

Strategic overview

Turn 8: Strategic Considerations

The Axis forces have made some surprising gains this turn. This has resulted in about 104.000 Ivans being encircled at Velikie Luki and another 95.000 being outmaneuvered in the south. On top of this, so far this turn has cost me 134.000 Ivans, which has meant that the Red Army has not grown at all this turn. The only good news are the facts that I have some 63.000 Ivans in my manpower pool and that I will receive 15 fresh divisions come next turn.

In the air, the carnage have continued. Losses since my last turn stand at 464 Soviet aircraft for 85 Axis ones. Notable is the loss of another 32 German Single Seat Fighters. As the Germans have also lost two Fighter Gruppen this turn, and will lose another two next turn, I am guessing the quality of the Luftwaffe field work will soon begin to decline. I notice that III/JG 27 (to be withdrawn on turn 18) is now at a strength of 12/27 Bf 109E-7's while IV/JG 51 (not to be withdrawn) is at six flight worthy Bf 109F-2's.

Productionwise, I not have enough Rocket Launchers to create my first Rocket Launcher SU, which have to sit at STAVKA for a while yet to musetr up some experience. In the air, I have begun producing the Pe-3 night fighter, which looks to be absolutely useless for now, as the Germans are not flying at night. I am also producing the LaGG-3 '11 Series', which is basically a LaGG-3 with a couple of light machineguns stripped off. I will use it as a standard LaGG-3 but I doubt it will have any impact, unless I manually switch some Air Regiment to fly this type.

The creation of the Bryansk Front has also given me a lot of AP this turn, but as I have used the Orel MD as a Front unit (max four armies at nien divisions each), I do not need the points to reassemble the Bryansk Front, and can use them for other, more interesting purposes instead.

Returning my low morale Air Regiments to the National Reserve, I have to send about 50 Air Regiments back this way. The Soviet Air Force is still not able to fight the Germans and keep up morale, so I repeatedly end up cycling my air forces to have some sort of quality for the air war. I notice that the SB-2 bombers are still being hit rather badly, and losses of this type of bomber is heavy.

A side effect to this strategy is that I am forced to being selective about where I put my Air Regiments. I generally have no more than 25 or so Fighter Air Regiments to send forward each turn, and the regiments at the front are generally rather depleted at the beginning of my turn. This means that my airforce is slowly getting concentrated where it is needed the most, which is not a bad thing.

Another effect is that I fly a lot more against the Germans than may be done in a "standard" setup. This burns through the reserve pools rather fast, and I now have only 1590 I-Types left in my reserve pools to feed the 91 Air units that still use these aircraft. During the Axis turn and the Soviet Logistics phase alone, I have lost 179 of these aircraft.

The North



Situational assessment

South of Leningrad, the Germans have continued to shift their attack westwards and have pushed away my skirmish troops. After making contact with my main line, they have conducted a couple of hasty attacks against one of the weaker defensive stack using two Panzer Divisions and a Motorized Division, both attacks failing without much success.

Axis Forces Attacking (H): XXXXII Panzer Corps 6th Panzer Division (74) 12th Panzer Division (58) 36th Motorized Division (41) 611th Gun Battalion (0) 11/67th Howitzer Battalion (0) 601st SP Lt Flk Bn (2) 607th SP Lt Flk Bn (2) [v]	< 2 of 4 > 80.19 - Light Woods - Clear Turn:8 1941-08-07 Forces Engaged ATK: men 46795, art 422, afv 499 DAM: men 144, art 1, afv 8 LOST: men 196, art 5, afv 13 ATK: flt 33, bmr 53, utl 0 LOST: flt 0, bmr 0, utl 0		Soviet Forces Defending: 28th Army 3rd Tank Division (124) 163rd Motorized Division (98) 1st Len. PM Rfl Div (32) Northern Air Command 33 I-16 Type 24 10 I-16 Type 29 [v]
	Defending Forces HELD		
	CV: 189->371.3 Eng Val: 2 Comm HQ: XXXXI Panzer Corps G Georg-Hans Reinhardt	Show Details Odds 1 : 1.10 Exit	CV: 254->411.6 Fort: 1.60->1.58 Comm HQ: 28th Army GM Rodion Malinovsky

Further to the southeast, the Germans have pushed into Novgorod, rather than trying to encircle it. Last turn, I was debating with myself on how long I should try to hold the city if a flanking attack was made, but this turn, the decision was made for me.

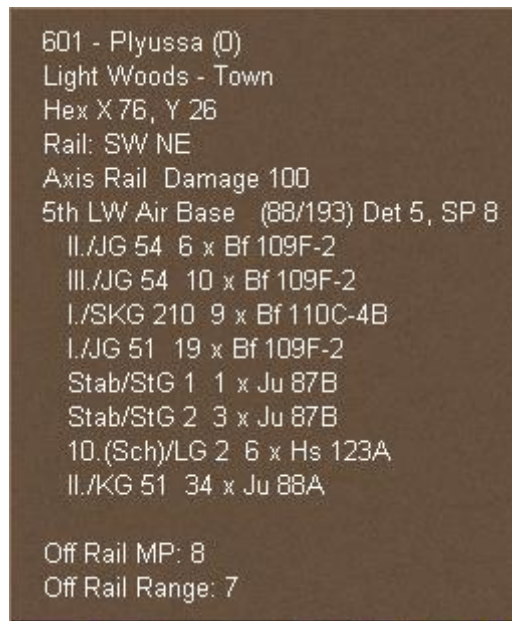
Axis Forces Attacking: XXVIII Corps -16% 123rd Infantry Division (65) 94th Infantry Division (78) 153rd Gun Battalion (0) 843rd Howitzer Battalion (1) 1/291st LW Mix Flk Bn (2) 296th LW Mix Flk Bn (1) 655th Pioneer Battalion (6) [v]		1 of 182,25 - City(Novgorod) - ClearTurn:8 1941-08-07 Forces Engaged ATK: men 86061, art 1092, afv 8 DAM: men 256, art 12, afv 0 LOST: men 370, art 6, afv 0 ATK: flt 103, bmr 71, utl 0 LOST: flt 0, bmr 0, utl 0 DEF: men 26213, art 385, afv 32 DAM: men 53, art 9, afv 0 LOST: men 1907, art 38, afv 7 DEF: flt 40, bmr 25, utl 0 LOST: flt 5, bmr 12, utl 0 4th Naval Infantry Brigade RETREATED 313th Rifle Division RETREATED 272nd Rifle Division RETREATED Show DetailsOdds 2.19 : 1Exit		Soviet Forces Defending: 27th Army 272nd Rifle Division (63) 313th Rifle Division (108) 4th Naval Infantry Brigade (91) 59th Mot. Sapper Bn (7) Northwest Air Command 4 MiG-3 [v] CV: 269->351.3Fort: 1.68->0.00 Comm HQ: 27th Army GM Nikolai Berzarin	
CV: 419->770.3Eng Val: 16 Comm HQ: XXIII Corps G Albrecht Schubert				CV: 269->351.3Fort: 1.68->0.00 Comm HQ: 27th Army GM Nikolai Berzarin	

I also notice that the Germans have begun building up some strong Infantry Divisions, obviously for the push into Leningrad itself. Several divisions now have a CV of 11, which usually means “Refit” and Pioneer battallions attached. I will have to make their advance a tough one.

Southeast of Lake Ilmen, the Germans continue to push northeast with a Panzer Corps, now reinforced with a couple of Infantry Divisions. As the German rail line has reached Pskov and is now continuing straight east 8one hex out of Pskov, currently), I will need to focus more on this area in the future.

In the air, I notice that the Germans have three Luftwaffe air bases in the area, with a total of five fighter Air Gruppen. However, those five Gruppen have a total of 55 flight worthy aircraft between them, and the bases they are stationed at seem to be rather overloaded. At the base near Pskov, I also notice four Air Gruppen of Stukas and one Air Gruppe with He 111H-4’s. behind the Northern Front, I have several hundred fighters available as well as eight Air Regiments with tactical bombers and several with SB-2’s.

The Luftwaffe base with the most fighters can be seen below. As can be seen. There are plenty of damaged aircraft on this base. None of the Fighter Gruppen on this base will be withdrawn before turn 17.



601 - Plyussa (0)
Light Woods - Town
Hex X 76, Y 26
Rail: SW NE
Axis Rail Damage 100
5th LW Air Base (88/193) Det 5, SP 8
II./JG 54 6 x Bf 109F-2
III./JG 54 10 x Bf 109F-2
I./SKG 210 9 x Bf 110C-4B
I./JG 51 19 x Bf 109F-2
Stab/StG 1 1 x Ju 87B
Stab/StG 2 3 x Ju 87B
10.(Sch)/LG 2 6 x Hs 123A
II./KG 51 34 x Ju 88A

Off Rail MP: 8
Off Rail Range: 7

Planning

South of Leningrad, I will remain in position along my current line of defense. As the Germans have relatively few units available here, I am not that fearful of a dangerous breakthrough. I will however, shift the 8th Army of the Northwestern Front to the southeastern side of Lake Ilmen in order to support the 31st Army already here. This army will be transferred to the Northwestern Front in order to give room for Rukossovsky's army in the Reserve Front.

Finally, I will send the Airborne Brigades of the western Front northeast towards Svir, while also assigning them to STAVKA. This should, more or less, cover the entire river range, leaving the Finns in one huge POW camp until Leningrad is taken (if ever).

In the air, I will be more aggressive. I will start by using the Air forces of the Northwestern Front in a series of fighter sweeps against the Germans at Lake Ilmen, in order to draw out the few Luftwaffe fighters and tire them out. I will also use some of the Northern Front I-Types and SB-2 bombers to do this. Once the Luftwaffe is fatigued enough, I will direct my tactical bombers onto two of the Luftwaffe bases (the one above and the Stuka base) in order to hurt the Luftwaffe.

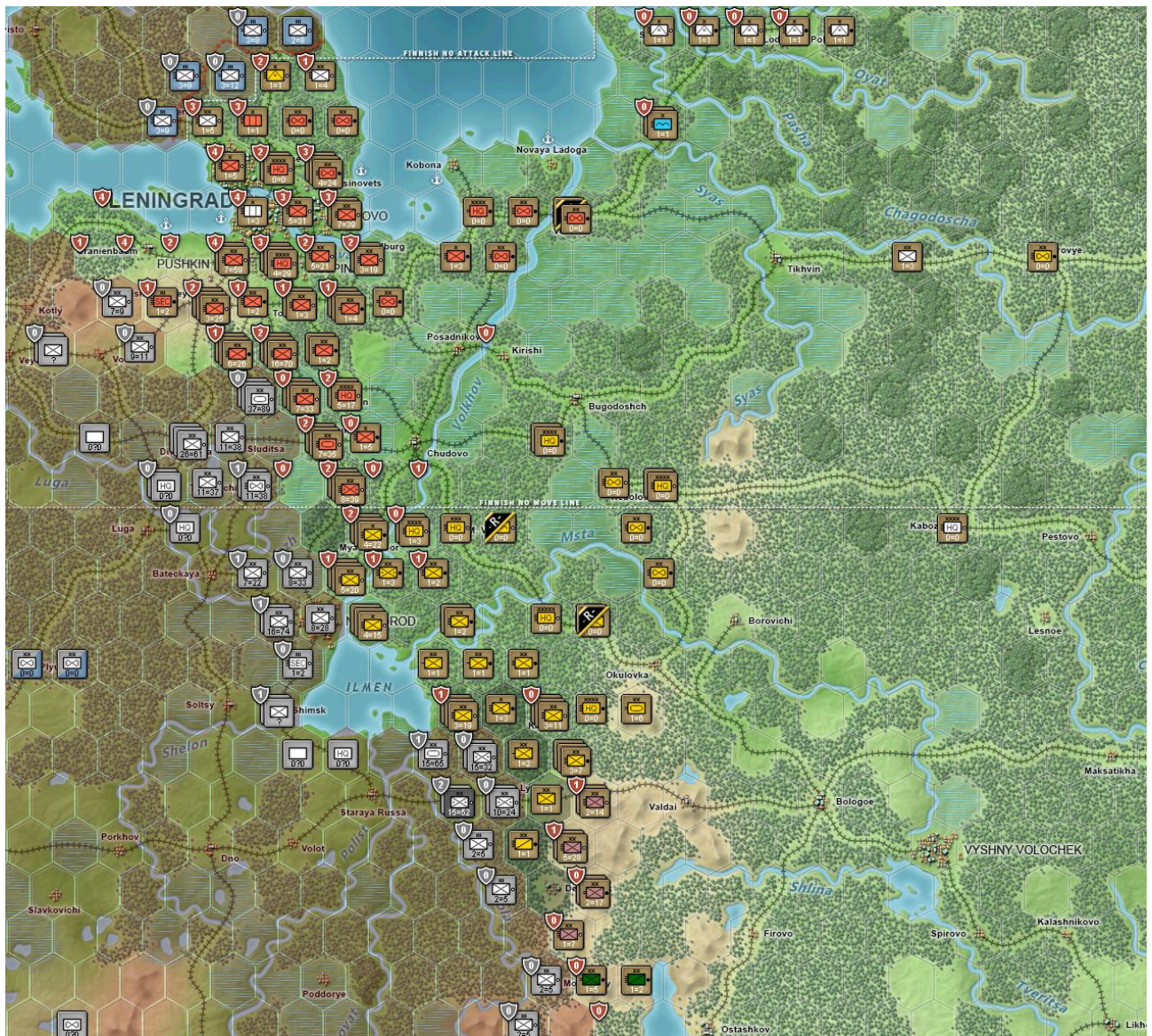
Execution

As I have done no attacks in the north, there is little to report on the ground. I believe that I now have a fairly strong defensive line that will take at least a turn or two to break down. We shall see if the Germans agree.

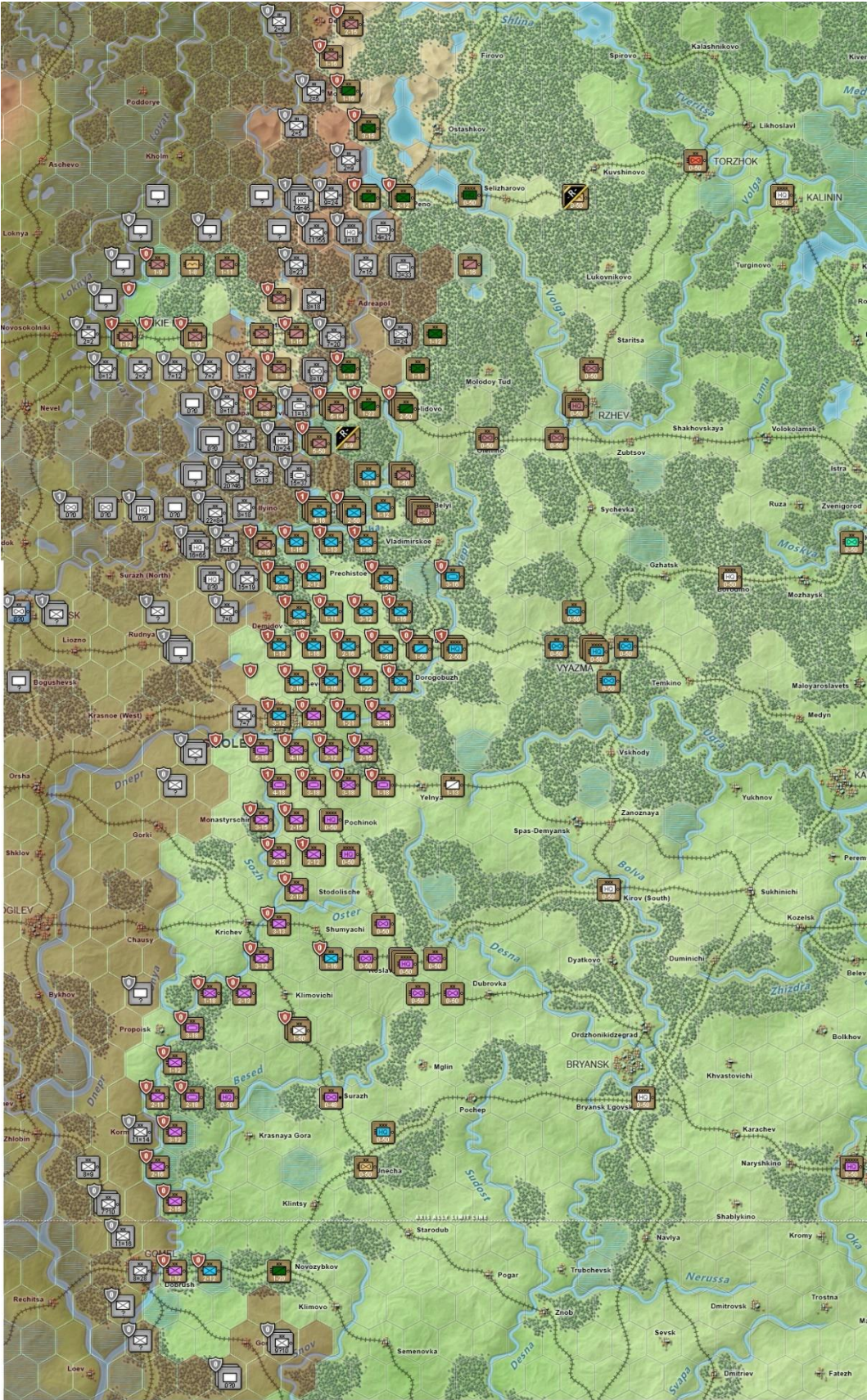
Southeast of Lake Ilmen, the 31st Army has been concentrated in three heavy stacks, while the weak 8th Army has been spread out to cause delays in the German buildup. The 8th Army has also been set to "Refit" in order to ensure that it will be able to fight just a little better come next turn.

Doing the air battles, the Luftwaffe was soon fatigued enough that their defense of the airbases was pretty weak. In fact, it was mostly left to the Finns flying long range interception. However, the bombing of the airbases soon proved to be less than effective.

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



The Center



Situational Assessment

At Velikie Luki, the Germans have thrown the full weight of their local Panzer Forces into securing the encirclement of the Reserve Front divisions that were rescued last turn. This has led to the encirclement of 10 Rifle Divisions, two Cavalry Divisions and an Airborne Brigade in the area east of Velikie Luki. The foremost Panzers are now low on fuel and at a nice distance from their rail heads. However, they all have Infantry close by, and will be resupplied in a turn or two.

Separating the Soviet main line from the encircled troops is one German Panzer Division behind a small river (CV 11=13). I can attack this division with units under Rokossovsky's command for a total of about 13.3 CV, mainly across a minor river. The attack can be prepared by heavy bombing of the German unit.

In the air, the Germans have 103 single engine and twin engine fighters in the area, spread out over a large number of fighter units, most of whom have very few fighters available to fly. I have quite a lot of units available for air transfer, including more than 20 fighter Air Regiments, five IL-2's, 2 Su-2's and 2 I-153BS's.

Further south, the shifting of the German Panzers has meant that the pressure on Smolensk has heightened considerably. As the German rail line is now on the north side of the Dvina river above Vitebsk, the Germans will have to begin pushing in this area again in the next couple of turns.

Planning

I will have to make a "hail Mary" attack on the German Panzer Division holding the line preventing contact with the encircled Soviets. I have little faith in the attack, but with Rokossovsky in command and an attack from four hexes, I hope the Germans will suffer some attack penalties (it will not be many, as the Division has two other SU's attached and also have a basic ToE of almost 16.000 men).

I will also pull the Bryansk Front and the Western Front northeast in the area they cover, in order to make extra depth in the defense behind the Reserve Front, which is looking particularly weak. As the Germans are not currently pushing strongly on Smolensk, I will allow the front here to get a little thinner, even if I think that the Germans will soon return to this area.

South of Smolensk, the Bryansk Front will continue to withdraw, as I need to establish some cover for Bryansk and its industries within the next couple of turns.

Execution

Due to the Germans overusing the Luftwaffe, I am able to begin the turn by continuing my bombing spree against the Luftwaffe airfields in the center. Air Transferring a series of fresh Air Regiments forward (all with morale of 50+), I can then start to bomb the Luftwaffe airfields with relatively few fighters flying in defense. This leads to airfield bombings like the one shown below, and generally to massive fighter losses in the Luftwaffe.

Axis Forces Defending:		< 2 of 2 77.47 - Clear - Clear Turn:8 1941-08-07		Soviet Forces Attacking:	
3 : 10 Bf 109F-2		DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0		23 MiG-3	
2 : 2 Ju 88A		DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0		20 I-153	
		LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0		103 SB-2	
8 -> 88mm Anti-aircraft Gun		DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		3 Pe-2	
8 -> 37mm Anti-aircraft Gun		LOST: ftr 10, bmr 1, utl 0			
		airfield was BOMBED			
		Show Details		Exit	

Finishing up the bombing campaign against the Luftwaffe bases in the center, I notice that German Single Seat Fighter losses during my phase are now 4 Bf 109E-7's, 37 Bf 109F-2's and 3 Bf 109F-4's. Combined with the losses during the German turn, losses like this will soon cripple the Luftwaffe.

After the airfield bombing attacks are over, I continue with the bombing of the German Panzer Division I wish to force a retreat upon. For these attacks I have assigned all tactical bombers to the Reserve Front and intend to use them in two bombing attacks and as ground support. Much to my dislike, the initial bombing attacks caused virtually no damage upon the Germans, and thus I had to do the main attack with even less confidence than I had before planning the whole thing.

So, choosing the nine divisions for the attack, I press "Go". Doing the attack on high report detail, the first thing I notice is that I have a reserve activation and the next that none of my tactical bombers are joining the attack. I also notice that I am unable to inflict any real casualties upon the Germans, so in the end it all comes down to the command of Rokossovsky. It is with some surprise, that I see the attack actually succeeding, thus giving an extra round of life to the encircled divisions and making the German supply situation a little harder for one more turn.

Axis Forces Defending (W): XXXXVII Panzer Corps 18th Panzer Division (108) 94th LW SP Lt Flk Bn (6) 611th Panzerjager Battalion (6) 746th Pioneer Battalion (8) 105th Heavy Werfer Battalion (0) VIII Fliegerkorps CV: 128->95.1 Fort: 0.02->0.00 Comm HQ: XXXVII Panzer Corps GL Hans-Jurgen von Arnim	< 2 of 4 > 87.42 - Clear(Zapadnaya Dvina) - Clear Turn:8 1941-08-07 Forces Engaged DEF: men 16593, art 137, afv 204 DAM: men 137, art 1, afv 4 LOST: men 170, art 4, afv 10 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 14, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 5, utl 1 18th Panzer Division RETREATED Show Details Odds 2.56 : 1 Exit		Soviet Forces Attacking: 33rd Army 285th Rifle Division (6) 54th Cavalry Division (4) R 168th BM Howitzer Regiment (0) 368th Crps Art Rgt (0) 45th Sapper Regiment (3) 31st Sapper Battalion (1) 24th Army -10% CV: 81->243.5 Eng Val: 4 Comm HQ: 33rd Army GM Konstantin Rokossovsky

As I had not expected this result, I ended up using the adjacent divisions that were inside the encirclement, so I find myself unable to enter the hex I just took, except from the east. This I have no intention of doing, as the divisions are effectively just as domed as they were before the attack. All I have achieved is slowing down the German attack with one turn in this area.

I proceed with reordering my frontline as best I can. I then decide, completely unpanned, to attack the German Infantry Division west of Smolensk with six of my own Rifle Divisions as well as some reserves I set up for the occasion. Much as expected, this attack is another win for the Soviets (attacking with six Rifle Divisions, all having at least 2.0 CV). The German bombers, at this time, is reduced to flying without fighter cover, so I take out a few of those as well. The main purpose of the attack however, was to accumulate a win and push the Germans one hex back.

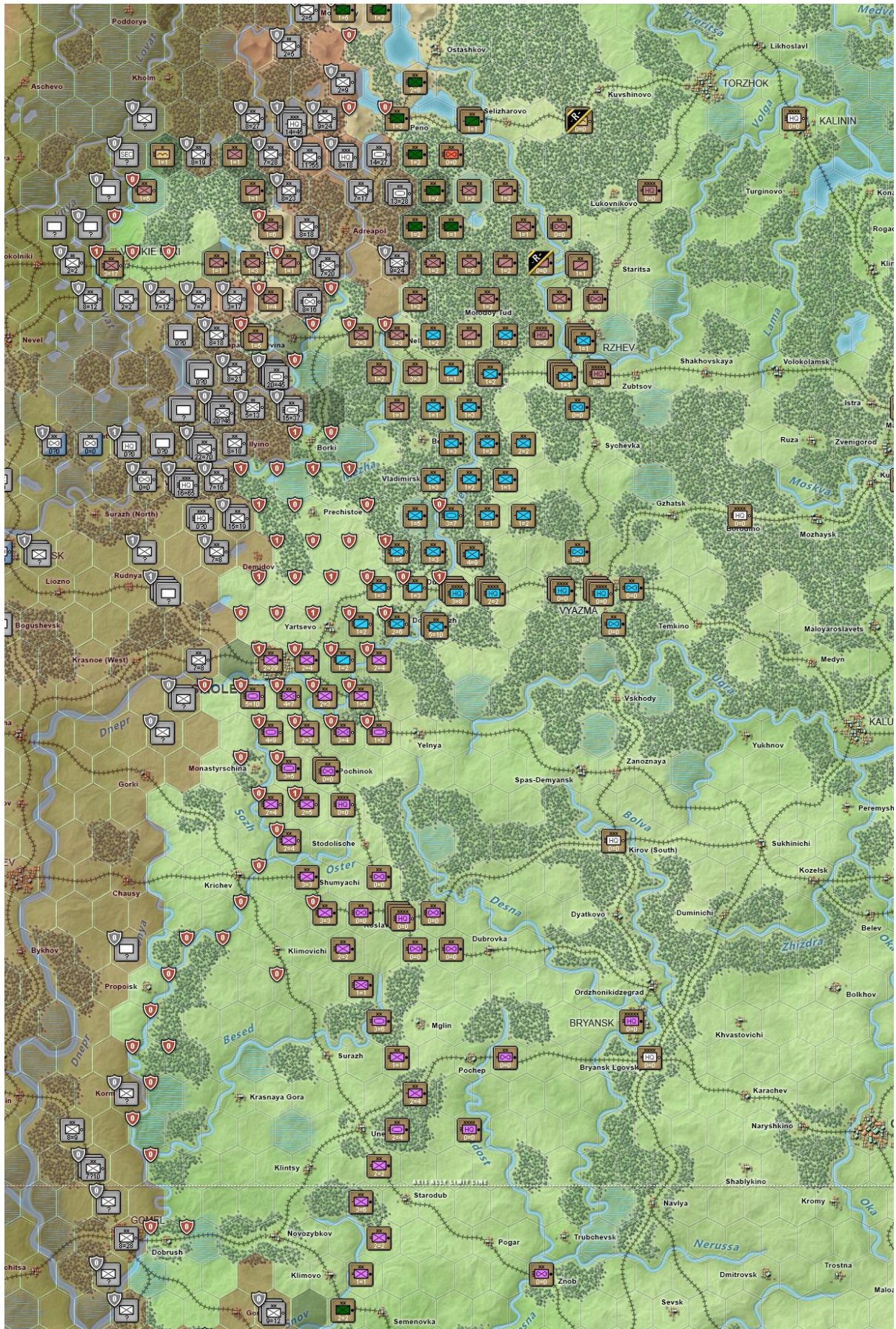
Axis Forces Defending (W): IX Corps 263rd Infantry Division (79) I/3rd Lehr Hwz Bn (1) I/109th Gun Battalion (0) I/108th Artillery Battalion (1) II Fliegerkorps 1 Do 17Z-2 CV: 81->67.2 Fort: 0.00->0.00 Comm HQ: IX Corps GL Hermann Geyer	1 of 1 85,51 - Clear - Clear Turn: 8 1941-08-07 Forces Engaged DEF: men 17177, art 221, afv 1 DAM: men 142, art 7, afv 0 LOST: men 214, art 5, afv 0 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 38, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 7, utl 0 ATK: men 71072, art 915, afv 51 DAM: men 425, art 4, afv 0 LOST: men 654, art 2, afv 4 ATK: ftr 39, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 263rd Infantry Division RETREATED Show Details Odds 5.60 : 1 Exit		Soviet Forces Attacking: 20th Army -10% 110th Rifle Division (22) 172nd Rifle Division (26) 222nd Rifle Division (19) 537th BM Howitzer Regiment (1) 301st Howitzer Regiment (1) 399th Howitzer Regiment (1) 441st Crps Art Rgt (2) [v]
--	---	--	---

As I wrap up the battles around Smolensk, I check the status of the various Luftwaffe bases in the area, and the image below is not uncommon. A Fighter Gruppe and a Stab Gruppe (44 total potential aircraft) can muster 12 aircraft in total, both flightworthy and damaged.

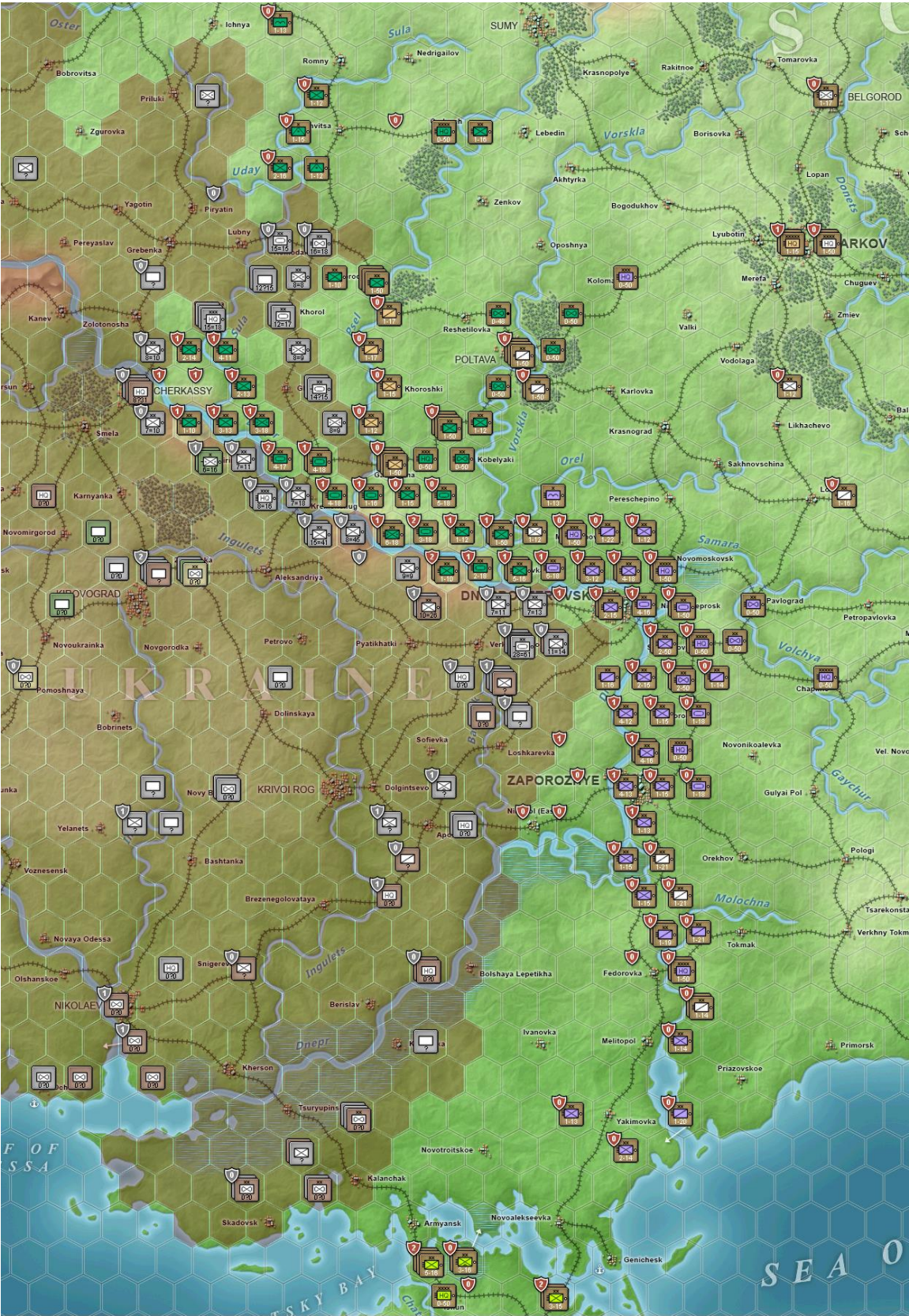
Light Woods
Hex X 80, Y 45
Fort 1 (10%)
Axis Control
16th LW Air Base (5/12) Det 5, SP 8
Stab/JG 54 1 x Bf 109F-4
II./JG 52 4 x Bf 109F-2

Off Rail MP: 8
Off Rail Range: 5

South of Smolensk, I have pulled my forces back in order to avoid being hopelessly placed over future turns. Below is an image of the center, as I give the turn to HJ.



The South



Situational Assessment

The Germans have crossed the Dnepr north of my lines and then broken clean through my covering units along the Sula River. While they have not encircled any of my divisions along the Dnepr, the situation is not good, and I might end up losing five Mobile Divisions along with five Rifle Divisions.

The German Panzers that have crossed the river are generally at relatively low fuel levels, except for a few that have received fuel drops by the Luftwaffe. I notice that the unit having received the most fuel is a Motorized Division attacking north, that is currently outside Priluki.

At Dnepropetrovsk, the Germans are continuing to steadily push towards the city, even if the attacks are now done by the arriving infantry and not the Panzers that are getting a rest (and possibly a HQBU) to the rear.

At the mouth of the Dnepr, the Germans and the Rumanians have crossed the river, and are now advancing on Crimea

Planning

I will launch an attack on the southernmost German Motorized Division in order to hopefully dislodge it and allow some freer movement by two of my other Tank Divisions. It will be another "hail Mary" attack, as I really do not have anything going for me except superiority in numbers. Prior to the attack, I will transfer all the aircraft from the Southern Front to the Southwestern Front, in order to give a little extra "punch" (the codeword here is "little").

Having done the attack, I will most likely pull back towards the Vorskla River, in order to establish a new line here. I will combine this with the sacrifice of one Cavalry Division that I will throw into the rear of the German advance. Combined with placing the Rifle Divisions inside inside the forming pocket, I hope to be able to limit the amount of fuel that will reach the Germans over the next turn.

Further south, I will more or less hold on to the front I currently hold.

Execution

As the attack in the center has proven a lot more effective than I had expected, I was in real doubt as to whether I should use the partly encircled units in the attack on the German Motorized Division, or whether I should simply use the seven Rifle Divisions I could get into position for the attack. In the end, I decided to use one of the Divisions and hope for the best. The attack soon showed that the Luftwaffe is still strong in the south, and there is little to be said except that the attack failed.

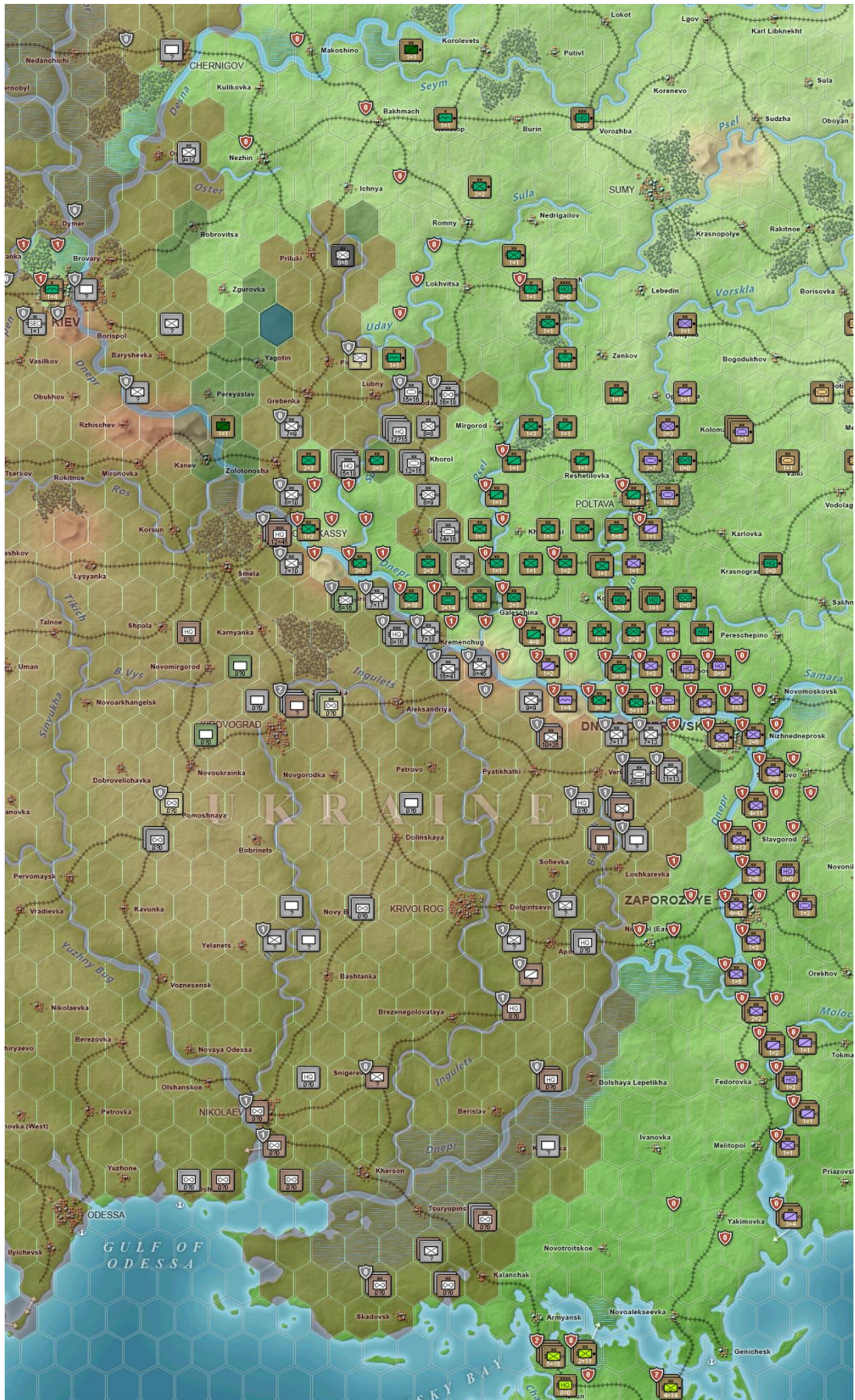
Axis Forces Defending (C): III Panzer Corps 25th Motorized Division (82) II/60th Gun Battalion (0) II/63rd Howitzer Battalion (1) 652nd Panzerjager Battalion (0) I/7th LW Mix Flk Bn (2) I/501st LW Mix Flk Bn (1) II/54th Werfer Battalion (0) [v]	1 of 7 > 92,89 - Clear - Clear Turn: 8 1941-08-07 Forces Engaged DEF: men 17936, art 331, afv 10 DAM: men 98, art 12, afv 0 LOST: men 124, art 5, afv 0 DEF: flt 121, bmr 43, utl 0 LOST: flt 2, bmr 0, utl 0 Defending Forces HELD Show Details		Soviet Forces Attacking: 26th Army 49th Tank Division (11) 141st Rifle Division (16) 289th Rifle Division (5) 293rd Rifle Division (3) 295th Rifle Division (14) 297th Rifle Division (16) 301st Rifle Division (7) [v]
	CV: 86->95.6 Fort: 0.00->0.00 Comm HQ: III Panzer Corps G Eberhard von Mackensen		CV: 88->148.6 Eng Val: 2 Comm HQ: 26th Army GL Markian Popov
	Odds 1.55 : 1 Exit		

With the attack failed, I have spent whatever MP I have left to pull back towards the Vorskla river. I realize I must have been tired or something when doing the planning, as most of the divisions participating in the attack, did not have near enough MP to get into position.

Instead, I have set up to delay the Germans in crossing the Dnepr with their Infantry Divisions and the Panzers from attacking east. If the Germans can do this, they can widen the encirclement, effectively costing me a lot more divisions. The cornerstone to this defense is the 4=9 stack southeast of Galeshna. This position should fortify to level 1 during the Axis Logistics phase, which should leave me with a 4=18 stack to deny the Germans free movement upon crossing the river.

Further south, there are no interesting news to report.

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



Conclusion

This turn, I have reconnected to the encircled Rifle Divisions around Velikie Luki. They will be reencircled next turn, along with a large pocket in the south. I will not be at all surprised, if I receive next turn to see more than 20 divisions encircled. This turn however, I only leave one Airborne Brigade encircled (in Kiev), for a total of 2.000 men.

Ground losses are 138.000 Ivans for 24.000 landers this turn, with 197 Axis AFV going for 673 Soviet ones. I have no doubt that Soviet AFV losses will rise sharply over the next two turns.

In the air, losses are still sky high. 178 Axis aircraft have been lost for 689 Soviet ones. The key losses look a lot like last turn, with 62 Bf 109F-2's and 16 Bf 109E-7's on the German side, going for 222 Soviet I-Types, 25 MiG-3's, 18 Yak-1's and 24 LaGG-3's. Soviet reserve pools of I-Types are now 1590 of all types. On top of this, I have lost another 214 SB-2's and 23 Pe-2's with a remaining pool of 806 SB-2's. My analysis is the same as last turn. I can far better afford this kind of attrition than can the Germans, and I will not change my approach to the airwar unless the Axis make some alteration to their own strategy.

I have evacuated the T-34 production as well as the Heavy Industry and Armament factories from Kharkov this turn, as well as some of the minor importance aircraft factories from Moscow. This leaves the Su-2 factories in Kharkov for the advancing Germans.

Weather forecast for the next turn in the south is Mud.