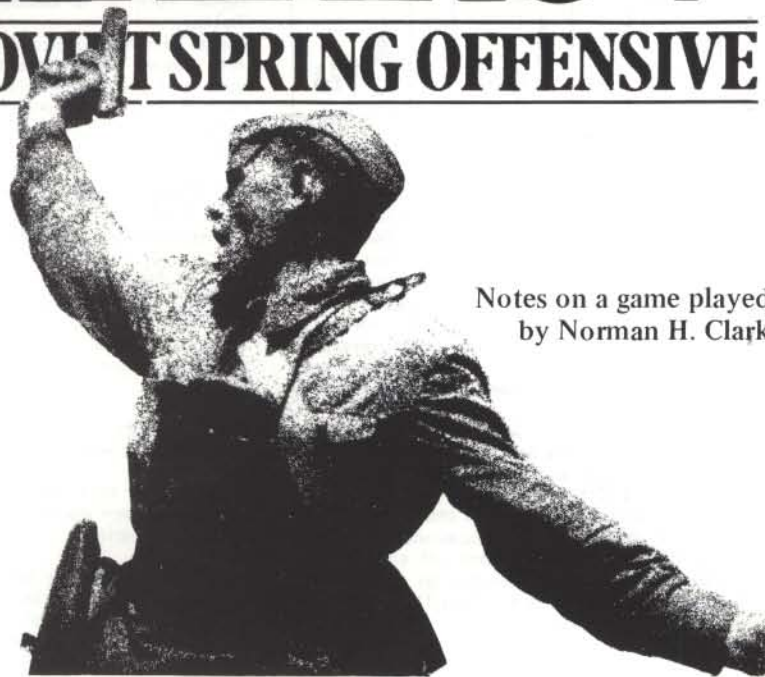


# KHARKOV

## THE SOVIET SPRING OFFENSIVE



Notes on a game played  
by Norman H. Clark

This is a report on a recent game of **Kharkov**, included in issue 68 of S&T. It is a ten-turn brigade/divisional level simulation of the Spring 1942 Soviet strategic offensive. Each game turn equals one day of real time; each hex equals 6.9 kilometers.

The article has been divided into 3 sections; first the pre-game and set-up period, next the first to fourth game turns (GTs) and thirdly the fifth to ninth game turns.

### PRE-GAME AND SET-UP.

The players, after examining the map, counters and rules, will find that it is a game of two parts. In the first five moves the Soviet player will have the upper hand, it is during this period that he must gain victory points by killing German units and capturing cities. In the second half of the game the German player, with the entry of a large group of reinforcements, will attempt to recover losses, retake captured towns and destroy enough units to give him victory.

The set-up itself is semi-fixed; that is, the front line is divided into zones containing fixed numbers of units but within these zones deployment is generally up to the individual player.

### GERMAN SET-UP

#### Area 1-2:

The German can split up divisions into three regiments. However he must conform to rules 5.14



FIG 1 Set up for German forces between points 1 & 3

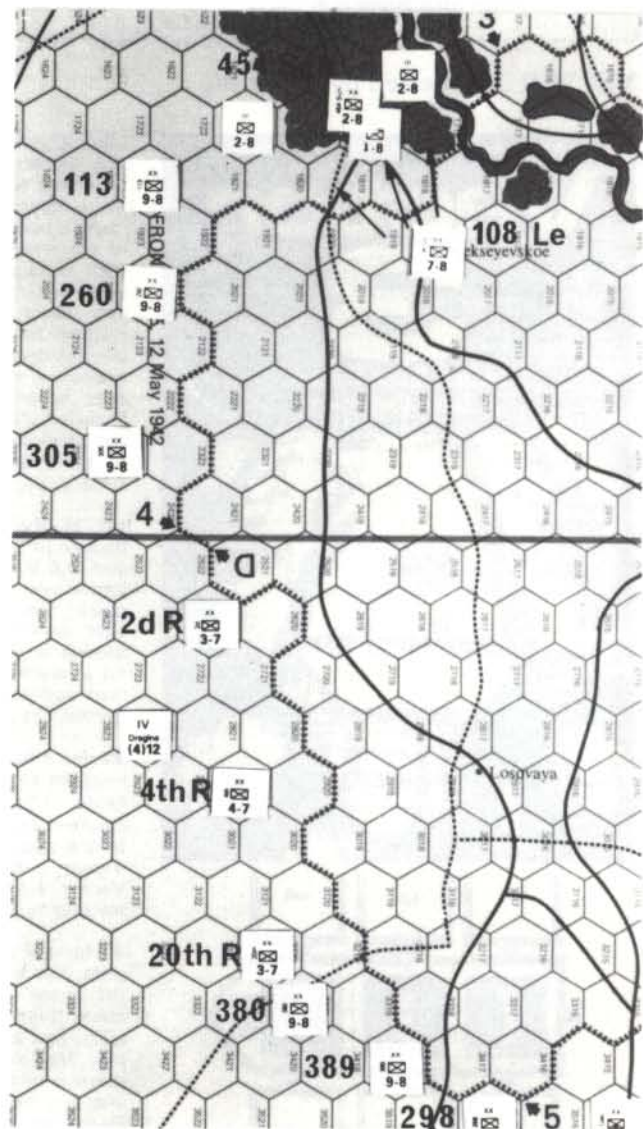


FIG 2 Set up for German forces between points 3 & 5



and 5.15 — he must be within one hex of the start-line or control that line with his zones of control. The chosen set-up is shown in figure 1. Why this particular distribution? His Russian opponent will deploy 7 infantry divisions and 2 tank brigades here so the German is relatively weak. More importantly, the front is very close to Kharkov which is worth a large number of victory points. The divisions in open country have been kept complete with the hope that they will be able to retire to the forests around Kharkov and thus increase their defensive strengths. The division split into regiments allows the German player to deploy a regiment in Kharkov, this can be changed into a strongpoint making it more difficult to dislodge, while the other two regiments are placed in good defensive terrain.

### Area 2 - 3:

Set-up shown in figure 1. This is a bad position, being a salient with a major river cutting across its base. It is saved by the two mobile formations available to the German player and the fact that the Russians opposite are fairly weak. Also, the area to the south and west of Alekseyevskoe seems a better place to attack for the Russian than here where there is forest to fight through and the Donets river. The Panzer divisions are therefore put on the shoulders of the salient in the hope of retreating the infantry between them out of the salient to reinforce Kharkov.

### Area 3 - 4:

Set-up shown in figure 2. To the south of area 3 - 4 is the Green Line. This is the north/south sector boundary line and units to the south of it remain unactivated until attacked or outflanked. Thus the German commander cannot depend upon help from the south. Further, taking into account the openness of the terrain and the strength of his opponent, he must expect attacks in this sector. If this front is ruptured it is a long retreat to the next secure line and in retreating one must become weaker from continuing losses and trying to cover an extended front. Also, a retreat will tend to be towards a Soviet target, Poltava, or it will uncover Kharkov to an assault from the south. The set-up uses the forests to the north with the intention of pulling back in front of any Soviet advance. If the Russian then advances too far the German player can cut him off from supply and/or try to pull him south over the Green Line.

### Area 4 - 5:

Set-up shown in figure 2. Below the Green Line the Germans cannot attack until GT5 or until activated. Here again there is a weak position with no terrain features to help in defence and an area that includes a Rumanian Corps which is slower and less effective than the German. This may be too tempting for the Russian player. However, the German player decides not to reinforce what he sees as a certain failure and concentrates the German units in the south. This is for two reasons.

First, the Rumanian Corps will, he thinks, break and he doesn't want to be carried away with it and secondly, he wants to retain contact with area 5 - 6. It is here that the German IV Corps enters to be used in the counterattack. If he allows a break between areas 4 - 5 and 5 - 6 to occur then his reserves will be dispersed fighting their way onto the map.

### Area 5 - 6:

Set-up shown in figure 3. This is probably the strongest German sector both in numbers and types of unit and has open ground suited to armour. This is the only area in which the German commander can contemplate attacking — once activated — by driving north and cutting off any Russian advance across his front.

### Area 6 - 7:

Set-up shown in figure 3. The fairly strong position along the river Donets is used as much as possible, a fairly weak centre is kept close to the reserves at 3506 in case it needs bolstering.

## OVERVIEW

With the morale bonuses etc. that the Soviet player gets in the first few turns the German commander is wary of committing units too soon only to see them badly cut up. At the same time the Russian commander can make a lot of points by breaking the centre. On balance the German player decides to try to hold on until GT 5 when he can launch an armoured attack from the south well into the Soviet rear areas.

## RUSSIAN SET-UP AND OVERVIEW.

The Russian set-up on the other hand is simplified — if that word can be used — by the fact that he does not know the value of his units and therefore can only assign missions to groups of units. He knows the strengths of the three Guards units though so deploys them thus: 1st. Guards — 0514; 13th. Guards — 28th. Army Reserve and 14th. Guards to the 9th. Army Reserve. (A full Russian layout appears at the end of this article).

The Russian Commander decides to use his armies thus: 28th. and 6th. will attack Kharkov from the north and south respectively and he will commit most of his reserves here. In the south, 57th. Army will activate and attack the weak Rumanian Corps threatening Poltava and Dnepropetorsk. With that lot on his plate the German player will find that he cannot hold everything — that is the aim!

However, as an aside, the Soviet player also notices rule 6.54 which states that if he cannot control the front line south of the green line then the German units will activate. It appears therefore that a German unit from the north could attack southwards and thus release the southern German flank. Both commanders also note rule 10.33 which refers to two further rules that cannot be found — such are the problems sent to try us! However, on with the game.

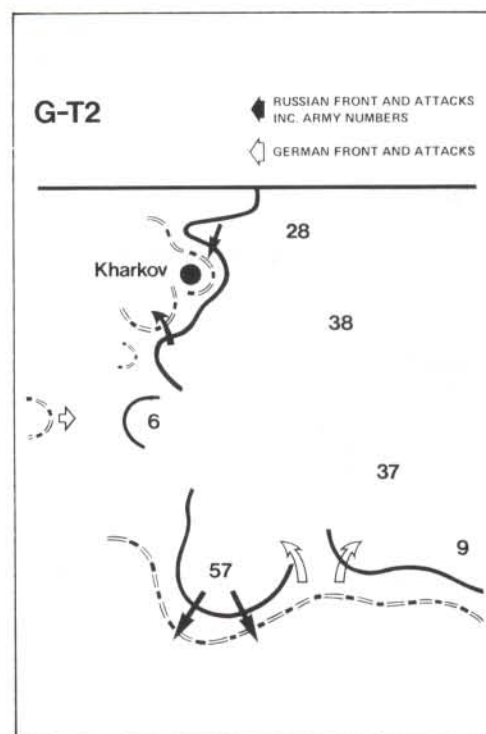
## GAME TURNS 1 - 4.

Taking advantage of the Russian infiltration rules 6th. and 28th. Armies make good progress but are slowed by the Axis armour. This allows 3 German regiments to occupy Kharkov and begin to fortify it. However GT 2 sees the map split into two areas of major action. In the north a dour slugging match develops around Kharkov. In the centre the German units are destroyed while in the south 57th Army becomes involved in a fluid contest for ground.

In the north the pincers continue to advance but, horrors, the Russian success goes to Stavka's head and an armoured group heads for Poltava. This draws off 6th. Army HQ and halts the southern pincer advancing on Kharkov. In spite of this drawback and with air support the Russians are near to the outskirts of Kharkov by GT 4 and poised to launch a major attack.

In the centre there is only silence.

In the south all is movement and confusion. The Rumanians, to the Germans surprise, stand and allow a counter attack in GTs 2 - 3 — a drive to the north threatens to separate 57th. Army from the neighbouring 37th. and 9th. Armies. This German wedge is to be a continuing source of embarrassment to the Russian since it refuses to be reduced. While 14th. Panzer takes such a beating that it is left with only an armoured regiment — which, incidentally, retreats to save victory points — 57th. Army find that portions are chewed off and cut up. Indeed, by GT 4 reinforcements which had been assigned by Stavka to take Kharkov are being used in the south to save 57th. Army. At the end of GT 4 the accumulated victory points are: Russian 20 — German 18.



## GAME TURNS 5 - 9.

On GT 5, May 16th., bells ring in the Kremlin — Kharkov is taken. But back on the ground it is not quite so clear cut; indeed, one city hex has fallen but the Germans are trying to ensure that it will not be held for long. The northern sector continues to be a series of short but sharp contacts in the heavily wooded area around Kharkov. As the game turns go by however German counter pressure builds up and by GT 8 Kharkov is "re-iberated".

In the centre the German player makes half-hearted attempts to re-construct a line but with his hands full in both north and south a 1-8 regiment is the best he is prepared to do.

In the south meanwhile, with the peak being reached in German air power and Operation Fridericus underway, the German IV Corps strikes

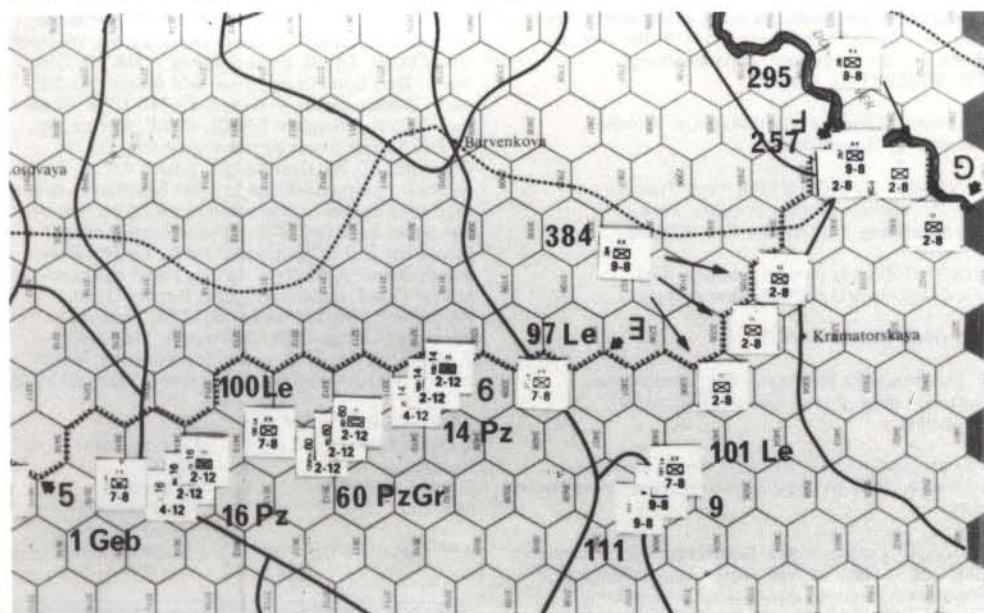
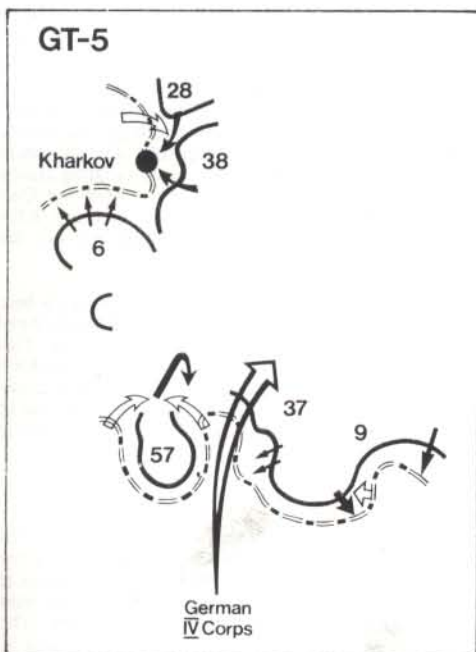


FIG 3 Set up positions between points 5 & 6





north past the remnants of the 57th. Army, its HQ overrun and displaced, to get behind 37th. and 9th. Armies. In reply, in GT's 6 & 7 the Russian commander pulls back units and forms a solid line. The Russians are still ahead in Victory Points and Stavka decides to hold tight, stay ahead in VP's and win out in the long run. However its not going to be that easy — IV Corps continues its drive led by 3 armoured divisions which cross the Donets and begin to roll up the Russian line. The final turns see the 6th. Army diverted southward to halt this drive but its not enough and by GT 10 the Germans come out with a marginal victory.

### WITH HINDSIGHT.

Three schools of thought appear in this game: 1) a Russian drive in the north, 2) in the centre and 3) in the south. In effect the Russian player chooses the ground for the battle and he must use this to its maximum. He must use the first four turns to make his fortune in whatever manner he chooses but diversions of any sort are fatal. Indeed the initial feeling of being in charge of a horde of supermen must be tempered, its too easy to forget that this Russian high will be short lived. The German, as a consequence of this, must not give up the game when all about him do. What he must do is guard his strong mechanised units which can then be used to cut off Russian units during the mechanised movement phase. Russian HQs are also

a weakness and their limited range allows the German commander to split the Russian up into individual armies which can then be attacked peacefully.

This is a good balanced game but most commanders must realise that they will have a good and bad half; the winner will make the best of his chances and minimise his opponents. More importantly he will know when the tide is turning.

### RUSSIAN INITIAL DEPLOYMENT.

(for the solo gamer)

0212 - 2 Inf; 0408 - 28th. Army reserve; 0514 - 2 Armour and 28th. Army HQ; 0713 - 2 Inf; 0714 - 2 Inf; 0911 - 1 Inf; 1509 - 1 Inf; 1616 - 1 Inf; 1711 - 1 Inf; 1715 - 1 Inf; 1808 - 1 Armd. and 38th Army HQ; 1813 - 1 Inf. & 1 Cav; 1816 - 1 Inf; 1912 - 1 Inf; 2018 - 1 Inf; 2020 - 1 Inf; 2119 - 6th. Army HQ; 2118 - 1 Armd; 2214 - 6th. Army Reserve; 2321 - 1 Inf; 2501 - 9th Army HQ & 9th. Army Reserve; 2520 - 2 Armd; 2606 - 37th. Army HQ; 2701 - 3 Armd; 2702 - 1 Armd; 2704 - 2 Inf; 2719 - 1 Armd; 2801 - 1 Inf; 2802 - 2 Inf; 2901 - 3 Inf; 2905 - 1 Inf; 3016 - 57th. Army HQ & 57th. Army Reserve; 3018 - 3 Cav; 3106 - 2 Inf; 3108 - 1 Inf; 3110 - 1 Inf; 3112 - 1 Inf; 3114 - 1 Inf; 3217 - 1 Inf; 3317 - 1 Inf.

# Contact!

Contact entries will appear twice and will then automatically lapse. Please ensure that you contact me in good time if you want to continue or change your entry. An \* before an insert signifies the first appearance and as such will automatically appear in issue 23; all others will lapse after this issue.

\* **BLANTYRE BOARD WARGAMES CLUB** in Elizabeth Scott Community Centre, Logan Street, Blantyre, Glasgow. 1st & 3rd Sat. every month. Contact Ian Mackay (Cumbernauld 28642).

**GOD (GAMERS OF DORSET)**, new members welcomed. Contact Ron Kill, 14, Lower Golf Links Road, Broadstone, Dorset. Tel: Broadstone 693389

\* **CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY WARGAMES CLUB.** Board and figures wargames. Meet weekly in Christ's. Contact President, Adam Huby (Christ's), Cambridge for details.

**CARTERTON WARGAMERS CLUB** meets at the Focal Centre every Sunday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. Contact S. Bainbridge, 23, Swinbrook Road, Carterton, Oxfordshire OX8 8DU.

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\* **CROYDON WARGAMES GROUP.** Meets alternate Tuesdays in South Croydon. Sec: G.W. Fabron, 95 Churchill Rd, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 6HF.

**BARAD-DUR DUNGEONEERING SOCIETY.** Open to anyone playing SF/F role playing games, especially D&D. Also postal D&D games. Interested? — Contact Michael Stoner, 29 Parkway, Dorking, Surrey or phone Dorking 87253 (SAE appreciated if reply wanted).

**EALING GAMES GROUP,** The Northfield Community Centre, 71/73 Northcroft Road, Ealing, London W13. (Fourth Sunday every month from 1.30 p.m. — 9.30 p.m. 01-574 2709).

**KIRKLEES MILITARY MODELLING AND GAMING SOCIETY** meets in an enormous room at **Huddersfield Sports Centre** (which sells BEER!) every Monday at 7.30 p.m. We have 100 members (mostly D&D) and are growing! We cover: D&D, Traveller etc. Table topping Board gaming. Military modelling and Militaria.

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\* **KENT WARGAMERS ASSOCIATION.** Forming according to prospective members wishes. Send SAE for particulars to M.A. Blundell, 56, Yeoman Lane, Bearsten, Maidstone, Kent. Let us know your views on what the Association should do.

\* **SOUTH WALES WARGAMES FEDERATION** — Contact R.B. Walker, 10, Wildbrook Close, Taibach, Port Talbot, PT 87954.

David Read, 20, Radnor Gardens, Twickenham, Middx. Tel: 01-892-9622.

### OVERSEAS

**JUBULA WARGAMERS** meet every Wed. 7.30 p.m. at Jubula Club, corner of Athlone Ave. & Anne St., Sandringham, Johannesburg. Tel: 6095987 for details.

B.J.Ward, 2 Nadiva, Earls Avenue, Windsor, Handburg, South Africa.

**WINDSOR WARGAMERS** meet Tuesdays at The Recreation Centre, Windsor Park, Johannesburg. For details Tel: 6095987.

VIBG/URBS c/o Arturo Lorio, 474 Via Gregorio VII, 00165 Roma, Italy.

### OPPONENTS WANTED

P. Stanton, 227 Somerton Rd., Brompton, Bolton, Lancs. Postal games of Airforce/Dauntless.

\* Mick Godwin, 42, Hellicoe Road, Leicester, LE5 4FN. Play-by-mail or face to face Third Reich only.

P. Fry, 17 Fullers Road, South Woodford, London E18 20B — Nap. at War, Borodino, Barbarossa, Stalingrad, Cassino, Antietam, Decline & Fall. Tel: 01-505-0503 (Home) 01-633-6981 (office).

\* **War in Europe — Campaign Game '39.** Experienced monomaniacs needed to play one weekend a month. Free deployment and most optional rules. Game to be played in the London area. Contact Keith Jacques, 7, Adolphus Road, Finsbury Park, London N4.

\* **Andrew Davidson, 2, Abbot's Garth, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorks, YO12 4HS.** Wishes to contact other board-gamers in Scarborough Area.

\* **Tim Stratton, Appledore, West Keal, Spilsby, Lincs PE23 4BE** — also opponents in Loughborough & Peterborough areas.

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**FOR SALE:** The following SPI boardgames, boxed and in mint condition: Seelowe, Panzer 44, Sinai — £3.50 each; Sorcerer — £4. Andrew Jones, 22, Snydale Road, Normanton, West Yorkshire, WF6 1NT.

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