

Turn 25, Strategic Considerations

____ SPECIAL ____						
-	Vehicle Repair	A	-	3914	201200	0
-	Port	101	0	0	0	0
-	Railyard	258	1	0	0	0
-	Manpower	2865	5	87809	3674917	0
-	Vehicle	140	0	213817	296100	0
-	Heavy Industry	232	0	0	2445000	0
-	Oil Production	128	0	0	1536000	0
-	Fuel Production	149	0	0	858240	0
-	Resource Production	182	0	0	4478000	0
-	Armaments Production	366	0	262008	1909750	0

The blizzard is here, and the Germans look vulnerable to say the least.

In the north, the German line at Novgorod has a defensive CV of 10-15. In the center, north of Bryansk, the line is held by units with a maximum of five defensive CV. Northwest of Kharkov, the Germans can muster some five to ten defensive CV. On top of this, there are plenty of areas where I might be able to pull off some localized attacks in order to outmaneuver and hopefully encircle German units.

Axis VP stand at 196.

The North



Situational assessment

On the surface, the German defense north of Lake Ilmen looks sound, but certainly not unbreakable. However, one has to remember that the German CV may be divided by two in case of either failed Admin or infantry checks. Further, at the start of combat, German units may become disrupted and thus play no part in the following battle. In total, it seems I might well be able to break the German lines during the first round of combat.

The Luftwaffe appear to have been withdrawn from the area.

Planning

The main thrust of my attack in the region will be aimed at the weak German hexes north of Novgorod. In case of a breakthrough, I will push my units forward and have them swing north next turn to meet up with the forces currently in Leningrad. To aid in this, the forces inside Leningrad will try to break out to the south, thus shortening the distance my Novgorod attack needs to cover.

Further, the German have placed three entire infantry divisions in Novaya Ladoga. If I break the German lines two hexes southwest of that spot and push a single unit forward, I will effectively have surrounded the German divisions north of this spot.

Finally, south of Lake Ilmen, I will try to break the weak German lines in order to push a cavalry division through and cut the German rail line running south from Dno.

Execution

My plans for the attack along the Volkhov has been thwarted by the fact that the ice level on part of the river is only seven. The northernmost attack across the river has had to be cancelled altogether. Still the attack has had some success, and I have broken the German lines in several locations.

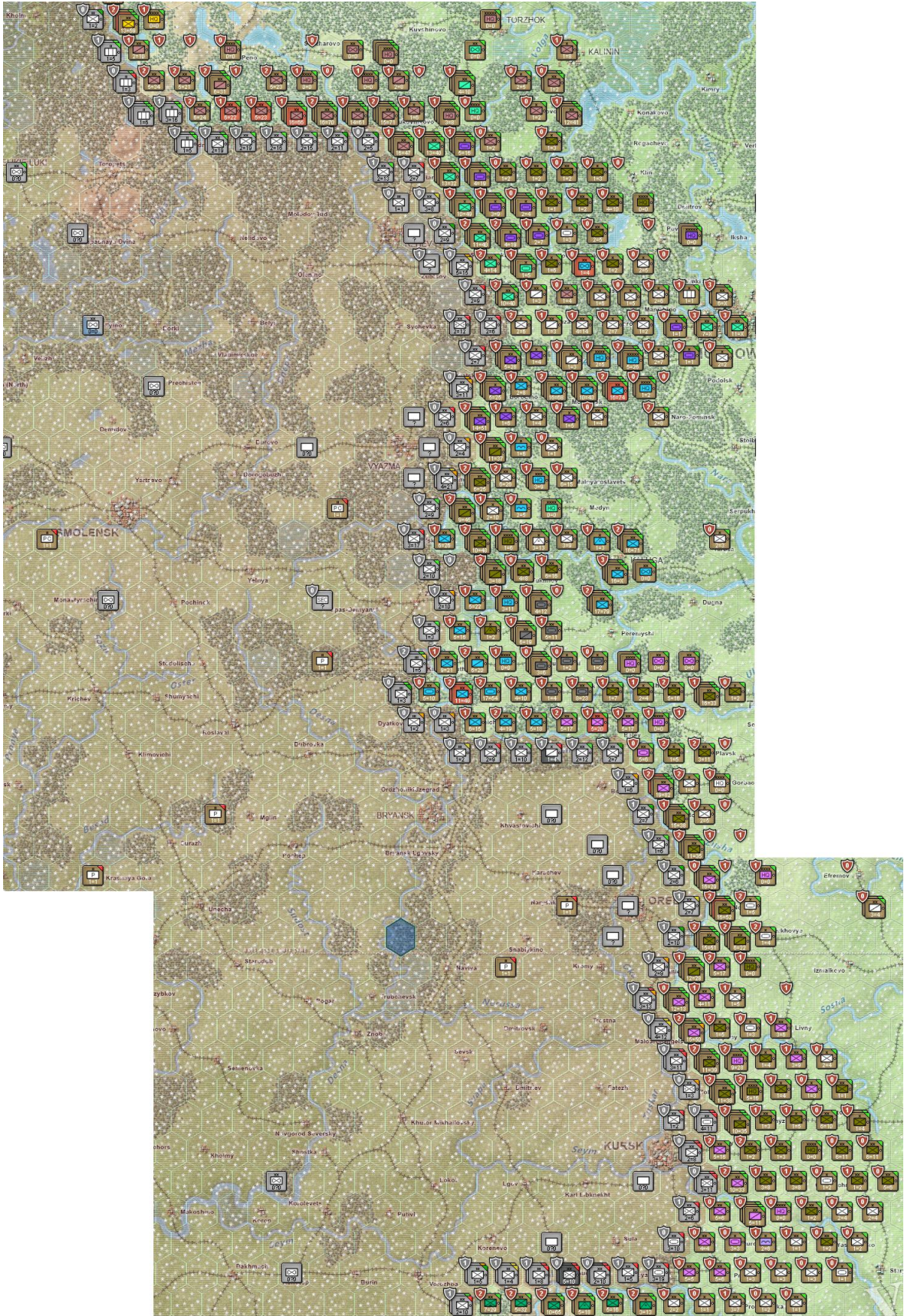
I have no doubt that I will be able to reconnect my main lines with the defenders of Leningrad. The question is, how many Germans will I be able to encircle in the process.

South of Lake Ilmen, I have pushed some of my Northwestern Front divisions forward against the weak German defenses in the area. The German line has crumbled, and I will reach the Dno rail line in a few short turns.

Below is an image of the northern sector, as I give the turn to Hermann.



The Center



Situational assessment

In the center, the Germans have some of their best infantry divisions in the area west of Moscow. Those divisions are not really dug in very well, so their defensive CV rarely exceeds 10-15, which I can easily match in an attack.

Further south, in the area north of Bryansk, the Germans have a sector of the front manned with infantry with no more than a max of five in defensive CV. This is the area where I plan to launch the northern pincer of my Kursk offensive.

Still further south, at Kursk itself, the Germans have several Panzer divisions holding a section of the front.

The Luftwaffe seems to be almost absent from the area.

Planning

In the north, at Rzhev, I will do some local attacks with the purpose of encircling a German infantry division or two.

Further south, at Bryansk, I need to push aside the German divisions holding the line, in order for my own units to be able to break into the open terrain behind the German front and then swing southwards. I will then move in two more armies of the Western Front to be ready for further attacks come next turn.

At Kursk, I will do a local attack aimed at encircling some German Panzers. The plan is not likely to succeed, but even the attempt may well serve me in a Maskirovka (misdirection) capacity, if it removes the German focus from what I will be doing further west.

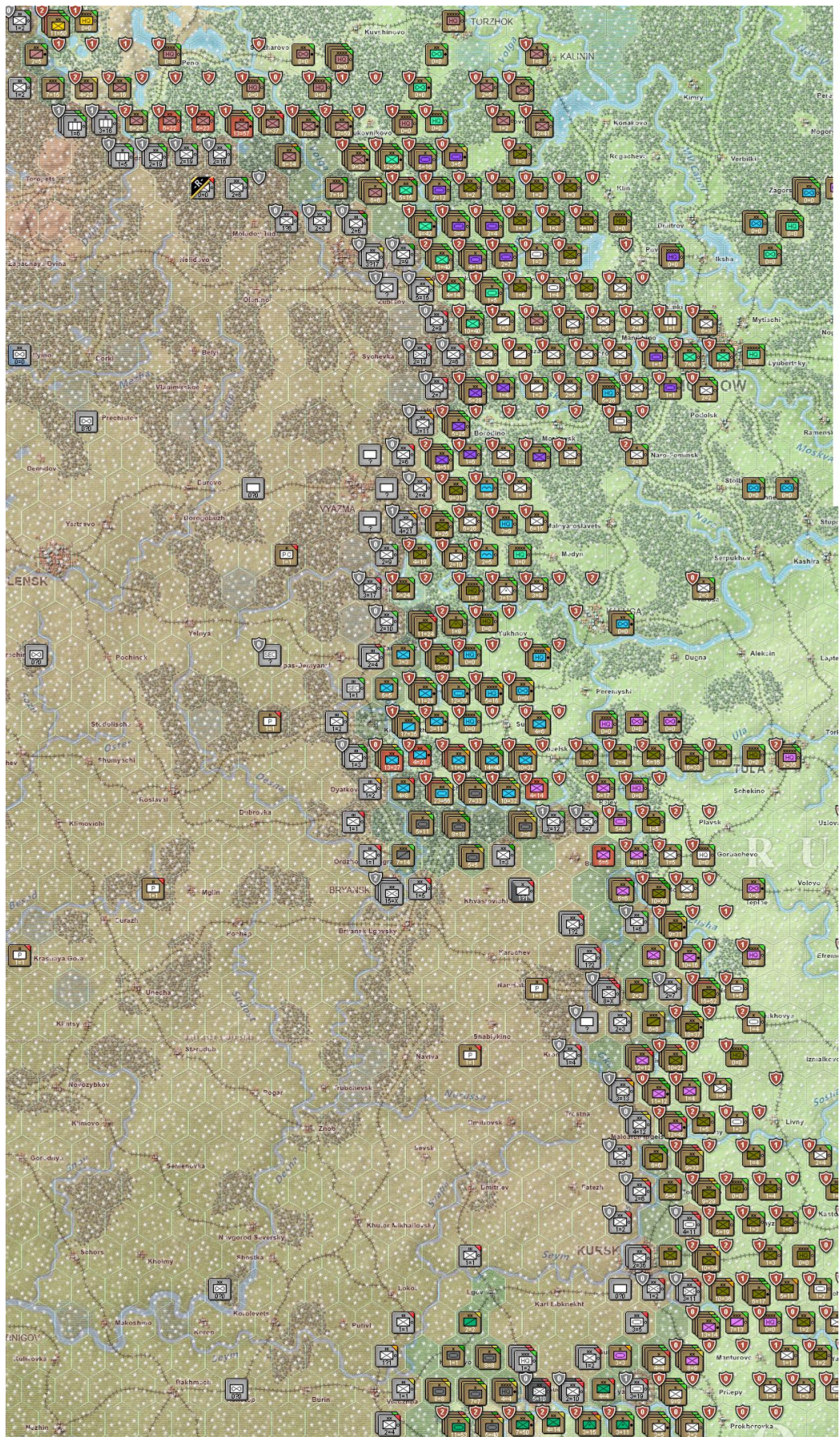
Execution

At Rzhev, I was able to encircle one German infantry division, but as I could not move any units into its escape route, it would simply withdraw one hex and reestablish contact with the German lines come next turn. Because of this, I decided to rout it instead, causing withdrawal attrition on the unit.

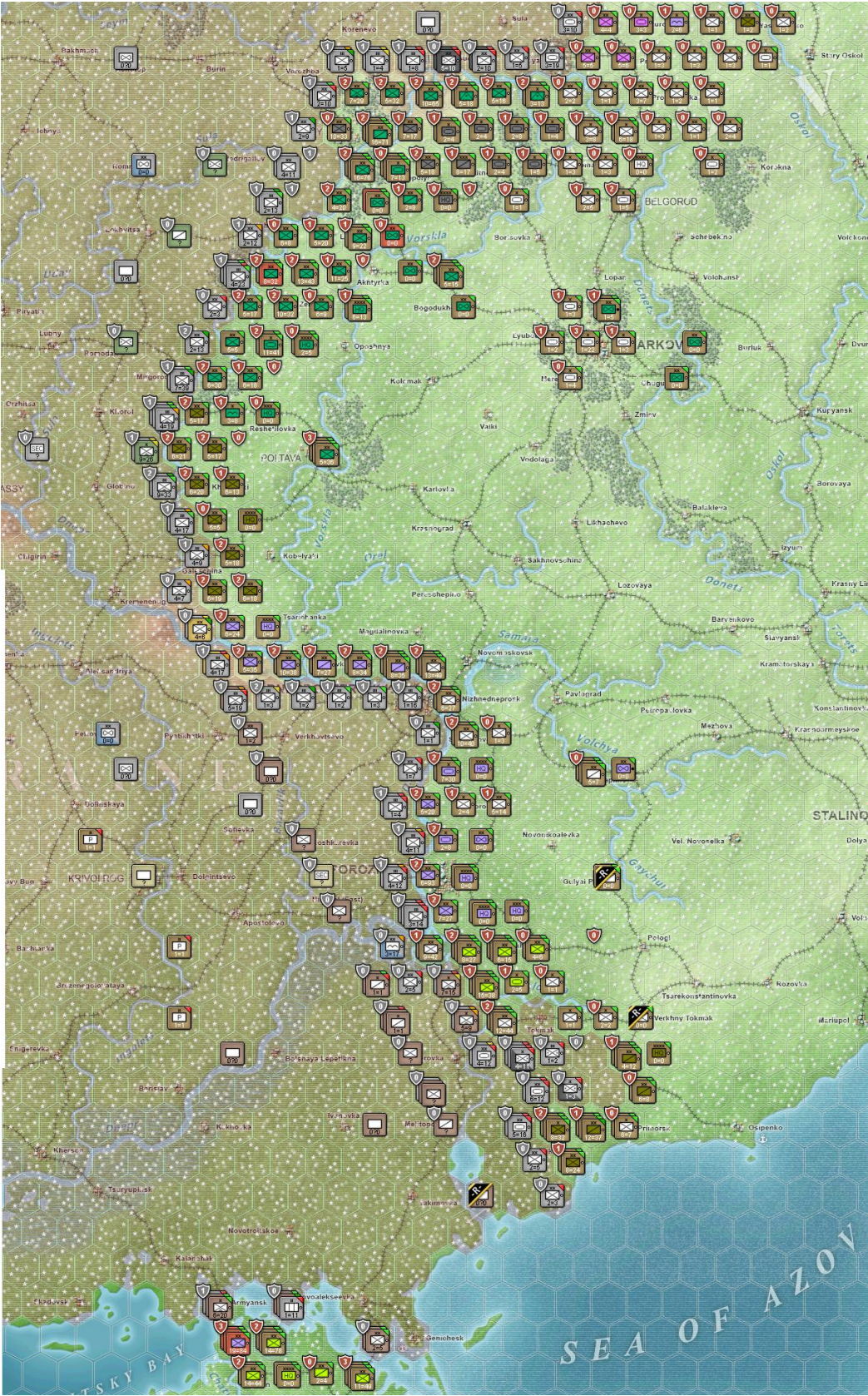
Further south, at Bryansk, my attacks have caused the German line to more or less collapse. The German infantry in the area are all still in good order, but they have been thrown back into a disorderly setup. A few of the forward German divisions have been either encircled or badly outmaneuvered. It seems very likely, that the Germans will suffer encirclements they can not break in this area before too long.

My attacks have shown that there are several German reserve divisions in both Bryansk and Orel, so the Germans may well decide to launch local counterattacks in order to relieve the encircled divisions to the east of Bryansk. If they do, those reserves will not be available to counter my continued attack directly north of Bryansk.

Below is an image of the central sector, as I give the turn to Hermann.



The South



Situational Assessment

In the south, the German front northwest of Kharkov is held by infantry that have been dug in somewhat. As a result, several of the hexes I have planned to launch the southern pincer of the Kursk offensive on has more than ten defensive CV.

Further south, the German Mountain infantry has been spilt into regiments and sent to help hold part of the line. To my mind, this is a mistake, as these units could have been a very valuable reserve for the Germans.

At Dnepropetrovsk, the Axis have pulled the Axis Minor units back in order to establish a second line of defense, in case I breach the Dnepr river line. The river itself has frozen over, with an ice level of eight.

Finally, east of Melitopol, the German Panzers have begun pulling back towards the west.

Planning

Northwest of Kharkov, I will launch an attack as planned. The main focus on the attack this turn will be to bring the German mobile divisions out of position, so that I may be able to exploit a breakthrough at some later turn. I doubt this will be possible, but I have to try.

All along the Southwestern Front's line to the west, I intend to attack as well, in order to prevent any reinforcements coming north.

At Dnepropetrovsk, I will try to encircle the Germans inside the city by attacking on both sides of it.

Finally, in the deep south, I will try to encircle the two easternmost German Motorized brigades by forcing them to withdraw eastwards (denying them the possibility to withdraw to the west).

Execution

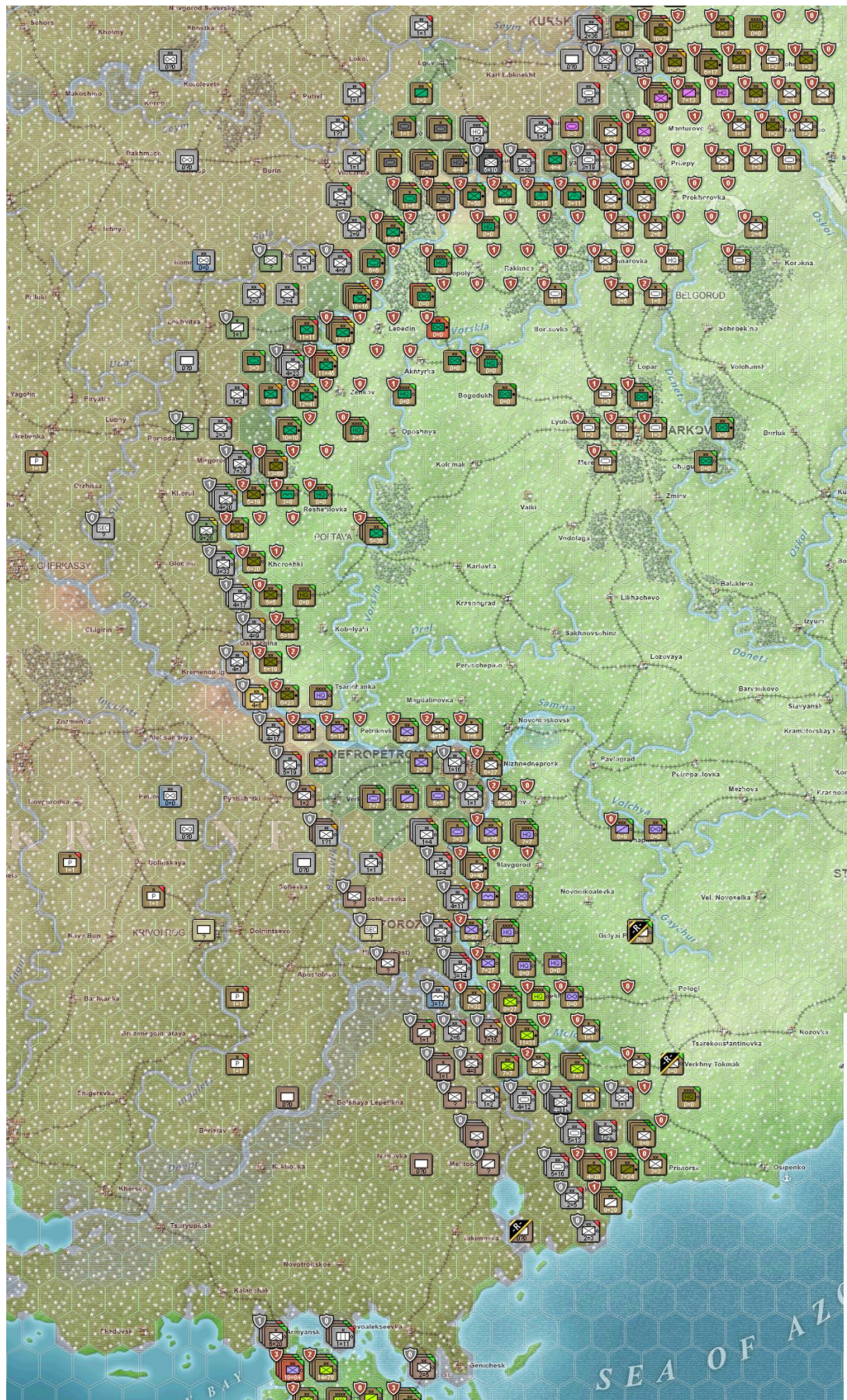
At Kursk, the Soviet offensive is looking very good indeed. A major breakthrough to the west of Kursk threaten to push several tank units deep into the German rear, and there are few forces nearby to stop the Soviets advancing further. Prudence may tell the Germans to conduct a general withdrawal in this area. However, should they decide to do so, several Panzers and Motorized divisions will be left behind in a very difficult position.

South of Sumy, I have penetrated the German lines and made a temporary encirclement of some units. The main purpose of attacking here is to prevent the German Mountain troops from moving north.

At Dnepropetrovsk, I have encircled two German Infantry regiments in such a way that I seriously doubt their ability to break free from the encirclement.

In the deep south, the first SS Motorized brigade has held out against a large number of attacks, most of which I thought had decent odds to force it to withdraw. As a consequence, the encircling of the Germans have not taken place in this area.

Below is an image of the southern sector, as I give the turn to Hermann.



Conclusion

Losses have been heavy this phase, as can be seen below. But even if the Soviets have lost four men for every Axis soldier lost, I still think this exchange rate is very good when considering the amount of attrition that will be suffered by the Germans caught in the open.

Take into account that I have already placed many German units in very dangerous positions, and I think this turn has been a major Soviet success.

It will be interesting to see, how the Germans react to these new developments.

AXIS LOSSES			
Men	15	15503	623645
Guns	3	287	13043
AFV	0	7	2123
SP & AC	0	6	540
Men Killed	5	6594	279163
Men Captured	0	4723	10251
Men Disabled	10	4186	334231
Men Returned			25560
SOVIET LOSSES			
Men	330	60797	2540819
Guns	1	296	26949
AFV	0	504	13544
SP & AC	1	74	3443
Men Killed	268	44690	478491
Men Captured	0	0	1098257
Men Disabled	62	16107	964071
Men Returned			57741