
Fifth Corps

SPI's Central Front Series

Replay by Richard Bool

Background by Russ Gifford.

Central Front is a game-system which covers potential warfare in West Germany during the 1980's. The scale is 4 km to a hex and 12 hours per turn. Games in the **Central Front** system include this one – **Fifth Corps** (Central Front Series Vol. 1); **Hof Gap** (Vol. 2); and **BAOR** (Vol. 3.). Each game may be played individually or may be joined together with others in various configurations to create larger games. The original plans called for 10 games. Only these three were published before SPI fell in the bad business climate of the early 1980s. But despite that their premature demise, the Central Front game system was a unique contribution to game simulations, and has adherents 40 years later!

Playing the Central Front Game System.

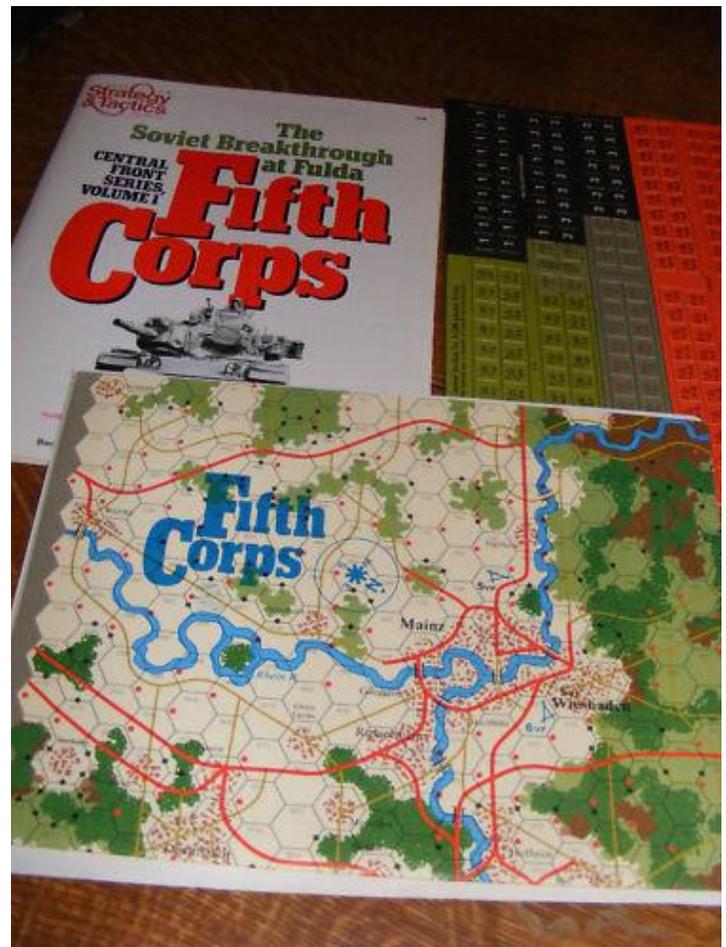
The game is played in Game-Turns, each consisting of a *theoretically endless* number of player phases. Each phase allows a player to move any number of his units and conduct attacks as part of the movement. Then the other player then moves and attacks with his units in the next Player Phase. This alternates until neither Player wishes to move or attack with his units, **thus ending the Game-Turn.**

Be aware - it can also end with the complete exhaustion of all available units if a player isn't careful!

The Friction Point System

The **Central Front** game system is unique in that "losses" are measured in terms of Friction Points (FP's). FP's represent personnel and equipment losses, the expenditure of ammunition (particularly for artillery units) and fatigue. The removal of FP's from a unit represents the receipt of supply and replacements, and the accumulation of combat experience. The ability of units to have combat as a function of movement, plus the use of an "endless turn" of back to back player phases allows for very fluid play.

The outcomes of attacks are expressed in terms of Friction Points gained by the defending and/or attacking units. Each unit may "absorb" up to five Friction Points. When a unit gains its sixth FP it is considered destroyed. Unlike most games, a unit may be moved more than once per Game-Turn in Central Front. This, however, adds to a unit's fatigue (by adding Friction Points to the unit or stack of units).



This is the **Fifth Corps Scenario**. It denotes the initial attack of the Soviet 8th Guards Army, attempting to seal the fate of NATO troops in the Fulda Gap / Frankfurt area. The attackers committed the 1st Guards Tank Army, while the remainder of the 103rd Guards Airborne Division dropped deep into the rear for the front, entangling the movements by the German 5th Panzer Division and the U.S. 3rd Armored Division.

Richard Bool painstakingly captured his replay of this scenario and added a wealth of comments. *(Any comments I add will be in italics!)* Enjoy!

Great Games in the Central Front Series

Soviet armored forces break through into the central German plain. *Fifth Corps* contains a 22" x 34" map, 200 cardboard playing pieces, and *Central Front Standard* and *Fifth Corps Exclusive* rules booklets. **\$8.00**



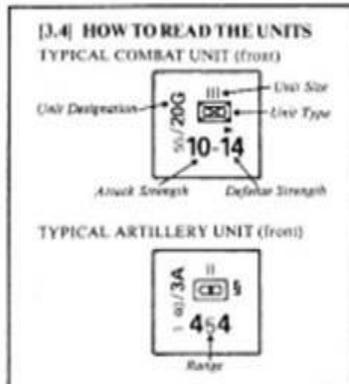
A combined Warsaw Pact force attacks into the mountainous south German area. *Hof Gap* contains a 22" x 34" map, 400 cardboard playing pieces, and *Central Front Standard* and *Hof Gap Exclusive* rules. **\$10.00**



Combine these games with BAOR featured in S&T 88! Available through your retailer for \$6.00.

Central Front is an ongoing series of games in which NATO forces in Germany confront the Warsaw Pact steamroller in a hypothetical future war. *Fifth Corps* is the first game in the series and covers the Soviet breakout in the Fulda Gap area. *Hof Gap*, the second game in the Central Front series, expands the scope of the simulation by examining the Czech, East German and Soviet forces attacking to the south of the *Fifth Corps* area. A campaign game is included which ties the first two games together. New elements, such as artillery counterbattery fire, US training areas, supply airheads and airmobile operations, are introduced which can be incorporated into *Fifth Corps* as well. The third game in the series, *BAOR (British Army of the Rhine)* is available in *Strategy & Tactics 88*, and offers new Standard rules applicable to both *Fifth Corps* and *Hof Gap*.

All games in the Central Front series are now available through your local retailer!



The *Hof Gap* and *BAOR* maps show the *Fifth Corps* map as part of the Central Front game series.

Section of *Hof Gap* map and sample counters.



Scenario Setup:



ABOVE is the initial deployment of USAEUR V Corps alongside southern elements of Bundeswehr III Corps. In the front, a brigade from 2nd Panzer Grenadier Division (here denoted by 2nd Jäger - not truly Jäger troops) plus the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (the Blackhorse Regiment). You can see the West German attack helicopter brigade at Fritzlar to the very north, close to the border. Further back around Frankfurt and further north, the US 3rd Armored, US V Corps support (attack helicopter and artillery) and the West German 5th Panzer Division.

It's fascinating looking at this original picture, before the 8th Guards Army crossed at Herleshausen and just east of Mellrichstadt (now an autobahn), and the evolving assault in the later post.

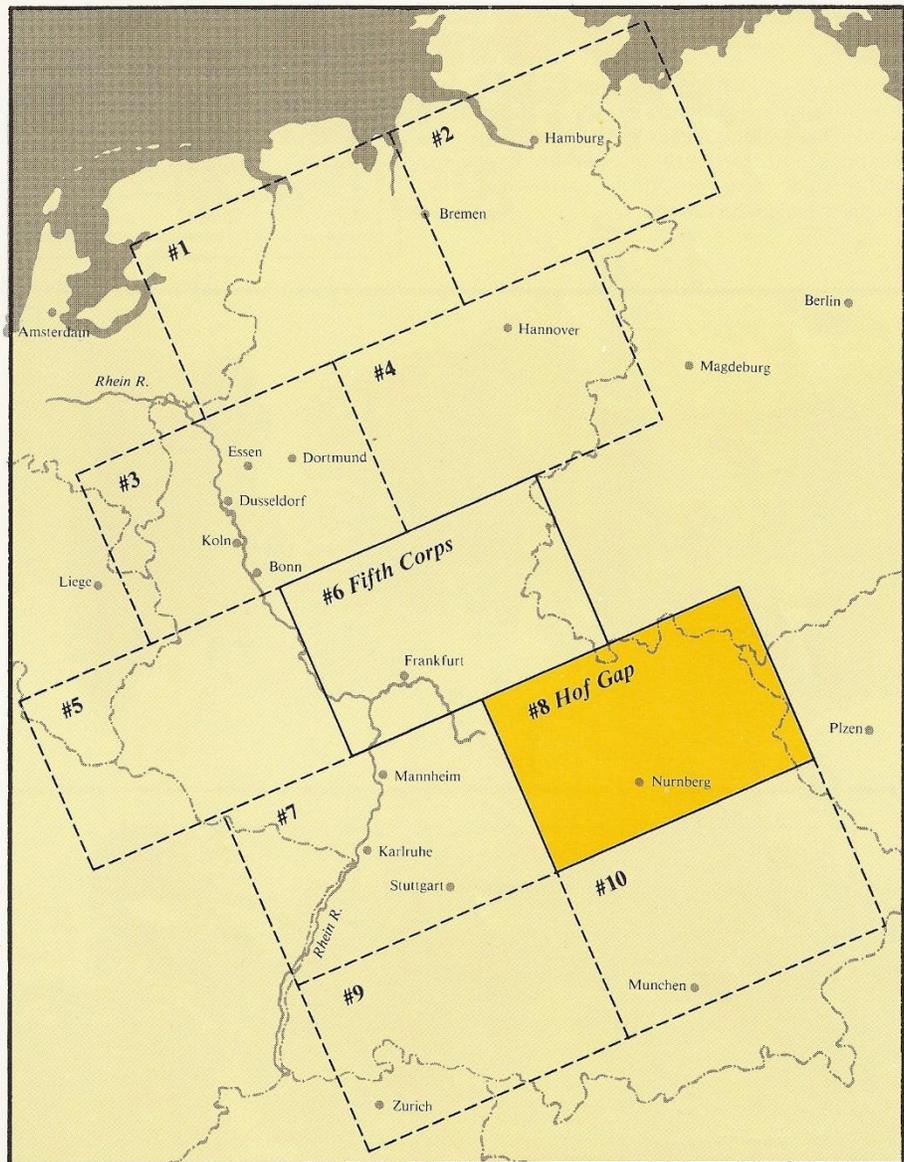
Below on this page, an advertisement for the series!

Central Front is an ongoing series of games in which NATO forces in Germany confront the Warsaw Pact steamroller in a hypothetical future war. *Fifth Corps* in this issue is the first of the *Central Front* game series; *Hof Gap*, the next game in the series to be released, will take the game system one step further. *Hof Gap* will add such elements as air supremacy, artillery counter-battery fire, U.S. training areas, supply airheads, and airmobile operations — new ideas that can be incorporated into *Fifth Corps* as well.

As shown in the accompanying map, all of West Germany will eventually be portrayed in the *Central Front* series. The *Fifth Corps* (#6 on the map) game-map abuts on its south edge with the *Hof Gap* (#8 on the map) game-map. The third game in the series, as yet untitled, is scheduled to use map #4.

Hof Gap will include a 22" x 34" map, 400 cardboard counters, *Central Front*-system Standard Rules, 12-page Exclusive Rules, and will contain three new scenarios, one of which *Seventh Army* is a campaign game using the *Fifth Corps* and *Hof Gap* maps joined together.

Available for \$9.95 in retail outlets nationwide!



1/6/1A 3-7	5/3/EGA 1-1	1/35/1A 4-6	RAG/1 346
44G/15G 48-12	A/1/2C 1-2	106/4 353	262/26 1-4
3/23T 10-11	363/16/12 1-3	DAG/23T 353	2/13/8 3-7

6/14/1A 353	363/12 2-3	172/17 1-2	107/4 3-7	1	3/3/EGA 0-1	2/11 7307	7/6/19 6-7
5/1G/18G 10-14	12/12 5-5	3	DAG/11 555	320/111 141	80/20 9-9	4/3/EGA 3203	15/13A 3203

BELOW: Southern edge of 11th Armored Cavalry, with artillery and attack helicopter units based in Fulda. Also shown are West German Heimatschutz battalion holding Neuhof behind Fulda and two troops of 11th ACAV. (Below)



BELOW: Looking east from Alsfeld down the autobahn towards Bad Hersfeld, and the Fulda Gap (itself centered on Bad Hersfeld, but named after the major town in the area - Fulda). West German 2nd PzGD (2nd Jäger) troops behind 11th ACAV units in Bad Hersfeld and straddling the autobahn further east from Bad Bersfeld – "tip of the spear, the edge of the knife... crack of my..." (credit to Master Sergeant Farell).



BELOW: Southern edge of the sector, southeast of Fulda with a mix of 11th ACAV and Heimatschutz, protecting V Corps from a GSFSG edge run to the south of Fulda, between the V Corps and VII Corps sectors.

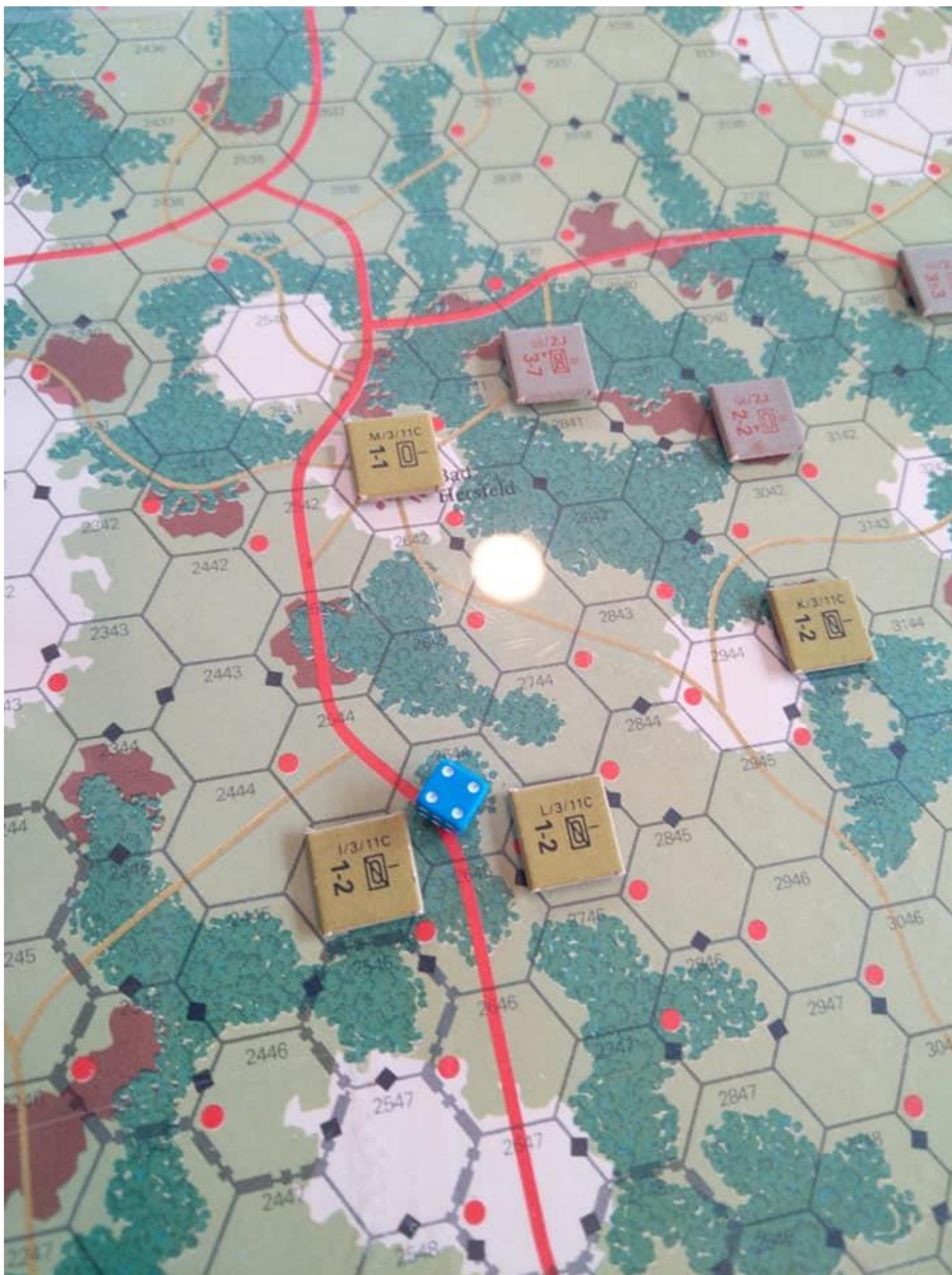


And it begins!

BELOW: Warsaw Pact pre-emptive air strikes! Maximum effect against front line forces south of Fulda (Fulda can be seen at the top of the image). As the US troops are companies, 4-FP hits destroy the units. The Heimatschutz battalion is at max FP level, all but obliterated. Although a significant hit, this took an air strike package away from stronger, more important units. It does, however, pave the way for a strike to the south by WARPAC forces, depleting them severely.



BELOW: Another WARPAC air strike package on the autobahn leading into the Fulda Gap. west from the IGB crossing at Herlehausen. Again, a 4-FP strike wipes out the 11th ACAV units deployed near the eastern Observation Post Romeo, opening the way for advancing Soviet divisions.



Another well targeted air strike into the broken area south of Fuldabruck (itself on the southern edge of Kassel). Two West German battalions deployed to protect the area south of the major city are heavily damaged (3-FP result) from the strike, along with a severe strike on the Kampfhubschrauberregiment 36 "Kurbessen" (Attack Helicopter Regiment 36) - a 4-FP result against the very powerful West German attack helicopter unit almost takes it out of action. The focused air strikes north of Bad Hersfeld suggest a path is being cleared for advancing Soviet divisions south of



Kassel.

BELOW: WARPAC air strike packages against the tightly grouped USAREUR 3rd Armored Division kasernes sees a mixed range of impacts. Results of 2, 3, and 4-FP against three US brigade groupings from the Spearhead division leave it severely degraded. Due to the time to get 3rd Armored underway, there is little the US troops can do to repair the damage. At least the focus on the front line troops has spared the US Corps troops in Frankfurt.



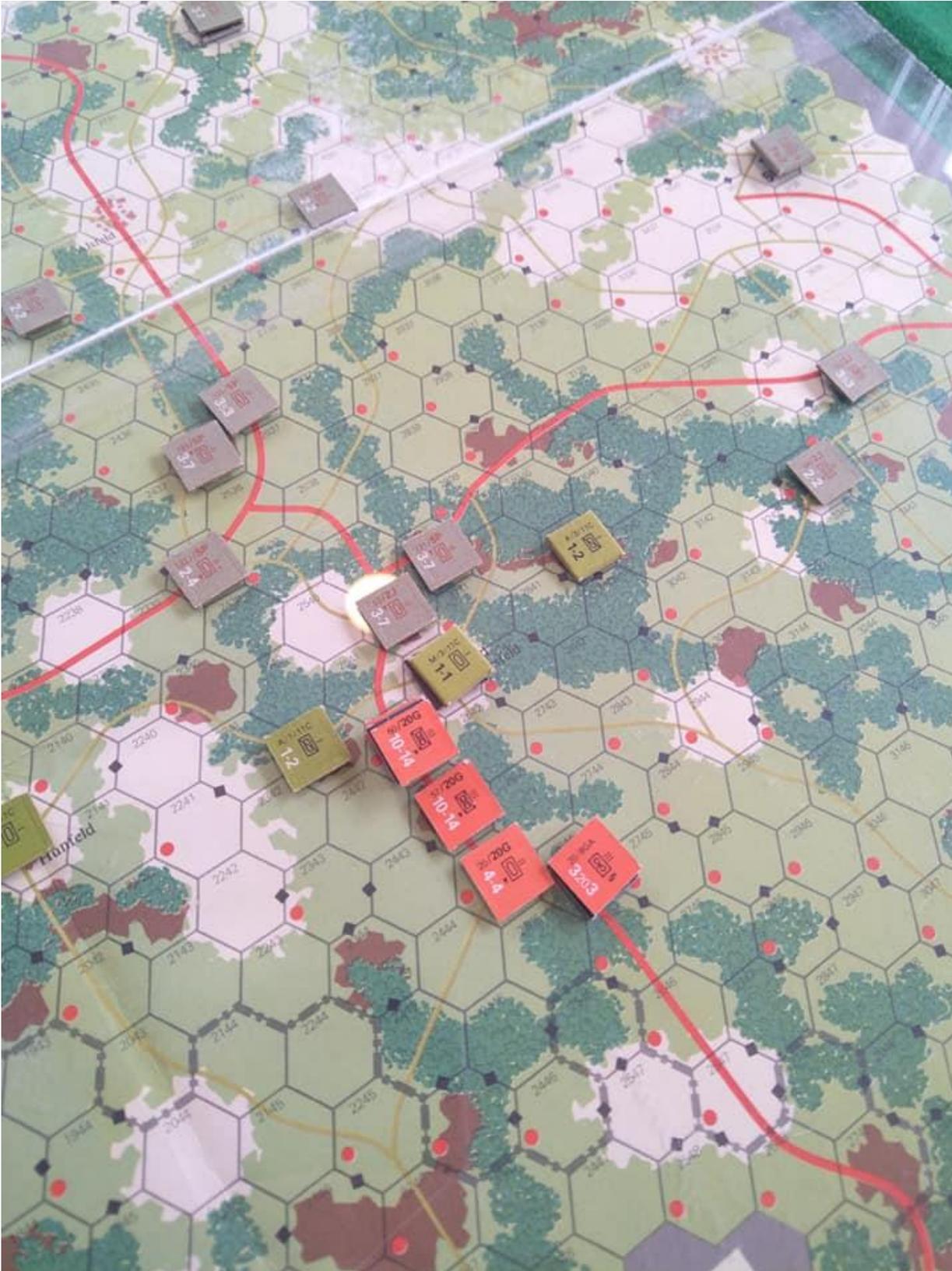
BELOW A further two air strikes round off the pre-emptive assault by the 16th Air Army against the final brigade-grouping in the western suburbs of Frankfurt itself, as well as the US attack helicopter brigade (at the Flughafen Frankfurt - the main airport for the city - presumably relocating from the Fliegerhorst Casern, Eriensee, north of Hanau in an attempt to avoid strikes - of little help).



BELOW The red tide starts coming in. Initial advances of the 39th Motor Rifle Division of 8th Guards Army (8GA) along with army-level units pinning forces east of Fulda and working to envelop Fulda to the south.



BELOW: Rapidly advancing down the autobahn, the 20th Guard Motor Rifle Division (of 8GA) entered West Germany, across the Inner German Border (IGB) at Herlehausen, bypassed the smoking wrecks of US 11th ACAV troops west of Wildeck with little to no resistance. Advancing directly up to the US McPheeters Barracks in Bad Hersfeld where the armored troop were establishing their defensive line along with the cavalry troopers in the hills to the south of Bad Hersfeld, in the area around Hauneck (represented by the Town symbol on the hex).



BELOW: Near the southern edge of Kassel, the second group of the 20th Motor Rifle Division acts as a pinning force against the brigade from the 2nd PzGdr Division, not strong enough themselves to punch through easily. (Note the two units both have black Friction Point markers – they are hurting!)



BELOW: Looking further west from the initial Soviet advance into the Fulda Gap at Bad Hersfeld, the advancing Bundeswehr Heer 5th Panzer Division can be seen streaming down the autobahn towards the rapidly forming front line. The 5th PzD avoided the air strikes as they were able to get well spread out prior to Soviet aircraft arriving over the IGB. Because of this, the 5th PzD will become the main defensive force, needing to delay the Soviet advance long enough for the 3rd Armored Division to get underway.



BELOW: A wider view across the V Corps sector showing the advancing 5th PzD to the north, and the 3rd AD in Frankfurt and to the north, with some of the covering force visible to the bottom of the image (to the east).

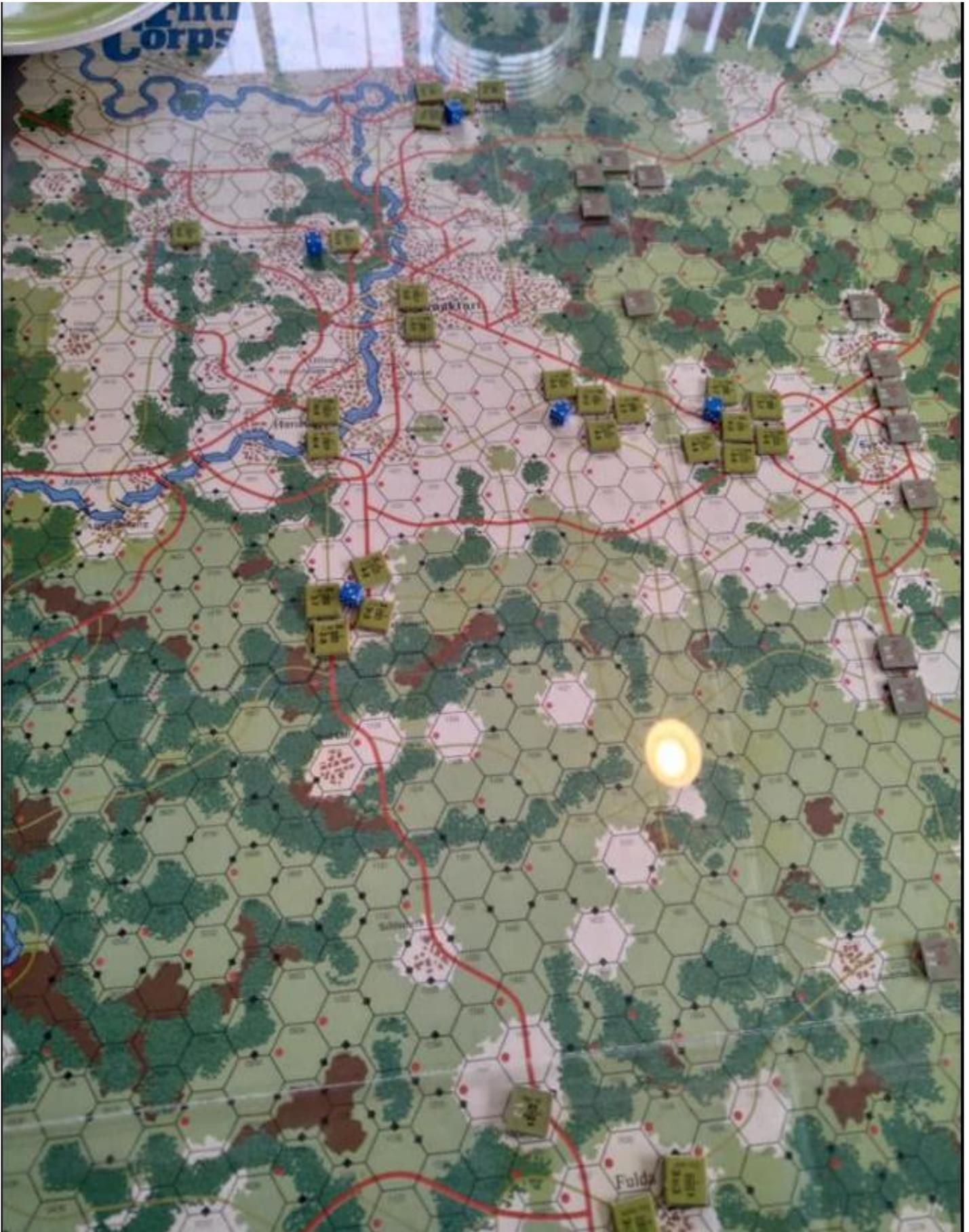


BELOW with some of the covering force visible to the bottom of the image (to the east).



(Full combined view next page.)

BELOW: Same shot as previous page, combined.



BELOW Further Soviet advances during the second impulse, setting up for subsequent attacks or pinning forces.



BELOW: A closer look at the area east and south east of Fulda showing the evolving Soviet assault. (*The small American units will likely be steamrolled, but they are costing the Soviets time - and friction points.*)



BELOW: A view of the 5th PzD brigade screaming through Frankfurt, positioning themselves to the southern part of the V Corps sector, protecting the eastern USAREUR units, still forming up.



BELOW: Further movements in the area around Alsfeld and Bad Hersfeld, strengthening a second line of defense.



BELOW: A closer view of the countryside south of Kassel, with the 2nd PzGdr units forming two lines of defense.



BELOW: Soviet forces pushing through south of Fulda, clearing the remaining covering troops.



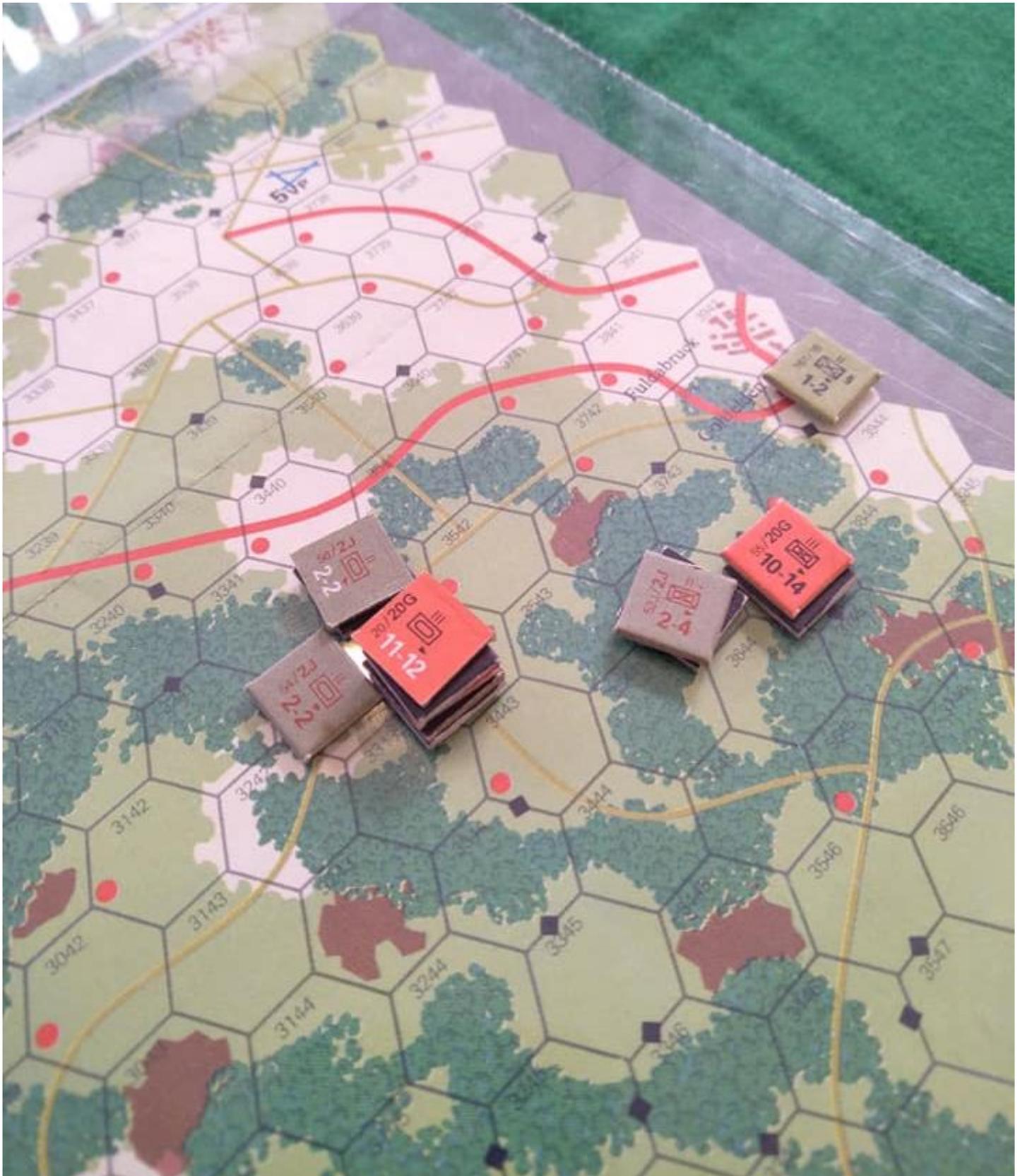
BELOW: The Soviet 57th Guards Motor Rifle Division arriving on the battlefield (top right of image) and pushing between the two main points of contact at Fulda and Bad Hersfeld. The 5th Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 5th PzD raced up the autobahn to plug the gap but ultimately is eliminated. In doing so, the 5th MRD is halted, allowing the 5th PzD to meet the onslaught, holding key cities and defensive terrain.



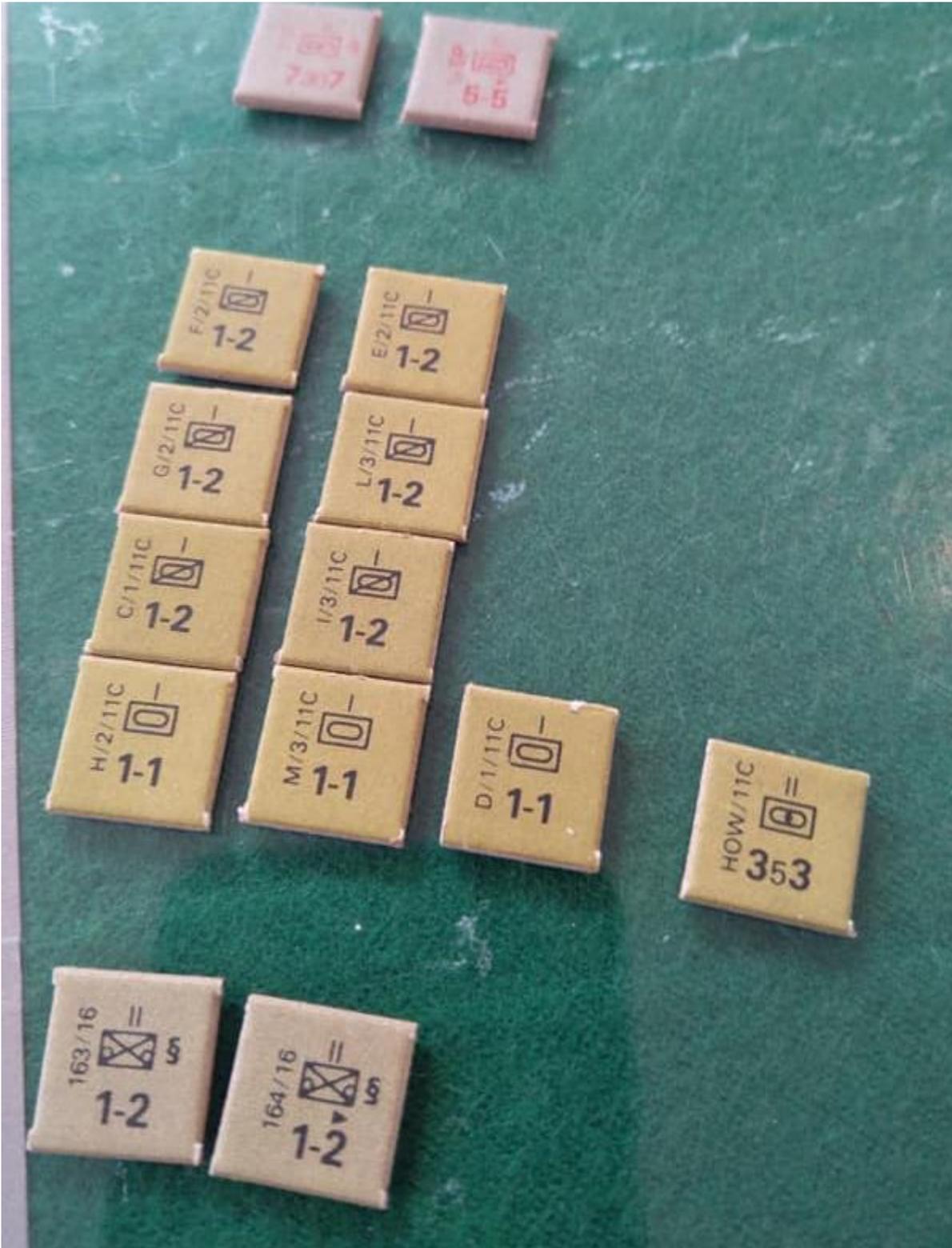
BELOW: The Bad Hersfeld area has stalled, but no further NATO forces are available for reinforcements. Some troops have positioned themselves to the north of the Soviet assault to avoid an end run to the north.



BELOW: Minor movements to the north of Bad Hersfeld as West German troops attempt to pin the main Soviet force in the northern area. German defensive battles in the area suffered the loss of the final elements of the Attack Helicopter Regiment 36



BELOW: Losses by the end of Turn 2, late at the end of Day One - 2 entire squadrons of the 11th ACR have been shattered, their remaining troops no longer able to continue the fight. The ACR howitzer battery has been eliminated, as has the ACR armor troop from the third ACAV squadron. The West German attack helicopters were eliminated due to losses in combat, and the 5th Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 5th PzD which raced forward to plug a gap, and was eliminated. Two Heimatschutz battalions round out the NATO losses. **No Soviet units have been eliminated, but they are all heavily attrited due to the frenetic pace of operations and pressure on the NATO front line.**



BELOW: Turn 3 the Soviet 16th Air Army regains control of the skies long enough to air drop the 103rd Air Assault Division deep in the NATO rear area. Troops advancing from their landing zones move to hold bridges, and attack the US 4th Aviation Brigade, destroying the command and support elements along with those helicopters remaining at the airport. This means both strong NATO attack helicopter units have been destroyed - a victory of sorts for the front line Soviet troops.



BELOW: Soviet 103rd Air Assault regiment landing across Wetzlar and Giessen, north of the US brigade at Schloß-Kaserne, Butzbach. Amongst other targets, the Sondermunitionslager Gießen (Special Ammunitions Depot), Giessen in the eastern outskirts of the large town were taken (along with the kaserne at Wetzlar - LLoyd Barracks). Further east from Giessen, the autobahn east from Butzbach was captured.



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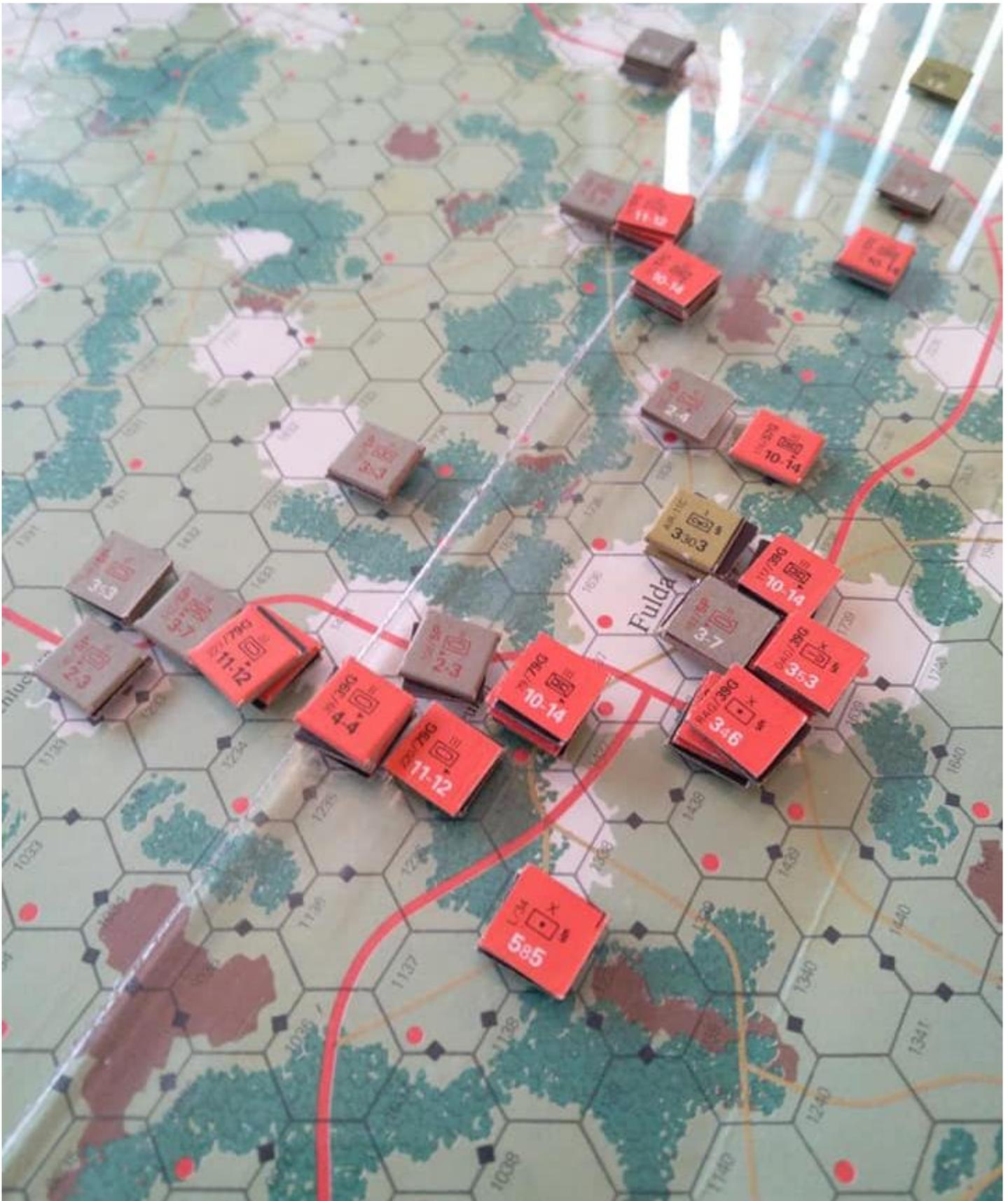


Note the text repeat is not a mistake – this picture is a larger view where previously we only saw Mainz in the close up. Now we see Frankfurt as well. Next picture is to the right of this one.

BELOW: Soviet airborne forces strike west towards the Rhine and concentrate in Giessen.



BELOW: Further Soviet forces gather south of Fulda, attempting to push further west. 5th PzD establish defensive lines supported by M109G howitzers in the countryside to the west of the autobahn. The 57th MRD pushes through the close terrain to Lauterbach, held by a strong West German Panzer Grenadier battalion. *(The big battle! How will it play out?)*



BELOW: Another view of the centre, showing the stalled assault at Bad Hersfeld, and the northern edge of Fulda, where the Soviets have managed to gain a foothold in the north eastern suburbs, stopping the 11th ACAV attack helicopters from providing support.



BELOW: Turn 3, early on Day Two, more Soviet divisions advance into the Fulda Gap, and north between Bad Hersfeld and Kassel. Probing attacks west of Bad Hersfeld are making some inroads into the forests but the West Germans are still holding.



BELOW: Catastrophe at Fulda! The Soviet 39th Guards MRD struck into the south eastern suburbs, causing casualties to the West German defenders, but also causing losses to the attackers. With the Soviet units already stretched from their first day of action, the combat was too much, and three regiments fell apart, leaving the supporting artillery severely depleted. A lone tank battalion charged in from nearer to Bad Hersfeld to hold onto the northern part of Fulda. (*An important answer!*)



BELOW: A wider look showing the southern sector of V Corps. Soviet regimental units are largely pinned in the south, but are also pinning further advances of the West Germans on the Soviet southern flank.



BELOW: A view of the west around Frankfurt.



BELOW: Looking north over the US brigades still paralyzed.



BELOW: Looking further west to the lone Air Assault company that has now crossed the Rhine.



