

## **DESIGN NOTES FOR TOLSTOYE WOODS**

**By  
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The battle for Tolstoye Woods was a four day battle that occurred about the same time as the battle of Prokhorovka, the difference being in that it took place on the western flank of the German southern thrust during the battle of Kursk. Although it contained less opposing forces than Prokhorovka, it was no less violent. East Front II has a scenario for the battle of Tolstoye Woods entitled “Birds of Prey”, by Jay Karamales, which deals with the third day of the battle. This scenario is the better one of Jay's two scenarios in East Front as it is certainly closer to the truth of what happened, compared to Jay's Prokhorovka scenario “Dead End on the Road to Kursk” which can be considered to be something of a bad joke. But like Jay's other scenario, “Birds of Prey” certainly has its faults and glaring errors, thus requiring correction. As I embarked on this mission, I found that there was more to the battle than just one scenario that needed correction. I felt that all four days of the battle had to be presented in individual scenarios and so was born this project.

### **The Mapsheet**

The original mapsheet in Jay's scenario is like the one in his other scenario in that the scale is 500 meters per hex. Of course, Jay neglected to tell anybody this and for years everybody presumed that it was the normal scale of 250 meters per hex. Thus, I had to remake the map to the proper scale. This was not hard as I used Jay's original map as a guide and also some topographical maps of the area contained in the Christopher Lawrence's book “Kursk: The Battle of Prokhorovka”. Of course, with the proper scale, I was able to add some more detail to the map and correct a couple of topographical errors that Jay made on his map. It certainly looks better than Jay's original. This map is used in all four scenarios.

### **The Order of Battle**

The original order of battle for Jay's scenario was nothing more than a bunch of units on each side, usually, battalions, regiments, and brigades, with no high controlling headquarters or organization. Not only that, there were no leaders for either side as well. So I discarded it and made a master order of battle file for the entire set of scenarios. Not only would this file contain the all units involved but have the major leaders for those units too. Then as I worked on each scenario I would use a copy of the master file, trimmed down and tailor-made for that particular scenario. So each scenario has its own order of battle, all based on the master file.

On the German side there were three major units involved, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Panzer Division, Panzergrenadier Division “Grossdeutschland”, and the 332<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division. These were under the command of the XLVIII Panzer Corps. Now the 332<sup>nd</sup> was normally under command of the LII Army Corps, but from the beginning of the second day of battle it was reassigned to the Panzer Corps to insure easier coordination between it and the other two divisions. There was also some corps level artillery units which supported the Germans from the second day of the battle on forward. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Panzer and Grossdeutschland both had been in combat for a week and were somewhat reduce, especially in their tank strength. The 332<sup>nd</sup> was coming into the battle fresh though.

On the Russian side there are six major units. The 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Corps, the 6<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps, the 10<sup>th</sup>

Tank Corps, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mechanized Corps, the 219<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division, and the 184<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division. During the battle the three tank corps and the mechanized corps were under command of the Russian 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Army, although two of them were previously serving under other commands. The two rifle divisions both came from the Russian 40<sup>th</sup> Army and were assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Army for better coordination. The 10<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps was minus its 11<sup>th</sup> Motorized Rifle Brigade, which was over in the Prokhorovka area, but otherwise was close to full strength. The 6<sup>th</sup> Tank Corps came into the battle on the second day and it was much reduced due to being in combat for the previous week, although it had been heavily reinforced with artillery assets from the 6<sup>th</sup> Guards Army. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Mechanized Corps only sent in the elements of two brigades on the third day of the battle and these were reduced due to being in combat in previous week as well. The 5<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Corps was even further reduced due to previous combat and only makes an appearance in the first scenario. The two rifle divisions came into the battle fresh and at full strength.

## **The Scenarios**

There are four scenarios, one for each day of the battle. The weather over the four days of battle was mostly rainy with periods of no rain, but still cloudy. The ground conditions were mostly soft, although on the last day the ground became muddy due to all the rain that had fallen in the area over the previous week. Although the scenarios are 40 to 50 turns long, in truth the battles each day lasted far longer usually 60 to 70 turns. But these longer times would include lulls in the battle where units would stop and regroup before moving on. Since the Campaign System's six minute turns do not account for this, I shrunk the game length down to the actual time of combat and movement in each scenario. In all of the scenarios, there are units that are frozen in place at the beginning of the game. In the first three scenarios there are release turns for some of them. These reflect the relative times within the scenarios moved that these units first moved out. Those units without release times are essentially on defense missions and would only be released if attacked. There are reinforcements in the first three scenarios of the set. Yet only in the first scenario is there an exit hex and it is Russian. The Germans have airstrikes in all four scenarios while the Russians only have them in the first.

It should be remembered that during this four day battle, the Germans needed to capture Tolstoye Woods in order to secure the left flank of the German southern thrust during the Kursk campaign. It was just their unfortunate luck on the first day to have a gap in the line at the exact spot that the Russians had chosen to attack. But it was stupidity on the German's part on the first day to withdraw back towards Verkhopen'ye after capturing Hill 258.3. On the second day they had to capture the hill all over again, only this time they kept it as it would serve as a springboard into Tolstoye Woods during the next day. Not only that, the Germans also tried to envelop the woods, but came up short. On the third day the actual battle for the woods occurred with the Germans only managing to get a few footholds in it. But during the night the Russians evacuated the woods under the cover of a thunderstorm, so on the fourth day the Germans captured the woods and secured their western flank. But the fighting caused northern thrust towards Oboyan be halted while it was resolved, and by the time that it was the whole operation had been canceled.