

# PANZERBLITZ AT PROKHOROVKA

By  
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About twenty years ago I wrote an article for the game Panzerblitz, presenting six engagements that occurred at the battle of Prokhorovka. It was published in the *Boardgamer's Special Panzerblitz Issue* in 2001. About three years later an update for the article was published in the *Vaipa Express #11*, incorporating new information about the battle that came out during that time. Since then a lot of water has past under the bridge and once again, the scenarios of these engagements are in need of updating. In the past fourteen years, even more information has come out about the battle and historians have re-evaluated their conclusions about the various events and engagements that occurred during the battle. These can best be summed up in the most current and definitive source, "*Kursk: The Battle of Prokhorovka*" by Christopher Lawrence which was published in 2015. This book was a result of over twenty years of research by a team of experts from the Depuy Institute who went over thousands of pages of data, veteran interviews, and combat records from both the German and Russian archives. I would recommend this book to any serious student of military history when reading about the battle.

Over the decades, this battle has been represented in the scenarios of many games or game systems, in both boardgames and computer games. In fact, the earliest example was in Panzerblitz itself with its Situation #10 back in 1970. Very little was actually known about the battle at that time and what was publicly known came from the Russians. While checking the data from the German archives could have easily refuted much of what the Russians said, the Cold War mentality of the Western governments at the time prevented that from happening and the image of two gigantic phalanxes of German and Russian tanks colliding in an orgy of mayhem and destruction, all day long on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, 1943, dominated the Western perception of Prokhorovka for many years to come. It was only in the 1990s, with the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, that the Russian archives were finally opened up to Western historians and the archives of the Western governments could finally be used to determine what really happened. Yet, with the flood of new data available, it still took another twenty years to do away with all the old myths and incorrect perceptions about the battle. Now in 2018, the truth about the battle is pretty much established and accurate depictions of it can finally be presented in various gaming formats.

Here in this article I will be presenting the updated scenarios from the original article, their history, and information on the units that actually fought those engagements. But before going into the actual scenarios, a brief description of the rules, units, and mapboards used in them will be presented to give players a better understanding.

**The Rules:** These scenarios were designed to be played using the regular, Optional, and Experimental Rules of the original game, which are further augmented by the official clarification and answer boxes that were originally published in *General* magazine. These were assembled from the various issues and published in one big article in the *Boardgamer's Special Panzerblitz Issue* back in 2001, but have since been further updated and posted in various places on the Internet. However, I am presenting one new rule to be used in these scenarios. This has to do with off-the-board indirect fire. While this concept was introduced in a later game based on Panzerblitz (Arab-Israeli Wars), I have adopted it into Panzerblitz in a simpler form that fits within its existing rules.

**Off-the Map Indirect Fire:** In certain situations, one or both sides may have a group of units in its order of battle that are not placed on the board, but are held off board on the owning player's side. These are artillery howitzer and gun units that are located off map. One may wonder why they are off map, given their Range Factors, especially the Russian ones whose Range Factors are far lower than the German ones. The Range Factors on these units do not represent their maximum ranges, rather they represent their maximum effective ranges after

they have just set up. In order to fire out to their maximum ranges these artillery units must register their weapons, a process that can take hours, or in the Russians case days, to accomplish. In a normal mechanized battle, units were expected to be moved around a lot. This is especially true for artillery units in that they would either move in order to keep up with the battle during the offense or to get out of harm's way when on the defense. When these units would stop to fire, they did not have time to register. In fact, because the Russian ranges were so short, they would frequently use their artillery in direct fire missions to save time. But in some situations, enough time is presumed to have passed beforehand to allow artillery units to register and fire their weapons out to their maximum ranges, and thus are set up off of the board to conduct indirect fire missions against on-board targets.

A. Off Board artillery units are held off of the board on their owning player side. These units are flipped over when they are fired during the combat step of a player turn as reminder that they have been used and are flipped back up at the end of the player turn at the same time as disrupted units are turned over.

B. Off Board artillery units may fire at any enemy unit on the board, regardless of where it is located. They may fire by themselves or be combined with the fire of on-board friendly units against the same enemy units.

C. Off Board artillery units are presumed to be employing Indirect Fire at enemy units at greater than their half range, regardless of that target unit's location on the board. This means that their Attack Factors are normal against non-armored units and halved against armored unit.

D. Off Board artillery units do not have their Attack Factors halved when firing at enemy units located on Slope and Hilltop hexes. As an Experimental Rule, allow on-board units employing Indirect Fire this same effect. (The normal halving of Attack Factors when firing at units on Slopes and Hilltops using Direct Fire reflects the difficulty in hitting targets at higher elevations.)

E. Off Board artillery units that fire at hexes with more than one target unit in them may use the Selective Attack, the Multiple Attack, or the Combination Attack method when executing of the attack upon the hex.

F. Target units must be seen by a Friendly CP unit if using the Optional Rules or by any German unit and any Russian CP or Guards units if using the Experimental Rules. In addition, target units in covering terrain must be spotted by an adjacent friendly unit.

F. Off Board artillery units may employ the Intensive Fire Rule which triples their Attack Factor. However, the artillery unit is then removed from the game and cannot be used again.

G. Off Board artillery units cannot be attacked by enemy units by any means.

**The Units:** All of the units used in these scenarios can be found in the Internet websites *Imaginative Strategist* and *Greg's Panzerblitz Site*.

**The Mapboards:** The mapboards used in these scenarios can be found on the *Imaginative Strategist* website as well. In three situations (1, 2, and 6) the North Arrow really represents the direction Northeast as the general combat action in those scenarios historically moved either in a northeasterly or southwesterly direction, but for simplicity and to avoid confusion I made the direction North.

**The Situations:** The following six situations represent the four major engagements, and two minor engagements, that occurred during the battle of Prokhorovka on 12 July, 1943. In each situation there will be a brief historical synopsis, followed by the historical unit designations of the major units in both side's forces, and concluded by historical notes on particular units within the respective forces. Note that in the German historical unit designations, I am using those designations that they were labeled as during the battle of Kursk (the numerical designations did not come until the fall of 1943). It should be noted that while these are the most historically based representations of these engagements in Panzerblitz, they are at best caricatures of the real battles, with some aspects of combat being more emphasized than others. But then, that is the nature of wargames, and of Panzerblitz, in particular.

Situation #1: Hill 252.2

On the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1943, the LAH SS Panzergrenadier Division (Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler) was situated on a large hill mass, which included Hill 252.2, whose leading slope was about 2½ kilometers southwest of the town of Prokhorovka. Covering the front was the 2<sup>nd</sup> SS Panzergrenadier Regiment, of which its three battalions were spread out along the front and dug-in. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment's mission for the day was three-fold. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, which was on the left, was to advance towards Hill 252.4 and link up with the Totenkopf SS Panzergrenadier Division, whose mission was to capture that hill. If this happened then the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, which was located on the left, was shift its forward further east so it was south of the town of Prokhorovka. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, which was in the center, was to spread out and maintain contact with its two sister battalions. Since none was supposed to happen until Totenkopf captured the hill, which was not expected to occur until late afternoon, the LAH treated the day as a day of rest, at least until it was time to move out. At about 6:30 AM the division was hit by a series of probing attacks by Russian reconnaissance units all along its front. The attacks were easily brushed away and the division resumed its day of ease. At 8:30AM a massive artillery barrage hit the LAH SS Division, all up and down its front line and culminated with a rocket attack. Rightly expecting a Russian assault to occur, the 2<sup>nd</sup> SS Regiment called for reinforcements. A tank company of seven tanks arrived just moments before the first Russian tanks crested the forward edge of the hill and linked up with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. Three tank brigades, the 31<sup>st</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> from the 29<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps, and the 170<sup>th</sup> from the 18<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps, supported by the 23<sup>rd</sup> Guards Airborne Regiment from the 9<sup>th</sup> Guards Airborne Division, converged on the German 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. The other two battalions were assaulted by the 25<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade and the 28<sup>th</sup> Guards Airborne Regiment, from the 29<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> Guards respectively. The 170<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade tried to flank the German to the right but were stymied by an anti-tank ditch and so continued to the southwest. But the 31<sup>st</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> rolled on into the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion's front line. After heavy fighting, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion fell back to the southwest, losing 23 halftracks and four of the reinforcing tanks in the process, but they managed to knock out over 20 Russian tanks in the process. After briefly reorganizing on top of Hill 252.2, the Russians continued forward, only to be stopped by a deep anti-tank ditch that was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion's rear area. This allowed elements of the German 1<sup>st</sup> SS Panzer Regiment to come up and engage the 31<sup>st</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> Tank Brigades in a knock-down, drag-out gun duel. This included the three surviving reinforcing tanks that the Russians had bypassed, who came up from behind them and engage them from the rear. Meanwhile the other two battalions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> SS were being forced back from their positions, but some tanks from the 1<sup>st</sup> SS Panzer Regiment came up and helped stabilized the situation. After a half hour of combat the 31<sup>st</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> pulled back and set up a defensive line on the forward slope of Hill 252.2, reinforced by the 108<sup>th</sup> Anti-Tank Regiment, while the 25<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade and the two Guards Regiments settled into the newly captured front lone positions. Meanwhile the 170<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade tried to bypass the whole engagement and continue southwest towards its objective, the Komsomolets Collective Farm, but was stopped cold by the Tiger tanks from the 1<sup>st</sup> SS Panzer Regiment. The German advanced back up to the rear slope of Hill 252.2 and set up a defensive line. By 12:00 PM the fighting had died down as both sides were exhausted and were using the top of the hill as a no-man's land between them. The Germans had lost about 17 tanks and 23 halftracks that morning but the Russians had lost over 150 various tanks and self-propelled guns in the battle for the hill.

#### Russian Forces:

Group A: (29<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps)

31<sup>st</sup> Tank Brigade

76<sup>th</sup> Guards Mortar Regiment (2 battalions M-13) (Note 1)

Group B: (29<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps)

32<sup>nd</sup> Tank Brigade (Note 2)

1529<sup>th</sup> SU (Heavy) Regiment (2 batteries SU-152) (Note 3)

1446<sup>th</sup> SU (Mixed) Regiment (3 batteries SU-122) (Note 4)

271<sup>st</sup> Mortar Regiment (2 batteries 120mm Mortars)

Group C: (29<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps)

25<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade

1446<sup>th</sup> SU (Mixed) Regiment (2 batteries SU-76) (Note 4)

- 271<sup>st</sup> Mortar Regiment (2 batteries 120mm)
- Group D: (18<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps)
  - 170<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade
- Group E: (9<sup>th</sup> Guards Airborne Division)
  - 23<sup>rd</sup> Guards Airborne Regiment
- Group F: (9<sup>th</sup> Guards Airborne Division)
  - 28<sup>th</sup> Guards Airborne Regiment
- Group G: (29<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps)
  - 747<sup>th</sup> Anti-Tank Battalion (85mm ATG) (Note 5)
  - 108<sup>th</sup> Anti-Tank Regiment (76.2mm ATG) (Note 6)
  - 366<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Regiment (2 batteries 37mm AA)
  - 193<sup>rd</sup> Sapper Battalion
  - 29<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps HQ
- Group H: (5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army Artillery Support Group) (Note 7)
  - 1148<sup>th</sup> High Power Howitzer Regiment (203mm How)
  - 148<sup>th</sup> Gun Artillery Regiment (122mm How)
  - 7<sup>th</sup> Guards Airborne Artillery Regiment (122mm/76.2mm How)

Note 1: The 76<sup>th</sup> Guards Mortar Regiment had three battalions of M-13 Mobile Rocket Launchers. Two battalions supported the 29<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps, the other battalion supported the 18<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps.

Note 2: The 32<sup>nd</sup> Tank Brigade was unusual in that it had all T-34c tanks and no light tanks. Also all three tank brigades in the 29<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps were organized in the then experimental two tank battalion structure, each with three tank companies apiece.

Note 3: The 1529<sup>th</sup> SU (Heavy) Regiment was composed of 12 SU-152s, a vehicle which was making its combat debut at the battle of Kursk. The Germans were in awe of the vehicle and reported over 100 SU-152s being in the entire battle of Kursk in ten different SU regiments. However, the Russians only have a total of 44 SU-152s in four SU Regiments, two in the north facing the northern German pincer and two in the south facing the southern German pincer. The 1529<sup>th</sup> itself was originally in the Russian 7<sup>th</sup> Guards Army when the battle of Kursk started. It was transferred to the 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army on the night of the 11<sup>th</sup> of July and was assigned to the 29<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps. When it arrived, it was low on ammunition and fuel and one of its vehicles was in maintenance for a breakdown. While getting fuel was not a problem, getting ammunition was and so the ammunition in the remaining eleven vehicles was pooled and used to fully load what vehicles that they could. Three vehicles were fully loaded and these were assigned to support the 32<sup>nd</sup> Tank Brigade. The remainder were parked outside the northwest corner of the town of Prokhorovka where they sat for the rest of the battle.

Note 4: The 1446<sup>th</sup> SU (Mixed) Regiment was composed of 12 SU-122s and 9 SU-76s and was assigned to the 29<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps. The mixed SU regiment was an organization that was being phased out in the Russian Army at the time of Kursk in favor of SU regiments with only one type of vehicle. The SU-122s supported the 32<sup>nd</sup> Tank Brigade and the SU-76s supported the 25<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade during the battle.

Note 5: The 747<sup>th</sup> Anti-Tank Battalion was equipped with twelve 85mm anti-aircraft guns which were converted to an anti-tank role while a proper 85mm anti-tank gun was being developed. This battalion's primary mission was to combat German Tiger tanks as its guns were the only ones that could penetrate the armor of a Tiger tank at normal combat ranges.

Note 6: The 108<sup>th</sup> Anti-Tank Regiment had six batteries of four 76.2mm anti-tank guns apiece and was assigned to the 29<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps.

Note 7: The 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army Artillery Support Group is a generic name that I have given to the various artillery support groups at Prokhorovka. The 7<sup>th</sup> Guards Airborne Artillery Regiment was actually assigned to the 9<sup>th</sup> Guards Airborne Division and supported its regiments.

German Forces: (LAH SS Panzergrenadier Division)

Group A: 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion/2<sup>nd</sup> "LAH" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (Note 1)  
6<sup>th</sup> Company/2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/"LAH" SS Panzer Regiment (Note 2)

Group B: 2<sup>nd</sup> "LAH" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (2 battalions)  
2<sup>nd</sup> Company/"LAH" SS Motorized Engineer Battalion (2 Platoons)

Group C: (HQ Unit/2<sup>nd</sup> "LAH" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment)

13<sup>th</sup> Company (GW-38)

14<sup>th</sup> Company (75mm/50mm ATG)

15<sup>th</sup> Company (SPAA)

16<sup>th</sup> Company (Flamethrower) (Note 3)

Group D: ("LAH" SS Panzer Regiment)

2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Pz III/Pz IV) (Note 4)

13<sup>th</sup> Company (Tigers Tanks) (Note 5) (Note 6)

14<sup>th</sup> Company (SPAA)

15<sup>th</sup> Company (Engineer)

FO Platoon (Pz II)

2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/ "LAH" SS Artillery Regiment (Wespe/Hummel) (Note 7)

4<sup>th</sup> Battery, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 55<sup>th</sup> Werfer Regiment (Maultier)

Note 1: Although all three SS Panzergrenadier Divisions at Kursk were authorized to have one armored infantry battalion in their T.O.& E.'s, only the LAH SS Division was so equipped. The others had to make due with all motorized infantry battalions. Incidentally, this battalion was commanded by Major Jochen Peiper, who later go on to become the infamous Colonel Peiper of the Battle of the Bulge fame the following year.

Note 2: This tank company was commanded by Captain Rudolf von Ribbentrop, son of the infamous German Foreign Ministry Joachim von Ribbentrop

Note 3: The LAH SS Division was the only SS division to have flamethrower halftracks at Kursk.

Note 4: Many of the earlier histories of the battle of Kursk place Panther tanks in the II SS Panzer Corps. In reality, all of the Panther tanks at Kursk were placed in the 39<sup>th</sup> Panzer Regiment which was attached to the Gross Deutschland Panzergrenadier Division further west. Thus, there were no Panther tanks in any of the SS Divisions at Kursk. As a side note, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the LAH SS Panzer Regiment was absent from the battle of Kursk as it was at the time in Germany undergoing conversion and training to the new Panther tanks.

Note 5: There has been some dispute as to the number of Tiger tanks in the German II SS Panzer Corps at Prokhorovka, mostly stemming from the Russian reports of seeing over 100 Tigers in and around the battlefield. In reality the II SS Corp started the Kursk offensive with 42 Tigers in its inventory and on the morning of July 12<sup>th</sup> had only 17 operational Tiger tanks left, the rest undergoing various states of repair in the German rear areas. These tanks were assigned as follows; four tanks in the LAH Divison, two tanks in the Das Reich Division, and eleven tanks in the Totenkopf Division. Russian tankers were plagued by the same malady that plagued Western Allied tankers the following year in Normandy where every German tank when first encountered was identified as a Tiger tank until a positive identification could be made as to its true identity. So great was the Tiger tank's reputation to have caused this problem.

Note 6: This was the Tiger unit involved in the famous Russian tank ramming tactic incident. During the Tiger unit's engagement with the Russian 170<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade, one Tiger tank was indeed rammed by a T-34 tank. But this collision later proved to be an act of desperation by the Russian tank crew, not a standard tactic. The T-34 end up being destroyed and the Tiger tank was damaged and had to be sent back to the rear for repairs. The incident created the myth of Russian tank ramming tactics. Incidentally, this Tiger tank unit was commanded by Lieutenant Michael Wittman, who would go on to become Captain Wittman of Villars Bocage fame in 1944.

Note 7: According to earlier records, the LAH SS Division was the only SS Division to be equipped with actual Wespe and Hummel vehicles in its Mobile Artillery Battalion. The other two SS Divisions were equipped with experimental self-propelled artillery vehicles based on captured French tank chassis. More recent findings dispute this, but the matter, as of this date (2018), is unresolved.

### Situation #2: The Psel River Valley

At 0830 AM the Russian 18<sup>th</sup> Tank Corp launched its attack in two columns. The left column had the 170<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade in the lead and its mission was to support the 29<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps attack on Hill 252.2. The right column was led by the 181<sup>st</sup> Tank Corps and its mission was to proceed down the Psel River Valley along the river road to the town of Andreevka to relieve the 99<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Corps and the 153<sup>rd</sup> Guards Rifle Regiment from the 52<sup>nd</sup> Guards Rifle Division where they were surrounded from the day before. Following hard on the 181<sup>st</sup>'s heels was the 127<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Regiment from the 42<sup>nd</sup> Guards Rifle Division which was in a supporting role. However, the situation had changed during the night before the attack. The town of Andreevka was no longer surrounded and the 153<sup>rd</sup> Guard Rifle Regiment had pulled out to link up with the rest of its division further north. In its place, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 11<sup>th</sup> Motorized Rifle Brigade had pulled in takes its place. But the 99<sup>th</sup> still needed relief so it could link up with its parent tank corps. By 11:30 AM the 181<sup>st</sup> reached Andreevka and sent the 99<sup>th</sup> Brigade packing. Now it was now ordered to attack the next town down the road which was Vassilievka. Vassilievka, which was the scene of heavy fighting the day before, was a wrecked town but was presently devoid of enemy forces. However, the Germans also wanted that town and attacked it from the west with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the "Thule" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment and the Totenkopf SS Assault Gun Battalion, both from the Totenkopf SS Panzergrenadier Division. The two forces slammed into each other in the middle of Vassilievka and a terrific fight developed. The 181<sup>st</sup> sent one of its tank battalions around to the south to flank the Germans from the left, but instead it ran into elements of the LAH SS Armored Reconnaissance Battalion which was screening the approaches to LAH SS Panzergrenadier Division main base of operations and headquarters. The fighting intensified as both sides fed reinforcements into the fray. The Russian 127<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Regiment finally caught up and joined in. Also, an unexpected reinforcement came in the form of Churchill tanks from the Russian 36<sup>th</sup> Guards Heavy Tank Regiment. These reinforcements caused the battle to initially in the Russians favor. But the Germans received reinforcements in the way of long- range tank fire from across the Psel River where tanks from the Totenkopf SS Panzer Regiment were busy expanding the German bridgehead across the Psel. This tank fire, plus fire from reinforcing anti-aircraft units, threw the engagement back in the German favor and the Russians were pushed out of Vassilievka. The Germans then pushed on to Andreevka, only to be stopped at the outskirts of the town. But the LAH SS Recon Battalion was pushed back, creating a break in the German line, which was exploited later in the afternoon by the Russian 32<sup>nd</sup> Motorized Rifle Brigade in their attack on the LAH SS Division's artillery positions.

#### Russian Forces:

Group A: 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/11<sup>th</sup> Motorized Rifle Brigade (Note 1)

Group B: 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/11<sup>th</sup> Motorized Rifle Brigade (Note 1)

Group C: 99<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade/ 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Corps (Note 2)

Group D: 181<sup>st</sup> Tank Brigade/18<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps

Group E: 127<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Regiment/42<sup>nd</sup> Guards Rifle Division

Group F: 36<sup>th</sup> Guards Heavy Tank Regiment (Note 3) (Note 4)

Group G: 92<sup>nd</sup> Gun Artillery Regiment (152mm How)

75<sup>th</sup> Guards Artillery Regiment (122mm/76.2mm How) (Note 5)

Note 1: The 11<sup>th</sup> Motorized Rifle Brigade was part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps. It was detached from the 10<sup>th</sup> and assigned to the 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Army on 10 July, 1943, with the rest of its parent tank corps sent west to fight the German XLVIII Panzer Corps.

Note 2: The 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Corps had been split in two by an attack by the LAH SS Panzergrenadier Division the day before. Its reduced 99<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade became trapped in the Psel River Valley as a result. After being relieved by the 182<sup>st</sup> Tank Brigade, the 99<sup>th</sup> returned to its parent tank corp.

Note 3: The 36<sup>th</sup> Guards Heavy Tank Regiment has been described in many histories as being an oversized heavy tank regiment with 35 Churchill tanks at Prokhorovka. There has also been conflicting reports that it was in action on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July and that it wasn't. It is now known that there two heavy tank regiments present in the 18<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps that day. The first one was the 36<sup>th</sup> Guards Heavy Tank Regiment with 18 Churchill tanks present. The second one was the 1549<sup>th</sup> SU (Heavy) Regiment with 20 Churchill tanks. The 1549<sup>th</sup> was normally equipped with SU-152s but all of its vehicles were either detached out to other units or in the rear field trains undergoing repair, leaving only the headquarters unit. The Russians then used the headquarters unit to take command of replacement Churchill tanks that had recently arrived. Thus, this was the heavy tank regiment that actually stayed in the rear and took pot shots across the Psel River at German units as many histories say that the 36<sup>th</sup> did. As the 1549<sup>th</sup> got its SU-152s back over the next few days, the Churchill tanks were removed and sent out as replacements.

Note 4: The 36<sup>th</sup> Regiment was originally assigned to follow up behind the 170<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade. When it came up to the 170<sup>th</sup> and finding that unit locked in battle with Tiger tanks, the 36<sup>th</sup> circled wide to the right with the intention of coming up on the Tigers from behind. However, it ran into the LAH SS Reconnaissance Battalion and got involved in the battle down in the Psel River Valley.

Note 5: The 75<sup>th</sup> Guards Artillery Regiment was assigned to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Guards Rifle Division.

German Forces: (Totenkopf SS Panzergrenadier Division)

Group A: 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion/"Thule" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment

13<sup>th</sup> Company/"Thule" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (1 Platoon 150mm IG)

"Totenkopf" SS Assault Gun Battalion

2<sup>nd</sup> Compny/"Totenkopf" SS Motorized Engineer Battalion (1 Platoon)

3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion/55<sup>th</sup> Werfer Regiment (1 Battery Nebelwerfer)

Group B: 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/"Thule" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment

Group C: (LAH SS Panzergrenadier Division)

"LAH" Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (2 Companies/Support elements)

Group D: 4<sup>th</sup> Company/2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/"Totenkopf" SS Panzer Regiment (Pz IV)

9<sup>th</sup> Company/"Totenkopf" SS Panzer Regiment (Tigers) (Note 1)

Group E: "Totenkopf" SS Motorized Flak Battalion (2 Companies 20mm/37mm/88mm AA)

Group F: 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/861<sup>st</sup> Artillery Regiment (105mm How) (Note 2)

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/"LAH" SS Artillery Regiment (105mm How)

Note 1: Totenkopf's 9th Company started the day with eleven Tiger tanks operational, as of the previous evening's status report. But when they started vehicles the morning of July 12<sup>th</sup>, one refused to start, so that reduced the company down to ten tanks. During the morning while crossing the Psel River to the north side, four more vehicles broke down, reducing the company to six Tiger tanks. During the expansion of the bridgehead north of the Psel, two more vehicles broke down, reducing the company down to four Tiger tanks at the start of the afternoon battles.

Note 2: The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/861<sup>st</sup> Artillery Regiment was an independent artillery battalion which was attached to the II SS Panzer Corps for the Kursk operation. It supported by the LAH and Totenkopf SS Divisions.

### Situation #3: Kluchi

Kluchi was one of the most overinflated engagements in the battle of Prokhorovka. The Soviet government portrayed it as a full-blown assault against the town by a full strength 31<sup>st</sup> Tank Corps. Even after the fall of

the Soviet government in Russia this portrayal lasted for the rest of the 1990s. But in the early 2000s, the true story started to emerge. This battle was really two smaller engagements that happened in close proximity to each other. The first engagement was on the northern side of the Psel River where Kluchi was located, a battle for both the town and the Russian Army barracks about a mile north of it, between the German 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/“Thule” SS Panzergrenadier Regiment and the Russian 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/290<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Regiment of the 95<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division, which was entering its second day. This battle would last the rest of the day and would end in a stalemate with the Germans in possession of the town and the Russians in possession of the barracks. The other engagement occurred on the western flank of the Totenkopf SS Division. This flank extended from Krasnyi Oktiabr near the Psel River crossing to the west where Totenkopf linked up with the German 11<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division. While Krasnyi Oktiabr itself was garrisoned by a company from the “Thule” SS Regiment, the rest of the distance was screened by units of the Totenkopf Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, backed by two companies of the Totenkopf Anti-tank Battalion. Opposing them were the Russian 289<sup>th</sup> and 294<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Regiments of the 97<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division. Supporting them were the Russian 237<sup>th</sup> and 242<sup>nd</sup> Tank Brigades of the 31<sup>st</sup> Tank Corps. The Russians were conducting an active defense at first, which entailed launching probing attacks with small units to determine the strength of the German line. Once it was determined that it was a single battalion defending a long stretch of line, the Russians started a general advance with the two Guards rifle regiments at about 11:10 AM. The German slowly fell back, disrupting parts of the Russian advance with heavy fire. Dissatisfied with the slow rate of advance, the Russians committed the two tank brigades to break through the German line and perform a double envelopment of it. The 242<sup>nd</sup> Tank Brigade was too weak and could only support by gunfire, so the 237<sup>th</sup> had to go it alone and do a single envelopment with the bridge across the Psel as its ultimate goal. The 237<sup>th</sup> did break through the line, but as it turned east towards the bridge, it was hit on the flank by a reinforcing Marder company, stopping it in its tracks. The 237<sup>th</sup> pulled back behind the Russian lines and their whole advanced sort of fizzled out. For the rest of the day the Russians went back to conducting an active defense and the bridge across the Psel was never captured.

#### Russian Forces:

Group A: 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/290<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Regiment/95<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division

Group B: 289<sup>th</sup> and 294<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Regiments/97<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division

Group C: 242<sup>nd</sup> Tank Brigade/31<sup>st</sup> Tank Corps (Note 1) (Note 2)

Group D: 237<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade/31<sup>st</sup> Tank Corps (Note 1) (Note 2)

Group E: 232<sup>nd</sup> Guards Artillery Regiment/97<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division (122mm/76.2mm How)

Note 1: The 31<sup>st</sup> Tank Corps was forming up when the battle of Kursk occurred, so it went into battle with an incomplete organization. It only had its three tank brigades, the 100<sup>th</sup>, 237<sup>th</sup>, and 242<sup>nd</sup>, along with the 31<sup>st</sup> Armored Car Battalion and its headquarters elements. The 100<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade and the 31<sup>st</sup> Armored Car Battalion were off map to the west conducting an attack on the town of Kochetovka against elements of the German 11<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division. Both the 237<sup>th</sup> and the 242<sup>nd</sup> Tank Brigades were in a much-reduced state as they both had been in combat during the previous three days. The 237<sup>th</sup> supported the 289<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Regiment and the 242<sup>nd</sup> supported the 294<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Regiment.

Note 2: Many of the earlier histories, and not a few orders of battle, state that both the 237<sup>th</sup> and 242<sup>nd</sup> Tank Brigades each had a battalion of 21 M-3 Grant/Lee tanks at the battle of Prokhorovka. This is not true, instead they had the standard T-34c/T-70a tank mix. The two brigades did each receive a battalion of M-3 Grant/Lee tanks as replacements after the battle of Kursk was over though. The three tank brigades in the 31<sup>st</sup> Tank Corps were organized in the experimental three tank battalions per brigade set up, which would become the standard organization for all tank brigades in the Russian Army by the end of the year.

#### German Forces: (Totenkopf SS Panzergrenadier Division)

Group A: 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/“Thule” SS Panzergrenadier Regiment

13<sup>th</sup> Company/“Thule” SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (2 Platoons 150mm IG)

- “Totenkopf” SS Motorized Engineer Battalion (1 Platoon)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion/55<sup>th</sup> Werfer Regiment (2 Batteries Nebelwerfers)
- Bridge Column “B”/537<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion (“J” Bridge)
- Group B: “Totenkopf” SS Armored Reconnaissance Battalion
  - “Totenkopf” SS Motorized Anti-Tank Battalion (2 companies 75mm ATG)
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/“Totenkopf” SS Artillery Regiment (105mm How)
- Group C: “Totenkopf” SS Motorized Anti-Tank Battalion (1 Company Marders)
  - “Totenkopf” SS Motorized Flak Battalion (1 Company 20mm/37mm/88mm AA)

#### Situation #4: Storozhevoe

This is another engagement that the Soviets overinflated and misrepresented over the years and it was not until the early 2000s that the truth finally began to emerge. On the eastern flank of the LAH SS Panzergrenadier Division was two mile stretch of woods, the Smoroshevoe Forest, which was anchored on the towns of Stalinsky in the north and Storozhevoe in the south. Another section of woods went further south but this was covered by elements of the Das Reich SS Panzergrenadier Division. These woods and towns were to be the jumping off points for the 1<sup>st</sup> SS Panzergrenadier Regiment's planned push to extend the division's right flank further east. Again, this operation was contingent on the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/2<sup>nd</sup> SS Panzergrenadier Regiment's planned extension of their front line up north. As this did not happen, the 1<sup>st</sup> SS Regiment settled into a defense of their sector. Opposing them was the Russian 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Corps. This unit had been worn down by five days of combat and was about at 35% strength. Not only that, one of its tank brigades (the 99<sup>th</sup>) was stuck down in the Psel River Valley. Thus, it was planned that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Corps would just assume a defensive posture. However, the Russians were so afraid that the Germans would break through the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Corps line in a general counterattack against the 29<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps further north or the 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Tank Corps to the south, that two Guards Tank Regiment (the 53<sup>rd</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup>) were attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> in case this happened. By 12:00 PM though, the feared counterattack did not happen and the two tank regiments were sent south to link up with Group Trufanov which was moving out at the time. Both sides just sat still for most of the afternoon, but at 16:00 PM the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Corps was ordered to launch an immediate attack on Storozhevoe and the Smoroshevoe Forest. It seems that the 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army's three main assaults that day had failed to achieve their objectives and the 5<sup>th</sup> was trying to retrieve the situation by attacking a previously non-assaulted sector. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Corps attacked with its whole force (the 99<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade only recently returned to the Corps) and managed to capture Storozhevoe and get into the eastern edge of the forest. But the Germans called for reinforcements and with these, pushed the Russians out of both the forest and the town and back to their starting line by evening. By then both sides were exhausted and the fighting died down.

Russian Forces: (2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Corps) (Note 1)

- Group A: 26<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade
  - 99<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade
  - 169<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade
  - 58<sup>th</sup> Motorized Rifle Brigade
  - 62<sup>nd</sup> Heavy Tank Regiment (Note 2) (Note 3)
  - 296<sup>th</sup> Mortar Regiment
  - 83<sup>rd</sup> Motorcycle Battalion
  - 74<sup>th</sup> Sapper Battalion
  - 307<sup>th</sup> Guards Mortar Battalion (M-13)
- Group B: (5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army Artillery Support Group)
  - 522<sup>nd</sup> High Power Howitzer Regiment (203mm How)
  - 93<sup>rd</sup> gun Artillery Regiment (122mm How)

Note 1: Earlier historians, including Soviet, Western, and later Russian, reported that the 136<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Regiment, from the 42<sup>nd</sup> Guards Rifle Division, was attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Corps and

involved in the attack that day. It turns out that this is false. The 136<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Regiment was not attached until the 14<sup>th</sup> of July and took its place in the front lines opposite of Storozhevoe.

Note 2: The 62<sup>nd</sup> Heavy Tank Regiment has been identified as the 15<sup>th</sup> and 69<sup>th</sup> Heavy Tank Regiments by earlier Soviet and Russian historians. While both of these regiments did serve in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Corps during 1943, neither was present in the corps during the battle of Kursk. Contrary to earlier histories, the 62<sup>nd</sup> was not equipped with KV-1c's but with Churchill Mk IV heavy tanks.

Note 3: The 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army operational records for July 12<sup>th</sup> state that the only heavy tanks in the army were in the 36<sup>th</sup> Guards Heavy Tank Regiment and the 1549<sup>th</sup> SU (Heavy) Regiment in the 18<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps. But there were also heavy tanks in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Tank Corps. The reason that the 5<sup>th</sup> Guards missed them is because their regiments were listed as medium tank regiments in their records and the tanks were assumed to be T-34c's.

German Forces: (LAH SS Panzergrenadier Division)

Group A: 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/1<sup>st</sup> "LAH" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment

2<sup>nd</sup> Company/"LAH" SS Motorized Anti-Tank Battalion (1 Battery Marder III)

Group B: 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/1<sup>st</sup> "LAH" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment

2<sup>nd</sup> Company/"LAH" SS Motorized Anti-Tank Battalion (1 Battery Marder III)

Group C: (Das Reich SS Panzergrenadier Division)

2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/"Deutschland" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment

Group D: 13<sup>th</sup> Company/1<sup>st</sup> "LAH" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (SG-38w)

14<sup>th</sup> Company/1<sup>st</sup> "LAH" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (50mm/75mm ATG)

15<sup>th</sup> Company/1<sup>st</sup> "LAH" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (20mm SPAA)

Group E: "LAH" SS Assault Gun Battalion (2 Batteries SG-IIIg)

1<sup>st</sup> Company/"LAH" SS Motorized Anti-Tank Battalion (2 Batteries Marder III))

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/55<sup>th</sup> Werfer Regiment (2 Batteries Nebelwerfers)

Group F: "LAH" SS Artillery Regiment (105mm/150mm How/Gun)

#### Situation #5: Kalinin

Further to the south was the German Das Reich Panzergrenadier Division, which was defending the long eastern flank of the II SS Panzer Corps's salient. Its mission for the day was to extend the corps's flank further to the east in order to broaden the base of the salient. Of course, this mission was contingent on the 1<sup>st</sup> SS Panzergrenadier Regiment to the north also extending its front further east. Until this happened, Das Reich was content to defend its front and giving its troops a rest after a week of hard fighting. Opposing Das Reich was its Russian counterpart, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Tank Corps. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards was somewhat weakened by the five previous days of combat and was not ready when the other tank corps in the 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Army attacked at 8:30AM. It was allowed to delay its attack until 12:00 PM. Supporting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards was the Russian 183<sup>rd</sup> Rifle Division. This division had seen some hard fighting the last several days, including a stand on Hill 252.2 just the day before, and was at about 30% strength, suitable only for defense, not the offensive it was called on to support. At about 12:00PM the Russian attack commenced in two columns and quickly broke through the German line in two places. The southern column headed towards the town of Kalinin and the northern column headed towards the town of Iasnja Pollana. The southern column bypassed Kalinin and headed into a giant field north of it. The northern column itself broke into two smaller columns, one assaulting Iasnja Pollana itself and the other heading into the giant field north of Kalinin and converged with the southern column. Meanwhile the Germans had set up their panzers, assault guns, and tank destroyers around the giant field north of Kalinin, in essence laying an ambush for the Russians. As the combined Russian force fell into the trap, the Germans opened fire from three sides. Though often described as a swirling tank battle in the earlier histories, the engagement was in reality nothing more than a giant tank ambush. The Russians returned fire but only knocked out one German tank, while dozens of their tanks were knocked out in the giant field. The Russians then pulled

back towards their own lines. The attack on Iasnia Pollana was repulsed as well and those Russians also retreated. The Germans reestablished their front line, but the forced expenditure of ammunition in repulsing the Russians, plus the softness of the ground brought about by the afternoon rains, precluded any chance of Das Reich going over to the offensive that day and so they resumed the defensive for the remainder of it.

#### Russian Forces:

Group A: (2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Tank Corps) (Note 1)  
4<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Brigade (4 Companies T-34c/T-70a)  
25<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Brigade (5 Companies T-34c/T-70a)  
26<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Brigade (5 Companies T-34c/T70a) (Note 2)  
47<sup>th</sup> Guards Heavy Tank Regiment (1 Company Churchill Mk IV)  
4<sup>th</sup> Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade (9 Companies Guards/SMG)  
1500<sup>th</sup> Anti-Tank Regiment (3 Batteries 76.2mm ATG)  
755<sup>th</sup> Anti-Tank Battalion (2 Batteries 85mm ATG)  
51<sup>st</sup> Sapper Battalion (2 Companies Engineers)  
19<sup>th</sup> Armored Car Battalion (2 Companies BA-64)  
79<sup>th</sup> Motorcycle Battalion (2 Companies Motorcycles))  
80<sup>th</sup> Guards Mortar Regiment (3 Battalions M-13)  
Group B: (183<sup>rd</sup> Rifle Division) (Note 3)  
227<sup>th</sup> Rifle Regiment (5 Companies Rifles)  
285<sup>th</sup> Rifle Regiment (8 Companies Rifles/SMG)  
296<sup>th</sup> Rifle Regiment (7 Companies Rifles/SMG)  
273<sup>rd</sup> Mortar Regiment (3 Batteries 120mm Mortars)  
Group C: (183<sup>rd</sup> Rifle Division)  
623<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Regiment (122mm/76.2mm How)

Note 1: The units listed in parentheses beside each formation are the number of primary maneuver element equivalents that each of those formations had in this attack. Support weapons are not listed. As the 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Tank Corps had about 110 tanks available, that would make each tank company worth about 6-9 tanks per medium tank company and 3 tanks for the heavy tank company.

Note 2: The 26<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Brigade was transferred in the late afternoon of the 12<sup>th</sup> of July to the 7<sup>th</sup> Guards Army to defend against the German III Panzer Corps.

Note 3: The units listed in parentheses besides each formation are the number of primary maneuver element equivalents that each formation had in this engagement. Support weapons are not listed.

#### German Forces: (Das Reich SS Panzergrenadier Division)

Group A: 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/"Der Fuhrer" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment  
2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/"Der Fuhrer" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment  
1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/"Deutschland" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment  
"Das Reich" SS Motorized Flak Battalion (1 Company 88mm/37mm AA)  
13<sup>th</sup> Company/"Der Fuhrer" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (GW-38)  
Group B: 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion/"Der Fuhrer" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment  
"Das Reich" Assault Gun Battalion (SG-IIIg/Marder III)  
2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/55<sup>th</sup> Werfer Regiment (Nebelwerfer)  
13<sup>th</sup> Company/"Deutschland" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (GW-38)  
14<sup>th</sup> Company/"Der Fuhrer" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (75mm IG)  
15<sup>th</sup> Company/"Der Fuhrer" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (50mm/75mm ATG)  
16<sup>th</sup> Company/"Der Fuhrer" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (Sd Kfz 10/4)  
Group C: 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/"Das Reich" Panzer Regiment (Pz III/Pz IV) (Note 1)

“Das Reich” SS Motorized Anti-Tank Battalion (Pz III/T-34c) (Note 2)  
3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion/”Das Reich” SS Artillery Regiment (Wespe) (Note 3)  
“Das Reich” SS Motorized Flak Battalion (2 companies 88mm/37mm AA)  
Heavy Tank Company/”Das Reich” Panzer Regiment (Tiger) (Note 4)

Group D: “Das Reich” SS Armored Reconnaissance Battalion

Group E: “Das Reich” SS Artillery Regiment (105mm/150mm How/Gun)

Note 1: The “Das Reich” SS Panzer Regiment, like the LAH SS Panzer Regiment, was missing its 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion as it was in Germany undergoing conversion to and training in the new Panther tanks.

Note 2: The “Das Reich” SS Motorized Anti-Tank Battalion was assigned to the Panzer Regiment to control all of the extra Pz III tanks and the captured T-34c tanks that were left over when the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion went back to Germany. Its own units were divided up and assigned to other formations in the division, the Marders going to the assault gun battalion and the anti-tank guns going to the two panzergrenadier regiments.

Note 3: Normally, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had two Wespe batteries and one Hummel battery. However, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, Das Reich traded its Hummel battery for one of Totenkopf's Wespe batteries for a few days. This is why it has three Wespe batteries. Also, even though these batteries were labeled as Wespe in the organizational charts, in reality these batteries were equipped with experimental self-propelled artillery vehicles based on captured French tank chassis. Thus, the Wespe counters represent these vehicles as the counter values would be about the same.

Note 4: One of the myths about this engagement is that one of the Tiger tanks was hit over eighty times during the course of the battle. This is not true as neither Tiger tank involved was hit. Das Reich did have a Tiger tank that was hit a total of eighty-three times during the course of the Kursk campaign though. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of July it was back in the field trains being repaired so it could not have been in the engagement at Kalinin. By the end of the campaign this tank had scores of pock marks from hits which ricocheted off the armor on all four sides of the vehicle as well as two actual penetrations which were patched up, a truly incredible amount of damage. Yet for all of this punishment that this tank took, it was repaired and put back into service several times. It was finally lost and abandoned when it broke down during the withdraw at the end of the campaign and could not be recovered. They don't build tanks like that anymore.

#### Situation #6: Hill 235.3

After dealing with the flanking attacks from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> Tank Corps as well as infantry attacks by the 95<sup>th</sup> and 97<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Divisions and expanding its bridgehead across the Psel River, the Totenkopf SS Panzergrenadier Division was ready to carry out the II SS Panzer Corps's planned offensive of the day. The plan was to attack out of the bridgehead and head north to the Prokhorovka/Kartachevka road and cut it. The division was then to move down that road towards Prokhorovka and capture Hill 252.4 just northwest of the town. This would be the left arm of a double envelopment of the Russian forces in the Psel River Valley. (The right arm would be from the LAH SS Division.) Leading the assault out of the bridgehead was the Totenkopf Panzer Regiment, supported by the “Theodor Eicke” SS Panzergrenadier Regiment and various other support units. As it was desired to advance the shortest distance to the road, the direction of the assault was more to the northeast than to the north. The German starting positions were on the southern half of Hill 226.6. Opposing the Germans were a mixture of units occupying the front line along the northern half of Hill 226.6, composed of elements of the 52<sup>nd</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Divisions as well as the 11<sup>th</sup> Motorized Rifle Brigade. Behind them was a second defense line containing the remainder of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Guard Rifle Division. Even further back, defending the road itself, was a third defense line containing a rifle regiment from the 95<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division. The assault began about 1:00 PM and at first battled the Russians for control of Hill 226.6. By late afternoon the Germans had the hill in their possession and after a brief pause to reorganize, resumed their advance towards the second Russian defense line. This line was weaker than the first so the Germans got through it by early evening. Seeing their first defense lines pierced, the Russians brought down reinforcements from the 5<sup>th</sup>

Guards Mechanized Corps to stabilize the situation. These units battled the Germans throughout the evening as they attacked towards the road, but by about 10:00 PM the Germans managed to get a tank company to the road, cutting it. However, night was falling and both sides were just too exhausted to continue fighting. The German was to rest for the night, then start down the road after breakfast. However, the Russians brought in more reinforcements during the night and attacked first. By late morning they had driven the Germans all the way back to Hill 226.6, destroying any chance of the Germans carrying out their original plan.

#### Russian Forces:

- Group A: 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/290<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Regiment/95<sup>th</sup> Guard Rifle Division
  - 151<sup>st</sup> Guards Rifle Regiment/52<sup>nd</sup> Guards Rifle Division (Note 1)
  - 155<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Regiment/52<sup>nd</sup> Guards Rifle Division (Note 1)
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/11<sup>th</sup> Motorized Rifle Brigade
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion/11<sup>th</sup> Motorized Rifle Brigade
- Group B: 153<sup>rd</sup> Guards Rifle Regiment/52<sup>nd</sup> Guards Rifle Division (Note 2)
  - 124<sup>th</sup> Guards Artillery Regiment/52<sup>nd</sup> Guards Rifle Division (Note 2)
- Group C: 284<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Regiment/95<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division
- Group D: 24<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Brigade/5<sup>th</sup> Guards Mechanized Corps
- Group E: 10<sup>th</sup> Guards Mechanized Rifle Brigade/5<sup>th</sup> Guards Mechanized Corps
- Group F: 142<sup>nd</sup> Gun Artillery Regiment (152mm How)
  - 233<sup>rd</sup> Guards Artillery Regiment (122mm/76.2mm How) (Note 3)

Note 1: The 52<sup>nd</sup> Guards Rifle Division had been in combat for several days prior to the 12<sup>th</sup> and was much reduced in strength. The 151<sup>st</sup> and 155<sup>th</sup> Regiments were both about a battalion equivalent in strength.

Note 2: The 153<sup>rd</sup> Regiment was not quite as bad as the other two, being about two battalions equivalent in strength.

Note 3: The 223<sup>rd</sup> Guards Artillery Regiment was from the 95<sup>th</sup> Guards Rifle Division.

#### German Forces: (Totenkopf SS Panzergrenadier Division)

- Group A: 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/ "Thule" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment
- Group B: 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/Totenkopf SS Panzer Regiment (Pz III/Pz IV)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion/"Theodor Eicke" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (Note 1)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Company/"Totenkopf" SS Motorized Flak Battalion (88mm/37mm AA)
- Group C: 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/Totenkopf SS Panzer Regiment (Pz III/Pz IV)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/ "Theodor Eicke" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment
  - 9<sup>th</sup> Company/Totenkopf Panzer Regiment (Tigers) (Note 2)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Company/"Totenkopf" SS Motorized Flak Battalion (88mm/37mm AA)
- Group D: 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/"Totenkopf" SS Artillery Regiment (Wespe/Hummel) (Note 3)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Company/"Totenkopf" SS Motorized Engineer Battalion
  - 13<sup>th</sup> Company/"Theodor Eicke" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (75mm IG)
  - 15<sup>th</sup> Company/"Theodor Eicke" SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (20mm SPAA)
  - 4<sup>th</sup> Battery/3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion/55<sup>th</sup> Werfer Regiment (Maultier) (Note 4)

Note 1: The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was actually a Motorcycle Battalion. As it was slated to receive halftracks after the Kursk operation, it was decided to leave it as a motorcycle equipped motorized panzergrenadier battalion instead of temporarily equipping them with trucks. However, for this scenario I have equipped them with trucks as they were used as infantry, not recon troops.

Note 2: The company started the attack with four operational Tiger tanks. By the end of the day, all four of them had been knocked out.

Note 3: Although the Totenkopf SS Artillery Regiment was authorized to have two Wespe batteries and one Hummel battery, for this battle they had one Wespe battery and two Hummel batteries. The

extra Hummel battery came from the Das Reich SS Division, for which Totenkopf trades one of its Wespe batteries. This was so Totenkopf would have heavier artillery support for its planned offensive that day. Like the Das Reich SS Division, Totenkopf had self-propelled artillery pieces that were mounted on captured French tank chassis. Again, I use the Wespe and Hummel counters to represent them.

Note 4: The 4<sup>th</sup> Battery actually consisted of rocket launchers mounted on the sides of Sd Kfz 251 halftracks. The Maultier counter represents these older vehicles.

### **Aftermath:**

By the end of the day there were over 360 knocked out tanks scattered about the fields around Prokhorovka. About 300 of these were Russian and the remainder were German. While the German tank losses were surprisingly light, given the intensity of the day's battles, their infantry battalions were thoroughly disrupted which in two divisions, effectively put a stop to the day's planned offensives. About a third of the German infantry battalions were so badly mauled that they were incapable of further offensive operations. (The Russians claimed that those battalions were destroyed.) Russian infantry losses were heavier but at least they had replacements readily available to replace them, while the Germans had to make due with what they had left. The next day Adolf Hitler canceled the Kursk Operation but he ordered the forces in the southern pincer to continue their attacks in order to destroy Russian reserves. This they did for the next three days, but while they were able to widen the base of the salient, they were unable to move further north. Meanwhile, continued Russian counter-attacks were ruthlessly grinding down the strength of the II SS Panzer Corps, so much that on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of July, the Germans had to go over to the defensive. Finally, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July the Germans were ordered to pull back to their original starting line of the Kursk Operation. In their wake they left over 550 German and Russian AFV wrecks in the open steppes around Prokhorovka.

### **Conclusion:**

I hope that the revised scenarios in this article give a greater understanding of what really went on at the battle of Prokhorovka. It is my hope that that gamers find them challenging and enjoyable and that the historians among them will find greater cause to look deeper in the history of the battle.