

panzerfaust

Games of Strategy • Strategy of Games

FOUNDED BY DONALD GREENWOOD

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LINE OF COMMUNICATIONS

EDITORIAL



The magazine is beginning to take shape now, and a good backlog of articles is accumulating. This by no means indicates that we wouldn't like to receive more or that articles on hand couldn't be by-passed by newer ones if they fit in better. Good game strategy articles, such as the WATERLOO article in this issue, are still hard to find.

The biggest news around here is that we are going to move. Besides PANZERFAUST we also have Lowry's Hobbies and Guidon Games all crammed into our present home. The stock room is in the attic, the office in the "dining room," and the print shop in the basement. But now we have finally found our dream house, just outside Belfast, Maine, where we'll have lots of room--which means we can expand our staff. Please notice our help-wanted ads on page 7. Issue #56 will be out before we actually move.

Less than a week after returning from our house-hunting trip to Maine, I was back on the road--this time to Chicago for the "International Game Show" (22 and 23 July) where we had a booth. This show was designed to bring game manufacturers and dealers together for a bit of buying and selling without the distractions of other types of merchandise found at the usual hobby and toy shows. It was held at the Sherman House hotel in conjunction with DIPLOCON V (DIPLOMACY convention) and a regular wargaming convention. Being stuck behind a booth most of the time I didn't see too much of the convention side of things but it appeared to come off OK, especially the DIPLOCON. I'd guess maybe 300 gamers were squeezed into the convention rooms. Unfortunately the game show itself didn't go over so well. Not enough manufacturers showed up to satisfy the buyers and not enough buyers showed up to satisfy the manufacturers. It is hoped that this experience will not kill the idea of a game show, as I feel it is basically a good one.

Four weeks later it was back on the road again as Julie, Jimmy and I headed for the Lake Geneva Convention (GENCON V), held this year on the campus of George Williams College at Williams Bay, Wisconsin (on Lake Geneva)--where we also had a booth. Possibly 200 wargamers attended--down from last year. Miniatures gamers seemed to enjoy themselves thoroughly, but about the only board-gaming activity I saw was the "Old Masters" tournament, which I don't believe was ever completed. The miniatures and board games were conducted in two widely separated buildings while registration was at a third location. Hopefully, next year GENCON will return to the town of Lake Geneva.

Incidentally, we have recently been advised that the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Strategic Games Society (MITSGS) plans to sponsor a convention (WINTER

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THE SOVIET MECHANIZED

CORPS

JUNE - JULY 1941



by JOHN LUNDSTROM

Wargamer's Guide to the EASTERN FRONT Number 1

INTRODUCTION

Here begins what we believe to be an outstanding series of historical analyses by John Lundstrom, Ron Mazurkiewicz and Dale Roethig. This is not merely a rehash of information already presented in similar publications. A glance at the bibliography will serve to show that this material is based upon extensive original research into many important sources not previously utilized for this kind of in-depth military history of the period. All previous scholarly -- and not-so-scholarly -- writings on the German-Russian conflict in WWII have been based mostly on German accounts, for the simple reason that until very recently almost nothing had been published on the subject by the Russians. However, several important Russian works are now available -- to those who read Russian, and John Lundstrom is one who does! Many previously held certainties turn to dust in the light of this new information. So that's enough build-up, let's get to it.

Editor

During a major conference at the height of the 1941 summer campaign, Adolf Hitler remarked to Panzer General Heinz Guderian: "If I had known that the figures for Russian tank strength which you gave in your bood were infact true ones, I would not -- I believe -- ever have started this war." Hitler referred to Guderian's 1937 book ACHTUNG! PANZER! which estimated soviet tank strength at 10,000. It would have been most interesting to have recorded the Fuhrer's reactions had he known his enemy had possessed over twice as many tanks as Guderian's previously 'improbable' figures! (Quote is from GUDERIAN, p. 190)

In June 1941 the Soviet Union was the proud possessor of the largest tank force in the world, approximately 22,700 vehicles in all. Their nearest rival, Germany, wielded only about 5700 armored vehicles, 3348 in the armies participating in "Barbarossa." Yet by the end of July 1941, the Wehrmacht was streaming east into the Soviet Union at an ever increasing pace. All of the massive Soviet tank counterattacks were smashed by the numerically much inferior German panzer forces. It is the purpose of this article to examine the organization and strength of the Soviet armored forces in June 1941 and their employment in the early summer 1941 campaigns. Soviet reticence in releasing detailed information forced researchers in the past to turn to

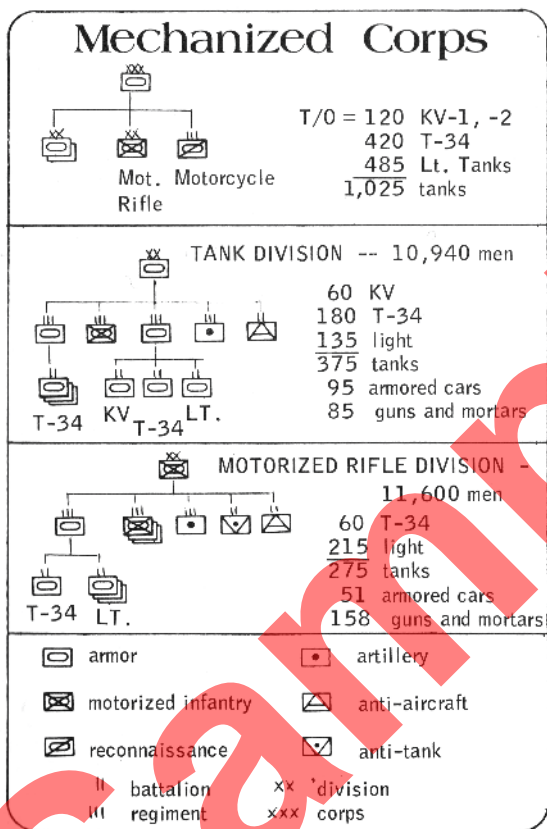
German intelligence reports, particularly the highly inaccurate pre-invasion estimates. These estimates rated the Soviet tank strength at 10,000, organized into a number of "tank brigades" and "moto-mechanized brigades." Only with the publication of the Soviet Official History and other key memoirs and campaign studies has it become possible to offer a reasoned analysis of the Soviet armored forces at the start of the campaign.

After the successful conclusion of their revolution, the Soviets felt themselves confronted by a hostile world, their only defense against supposed annihilation being the military might of the "Red Army of Workers and Peasants." Consequently in the late 1920's during the beginning of industrialization, the Soviets began to produce tanks and other weapons in great numbers to achieve superiority in military strength over any possible invader. By 1938 at the conclusion of the Second Five Year Plan, the Red Army boasted over 15,000 tanks. The Soviets felt such a high number of tanks was necessary (so they say) because of erroneous intelligence reports ascribing nearly as high amounts of tanks to other European powers.

With a mass of tanks to deal with, the Soviets helped to pioneer the development of mechanized formations, organ-

izing a number of mechanized corps by 1935. They also utilized the timely opportunity of the Spanish Civil War to test their tanks and tactics, and came to the conclusion that tanks should be distributed among the rifle divisions as direct infantry support. The great success of the Wehrmacht's massed panzers in Poland and France came as a distinct surprise to the Soviet military planners and caused them to reconsider a reorganization of their mechanized forces.

In the summer of 1940, the People's Commissariat for Defense decided to return to the previous conception of massed tanks, and began the formation of nine new mechanized corps along with "many independent tank and motorized rifle divisions." Instead of the 500 or so tanks of the previous corps, the 1940 version wielded no fewer than 1,025 tanks each under the proposed tables of organization. Each mechanized corps consisted of two tank divisions and one motorized rifle division, organized as follows:



In early 1941, it was decided to organize another twenty mechanized corps out of the previously independent tank and motorized rifle divisions and newly organized formations. In addition, two other independent tank and seven independent motorized rifle divisions were created. The majority of the corps were formed in the period March-June 1941, and by June the Red Army had a total of 60 tank divisions (58 in the 29 mechanized corps) and 36 motorized rifle divisions (29 in the 29 mechanized corps).

In practice the state of the Red Army's 96 mechanized divisions was not so neat. First of all, the Soviet tank strength in 1940 consisted of a large number of independent light tank battalions attached to the rifle divisions (T-26 tanks), light tank battalions attached to the cavalry divisions (BT-5 and BT-7 "light tanks"), mechanized

brigades (T-28 medium tanks) and a few heavy tank brigades (KV and T-35 heavy tanks). As the mechanized corps were created, the smaller independent units were parcelled out among the individual corps with little regard to tables of organization. The Red Army had great difficulty in providing trained staffs for the higher headquarters, regiments and above.

The principal obstacle entailed in the organization of the mechanized corps concerned the ability of the Red Army to provide tanks for the units. As Marshal G. K. Zhukov said of the grandiose plans for 29 corps, "we failed to correctly estimate the capacity of our tank industry." The 96 mechanized divisions required about 32,000 tanks to come to full strength, including about 16,600 of the latest types (KV, T-34). However, in June 1941 Soviet tank strength aggregated about 22,700 tanks according to data furnished in several Soviet works. Far from the 16,600 modern tanks needed, only 243 KV-1, -2 and 115 T-34 were produced in all of 1940, followed in the first six months of 1941 by only an additional 393 KV and 1110 T-34. The approximate breakdown of tanks in June 1941 was:

HEAVY and MEDIUM TANKS (17%)

KV-1,-2	594
T-34	1225
T-35	20 (about)
Others	2020 (about; almost all T-28's,
Total	3860 with a very few SMK's and T-100's)

LIGHT TANKS (83%)

BT and T-26	17,025 (about) (75% of all Soviet tanks)
Others	1,815 (about; mostly T-38's, with a
Total	18,840 few hundred T-37's, a few hundred T-40's and about 50 T-50's).

Faced with the difficulty of equipping the mechanized corps, the People's Commissariat for Defense decided to allocate each mechanized corps a portion of its equipment. All 29 mechanized corps received some equipment, but none were brought up to full strength (although a few like the 5th Mechanized Corps were very close to it). Some mechanized corps (notably the 1st and 21st) were given hardly anything. Most of the corps had approximately half of their allotted tanks, although in most cases they were almost exclusively BT and T-26 light tanks (for example the 14th Mechanized Corps had 500 tanks, all T-26's).

The distribution of the mechanized corps as of June 22, 1941 is somewhat difficult to determine, however, it appears that 25 of the 29 mechanized corps were in the western part of the Soviet Union, with the remainder in the Far East and frontier military districts. The distribution of corps in the West was:

- A) Border Military Districts
 - 1) Leningrad Military District (later North Front) 1st and 10th Mechanized Corps
 - 2) Baltic Special Military District (later Northwest Front) 3rd and 12th Mechanized Corps