

Turn 27, Strategic Considerations

____ SPECIAL ____						
-	Vehicle Repair	A	-	5776	235396	0
-	Port	105	4	0	0	0
-	Railyard	266	9	0	0	0
-	Manpower	2903	43	92934	3962162	0
-	Vehicle	140	0	210746	298900	0
-	Heavy Industry	232	0	0	2630500	0
-	Oil Production	128	0	0	1664000	0
-	Fuel Production	149	0	0	929760	0
-	Resource Production	182	0	0	4842000	0
-	Armaments Production	366	0	155798	2074000	0

At Leningrad and Kursk, the Germans are frantically scrambling to get their divisions back to safety. The supply issues they face, may well mean it is too late for many of their units to get back to safety. This turn will be important in that regard, as it is now I may either close the pockets, get very close to doing so or else failing to do so entirely.

The fate of some 300.000 German "landers" (German army soldiers) depends on what happens during the rest of December.

Strategically, the Kursk salient is crumbling, and the bulge in the lines will soon be replaced by a more or less straight line front, stretching from north to south. When that happens, the Soviet supply system will be stretched to thin for further attacks into the German rear in this area. A similar situation will occur in the north, where the Soviet advances will soon get away from the Soviet ability to move supplies forward.

For those reasons, I believe the Leningrad and the Kursk offensives must come to a stop within the next few turns, and the Soviets can then prepare new defensive lines running straight from Leningrad to Novgorod in the north and running straight south from Bryansk in the center.

However, the winter is far from over, and I will not let it slip away unused. At the strategic level, I would very much like to put a little more space between the Germans and Moscow before the winter is out. So this area is the obvious choice for an offensive in January 1942. However, I am far from prepared for such an attack yet. For instance, the Volkhov Front in the area still has no air units assigned to it whatsoever. Nor are many of the other Front units prepared for an all out attack. This turn, I will commence planning for "the 2nd battle of Moscow".

German OoB losses since the end of last turn are 30.000 men.

Axis VP's are 191.

The North



Situational assessment

The withdrawal of the German infantry divisions from their exposed positions along the Volkhov continues. However, there are still eight infantry divisions north of the two hex gap remaining for the Germans to pull their units south. That is a prize well worth fighting for.

South of “the gap” the German line is looking relatively thin and it should be quite possible to push forward in this area as well. The German CV’s range from 1=2 to 1=10 for much of the front, while I have significant forces standing opposite the Germans.

South of Lake Ilmen, the Germans have moved their front forward once more and retaken the small area I pushed them out of in the early December attacks.

Planning

I will obviously do what I can to close “the gap” encircling eight or so German divisions in the process. To the south of “the gap”, my attacks will also proceed in order to remove any chance of a German relief attempt striking north and to establish my new planned defensive line from Leningrad to Novgorod.

South of Lake Ilmen, I will do nothing for now.

Execution

The first attack to cut off the northern German divisions proved to involve heavy casualties, not at least because of the few Ju87's the Germans managed to get flying in the battle. I just cannot help to be continuously amazed at how effective those dive bombers are at close support. However, the battle was won, which was the most important thing.

1 of 3 > 84,20 - Swamp - Blizzard Turn:27 1941-12-18		
Axis Forces Defending: II Corps 122nd Infantry Division (140) 526th Howitzer Battalion (0) I Corps -6% 3/58th Infantry Division (57) 536th Howitzer Battalion (0) 511th Gun Battalion (0) 676th Pioneer Battalion (3) [v]	Forces Engaged DEF: men 27410, art 315, afv 2 DAM: men 299, art 15, afv 0 LOST: men 132, art 6, afv 0 DEF: ftr 19, bmr 9, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 1, utl 0 3/46th Infantry Division RETREATED 3/58th Infantry Division RETREATED 122nd Infantry Division RETREATED [v]	Soviet Forces Attacking: 7th Independent Army 106th Rifle Division (95) 168th Rifle Division (58) 237th Rifle Division (85) 272nd Rifle Division (95) 286th Rifle Division (80) 67th Tank Brigade (24) 272nd Art Rgt RVGK (4) [v]
CV: 232->128.8 Fort: 0.48->0.00 Comm HQ: II Corps G Walter von Brockdorff-Ahlefeldt	Show Details Odds 4.07 : 1 Exit	CV: 452->525.2 Eng Val: 4 Comm HQ: 7th Independent Army GA Kirill Meretskov

After that, my attacks seemed to fail at every chance they got, it seemed, and I failed to cut off the German divisions, after all.

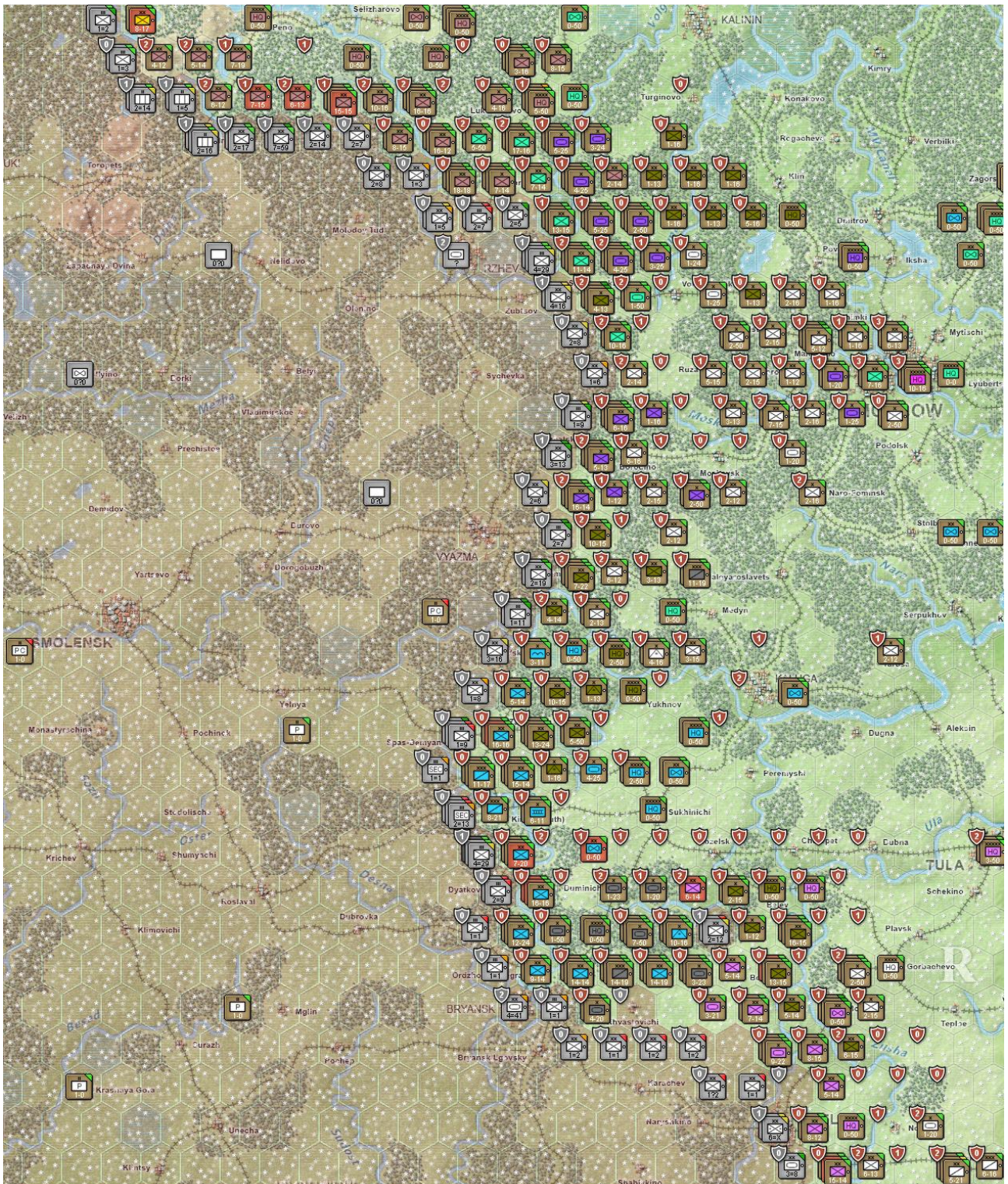
1 of 5 > 83,19 - Clear - Blizzard Turn:27 1941-12-18		
Axis Forces Defending: II Corps 32nd Infantry Division (39) 636th Howitzer Battalion (0) 2nd Nebelwerfer Battalion (0) 9th Nebelwerfer Battalion (0) I Corps -6% 11th Infantry Division (32) II/58th Howitzer Battalion (0) [v]	Forces Engaged DEF: men 38310, art 440, afv 47 DAM: men 34, art 3, afv 3 LOST: men 48, art 1, afv 1 DEF: ftr 15, bmr 2, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 Defending Forces HELD [v]	Soviet Forces Attacking: 23rd Army -10% 90th Rifle Division (34) 43rd Artillery Regiment RVGK (1) 16th Army 77th Rifle Division (38) 8th Motorcycle Regiment (7) 126th Art Rgt RVGK (4) 24th Artillery Regiment RVGK (3) [v]
CV: 83->80.7 Fort: 0.00->0.00 Comm HQ: II Corps G Walter von Brockdorff-Ahlefeldt	Show Details Odds 1 : 2.64 Exit	CV: 97->30.5 Eng Val: 0 Comm HQ: 16th Army GM Aleksandr Vasilevsky

< 2 of 5 > 83,19 - Clear - Blizzard Turn:27 1941-12-18		
Axis Forces Defending: II Corps 32nd Infantry Division (43) I Corps -6% 11th Infantry Division (31) 637th Howitzer Battalion (0) 185th Stug Battalion (2) XXXVIII Corps -6% 1/21st Infantry Division (9) [v]	Forces Engaged DEF: men 36044, art 361, afv 46 DAM: men 50, art 4, afv 8 LOST: men 129, art 5, afv 1 DEF: ftr 19, bmr 3, utl 0 LOST: ftr 1, bmr 0, utl 0 Defending Forces HELD [v]	Soviet Forces Attacking: 16th Army 111th Rifle Division (41) 68th Rifle Division (40) 77th Rifle Division (25) 126th Art Rgt RVGK (4) 116th Howitzer Regiment (4) 24th Artillery Regiment RVGK (3) 112th AA Battalion (0) [v]
CV: 86->64.6 Fort: 0.00->0.00 Comm HQ: II Corps G Walter von Brockdorff-Ahlefeldt	Show Details Odds 1.04 : 1 Exit	CV: 117->67.2 Eng Val: 0 Comm HQ: 16th Army GM Aleksandr Vasilevsky

The only consolation in the north was that I have reestablished a land based connection to Leningrad.

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

The Center



Situational assessment

At Moscow, little is happening. I guess that is good news to me, as the more quiet this sector seems, the less attention it will have from the Germans.

Further south, northwest of Bryansk, the German line is continuous, although with great variations in defensive CV (ranging from 1=1 to 4=29). The Germans have sent at least two Motorized and one Panzer division to help hold this sector of the front. In this area, I also have the first of my rail repair units active.

East of Bryansk, the two German infantry divisions remain firmly encircled, and the Germans have focused their efforts on building a stable front. One of the German Panzer divisions (the one that gave me so much trouble last turn) has been rushed south, it seems, to help avert a German disaster at Kursk.

At Orel, two German Panzer divisions and one Motorized division remain at the very forward edge of the German lines, flanked by a series of weak German infantry divisions. I am surprised at this, as I would have thought the Germans would refrain from such setups by now.

Planning

At Moscow, I will begin ordering my Front commands and set all units soon to be involved in attacks to "Refit" (remember that only units on "Refit" will reinforce to 100% ToE). I will also assign new aircraft to the area as they become available, but once the offensive begins, I will move Air Groups from the Western Front northwards in order to assist in the attack.

Northwest of Bryansk, I will continue my attacks for a turn or two, not because it matters much in relation to the Kursk offensive, but rather because I wish to see if I can get a better staging situation for my coming attack west of Moscow.

East of Bryansk, I will crush the encircled German divisions and otherwise attack southwards, in order to link up with a northwestbound attack south of Orel. If this succeeds, I will have bagged another three mobile German divisions.

Execution

Reordering the Soviet forces and moving up new units by rail is by far the most boring task the Soviet commander is faced with, in my honest opinion. Bombing German troops is tremendously fun in comparison. Wouldn't it be great if the Soviet units that are more than 20 hexes from the nearest German and has a detection level of zero could "instamove" by rail – up to a point 20 hexes from the nearest German?

In any case, I have begun placing Airborne brigades and Naval Rifle Brigades in the Moscow Defense Zone. My plan is to let those units spend their time digging for the rest of the war (with the exception of the airborne brigades, that I will form into divisions at some point).

West of Bryansk, I have advanced a little, but without any encirclements. The most interesting thing to say of this area is that the Germans will have to abandon Bryansk or suffer another encirclement.

Of more interest is the developments around Orel and Kursk, and both those areas will be described below, as the events around those two cities have been closely linked.

North of Orel, the two encircled German infantry divisions have been destroyed in two attacks. This has given me quite a few prisoners, as can be seen below.

Axis Forces Defending: LI Corps 28th Infantry Division (35) 95th Infantry Division (38)	< 2 of 4 > 101.59 - Light Woods - Blizzard Turn: 27 1941-12-18		Soviet Forces Attacking: 32nd Army -25% 19th Guards Rifle Division (45) 217th Rifle Division (37) 42nd Army 362nd Rifle Division (32) 333rd Rifle Division (36) 18th Rifle Brigade (14) 30th Rifle Brigade (14)
	Forces Engaged		
	DEF: men 23739, art 236, afv 0 DAM: men 52, art 7, afv 0 LOST: men 21120, art 210, afv 0 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		
95th Infantry Division SURRENDERED 28th Infantry Division SURRENDERED			
CV: 73->72.0 Comm HQ: LI Corps G Hans Reinhard	Odds 2.26 : 1		CV: 191->162.8 Comm HQ: 42nd Army GM Semyon Krivoshein
Show Details		Exit	

My attacks from the north of Orel has revealed that the German infantry in this area is all but spent. The combats fought here soon revealed final CV's of around 10 or less on the battle reports. I was even close to succeeding in a hasty attack performed by a single Tank Brigade. Combind with the attacks from south of Orel, the Germans inside the city is now in grave danger of being encircled next turn. To me it seems all but a certainty that it will happen, but the Germans may yet find some reason to disagree.

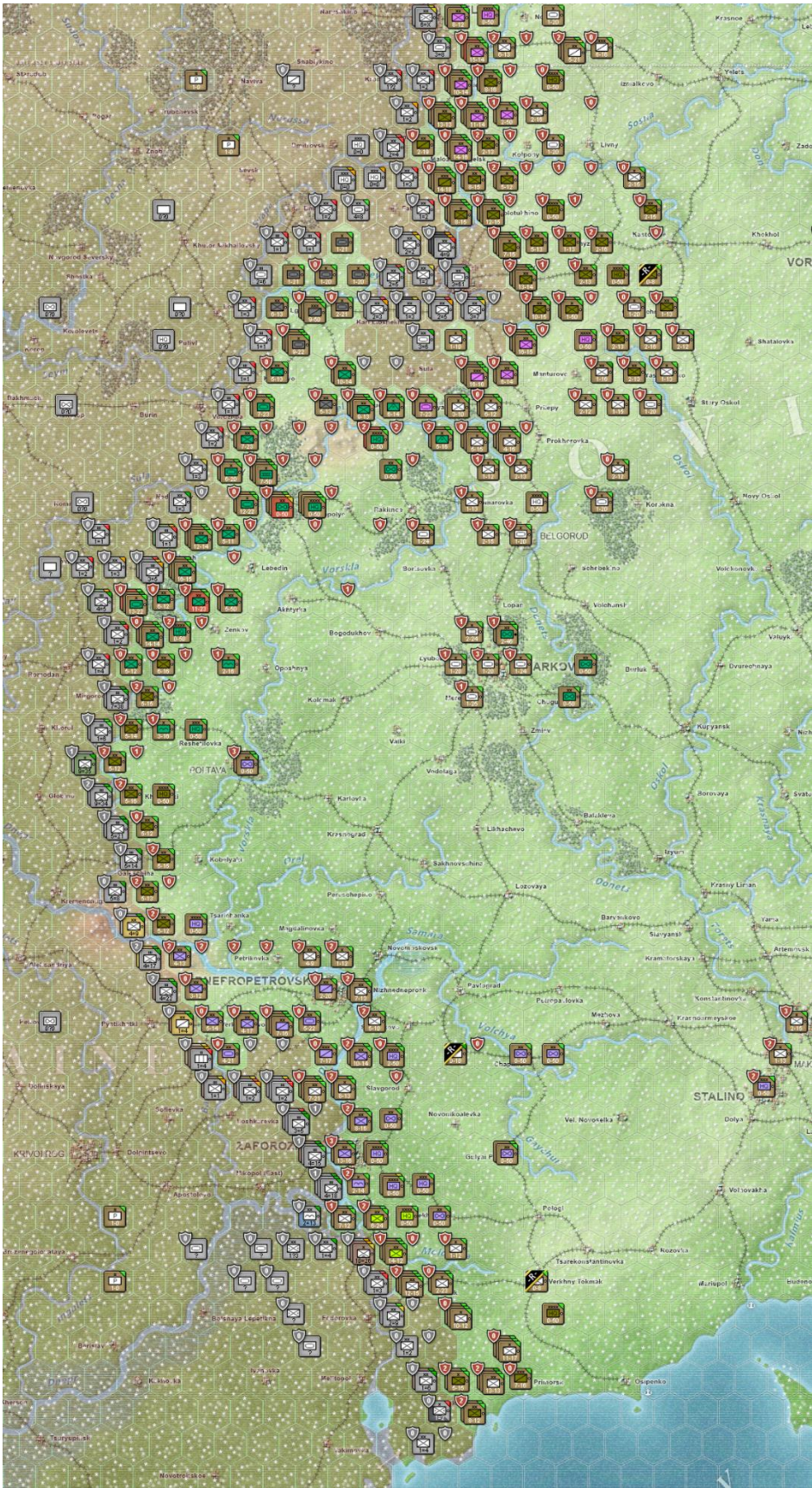
Further south, at Kursk, the pocket has been sealed around some 19 German divisions, including five panzers and six motorized divisions. The weakest section of the ring holding the Germans is manned by a 6=6 Soviet Cavalry Corps.

Should the Germans mount a releif attempt, I have penty of forces in the area to reseal the pocket once more. The Germans outside the pocket are themselves in grave danger of further Soviet advances, and should be pulled back instantly, if they are to avoid risking destruction.

To the west of the main Kursk pocket, a lone German infantry regiment has also been encircled.

As can be imagined, the fighting in the area has been severe, as the following reports image suggest:

The South



Situational Assessment

The Germans at Kursk are desperately trying to escape encirclement by withdrawing northwards. Some of their forward Panzers have been unable (or unwilling) to move more than one hex this turn, signalling that the German supply situation is bad indeed. The total number of German divisions threatened with encirclement are eight infantry divisions, six motorized divisions and five panzer divisions. Should the Germans lose such a force, it would be nothing short of a major disaster.

West of the Kursk attack, stretching south all the way to the Dnepr, is a very thin screen of German infantry, rarely capable of mustering a higher CV than 3=5.

Going south from Dnepropetrovsk towards the black Sea, the front has been left to German and Axis Minor infantry, with the German Panzers in the deep south being rushed off the front, heading for the nearest railline in Krivoi Rog (I assume) in order to be sent north.

Planning

At Kursk, the task for this turn is simple: Close the pocket, so it can not be reopened by the expected German counterattacks. In order to do this, I will rush the 6th and the 12th Armies of the Southwestern Front into the western pincerattack in order to move north and west come next turn. From the south, the remaining armies of the Southwestern Front will be asked to cover a greater section of the front, where I will do no attacks this turn. The area to the east and south of the expected pocketed area will be thinly held by STAVKA units for now.

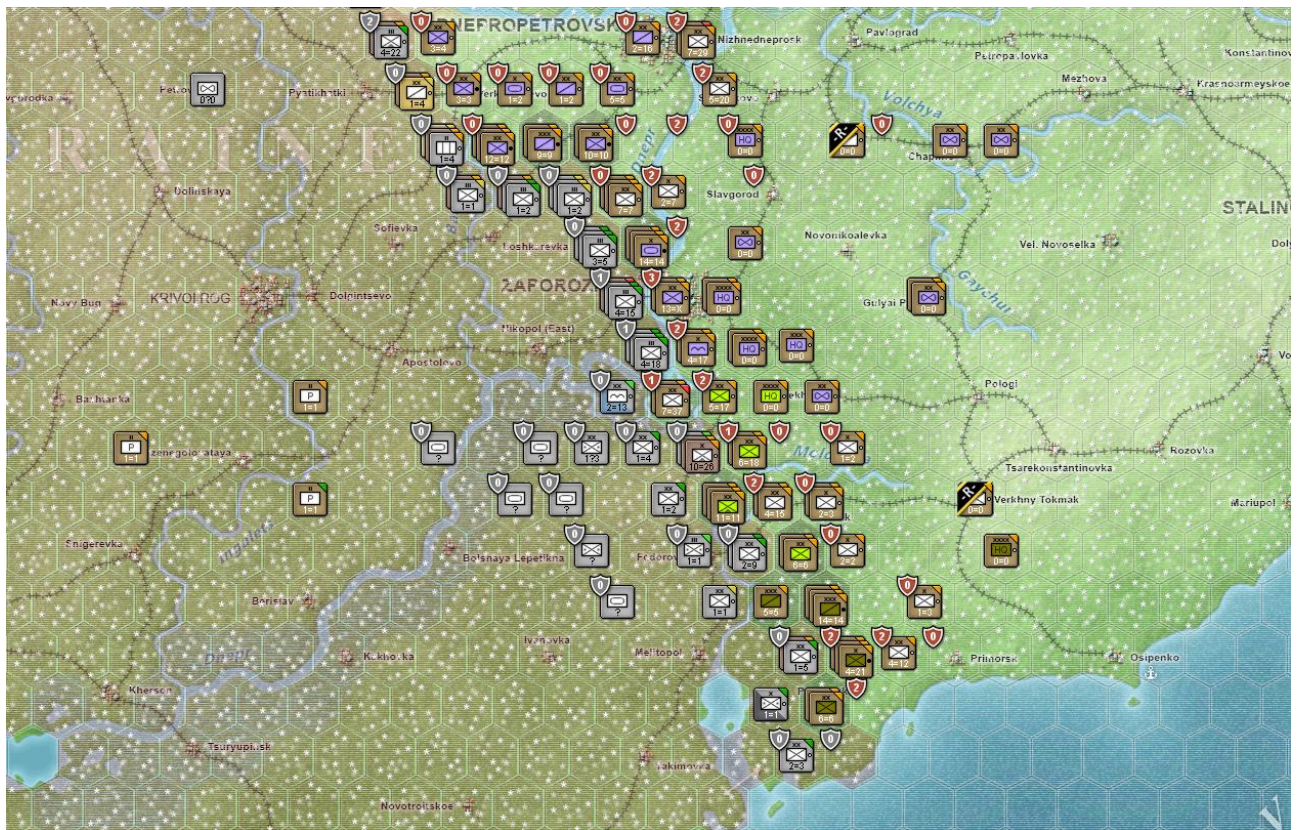
At Dnepropetrovsk, I will place my mobil units in a better position for a later local offensive aimed at encircling more Germans, while south of Zaporozhye, I will attack in order to move my front forward to the Bay of Melitopol.

Execution

After the events in the center, the south has seemed very uneventful, to say the least.

At dnepropetrovsk, I have maneuvered my units, while at the Bay of melitopol, I have attacked and sought to bring the defenders out of balance.

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



Conclusion

In my opinion, this turn has been a disaster for the Germans. Having 19 divisions encircled at Kursk, and another five or so destined to become encircled at Leningrad would mean a loss of 250.000 men or so, plus a lot of panzers, guns and vehicles to boot.

Added to this must be the losses suffered through the fighting. Since the start of December, the German OoB has dropped by no less than 150.000 men. Meanwhile, the Soviet forces has climbed by almost 200.000.

AXIS LOSSES			
Men	24	34055	767571
Guns	1	530	15341
AFV	0	19	2427
SP & AC	0	8	694
Men Killed	14	4756	303498
Men Captured	0	22724	44220
Men Disabled	10	6575	419853
Men Returned			30873
SOVIET LOSSES			
Men	20	34810	2755979
Guns	0	185	28649
AFV	0	181	14665
SP & AC	0	39	3669
Men Killed	17	25360	565969
Men Captured	0	0	1099995
Men Disabled	3	9450	1090015
Men Returned			67711