

Red Victory Operations

This document is designed to be used with the Scenario_Map.pdf file located in the main game directory, which provides a representation of the eastern front and the general locations of the actions listed here.

The first 5 scenarios are not listed on the map as they are training scenarios.

000.Getting Started - 28 June 1944 – 18 turns

“Tank Cavalry at Slutsk”

Near Slutsk, Bobruisk - Baranovichi Road

After shattering 9th Army's lines near Bobruisk, Konstantin Rokossovsky, commander of the 1st Belorussian Front, committed his exploitation force, the powerful Pliyev Cavalry Group, into action. Pliyev's tanks and cavalry stormed the German defenses behind Berezina River and kept the momentum in the marshlands of Pripyat.

On 27 June, the 1st Mechanized Corps move into Glusk, sweeping aside the remnants of the German 35. Infantry Division. By 1700 Soviet armor were pouring through a gap at Glusk in the direction of Slutsk. A very important railway junction, Slutsk was vital for the Soviets for keeping the momentum onwards Baranovichi and later, Minsk. Frantically gathering reserves from other sectors, German command committed a newly arrived paratrooper unit, Kampfgruppe Schirmer to block the seemingly unstoppable Russian spearhead before Slutsk.

001.Bootcamp_1 – 16 turns

“Assault on a Fortified Position”

Commander; today our battalion will capture a ridgeline which is vital for the enemy defense system. Your rifle company will assault a fortified hill to the north. Recon tells us that the position is defended by heavy machine gun emplacements covered by at least a platoon of infantry. Your infantry will be supported by a sapper platoon and an artillery battery. Good Luck.

Tactical Tips:

- Staying away from the enemy killing zones is vital especially in assaults. It is likely that one or two setup machineguns or mortars are waiting for you. Do not use apparent and easy routes as they are most probably killing zones.
- Try to gather maximum info on the enemy strength in the first turns. Fix enemy troops with diverting attacks and hit them on the flanks.
- Study the map. The LOS angles, covered approach routes and use them but do not forget the covered routes are generally mined.
- Use your specialized units such as engineers at the right time. Do not commit them prematurely. Placing an engineer unit on a wrong hex can cost you a battle in scenarios with limited time.
- The timing for artillery strike and smoke is vital in assaults. Use them to support your troops or reduce casualties at the crucial moment.
- Try to lure the enemy out with diverting moves and attacks. It is high probability that a setup artillery observer is there and a premature enemy barrage will be much better than one hit you just before your assault.

002.Bootcamp_2 – 16 turns

“Combined Arms Tactics”

Commander; your motorized column has stopped near a village where enemy movement has been detected. The leading infantry has dismounted and is ready for the attack. Unfortunately we don't have much information on the enemy forces located in the village so a close cooperation between the infantry and the supporting armor is crucial.

Tactical Tips:

- Do not commit your armor early and never use them as recon vehicles into the unknown. That's the infantry's job.
- Do not bunch up infantry and tanks closely as they will be very inviting targets. Do not place them too far either. Try to maintain a distance ideal for tank-infantry cooperation.
- Never isolate your tanks on terrains with low LOS.
- As a leader try your best to spot enemy positions with your binoculars.
- Suppress the enemy defenses and use your mobility to outflank them. Do not use apparent approach angles as they are likely to turn out killing zones designed by the enemy.
- Do not use roads close to the enemy. They might be mined.
- Do not deploy smoke prematurely. The timing of smoke is very crucial in maneuvers.
- Sometimes moving fast is a better option than returning fire; sometimes not. There are no simple answers on the battlefield.
- Always load AP rounds before ending your turn if there is a risk of encountering enemy armor; so your tanks will opportunity fire the correct shell on the highest risk target. Do not forget to switch to HE rounds against soft targets.

003.Bootcamp_3 – 16 turns

“Defending Against An Armored Attack”

Commander; we are expecting a probing attack on your sector. As our right flank you must hold your lines and prevent an envelopment. Recon reports indicate enemy tanks so expect armor accompanying the infantry. Regiment will send you a self propelled gun to bolster your defenses. Good Luck.

Tactical Tips:

- It is vital to hold your fire until the right time. Don't reveal your infantry positions by opening fire prematurely. This will give enemy armor a chance to suppress your units to protect its infantry's advance.
- Protect your anti-tank assets. Those are the most valuable items in your arsenal.
- Don't commit yourself propelled gun early. Find good ambush angles behind the infantry screen and wait for opportunities.
- Don't enter into a direct fire duel with enemy armor in the open. They have more firepower and you have thin armor plate. If possible spare action points to hide behind cover after firing one or two shots.
- Be flexible. Try to predict enemy moves and take necessary actions early.

004.Bootcamp_4 – 16 turns

“Defending Night Attacks”

Commander, reports indicate that enemy will try a breakout to avoid encirclement. They will likely launch an attack tonight, utilizing low visibility. Your unit lies on their shortest path for a possible breakout so be ready for a heavy night attack. It is imperative to defeat the enemy's breakout attempt at this point. Our regiment is spread out thinly so don't expect much reinforcement. You are on your own comrade. Good luck.

Tactical Tips:

- In night battles spotting the enemy is vital for learning their intentions and the biggest asset is your illumination rounds. Use them carefully.
- Check out the illumination ammo allocated to your forces and don't exhaust them prematurely.
- Be wise in using flares; do your best to illuminate enemy forces without illuminating your positions. Check out the flare ranges and do not deploy them too close to your positions.
- Always hold your fire as triggered opportunity fire might reveal your positions too early. This will give you ability to open concentrated fire on enemy troops and give them little chance to recover.
- It is imperative to follow a flexible deployment and preserve a tactical reserve to seal enemy penetrations that cannot be spotted in low visibility.

1943

005.Ozereika - 04 February 1943 – 18 turns

“The Dieppe of the Blacksea”

Ozereika Bay, 12KM Southwest of Novorossiisk

After surrounding the German forces at Stalingrad, STAVKA planned another smaller operation codenamed "Operation Sea". The aim of the operation was to capture the Black Sea harbor town of Novorossiisk and block the 17th Army's path of retreat from the Caucasus into the Crimea. The assault was to be a combined one that included amphibious and airborne landings. The amphibious operation was directed against Novorossiisk while airborne troops delayed the reinforcements. The location of the beach landings was the bay of Ozereika which is a couple of kilometers southwest of Novorossiisk. The Ozereika Bay provided a suitable landscape for landings and advance inland.

The Axis defenses in the area consisted of the 38th Rumanian Infantry Regiment which was defending the beaches and the German 789th Coastal Artillery Battalion with its 105mm howitzers emplaced in the heights dominating the bay and the village of Yuzhnaye Ozereika.

The Soviet plan was to push through the defense in order to reach a line between Yuzhnaye Ozereika and Stanichka; then turn right and envelop Novorossiisk from the West. The mission was undertaken by the elements of the 255th Naval Brigade, a stubborn and crack unit which was supported by lend lease Stuart tanks from the 563rd Tank Battalion. Soviet command used every vessel for naval transportation; patrol boats, rubber boats, fishing boats and barges. The destroyer "Minsk" provided artillery support on pre-assigned targets. At 02:00 hours the first wave of the assault force closed in on the beach. The landing forces found trenches, mines and obstacles intact after the artillery preparation and engaged in a heavy fight with the Rumanian infantry.

006.Krasny Bor - 10 February 1943 – 20 turns

“Viva La Muerte!”

October Station, Krasny Bor, 30KM South of Leningrad

In January 1943 the Red Army managed to breakthrough the bottle-neck near the shore of Lake Ladoga and created a land-connection to Leningrad first time since September 1941. In order to defeat the siege decisively, the Soviet command planned a much larger operation named Operation Polar Star. It was based on coordinated blows from three directions to encircle the enemy forces south of Leningrad. The plan gave the main attack to the 55th Army. The 55th army's orders were to break open the vital Leningrad-Moscow Highway, starting from its jump-off position in Kolpino towards Tosno, to join with a northbound attack pincer of 54th Army of Volkhov Front, thereby encircling German formations near Leningrad. The vital point for the highway was the town named Krasny Bor which was defended by the 250th Infantry Division, or the "Azul" Division which was formed by the Spanish phalangist volunteers.

On Wednesday, 10 February 1943, a massive artillery bombardment of 1,000 Soviet guns and mortars opened on the Spanish lines at precisely 6:45. Shells, mortars and Katyusha rockets pounded the trenches, bunkers and dugouts. At approximately 8:40, the 45th and 63rd Guards and the 72nd Rifle Divisions, followed by armor started their advance.

Inside Krasny Bor, a company of the 250th Infantry Division was holding the October Railway station. Company commander Captain de Huidrobo had dispersed his troops along the railway embankment directly on the way of the 63rd Guards Rifle Division. That day, along the railway embankment, the Spaniards gave their toughest fight with heaviest casualties. That day would be remembered in veterans' memories as "The Black Wednesday".

007.Chernichevo – 11 February 1943 – 18 turns

“Fire Brigade Meyer”

Chernichevo, Krasny Bor - Mishkino Road

After their success in defeating the German bridgehead at Schlüsselburg, south of Leningrad, STAVKA planned a bolder operation at the junction of Mga. The Russians aimed to isolate a large part of the German 18th Army. The main axis of the Russian penetration was the town of Krasny Bor which was defended by the Spanish "Azul" Division. On 10 February a heavy Russian attack shattered the German Front at Krasny Bor. Pushing aside the defenders and bypassing pockets of resistance, the Russian armor poured westwards in the direction of Mga. Outflanked with the fall of Krasny Bor, the neighboring 4th SS Polizei Division was facing a dangerous envelopment. German command sent their only mobile reserve, one company from the 502nd Heavy Panzer Detachment which was ordered to stop the Russian advance on Krasny Bor - Mishkino axis.

At the dawn of 11 February a Tiger platoon under the command of Leutnant Meyer arrived at the battlefield. From his position Meyer could see that Russian tanks had already occupied the village of Chernichevo. At 07:00, the Russian column consisting of KV1 heavy tanks resumed their advance towards Mishkino. Meyer quickly deployed his panzers to ambush the Russian armored spearhead at a road junction near Chernichevo.

008.Jeremejewka – 18 February 1943 – 20 turns

“Peiper at Jeremejewka”

Jeremejewka, 30 KM East of Krasnograd

After the failure of the German attempt to re-join the encircled Sixth Army in Stalingrad, a Russian offensive on 2,000 Km long line followed in January 1943. The entire front between the Orel River and the Black Sea was active, while the critical sector was the Stalingrad corridor and the Caucasian German Armies. Strong Russian formations attempted to cut the key city of Kharkov and disrupt the German communications between Army Group Center and South. Although being in crisis against irresistible enemy waves, von Manstein started to prepare a counteroffensive based on the principles of mobile warfare.

On February 16th, Vatutin took Kharkov and sent two armies towards Krasnograd with a left hook; unaware of the powerful forces ready to envelope him. On February 17th, von Manstein was able to say that his preparations had finished and he was ready to begin the operation. The SS Panzerkorps was sent to Krasnograd to assault Vatutin's flank. Sepp Dietrich divided the 1st SS Panzergrenadier Division "Leibstandarte Adolph Hitler" into three powerful Kampfgruppe: KG Wunsche under Major Max Wunsche; KG Meyer under Major Kurt Meyer and KG Peiper under Major Jochen Peiper. LSSAH's initial task was to capture certain villages to be used as observation & jumping points for the upcoming counterattack. The village of Jeremejewka located 30 km East of Krasnograd, was one of the key objectives overlooking the flanks of the advancing Soviet 3rd Tank Army. On 18 February 1943; flanked by Meyer's Aufklärung Abteilung; Kampfgruppe Peiper left Ziglerowka for Jeremejewka . Peiper encountered an enemy recon

element in the village. Always a daring and aggressive commander; he launched an immediate attack to capture the positions before Russians find time to react.

009.Barvenvoko – 25 February 1943 – 18 turns

“Against All Odds”

Barvenkovo, 30 KM Southeast of Kharkov

After the fall of Kharkov the Russian high command concluded, wrongly, that such an important junction would only have been abandoned under Hitler's express order and that Army Group South must therefore be in full retreat. Based on this assumption STAVKA ordered Voronezh Front to continue its pursuit towards the Dnyepir River. Despite frantic efforts to stabilize the frontline there was still a huge gap between 1st Panzer Army and Army Detachment Hollidt along the Mius River. Mobile Group Popov thrust into this gap and advanced south through Krasnoarmeyskoye towards Stalino.

German command blocked Popov's path with the battle weary 40th Panzer Korps. On 18 February, Manstein ordered the first moves of his counteroffensive, orchestrated attacks on Mobile Group Popov's flanks by the 7th and 11th Panzer Divisions, slowly bottlenecking the red armor. As late as the 21st of February, Russians still believed that German Army was in full retreat. By the 23rd, the last resistance of Popov's forces trapped in the Krasnoarmeyskoye area had been broken and remnants of the Mobile Group started a retreat northwards. At this point Manstein committed the 5th SS Panzergrenadier Division "Wiking" on Barvenkovo axis to pursuit and isolate the retreating enemy. Exhausted from continuous fighting in the Caucasus and having only a couple of PzIII and Marders, "Wiking" continued its push towards Barvenkovo.

010.Taranovka – 05 March 1943 – 18 turns

“For the Comrades”

Near Taranovka, 40 KM South of Kharkov

By the first days of March 1943, Mobile Group Popov was isolated and destroyed south of Kharkov with a brilliant counterattack designed by von Manstein. After destroying the powerful enemy spearhead, General Manstein turned his eyes on Kharkov. He sent two pincer columns; the SS Panzer Korps attacked Kharkov from the northwest where the 48th Panzer Korps moved north to isolate the city from the east.

Now its infantry armies were threatened by envelopment, Russian command desperately tried to slow down the German advance towards Kharkov. The 25th Guards Rifle Division was ordered to hold a long line from Taranovka to Merefa. Taranovka, a key position on the eastern flank of the defensive line, was defended by the 78th Guards Rifle Regiment which was supported by a handful of tanks from the 195th Tank Brigade. The high ground to the southeast of the town was particularly important for the defense of the city. On March 5th, the 6th Panzer Division, spearhead of the 48th Panzer Korps started its assault on this key position. Having no illusions for defending the position for a long period, Russian soldiers resisted fiercely to gain time for the retreating comrades.

011.Kharkov – 12 March 1943 – 18 turns

“To The Red Square”

Near Dzerzhinsky Square, Kharkov

After destroying "Mobile Group Popov" in a brilliant counterattack south of Kharkov, von Manstein turned his eyes to the north and the city itself. Elements of the 4th Panzer Army raced northeast to cut the Kharkov-Belgorod road to trap more Russian units. On March 10, 2nd SS Panzer Korps reached the outskirts of the city. Manstein ordered the SS korps to capture the city of Kharkov. "Totenkopf" was ordered to make an enveloping move from North to cut the escape route to Belgorod. "Das Reich" entered the city from

southeast and attempted to capture the eastern industrial district. "Leibstandarte Adolph Hitler" attacked the city from northeast aiming the city center.

Early morning 11 March, the Leibstandarte division launched a two-prong attack into northern Kharkov. Kampfgruppe Witt, consisting elements from the 1st SS Panzergrenadier Regiment and 1st SS Panzer Regiment, attacked down the main road from Belgorod and captured Kharkov Airfield. Rybalko's 3rd Tank Army was defending the city center and its' approaches. Fierce Soviet counterattacks were defeated by the SS troopers.

On 12 March, Kampfgruppe Witt made progress into the city's center, breaking through the strong Soviet defenses in the northern suburbs and began a house to house fight towards the center. By afternoon, German spearheads reached a position a couple of blocks north of the Dzerzhinsky Square, the city center of Kharkov. Standartenführer Fritz Witt, the commanding officer of the Kampfgruppe ordered a final push to reach the city center without further delay.

012.Zalyutino – 12 March 1943 – 18 turns

“No Time to Stop”

Zalyutino, Southern suburbs of Kharkov

SS Panzer Korps' attack on Kharkov started with the first lights of 11 March. Leibstandarte entered the city from the northwest and attacked the city center. Totenkopf advanced further north to block the escape route of the Russian forces at the Belgorod road. Das Reich joined the attack from the south, advancing on the Poltava - Merefa axis.

Das Reich's spearhead, Kampfgruppe Harmel, fought its way along the road, and at 16:00 they reached the Kharkov suburb of Zalyutino where their path was blocked by an anti-tank ditch defended by the remnants of the 40th Army.

During the night of March 11-12, Sturmabannführer Heinz Harmel sent a company of pioneers across the anti-tank ditch to secure the houses on the other side. Panzers and assault guns followed the pioneers closely to pin down the dug-in enemy. Russian forces counterattacked and a fierce night battle erupted for the control of the town.

013.Kharkov – 15 March 1943 – 20 turns

“Last Act at the Tractor Works”

Tractor Works District, Eastern suburbs of Kharkov

After 4 days of continuous combat SS Panzer Korps captured most of Kharkov. The "Leibstandarte" secured the area around the city center and the airport west part of the city. The 2nd SS Panzergrenadier Division "Das Reich" was deployed near the northeastern suburbs dominated by the industrial facilities. The Russians still holding the massive Tractor Works district were directing accurate artillery fire over the Das Reich's positions. Divisional command designed an assault on the Tractor Works on 15 March. 2nd Battalion from the "Der Führer" Panzergrenadier Regiment infiltrated the southern flank of the Russian position and deployed for the attack near the worker settlements. At that point majority of the Russian troops were facing westwards and the SS attack disrupted their defensive plans.

With the first lights of 15 March, Hauptsturmführer Sylvester Stadler's 2nd Battalion launched its attack after a brief artillery preparation. A dozen of panzers and pioneers were supporting the assault. Russian command reacted and shifted troops to support their relatively open southern flank. Remaining armor from the 179th Tank Brigade engaged the German panzers to gain the much needed time for the riflemen. The heavy fighting for the possession of the massive industrial structures was to continue all day.

014.Staraja Russa – 15 March 1943 – 18 turns

“A Moment of Respite”

Staraja Russa, Near Lake Ilmen, Novgorod

After the evacuation of the Demjansk Pocket Army Group North sought ways to create more operational reserves for the expected Russian spring offensive. Battle weary troops were deployed behind the lines to refit, and divisions that saw little action in the winter battles hold the line.

One of these units, the 21st Luftwaffe Field Division formed with the elements of the 21st Jaeger Division and Luftwaffe ground personnel, had been defending the important town and rail station of Staraja Russa near Lake Ilmen. With the coming of March, STAVKA ordered a series of offensives in the region, aiming at better operational deployment for the upcoming spring offensive on the Leningrad Front. Marshall Timoshenko, the commander of the Northwestern Front launched a two pronged attack on the German defenses south of Lake Ilmen.

Pavel Kurochkin's 11th Army advanced along the Moscow-Leningrad Railway and hit the German defenses on Staraja Russa. Lacking firepower to counter the Russian armor, elements of the 21st Luftlande Division had to rely on the bunkers and trenches they had built in the winter.

015.Badayev – 19 March 1943 – 18 turns

“Tigers on the Prowl”

Near Badayev, South of Lake Ladoga, Leningrad Front

On 12 January 1943, the Soviets opened the Second Battle of Lake Ladoga with a tremendous bombardment of more than 4000 guns. When the artillery barrage stopped, the divisions of the 2nd Shock Army under Lt. Gen. W. S. Romanovski launched its attack. The combined assault by the 2nd Shock and the 67th Armies broke the German ring south of Lake Ladoga. At the beginning of March the fighting around Leningrad died down and it appeared that the Second Battle of Lake Ladoga had ended. However, on 19 March the fighting flared up as the battle entered its third phase.

Holding the Leningrad Front were the divisions of L Army Korps bolstered by the Latvian and Flemish volunteers from the Waffen SS. Four Tigers led by Oberleutnant Hans Bölter of the s.Pz Abt.502, were deployed as tactical reserve behind the front line near the village of Badayev. The lines in front of them were defended by the infantry from the SS Volunteer Legion Flandern. On 19 March, 06:00hrs, Russian infantry supported by T34s launched a sudden assault on the direction of Badayev. Flemish volunteers, paralyzed under heavy artillery fire, sent frantic calls for help. Hans Bölter, one of the best tank commanders of the s.Pz Abt.502 moved his platoon towards the gun sounds.

016.Warsaw – 19 April 1943 – 16 turns

“The Bravest Battle”

Zamenhofa - Mila Junction, Warsaw Ghetto

The seeds of the ZOB (Jewish Combat Organization) were planted on 22 July 1942, when the German Nazis under SS General Jurgen Stroop began the GrossAktion Warschau -transportation of the ghetto population to the Treblinka extermination camp- sealing the fate of the Jews confined in the Warsaw Ghetto. Along with ZZW (Jewish Military League), ZOB turned the occupied ghetto buildings into bunkers; tried to gather small arms from smuggling and Polish resistance. However, despite all of the efforts, the Jewish rebels were armed only with pistols, rifles and Molotov cocktails.

On January 1943, Germans started the second phase of the "Grossaktion Warshau". The armed resistance was triggered when a 17 year old girl named Emily Landau threw a grenade into a cluster of SS men from a

rooftop on Gesia Street, killing or wounding a dozen of the soldiers. For two months, ZZW and ZOB units fought off SS attacks to control the ghetto. Despite the heavy toll, Germans slowly destroyed the pockets of resistance and pushed the rebels towards Mila and Muranowska Streets.

At the night of April 19, Jürgen Stroop dispatched groups of Lithuanian and Ukrainian SS auxiliaries and Polish police into the ghetto to secure the exits of the Mila street where the headquarters of the ZOB was located. Supported by armored vehicles, SS troops advanced in single file toward the junction of Zamenhofa and Mila. Having sworn to fight to the death, the young fighters of the ZOB under the command of their leader Mordechai Anielewicz were waiting to make their last stand.

017.Cherkasskoye – 05 July 1943 – 16 turns

“The Battle for Cherkasskoye”

Cherkasskoye, 10 KM South of Berezovka

48th Panzer Korps formed the left wing of the 4th Panzer Army's attack as the southern pincer aimed at the Kursk salient. Korps' objectives were to smash the Russian defenses near Berezovka and capture Oboyan located further north. The advance was also vital for the flank protection of the 2nd SS Panzer Korps deployed to attack towards Prokhorovka. The village of Cherkasskoye was the first obstacle for the 48th Panzer Korps. Cherkasskoye, a heavily fortified village defended by the 67th Guards Rifle Division formed the cornerstone of the Russian first defensive line.

During the night of 4/5 July, German engineers prepared lanes of attack through the dense minefields. After an hour artillery preparation German assault teams launched their attack at 05:00. Grossdeutschland Panzergrenadier Division which was the spearhead of Knobelsdorf's Korps hit the heavy defensive line in front of Cherkasskoye. Russian defense was well prepared and German casualties were high. However after one hour of heavy fighting Fusilier Regiment Grossdeutschland, supported by panzers including the Tigers, overwhelmed the first defense line. Elements of the depleted 199th Rifle Regiment started a fighting withdrawal to the village in order to gain time to prepare a new line of resistance. General Chistyakov, commander of the 6th Guards Army sent fresh reinforcements to bolster the defenses at Cherkasskoye. At 09:00 Grossdeutschland's grenadiers renewed their advance and reached the southern edge of the village. At the very moment, both sides collided in a violent battle for the possession of this vital position.

018.Iakhontov – 05 July 1943 – 18 turns

“The Ultimate Sacrifice”

Iakhontov Strongpoint, 4 KM South of Berezov, Southern Sector of the Kursk Salient

At the southern flank of the Kursk salient, Colonel Nekrasov's 52nd Guards Rifle Division was deployed between Zadelnoya and Berezov, guarding the eastern shore of the Vorskla River. The sector was on the direct path of General Hausser's powerful II.SS Panzer Korps. Colonel Nekrasov deployed most of his firepower on the first echelon. Supported by anti-tank batteries from the 6th Guards Army's arsenal, majority of the guardsmen concentrated their strength to wear SS divisions down before reinforcements arrive. Russian commander also created a security zone by placing platoon sized outposts several kilometers ahead of the main line of resistance. Those strong points were equipped with anti-tank guns, anti-tank rifles and mortars.

At 01:15, on 5 July, Waffen SS troops began recon in force to gather information on the enemy's main trench system. At 03:00, elements of the 3.SS PzG Rgt "Deutschland" (2.SS PzG Div "Das Reich") started their attack on one of the forward strongpoints located at the ruined village of Iakhontov 4km south of Berezov. The attack was spearheaded by Hauptsturmführer Helmuth Schreiber's 10. Panzergrenadier Kompanie. Having no illusions to survive the battle, the soviet guardsmen stood on their way.

019.Maloarkhangelsk – 05 July 1943 – 25 turns

“Hammer Meets Rock”

Maloarkhangelsk, Northern Sector of the Kursk Salient

At the start of Operation Citadel, 14th Sturmregiment of the 78th "Sturm" Division, one of the best formations in Kluge's 9th Army, was attacking toward Maloarkhangelsk strongpoint which was defended by the 410th Rifle Regiment (81st Rifle Division). German troops were assisted by the Ferdinand tank destroyers of the 654. PzJager Abteilung. In addition the remote controlled demolition tanks created gaps in the minefields and obstacles allowing an initial penetration for the 654th's armored monsters. By the end of the day, the 78th Division had advanced 4 agonizing kilometers through the well designed defensive network of the Red Army.

020.Zadelnoye – 05 July 1943 – 30 turns

“Leibstandarte at Kursk”

Zadelnoye, Tomarovka - Bykovka Axis

On the first day of the Kursk offensive, SS-Panzer-Grenadier Regiment 2 (Kraas), Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler supported by a platoon of Tigers led by Michael Wittman and a Sturmgeschutz Abteilung moved forward toward the first day's objective, the village of Bykovka which was located on the Tomarovka-Pokrovka axis. Leibstandarte's orders were to clear a group of small towns along the axis and blocking Soviet flanking movements from the west bank of the Vorskla River.

Moving northward, LSSAH encountered elaborately designed Soviet defensive positions around the village of Zadelnoye. Troops from the determined 52nd Guards Rifle Division (Nekrasov) occupied the trenches and bunkers reinforced by artillery, anti-tank guns, anti-tank riflemen, tanks and mortar batteries. Realizing the tenacity of the Russian defense, Wittman moved his Tigers forward to accompany the assault troops while they were opening lanes for the following grenadiers.

021.Ponyri – 07 July 1943 – 18 turns

“Little Stalingrad at Ponyri”

Ponyri Station, 60 KM North of Kursk

The Northern thrust of the German attack on the Kursk salient was undertaken by the 9th Army. The main axis of the advance was the railway linked Orel and Kursk. The village of Ponyri was a particularly important objective on this axis. Naturally, the Ponyri village and its surroundings were heavily fortified. The area was defended with the well entrenched divisions of the Soviet 13th Army under General Pukhov. The Ponyri village itself was defended by the elements of the 307th Rifle Division commanded by General Enshin. The 307th Rifle Divisions strong defense line was bolstered by well placed AT guns and dug-in T-34s from the 27th Tank Regiment.

The German spearheads reached the Ponyri line on 5 July. The German attacks of the 292nd, 86th and 78th Infantry Divisions slowly carved into the Russian defenses. On 7 July, forward elements of the 292nd Division (V.Kluge) reached the town center of Ponyri. Kluge ordered an immediate attack on the railway station which seemed to be the cornerstone of the Russian resistance. German infantry, supported by sturmpioneers and tanks including Ferdinands from the PanzerJager Abteilung 653, launched a heavy assault on the station.

022.Kliuchi – 11 July 1943 – 18 turns

“Deadend for Eicke”

Hill 266.6, Psel River, 10 KM West of Prokhorovka

Paul Hausser's II.SS Panzer Korps had been slowly carving its way before a stiff enemy resistance since the German attack on the Kursk salient was started on 5 July. Despite heavy losses, 3rd SS PzG Div. Totenkopf", the left wing of the Korps, reached Psel River on 9 July. At the dawn of 10 July, elements of the Panzergrenadier Regiment "Theodor Eicke" crossed the Psel River and attempted to capture the high ground east of the Kliuchi village, Hill 226,6. The hill was defended by the troops from the 153rd Guards Rifle Regiment. Brutal fighting continued for the rest of the day and at the midnight Waffen-SS regiment held the southern slopes of the hill and a small position east of Kliuchi.

During the night of 11-12 July, both sides finalized their preparations for the next day. According to Hausser's orders for the II SS Panzer Corps, the Totenkopf Division was to gain control of the rest of Hill 226,6 before advancing along the ridge to cut the Prokhorovka-Oboian road and provide flank protection for the "Leibstandarte" for its attack on Hill 252,2.

The German troops were finalizing their deployment for the attack at the dawn of 11 July. Panzers were moving to the assembly areas under the protection of the infantry. At 07:00 forward posts came under artillery fire which was followed by a heavy tank attack. The tanks were part of Bakharovs' 18th Tank Corps which had been sent to capture Hill 226,6 and crush the fragile bridgehead at the northern shore of the Psel River.

023.Belchinino – 12 July 1943 – 16 turns

“The Long Right Flank”

Near Belchinino, 13 KM Southwest of Prokhorovka

It was the second week of July and the armored fist of the 2nd SS Panzer Korps was maintaining its slow and costly advance on Prokhorovka. "Totenkopf" Division was bogged down on the western side of the Psel River and 3rd Panzer Korps' advance was too slow on their right. Therefore German spearheads, the 1st and 2nd SS Panzergrenadier Divisions had to concentrate their limited sources on a narrow frontage. The tough job of defending the extending right flank was given to the grenadiers of the "Der Führer" Regiment.

Elements of the motorcycle company, "Der Führer" Regiment, under the command of Ostuf. Buch was holding a wooded area near the village of Belchinino. Thanks to the skilful tactics and support from Sturmgeschütz Abteilung, SS troopers had managed to fight off continuous Russians attacks aiming to pierce the German flank. On 12 July Russian command committed fresh reinforcements -the 2nd Gds Tank Corps- to the area. Loosing no time, Russian armor hit the German lines near Belchinino, especially focusing on the woods the SS motorcycle company was deployed.

024.Oktiabrskii – 12 July 1943 – 18 turns

“The Fateful Day”

Oktiabrskii State Farm, 3 KM Southwest of Prokhorovka

By 11 July, 6 days of heavy fighting brought the 4th Panzer Army, the main striking force of the southern pincer aiming the Kursk salient, to the outskirts of the key road junction at Prokhorovka. Von Kluge's northern attack was beaten and Breith's III. Panzer Korps was unsuccessful in providing right flank support for Hausser's II. SS Panzer Korps. However, despite the absence of a breakthrough and bad news from other sectors Hausser's divisions managed to establish strong bridgeheads at the eastern side of the Psel River and were ready for the next push.

By the closing hours of the day, Hausser ordered his spearhead, the 1st SS PzG Div "LSSAH" to advance through the rail line towards Prokhorovka. During the night, LSSAH deployed for the attack in two axes. The left prong was based on Oktiabrskii State Farm; and the right one aimed the village of Jamki to the south of the critical heights codenamed Hill 252,2. However the Russians had other ideas. The very same

sector where the Germans expected the breakthrough was chosen for Rotmistrov's 5th Guards Tank Army's counterstroke. Without knowing each other's intentions, both sides' armor deployed for a major collision.

With the first lights of 12 July, the 2nd SS PzG Rgt (Kraas), led by the 11th Company, began its advance from the trenches at Oktiabirskii State Farm they had captured the last day. The leading infantry was negotiating the ridgeline east of Hill 252.2. Obersturmführer von Ribbentrop's panzers were covering their advance from the small village. At 08:15, the leading troops started to deploy purple smokes, the warning code for enemy tanks. In a couple of minutes the entire ridgeline was covered with purple smoke. Von Ribbentrop checked the ridgeline with his binoculars and saw a remarkable view; dozens of Russian tanks with riding infantry were advancing in full speed down the slope like medieval knights. Ribbentrop quickly deployed his panzers to slow the Russian avalanche. Michael Wittman's Tiger platoon rushed to support the sector. The carefully planned German attack turned out to be a desperate struggle for survival in a few minutes.

025.Garany – 22 July 1943 – 18 turns

“Crisis at the Mius River”

Hill 196.0, South of Garany

While entangled in a fierce struggle against the German Army in the Kursk Salient, STAVKA launched two local counter-offensives on both German flanks; one near Orel against the rear area of the 9th Army in the North; another near the Mius River against the Army Group South. The attack from the Mius Bridgehead particularly surprised von Manstein and threatened the logistical network of the Army Detachment Kempf.

On 21 July, the 4th Guards Mechanized Corps burst out from the Mius position and overwhelmed the thin infantry screen overlooking the river. The 16th Panzergrenadier Division which was deployed between Garany and Kalinowka was the only obstacle on the way of the Russian breakthrough. The German division was dangerously spread out to cover large areas on a flat, tank country. One particularly important spot, the strongpoint known as Hill 196.0 was defended by the elements of the 156th Panzergrenadier Regiment. A few panzers from the Panzer Abteilung 116 were deployed to the rear as reserves. After a brief preparation, the 4th Guards Mechanized Corps launched a heavy assault on the German held hill. The deadly 88mm Flak Guns were the first to greet them.

026.Maximova – 07 August 1943 – 18 turns

“Steel Inferno at Maximova”

Maximova, 15 KM South of Bogodukhov

Operation Rumyantsev was the third Russian attempt to capture Kharkov. It was a nasty surprise for the German command which believed that after the Battle of Kursk the Soviet mobile reserves were too damaged to launch an offensive in the short term. However, on 23 July, elements of the Voronezh and Steppe Fronts hit the Belgorod line, pushing aside the 332nd Infantry Division and 167th Infantry Division. Soviet command sent two powerful armored spearheads into the breach; Katukov's 1st Tank Army and Rotmistrov's 5th Gds Tank Army. The counterattack by the tired 19th Panzer Division could not prevent the envelopment of Tomarovka.

On 5 August the 3rd Mechanized Corps, the leading mobile element of the 1st Tank Army, was holding static lines south of the Tomarovka Pocket. On 6 August the mobile unit was relieved by the infantry from the 32nd Guards Rifle Corps and continued its advance towards Bogodukhov and Merefa to outflank Kharkov from the West. On 7 August after bypassing the German defenses at Bogodukhov, the Russian spearhead continued its advance south towards Maximova, a key rail line sector between Kharkov and Bogodukhov.

By 17:00, the leading unit of the 3rd Mechanized Corps, the 1st Guards Tank Brigade, was near Maximova where they ran into the elements of the 2nd SS Panzergrenadier Division "Das Reich" which was moving from Olshany towards Bogodukhov to plug the gap and establish contact with Army Detachment Kempf. Russian tanks reacted quickly and engaged the German column South of Maximova. With the arrival of reinforcements, the unexpected encounter developed into a chaotic tank battle which continued for two days.

027.Vorskla Valley – 08 August 1943 – 30 turns

“Back to Akhytrka”

Vorskla River Valley, Northeast of Akhytrka

After the failure at Kursk, 52nd Panzer Battalion, commanded by Major von Sivers was attached to the 19th Panzer Division, receiving refitting near Tomarovka. When Voronezh Front launched Operation Rumyantsev, the counteroffensive against the Belgorod salient on August 3, Sivers got only 27 serviceable Panthers with the rest of his vehicles were under repair and immobile. By August 4, the Soviet 6th Tank Corps started an enveloping move south of Tomarovka, threatening the 52nd Panzer Battalion and the 19th Panzer Division's rear. Locked in a fierce tank battle against the 200th Tank Brigade, von Sivers decided to disengage and retreat through the Vorskla River Valley and reach the depots at Borisovka.

On 5 August, after destroying dozens of immobilized Panthers, von Sivers's Kampfgruppe began retreating southwest with the remnants of the 19th Panzer Division. Katukov's 1st Tank Army was racing down the valley towards Borisovka, trying to cut the escape route of the retreating Germans. On 6 August, von Sivers' column reached the outskirts of Borisovka, finding the town surrounded by the Russian armor. Destroying 17 T-34s after a brief long-range duel, von Sivers turned further south to link up with the elements of the Grossdeutschland Division near Akhytrka.

The pursuit continued for 2 days. Every time Russian armor cut his path, Kampfgruppe managed to breakthrough, thanks to the long range advantage of the Panthers. On the afternoon of August 8, Kampfgruppe Sivers was only a couple of kilometers away from the friendly lines north of Akhytrka, where a probe from the 13th Guards Tank Brigade spotted the German column and attempted to block their path. More Russian armor was on its way to destroy the evasive column before they link up with the forces at Akhytrka.

028.Nikolajewka – 12 September 1943 – 20 turns

“Duel in the Ukraine”

Nikolajewka, Northeast of Kolomak, Near Poltava Bridgehead

In September 1943, following the heavy battles for Kharkov, Das Reich Division was ordered to consolidate their positions near the Poltava bridgehead at Dnyepir River. Stubaf. Otto Weidinger's Armored Recon Battalion moved to new defensive positions at the outskirts of Nikolajewka a couple of kilometers Northeast of Kolomak. SS infantry worked for the defensive positions during the first week of September. However the effort didn't change the fact that the German lines were thinly held.

On September 12, around 14:00, German lines were alerted by a growing noise of tank engine and tracks. Forward posts started reporting number of enemy tanks coming from the valley north of German lines: "10, 15, 25, 40!". More than 60 T34's from the 1st Mechanized Corps, closely followed by infantry launched an attack on the German lines. Weidling had so little to throw against such a strong phalanx of armor. His orders were desperate: "Let the tanks overrun your lines; engage the infantry!". The job of dealing with the Soviet armor was left to the Panthers of Hstuf. Friedrich Holzer's 1st Panzer Company. If they arrive in time.

029.Stayki – 25 September 1943 – 16 turns

“Another Blister At Dnyepir”

Near Stayki, 20 KM South of Kiev

By the autumn of 1943, Soviet Armies were at the Dnyepyr River near Kiev, a major natural obstacle that would give the Germans a moment of respite. During September Russian units actively sought areas appropriate to establish bridgeheads for the upcoming Kiev offensive. The German command did not have sufficient troops to cover the entire shore of the river bend so they formed mobile units to control large areas in order to destroy any infiltration over the Dnyepyr.

One such crossing consisted of 50 men from Moshalenko's 40th Army. They established a tiny foothold near the town of Stayki. Past experiences taught the Germans well that such tiny crossings could expand to a regimental strength in a couple of days, so a recon company from the nearby 34th Infantry Division was dispatched to deal with the "blister" before it goes bigger.

030.Tokmak – 11 October 1943 – 18 turns

“Holding the Wotan Line”

Wotan Line, Near Tokmak, 40 KM NE of Melitopol

The Russian Lower Dnepr Offensive that started on 24 August 1943 applied great pressure on the overextended lines of the Army Group South and German front gradually but inevitably deteriorated under the continuous enemy attacks in different sectors. While most of the Dnepr battle concentrated around the capital of Kiev, General Tolbukhin's 4th Ukrainian Front launched a diversionary offensive on German right flank near Melitopol. Spearheaded by the 51st Army, the Soviet offensive aimed to breach the German defensive system codenamed Wotanstellung (Wotan Line) and capture Melitopol, thus isolating the Crimean Peninsula from the Axis main frontline.

On 11 October 1943, the 51st Army launched its attack on the 6th Army defending the line between Melitopol and Zaporozhe. The heavy Rolling barrage pinned down the 294th Infantry Division which struggled to shift troops from one sector to another. The 17th Panzer Division tried to plug the gaps with armored counterattacks but struggled to concentrate its hitting power where dozens of sectors cried for help. To make things worse Hitler's "stand fast" doctrine forced the Germans into a static defense they didn't have the resources to sustain. The line cracked in many sectors but German grenadiers continued to stand against the red tide in certain places where the Wotanstellung was better fortified.

031.Ternovka – 25 October 1943 – 20 turns

“Panzers to the Stage”

Ternovka, 24 KM South of Melitopol

In October 1943 the reconstituted 6th Army was holding the line at Lower Dnepr and the approaches of the Crimea. After pausing for rest and refitting, General Tobukhin's 4th Ukrainian Front launched another offensive on the German Lower Dnepr positions known as the Wotan Line in mid October. After two weeks of heavy fighting Melitopol, the key for the Crimea fell. Tolbukhin's armored spearhead, the 6th Guards Tank Brigade continued its advance southwards to Akimovka.

The approaches of Akimovka were defended by the weary remnants of the 226th Infantry Regiment (79th Infantry Division). Behind the infantry lines, Colonel Hake's armored group of the 13th Panzer Division was deployed as a fire brigade. On 25 October, Russian infantry attacked the town of Ternovka located at the outskirts of Akimovka on the Melitopol Road. Within an hour Russian troops entered Ternovka and the German infantry retreated to recover around the town. Armor of the 6th Guards Tank Brigade moved into the town to resume advance southwards. At 11:00hrs, when Soviet tanks hardly began their advance, Kampfgruppe Hake attacked to recapture the position of Ternovka. Encouraged by the appearance of the

panzers, elements of the 226th Infantry Regiment joined the fight. For the Russians a calm operational routine suddenly turned into a chaotic struggle.

032.Kocherovo – 18 November 1943 – 18 turns

“Schneidereit's Cannon”

Kocherovo, Kiev - Zhitomir Highway

On the morning of 3 November 1943, the 4th Panzer Army defending the Dniepr line near Kiev, woke up with a massive Russian artillery barrage. 1st Ukrainian Front's two pronged attack smashed the German bridgehead and Kiev was captured in a couple of days. After Kiev secured, 1st Ukrainian Front's objectives were to drive quickly westwards to take the towns of Zhitomir, Korosten, Berdichev, and Fastov and cut the railroad between Army Group South and Center. The powerful 3rd Guards Tank Army, commanded by Pavel Rybalko launched its attack toward Zhitomir on 5 November. Von Manstein committed the newly arrived 48th Panzer Korps on the Zhitomir - Kiev axis to blunt the Russian drive and recapture Kiev. Rybalko reacted the German counterattack by releasing the 7th Guards Tank Corps.

Russian and German spearheads collided near the town of Kocherovo. 48th Panzer Korps' leading division, the powerful 1. SS Panzergrenadier Division LSSAH captured Kocherovo and started preparing defenses for a future attack that will outflank the Russian tank army. However, Russians had other plans. Rybalko immediately ordered the 7th Gds Tank Corps to counterattack and secure Kocherovo. The thinly spread lines of the LSSAH resisted heavy Russian attacks on 17 - 18 November.

Rottenfuehrer Schneidereit was a gunner in the weapons company of the 2. Battalion (1.SS PzGren Regt) who was known for his prowess with the s.PzB 41 28/20 squeezebore cannon. Remnants of his 8th company were defending the Northeastern edge of Kocherovo. The Soviets attacked with tanks and large waves of infantry. At Kocherovo, he knocked out two T-34s by perfectly placing the shots in a vision block and in the turret ring. They received help from a couple of Panthers, assault guns, and a pair of tank destroyers. He then led a counterattack to regain the town after they had been pushed back. For his actions he was awarded the Knight's Cross.

1944

033.Olshana – 30 January 1944 – 16 turns

“Building the Kessel”

Olshana, 30 KM South of Korsun

The Russian attack to encircle the German troops located in the salient at Dnyepyr succeeded in 3 days and on 28th January, Vatutin's 1st Ukrainian Front's spearheads met Konev's 2nd Ukrainian Front at Zvenigorodka. This completely isolated two German Korps in an area known as Korsun Pocket.

On 28th January, German command realized that the Soviet penetration could not be contained and started preparations to build the pocket or "Kessel". The southern face of the Kessel was particularly vulnerable since Russian spearheads were very close. Indeed, Konev sent troops to take several key towns and villages and prevent the Germans from building a strong perimeter.

The town of Olshana was a particularly important objective. It was located on a junction with roads leading to key cities of Shpolia, Zvenigorodka and Korsun. German XI. Korps command quickly realized the danger and ordered the units of the 5th SS Panzer Division "Wiking" to block the Russian advance until infantry divisions arrive. However "Wiking" had already engaged into a heavy fighting Southeast of Korsun around Gorodische. When the first Russian patrols arrived Olshana, only troops located in the town was the supply

troops of the division. Officers hastily formed an adhoc force from clerks, drivers and mechanics. Division also sent four assault guns commanded by Ostuf. Willy Hein from Panzer Regiment "Wiking". Ostuf. Willy Hein left his Panther at Gorodische and headed for Olshana. He was given four StugIIIg which were under repair in the Divisional HQ. The "Alarmheit" troops supported by those four assault guns, managed to defeat several Russian probes on 28 and 29 January. Germans lost one assault gun in exchange.

However Russians continued their attacks. This time a stronger force, the 63rd Cavalry Division from General Selivanov's 5th Cavalry Corps resumed the offensive. Their first attempts to capture the town from south and east were fought off by the German resistance. On the morning of 30 January, Willy Hein planned a counterattack to hit the Russian flank before the enemy find time to consolidate their forces around the town. Hein's assault guns supported by the newly arrived infantry from the SS.PzG.Btl "Narwa" attacked the Russian left flank which was protected by an AT gun screen. The Russian troops caught completely off guard since they thought the engine sounds were from their own tanks. Hein quickly grasped the initiative. His assault guns followed by the Estonians shattered the disrupted Russian flank and charged on the infantry which was already deployed for a new assault on the town.

034.Shanderovka – 11 February 1944 – 18 turns
"Ritterkreuz for Werner Meyer"
Shanderovka, 22 KM Northeast of Lisyanka

The attempt to relieve the besieged Germans in the pocket around Korsun was started by Hermann Breith's III. Panzer Korps' attack towards Lisyanka. As a necessary precaution, General Stemmerman, the commander of the "Kessel" planned a series of attacks in order to establish an area of deployment north of Lisyanka for his isolated troops. The area Group Stemmerman attempted to secure formed a triangle with key points at Komarovka, Novo-Buda and Shanderovka.

The Northern edge of the triangle was the town of Shanderovka. Shanderovka was a small Ukrainian town located near Paresowiza River 18km southwest of Korsun. A huge brick factory which lies to the south was its only significant structure. This dull Ukrainian village has become a vital point both sides desperately fought to control in the course of the Battle of Korsun.

The German attempt to control Shanderovka was undertaken by the SS. PzG Rgt "Germania" which was part of the 5th SS Panzer Div "Wiking". Sturmbannführer Hans Dorr, the commander of the 1st Battalion, ordered Ostuf. Werner Meyer's 1st Company to lead the night attack on Shanderovka.

To carry out the attack, Dorr's battalion approached the southern skirts of the town, utilizing a large gully to hide their moves. Meyer moved forward to scout out the enemy positions however his presence was spotted by the Russian sentries. Having lost the element of surprise Meyer immediately ordered his men to attack while 2nd and 3rd companies were trying to catch up. The machinegun positions and flamethrower traps manned by the 54th Fortified Region was waiting for them.

035.Novo-Buda – 13 February 1944 – 18 turns
"No Day For Rest"
Novo Buda, 3 KM East of Komarovka, Cherkassy Pocket

The small village of Novo Buda was located on a hill a couple of kilometers south of Shanderovka. It was an important objective in the zone Stemmerman's isolated army secured in order to fight their way to link up with the III. Panzer Korps fighting near Lisyanka. The fall of Novo Buda meant a serious threat on the Shanderovka - Komarovka axis as it was the dominating height facilitating an attack to cut the road.

Two days ago elements of the 105th Infantry Regiment (71st Infantry Division) had captured Novo Buda and fought off numerous Russian counterattacks. On 12 February, Oberst Kastner's grenadiers were awaiting the arrival of the Wallonien Brigade which was supposed to relieve them. After completing a long march in mud and snow, the leading elements of the Wallonien Brigade arrived Novo Buda. Hand over completed at the late hours of 12 Feb. The exhausted Wallons sought shelter in isbas. Ostubaf. Lucien Lippert and Hstuf. Leon Degrelle, the leading Wallon officers were receiving an update on the tactical situation around the village from the wehrmacht officers.

At 07:00, 13 February, Wallons woke up with the sound of incoming katyusha rounds and the approaching tank treads. The off guarded Wallons hurried to reach their positions. Meanwhile, forward elements of the 11th Guards Cavalry Division (Selivanov's 5th Guards Cavalry Corps) have already infiltrated the southern edge of the village. A day of rest turned out to be a desperate struggle for survival.

036.Shanderovka – 13 February 1944 – 20 turns

“Where Are The Panzers?”

Shanderovka, 20 KM Northeast of Lisyanka

On 11 February, Sturmbannführer Hans Dorr's 1st Battalion from the SS Panzergrenadier Regiment "Germania" had captured Shanderovka, a key position for the defense of the pocket while waiting for the relief attempt. Ostuf. Werner Meyer, the commander of the 1st Company had formed a perimeter along the southeastern edge of the town and had been waiting for the inevitable Russian counterattack. Divisional command had promised armor support two days ago. However the anxiously waiting grenadiers did not receive anything but a couple of antitank guns to bolster their defenses. On 13 February at 2100 hours the Russian infantry launched an attack that was supported by tanks and artillery. Meyer and his company were on their own.

037.Oktyabr – 16 February 1944 – 18 turns

“The Last Ditch Effort”

Oktyabr, Near Lisyanka, 2 KM Southwest of Hill 239.0

The link-up of the 20th Guards Tank Brigade with the 6th Guards Tank Army at the village of Zvenigorodka on 28 January completed the encirclement and created the Kessel that became known as the Korsun-Cherkassy Pocket. Trapped in the pocket were around 50,000 men, a total of six German divisions under the command of General Stemmermann. Manstein, commander of Army Group South, reacted quickly, and by early February the III and XLVII Panzer Korps were assembled for a relief effort. Aware of the weakness of the XLVII Panzer Korps, Manstein ordered Hermann Breith's III Panzerkorps to lead the attempt to relieve the beleaguered Gruppe Stemmermann which was anxiously waiting the sound of friendly armor near Shanderovka. All progress began to bog down with a change in weather, resulting in the thick mud of the spring thaw that came early.

On 11 February; III Panzerkorps continued its drive east. The exhausted force reached the Gnily Tikich stream and established a small bridgehead on the eastern bank at Lisyanka. Despite heavy Soviet attacks on his flanks, Breith pushed forward to capture the strategically important point known as Hill 239.0 located a couple of kilometers north of Lisyanka.

The leading unit of the III Panzer Korps was the Kamfgruppe Frank under the command of Oberstleutnant Heinz Werner Frank which was formed around the elements of the 1st Panzer Regiment and the 113th Panzergrenadier Regiment; all part of the 1st Panzer Division. After the failed attacks on 14 and 15 February towards Hill 239.0, German commander planned another attack on the small village of Oktyabr which was blocking the road linking Lisyanka and Hill 239.0.

For the attack on Oktyabr, all Kampfgruppe Frank could spare was the under strength panzergrenadier company of Leutnant Fritz Leben. Most of the panzers were either destroyed or sent to flanks to fight off enemy counterattacks. Nevertheless, four Panthers under the command of Oberleutnant Dörnberg were present to give a much needed cover for the infantry. The regiment also provided Hummels for long range support. On 16 February 1944, at noon, panzergrenadiers of Leutnant Leben launched their desperate attack on Oktyabr. The hamlet was defended by the tanks and men from the 20th Tank Corps of the 5th Guards Tank Army.

038.Potschapinzy – 17 February 1944 – 20 turns

“The River of Freedom”

Near Potschapinzy, Cherkassy Pocket, 2 KM North of the Gniloi Tikich River

By 16 February it was clear that Breith's panzers were unable to advance further and link up with Stemmerman's isolated army waiting at Shanderovka. General Stemmerman decided to attack towards southwest and reach the advance elements of the relief force, the III Panzer Korps. The breakout attempt was undertaken by three battlegroups formed around the 72nd Infantry Division and the SS Panzer Division "Wiking". On 17 February, at midnight, the German breakout attack started from the direction of Shanderovka towards Lisyanka. With heavy snow and fog, weather was in favor of the Germans for the first time in three weeks. With the help of the fog, German spearheads were able to advance towards the critical heights north of Lisyanka without heavy engagement with the Soviet troops.

Ostuf. Heinz Debus' kampfguppe which was built around the SS-Pz.Aufkl.Abt.5 "Wiking" were following Oberst Kastner's "Grenadier Rgt. 105" closely. While powerful, Debus' unit was entirely an infantry formation. Only armored vehicles the kampfguppe had were a forward observer PzIII with a dummy main gun and two Wespe selfpropelled artillery guns. While Kastner's battlegroup managed to slip through the Russian lines without arising much attention, Heinz Debus had to attack a fully alerted enemy. After defeating Russian outposts near Komarowka and Dshurshenzy, Debus' men reached the outskirts of the Hill 239.0. Bad news arrived at this moment as the scouts reported soviet tanks on the hill. Having their escape path blocked by a phalanx of armor, Heinz Debus shifted to the southeast.

Utilizing the low visibility and a deep ravine, SS troopers managed to enter the forest between Hill 239.0 and Potschapinzy. The leading 2nd Company reached the southern edge of the woods at 04:00 just before the dawn. They had only a couple of kilometers before reaching the Gniloy Tikisch River and freedom. However, at the edge of the forest, Debus' advance was stopped by another Russian strongpoint belonging to the 41st Guards Rifle Division. The "Wiking" men launched a fierce attack to overcome this last obstacle before the enemy tanks catch them.

039.Lembitu – 17 March 1944 – 18 turns

“Carius at the "Kinderheim””

Lembitu, Narva Bridgehead, Estonia

In the Spring of 1944, German Army Group North was still holding a bridgehead at Narva. The bridgehead defenses linked with the front line with a narrow strip passing in an East-West direction between the marshlands of the Narva River to the south and the Gulf of Finland to the North. This narrow strip was making the German bridgehead vulnerable since a Russian breakthrough might have easily cut the lifeline of the defenses at Narva located further to the east. The railway linking Narva to Vaivara was the prime objective of the enemy.

Elements of the depleted 61st Infantry Division were holding the German line at Lembitu strongpoint which was guarding the railway and its approaches. Tigers from the 502nd Heavy Panzer Detachment were spread

along the thin defense line to support the infantry. Lieutenant Otto Carius, one of the best tank commanders of the war was stationed at Lembitu with another Tiger under the command of Albert Kersher.

On 17 March, six divisions, armored vehicles and artillery of the Soviet 109th Rifle Corps and the newly brought 6th Rifle Corps attacked the railway embankment. Russian artillery barrage was so intense, Carius and Kersher was unable to find a moment to reach their panzers for 15 minutes. When they managed to get into the Tigers, Russian troops were already overrunning the forward positions.

040.Zagrobela – 09 April 1944 – 16 turns

“Roar of the Monsters”

Zagrobela, Suburbs of Tarnopol

In the spring of 1944, two Russian fronts; Zhukov's 1st Ukrainian and Koniev's 2nd Ukrainian; was operating in the vicinity of the key junction of Tarnopol near the Polish border. On 5 March, Koniev's 2nd Ukrainian Front smashed the German lines at Uman and penetrated towards the Southern approaches of Tarnopol. This operation pushed the right flank of First Panzer Army back to the northwest away from the left flank of the Eighth Army. At the same time, Zhukov's 1st Ukrainian Front attacked along the rail line to Tarnopol, trying to isolate the city. Germans counterattacked in order to establish a cohesive line. However growing pressure from the two fronts pushed the 1st Panzer Army into a salient south of Tarnopol. While most of the Russian formations were sent to envelop the 1st Panzer Army near Kamenets-Podolskii, the 13th Army of General N.P. Pukhov turned east and attacked the city of Tarnopol.

The city was defended by Generalmajor von Neindorff's troops which were declared as "Festung Tarnopol" in accordance with Hitler's "stand fast" orders. Germans had turned most of the brick houses into pillboxes. The 13th Army's offensive started on 31 March and continued until the second week of April. On 1 April, the Russians penetrated the positions of the "Demba" Fusilier Battalion which was defending Zagrobela, a western suburb of Tarnopol. The veteran unit managed to seal off most of the Russian penetrations. However, heavy enemy pressure in other sectors forced the Battalion into the city center near the rail station. On 9 April, 117th Rifle Division attacked after a bombardment lasting several hours to take the rail-station. The Russians were unable to destroy the German strong points, so they deployed the SU-152 self propelled guns in a direct fire role. Oberstleutnant Udo Balzer had nothing but panzerfausts to throw against the armored monsters.

041.Kozlow – 11 April 1944 – 20 turns

“The Mud Offensive”

Wosuszka River, Near Kozlow, 17 KM West of Tarnopol

After the encirclement of Tarnopol the German command sent the 8th Panzer Division for a relief attempt. The main force that led the German attack was Kampfgruppe Friebe consisting of the elements from the 10th Panzer and 8th Panzergrenadier Regiments. On 25 March Oberst Friebe started the attack from the west towards Tarnopol. The kampfguppe advanced through mud and artillery fire, over three rows of hills, each with entrenched Russians.

By the first week of April the German spearhead was near Kozlow 17 km West of Tarnopol, facing the Wosuzka River and the entrenched 99th Rifle Division. After a brief rest and refitting Kampfgruppe Friebe set out to capture a foothold on the eastern side the river near Kubianka. At 06:00hrs 11 April, German panzergrenadiers supported closely by a Panther detachment started their attack on the bridge while two more diversionary moves were launched on both sides.

042.Pereval – 15 April 1944 – 18 turns

“The Sacrificed Battalion”

Pereval, Yaila Mountains, Southern Crimea

The Soviet attack on the Crimea started on 8 April 1944. Elements of the 2nd Guards Army and 51st Army hit the German and Rumanian divisions defending the Perekop Isthmus and Shivash Sea. After fighting two days to contain the enemy advance, the command of the 17th Army reached the conclusion that they didn't have the strength to hold the long northern front and gave the general retreat order towards Sevastopol. On 10 April, a race started between the Axis units trying to reach the Sevastopol perimeter and the Russian spearheads that tried to catch the retreating enemy on open ground.

With the fall of Simferopol on 13 April, the German 5th Korps at the Kerch Peninsula had only one route of retreat westwards; the coastal road passing through the town of Alushta. While the Axis units were in full retreat towards Alushta; the task of blocking the Russian advance was given to the Rumanian Infantry. The passes in the Yaila Mountains, north of Alushta, were defended by Rumanian detachments. A particularly important objective, Pereval which was located on the mountain road was defended by Lt.Col. Aurel Vulcanescu's 23rd Mountain Battalion which was supported by a battery of 75mm howitzers. The battalion had the unenviable job of gaining time for the thousands of troops retreating towards Alushta and Sevastopol. During the night of 15 April, Soviet troops from the 19th Tank Corps attacked the village.

043.Lopyashna – 16 April 1944 – 18 turns

“The Hit and Run Game”

Lopyashna, 50 km SW of Kishinev

By the spring of 1944, The Russian winter offensive was losing momentum with over-extended supply lines and tiring troops. Still, Rodion Malinovsky's 3rd Ukrainian Front has conducted probing attacks to infiltrate behind the German 8th Army which was retreating behind the Siret River into Moldova. The fast moving Russian mechanized spearheads were threatening the exhausted German infantry.

However, in April, after refitting at Kishinev, the 3rd SS Panzer Division "Totenkopf" arrived in the region and started operations as a mobile rearguard formation. Following the German flexible defense doctrine, the Totenkopf Division has set up a series of strong points in the valleys and hills of Moldova. Those strong points were planned as road blocks for the Russian mechanized columns where quick armored counterattacks aimed to destroy the enemy before the main part of the column can reach and provide support. In 16 April, at Lopyashna, approximately 50 km West of Kishinev, panzergrenadiers from the "Theodor Eicke" Regiment ambushed a forward column from the 55th Mechanized Brigade.

044.Radcha – 01 May 1944 – 18 turns

“Rage of the Red Bear”

Radcha, 8 KM Southwest of Stanislav

By the end of spring, 1944, southern Russia and the Ukraine were back under Soviet control and the Red Armies were preparing the invasion of Germany's Eastern European Allies. The northern gates of Eastern Europe was defended by the Hungarian First Army. After their unsuccessful spoiling attack against the Russian concentration at Stanislav, Hungarian forces dug-in around the town of Lisets, waiting for the inevitable attack of the Red Army. On May 1st, Russian armor started rolling again. 1st Ukrainian Front crashed the first line of defenses Southeast of Lvov and continued its advance towards the Hungarian border. Russian spearhead, 162nd Tank Brigade reached Lisets - Radcha line without much resistance from the enemy. At the outskirts of Radcha, Soviet units encountered elements of the Hungarian 2nd Armored Division.

045.Drvar – 25 May 1944 – 25 turns

“Operation Rösselsprung”

Tito's Headquarters, Drvar, Yugoslavia

Following the fall of Mussolini, partisan activity significantly increased in Yugoslavia in the spring of 1944. To counter the threat, German command designed a large anti-partisan offensive. The offensive code named Operation Rösselsprung (Knight's Leap) aimed to destroy large concentrations of Tito's Partisan Army by a series of well coordinated blows in different areas. Although the whole operation contained separate sectors and different units such as 7.SS Mountain Division "Prinz Eugen", "Brandenburg" commandos, Croatian Jager Brigade and Chetnik Corps; the most significant operation of the entire plan was an airborne assault on Tito's headquarters located on the hills surrounding the Bosnian town of Drvar.

The assault on Drvar was given to the 500.SS Parachute Battalion commanded by Hauptsturmführer Kurt Rybka. The SS airborne unit was formed in 1943 near Sarajevo and completed its training in the first months of 1944. An unconventional unit with SS troopers partially recruited from penal companies using paratrooper equipment; 500.SS Parachute Battalion was designed to be used in high risk special operations similar to Otto Skorzeny's successful raid on Gran Sasso that rescued Mussolini.

On 25 May 1944, at 05:00, following an aerial bombardment, SS paratroopers landed on an open ground in front of the hills hosting Tito's dugout. Paratroopers secured the area for the second wave glider landing. There were fewer than 100 Partisans in the area when the operation started. Most of the Partisan troops were dispersed in the countryside. Hills were defended by a company sized unit from Tito's Escort Battalion. Disrupted by the bombardment and the paratrooper attack, partisans struggled to bring reinforcements in order to block the German advance.

046.Lipovac – 29 May 1944 – 18 turns

“Help From The Skies”

Near Lipovac, 15 KM West of Mitrovica, Croatia

Although "Operation Rösselsprung" is largely known for the daring airborne assault on Drvar; there were many small battles in different parts of Bosnia and Croatia. In most of these battles, Tito's partisans desperately tried to slow the axis forces and gain time for their comrades trying to disengage and seek shelter in the mountains. As another interesting note, allied air forces assisted the partisan forces during these hard times. The assistance was generally limited with supply of food and ammunition but it had significant effect on the morale of the partisans.

One such event occurred near the village of Lipovac located at the Croatia - Serbia Border. On 29 May, four days after the raid on Drvar, a partisan company from the 1st Proletarian Brigade was protecting the area near Lipovac in order to provide cover for the general headquarters' withdrawal. On 14:00hrs, a combat group from the 7.SS Mountain Division "Prinz Eugen" attacked the partisan positions. Running out of ammunition, partisans had strict orders to hold fire until the last moment.

The partisan group resisted fiercely against the superior German fire power; until their ammunition dried. At the very moment the partisan commander prepared for a final hand to hand fight, allied aircraft appeared on the sky dropping canisters full of ammunition. There started another struggle for reaching the canisters before SS troops overrun their positions.

047.Chernyavka – 23 June 1944 – 20 turns

“Paving the Way to Bobruisk”

Berezina River, 40 KM Southeast of Bobruisk

Operation Bagration's purpose was the envelopment of the German Army Group Center in Belorussia by two attacking Soviet forces: a northern force comprised of two fronts and commanded by Marshal Alexander

Vasilevsky, and a southern force, also containing two fronts, commanded by Marshal Georgi Zhukov. The battle for Bobruisk was the first phase of the southern force's mission, and would form the penetration that would allow Zhukov to pursue and envelop German forces from the south. The city of Bobruisk site astride important crossing sites on the Berezina River, and was key to Zhukov's success in the operation.

14th Rifle Division, part of the 65th Army, was given the mission to seize one of the key crossing sites south of Bobruisk to allow the First Guards Tank Corps to pass to the west. Opposing the division on the west side of the Berezina was a regiment from the 35th Infantry Division, supported by batteries of 105mm howitzers.

The 14th Division commander General Mitka Biryokov developed a tactical plan based on concentration of forces and artillery into a single point in the German lines. Biryokov lacked overwhelming force ratio required for a river crossing. He did, however, have heavy artillery concentration behind his lines. Therefore the key, surmised Biryokov was to gain overwhelming advantage at the decisive point. With the first lights of the attack day, Russian artillery began pounding the German positions across the river. Under cover of smoke, troops from the 242nd Rifle Regiment led the attack.

048.Volkovo – 23 June 1944 – 20 turns

“Hammer Falls Over Sturm”

Near Volkovo, 12 KM Northeast of Dubrovno

While the 39th Army was trying to envelop Vitebsk on its right wing, General Galitskii's 11th Guards Army attacked through the Orsha axis on the first day of the Operation Bagration, the great summer offensive on the German Army Group Center. On 23 June, the 36th Guards Rifle Corps launched its attack to open the way for the waiting armor of the 2nd Guards Tank Corps. The Russian troops had difficulties in advancing on the marshy terrain between Volkovo and Dubrovno.

The German line facing the 39th Guards Rifle Corps was defended by a powerful unit, the 78th Sturm Division an elite formation with special equipment and more firepower. However the unit has the unenviable task of standing directly on the way of the 3rd Belorussian Front. The Soviet attack started with a heavy artillery barrage that shook the ground in all sectors for miles. At 07:00 supported closely by heavy assault guns and flamethrower tanks, the leading 16th Guards Rifle Division sent waves of infantry on the well entrenched positions of the 14. Sturm Regiment.

049.Makarova – 24 June 1944 – 16 turns

“A Gaping Hole”

Makarova, 17 KM Northeast of Orsha

At the initial phase, Operation Bagration aimed to encircle key defensive points like Vitebsk, Mogilev and Bobruisk by coordinated pincer moves. While those pincer moves were pinning the German defenses Stavka planned another breakthrough at Orsha, the very center of the defenses of the Army Group Center. The task of capturing Orsha was given to General Cherniakovskii's 3rd Byelorussian front. Orsha sector was defended by the strong 78th Sturm Division which had additional heavy weapons and armor.

On 23 June the heavy Russian hammer fell on the German lines. 8th Guards Rifle Corps supported by hundreds of aircrafts and artillery hit the German lines hard. 78th Sturm Division resisted fiercely. However at the end of the first day German defenses were stretched too far. On 24 June, Russian attack intensified at the area between Dubrovno and Orsha. Russian troops were trying to force a breakthrough at the road and rail line leading Orsha. German command frantically gathered troops to support the creaking line. However Russian pressure was too much to handle. General Chernov's 26th Guards Rifle Division, supported by armor including the fearful flamethrower tanks renewed their efforts to punch a hole in the German line. By noon,

Russian attack was clearly threatening the communications of the Sturm Division. General Traut sent his only reserve, the Aufklärung Abteilung to block the Russian advance at the town of Makarova.

050.Senno – 25 June 1944 – 20 turns

“Standing Against the Red Tide”

Senno, 60 KM Southwest of Vitebsk

During the planning for Operation Bagration the Oslikovskiy Cavalry-Mechanized Group was assigned the role of leading the drive through the gap created by the 3rd Byelorussian Front at Bogushevsk. Smashing or bypassing the German resistance pockets, the mobile group was ordered to reach their initial objectives at Berezina near Borisov in two days. As the spearhead of the mobile group, 3rd Mechanized Corps' drive towards Berezina began on 23 June after wide gaps had been opened in the German lines by the initial Soviet assault north of Orsha. By the end of the day Bogushevsk was in Russian hands. Soviet armor lost no time and continued their advance westwards.

German command hopelessly tried to plug the gap between Vitebsk and Orsha. The German counterattack by Panzergruppe Hoppe was beaten by the Russian AT gun screen deployed on the Bogushevsk-Senno road. On 25 June, the 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps overran the 299th Infantry Division. By 0700 the 3rd Mechanized Corps captured Senno. Cavalry and tanks continued their attack in the direction of Smolyany. The German 2nd Security Regiment was deployed between Senno and Smolyany to delay the Soviet advance so the shattered front could recover behind Berezina.

051.Simanovichi – 27 June 1944 – 22 turns

“The Escape Door”

Simanovichi, Bobruysk-Slutsk Road

On the third anniversary of the invasion of Russia, Josef Stalin launched a massive onslaught of Red Army forces against Army Group Centre on June 23, 1944. Waves of troops crashed the thin German lines, first in the north, and then progressively farther south until Marshal Rokossovsky's 1st Byelorussian Front attacked the German Ninth Army, just north of the Pripyat marshes.

As the German defenses began to crumble, Rokossovsky committed his southernmost breakthrough group, a cavalry-mechanized unit commanded by General Lieutenant Pliyev. Slipping between the Soviet 28th and 65th Armies, Pliyev Cavalry Group raced for the heavy bridge over the Ptich River, which would be the most likely escape route for the tens of thousands of German soldiers fleeing the front from Bobruysk, to the next city further west, Slutsk. German ad-hoc units formed mainly from security regiments tried to block the Russian cavalry in a swampy terrain just to gain more time for the retreating 9th Army.

052.Slutsk – 28 June 1944 – 18 turns

“Tank Cavalry at Slutsk”

Near Slutsk, Bobruisk-Baranovichi Road

After shattering 9th Army's lines near Bobruisk, Konstantin Rokossovsky, commander of the 1st Belorussian Front, committed his exploitation force, the powerful Pliyev Cavalry Group, into action. Pliyev's tanks and cavalry stormed the German defenses behind the Berezina River and kept their momentum in the marshlands of Pripyat.

On 27 June, the 1st Mechanized Corps moved into Glusk, sweeping aside the remnants of the German 35. Infantry Division. By 1700, Soviet armor was pouring through a gap at Glusk in the direction of Slutsk. A very important railway junction, Slutsk was vital for the Soviets maintaining momentum towards Baranovichi and later, Minsk. Frantically gathering reserves from other sectors, German command

committed a newly arrived paratrooper unit, Kampfgruppe Schirmer to block the seemingly unstoppable Russian spearhead before Slutsk.

053.Vidzy – 15 July 1944 – 14 turns

“Roadblock to Dvinsk”

Vidzy-Girejsy-Dvinsk Road, Western Belarus

The Russian Summer offensive shattered the Army Group Center and virtually destroyed two German Armies in two weeks. The success was so overwhelming that Russian spearheads have found their way to Eastern Poland and Baltic Coast open. German High Command sent its scarce reserves to delay the Russian advance while the Red Army's armored columns were exploiting the huge holes on the German Front.

On 15 July, 89th Tank Brigade, the leading unit of the 1st Tank Corps of General Butkov were reconing on the axis of Dvinsk in the Northwestern Belarus. The swampy and wooded topography was ideal for ambushes and rearguard actions. Although Soviet tankers were fully alert of the German presence, they had little chance to spot a roadblock before Germans open fire. At noon, leading T34s were cautiously approaching towards a village which looked to be a very suitable position for an ambush.

054.Wolomin – 03 August 1944 – 18 turns

“Holding to Vistula”

Wolomin-Okuniew Road, 20 KM East of Warsaw

The lightening summer campaign brought the Russian armies to the Vistula River at the end of July 1944. Although most of the infantry armies were bogging down with logistical problems and exhaustion from continuous action, the mechanized spearheads pushed one more time to gain footholds at the Vistula. On 28 July 1944, Maj. Gen. A. I. Radzievsky's 2nd Tank Army, which had been turned north from the Magnuszew region to strike at Warsaw, engaged German 73rd Infantry Division and the Hermann Goering Panzer Division 40 kilometers southeast of Warsaw. Unaware of the presence of strong armored forces on their right flank, 3rd Tank Corps pushed aside the resistance and attacked towards the key towns of Wolomin and Radzymin.

Beginning on 30 July, Field Marshal W. Model, the commander of Army Group Center, organized counterattacks on the Russian armored spearheads that were forcing their way towards Warsaw. On 3 August, Germans committed the 4th Panzer Division and the 5th SS Panzer Division "Viking" into the fight. Both formations struck at the critical Okuniew - Wolomin axis to disrupt enemy movement and isolate the forward units.

On 3 August; Oberscharführer Gerhard Fischer, a decorated tank ace from the Jagdpanzer Abteilung "Viking", moved his Jagdpanzer IV to a road junction near Wolomin. His orders were to intercept the Russian armor moving to his direction and gain time for the entire division which was still on the move. Fischer was supported by a company of panzergrenadiers from the regiment "Germania". With the rising sun, the SS troopers defending the road junction were alerted by the tank engine sounds from the 50th Tank Brigade, the leading unit of the 3rd Tank Corps.

055.Basinow – 06 August 1944 – 16 turns

“Stalins to the Rescue”

Basinow, Magnuszew Bridgehead

The Soviet attack on Lublin-Brest axis has caught the German command, which was preoccupied with the disaster in Belarussia, off-guard. On July, 1st Belorussian front's attack from Pripet marshes achieved a quick penetration and Russian spearheads reached the Vistula River in 6 days. While overstretched lines started to

slow down the Russian advance, Chuikov's 8th Guards Army managed to capture a bridgehead at Magnuszew south of Warsaw on 2 August.

As expected, German response to the Russian presence on the Western side of the Vistula river was violent. 1132nd Volksgrenadier Brigade and 19th Panzer Division launched strong counterattacks from Warka on the eastern side of the Magnuszew Bridgehead. 45th Volksgrenadier and 17th Infantry Divisions hit the southern flank of the Russian lines. On 5 August, Herman Goering Panzer Division joined the attack on the South. Germans captured Mariampol and Grabnowola and threatened the fragile bridgehead. 4th Guards Rifle Corps desperately organized new defense lines to delay the enemy advance. Chuikov's main problem was getting his armor on the Western side of the Vistula. 8th Guards Army's pontoon bridges have been under constant air attacks.

On 6 August, Herman Goering's spearheads reached the Russian lines at Basinow and Celinow, 6 km south of Magnuszew, where elements of the 35th Guards Rifle Division were deployed. German infantry launched the assault with support from the Panzer Regiment. The same day Russians managed to pass two heavy JSII tanks over the Vistula under heavy bombardment. Chuikov immediately sent the giants to support the hard pressed infantry.

056.Kielce – 16 August 1944 – 18 turns

“Panthers Forward!”

Kielce-Opatow Road, Southern Poland

During the nights of 13 and 14 August 1944 the 3rd Panzer Division detrained at Kielce in southern Poland. The division's mission was to stop the advance of the Russian forces that had broken through the German lines during the collapse of Army Group Center and to assist the withdrawing German formations building up a new defense line near the upper Vistula. The force was to be led by the 2nd Panzer Battalion consisting of two panzer companies, equipped with Panther tanks, one armored infantry company mounted in armored personnel carriers, and one battery equipped with self-propelled 105mm howitzers.

On 16 August, the leading panzer company under the command of Hauptman Zobel deployed on the Kielce Opatow Road near a heavy bridge. After losing one Panther with the first Russian antitank fire Hauptman Zobel sent one column southwards for a diversion around a hill dominating the bridge and the village. Unknown to the German commander, the hill was occupied and the Russian troops spotted the diversion early.

057.Jassy – 21 August 1944 – 20 turns

“A Shattering Alliance”

Mare Ridge, 20 KM Southwest of Jassy, Northeastern Romania

The Second Jassy-Kishinev Offensive which aimed the capitulation of Romania and penetration to the Balkan Flank was led off with a massive artillery barrage and air strikes on the axis positions at the Moldavia-Romania Border. General Trofimenko's 27th Army tore a huge gap by destroying the majority of the Romanian 4th Army west of Jassy and started pushing the German 6th Army towards Southeast into a pocket. Early as 10:00, 2nd Ukrainian Front Commander, Gen. Malinovsky committed Kravchenko's 6th Tank Army into the breach.

5th Guards Tank Corps and 5th Mechanized Corps drove south in full speed to gain operational freedom behind the enemy lines. By nightfall, the Russian spearheads reached the third line of the enemy defenses. The wooded "Mare Ridge" was a focal point in the axis defense system in this sector. The ridge was defended by the elements of the German 76th Infantry Division supported by a Rumanian mountain brigade.

On 21 August, Colonel Shutov's 20th Guards Tank Brigade launched its attack on this tough enemy position and last line of resistance.

058.Domasin – 31 August 1944 – 25 turns

“A Determined French Lot”

Domasin Heights, Strecno Gap, Slovakia

In 29 August 1944, Slovakian resistance groups launched a national uprising against the German control and the collaborationist government of Jozef Tiso. Based at Banská Bystrica, the rebel army captured two airfields and key road junctions to disrupt the German moves. Heinrich Himmler has sent Obergruppenfuhrer Gottlob Berger with the task of suppressing the uprising. Berger hastily gathered troops from different parts of Germany and launched immediate attacks on the partisan held cities and passes.

As part of the German countermoves, Kampfgruppe von Ohlen advanced towards Zilina Garrison in order to penetrate the rebel base at Vrutky. Facing, a superior enemy, Slovak Partisans retreated to a favorable position on the hills dominating the meanders of the Vah River. One of the key points in the Slovakian lines was a wooded ridge known as the Domasin Heights. Controlling the roads and the railway tunnel leading into the rebel held valley, Domasin Heights was the primary objective for Colonel von Ohlen.

Interestingly, the hill line was defended not by the Slovaks but French troops under the command of Captain Lannurien. French troops were composed of ex-POWs and labor camp workers; determined to stand against anything the hated Germans send against them. On 31 August, after a brief artillery barrage, German infantry, followed by panzers and assault guns started their advance into the pass. Far away from their country, French soldiers were waiting for them.

059.Radzymin – 10 October 1944 – 16 turns

“Gates of Warsaw”

Radzymin, 20 KM East of Warsaw

The Russian successes in the summer battles brought the Red Army spearheads to the gates of Warsaw on the Eastern side of the Vistula. On 29 July, the 5th Guards Tank Army took Siedlce. The 3rd Guards Tank Corps fought its way to Okunie and Volokin. German command sent the IV.SS Panzer Korps in order to restore the shattered front. SS divisions "Totenkopf" and "Wiking" launched counterattacks towards Radzymin and temporarily halted the Russian advance. Totenkopf immediately organized a defense around the city of Radzymin. The area remained silent until October. On 10 October, Russian troops renewed their offensive to take the key road junction at Radzymin.

060.Cegled – 03 November 1944 – 20 turns

“Bitter Lesson at Cegled”

Halasztelep, Cegled-Orkeny Road, 70 KM South of Budapest

The 1944 Balkan summer offensive has brought the Red Army to the outskirts of the Hungarian capital in October. Soviet armies have destroyed most of the Hungarian Army and mauled the few German panzer divisions that tried to plug every gap on the front. Eager to capture the Hungarian capital and force the Hungarians out of the war, Stalin has ordered one more push towards the capital. Malinovsky, the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front replied that his troops needed at least 5 days to prepare which was declined by Stalin, however, who insisted for an immediate attack.

The Russian attack began on October 29th. The mechanized spearheads opened several large holes in the frontline held by the demoralized Hungarian divisions on the first day. However, the Russian push turned out to be a sluggish advance due to a deep autumn mud and logistical problems. The Soviet spearheads' advance

towards Budapest created a narrow bulge which was dangerously thin on the flanks since the rifle divisions were unable to keep up the pace. The situation provided a good opportunity for the axis mobile reserves who had learned the art of counterattack after 4 years on the East Front.

On November 3rd, a combined kampfguppe from the Hungarian 1st Armored Division supported by the elements of the 24th Panzer Division, attacked to penetrate the Russian left flank near the Orkeny - Cegled road. The advance outposts of the 14th Guards Mechanized Brigade have found themselves in a vicious fight to hold the lines against their old foes.

061.Goldap – 03 November 1944 – 20 turns

“Sturmpioneers at Goldap”

Mount Goldap, Eastern Prussia

During the autumn of 1944 the German Fourth Army was engaged in defensive fighting around Gumbinnen in East Prussia. After the Russian 88th Guards Division had succeeded in occupying the town of Goldap on 21 October, the Russian front line formed a salient skirting Goldap. Approximately 2 miles south of Goldap the Russians had occupied an advance position on Mount Goldap which had a commanding view of the surrounding territory. Toward the end of October the commander of the Fourth Army was ordered to retake Goldap.

The plan the German Command drew up called for an envelopment to be launched early on 3 November with the 50th Infantry Division advancing from the southeast while the Fuehrer Escort Brigade was simultaneously driving down from the northwest. To eliminate any threat to the flank of the 50th Infantry Division from the direction of Mount Goldap, the assault engineer battalion directly subordinate to Fourth Army was given the mission of attacking and seizing the forward Russian position from the south.

The Russian advance position on Mount Goldap consisted of a continuous fortified line situated halfway up the southern slope between the two roads leading from Goldap to Angerburg and Szczuczyn, respectively. The summit had been transformed into a strong point with all-around defenses. The main position on the southern slope was protected by wire entanglements, while the approaches to the hill were heavily mined. To achieve maximum surprise, the engineers were to attack Mount Goldap on 3 November, without the usual artillery preparation at daybreak.

During the preceding night the battalion assembled directly south of the hill. During the last hours before dawn mine-clearing teams succeeded in clearing several lanes through the mine field. Promptly at 0700 the battalion launched its attack in a misty and cold day break. It soon became obvious that the Russians had observed the activities of the mine-clearing teams and redeployed their machine guns to cover the German axis of advance.

062.Polgardi – 23 December 1944 – 18 turns

“Fire Brigade at the Margit Line”

Polgardi, 16 KM Southwest of Szekesfehervar, Hungary

The Soviet offensive aiming the encirclement of Budapest was started on 20 December 1944. Despite the bad weather, the northern pincer, Malinovsky's 7th Guards Army broke through towards Esztergom on the first day, and the 6th Guards Tank Army, under General Kravchenko, took Leva and crossed the Gran river on the second day. The southern pincer, Tolbukhin's 3rd Ukrainian Front launched its assault on the Margit Line East of Lake Balaton after a heavy artillery barrage. On the same day, Tolbukhin's forces achieved a penetration 5 km wide. 7th Mechanized Corps slipped through the narrow penetration and captured the important road junction at Szekesfehervar.

Despite the success, southern pincer's penetration was narrow and vulnerable on the flanks. Colonel-General Maximilian Fretter-Pico, commander of the German 6th Army, organized counterattacks on the flanks of the Russian penetration. Breith's III. Panzer Korps launched furious attacks on the left flank of Tolbukhin's forces that were trying to advance northwards toward Budapest.

Polgardi, a small farming town 16 km southwest of Szekesfehervar had been saved from the destruction of the war. On December 1944, it suddenly became a frontline. As a key position guarding the left flank of the Soviet advance, the town witnessed heavy fighting. In three days, Polgardi changed hands seven times. This scenario depicts the German counterattack led by the elements of the 503rd Heavy Panzer Detachment on 23 December.

1945

063.Biejkov – 16 January 1945 – 20 turns

“No Time for Excuses”

Biejkov, Pilica River, 18 KM Southwest of Warka

With the first lights of 14 January, two days after Koniev's attack at Sandomierz, 1st Belorussian Front commenced its assault from the Magnuszew Bridgehead south of Warsaw. On the left, 8th Guards Army stormed through the shattering German front. Despite German counterattacks by the two reserve Panzer divisions (25th and 19th) Soviet forces achieved a clean breakthrough by noon. At this point, the front commander Zhukov released Katukov's 1st Guards Tank Army which slipped through the hole in the enemy lines and advanced westwards towards Lodz.

The leading unit of the 1st Guards Tank Army was Colonel Gusakovskii's 44th Guards Tank Brigade. The dashing colonel reached the Pilica River on the night of 15-16 January. Having immediate orders to secure passings on the River Pilica, Gusakovskii sent his mechanized infantry over the frozen river on foot. Engineers found a ford and blew a lane through the ice for the tanks. Meanwhile, the Soviet infantry formed a perimeter near Biejkov on the other side of the river. Without heavy weapons and armor they waited for the German counterattack. On 16 January, 25th Panzer Division launched a heavy assault from the direction of Bialobrzegi.

064.Mniszek – 16 January 1945 – 20 turns

“Get the Ball Rolling”

Mniszek, 20 KM West of Radom, Poland

Zhukov's 1st Belorussian Front opened its attack on the German Ninth Army from the Magnuszew and Pulawy bridgeheads at 08:30 on January 14 after a heavy bombardment. At Pulawy, The 33rd and 69th Armies gained a 30 km breakthrough in the direction of Radom. 69th Army's attack was particularly successful and the defending LVI Panzer Korps disintegrated under heavy pressure on its flanks. Limited counterattacks by the 19th Panzer Division were repulsed and by the end of the day Soviet infantry captured Radom. At this point, Zhukov released the 11th Tank Corps, the exploitation force of the 69th Army, which rolled on towards the Radomka and Pilica Rivers.

On 16 January, spearheading tanks from the 65th Tank Brigade reached the Radomka River and engaged in a fight against the elements of the 19th Panzer Division. At noon, an armored probe aimed at the bridge at Mniszek was stopped by a German anti-tank screen. The Soviet commander sent a detachment of tanks southwards to outflank the German positions. At 13:00, with the help of some sappers, an armored detachment managed to cross the river and outflanked the German garrison Mniszek. The local German command reacted by sending elements of the 27th Panzer Regiment to counter this threat.

065.Pilica – 20 January 1945 – 18 turns

“Nehring's Roving Cauldron”

Pilica River, 6 KM South of Tomaszow, Central Poland

In January 1945, General Walther Nehring was commanding the XXIV Panzer Korps which was built around the 16th and 17th Panzer Divisions. The Korps was deployed to the south of Kielce as an operational reserve of the 4th Panzer Army facing Koniev's forces in the massive Sandomierz Bridgehead on the Vistula. When the 1st Ukrainian Front burst out from the bridgehead on January 12th, both panzer divisions engaged in heavy fighting in order to hold the front together near Kielce. However, on 15 January, Soviet pressure on both sides of Kielce started to isolate the German armored units. Nehring continued the fighting at Kielce until 17 January to gain time for the retreating infantry divisions. On 17 January, after joining with the elements of the LXII Army Korps, Nehring turned northeast to escape the Russian pincer.

For the next 3 days Nehring's cauldron fought its way to reach the friendly positions behind the Pilica River. Using mainly secondary roads and avoiding contact with large enemy concentrations, Nehring's isolated army reached Pilica River at the night of 19 January and located a wooden bridge between the towns of Sulechow and Tomaszow. Most of the German infantry crossed the bridge while engineers were improving its structure to support heavy vehicles and armor. A couple of kilometers to the east, Nehring's rearguard consisting of the 342nd Infantry Division and 16th Panzer Division occupied high ground to block or delay any Russian probe. On 20 January, after a snowy night, forward units of the 11th Tank Corps advancing from Pulawy Bridgehead towards Lodz caught the German column.

066.Kortau – 21 January 1945 – 18 turns

“A Shocking Parade”

Kortau, Allenstein Suburbs, East Prussia

During the Soviet offensive into East Prussia, Konstantin Rokossovsky's 2nd Belorussian Front shifted north from the bridgehead at Narew. The change of direction caught the 3rd Panzer Army unprepared. On 21 January, Rokossovsky's right wing spearhead, the 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps reached the outskirts of Allenstein without much opposition.

As a result of Goebbels' propaganda, native population had no idea that Red Army was so near and civilians were shocked when the leading elements of the crack 5th Guards Cavalry Division entered the suburb district of Kortau.

The cavalry stormed the town and brushed aside the weak volksturm resistance. A breakthrough to the North on the direction of Konigsberg seemed inevitable. At this vital moment, a recon detachment from the GrossDeutschland Division counterattacked the Russian cavalry.

067.Liebenow – 17 February 1945 – 20 turns

“The Last Offensive”

Liebenow, 20 KM East of Arnswalde

After defeating the German Army at Vistula and conquering Poland and Pomerania, Zhukov's 1st Belorussian Front stopped to regroup at Stargard. Due to slow advance of Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky's 2nd Belorussian Front on its right; Zhukov's forces had to deploy in a bulge shape with a vulnerable flank near Stettin. General Heinz Guderian sought the opportunity to hit Zhukov's forces there. Operation Sonnenwende (Solstice) consisted of a limited counter-attack by the three corps of the 11th SS Panzer Army (Felix Steiner), which was being assembled in Pomerania, against the spearheads of the 1st Belorussian Front. The German forces would initially attack along a fifty km front around Stargard south-eastwards

towards Arnswalde, destroying the spearheads of the 61st Army and the 2nd Guards Tank Army, and reaching their ultimate objective at Kustrin.

As part of the 3rd (Germanic) SS Panzer Corps, Führer Begleit Division launched its attack on 17 February and captured Reetz after intense fighting and heavy losses. Led by the 102nd Panzer Regiment, Führer Begleit pushed southwards to capture the town of Liebenow and secure the eastern flank of the entire operation. At noon, the German spearheads approaching Liebenow reported enemy tanks in the town. Those units were part of the 47th Guards Tank Brigade which was sent to delay the German advance on this axis. Having lost the element of surprise, the German command had no choice but attack and hope for the best.

068.Oder – 28 February 1945 – 18 turns

“Oder Bridgehead”

Oder River, 20 KM South of Frankfurt an der Oder

In early February 1945, after the collapse of the German front in Poland in January, the Russian advance ground to a temporary halt east of the Oder River. During February, Russians attempted several breakthroughs near Frankfurt. All of them were repulsed by the stiff German resistance and difficult topography. However, Russians continued their efforts to establish a bridgehead that was going to support the upcoming spring offensive for Berlin; where German command brought ad-hoc units in order to plug the gaps on the long Oder front.

The 32.SS Grenadier Division, an improvised infantry formation was deployed on the west bank south of Frankfurt an der Oder. Composed of diverse formations such as security guards, SS units, Volkssturm battalions, training classes and children from the Hitlerjugend organization, the 32.SS Grenadier Division was assigned to a 6 km sector along a river bend that formed a salient approximately 15 km south of Frankfurt.

The night of 27-28 February was marked by poor visibility, rain, and strong winds. At 0300 a strong Russian patrol crossed the river at the north end of the salient on rafts without being observed by the Germans and broke into the positions of the German left flank. The Germans were unaware of the existence of the bridgehead until 0400, when they suddenly heard the engine sounds of Russian tanks that crossed the river on ferries. To block any further enemy advance, the German regimental commander ordered two companies to assemble near the woods blocking the northern approaches. At 0530 the German infantry near the woods were attacked by a force driving from the north.

069.Golzow – 22 March 1945 – 22 turns

“Encounter of the Beasts”

Golzow, 12 KM NW of Kustrin

While the battle inside the fortress Kustrin was still raging, the 5th Shock Army and the 8th Guards Army began their operations along the autobahn linking Kustrin to Seelow. On the western side of Oder, the 56th Panzer Korps were standing on their way. The most powerful unit in the German OOB was a kampfguppe from the "Brandenburg" Panzergrenadier Division. The armored kampfguppe equipped with Panthers and King Tigers, engaged in a heavy and costly battle against the Soviet spearheads forcing their way towards Neu Tucheband and Seelow. The counterattack by the panzer group stopped the Russian armor on both side of the autobahn. Stopped dead on their tracks, the Russians tried their chances on the Northern flank.

General Berzarin, the commander of the 5th Shock Army, sent the 47th Guards Rifle Division to outflank the German formations around the Kustrin - Seelow autobahn. The guardsmen were closely supported by the tanks from the 50th Heavy Tank Regiment. The Soviet attack focused on the town of Golzow which was

defended by a thin line of infantry from the headquarters company. Four Panthers from the Kampfgruppe "Brandenburg" were providing support for the grenadiers. The heavy artillery and katyusha barrage surprised the German troops in Golzow. A line of T34s started their advance under the artillery barrage. Russian infantry and heavy armor were following them closely.

070.Kleschkau – 22 March 1945 – 16 turns

"Claw of the Panther"

Kleschkau, Near Danzig, Pomerania

At the end of 1944, the 4th Panzer Division was transferred from Courland to Danzig. The division was deployed in the area between Danzig and Stargard where it involved in heavy defensive fighting. The unit no longer existed as a cohesive entity; rather, elements from the 35th Panzer Regiment were sent to different sectors to help the grenadiers that were struggling under the heavy attacks by General Vlasov's 2nd Shock Army. On March, one panzer company led by Leutnant Tautorus, had been split up into small fire brigades and placed under the command of various grenadier units south of Danzig.

Oberfeldwebel Herman Bix, one of the top aces of the Panzerwaffe, was commanding a platoon under Tautorus command. The company had no battle ready tanks left but they were given six new Jagdpanthers that had been originally destined for an assault gun company. Bix who had achieved ace status in a Panther, has found another deadly weapon with an excellent gun.

On 22 March 1945, near Kleschkau, Bix had taken up a position with his Jagdpanther at the edge of the village overlooking the positions grenadiers recently abandoned. He had orders for covering the infantry's withdrawal and stopping a possible enemy probe into the town. Other two Jagdpanthers of his command were deployed at the rear due to supply problems. All cover Bix enjoyed was a small platoon of panzer crews who had no tanks to use. At 08:00, Bix's patience paid off. A column of lend lease Sherman tanks appeared down the road. It was time for Herman Bix to show his skills behind an even deadlier gun.

071.Seelow – 17 April 1945 – 28 turns

"Brauer's Hardest Hour"

Seelow Heights, Kustrin-Berlin Autobahn

9. Fallschirmjäger Division was formed in December 1944 in Stettin under the command of General Bruno Bräuer who was a veteran of the Crete Campaign. Most of the high and middle rank officers of the unit were veterans of the operations in Holland, Italy and Balkans. However, despite its grand name, the 9. Fallschirmjäger Division was composed of Luftwaffe ground personnel with no combat experience. This fact proved to be decisive in the upcoming battles.

In January 1945, division sent two battalions to reinforce fortress Breslau. Rest of the division was deployed in the Seelow Heights to counter the inevitable Soviet attack on Berlin. The 9. Fallschirmjäger Division was positioned between Seelow and Neuhardenberg. On 16 April, the day the Russian attack started, they received the full force of the artillery bombardment by Marshal Georgi Zhukov's 1st Belorussian Front. Most of the forward elements of the division routed under the heavy barrage. 27th Parachute Regiment's commander Oberst Menke's and General Brauer's frantic efforts barely managed to rally the troops. On 17 April, the division was holding the area east of Seelow near the train station. The attack of the 4th Guards Rifle Corps (8th Guards Army) started with another heavy artillery and katyusha barrage. Russian infantry, supported by assault troops and dozens of tanks, cautiously advanced towards the German forward positions. Once again, veteran officers of the Fallschirmjäger had the desperate task of maintaining order among the inexperienced troops.

072.Klosterdorf – 19 April 1945 – 20 turns

“The Last Glory”

Klosterdorf, 20 KM East of Berlin

In April of 1945, SS-Hauptscharführer Karl Körner, one of the platoon commanders of the sSSPzAbt 503 was supporting an infantry counterattack in the Bollersdorf area east of Berlin. As part of the III SS Panzer Corps under Obergruppenführer Felix Steiner, sSSPzAbt 503 was attached to the 11th Waffen SS Panzergrenadier Division "Nordland". Four King Tigers of the 503rd SS Heavy Panzer Battalion were positioned to interdict the main axis of advance of the Soviet 2nd Guard Tank Army's thrust towards Strausberg on April 19, 1945. Körner's group was deployed to engage the enemy on a Hill near the town of Klosterdorf. Meanwhile, Russian 11th Tank Corps was heading on the road linking Grünow to Klosterdorf. King Tigers opened fire to take advantage of their 88mm guns.

073.Müncheberg – 19 April 1945 – 15 turns

“Rearguard at Müncheberg”

Müncheberg, 30 KM East of Berlin

Tenacious German defense at the Seelow Heights effectively blocked Zhukov's 1st Belarussian Front's advance for a week. However, after continuous heavy fighting, Russian numerical superiority in soldiers and equipment overwhelmed the German lines. Making things worse, Koniev's 1st Ukrainian Front's penetration to the south at Neisse created a huge gap on the German right wing. German 9th Army started a fighting withdrawal towards Berlin suburbs on 18 April. Zhukov's spearhead, Katukov's 1st Guards Tank Army was aggressively pursuing the German troops in order to cut the retreat route on Kustrin-Berlin autobahn.

On 19 April, remnants of the "Müncheberg" Panzer Division was ordered to the city the division was born and got its name. Müncheberg was an important objective located between Berlin and Seelow Heights on the Kustrin-Berlin autobahn. Germans hastily organized a rearguard defense around the city. Jagdtigers from the Panzerabteilung 682 were sent to provide the much needed antitank punch against the Russian spearhead which was just on the heels of the Germans.

074.Baruth – 25 April 1945 – 20 turns

“End of the Road at Baruth”

Baruth, 11 KM West of Halbe

On April 16 the Soviets started the Battle of Berlin with a three Front attack across the Oder-Neisse line. By April 21 they broke through the German front line in two places and started to surround Berlin. The high speed of the advance of Koniev's 1st Ukrainian Front threatened Ninth Army with envelopment by the two massive Soviet pincers that were heading for Berlin from the south and east. The area (known as Halbe Pocket) into which the Ninth Army had been pushed by troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian Fronts was a region of lakes and forests south-east of Fürstenwalde.

On April 25th, after receiving Hitler's orders which permitted a breakout in a westerly direction to link up with Wenck's 12th Army, 9th Army's commander Theodor Busse formed two battlegroups to lead the attack. Kampfgruppe von Luck, consisting of the 21st Panzer Division and Kampfgruppe Pipkorn, containing the 35th SS and Police Grenadier Divisions, both named after their commanders, attempted a break-out in the direction of the road centre of Baruth to obtain the use of roads to Luckenwalde and Jüterbog. Initially Colonel Hans von Luck made good progress across the Berlin-Dresden autobahn and paved the way for the huge infantry column behind him in the heavily wooded area around Halbe.

Russian reaction to the breakout attempt was quick. Gordov's 3rd Guards Army was rushed into positions close to the Berlin-Dresden autobahn to block all the forest roads leading from east to west. By the night of 25 April, Kampfgruppe von Luck reached the road center at Baruth and hit the defenses of the 50th Guards

Rifle Division which had been reinforced by dug-in Stalin tanks. The upcoming night battle was to decide the fate of the 80.000 German soldiers trapped in the Halbe Pocket.

075.Moltke Bridge – 29 April 1945 – 20 turns

“Gateway to Reichstag”

Moltke Bridge, Spree Canal, Berlin City Center

After the unsuccessful attack to capture the Moltke Bridge which was the only intact structure on the Spree Canal in order to enter the Reichstag area, on 28 April, General Kuznetsov, the commander of the 3rd Shock Army designed another assault on the next day. On 29 April, 756th Rifle Regiment (General Shatilov's 150th Rifle Division) deployed at the Alt Moabit, near the Moltke Bridge. Contrary to the failed 28 April attack, Russian troops managed to move artillery and katyushas which provided much needed indirect firepower for the advancing formations. The Russian troops were also supported by the heavy tanks from Kirichenko's 9th Tank Corps.

The approaches to the Moltke Bridge was defended by an ad-hoc force which was formed around the remnants of the SS Anhalt Regiment, 9th Fallschirmjäger Division and Kriegsmarine soldiers organized into several Kampfgruppen under Hauptsturmführer Babic's command. The German defenses in the area were centered on the Ministry of Interior and Diplomatic Quarter Buildings, all massive concrete structures German troops turned into powerful strongholds. German troops also had armor and flak support from the direction of the Königsplatz. With all the heavy guns zeroed to the Bridge and the fanatical defenders dug-in in massive government buildings, Shatilov's men had a daunting mission to secure the area for the upcoming attack on the big prize, the Reichstag.

076.Potsdammer Platz – 30 April 1945 – 16 turns

“Close Quarters”

Potsdammer Platz, Berlin

By the end of April 1945, German defenders of "Festung Berlin" found themselves trapped in a shrinking pocket under an overwhelming pressure from three Soviet armies. On 30 April, spearheads of General Barzarin's 5th Shock Army reached Potsdammer Platz a couple of blocks away from the Brandenburg Gate.

In order to stop the Russian advance German Festung command sent urgent messages to the tactical reserve, the 503rd SS Heavy Panzer Detachment which had only two operational Tigers. Unterscharführer Karl-Heinz Turk, commanding one of the remaining King Tigers, received orders to drive towards Potsdamer Platz and engage the Russian armor threatening the grenadiers in that sector.

077.Tiergarten – 02 May 1945 – 18 turns

“Out of the Cauldron”

Tiergarten, Berlin City Center

With the coming of May, the bloody fight for Germany's capital started to ease off. Hitler was dead and General Krebs was working on cease fire negotiations with Chuikov. Red Army soldiers' fighting attitude too changed as they were aware end was near and nobody wanted to get killed in the last hours of the war.

Around Tiergarten and Reichstag, isolated German resistance continued. However on 2 May the surviving soldiers gathered in larger parties for breakthrough attempts to the west and northwest. One of such attempts was undertaken by a battlegroup consisting remnants of 9th Parachute Division and Panzer Division "Müncheberg". German breakout attempt was supported by a handful of armored vehicles including an IR device equipped Panther from the 29th Panzer Regiment. Bogdanov's 2nd Guards Tank Army was standing between them and freedom.

078.Prague – 07 May 1945 – 18 turns

“Der Führer's Last Battle”

Troja Bridge, Prague City Center

After the heavy fighting in Vienna, 2nd SS Panzer Division "Das Reich's various units were sent to different parts of the frontline. One group remained in Austria; another battlegroup was deployed near Dresden. Ostufaf Otto Weidinger's "Der Führer" Panzergrenadier Regiment, which was combined with the armored recon battalion and one battalion from the artillery regiment, was reformed as a kampfguppe. On 5 May 1945, "Der Führer" was ordered to advance Prague where an uprising controlled the city. "Der Führer" was to attack towards Prague's city center; suppress the rebellion and relieve the surrounded German garrison.

Regiment's advance started on 6 May. In the past 2-3 days Czech resistance fighters had placed dozens of road blocks to delay the German advance and "Der Führer" had to stop several times to remove those roadblocks. Czech resistance stiffened in the suburbs. However SS troopers got the upper hand with superior firepower and experience. On 7 May, "Der Führer" was one step away from the city center. The Troja Bridge over the Vltava River remained as the only obstacle between the surrounded garrison and the "Der Führer". Hstuf. Johann Schulzer's II. Battalion which was supported by armored recon vehicles launched its assault on the bridge. That day was to be the last battle of "Der Führer"s long war.

Campaign Scenarios

079.Battle of Tali-Ihantala_1 – 25 June 1944 – 16 turns

“Counterattack at Portinhoikka”

Portinhoikka, 2 KM Northwest of Tali

Historical Background: The Soviet objective in the massive Karelian summer offensive of 1944 was to destroy the Finnish Army, penetrate deep into Finnish territory, and force Finland into capitulation. After a heavy artillery barrage by the Leningrad Front, the main offensive started on June 10, focusing on the key Finnish stronghold at Valkeasaari. Colonel General Dmitrii N. Gusev's 21st Army achieved a quick penetration on the initial Finnish defenses and pressed forward to the second Finnish Line. The second Finnish line known as VT-line (Vammelsuu-Taipale) was breached in Sahakylä and Kuuterselkä on June 14. After a failed counterattack in Kuuterselkä by the Finnish armored division "Lagus", the Finnish defense had to be pulled back to the VKT-line (Viipuri - Kuparsaari - Taipale). On June 20, the Soviet juggernaut captured the historic city of Viipuri. Despite the Red army's great success in smashing two Finnish defense lines and capturing Karelian Isthmus in ten days, it had failed to destroy the Finnish IV Army Corps (Gen. Laatikainen) which managed to withdraw to the VKT-line. The Finnish Army was determined to hold the VKT-Line at all costs since it was the only obstacle between Red Army and their homeland. After the fall of Viipuri Soviet forces launched their attack on the VKT-Line on 24 June. They especially focused on the Tali-Portinhoikka axis where they expected the decisive breakthrough. The following battle of attrition known as the Battle of Tali-Ihantala was one of the heaviest engagements of the Second World War.

Tactical Situation: Main Soviet attack on the Tali position started at 07:30 on the 25th of June. 30th Guards Rifle Corps reinforced the Russian units in this sector. The Russian attack sought a breakthrough on the Eastern and Western shores of the Lake Leitimajärvi. The attack on the eastern side of the lake was stopped by the Finnish 4th Division. However, on the western shore Soviet tanks from the 27th Tank Regiment were able to force their way to the Portinhoikka crossroads. Possession of Portinhoikka was vital for the Finns whose units were at risk of being cut off and surrounded. At 12:00 hours; Finnish command managed to organize a counterattack led by the Armored Division "Lagus". The spearhead of the Finnish attack was the elite 3rd Jaeger Battalion supported by an assault gun detachment.

080.Battle of Tali-Ihantala_2 – 27 June 1944 – 18 turns

“Return to Motti Tactics”

Talinmylly, Portinhoikka-Tali Road

Tactical Situation: Counterattack of the Armored Division "Lagus" effectively stopped the Russian advance on Portinhoikka and badly mauled the 27th Tank Regiment which fell back in disorder. Finnish forces continued their attack southward towards Tali to trap the Soviet units near Lake Leitimajärvi. 46th Guards Rifle Division joined by the 30th Guards Tank Brigade formed a hedgehog defensive position near the village of Talinmylly. At 17:00, 27 June 1944, leading elements of the "Lagus" Armored Division launched their attack on Talinmylly.

081.Battle of Tali-Ihantala_3 – 29 June 1944 – 18 turns

“Crisis at the Portinhoikka Junction”

Portinhoikka Junction, 3 KM Southeast of Ihantala

Tactical Situation: The unsuccessful attack on Talinmylly was a missed opportunity for the Finnish command. After repulsing the attack, the Russians consolidated their positions on the both sides of the Tali - Portinhoikka road. The Red Army resumed its advance on 29 June on two axes. Led by the 46th Guards Rifle Division, one axis attacked the vital Portinhoikka junction; the other one pointed towards the Ihantala village on the Finnish left flank. Threatened by Russian advance on both flanks, Finnish 4th Army Corps was retreating to form new positions North of Portinhoikka. The 3rd Jaeger Battalion was ordered to defend the road junction and gain time for the retreating comrades.

082.Battle of Tali-Ihantala_4 – 02 July 1944 – 20 turns

“The Final Act at Ihantala”

Ihantala Village

Tactical Situation: Between 29 June and 02 July, Russians tried to achieve a clear breakthrough at and around Portinhoikka crossroads. Despite suffering heavy losses the Finnish 4th Army Corps managed to maintain a continuous line and retreated to new defensive positions further north. On 02 July, Russian pressure switched to the Northeast. 63rd Guards Rifle Division, supported by the 30th Tank Brigade, was searching a weak spot to outflank the Portinhoikka position. Finnish 12th Infantry Regiment (6th Division) was defending a tiny village named Ihantala on the way of the Russian onslaught. The Finnish command had successfully deployed its limited artillery assets in the sector. At the dawn of 02 July, forward elements of the 63rd Guards reached Ihantala. The Battle for Ihantala village was the climax of the monumental battle of attrition. Near this remote Karelian village the Finns gave one of their crucial fights to resist capitulation and postwar Soviet domination.

083.Operation Sudwind_1 – 17 February 1945 – 18 turns

“Breaching the Line”

Hill 190, Near Svodin, Slovakia

Historical Background: After the failure of the Ardennes Offensive, the bulk of the 6th SS Panzer Army were sent to Hungary to block the Red Army's advance into Austria and southeast Europe. This move was part of a broader plan Hitler designed; a counterattack against the Russian troops near Lake Balaton which was to relieve the Hungarian capital. However, before the attack, German command must have secured their left flank. In order to secure the flank of the Balaton Offensive, German command planned an operation to eliminate a strong Russian bridgehead west of Danube River near Gran (Esztergom). Codenamed "Operation Sudwind" (South Wind), the attack against the Russian bridgehead was led by the newly arrived forces of the 1st SS Panzer Korps (Gruppenführer H. Priess) which were supported by Wehrmacht infantry divisions. 1st SS Panzer Division "LSSAH" was deployed as the schwerpunkt of the attack. Divisional commander,

Brigadeführer Otto Kumm assigned Jochen Peiper as the spearhead of the advance. This campaign portraits actions of a combat group belongs to Kampfgruppe Peiper on their road to Danube.

Tactical Situation: The German attack on the Gran bridgehead started with the first lights of 17 February with an artillery barrage on the Soviet positions holding northern part of the bridgehead. 46th Infantry Division led the attack on Svodin in order to pave the way for the panzers of Kampfgruppe Peiper. However their attack was bogged down under a strong Russian artillery fire. An hour later, Kampfgruppe Peiper was committed to gain the momentum. German armored column specifically avoided towns and attacked the countryside. Hill 190, located a couple of kms east of Svodin was the first obstacle on their way. Hstuf Erich Grätz' panzergrenadiers supported by armor including the King Tigers, launched the attack on Hill 190.

084.Operation Sudwind_2 – 17 February 1945 – 20 turns

“Bridge for the Tigers”

Pariszky Canal, 12 KM North of Danube River

Tactical Situation: After defeating the Soviet strongpoint at Hill 190, Kampfgruppe Peiper continued its rapid advance southwards to the Danube River. At the end of the day, German column reached Pariszky Canal, one of the natural obstacles Soviets can form a defensive line. Peiper's grenadiers lost no time and launched an attack in order to capture a bridgehead across the canal. Unable to cross the light canal bridges, panzers provided close support.

085.Operation Sudwind_3 – 18 February 1945 – 18 turns

“Night Watch at Pariszky”

Pariszky Canal, Gran Bridgehead, Slovakia

Tactical Situation: By the end of 17 February, panzergrenadiers defeated the Russian defenses and managed to secure a narrow bridgehead on the other side of the Pariszky Canal. Since the two bridges KG Peiper captured could not support heavy vehicles, pioneers started building a pontoon bridge in order to move tanks and continue the advance towards Danube. Until then, panzergrenadiers were alone on the Soviet side of the Canal. They dug-in and waited for the Russian counterattack. At 01:00 Russians came with tanks.

086.Operation Sudwind_4 – 19 February 1945 – 20 turns

“Closing the Door at Parkany”

Parkany, Southeastern Corner of the Gran Bridgehead, Slovakia

Tactical Situation: After securing the bridges over the Pariszky Canal, Kampfgruppe Peiper resumed its advance southwards. By the end of 18 February, German column reached Muzla which was captured by a spearhead from the 12.SS Panzer Division "Hitlerjugend". Bypassing Muzla, Peiper advanced towards Nana and Parkany in order to reach Danube and isolate the Russian troops fighting in the north. At 13:00 leading companies of the KG Peiper launched their attack on Parkany. Kampfgruppe Krause from the "Hitlerjugend" was also racing from south. Soviet infantry and armor from the 14th Guards Mechanized Brigade had formed a perimeter around the town, especially strong near the railway station at the northern outskirts of Parkany.

087.Battle for Tempelhof_1 – 23 April 1945 – 16 turns

“Into the Heart of the Reich”

Teltow Canal, Neukoln, Southeastern Suburbs of Berlin

Historical Background: General Vassily Chuikov's 8th Guard Army was born in the ashes of Stalingrad as the 62nd Army. After the victory at Stalingrad, they participated in nearly every important battle in the massive clash known as the East Front. The tides of war brought the guardsmen to Russia, Ukraine, Poland and

Germany. 8th Guards Army was Zhukov's spearhead in the hard and costly battles of Küstrin and Seelow Heights. On 23 April 1945, after 4 years of hardship, the guardsmen were at the outskirts of Berlin, the capital of their nemesis. The 8th Guards Army, along with Katukov's 1st Guards Tank Army, entered the German capital from the southeast; advancing towards Neuköln and Kreuzberg. Zhukov ordered Chuikov the capture of the Tempelhof Airport, the largest airport the Nazi leaders could use to escape the Soviet grip. The campaign portrays an assault group's actions during the battle for the Tempelhof Airport.

Tactical Situation: The first considerable obstacle on 8th Guards Army's path was the Teltow Canal southeast of the NeuKöln district. Russians organized special assault groups for the operation. Relatively small, those assault groups included heavily armed crack soldiers that were experienced in street fighting. On the evening of 23 April; Lieutenant Dmitri Nesterenko's assault group took their positions on the eastern shore of the Teltow Canal. Germans seemed to blow all bridges in this sector. However Nesterenko noticed that one of the destroyed bridges still provided movement over the debris. Under the low visibility created by the burning houses he ordered his man to grasp the opportunity and surprise the SS defenders at the other side of Canal. Carrying some rubber boats, the guardsmen leaped forward despite the heavy odds.

088.Battle for Tempelhof_2 – 25 April 1945 – 16 turns

“A Wagnerian Night”

Evangelist Cemetery, Kreuzberg, Near Tempelhof

Tactical Situation: After securing the Neuköln District, the 8th Guards Army launched its attack on the Tempelhof Airport. Rather than assaulting directly, General Chuikov sent two pincers in order to isolate the area to deny the use of the aircrafts by the Nazi leadership for an escape attempt. The right hand of the pincer was 39th Rifle Division which advanced towards Kreuzberg and tried to cut the S-Bahn and isolate Tempelhof from North. In 25 April, heavy fighting continued near the S-Bahn that linked the Neuköln area to the city center. Especially road junctions were heavily contested. Remnants of the SS Division “Nordland”, supported by a handful of armored vehicles, had setup ambush points in the area. One particularly dangerous point was a road junction that linked Kreuzberg with Wilmersdorf near an old Evangelist Cemetery. Nesterenko's assault group led the way for the riflemen and heavy tanks of the 34th Heavy Tank Regiment in a night assault. The sounds of battle, the light from the burning houses and the scene of an 18th Century Cemetery were yet to draw another gothic imagery in the last days of the Reich.

089.Battle for Tempelhof_3 – 26 April 1945 – 16 turns

“Next Stop Tempelhof”

Tempelhof Airport, Berlin

Tactical Situation: After isolating their objectives, the 39th Guards Rifle Division turned south for the final assault on the Tempelhof Airport. With the first lights of 26 April, Soviet riflemen and tanks launched multiple attacks. Lieutenant Nesterenko's group spearheaded one of those assaults in order to capture the administrative buildings of the airport. German defenses had been bolstered by the arrival of the Panzer Division “Müncheberg”. Panzergrenadiers, dug-in tanks, elements of the Volksturm and Tempelhof's anti-aircraft batteries put up a fierce but desperate resistance against the Soviet onslaught.

090.Battle for Tempelhof_4 – 27 April 1945 – 16 turns

“The Chapel at the Corner”

Kurfürstenstrasse, 3 KM Southeast of Reichstag

Tactical Situation: On 26 April 1945, Tempelhof Airport was firmly in Russian hands. After securing the runway and eliminating last resistance pockets 8th Guards Army resumed its advance towards the city center. At Kurfürstenstrasse, a couple of blocks northwest of Tempelhof a heavy tank was immobilized by a booby-trap. Lieutenant Nesterenko's group advanced forward and formed a perimeter centered on a chapel located in

an intersection and waited for the rest of the Battalion. At 03:00AM, a heavy armored attack was launched by the remnants of the SS Division "Nordland".