

Strategic overview

Turn 8: Strategic Considerations

This turn, Sparkley has posted his turn two report before sending the turn back to me. In this report he has laid out his reasons for bombing the German Panzers (to cause fatigue and thus limit the movement of the Panzers on the coming turn). I find that the reasoning does not stick, and I have debated with myself on whether to post a reply in Sparkley's thread. I decided not to, as the reasoning is based on information on how much fuel the German Panzers receive. Instead, I will post my reasoning here, and Sparkley will have to wait for a few turns before reading it.

First, a little info on fuel: In this game, the amount of fuel that reaches the Panzers is severely limited. For instance, at AGC I have a Panzer Division that is 6MP and 3 hexes from a railhead. The HQ of the division is adjacent and at a distance of 4MP and 2 hexes from a railhead. Yet the Panzer has received exactly 50% of its fuel requirements this turn.

Second, calculating the movement of a Panzer Division. The division has a base of 50MP, which is reduced by the fatigue level divided by 10. Let us assume a maximum fatigue of 100, giving a reduction of 10MP, which means the Panzer has 40MP left. Then, the Panzer will do two leader checks (Initiative and Administration) and reduce the MP for each failed check. Being Germans, chances are that the Panzer will certainly pass one of the checks, but let us assume it fails both. This will leave it with 25 MP (rounded down). Finally, the division will check to see if it has enough fuel to move its allotment and reduce the MP total if not.

The above mentioned Panzer Division has received 50% of its requirement, which is exactly the 25 MP it has left, so even if it had a fatigue level of 100 and had failed both leader checks, it would still not get its MP's reduced. With divisions being farther from the railheads receiving less fuel, this will just compound the issue. Consequently, the deciding factor on Panzer movement (in this game) is entirely the fuel it receives and Sparkley's reason for bombing the Panzers (to reduce Panzer MP) does not add up. It might still be a good idea in order to reduce combat effectiveness, but that is another discussion.

I myself is also making plenty of mistakes. I have noticed that sticking my level bombers on one airfield is a bad idea, as the ground personnel is simply not capable of keeping them functioning. Thus, I often start the turn with several bombers being damaged. Nothing for it but to admit the mistake, and transfer units onto another airfield.

In the air, the Axis air forces are now apparently numerically larger than the opposing Soviets. I doubt that will last.

Production wise, I am now producing the Ju-87D, with its longer range and bigger payload, which is quite a nice thing. I have also begun the production of the Me 210A-1, which I will probably end up using as an escort fighter.

The North



Situational assessment

In the north, the Soviets have sent a large force into the area south of Tallinn. I am a little unsure of whether the purpose is to counterattack the German flank, or if it is to distract German Panzers from the fighting at Pskov (or maybe a bit of both). In any case, I do not feel particularly threatened by the move.

At Pskov itself, the Soviets have done a series of counterattacks north of the city, and displaced one Panzer Division in a massive attack encompassing nine Rifle Divisions. Even with nine divisions and Zhukov as the commander, the attack odds did not end up with a huge advantage for the Soviets.

Axis Forces Defending (W): XXXXI Panzer Corps 1st Panzer Division (305) II/59th Howitzer Battalion (1) 272nd Mot. Flk Bn (1) 761st LW SP Lt Flk Bn (2) 702nd SP Inf Gun Coy (0)	< 3 of 7 > 73/27 - Light Woods - Clear Turn: 7 1941-07-31 Forces Engaged DEF: men 16663, art 178, afv 197 DAM: men 131, art 10, afv 6 LOST: men 352, art 7, afv 9 DEF: flt 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: flt 0, bmr 0, utl 0 ATK: men 131009, art 1678, afv 110 DAM: men 586, art 11, afv 4 LOST: men 971, art 9, afv 2 ATK: flt 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: flt 0, bmr 0, utl 0 1st Panzer Division RETREATED		Soviet Forces Attacking: 11th Army -10% 117th Rifle Division (26) 166th Rifle Division (29) 124th Howitzer Regiment (1) 8th Army 154th Rifle Division (28) R 111th Rifle Division (26) 149th Rifle Division (28)
	CV: 309->387.2 Fort: 0.04->0.00 Comm HQ: XXXXI Panzer Corps G Georg-Hans Reinhardt	Show Details Odds 2.40 : 1 Exit	CV: 300->929.8 Eng Val: 8 Comm HQ: 8th Army GA Georgy Zhukov
			[v]

The Soviets have left a line of three stacked divisions at the German lines with an almost empty second row of defense and finally a thinly held third line. It is obvious that the Soviets intend to fight on with any units pushed back from the first line. It seems to me that the strength of the Soviet units in the area is waning, but then again, I have felt this way for two or three turns by now.

In the air, the Soviet Air Force consist mainly of I-Type Fighters with SB-2's and some IL-2's to fill up the ranks. While I have, by now, destroyed most of the Soviet Su-2's and I-153BS's, the production of IL-2's is picking up, and I will have to contend with those aircraft from now on.

Planning

This turn, I will look to cut the rail link to the Soviet units south of Tallinn if possible. A Panzer strike directly north along the west side of Lake Peipus will encounter no more than two Soviet counters before hitting the all important rail line. If such an attack can be done using only one Panzer Division, that will increase the MP range of the Soviets back to the important battle at Pskov, while also increasing somewhat the MP range to the Soviet supply grid ever so slightly. If I can tie down these forces south of Tallinn for a couple of turns, the attacks at Pskov will have a smaller number of Soviet Rifle Divisions to contend with. I will not use many Panzers in such an attack however.

In order to cover the northern flank of the Pskov attack, I will pull up the northernmost Infantry Corps of the 16th Army. Over the following turns, these forces will also be charged with clearing the area around Talinn, should the Soviets decide to keep forces in the area.

At Pskov, I will basically attack along the rail line. Doing so will extend the front, forcing the soviets to thin their lines while also giving the Germans more room to maneuver for the attacks. I have plenty of strong divisions in the area, and even have several Pioneer units and StuG battallions attached to the HQ's in the area.

In the air, I will begin using my strategic recon aircraft in an attempt to "tire" the Soviet fighters this turn. The Soviets often send interceptors against my recon aircraft, and if I can tire them out before my main bombers arrive on the scene, that will be a blessing. For now, I will use my Ju 88D-1's and my Bf 110 recons for this.

Execution

The initial movement of infantry into position south of Talinn revealed a series of hitherto unknown Soviet units. Following up with an extra series of recon missions it quickly became clear that any Panzer attempt to reach the Gulf of Finland would be in vain, unless I committed large resources. Consequently, I simply moved my Infantry Divisions into place and will do nothing else in this sector this turn.

At Pskov, my initial bombing attacks against the forward Soviet units had little impact in the way of losses, but did inflict some disruption which must have turned into fatigue before my main attacks. The attacks on the first Soviet lines were all conducted by the 3rd Panzer Group, and succeeded in punching the Soviets back over a front three hexes wide.

Axis Forces Attacking: XXXX Panzer Corps -6% 20th Panzer Division (126) R 14th Motorized Division (101) 51st Werfer Regiment (3) II/70th Artillery Battalion (1) 733rd Howitzer Battalion (1) 620th Gun Battalion (1) 605th SP Lt Flk Bn (6) [v]		1 of 4 > 75,28 - Clear - Clear Turn:8 1941-08-07 Forces Engaged ATK: men 131412, art 1494, afv 549 DAM: men 367, art 14, afv 14 LOST: men 513, art 17, afv 7 ATK: flr 134, bmr 113, utl 0 LOST: flr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 24th Tank Division RETREATED 91st Rifle Division RETREATED 110th Rifle Division RETREATED Odds 9.03 : 1 Show Details Exit		Soviet Forces Defending: 8th Army 24th Tank Division (158) 103rd Howitzer Regiment (0) 331st Howitzer Regiment (1) 429th Howitzer Regiment (1) 614th Crps Art Rgt (1) 27th Army -10% 110th Rifle Division (87) [v] CV: 362->243.1 Fort: 1.92->0.00 Comm HQ: 8th Army GA Georgy Zhukov	
CV: 911->2195.8 Eng Val: 30 Comm HQ: LVII Panzer Corps G Adolf Kuntzen					

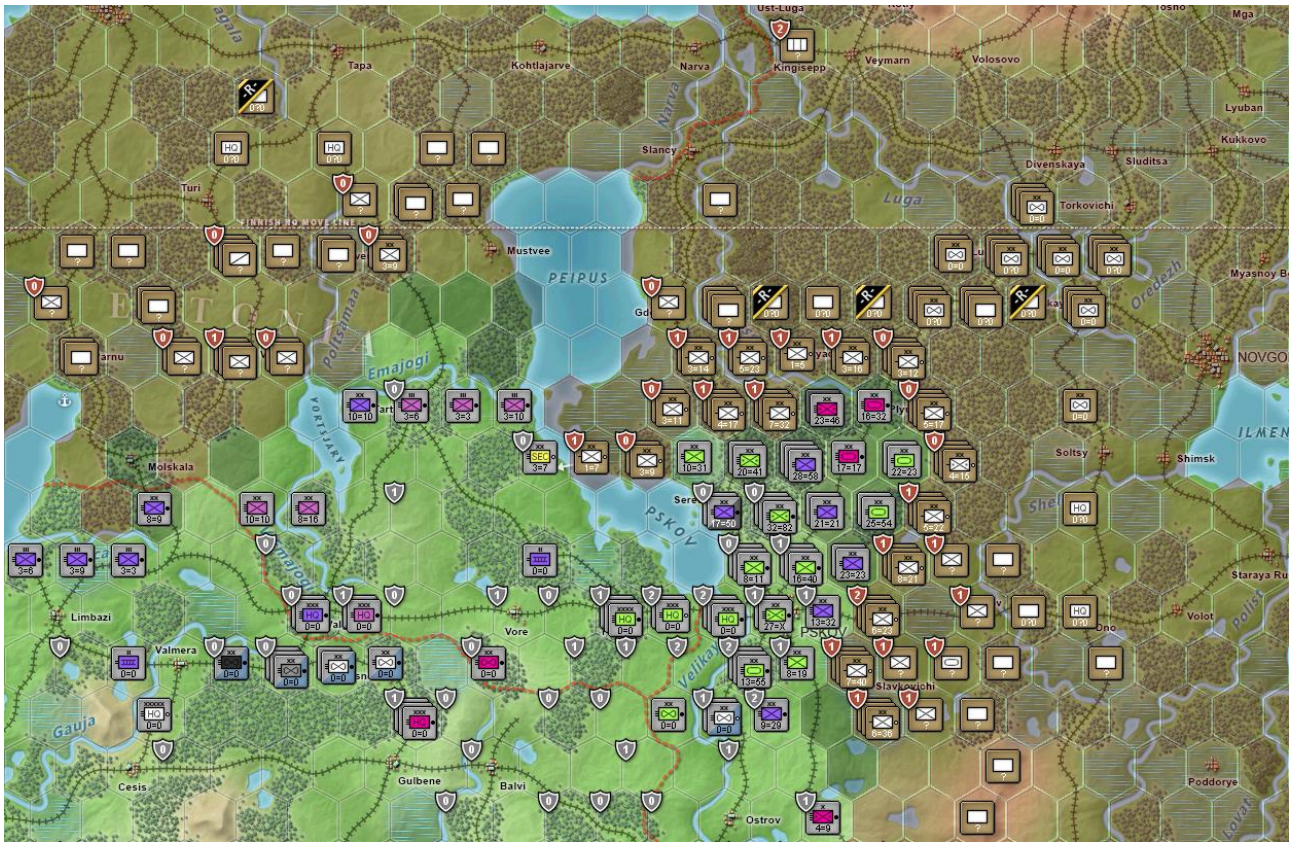
For the attacks on the second Soviet line (now mainly occupied with Soviet units that had been forced to retreat from the first line), I moved in the 18th Army Infantry Divisions into the attack. After another three wins, I had pushed the Soviets back another three hexes, but with routs caused solely by not having a hew to retreat to.

Axis Forces Attacking: XXVI Corps 291st Infantry Division (84) 290th Infantry Division (102) 436th Gun Battalion (0) 563rd Panzerjager Battalion (1) 207th Pioneer Battalion (7) 45th Pioneer Battalion (10) 5th Machine Gun Battalion (6) [v]		1 of 175,27 - Clear - ClearTurn:8 1941-08-07 Forces Engaged ATK: men 92280, art 1137, afv 41 DAM: men 202, art 8, afv 0 LOST: men 206, art 4, afv 0 ATK: flr 75, bmr 122, utl 0 LOST: flr 0, bmr 1, utl 0 24th Tank Division ROUTED 163rd Motorized Division RETREATED 187th Rifle Division ROUTED Show DetailsOdds 9.35 : 1Exit		Soviet Forces Defending: 8th Army 24th Tank Division (78) 163rd Motorized Division (93) 103rd Howitzer Regiment (0) 429th Howitzer Regiment (1) 448th Crps Art Rgt (0) 614th Crps Art Rgt (1) 28th Crps Art Rgt (1) [v] CV: 231->133.1Fort: 1.68->0.00 Comm HQ: 8th Army GA Georgy Zhukov	
CV: 523->1244.8Eng Val: 20 Comm HQ: XXVI Corps G Albert Wodrig					

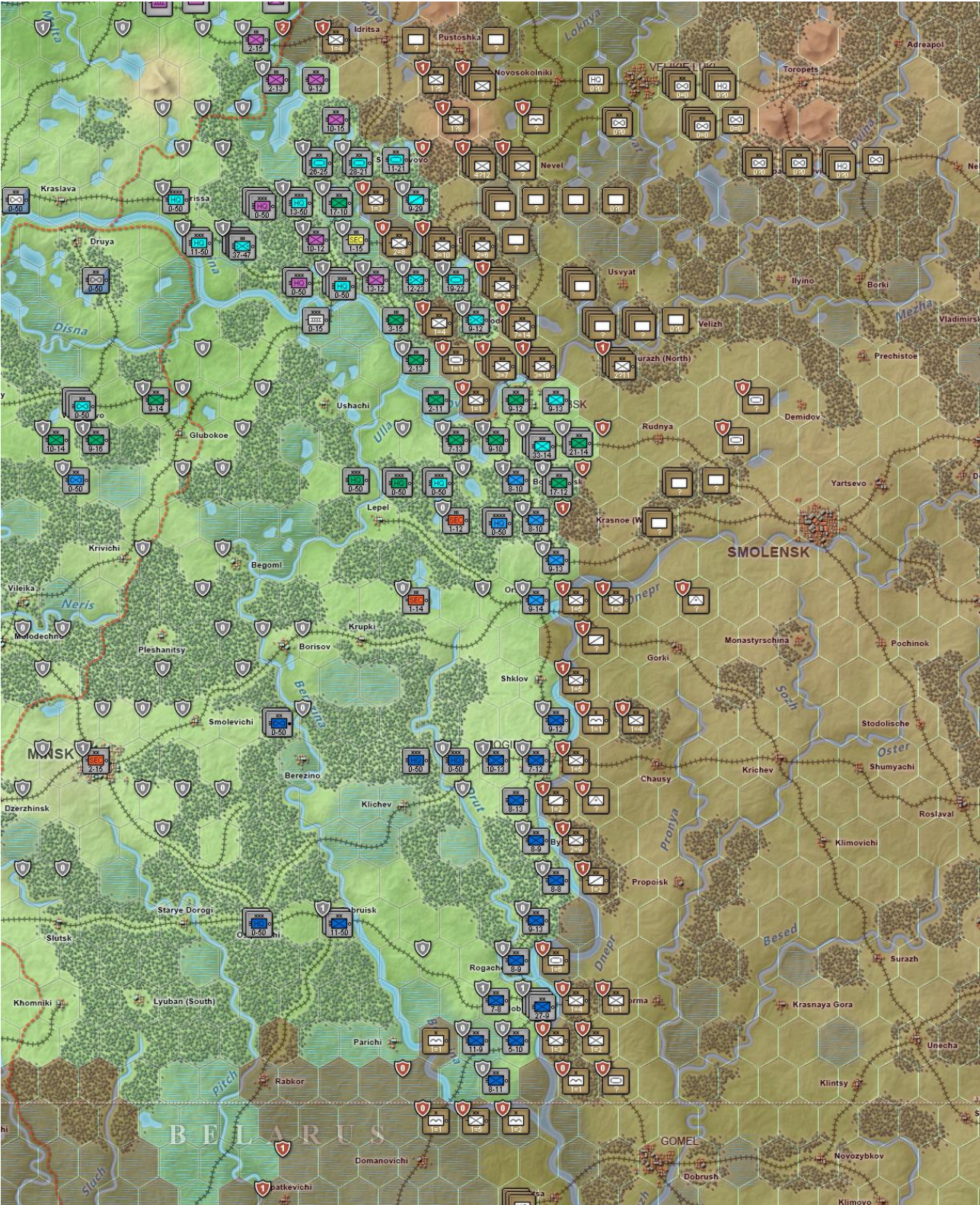
Finally, the last two attacks were done by the 4th Panzer Group, pushing the Soviets back from another two hexes. Once again, it was slow going, with the Soviets retreating rather than routing. At this stage, the Soviet air response had obviously been spent (and my own weren't looking to good either). The good news are that it seems I am finally pushing through the lines of Soviet fortifications, and I am now facing several hexes where the fortification level is not yet up to lvl one (66%, 78% and 54%). I think (as I have done for a few turns now) that the Soviets will soon have to pull back towards the Luga, as their frontline is becoming longer and longer and less and less fortified.

Axis Forces Attacking: LVI Panzer Corps 8th Panzer Division (184) Totenkopf SS Mot. Div (128) 3rd Motorized Division (83) II/61st Artillery Battalion (1) 92nd LW SP Lt Flk Bn (7) 274th Mot. Flk Bn (1) 276th Mot. Flk Bn (1) [v]		1 of 3 > 76,26 - Light Woods(Plyussa) - Clear Turn:8 1941-08-07 Forces Engaged ATK: men 50584, art 576, afv 411 DAM: men 241, art 10, afv 19 LOST: men 355, art 6, afv 11 ATK: flr 20, bmr 64, utl 0 LOST: flr 0, bmr 1, utl 0 DEF: men 36346, art 459, afv 32 DAM: men 75, art 4, afv 0 LOST: men 1436, art 31, afv 0 DEF: flr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: flr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		Soviet Forces Defending: 8th Army 111th Rifle Division (70) 51st Rifle Division (72) 331st Howitzer Regiment (1) 448th Crps Art Rgt (0) 28th Crps Art Rgt (1) 27th Army -10% 64th Rifle Division (72) [v]	
CV: 447->1332.0 Eng Val: 8 Comm HQ: LVI Panzer Corps G Erich von Manstein		Show Details Odds 2.69 : 1 Exit		CV: 217->494.5 Fort: 1.48->0.00 Comm HQ: 8th Army GA Georgy Zhukov	

Below is an image of the situation in the north, as I give the turn to Sparkley.



The Center



Situational Assessment

In the center, the fight for Vitebsk goes on. The Soviets have reconnected all the pockets with their main lines (as expected), but still have quite a few exposed divisions (as expected). I especially notice that the stack of three Rifle Divisions northwest of Vitebsk (the 3=7 stack) has no clear retreat path and will rout if beaten back, or else withdraw westwards into a pocket.

On my side, I have one more or less fresh Panzer Corps ready to strike forward in this area, as well as an interesting concentration of infantry in the area south of Vitbesk.

Further south, the Soviets have a weak line of mainly Rifle Divisions holding the Dnepr line. Even though my own infantry opposite is starved of MP (often having too few MP to even attack across the river), I should be able to cross the river in a few locations, and I might even be able to trap a few Soviet divisions with to few MP to pull back properly.

Planning

This turn, I will start by reestablishing the two pockets, hoping to push the 3=7 stack westwards and routing off part of the 2=6 stack at the northern pocket. After that I will move forward with the remaining infantry south of Vitebsk, hoping to create a possible future encirclement on the Soviet forces, while also trying a few infantry attacks north of the Soviet pockets. Depending on the success of this, I will either simply consolidate the pockets and do an HQBU on one Panzer Corps, og I will deploy the Panzers for further attacks.

At the Dnepr, I will launch some infantry attacks across the river, hoping to push across the river and prevent the orderly withdrawal of some Soviet Rifle Divisions. I will also use the local Ju-88 bombers to fly forward supplies to the divisions here that are getting starved.

Execution

The initial attack at Vitebsk unfortunately saw all Soviet divisions rout instead of pulling back in the wrong direction. I did inflict some rather nice casualties in the process though. Of not was the fact that the Soviets are now flying Pe-8's in combat support.

Axis Forces Attacking:		1 of 3 > 78,47 - Clear - Clear	Turn: 8 1941-08-07	Soviet Forces Defending:	
VIII Corps -6%		Forces Engaged			
28th Infantry Division (38)		ATK: men 52786, art 652, afv 5	DEF: men 37817, art 482, afv 15	29th Army	
II/44th Howitzer Battalion (0)		DAM: men 234, art 6, afv 0	DAM: men 193, art 11, afv 1	206th Rifle Division (28)	
861st Howitzer Battalion (0)		LOST: men 199, art 2, afv 0	LOST: men 5028, art 83, afv 6	260th Rifle Division (22)	
I/84th K3 Gun Battalion (0)		ATK: ftr 110, bmr 128, utl 0	DEF: ftr 33, bmr 12, utl 0	101st Crps Art Rgt (0)	
630th Pioneer Battalion (6)		LOST: ftr 2, bmr 0, utl 0	LOST: ftr 2, bmr 7, utl 0	283rd Crps Art Rgt (2)	
3rd Werfer Battalion (0)		260th Rifle Division ROUTED		3rd Army -30%	
V Corps		211th Rifle Division ROUTED		211th Rifle Division (17)	
[v]		206th Rifle Division ROUTED		301st Howitzer Regiment (0)	
CV: 144->478.2		Odds 4.65 : 1		CV: 70->102.8	
Eng Val: 8		Show Details		Fort: 1.02->0.00	
Comm HQ: V Corps		Exit		Comm HQ: 29th Army	
G Richard Ruoff				GL Ivan Maslennikov	

I then proceeded to clear a soviet Rifle Division from it's swamp hex, which turned out to be more than just a little annoying. This weak division withstood two full attacks by a German Infantry Division before finally shattering on the third attack. For some reason, the Soviet defenders of these marshes are really doing well.

Axis Forces Attacking: II Corps 294th Infantry Division (163) 526th Howitzer Battalion (1) 636th Howitzer Battalion (1) 809th Howitzer Battalion (1) 671st Pioneer Battalion (16) 2nd Werfer Battalion (1)		< 3 of 375,43 - Swamp - ClearTurn: 8 1941-08-07 Forces Engaged ATK: men 19112, art 247, afv 2 DAM: men 56, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 29, art 1, afv 0 ATK: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 DEF: men 6688, art 60, afv 1 DAM: men 143, art 2, afv 0 LOST: men 3255, art 36, afv 0 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 156th Rifle Division SHATTERED Show DetailsOdds 11.07 : 1Exit		Soviet Forces Defending: 13th Army 156th Rifle Division (36) CV: 36->61.8Fort: 0.00->0.00 Comm HQ: 13th Army GM Georgy Zakharov	
CV: 183->684.5Eng Val: 4 Comm HQ: II Corps G Walter von Brockdorff-Ahlefeldt					

Another stack of Soviet divisions really doing well was found east of Vitebsk, where a stack of three weak Rifle Divisions held off two attacks by German infantry. In the end, I had to redraw my plans and simply consolidate the encirclements and try to thwart any Soviet withdrawals once I give the turn to the Soviets.

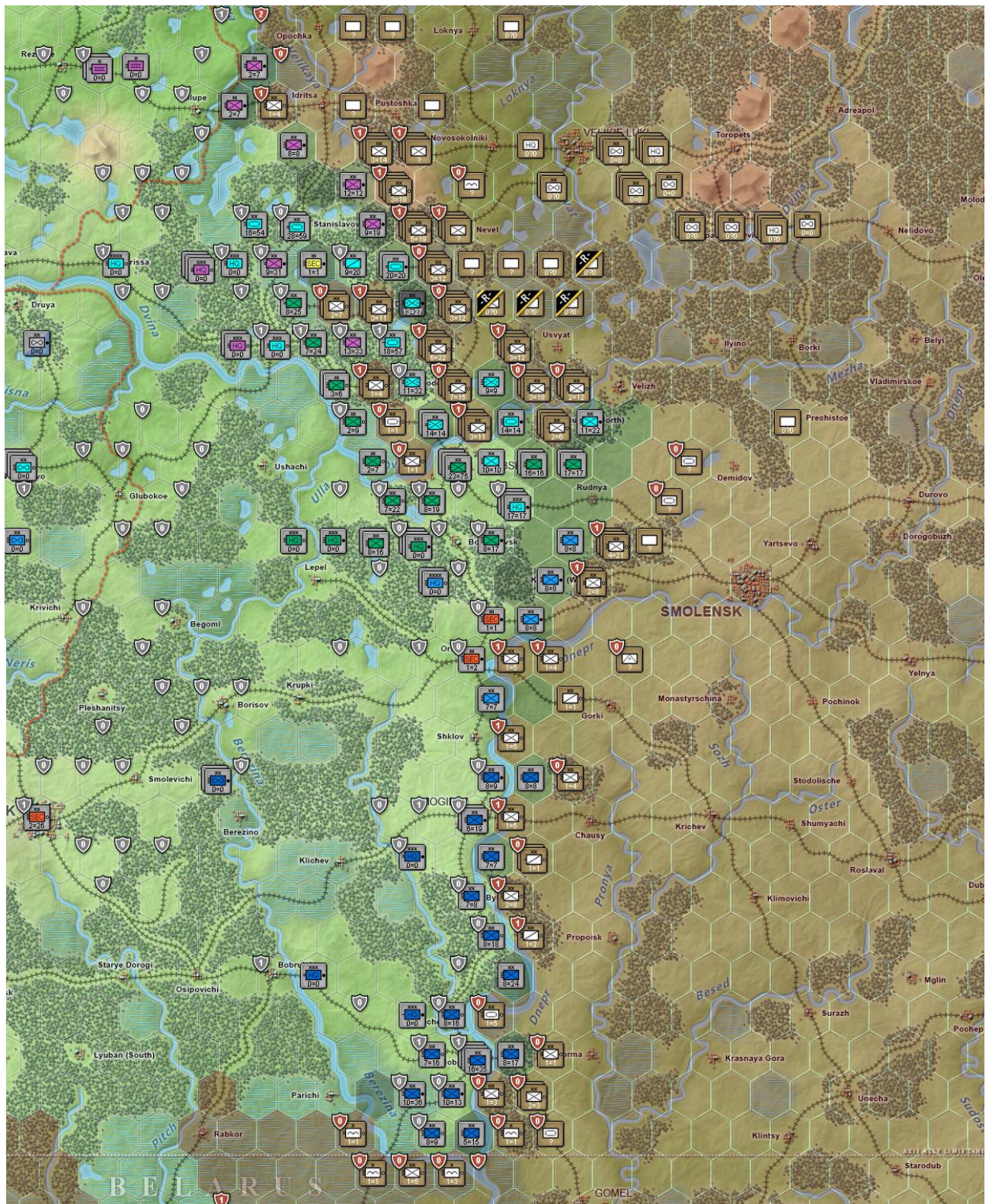
I did try to prevent any Soviet withdrawal of two stacks of three Soviet divisions but it is unlikely this will hold. I am left with one Motorized Division in very dangerous terrain, where it is more than likely that it will be beaten off. If it is, I will suffer a defeat, but if it can somehow hold, I will have outmaneuvered another six Soviet Divisions including one Motorized Division.

Finally, I have done a HQBU on a Panzer Corps which has not moved at all during the soviet turn. The HQ is currently at 4MP and 2 hexes from its railhead, so I assume I will have some movement available come next turn.

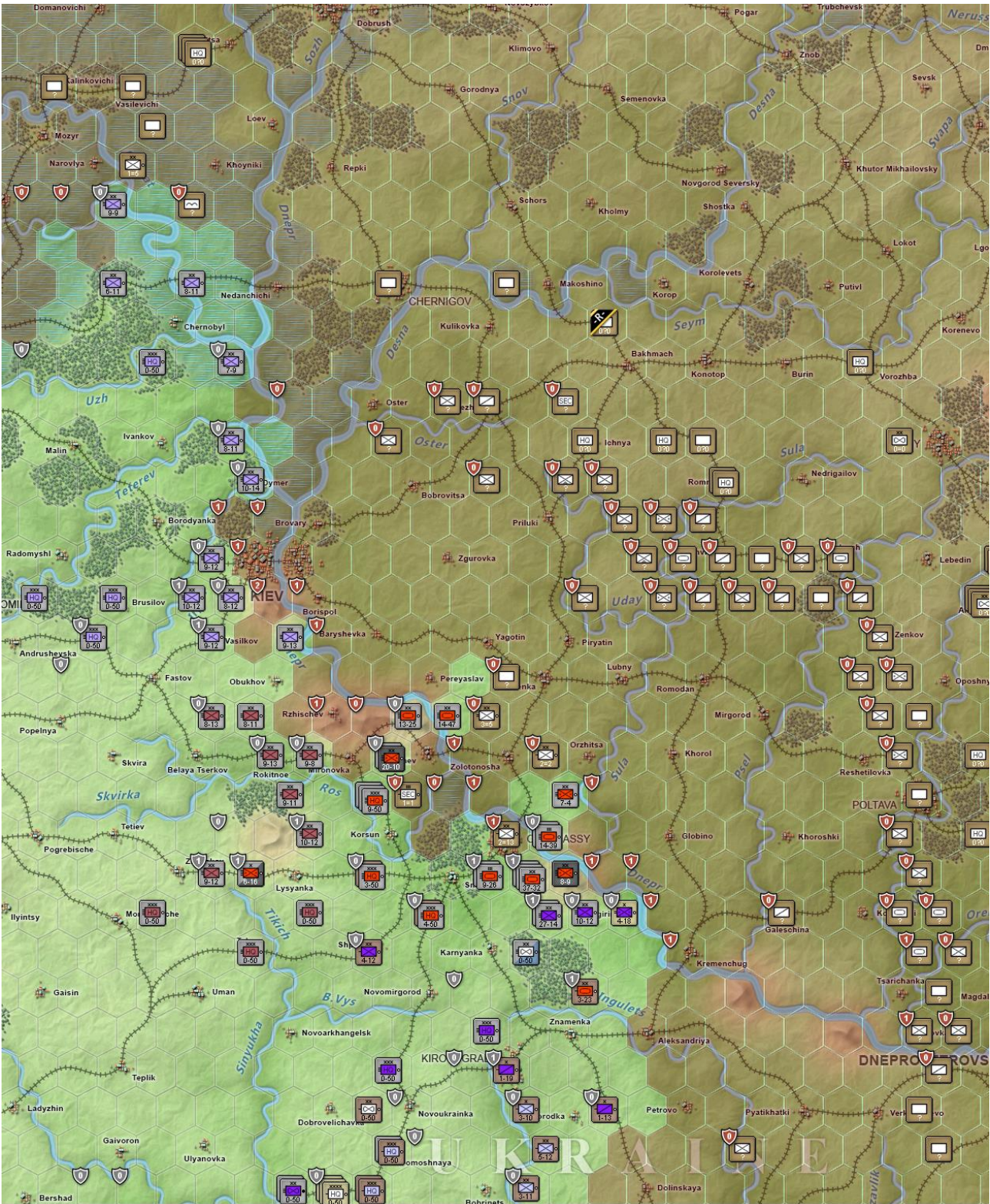
At the end of the turn, it seems I have broken through the Soviet defenses north of Smolensk and is now poised for an easier rail advance eastwards, once the pockets have been eliminated. For this reason alone, I really hope that the Soviets do not manage to break the encirclements once again, but this will be largely dependant on Sparkleys assessment of the situation.

At the Dnepr , I have forced the river in three separate locations, placing five Soviet divisions in a position from where they will have to move through EZOC to escape. As I used two Gruppen of Ju-88's to prepare my forward air bases for an Air Transfer on the next turn, the planned air drops of supplies to the forward Infantry Divisions ended up happening on a much smaller scale than I had hoped. Only the two northernmost divisions across the Dnepr received any supplies.

Below is an image of the center, as I give the turn to Sparkley.



The South



Situational Assessment

In the south, the battle for Pripyat is now all but over. The Soviet divisions have all been withdrawn, except for one that starts the current turn encircled. To the southeast of this, Kiev has been abandoned.

At the Dnepr, the Soviets have pulled back, leaving behind a few divisions without the MP to make it back in time. Last turn, I made a grave error in the placement of a German Motorized Division across the river, meaning that the Soviets pulling back did not have to pay EZOC MP penalties. As a result, the Soviets have spread out a lot more than I would have liked.

At the river, the German Panzers are not really receiving much fuel, and some divisions have as little as 10MP to start with.

At Odessa, the Soviets have remained in position.

Planning

I will begin the turn by attacking Odessa. For this, I can muster three German Infantry Divisions and three Rumanian ones, although the HQ situation is really bad. I have little hope of winning, but mainly wish to get a feel for how much the two defending Tank Divisions and one Rifle Division is capable of in dense terrain. After this attack, I may well relocate all the Pioneer of the south to these divisions, as they are no longer needed for crossing the Dnepr.

Other than that, I will simply encircle the Soviet Rifle Divisions left behind by the Soviet withdrawal. It is obvious to me that I will lack the fuel to conduct any meaningful attacks until the rail line is somewhat closer to Dnepr. The notion of deep penetrations strikes is not appealing with the current logistics modifier. The result seems to be that the Soviets will have an easy time of evacuating their industry.

Execution

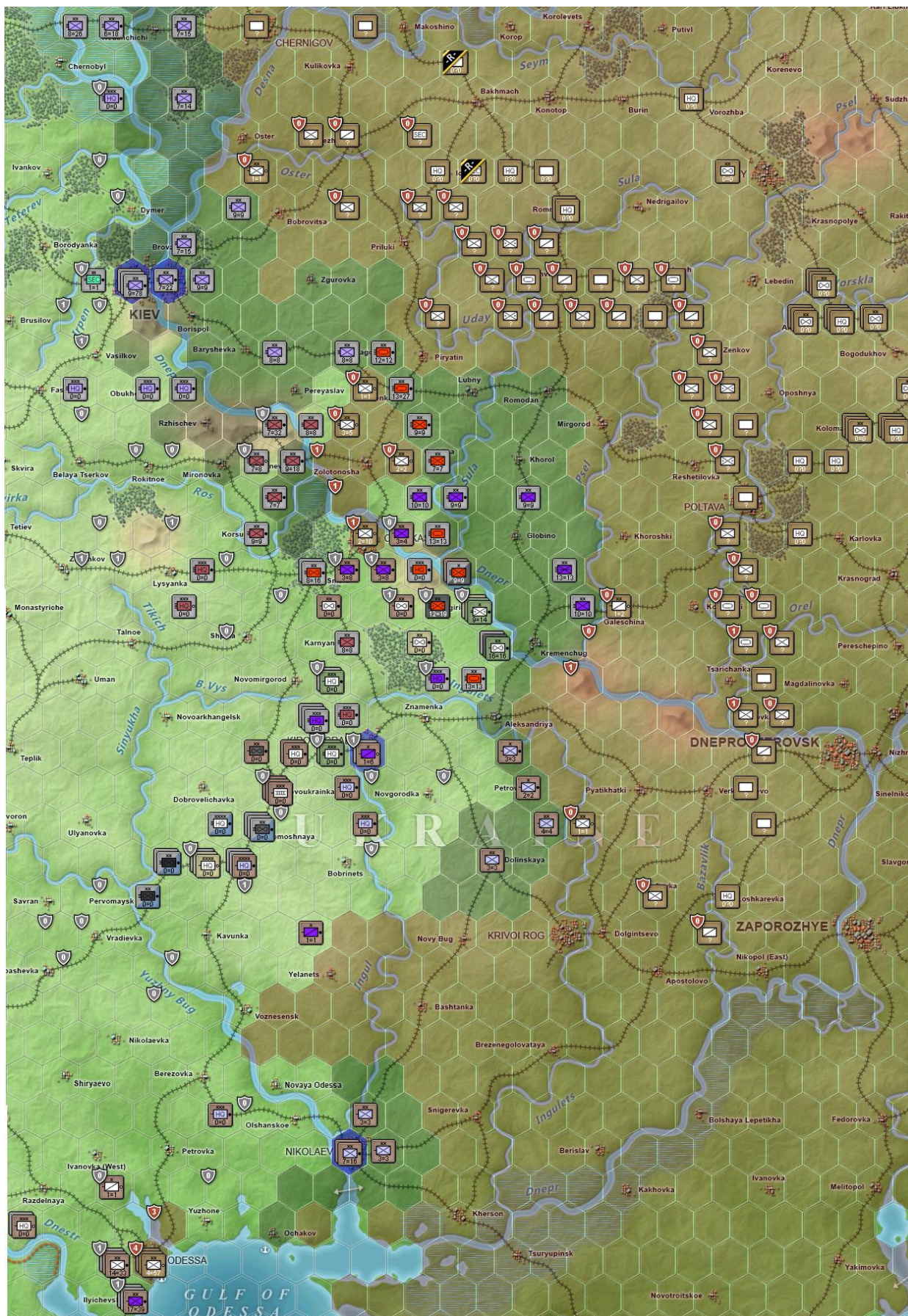
The attack on Odessa failed miserably, much as expected. It did manage to finish off some of the Soviet Tanks of the local Tank Divisions however, which was a good thing. The attack also showed that the amount of AA in the city is simply staggering. Whatever I do, I should be very careful with air attacks on the city.

At the Dnepr, I have moved my Panzers to encircle the four Soviet Rifle Divisions that have not been able to pull back to the main Soviet lines. I have followed this up with a series of fuel drops to my fuel starved divisions. This, at least, have been made easier by the fact that I not have all Ju-52's deployed in this sector of the front (to the north, the rail is far enough forward that fuel drops are not necessary).

In the air, I have relayed the local air forces forward, while also making a few fighter sweeps with the Hungarians to see if they could somehow be useful against the Soviets. It seems that the Hungarian fighters are not really that effective against the LaGG-3's and Yak-1's of the Soviet airforce, as can be seen below.

Axis Forces Attacking:		1 of 1		97,90 - Clear - Clear		Turn:8 1941-08-07		Soviet Forces Defending:	
		Forces Engaged							
		ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0 ATK: ftr 45, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 2, bmr 0, utl 0							
1st Royal HAF Field Bde 12 CR.32bis(H) 24 Re.2000 Heja 9 CR.42(H)		DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DEF: ftr 42, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0						3 I-153 21 I-16 Type 29 8 Yak-1 10 LaGG-3 10 -> 37mm Anti-aircraft Gun	
		ground forces were BOMBED							
		Show Details						Exit	

Below is an image of the situation in the south, as I give the turn to Sparkley.



Conclusion

It is getting obvious that I have now ended the border battles and am engaging the first real line of Soviet resistance. In both the north and the center, my advance has slowed to an absolute crawl, and only in case I can beat the Soviets "head on" will I be able to resume my advances.

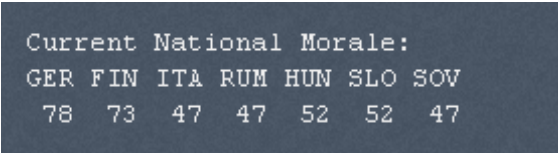
To the south, the real issue is the long Axis supply lines. My units across the Dnepr, often have supply distances of 35MP and 17 hexes or so, and even with HQ's placed in range and south of the river, they often end up with distances of around 18MP and 13 hexes. With the 80% logistics modifier, this seriously reduces my capacity to strike forward.

The turn ends with the Soviets have increased the size of the Red Army by 80.000 men and 2.000 guns over the last turn. The Soviet tank force is now well below 10.000, and the Soviet Air Force is now only 500 aircraft larger than the Luftwaffe. On the upside, the turn ends with some 16 Soviet divisions being encircled, although some of these will probably break the encirclements come the Soviet turn.

In the air, I am benefitting from the fact that Sparkley does not really put the pressure on the Luftwaffe, preferring instead to continue to bomb the forward German units. This way, losses since my last turn stand at 44 for 389. Of these, only seven are German Single Seat Fighters. Also noticeable, is the fact that the Soviets have lost another 44 Recon aircraft. At the rate Sparkley is burning through his recons, he will have few left come winter.

In preparation for the Soviet turn, I have set all fatigued German fighters (20+) to airfield protection range (300 miles), all semi fatigued fighters to "Close up protection" (150 miles) and all non fatigued fighters to "Full range combat" (300 miles). The exception are those fighters about to get withdrawn. I use those regardless of their fatigue levels. I have also set all Ju-88's to fly 300 miles while all other German bombers are set to 1 mile. The Axis Minor Air forces are all set to "full range" (300 miles).

Discussions on the forum as I finish my turn is on the effects of the modifiers on National Morale. The image from my Logistics report looks like this.



Current National Morale:						
GER	FIN	ITA	RUM	HUN	SLO	SOV
78	73	47	47	52	52	47