 1944. This mini-Stalingrad is a textbook situation used by the U. S. military for study and training. Two Soviet Fronts attacked along the flanks of a bulge in the German lines and succeeded in pocketing a large force within the first 5 days of the operation. Over the following weeks the Germans launched a series of relief attempts with numerous panzer formations. The final German breakout was as dramatic as they come, with Tigers in the snow, and more. Included with these notes is an outstanding article on the battle by Wild Bill Wilder. Also, players should take the time to read excerpts from the German commander's diary that is also included. It is short and quite revealing.

After starting on Korsun, we realized that the map did not need much expansion to include the battles at Kanev and Kirovograd, both unique and good situations in their own rights. Kanev saw the largest Soviet paradrop late in the war and presents a challenging situation for both sides. Kirovograd is another classic German counterattack against a Soviet penetration behind the lines.

KORSUN '44 VS. PRIOR PZC GAMES

While Korsun '44 has much in common with prior game in the series, there are a few points worthy of note.

UNIT SCALE

Korsun '44 uses a unit scale somewhere between the PZC Games Kharkov '42/Smolensk '41 (battalion) and Normandy '44/Tobruk '41 (company). In general, the Soviet units are on par with previous Russian Front games in the series. However, for the Germans, a smaller unit scale was needed to cover wide gaps in the German lines that would be caused with a battalion scale. Also the smaller company unit scale gives the German greater and more historical command flexibility. It would be fair to say that the unit scale most resembles that of Bulge '44, with battalions and companies.

Korsun '44 was a natural progression of the PZC series. Many long-time gamers will remember Jack Radey's classic "Korsun Pocket" and its impact on the board gaming world. Some of the game's appeal came from Radey's innovative approaches, but most important was the underlying historical situation. The battle for the Cherkassy Pocket, as the Germans called Korsun, was classic. The Soviet pincer attacks, and the German relief efforts, are textbook examples studied well into the late 20th century by the U.S. Army.

OOB

In general terms, the Soviet order of battle is based on references from Glantz, Sharp, and Radey, while the German is based on captured German records and Tessin. While the sources were not as good as those available for Normandy '44 and Tobruk '41, there is a surprising range of materials available, as can be seen in the bibliography.

Obviously, anyone who designs a game involving the Soviets owes a great deal to Charles Sharp and his OOB books. They are, quite simply, invaluable, and one wonders why such materials are not available in such detail for other WWII combatants. For Korsun in particular, we were fortunate that David Glantz had published the Soviet Staff Study on the battle. In addition, Glantz's transcript of a 1985 U. S. Army symposium covering Russian Front actions during the period was very helpful. Finally, we were lucky that Jack Radey revised his old Korsun Pocket OOB in issue #197 of S&T magazine. Crosschecking between these sources gave us a high level of confidence on the participating Soviet units.

The German OOB was made fairly straight forward by captured microfilm records. These were compared to Tessin and secondary source materials to come up with a reliable German OOB.

For Kirovograd we found a very good website that was crosschecked with other sources. Kanev was made easier by Brian Knipple's work, but mainly Glantz' sources, Tessin, and references to situational maps were used.

Starting unit losses were more of an informed estimate. Captured German loss records for the 1st Panzer Army, throughout the battle, were found on microfilm, but there were none for the German 8th Army. The microfilm gave us a benchmark from which to start. We then relied, somewhat, on Jack Radey's published materials to bring the 8th Army to a relatively correct loss position versus the 1st Panzer Army. We also obtained some Soviet data from an old Radey spreadsheet, which was floating around the Internet, and

conversations online with David Glantz. The loss positions of the armies may certainly drive some discussion. For example, it can be strongly argued that the Feb 1 losses are too light for the Germans, especially relative to Soviet losses. However, the microfilm records and anecdotal information, such as German diary entries, indicate that we are quite accurate when replacements are considered. Since any detailed losses are mere educated guesses at this level of OOB, we opted to concentrate on assuring that the armies are historically balanced relative to one another. Our main goal was to put each army in the right position relative to its opposition, on the OOB break dates in the OOB, not to make sure the gun counts in each platoon were valid – the latter being simply impossible for this size OOB.

Air OOB was made simpler by access to the Soviet Staff Study, a good website on the Luftwaffe and information from Jack Radey on German plane counts. There is no information we could find on air losses in the campaign, so we have simply made minor percentage adjustments.

MAP

The map was built using an overlay made from 50,000 maps of the period. We also made use of additional detail available from the Soviet Study and Radey's game, particularly in the area of river crossings. As is usual, in a map project such as this, the names of features such as cities, towns, villages, and rivers, vary from source to source. We used the most common, or most recognized, spelling in these cases. After the Korsun map was built, we saw that it would take little effort to add the Kanev area to it, thereby enabling us to give players the opportunity to play this unique battle. After adding it, we also saw the chance to add some of the battles around Kirovograd, which led up to the initial forming of the pocket. Kirovograd and Kanev are not often the subjects of game designers, yet both are worthy of a serious wargamer's attention. We hope you enjoy these additions to the basic Korsun game. We are also including 2 blank scenarios that show the whole map in "Snow" and "Clear" conditions to enable you to more clearly "view" the playing area.

Players can cut their own SUB_MAPS from our master game map if they wish to create their own scenarios. The procedure to make a map is outlined in the Scenario Editor HELP file – in the section under "Other Features | Creating Sub Maps".

UNIT RATINGS

Unit ratings for Korsun '44 uses the same system developed for Normandy '44 and Tobruk '41. This means that units from these PZC games should be relatively the same compared to one another. For those interested in the details, an excerpt from the Normandy '44 designer's notes, which details how this was accomplished, is appended to the bottom of this file.

MORALE

This is probably the most subjective area of the game. In general, we followed Jack Radey's suggestions from the old Korsun Pocket board game, however, we made some modifications that generally reduced Soviet morale across the board. Basically the levels

are A = Elite, B = Good, C = Average, D = Below Average, E = Poor, F = Abysmal

MISCELLANEOUS

As players get into the game, they will likely come across a number of areas that do not appear correct. Most of the time, you will find that these are correct, and the result of deliberate, and sometimes heated, decisions in the design and playtesting process.

Here are but a few examples:

HW for the Germans are handled the same way as in N44 and T41. These companies formed a pool of heavy weaponry for the battalion; they both fought as a group, and dispersed among the line companies. Basically these units are composed of a large number of medium and heavy mortars, medium and heavy machineguns, and infantry guns (basically small artillery pieces). To assist players in finding Heavy Weapons Units in the game, Korsun '44 shows the Unit Window picture of all Heavy Weapons Units with a small Mortar.

Players will quickly note that most of these German HW companies are rated as Indirect Fire in Korsun '44. This does not mean that we believe that machineguns can fire indirectly. What this does is simulate the historical effect of these machineguns, and other units, being lent out to support the other units in the battalion. By placing the HW Company behind the front line units of the company, the HW Company can "support" the rest of the battalion in game terms very much as they did in historical practice. Also because of their high assault values, these units form a good "shock/storm" company to help, when needed, to stop or create a breakthrough.

II. Scenario List, Notes and Overviews

The scenario numbers are in a format with the first four digits represent the start date of the scenario in "mmdd" format. The second pair of digits after this is the scenario number on that date. Also, scenarios with a lower case "s" at the end of the number denote Explicit Supply Optional Rules are possible, but not required for play. These scenarios have the Explicit Supply counters removed when they are started without using the Explicit Supply Optional Rules.

As with previous games of the Panzer Campaigns series, we elected to not designate in the overview how players should approach each scenario. Such a practice can lead to scenarios being designated for play in only that manner, and we have found that many Panzer Campaigns scenarios can be played in more than one manner, whether that be Head-to-Head or vs. the AI, as one side or the other. However, for some scenarios we felt a clue as to how the scenario is best played was in order. Therefore be sure to read all of the Scenario Overview before you begin playing.

Making a scenario challenging from all aspects of play type is very difficult to do, and sometimes impossible in some situations. We were very fortunate to have daily

situational maps for Korsun, as well as good period maps for Kirovograd, and Kanev, to work with, so we feel confident that we have placed units accurately at any particular time in the battle.

Consider that not all battles were even fights, and in each game we try to cover all the important fighting regardless if a fight was one sided or not. This has lead some players to suggest that certain battles are not balanced. Balance of course is in the eye of the beholder. There are many events, die rolls, and even weather changes, that can have a huge impact on a scenario outcome. But even then, if a scenario appears unbalanced in a Play-by-Email match, then consider how it might play vs. the AI as one side or the other. Much of the testing was done against the AI, but the results and victory levels were tuned, so that a scenario could be enjoyed vs. the AI and yet still provide a challenge in Head-to-Head play wherever possible.

Therefore, unless it is otherwise specified, when playing vs. the AI it is usually more interesting when the human plays Side One. And for Play-by-email matches, consider those scenarios you may find biased to one side, as match games, so your results can be compared, playing either side.

There are also two non-playable scenarios included in the list. We have one large Master Map for this game that encompasses three battles; Kanev, Kirovograd and Korsun, however no single scenario covers the entire map area. We thought people might like to look over the total map area with #99a_Map_Summer.scn and #99b_Map_Winter.scn, and use hex locations in these scenario files when creating Sub Maps for their own user defined battles. (Note – creating Sub Maps for this game is covered in the Scenario Editor HELP under "Other features").

The final note is on scenarios is a repeat of the remarks by Greg "Sturmer" Smith. Sturmer is one of the original developers of the game system, and one of the principal designers behind the previous game of the series, Bulge '44. In those Notes he said:

"I strongly encourage the historians out there to feel free to edit the game to their heart's content. We went with the best data we had, and I think we've done a very good job....but I'm sure there will be those who feel that XYZ battalion should be one hex to the left or whatever. However, with full editing capabilities for both the order of battle and scenario included, I hope those people will be kept entertained for quite some time."

The Scenario List

#00_Started.scn

#0922_01_Kanev.scn

#0922_02_Kanev[WhatIf].scn

#0922_03_Kanev[Bridge].scn

#0923_01_Kanev[Paradrop].scn

#0107_01_Kirovograd.scn

#0111_01_Kirovograd.scn

#0125_01s_KorsunFullCampaign.scn
#0125_01s_KorsunVariant_1.scn
#0125_01s_KorsunVariant_2.scn
#0125_01s_KorsunVariant_3.scn
#0125_01s_KorsunVariant_4.scn
#0125_02_2ndUkrainian.scn
#0125_03_4thGdsArmy.scn
#0125_04_53rdArmy.scn
#0126_01_1stUkrainian.scn
#0126_02_1stMedvin.scn
#0126_03_1stShpola.scn
#0127_01_Zvenigorodka.scn
#0201_01s_KorsunPocket.scn
#0204_01_Vinograd1.scn
#0204_02_Shpolo.scn
#0204_03_Shpolo.scn
#0210_01s_KorsunBreakout.scn
#0210_02s_Breakout_Alt_Setup.scn
#0210_03s_Breakout_Alt_Weather.scn
#0211_01_Medvin.scn

*#99a_Map_Summer.scn
**#99b_Map_Winter.scn

The Scenario Overviews

Getting Started with Korsun

Dnepr Bend near Kanev, September 22nd 1943: Practically every Soviet Army had spearheads racing to the Dnepr. The 3rd Tank Army and the 40th Army were the closest to the Dnepr bend. Their orders were to "move with care at a speed of 100kms per day". There was no question that the first Red Army units to arrive at the river would attempt immediate crossings, without waiting for specialized bridging equipment, and that is exactly what they did. Local Partisan groups helped them to get as many boats as possible to cross. Anticipating trouble, the Germans had ordered the 19 Panzer Division to the area. The 19th Pz Recce battalion was the first to arrive, and it had to try to contain the small bridgeheads that were popping up all around the bend. [Size small]

0922_01: Race to the River (Kanev)

Kanev, September 22nd 1943: After the failed Kursk offensive in July 1943, most of the German Army was in retreat. In the Ukraine, the 8th Panzer Armee was no exception, it was racing to get to the Dnepr ahead of the Russian 3rd Guards Tank Army. Both sides reached the river at about the same time, the 3rd GTA at Zarubentsy, the XXIV Panzer Korps at Kanev. At that time there were few German units on the western bank from Kiev

to Cherkassey. The Russians decided to force a bridgehead on the western bank, then move south to cut off the XXIV Pz Korps at the Kanev bridge. It was touch and go for a while, as the Germans scrambled to find units to seal off and destroy the bridgehead. 19th Pz Division's Armored Recce Battalion was dispatched from the Kiev area with orders to hold until the rest of the division could arrive. It was hoped this would be enough to enable the XXIV Pz Korps, on the east bank, to get over the last bridge and push the Russians back into the river. However, the Soviets also had plans for the bridgehead, although unable to ferry many tanks or heavy weapons over, they had numerous small infantry bridgeheads. They also had a daring plan to use an airborne assault to seal the bulge, but unfortunately, the organizational skill to put this assault together was found to be lacking. The assault came in dribs and drabs, the pilots were inexperienced, as indeed, were the paratroops themselves, many were clerical and support staff "rounded up" for a maximum effort. Add to this delays and complete confusion, as they were dropped mostly at night, and there was a recipe for a total disaster. [Size large] Designer Note: This scenario is perhaps best played by two humans, as it presents the AI with a challenging situation to evaluate. However AI Play is possible and will be most challenging for a Human German, but fun for the Human Russian, who should rack up a win easily.

0922_02: Race to the River (Kanev-What If)

This is a "What If" scenario: Kanev, September 22nd 1943: After the failed Kursk offensive in July 1943, most of the German Army was in retreat. In the Ukraine, the 8th Panzer Armee was no exception, it was racing to get to the Dnepr ahead of the Russian 3rd Guards Tank Army. Both sides reached the river at about the same time, the 3rd GTA at Zarubentsy, the XXIV Panzer Korps at Kanev. At that time there were few German units on the western bank from Kiev to Cherkassey. The Russians decided to force a bridgehead on the western bank, then move south to cut off the XXIV Pz Korps at the Kanev bridge. It was touch and go for a while, as the Germans scrambled to find units to seal off and destroy the bridgehead. 19th Pz Division's Armored Recce Battalion was dispatched from the Kiev area with orders to hold until the rest of the division could arrive. It was hoped this would be enough to enable the XXIV Pz Korps, on the east bank, to get over the last bridge and push the Russians back into the river. However, the Soviets also had plans for the bridgehead, although unable to ferry many tanks or heavy weapons over, they had numerous small infantry bridgeheads. They also had a daring plan to use an airborne assault to seal the bulge, but unfortunately, the organizational skill to put this assault together was found to be lacking. WHAT IF the airborne assault had been well conducted and the paratroops had landed in large numbers. Their mission was to seal off the bend in the west on a line from the Rossava River in the south, north through Makedony and Lipovyy Rog to the river. [Size large] Designer Note: This scenario is perhaps best played by two humans as it presents the AI with a challenging situation to evaluate. However AI Play is possible and will be most challenging for a Human German, but fun for the Human Russian, who should rack up a win easily.

0922_03: A Few Good Men

Kanev Bridge, September 26th 1943: The Germans were slogging through the mud to get to the west bank of the Dnepr, as General Nehring tried to move the XXIV Panzer Korps over the Kanev Bridge. At the same time, the leading elements of the Russian 6th Guards Tank Corps was powering down the east bank, in attempt to capture the bridge and cut off the withdrawing German forces. They clashed at the village of Reschetki. [Size small]

0923_01: A Perfect Plan

West of Kanev, night of September 23rd 1944:WHAT IF SCENARIO: After reading articles published about the Soviet Airborne drop at Kanev, one has to question why, after all the setbacks, the decision was made to proceed with it at all. Be that as it may, the plan was perfect. The situation was ideal for the use of airborne troops, and the plan itself was daring and sound. The only drawbacks were huge ones, the Soviet military had neither the organizational skill or experience to carry it out. "What If" they had executed it perfectly, on time, with all 3 Airborne brigades while the Germans were still struggling through the mud on the east side of the Dnepr? The 1st Guards AB Bde would land near Lasurzy and set up a defensive line Makedony-Sinyavka. The 3rd Guards AB Bde would land near Grushevo, then set up their line from Lipovyy Rog-Makedony. The 5th Guards AB Bde drop would be in the area south west of Kanev to secure the Rossava River and road to the east to prevent any counter-attack from the south and south-west. Ideally they were to hold up the Germans until the 40th Army could burst out of the Bukrin bridgehead. This scenario deals with the drop and the attempt to hold on for the day and a half required for the breakout. [Size medium]

0107_01: Battle of Kirovograd

Kirovograd, 100 km south of the Korsun Salient, January 7th 1944 (three weeks before the battle that formed the Korsun Pocket): After the Battle of Kursk, the Red Army started to push the German forces in the south back towards the Dnepr. Stavka realized that they had to get bridgeheads over Dnepr as fast as possible, so the Germans didn't get time to prepare a proper defense-line utilizing the river. It was Konev's 2nd Ukrainian Front that started to attack on 5th January. The attack was directed mainly against XXXXVIIth Panzer Corps from 8th Army, and not all forces in 2nd Ukrainian Front were used by Konev. Massed infantry burst through the thinly held front. They were followed by more infantry and anti-tank units to hold open the penetrations for the following Soviet armor. The Germans held on and then withdrew using their reserves for numerous small flank counter attacks. This scenario joins the action on the morning of January 7, as the Russians continued their attempt to capture Kirovograd. [Size large]

0111_01: Stemming the Red Tide

Kirovograd, 100 km south of the Korsun Salient, (two weeks before the battle that formed the Korsun Pocket): Five days after the massive Soviet infantry attacks on Kirovograd, the Germans, cleverly using what reserves they had, managed to slow the advance. But, after some re-organization and despite their losses, the Russian juggernaut moved forward again. The Russians were rich in manpower, and reinforcements were rushed forward and fed into the depleted rifle divisions. The Germans were handicapped, as the whole Southern Front was under pressure, and the 8th Army was unable to prevent some local penetrations. They demonstrated extraordinary flexibility, with the use of different defense tactics, basically letting the Russians through the line, then isolating them. But their reserve strength was being eaten up. Desperately the German High Command scoured for units to stem the "Red Tide". [Size large] Designer note: The Germans are outnumbered in this scenario, so it may be best played as an Human Axis Defender against the Russian AI.

0125_01s: The Korsun Pocket Full Campaign

"Korsun Salient", 120kms SE Kiev, January 25th 1944: In the middle of January 1944, the overall front line of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts, along the Dnepr, was dented by a well protected German salient. This was in the Kanev, Shpola and Zvenigorodka area near Cherkassy. The dense German grouping in the area had been caused by previous combat operations in the area. The strong force at the junction of the two Fronts created a threat to the Russian rear area. Although both Fronts had been fighting continuously for some time, the Stavka High Command urgently required the liquidation of this threat. Their plan was for 1st Ukrainian to attack from the west, and 2nd Ukrainian to attack from the east, with the two tank armies, 5th Gds and 6th Gds Tank Armies, meeting at the town of Zvenigorodka. This would pocket the Germans, and allow the rifle divisions following, to splinter, and destroy the encircled enemy forces. Of course, the Germans had different ideas, reacting swiftly to rescue the trapped divisions. [Size very large]

0125_01s_a: "No Retreat" Campaign ALT #1

"Korsun Salient", 120kms SE Kiev, January 25th 1944: The German Army in Korsun Salient held tight to the Dnepr River. It was Hitler's grand idea that this hold on the Dnepr would be needed to launch the next great offensive into the Soviet Union. Of course such plans were mad raves of the deranged dictator. But this order to HOLD would prevent the Germans from performing a mass retreat to avoid the encirclement by the Soviet pincers. In this respect, this scenario represents a fairly accurate historical situation using FIXED German forces, north of the operational areas. The Axis player cannot retreat against Hitler's orders and a pocket will likely be formed. [Size very large] Designers Note: This scenario is best played H2H, as the fixed troops will prevent a mass German retreat causing no pocket to be formed.

0125_01s_b: "Enter 24th Pz" Campaign ALT #2

"Korsun Salient", 120kms SE Kiev, January 25th 1944: The 24th Panzer Division did not fire a shot during the Korsun Campaign. It was mired down counter marching back and forth while Hitler and the High Command tried to figure out where to best employ it. However, the presence of this full Panzer Division, early enough in the battle may have been enough to swing the balance in favor of the Germans in their plight to break into the encircled pocket. This campaign variant features an early release of the 24th Panzer along with the fix German forces used in Alt #1. [Size very large]

0125_01s_c: "Stiff Resistance" Campaign ALT #3

"Korsun Salient", 120kms SE Kiev, January 25th 1944: When the Soviet Army launched offensives by both the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts, they met stiff resistance in a fortified line. Now these defenses were no Maginot Line - there were no concrete bunkers and pillboxes, but there were good field fortifications. This scenario examines a Campaign situation where the German field fortifications in game terms are TRENCHES instead of IMPROVED POSITIONS. It also features slightly earlier German reinforcement. [Size very large] Designer Note: If the Soviet player is looking for a greater challenge, then he may find this Campaign Scenario more to his taste.

0125_01s_d: "Hold That Line!" Campaign ALT #4

"Korsun Salient", 120kms SE Kiev, January 25th 1944: Soviet doctrine for a major

offensive, such as the one at Korsun, called for large holes to be torn in the German Front lines. Then, at the appropriate movement fresh reserves, usually tank and cavalry units would surge forward into the gap. This scenario depicts a situation where the Soviet Reserve immediately behind the lines is UNFIXED and ready to be deployed at will by the Russian Player. The Axis player is still facing the situation with FIXED units on the Dnepr as per the "No Retreat" situation depicted in the ALT #1 scenario. Designer Note: If the German player is looking for a greater challenge, then he may find this Campaign Scenario more to his taste.

0125_02: The 2nd Ukrainian Front

The east flanks of the Korsun Salient, 120kms SE Kiev, January 25th 1944: The first shots fired in the battle to encircle the Germans in the Korsun Salient were fired by Marshall Konev's 2nd Ukrainian Front. The plan called for a frontal attack by the 4th Guards and 53rd Armies, followed by exploitation by the 5th Guards Tank Army. If all went to schedule, the Soviets would be in Shpola on the second day, and link up with the later attack by the 1st Ukrainian coming from the NE on the third day. [Size large] *Players note - German reinforcements arriving on the map edge have a protective zone that may extend 3 hexes from the edge.

0125_03: 4th Guards Army

The east flanks of the Korsun Salient, 120kms SE Kiev, January 25th 1944: On the northern flank of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, the 4th Guards Army slammed into the 72nd and 389th German Infantry divisions who held fast on the first day on the edge of the town of Telepino. Nightfall brought the release of the 5th Guards Don Cavalry Corps, its goal was to smash swiftly into the German rear area destroying personal and equipment. Because of its swift advance, the Army had to be wary of its flanks first day when the 5th Guards Tank Army was committed to the line. The tanks swift advance had to be wary of its flanks as the 53rd outpaced the Soviet formations to the north and were threatened on the south flank by powerful Panzer reinforcements. [Size medium] Players note - German reinforcements arriving on the map edge have a protective zone that may extend 3 hexes from the edge of the map.

0125_04: 53rd Army

The east flank of the Korsun Salient, 120kms SE Kiev, January 25th 1944: The 53rd Army sector was the area where the greatest gains were made in the early phase of the battle. The Red Army captured Ositnyazhka, Reymentarovka and Pisarevka on the first day when the 5th Guards Tank Army was committed to the line. Because of its swift advance, the Army had to be wary of its flanks first day when the 5th Guards Tank Army was committed to the line. The tanks swift advance had to be wary of its flanks as the 53rd outpaced the Soviet formations to the north and were threatened on the south flank by powerful Panzer reinforcements. [Size medium]

0126_01: The 1st Ukrainian Front

The west flank of the Korsun Salient, 120kms SE Kiev, January 26th 1944: Day two in the Russian effort to form a pocket at Korsun, but day one of the jump off attack for the 1st Ukrainian Front on the west side of the salient. The weather is lousy, so only limited air

support is available, and artillery spotting is hampered. The plan calls for the 47th and 104th Rifle Corps to breach the line for the 6th Tank Army to rush through. But by noon it is apparent that the tanks will need to be committed if Marshall Vatutin's army is going to break the deadlock and meet Konev's forces driving up from the south east. [Size large]

0126_02: Advance Through Medvin

The west flank of the Korsun Salient, 120kms SE Kiev, January 26th 1944: On the morning of this second phase of the Soviet offensive, the 1st Ukrainian Front struck. Although slow from the very beginning, the attack built in momentum. Later in the day the units of the 6th Tank Army were drawn into frontal battle and they made their presence felt by reinforcing the sector with the best gains. The powerful tank and mechanized force did a left hook to fall in behind and reinforce the 47th Rifle Corps in pressing for Medvin. [Size medium]

0126_03: Sudden Night Strike to Shpola

Shpola, as the Russians broke the line in the east, January 26th 1944: A complex situation had developed by the evening of the 26th of January. Much of the 20th Tank Corps had broken through the German lines and were themselves cut off from their own side. Yet General Lazerev decided to strike out for Shpola, and ultimately toward Zvenigorodka, and a link up with tanks pushing from the northwest. Shpola was the next major place in his path and it was learned the town was prepared for all-round defense. So Lazerev elected to try for a Sudden Night Strike, even before all his Corps could be brought to bear, in hopes that he might catch the battered German defenders off guard. [Size small]

0127_01: The Pincers Meet

The west flank of the Korsun Salient, 120kms SE Kiev, January 27th 1944: Day three in the Russian effort to form a pocket at Korsun, but the second day of the jump off attack for the 1st Ukrainian Front on the west side of the salient. The weather remains poor but the armor of the 6th Tank Army moves forward to support the 47th Rifle Corps. Marshall Vatutin's army is striking hard toward the southeast to meet with Marshall Konev's tanks pushing forward from the Southeast. [Size medium]

0201_01s: The Korsun Pocket – "In the Bag"

"Korsun Pocket", 120kms SE Kiev, February 1st 1944: The first large pocket since Stalingrad has been formed on the Dnepr's right bank. The Soviets brace themselves to hold the outer ring against the inevitable German counterattack, while at the same time squeezing the pocket inwards. The Germans are massing 8 Panzer Divisions to launch the relief effort, but for now, the Russian Army has them "In the Bag". [Size large]

0204_01: Crisis in the West

Near Vinograd, 60km south of Korsun, February 4th 1944: On the western side of the outer encirclement, III Panzer Korps had assembled 16th and 17th Panzer Divisions to attack towards Vaselyi Kut, the recognized crossing point of the Gniloy Tikich river in the area, then they would wheel to the east and relieve the pocket. The original plan had included the SSLAH and 1st Panzer Division, but on the night of February 1st, a surprise thaw had changed the snows to thick, black, oozing mud, slowing down their approach. The attack was launched without them and, initially, smashed through the Soviet defenses of 104th Rifle Corps. The Soviet High Command saw this as a crisis, and rushed any available units to stop the thrust. Gradually, the sea of mud and Soviet positions slowed the onslaught to a crawl. III Pz Korps did make it to the river, and establish a bridgehead, but there they stalled. This gave rise to the decision to have them withdraw from the narrow salient they had punched in the line, to regroup, and make another attempt on a different route in the days to come. [Size medium]

0204_02: About Turn ["What If" with 24th Pz Div]

Shpola, February 4th 1944: The German XXXXVII Panzer Korps had pulled back into the gaping hole between it and III Pz Korps to lick its wounds. It had been roughly handled by the Soviet onslaught. The Korps pulled its battered divisions together for a final desperate effort to relieve the pocket. Its first attack was beaten off, and then on Feb 4th it was ready to attack once more. Help, in the form of 24th Pz Division, was supposed to be forthcoming. However, before it could add its weight to the conflict, it was recalled to the area around Nikopol, so it did an about turn, leaving the Korps to its own devices. "WHAT IF" the 24th Pz Div had not been recalled to Nikopol? [Size medium]

0204_03: About Turn [No 24th Pz Div]

Shpola, February 4th 1944: The German XXXXVII Panzer Korps had pulled back into the gaping hole between it and III Pz Korps to lick its wounds. It had been roughly handled by the Soviet onslaught. The Korps pulled its battered divisions together for a final desperate effort to relieve the pocket. Its first attack was beaten off, and then on Feb 4th it was ready to attack once more. Help, in the form of 24th Pz Division, was supposed to be forthcoming. However, before it could add its weight to the conflict, it was recalled to the area around Nikopol, so it did an about turn, leaving the Korps to its own devices. [Size medium]

0210_01s: The Pocket - "We Will Come Out!"

"Korsun Pocket", 120kms SE Kiev, February 10th 1944: By the 10th of February it was obvious to the German High Command that it was now or never. A breakout attempt had to be made and soon. A radio message from General Breith in the pockets was short and to the point " ... we will come out, no matter what!" Meanwhile, on the other side, Marshall Konev anticipating the breakout attempt, began shifting units to meet the threats from all directions. [Size large]

0210_02s: Korsun Breakout – Human German

"Korsun Pocket", 120kms SE Kiev, February 10th 1944: This alternative version of the scenario 0210_01s: The Pocket - "We Will Come Out!" uses some alternative positioning

of Soviet units. Marshall Konev had anticipated the German breakout and began re-position a number of units, notably elements of the 5th Guards Cavalry Corps. Therefore, the scenario designers have placed the Soviet forces for defense in depth, fixed with variable release and triggered for release by German units in line-of-sight. [Size large] *Designer Note - The placements in this scenario make it more challenging for German Human Play vs. either a Soviet AI or Human opponent.

0210_03s: The Pocket - Alternative Weather

"Korsun Pocket", 120kms SE Kiev, February 10th 1944: One huge factor that dominated this battle of encirclement at Korsun is the abominable weather conditions caused by the quick February thaw that brought mud, mud and more mud. While it is true that both sides were equally subjected to these handicaps, the bad weather hit at a when the Germans desperately needed firm ground to give their panzer formation the mobility they required to carry out their mission. This alternative weather scenario examines the breakout attempt with SNOW ground conditions and should make the German side task a little easier, but still offer a challenging situation. [Size large] *Designer Note – this scenario is designed for play without the Optional Programmed Weather Rules. Under the basic weather rules, ground and visibility may still vary but in general, snow ground conditions will normally prevail.

0211_01: Try, Try Again

Vinograd, 60km south west of Korsun, February 11th 1944: Time was running short for the 56,000 men trapped in the Korsun Pocket. All the rescue attempts so far had ground to halt due to Soviet counter-attacks, the clinging mud, and the failure of the German High Command to effectively use its available units. In the east, the worn out divisions had been battered onto the defensive. The emphasis was now in the west, where III Pz Korps was now the massing its units to try again to relieve the pocket. 16th and 17th Pz Divisions had now been reinforced with the well-equipped 1st Pz Division and Kampfgruppe Baeke with its Tigers and Panthers. They pushed aside the 47th Rifle Corps, and rushed towards the crossing points of the Gniloy Tikich river at Bushanka and Lisyanka. [Size medium]

***#99a_Map_Summer.scn**

****#99b_Map_Winter.scn**

These two Scenarios are NOT playable game scenarios. They are blank shell scenarios which show the entire map area encompassed by the game in the three separate Operations: Kanev, Kirvograd, and Korsun, in both Summer and Winter colors. Players wishing to make their own scenarios will find this map template useful for reading the coordinates of the upper left corner of the required Sub_map. Refer to the Scenario Editor -> HELP | General Help ... -> Other Features -> Creating Sub Maps for more information.

III. Watchword Freedom

Cherkassy-Korsun, February 4-16 1944

By Wild Bill Wilder

Another Bitter Year

The year of 1944 began just as the previous had ended. The once arrogant Wehrmacht that had boldly crossed the border with Russia was a thing of the distant past. It felt like a thousand years ago to the weary German soldier. His face is dirty, gaunt, and hollow eyed. He wears rags for a uniform, (which were stuffed with paper to hold in a little more body heat). He vainly searches for food, not the enemy. He appears as a walking dead man. There is no light of hope in his eyes, only panic and frantic glances all around, lest death catch him by total surprise.

This soldier was the personification of the army itself. The half-dead, half-frozen warrior portrayed graphically the condition of the entire Wehrmacht. Gone for the most part were the mighty leaders, either angrily dismissed by a ranting Hitler, or lying in the frozen ground of the Russian steppes. More and more of the leaders filling the gaps were sycophants for the Fuhrer. The deterioration in leadership naturally had its effect on the rank and file of the German army.

For the poor soldier in the field, a desperate resignation to a miserable existence and a worst final fate pervaded his thinking. There was never enough of anything. Starving, low on ammunition, and exposed to the bitter icy winds of the Soviet Union, and lonely for home, he wondered often just why he was here and what would be his fate. Certainly there would be no victory marches through the streets of Moscow. More than likely, there would be no triumphant return to his homeland.

Death would come. He was resigned to it. He was sure of it! But how? A Russian bullet in the brain, or a bayonet in the gut? Or would it be the slow killers, hunger and cold? Goodbye Germany, goodbye family, farewell hope! Both the equipment and the men were old before their time, simply worn out. And it seemed to get worse with each passing day.

The Germany army now stumbled, as a punch-drunk fighter who has taken too many blows. It reeled blindly from the hammer-like blows of the Russian army, first in one place, then in another. And they continued incessantly.

A renewed Soviet offensive slammed into Army Group North around Leningrad, pushing them rudely away from the mighty city that had been under a two-year siege. Before the German forces could recover from that, another blow fell, but this time at the other end of the defensive line. Now it was Army Group South, holding on to part of the Donetz Basin that would face the mighty fist of the Soviet army.

Hitler's reactions to these incursions were standard for him at this point. "Stand fast! No retreat!" Generals began devising ways of retreating without calling it such. It was a maneuver, or seeking a better position. Using the word retreat could bring instant dismissal, or worse. Military leaders in the field not only had a resolute, vicious enemy in front of him, dogging his every move, but a watchful eye behind him, ready to issue orders for removal or a firing squad, depending on the capriciousness of the moment.

The Soviet leaders, on the other hand, were very pleased with Hitler's strategy. "Stand Fast" was a golden opportunity for them. They simply went around the enemy and surrounded him. Then they watched him die from either starvation, or being shot. Motionless targets are so much easier to hit!

A Big Victory for the Premier

Premier Stalin had a voracious appetite. He wanted a big victory, more German blood, and more revenge in early 1944. He was fully aware that the German forces were reeling from another winter in the Motherland, and their forces were weary, depleted, and retreating. There would be no respite. Hitler, attempting to run everything, including every move of the German Army on the East Front cried out in anguish, "Even the Russians have to stop sometime to catch their breath!" These "sub-human" creatures were kicking the elite Wehrmacht all over the map.

To achieve this goal, the Ukrainian Front Group, led by Generals Konev and Vatutin, two of the better Russian generals, would be the leaders in a new encircling assault. The fact that they both were still alive at this point in the war proved their capabilities. Otherwise a German, or Russian bullet, would have dispatched them before now (a fate which other Soviet military leaders had suffered).

During the earlier part of the Russian winter offensive of 1943-44, the German defenses on the middle Dnepr had collapsed under enormous enemy pressure. The Russians had bridged the great river, and continued their advance westward. Only at one point was a German force still holding a front along the river.

It was a big part of the German Eighth Army, both the 11th and 42nd Corps. It included four infantry divisions: the 57th, 88th, 72nd, and a part of the 389th. In addition, the 5th SS Panzer Grenadier Wiking Division, and the Korpsabteilung "B" (with parts of the 258th Regiment and the 112th Infantry division), plus various armored, artillery, and other units, were still holding the line along the Dnepr. They were responsible for a sector whose frontage was nearly 80 miles long, between Kanev and Cherkassy. It was in a north bend of the river and stuck out like a boil into the Soviet lines.

A Danger Seen...A Danger Ignored

General von Manstein, now commander of Army Group South and one of the last few military geniuses the German army had in Russia, had lobbied incessantly that the two corps be allowed to withdraw from the salient and smooth out the German defenses. Hitler would not hear of it. The Fuhrer needed time to anticipate the Allies and their next move in the west. Once he knew that, he would know better how to deal with the East.

It was kind of like the game of paying off one credit card with another credit card. The debt just keeps growing. Hitler transferred armies at the slightest whim, with occasionally disastrous results. To a point, however, such action was necessary, since there were simply not enough German units to defend the entire German Panther defensive line.

As the Russians struck, Hitler ordered reinforcing units to the area. Now he planned for the same type of action if activity intensified in the west. He would not commit troops on the East Front to battle, when they might suddenly be needed elsewhere. The end result was that the units in other battle areas would remain where they were until further notice. No help would be sent.

Hitler's allies were now practically non-existent. Japan had enemy forces drawing ever nearer to the Home Islands, with no way to stop them. Italy had dropped out of the war entirely. Finland sought no wider war, but rather to maintain what it had regained from the early Soviet invasion of 1939-1940. Rumania and Hungary were out of the war. Spain had withdrawn its legion. Germany was essentially standing alone, with no help in sight.

It was in late December 1941 that Hitler, after sacking Guderian and some 30 other top

generals, laconically stated, "The little matter of operational command on the Eastern Front is something anyone can do." This could be considered the prelude to disaster.

But frustrated corporals don't always make good generals! Hitler's unsuccessful conduct of the war became patent, with the annihilation of the proud Sixth Army and a part of the Fourth Panzer Army at Stalingrad, in late 1942 and early 1943. The great battle of Kursk was stopped in midstream (though it was apparent that the German panzers would not be successful) and units withdrawn from the battle. It also ended in a fiasco, and marked the end of any further major offensive operations by Germany for the remainder of the war on the Eastern Front.

Even worse, from that moment on, the Soviet Union launched one hammer-like offensive after another against the Wehrmacht. Germany's army staggered under the blows of one attack after another, from Finland to the Black Sea. Retreats were inevitable. Losses were irreplaceable. Yet the Fuhrer retained an incredible enthusiasm. He continually believed that the Soviets were making their last gasp before collapse. They were on the verge of defeat to his way of thinking, even in late 1943. The reality was that just the opposite was true.

His strategy against such attacks was simple. The order went out again and again to beleaguered and surrounded German soldiers, "Hold fast!" "Stand your Ground!" "There is to be no retreat!" He saw outlined on great maps his panzer divisions. What was on paper, however, was not in the field. That same panzer division, so proudly stenciled in on the map, was often little larger than a panzer regiment, and sometimes nothing more than a battalion, one-tenth its original size. Paper armies cannot win wars.

Hitler's mad control now extended to any sort of movement on the front. Just the readjustment of a single division had to have his approval. The absurdity of this type of thinking was graphically proven when General Sponeck dared to withdraw his corps (consisting of a single division) lest it be cut off in the Crimea, this was answered with his instant dismissal, and subsequent court-martial and execution.

At Rovno, in the Ukraine, about 600 German soldiers clung by their fingernails to a tiny piece of the town. Hitler declared it to be a fortress, to hold at all costs. The commander of the force withdrew the men anyway. He too was court-martialed, and shot, for "reckless disobedience." German generals did not know whom they should fear more, their leader or the Russians.

The horrendous losses suffered by German in three years of fighting had seriously debilitated the strength of the German army. Instead of the haughty goose-stepping young soldiers of 1941, these warriors seemed to have aged prematurely. Their eyes were lifeless, filled with fear. Those eyes constantly watched, for they could never close completely. Instead there were darting glances, in all directions, to anticipate another Russian attack.

There was no sleep in Russia. Partisan elements owned the night and struck mercilessly. Then there was the cold weather! There was no real warmth in the Russian winter. Temperatures reaching 50 degrees below zero left a man in a frozen stupor. Weapons did not work, vehicles would not run, and what rations there were froze in seconds, even after being warmed by a weak fire. There was death, however, and plenty of it. Over 1,000,000 German youth had perished in Russia, and a like number taken away as prisoners to the slave labor camps for a slow death, or shot enroute, for a quicker one.

And the German army was retreating, always retreating. There were no more major victories, only entrapments and occasionally rescues. There seemed to be no hope on the

East Front.

Even worse, the Russians would not – no, could not be stopped. They just kept coming. They were a flood, an inexhaustible torrent of men dressed in brown, riding tanks, and killing with pleasure. Alan Clark in his work, "Barbarossa", said about this period in the war that, "...the floodgates were creaking." That is to say, the entire German front was in danger of being swept away by a tidal wave of Soviet attacks.

But it was the Russian soldier himself that was the key to even greater victories, not so much the generals. He was not the same man that faced the German Army three years earlier. His training, experience, and zeal, were positive qualities that gave him the edge. Even more, the Russian soldier was motivated primarily, not by loyalty, but by an inordinate desire for revenge. Hate filled his eyes with an unmistakable fire.

To him, the German soldier was a home invader of the worst sort. For the Russian man of arms, it was not just "The Great Patriotic War," but also a personal vendetta. It was retribution for burned homes, a ravaged land, dead comrades in arms, raped wives and daughters, and slaughtered children. It was a time to exact that "pound of flesh." Revenge might be a dish better served cold, but it ran hot in the veins of the Soviet soldier, tanker, and airman. They were not out just to beat Germany, but to crush it out of existence, to recompense pain for pain, and with abundant interest. For the Russian, it was time for the "big payback!"

Danger from the Northwest

While chaos reigned in the Wehrmacht, the Soviets approached the war with a simple strategy. It was "attack." Attack again and again. Give the enemy no room. Crush him, suffocate him, strangle him. With one victory after another to his credit, General Zhukov's mind in early 1944 was obsessed with a greater prize: the destruction of the German 8th Army. It was felt that another victory, of the sort secured at Stalingrad, would finally unhinge German defenses and pave the way to Berlin.

The German salient along the Dnepr in southern Russia, between Kanev and Cherkassy, would be a great spot to begin this new attack. By cutting off the units in this bend in the river, German forces would be drawn to it, and could be pounded to pieces by the superior numbers of Russian tanks and infantry. It offered great prospects.

Even more appealing, was the idea that the retreat of Army Group South, or its encirclement, could mean cutting off another major German force, Army Group A, further to the south in the Crimea. All of these possibilities presented themselves as the attacks by the two Ukrainian Front Groups began in the middle of January 1944.

Two German Corps held the 80-mile German extension into Soviet lines; they were the 11th and the 42nd. Corps. They included units of five infantry divisions, a battlegroup, and an SS Panzer Grenadier Division (The Wiking). Manstein advocated the withdrawal of these divisions and a straightening of the German lines. These 60,000 men and their vital equipment were dangerously exposed to encirclement.

Hitler would not allow any withdrawal. He used as a pretext the possible invasion of France in the west. He needed to maintain the 'status quo' in the east for possible later action in the west. It was a poor excuse for an argument. In reality, he saw this salient as bait for the Russians. If they encircled the German forces, Hitler's panzer divisions could then encircle the Russians and crush them from without, and within, at the same time. A large airfield at Korsun also provided the possibility of the units, that might be trapped, to be resupplied from the air (a project that failed miserably at Stalingrad 14 months before).

When the two Ukrainian Fronts attacked from the southeast and northwest, they were initially stopped in their tracks. However, by committing thousands of infantry, and three full divisions of cavalry, their numbers alone soon proved overwhelming. The 2nd Ukrainian Front made

excellent progress into the German defenses and headed to the northwest.

At the same time that Konev's 2nd Ukrainian Front was shattering the German line to the east, the second jaw of the Russian pincers was clamping down from the northwest. The 6th Tank Army, of the 1st Ukrainian Front under General Vatutin, spearheaded it. Leading the way into the battle was the 5th Guards Mechanized Corps, supported by the 5th Guards Tank Corps.

In 1942, the 5th Mechanized Corps had originally been designated 6th Mechanized Corps. It was a newly formed unit, put together in a time of real peril in southwest Russia, and had less than 200 tanks with which to confront the powerful German 4th Panzer Army. Nevertheless, the Soviets had gone head-to-head with von Manstein's panzer divisions that were trying to relieve the German 6th Army trapped in Stalingrad. Equipped with T-34 and T-70 tanks, the Corps had made a name for itself. It helped to blunt, and then turn away the rescue effort. In recognition of this heroic act, it was redesignated as the 5th Guards Mechanized Corps.

Much had changed since those dark days near the Volga River. The Corps had been gradually built up in men and equipment until it was a force to be reckoned with. It was the mobile arm of the 1st Ukrainian Front and took the fight directly to the Germans.

To the west of the German 11th Corps, was the sister 7th Corps that took the brunt of the 1st Ukrainian Front's attack. It crumbled under the onslaught. The Bavarian 88th and the 198th Baden-Wurttemberg Divisions flung themselves recklessly against the Russian tank packs. These units, with little armored support, were the only forces available to fill in the gap in the line. If they failed to hold, there was an open path toward Romistrov's tanks of the 5th Guards Tank Army, less than 60 miles to the southeast. Once they linked up, the salient would be cut off. Sixty thousand Germans would find themselves cut off from friendly lines.

Trapped!

The question now for the German field commanders was how to resolve the problem. General Lieb commanded the 11th Corps, and General of Artillery Stemmerman was in authority over the 42nd Corps. Upon the closure of the encirclement, command of the entire force passed to General Stemmerman. The trapped German divisions became known as "Group Stemmerman". The most rational solution would have been to order both corps to attempt an immediate breakout, before the Soviet snare could be secured. In addition to saving these men, this would fill the void now created between the 1st Panzer Army on the right and 8th Army on the left. Otherwise, the road was open to allow a Soviet advance for dozens of miles with absolutely nothing to stop it.

This would not be allowed. Instead, Hitler saw the opportunity for an even greater victory. With nine panzer divisions in the vicinity, he sprang upon the idea of encircling the Soviet forces that surrounded the German Corps. Hitler's grand offensive would trap two Soviet Fronts and advance to Kiev. He was sure that the Soviet armies had been weakened considerably, and would not be able to resist the sweeping moves of the panzers.

He failed to take into account two facts. The first was that the units that had been bled white, were not the Soviet forces, but the Germans. The panzer divisions ordered to make the attack were at half strength, or less, except for the recently arrived 24th Panzer Division. Total tank strength for this armored force numbered less than 1,000 tanks. They faced three times that number. Their equipment was badly in need of repair. Supplies were low, and the German fighting man was at the point of exhaustion.

The second was the capriciousness of the Russian weather. Both 1941 and 1942 had seen some of the severest winter weather in Russian history. The Germans had been caught in the middle of it, most of whom were totally unprepared. There were as many casualties from illnesses, starvation, and frostbite, as there were from combat. In early 1944, the fickleness of the weather would come into play again.

The Fickle Russian Winter

The first week of February was witness to an early warming of the weather. This proved fatal to movement. The rich black earth of the Ukraine turned quickly into a sea of mud, in which tanks would sometimes sink to the turret. Soldiers' boots would be pulled off their feet by the suction. Even heavy draught horses could not maneuver in such a morass. It was called the "roadless" season. What poorly constructed roads there were, simply turned to black, gooey mush.

Only some tracked vehicles could make slow progress, usually at speeds of 3 to 5 miles per hour, and then with an inordinate expenditure of fuel. In addition, the engines of the tanks and tracked vehicles often burned up under the strain. Soviet armor, built with wider tracks, usually enjoyed increased mobility in such conditions. Even they, however, became paralyzed in these nightmare conditions.

Then, when night came and the temperature again plummeted to 15 degrees below Centigrade, the vehicles would freeze solid in the now rock hard earth. It would take pickaxes and blowtorches to break them free. Thus the weather, and the weakened condition of German armored units, doomed the enterprise of encircling nearly 200,000 Russian soldiers, and over 2,000 tanks, to failure. Of course Hitler, seated comfortably in the Wolf's Lair, only saw maps and units placed on them. The difficulties at the front were over a thousand miles away.

When the plan was presented to the generals of Army Group South, there was protest. General Wohlers, commander of the Eighth Army, preferred that the III Panzer Corps (1st, 16th, and 17th Panzer Divisions, with SS Panzer Division "Liebstandarte Adolf Hitler") link up with the 47th Panzer Corps (3rd, 11th, 13th, and 14th Panzer Divisions, with the 24th to join them immediately). Once that was accomplished, they would drive straight for the southwest edge of the pocket and open a path of escape. This time General von Manstein took Hitler's side, at least in part, and opted for the plan of surrounding the Russian attackers.

The First Phase of the Attack

On the morning of February 4th, General Breith initiated the attack to the northeast with the 16th and 17th Panzer Divisions. It was on the same day that the dreaded "rasputitsa" (spring thaw) intervened, and did what the Soviets might not have been able to do. It stopped the German tanks "in their tracks." Near Medwin, tanks of Oberstleutnant Dr. Bake's Heavy Panzer Regiment led the way, 34 Tigers and 46 Panther tanks. The 34th and 198th Infantry Divisions protected their flanks. The infantry units had parts of the LAH SS Panzer Division to support them. Bake's panzers fought the mud for one mile, then two, and finally six.

By this time they were engaging parts of four Soviet tank corps. The Tigers floundered, finally stopped and began firing at long range. The Panthers sought to close the distance, but two of their greatest assets, maneuverability and speed, were denied them by the

treacherous ground. For nearly an entire day, the two armored forces pounded each other. Both sides suffered loss, but the Soviets held their ground. The Panzers could get no closer.

Another Hard Push

General Breith did not give up. With the bulk of the LAH division on hand, and the advance elements of the 1st Panzer Division now arriving, he committed them to the action. Finally, on February 8th, the Soviets were hammered into a withdrawal of sorts. The tanks of Bake's Heavy Panzer Regiment and units of the 16th Panzer Division reached the Gniloy Tikich stream and established a small bridgehead there. It was the furthest point of advance of the III Panzer Corps. There they would wait for the Germans trapped in the Korsun pocket to fight their way to them.

There is a claustrophobic feeling that grips all of us to one degree or another on being trapped. To be enclosed with no way out produces extreme anxiety and tension. On February 1st, 1944, over 57,000 German soldiers, from dozens of different units, found themselves suddenly boxed in by nearly 200,000 Soviet soldiers from four different armies. This had also happened to nearly a quarter of a million German soldiers at Stalingrad. Horror stories were still being told about that disaster. Now it had happened to them. While not on as huge a scale, they were still trapped, shut off from friendly lines. Around them a ring of flesh and steel waited to destroy them, or watch them starve and freeze with an indifferent delight.

Generals Lieb and Stemmerman, commanders of the trapped German forces, quickly realized the seriousness of the situation. It was in the dead of winter, with temperatures dropping to more than forty below zero at night. Shelter was hard to come by. Rations were scarce, as well as the other vitals of war, such as appropriate clothing, ammunition, and weapons. Now within the Soviet circle, which would come to be known as the Korsun or Cherkassy Pocket (the former is more accurate), they faced a grim future.

Finding a Way Out

Only quick and decisive action could save the situation from becoming a major disaster. They would have to be rescued and soon. To accomplish this, the first task would be to establish new fronts at possible breakthrough points mostly to the south of the circle. Help would come from that direction. At the moment, most of the German forces were facing north, along the Dnepr River. Units would have to be shifted and balanced to keep the Soviets at a distance.

Orders went out from 8th Army to the surrounded comrades of the two Corps in the ring of death, "Group Stemmerman will shorten the front lines and move the pocket in the direction of Shenderovka in order to be able, when the time comes, to break out towards the forces mounting a relief attack from outside."

That was clear enough. Executing the orders would require a masterful handling of troops under siege. Stemmerman took on the task with a vengeance and successfully pulled back in the north while pushing ahead in the south.

Since no reserves were available to the 11th and 42nd Corps, it was decided that elements from both corps would be taken in battalion strength to form these new strongpoints. This led to a large intermixing of units. Such an action would later confuse the Soviets, who believed that they had the bulk of the German Eighth Army trapped.

The first units to move away from the front were parts of the 42nd Corps, furthest to the north. This meant the abandonment of the Dnepr River positions. From the southeast, the 11th Corps also began shrinking its perimeter and extending to the south.

The focal point of all this activity was Korsun, with the pocket's only airfield. Here supplies were flown in daily, as weather permitted. It was the only contact that the German forces had with the outside world with the exception of radio communications. The town would become the very center of all major movement and coordination of forces.

Of course, the ordinary German soldier, fearful and half-frozen, did not have the big picture. He only found himself moving daily. There were no more fortified positions, bunkers or warm billets. He marched and fought, both day and night. This meant wading through icy mud, at times knee deep. On many occasions he would lie unprotected, in the freezing night wind, without cover. Their uniforms were soaked daily by rain, and froze to them at night. Rations were few and far between. Black bread, tepid soup, an occasional cup of ersatz coffee, or perhaps even a mug of hot tea. What a luxury! Dirty soldiers became dirtier. It was discomfort at its worst.

And on top of it all there was fighting, always fighting. Soviet tanks and troops constantly came from nowhere and charged madly. On other occasions they hid in the snow and forested areas, sniping and dropping mortar shells in the midst of the moving Germans. Casualties mounted. Many had to be left behind. The men who could still walk had no strength to carry them.

On the days when there were breaks in the winter overcast, the Soviet Air Force bombed at will. Dozens of vehicles in the long caravans to Korsun were nearly always in flames. They at least provided warmth, but no one dared draw near. Exploding ammunition, and the smell of roasting human flesh, kept the men at a distance.

The Pocket grows Smaller

To open the way in the south for the escape, key villages would have to be wrested away from the Soviet forces. These included Shenderovka, Novaya-Buda, and Komarovka. At Novaya-Buda the 105th Regiment, of the 72nd Division, was an example of the German desperation and courage at this dark hour. Major Kaestner, knowing he would have to cross an open slope under the guns of the enemy, chose a night attack. Though the regiment was now a shell of its former strength, the desire to be free overwhelmed the German soldier and gave the strength to do the job.

On February 11th, 1944, the attack began. Moving silently with bayonets at the ready, the men of the 105th crept toward the Russian positions. They could hear enemy soldiers chatting along the line with an occasional burst of arrogant laughter. Suddenly a Soviet sentry challenged them. It would be his last.

"Forward!" was the order of Major Kaestner. As one man, the regiment charged the enemy. Fighting was fierce in the enemy trenches. The Germans fired as they ran, charging straight into the surprised enemy. The fight was short. Cold and hot steel took out the defenders and soon shock troops roved up and down the trenches finishing what remained of Russian resistance.

By February 15th, the pocket had moved with a masterful fluidity, maintaining its flanks against constant Soviet pressure to the jump-off point at Shenderovka. Nearly 40,000

German soldiers were crowded into a very cramped space. Korsun, with its precious airstrip was now in Soviet hands. There would be no more resupply for the trapped Germans. The time had come.

The Rescuers are Frustrated

On that same day, panzers from III Panzer Corps made one huge push to capture Hill 239, northeast of the Gniloy Tikich River. By this time, however, the Soviets had prepared awesome defensive positions and were constantly being reinforced. As hard as they tried, they could not take the hill. This meant that the men trapped in the pocket would have to fight their way out against Soviet armor, and infantry, well dug in, and waiting for them.

The Soviets now had a double ring of defensive positions. The inner ring faced Group Stemmerman. Around it was an outer ring that held off the III Panzer Corp's efforts to break through. The two Corps would have the awesome task of fighting through both rings to escape the trap. It was a very difficult task. Still, there was no choice. Eighth Army radioed Stemmerman, "Group Stemmerman must perform breakthrough as far as Zhurzintsy/Hill 239 by its own effort. There link up with III Panzer Corps."

The tragedy was that the message did not clarify that Hill 239 was still in enemy hands. Stemmerman's conclusion from the message was that surely the hill was in friendly hands. He began preparations for the final bid for freedom. He would stay with the rearguard troops, formed from the remnants of three divisions and numbering about 4,000 men.

General Lieb would lead the breakout. Once it began, however, there would be little communication between units. It would be every man for himself. Still local commanders retained strong discipline among their men. They would come out as a unit, no matter how beaten up and decimated they might be.

"Watchword Freedom"

By the 16th of February, the besieged Germans of Group Stemmerman had been under siege for nearly three weeks. The situation was becoming more critical with each passing moment. III Panzer Corps had gone as far as it could. If any of the trapped German forces would be saved now it would be on their own initiative.

Fearing that Hitler might at any time veto the breakout, and knowing of the steadily weakening condition of the two Corps, Manstein made the decision. He issued the order to General Stemmerman to begin the breakout attempt. The codeword was "Watchword Freedom." His communiqué stated simply, "Watchword (password) Freedom, objective Lysyanka, 2300 hours."

Within minutes the message had been read by Stemmerman's chief of staff, Colonel Franz. An immense relief swept over the officer. The orders were clear. This would not be a repeat of Stalingrad. The entire force was advised and went into action. The battle plan for the breakout involved a three-pronged attack by the group.

To the northwest, Corps Detachment B would lead the right wing of the breakout. In the center, the 105th Regiment would again lead the way. Their stunning success at Novaya-Buda had earned them the respect of the entire group. They were hard fighters and they would open the door to freedom.

The left wing, to the southeast, would have units of the 5th SS Viking Division in the lead.

General Stemmerman would control the covering forces for the withdrawal. The bulk of the force would follow the penetrations made by the lead units. All unnecessary items were left behind. Each soldier would carry only that which was essential. Those leading the breakout would carry no bullets in their weapons. The bayonet would be the choice for the initial strike against the Soviets.

At 3:30am it began. The 105th Regiment moved with silent swiftness in the darkness until reaching the base of Hill 239. A recon patrol led by Lt. Bender moved ahead to scout out the area. It was hoped that he would make contact with units of the 1st Panzer Division. It was not to be.

Lt. Bender soon returned with grim news. "There are tanks ahead, but not ours. A half dozen T-34s are stationed on the road ahead, and there are more further to the west." The way was not open after all! After issuing the order to break out, Manstein had second thoughts and attempted to warn Stemmerman that Hill 239 was still in enemy hands. It was too late. Radios had been destroyed and there was no further communication with the trapped troops. None of the soldiers leading the way knew that between them and the rescuers was a strong Russian armored force. They did know that the collapsing pocket behind them was quickly being filled in by tanks of the 5th Guards Tank army, with a lot of infantry moving with them.

The Escape Discovered

Major Kaestner sent the message to those behind him that the enemy was directly ahead. There was no time for further talk or thinking. It was time for action. Kaestner's men moved again with silent deadliness into the Russian ranks. Again the bayonet did its deadly work with quiet precision. The Russians fled, and fired wildly into the darkness. The gunfire alerted tank commanders. Quickly turning on the searchlights, the Soviet tankers saw the ground in front of them covered with German troops. "Otkryt ogon!" ("Open fire!"), shouted the commander.

The troops of the 72nd tried to continue, but machine gun and cannon fire raked their ranks, ripping huge holes in their mass. Some went down for cover. Those who did usually never rose again. The only hope was to get past the enemy. Now there was no orderly movement. It was every man for himself. All along the line the German units moved frantically ahead, seeking a way out of this blackened hell, punctuated by the continual flashes of Russian cannon and machine gun fire. Like a giant scythe, whole ranks of German soldiers fell, screaming, moaning, or silent in death. Still they came. They had no choice.

Naturally, the movement of the masses slowed. In doing so, Soviet cavalry and tanks from the rear had time to catch up. Now the troops of the Wehrmacht were catching pure hell from both sides. The rescuers could do little but watch and cringe at what they could see, hear, and imagine was happening in front of them. The units of 1st Panzer Division and Bake's Heavy Regiment nearest to the front roared ahead into the darkness to offer what help they could.

By now, what was left of the 105th Regiment, 72nd Division had reached their rescuers. The silhouettes in the darkness were not T-34s but Panther tanks. They had made it, or at least a few of them had. Kaestner shouted the password loudly, "Freedom, freedom!" Climbing from his Panther, Lt. Freiherr von Dornberg welcomed Kaestner with an embrace. The first units had made it.

The thousands that followed them, however, were still running the gauntlet of hot Russian

steel. Firing into the masses from both directions, the sight was awesome. German soldiers, so close to breaking the chains that had bound them, came to a horrible death. Wagons carrying wounded were caught in a crossfire of T-34s.

The Russians killed the horses with machine gun fire and then ground the wagons, with their wounded inside, with their wide treads. The sight was horrendous. The wounded suffered the most grotesque sort of death imaginable.

Heroes in the Darkness

From the 3rd Company, 389th Panzerjaeger Battalion, Staff Sergeant Krause was leading his men along the road. He saw the calamity unfolding. They had no large antitank weapons, but he and a comrade grabbed a half-dozen panzerfausts and crept to the top of a nearby hill. Finding seven T-34s firing down on the columns they struck quickly. "Wham!" "Thunk!" In moments two of the Russian tanks were in flames. The other tank commanders, unable to see from whence the attacks had come, became frightened and moved away. The fleeing continued through the ravine.

Heroes continued to appear everywhere. One column of the Viking Division was under attack by Soviet armor when a sound like a muffled roaring cheer was heard. To their amazement, they saw coming from a nearby ravine, a horseman leading a line of some 3,000 troops appeared. In that moment of chaos and death, the sight of German soldier charging the enemy was indeed inspiring.

The force was led by Lt. Colonel Muller, mounted on a roan, waving for his men to follow as they smashed into the Russian line of resistance. Even though dozens fell to concentrated gunfire, the enemy line was broken and moved away. The men that were left moved on into the woods and headed toward the river.

Colonel Franz had witnessed the slaughter of the wounded from the Viking Division and had a horse shot out from under him in the process. Proceeding on foot, he joined up with another band of fellow soldiers and moved with them. Suddenly rifle and machine gun fire broke out in front of them.

Two soldiers of the Wallonien Volunteer Brigade appeared. They told of Russian infantry blocking the way in front of them. Franz quickly grabbed a sniper rifle and told the men to take him to the area. With his telescopic sight, the Colonel sighted three enemy soldiers manning a machine gun. Taking quick aim, he snapped off three shots. The machine gun stopped firing. Franz stood, and walked through the clearing. As he moved the rest of the group quickly rose and followed. As they passed the dead crew, the Germans kicked and spat on the lifeless bodies. The processions continued.

The Deadly River

By late morning, many of the troops of Group Stemmerman had reached the bank of the Gniloy Tikich river. The earlier thaw had melted a lot of the snow and the waters had become a turbulent, roaring force blocking their way. Huge pieces of ice bobbed to the surface. Of course, by now the temperature had dropped to below zero and the thought of trying to brave those icy waters was terrifying. Even more terrifying, however, were the roving bands of Soviet tanks. The water had not yet refrozen and the waterway was now 30 yards wide and about six feet deep. Crossing it seemed impossible. There was no bridge to be seen.

About a mile to the northwest of this, the 1st Panzer division had a bridge under their control and the engineers of the Jena Armored Engineer Battalion had gotten a smaller footbridge installed. These men, however, had no idea of what had been done. They only saw the raging river in front of them. And time was running out.

As the first arrivals milled around the river, the first T-34s appeared in the distance. Firing high-explosive shells and ricocheting airbursts, they further decimated the ranks along the river. For many, the choice was clear. They would either brave the strong, ice-dotted currents, or die where they stood, huddled and shivering.

Whole groups of men jumped in and began to try to cross. Many were swept away and drowned. Those who did reach the other side were suffering traumatically from the cold. Their uniforms immediately began to freeze to their bodies. Some stripped and, upon arriving on the other side, still had to a mile to go to refuge and were naked in the snow.

A number of units attempted the crossing in some semblance of order. General Gille of the Viking Division formed a human chain, alternating a swimmer and a non-swimmer to extend across the river. It worked well until the numbing effects of the water caused a man to lose his grip. Suddenly the chain was broken, and men were carried away screaming for help by the surging currents. Hundreds were lost in the waters.

The river, which appeared to be the door to salvation, had become the portal of death to many weak and weary German soldiers. "The Gniloy Tikich, that raging torrent, revealed the hidden aspects of the human soul – the precipices of fear, the caverns of cowardice, but also the shining peaks of heroism, comradeship and self-sacrifice" (Carell).

Once the first survivors reached the outposts, and pickets, of the Liebstandarte and the 1st Panzer division, the tankers realized the desperate situation to their south. One group, on the other side of the river, moved to help in bringing some of the refugees to the crossing to their north. A group of tanks and engineers immediately went to the crossing site further south to assist their fellow soldiers. On arriving, the Panthers engaged the devastating T-34s, took out four and scattered the others.

The crossings continued throughout the day. The Russians, after over two weeks of hard fighting, were also weary, and unable to fully pursue the German forces. Rear guard units of the Group pulled out successfully and made the crossing. By the end of the 16th, most of the fighting at the river had ended. The German lines had been straightened and nearly 35,000 of the original 56,000 were saved. They were led back to the assembly areas at Uman.

While the Russians had not succeeded in trapping the two Corps of Eighth Army, they had successfully neutralized the fighting ability of over six German divisions. Most of the men rescued had no weapons. All heavy equipment had been left behind and was now the property of the Soviet Union. The German line had been all the more weakened along the Dnepr and the situation was still grim for the survivors. At best, it would be a bittersweet victory for both sides.

The fighting would continue for another sixteen months, but it was apparent to those in command that the only open road to temporary survival was behind the German forces. The Soviets would regroup and prepare for the next attacks to drive the hated enemy from its soil. The next monster blow would come with Operation Bagration against Army Group Center in the summer of 1944.

Sources used by Bill Wilder in this Historical briefing:

Barbarossa; Alan Clarke
Scorched Earth; Paul Carell
Ostfront 44; Alex Buchner
Stalingrad to Berlin; Carl Ziemke
Lost Victories; Erich von Manstein

IV. Diary Of The Commander Of XLII Corps

The tactical situation between 28 January and 16 February, 1944, as described above, was modified by a number of developments inside the pocket. A record of these events is found in excerpts from the diary kept by the commander of XLII Corps up to the time of the breakout:

28 January

Communications to the rear along the road Shpola-Zvenigorodka have been cut. We are encircled. First Panzer Army to restore communication routes. Our defensive mission remains unchanged. Telephone request to Eighth Army: "Mission requires maintaining northeast front against strong enemy pressure. Russian advance against Steblev necessitates main effort on southern sector. Request authority for immediate withdrawal of northern and eastern fronts. This will permit offensive action toward southwest and prevent further encirclement and separation from XI Corps."

29 January

Radio message from Eighth Army: "Prepare withdrawal in direction Rossava up to Mironovka-Boguslav. Be ready to move by 1200 on 29 January upon prearranged signal. Authority for further withdrawal likely within twenty-four hours. Report new situation."

Requested additional ammunition for artillery and small arms. Food supplies in the pocket are adequate. XI Corps under attack by strong Russian tank forces. Several of its regiments reduced to 100 men. Air supply beginning to arrive. Evacuation of casualties too slow. More than 2,000 wounded have to be removed.

31 January

Message from Eighth Army: XLVIII Panzer Corps will attack on 1 February toward Lozovatka [three miles northwest of Shpola] to relieve enemy pressure against XI Corps.

1 February

Daily losses 300 men. Fighter protection inadequate. Ammunition and fuel running low.

2 February

Air supply improving. Radio message from Eighth Army: "Withdrawal of north front approved. Prepare for main effort on eastern flank of south front. Vormann [general commanding XLVIII Panzer Corps] is continuing the relief attack from the south. Breith [general commanding III Panzer Corps] will attack 3 February from southwest."

3 February

Air supply continues to improve. Unfortunately several transport aircraft with wounded aboard were shot down on the return flight. Have requested that air evacuations be made at

night only unless adequate fighter protection can be provided. Message from Army: "To strengthen southern sector, occupy proposed line without further delaying action at intermediate positions."

4 February

Made a determined effort to take Boguslav. Commander of Task Force B seriously wounded. Now all the division commanders are artillerymen, including the present SS big shot. The north front is tottering. Russian tanks today captured a medium battery of Task Force B that was firing from every barrel without being able to score a single hit. Evidently we have too few experienced gunners. By nightfall our line is restored. Daily ammunition expenditure of the corps 200 tons. Casualties still 300 per day. This cannot go on much longer. Have requested 2,000 replacements, also 120 tons additional ammunition per day.

5 February

Radio message from Eighth Army: "Prepare breakout for 10 February. Further instructions follow."

7 February

Radio message to Eighth Army: "Roads deeply mired. Will require more time for breakout preparations." Message from Eighth Army: "At time of breakout the following units will attack from the outside: XLVIII Panzer Corps toward Olshana, III Panzer Corps toward Morentsy. Pocket force will effect initial break-through and, covering its flanks and rear, concentrate its entire strength in attack across the line Shenderovka-Kvitki toward Morentsy, to link up with armored wedge of relief forces. Regrouping must be completed in time to permit breakout on 10 February. Final decision will depend on progress of armored spearheads. Situation does not permit further delay."

Stemmermann [general commanding XI Corps] assumes command of both corps in the pocket. Report to Army that because of road conditions attack impossible before 12 February.

Had a look at the 110th Grenadier Regiment and Task Force B. Morale of troops very good. Rations plentiful. Enough sugar, sausage, cigarettes, and bread to last for another ten days. Army Group Commander radios that everything is being done to help us.

8 February

Radio message to Eighth Army: "Artillery, heavy weapons, and horse-drawn vehicles of 72d, 389th, and *Wiking* Divisions, as well as hundreds of motor vehicles of *Wiking* carrying many wounded, are stuck in the mud at Gorodishche. Withdrawal from line held today, to effect regrouping, would involve intolerable losses of men, weapons, and equipment. Line must be held at least twenty-four hours longer."

Today I saw many casualties, including four officers; ordered more careful evacuation of wounded, and destruction of all classified documents we can possibly get rid of.

9 February

Generals Zhukov, Konev, and Vatutin have sent an emissary, a Russian lieutenant colonel, who arrived with driver, interpreter, and bugler at the position of Task Force B to present surrender terms for Stemmermann and myself. He is treated to champagne and cigarettes, receives no reply. Ultimatum remains unanswered.

Forces for breakout dwindle from day to day. Inquiry from Army High Command about Leon

Degrelle, commander of Brigade *Wallonien*. He is a young man, Belgian; I saw him a few days ago among his men. They are likeable fellows, but apparently too soft for this business.

Approach of relief forces delayed by necessary regrouping. Nevertheless Army now insists we break out on 12 February. Much as we would like to, we cannot do it by then. In this mud the infantry cannot possibly cover more than a thousand yards per hour.

10 February

My old division commander of 1940, General von Seydlitz [Ed.: Captured at Stalingrad by the Russians. Thereafter leader of the National Committee "Free Germany" composed of German officers in Russian hands.] today sent me a long letter delivered by aircraft: He thinks I should act like Yorck during the campaign of 1812 and go over to the Russians with my entire command. I did not answer.

Army inquires whether breakout in direction Morentsy still feasible, or whether the operation should rather be directed via Dzhurzentsy-Pochapintsy toward Lisyanka. Reply to Army: "Lisyanka preferable if Breith [III Panzer Corps] can reach it. Situation on east front critical. Several enemy penetrations. For the past forty-eight hours XI Corps unable to establish new defense line. Troops badly depleted and battle-weary. XLII Corps front intact. We are attacking south of Steblev. Serious danger if east front cannot be brought to a halt. XLII Corps will break through in direction Lisyanka. The troops are well in hand. Early advance of Breith toward Lisyanka decisive."

Reply from Army: "Thanks for comprehensive information. In full accord concerning new direction of breakout. Breith will attack 11 February in direction of Lisyanka. Will do all we can. Good luck."

Seydlitz today sent me fifty German prisoners with letters to their commanders; in addition they are supposed to persuade their comrades to go over to the enemy. I cannot understand Seydlitz. Although the events at Stalingrad must have changed him completely, I am unable to see how he can now work as a sort of G-2 for Zhukov.

12 February

Breith has reached Lisyanka. Vormann is advancing in direction of Zvenigorodka. Our infantry has taken the northern part of Khilki. [Map 5] The regimental commander leading the attack was killed in action. So goes one after another. XI Corps has taken Komarovka. The Russians, according to intercepted signals, are about to attack our left flank. Radio message to Army: "Absolutely necessary that Breith advance to Petrovskoye as quickly as possible, in order to effect link-up. Speed is essential. Forward elements of XLII Corps now at Khilki." Reply from Army: "Vormann southeast of Zvenigorodka. Breith will attack 13 February with strong armored wedge in direction Dzhurzentsy."

Was at Khilki this afternoon. Things look bad. Our men are exhausted. Nothing gets done unless officers are constantly behind them. Am now keeping my horses inside the hut; they are in better shape than I. My orderly is burning my papers and giving away my extra uniforms.

13 February

Another message from General von Seydlitz, this time addressed to the commander of the 198th Division. Not bad: they think we are stronger than we really are. The letter was attached as usual to a black, red, and white pennant [German colors] and dropped from a plane. These people never fail to find my headquarters.

Breakout further delayed because of heavy enemy attacks against XI Corps' east front. Radio message to Army: "Concentration for breakout prevented by heavy Russian flank attacks and final mopping up at Shenderovka. Will shorten east front, involving evacuation of Korsun, during night of 13-14 February. Forces thereby released will not be available for breakout before 15 February. Intend to continue attack throughout 14 February. Breakthrough of Breith's armored force toward Petrovskoye indispensable to success."

Reply from Army: "Breith under orders to thrust toward Petrovskoye. His forward elements now on line Lisyanka-Khichintsy." Have requested strong fighter protection for 14 February. Russian strafing attacks are getting increasingly serious in view of the growing congestion in the pocket. I am most afraid that Army cannot comply with this oft-repeated request.

14 February

Breith will have to arrive soon. Last night the Luftwaffe dropped ammunition over the Russian lines instead of ours. Now they are trying to put the blame on us, claiming the drop point was inadequately lighted.

Stemmermann has just issued orders for the breakout. The date: 16 February. Radio message to Army: "North front will be withdrawn during the night of 14-15 February to the south bank of Ross River. Main attack ordered for 16 February. Further advance of tank force for direct support absolutely necessary."

We are destroying all excess motor vehicles and equipment. I have prohibited burning.

15 February

Our pocket is now so small that I can practically look over the entire front from my command post, when it is not snowing. Enemy aircraft are hard at work; lucky for us it is snowing most of the time. I was once more at Khilki to reconnoiter the terrain selected for the breakout. Then issued final order. Since this morning there is trouble at the SS Division. The Walloons and the *Germania* Regiment are getting fidgety. They must hold only until tomorrow night.

Final instructions from Stemmermann: We are to jump off on 16 February at 2300, with Task Force B. 72d Division, and SS Panzer Division *Wiking* from Khilki-Komarovka across the line Dzhurzhtsny-Hill 239 to Lisyanka; 57th and 88th Divisions will cover the flanks and the rear.

With me, at my command post, are the three division commanders with whom I am supposed to perform the miracle tomorrow. One of them is doing this for the first time, the two others are old hands.

I left no doubt in their minds that, in my opinion, this is going to be one giant snafu, and that they should not get rattled, no matter what happens. You need a guardian angel to bring you through this kind of thing.

Have given my second mount to my G-3. His *Panje* horse will be used by the G-2.

16 February

Ample supply of ammunition dropped in aerial delivery containers as late as last night. In this respect we are now well off— if we can take it along.

After consulting Stemmermann I decided to hand over to the Russians some 2,000 wounded together with medical personnel and one doctor from each division. This is a bitter decision, but to take them along would mean their certain death.

Saw Stemmermann once more to say good-bye. My orderly takes my diary; he is a crafty

fellow and will get it through somehow.

V. Unit Ratings

In creating this as Korsun '44 wargame, we were very fortunate to have Jim Dunnam as a member of the design team. Jim's experience in creating Normandy '44 was extremely valuable and we felt that this portion of the Normandy Designer Notes that follows would be useful to repeat here.

(below is repeated from the **NORMANDY '44 Designer's Notes**)

Rating the units was a chore. The following is given only for those truly interested in what is behind the ratings. We are not ballistics experts or such, but in giving you the knowledge of how we came up with the ratings, you will have the tools to change them if you feel there are any errors and if you are so inclined. So if you disagree about how strong that Tiger tank should be, go ahead and make the change. However, you can be assured that on a relative scale each unit is rated according to a standard system with logical reasoning.

First we knew that each unit would have to be rated for Strength, Quality, Speed, Fire against Soft Targets (HE), Fire against Hard Targets (AP), Assault (AF) and Defense, along with some other various abilities. For these ratings we started with Strength.

STRENGTH

Each man, gun and vehicle has been counted into the strength per our Excel OOB files. If it is shown on a source, it should be there as close as we could come in type, etc. For other foreign equipment in German operation (t) = Czech, (r) = Russian, (f) = French, (it) = Italian. Wherever possible we have tried to be as specific as we could as to what each component piece of a unit is primarily composed of.

SPEED

Next we determined speed by average cross-country MPH. For some units we used a generic base. Thus, Foot = 4, Horse (Towed Guns) = 6, Bicycle = 10, and Truck/Half-track Motorized (including Towed Guns) and Motorcycle = 15. For specific vehicles we have gone with data available for each specific tank, armored car and self-propelled weapon. Thus a tank with a speed of 8 could average about 8 mph cross-country. The only exception are Truck, which would be more like 8 MPs cross-country when loaded. However, PDT modifications take care of this.

AP RATINGS

AP Ratings were determined by considering each weapon's average penetration at 100m, 250m, 500m, 750m and 1000m. For each of these range bands a To Hit

percentage was considered which was used to modify the penetration. The final AP rating was derived by taking a weighed average of these modified penetration numbers and dividing by a base to get a manageable AP Rating. The exception to this practice was for Infantry anti-tank rifles (e.g. bazookas, panzerfausts and piats). For ATRs the range bands used were 10m, 25m, 50m and 100m. These shorter range bands were used since we quickly decided that all infantry companies would have an AP range of 0 hexes, and they would only be able to fire AP in relation to an Assault. When the total ATRs in the standard infantry companies of 1944 were looked at in relation to the total manpower of those personnel companies, this methodology quickly resulted in our learning that just about every 1944 standard personnel company would have an AP Rating of 4, which became our base Infantry AP Rating.

The issue of special AP ammo types caused some concern. This ammo, such as Hollow Charge and HVAP was in limited supply, etc, but really increased penetration. We looked at general availability for summer of 1944 and averaged it in to the AP ratings for those weapons systems that were using this type of ammo at the time. In general this means the Germans get a boost, since the Allies did not have such ammo available for their larger AT weaponry in June 1944. While the amount of special AP ammo was in short supply, we used a 50/50 average of special versus regular AP to come up with the ratings on units that would have had it available. This does not mean we thought such special AP made up half the supply, but to reflect shot selectiveness, with the unit only using it when and where necessary.

The final AP Rating issue was what to do with primarily HE firing weapons, like artillery, mortars, rockets and aircraft bombs, that did not have penetration per se. For these a base AP Rating was determined as follows based on caliber:

	<u>AP</u>
Light Mortars – Less than 80mm	2
Medium Mortars - 81-100mm	4
Heavy Mortars – Over 100mm	6
Light Artillery – Less than 100mm, 110lb bombs	4
Medium Artillery - 101-149mm, 250lb bombs	6
Heavy Artillery – Over 150mm, 500lb bombs	8
Super Heavy Artillery – variable, 1000lb bombs	9
Rockets – 150mm	8
Rockets – 210mm	10
Rockets – 280mm	12

HE AND AF RATINGS

For HE and AF ratings, each weapon type was assigned a base HE or AF value by type.

	HE	AF
Rifle (per 10 men)	4.3	8.6
Flamethrower	0	6
Medium MG	4	6.4
Heavy MG	8.6	10.6

1st Tank Mounted MG	2.6	6
Each additional Tank Mounted MG	1.3	3
Anti-Air (Guns 20mm or more with High ROF)	10.6	14
Vehicle Mounted Guns – Less than 70mm	6	4
Vehicle Mounted Guns - 70-100mm	10	6.6
Vehicle Mounted Guns - Over 100mm	14	9.4
Light Mortars	6	2.6
Medium Mortars	10	4
Heavy Mortars	14	0.6
Light Towed Guns and SP Artillery , 110b bombs	10	6.6
Medium Towed Guns and SP Artillery, 250lb bombs	14	9.4
Heavy Towed Guns and SP Artillery, 500lb bombs	18	12
Super Heavy Towed Guns and SP Artillery, 1000lb	24	2
Rockets – 150mm	22	2
Rockets – 210mm	26	2
Rockets – 280mm	30	2

From these base values, all the HE and AF ratings were calculated on spreadsheets rounding to the nearest whole number. For single type units, the calculation is very straight forward. For example, a unit composed of 105mm Howitzers would have an AP of 6, HE of 14 and AF of 9. For personnel type units the calculation is basically the same but more complicated, since the program combines men into 10 man increments. Thus a German Infantry company of 142 men, 10 MGs and 2 8cm Mortars would have a more detailed calculation as follows:

$$142 \text{ men} / 10 = 14.2 \times 4.3 \text{ (Rifle is the base weapon)} = 61.06$$

$$10 \text{ MGs} \times 4 = 40$$

$$2 \text{ 8cm Mtrs} \times 10 = 20$$

$$61.06 + 40 + 20 = 121.06 / 14.2 \text{ (Ten man increments of 142 men)} = 8.52 = 9 \text{ HE Rating}$$

This calculation was done for each and every unit (thank God for computer spreadsheets), and you will see a tremendous range and variation, particularly in the German personnel units on the coast since they had such a wide variety and hodge podge of weapon. Remember that the computer will multiply the Rating x Manpower/10 to come up with the firepower. So the entire company above will have a HE firepower of $14.2 \times 9 = 127.8$ HE. Thus the German 42 and 64 man beach units with high ratings are really not as good as they first appear.

Assault Ratings were calculated using the same methodology. For Vehicle units, their AF Rating was also finally modified by its size (larger vehicles are given a little boost), whether or not it has a turret (turretless vehicles are reduced slightly) and whether or not the vehicle is open topped (having your head hanging out in an assault cannot be good).

Example of Vehicle AF Rating Calculation

PzVIe Tiger I (88L56, 2 MGs)

88L56 Vehicle Mounted Gun = 6.3

1st Machinegun = 6

2nd Machinegun = 3

$6.3 + 6 + 3 = 15.3 + 0.5$ (Large Vehicle) = 15.8 = 16AF Rating

The reason subsequent machineguns are $\frac{1}{2}$ as effective as the first is due to their difficulty in operation in conjunction with the main gun, etc.

One thing that looks odd to some is that the Light Artillery category is so large and thus there is no difference between a 50mm AT firing HE and a 75mm IG firing HE. This is justified by things such as rate of fire of the smaller caliber weapons, etc.

We have made some additional modifications of the final ratings. In general all American personnel units receive a final +2 to their AF and HE Ratings. Likewise all Engineers receives a final +2 to their AP, AF and HE Ratings. Also all German Ost units (usually POWs using captured Russians weapons with their associated ammunition and spare parts issues) receive a final -2 to their AP, AF and HE Ratings. Units that benefited from the availability of extra ATR teams (such as historic German Panzerfaust teams) receive a final +2 to their AP Ratings. And personnel units which were known to have less than average ATR support have their final AP Rating adjusted -2. There are also other modifications here and there where we felt it necessary, too numerous to detail.

Although the majority of weapons such as heavy mortars and artillery are broken out into separate units, special mention should be made of German Heavy Weapons companies. In general and where appropriate, a number of heavy mortars and infantry guns, which were part of these companies, have been consolidated within the unit. It was decided that this should be done to reduce the unit count (too many 2 strength point 75L12 infantry gun units are of questionable use) and also for effect. In general these German HW units have are capable of Indirect Fire from at 2-3 hexes. While not all of the weaponry within the HW company can conduct indirect fire, historically from time to time the HW company would send out its extra MGs and equipment in support of the other infantry companies within its battalion. Rather than just split up this equipment, we have allowed the HW company, through its 2-3 hex IF capability, to "support" its brother infantry companies within a reasonable range. So what plays out as Indirect Fire in the game is also the HW company lending its MGs, IGs, and Mtrs to the rest of its battalion directly. The 2-3 hex radius should allow the proper range of support along the line.

Air unit AP and HE values are based on an 11% chance of TO HIT for bombs, and base ratings are adjusted accordingly.

RANGES

A comment should also be made regarding maximum fire ranges. For guns, this was determined by looking at historical data on each gun, weapon system and also historical doctrine. Thus a PzIVd with its short 75L42 which was used for infantry support will have a 2 hex HE range, but 1 hex AP. While a PzV Panther with its long 75L71 will have a 2 hex AP range and 1 hex HE range. It is not that the Panther could not fire HE over 1000m, but that due doctrine, historical use and ammo availability it was not used that way.

As stated earlier, all personnel units have an AP range of 0, which is only useful in Assault

situations. For HE ranges, all Allied units were given a base of 1 hex. This is due to the American and British Infantry company reliance on LMGs, Light Mortars and mostly Rifles for its firepower. On the other hand, most of the German Infantry company firepower comes from its MGs and 8cm Mtrs, with their Rifles being in more of a supporting role. These TO&E differences, along with the fact that the Germans are operating for the most part on the defensive with better knowledge of the local terrain, warrant an edge for them in HE range. German Ost units, however, retain only an HE range of 1 hex.

DEFENSE RATINGS

SOFT TARGETS

Working with some knowledge of SMOLENSK '41 and the base ratings being used there, we started with a base rating for infantry of 16. From this we calculated downward for other Soft units.

	<u>DF</u>
Personnel	16
Light Mortars – Less than 80mm	14
Medium Mortars - 81-100mm	14
Heavy Mortars – Over 100mm	12
Light Artillery – Less than 100mm	14
Medium Artillery - 101-149mm	12
Heavy Artillery – Over 150mm	10
Super Heavy Artillery – variable	10
Rockets – 150mm	10
Rockets – 210mm	10
Rockets – 280mm	10

HARD TARGETS

Hard Defense Ratings were calculated by looking at the armor thickness of the vehicles at 18 points. Since the game does not use facing, it was then assumed that shots would hit as follows on average:

Assume shots coming in:

30% Direct Front

20% Front Angle

35% Side

10% Rear Angle

5% Rear

Assume Target Location Hit:

33.3% Turret

33.3% Upper Hull

33.3% Lower Hull
Suspension Hits are ignored

Result is 18 potential Hit locations. Armor in mm is then determined for each location.

Multiply millimeters of Armor at Location Hit times Probability of hitting that location to obtain Base Number.

Add all 18 Base numbers together

Modify Base Sum as follows (this modifier reflects that bigger targets are easier to Hit):

- 10 Vehicle is Heavy
- 5 Vehicle is Large
- +5 Vehicle is Small
- +10 Vehicle is Very Small

Divide by 5 to get Final Defense Strength.

Since this calculation uses a similar methodology and data as used in calculating the AP Ratings, we feel comfortable of the accuracy of AP and DF Ratings relative to one another.

AA RATINGS AND AIR

Basically Aircraft AP and HE are rated based upon the weaponry and bomb load. Some variations are made in AP for tank busters, etc. Aircraft DF is based on an estimate of the damage they can take with a base of 10 used for an American P-40 and German Stuka and the rest adjusted up or down.

For AA Ratings the following chart is used.

	<u>AA</u>	<u>RANGE</u>
Ost-Type units	1	0
Medium MG	2	0
Heavy MG	2	1
20mm	8	2
20mm Quads	14	2
37mm	10	3
40mm	10	3
80mm+	10	5
All other units	2	0

We also gave every German personnel and vehicle unit at least an AA Rating of 1 with an AA Range of 0. All these units had some form of machinegun and this give them a minimal AA defense in their own hex. Allied units were not given AA ratings since the only German air units are Recon.

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<http://www.ww2.dk/> (The Luftwaffe, 1933-1945) – Main source of Luftwaffe information

<http://www.skalmannu/third-reich/> (Third Reich Factbook) – Good for finding lots of details, such as German commander names.

MAPS:

U. S. Army Map Service

NATIONAL ARCHIVES (Microfilm/Microfiche/Paper Documents):

Capture German Records:

1st Panzer Army

Folder #	Origin	Roll	1st Frame	Contents
58683/1-3	1a (operations)	69	7305703	war diary: Jan - Jun
58683/4-18	1a (operations)	69-70	7306128	war diary attachments (reports, maps, etc): Jan - Jun
58683/19	1a (operations)	72	7310333	report from 201st Jager Div: Feb 28 - Mar 27
58683/20	1a (operations)	72	7310387	reports from Gruppe Mattenklott: Feb 17-22
58683/21	1a (operations)	72	7310483	reports from Gruppe Stemmerman: Feb 15-28
58683/25	1a (operations)	73	7310992	orders and reports on movement of equipment during withdrawal
58684/1	1c (Intel)	73	7311146	maps of enemy positions: Jan - Apr
58684/3	1c (Intel)	73	7311287	daily reports on enemy units: Jan - Apr
58684/5	1c (Intel)	73	7311753	info on enemy units and operations: Jan - Apr

85603	la (operations)	77	73164 05	radio messages and reports from area of Gleboka and Kashpirovka: Jan 5 - Sep 6
8th Army		T-31		
		2		
Folder #	Origin	Roll	1st Frame	Contents
44701/15	lc (Intel)	57-5 8	75728 24	intel maps: Feb'43 - Dec'43
58298/1	la (operations)	64	75816 00	w ar diary: Jan
58298/2	la (operations)	64	75817 96	w ar diary: Feb
58298/7	la (operations)	64	75826 02	OB Charts: Jan - Jun
58298/10	la (operations)	64	75827 22	misc: Jan - Jun
58298/12	la (operations)	65	75834 20	reports on situation w ith 6th Army, 1st Pz Army and 4th Pz Army: Jan - Mar
58298/13	la (operations)	65	75835 21	operational reports as AOK.8 retreated: Jan - Jun
58298/17	la (operations)	65	75838 49	w eather forecasts: Jan - Jun
58298/18	la (operations)	66	75841 66	w ar diary attachments (morning and evening reports for Army and Korps): Jan
5829819	la (operations)	66	75847 47	w ar diary attachments (morning and evening reports for Army and Korps): Feb 1-15
58298/20	la (operations)	66	75852 57	w ar diary attachments (morning and evening reports for Army and Korps): Feb 16-29
58298/24	la (operations)	68	75869 05	daily maps: Jan - Jun
58298/25	la (operations)	68	75876 40	misc (inc story of encirclement of Gruppe Stemmerman): Jan - Feb
58298/29	la (operations)	70	75888 94	daily maps: Jan 28 - Feb 7
58298/30	lc (Intel)	70	75889 79	intel maps: Jan - Jun
3rd Panzer Korps		T-31		
		4		
Folder #	Origin	Roll	1st Frame	Contents
48293/14	la (operations)	205	114	daily maps of Reloserje-Ssmela-Alexandrow ka region: Jan
53973/1	la (operations)	206	923	w ar diary: Jan - Feb
53973/2	la (operations)	207	1	morning and evening reports to Army: Feb - Mar
53973/6	la (operations)	207	847	daily reports from Divisions: Jan 1-20
53973/7	la (operations)	208	1	daily reports from Divisions concerning enemy activities: Jan - Feb
53973/8	la (operations)	208	526	daily reports from Divisions concerning enemy activities: Feb 6 - 14
53973/9	la (operations)	209	1	daily reports from Divisions concerning enemy activities: Feb 15 - 21
53973/10	la (operations)	209	550	daily reports from Divisions: Feb 22 - 29
53973/18	la (operations)	212	380	situation maps: Jan - Feb
53973/19&20	la (operations)	212	419	situation maps: Feb 12 - Mar 21
53974/3	lc (Intel)	212	776	daily reports on enemy units: Jan - Apr
7th Korps		T-31		
		4		
Folder #	Origin	Roll	1st Frame	Contents
	no records covering period			
11th Korps		T-31		
		4		
Folder #	Origin	Roll	1st Frame	Contents
51556/2	la (operations)	496	469	w ar diary attachments inc oob chars: Apr - May

42nd Panzer Korps

Folder #	Origin	T-31 4 Roll	1st Frame	Contents
	No records covering period			

47th Panzer Korps

Folder #	Origin	T-31 4 Roll	1st Frame	Contents
50628/1	1a (operations)	113	398	
		2		
50628/2	1a (operations)	113	556	
		2		
50628/3	1a (operations)	113	812	
		2		

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Series	Roll
T-78	548/549/655
T-31	64
T-314	359

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Command Decision, 3d

Spearpoint

Jadgpanzer