

Strategic overview

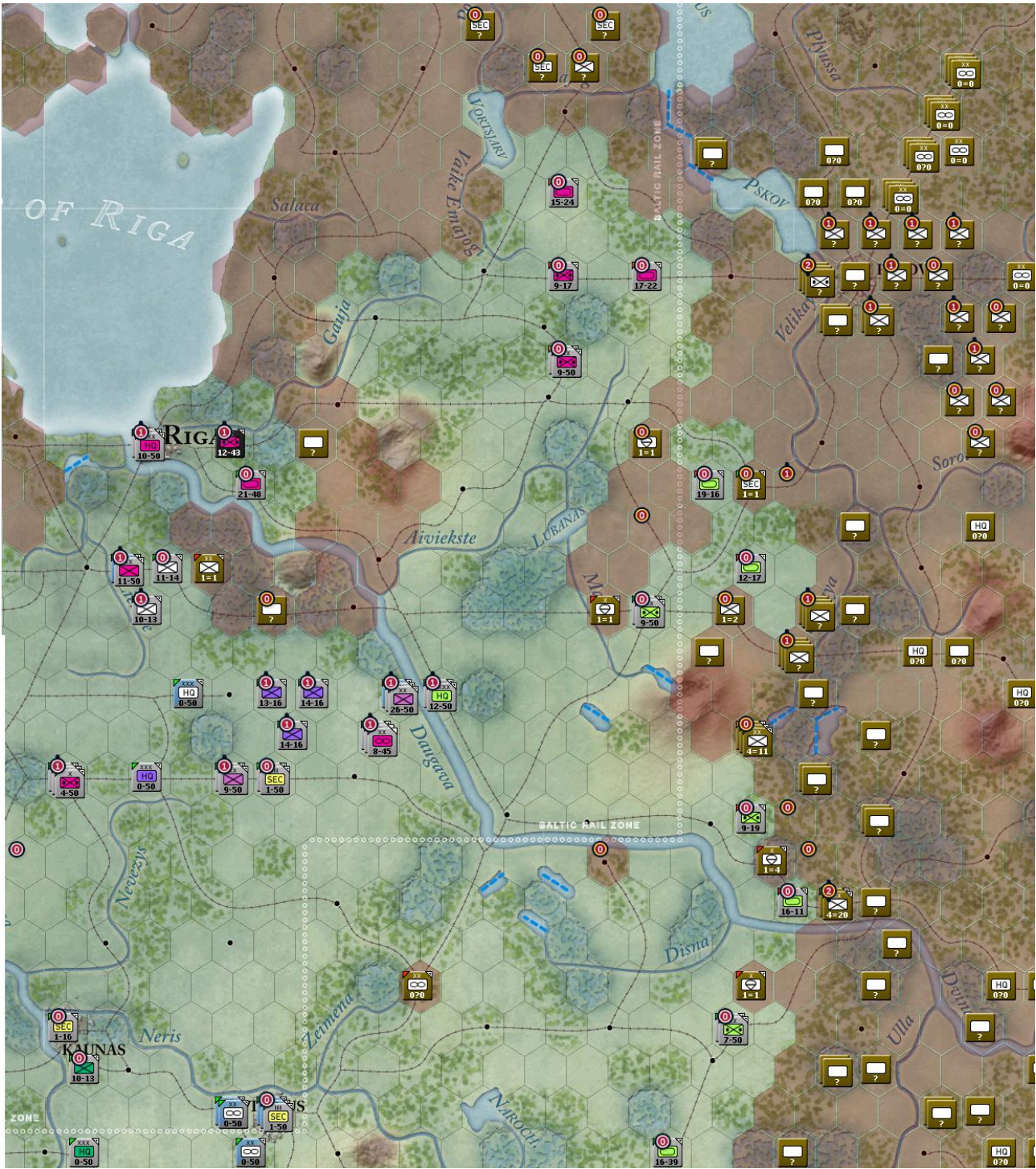
Turn 3: Strategic Considerations

The Soviets have decided to stay and fight in all sectors. Normally, I would have called such a move a complete folly, but having a logistics modifier this game of 80% makes several of my Panzers have a lot less fuel than I would have liked them to have. Maybe, it is not such a bad idea?

The Soviets have conducted a large number of night bombing attacks this turn (at least my fighters did not fly in opposition to them, causing a few losses for a few bombers, but nothing really serious. I have at least lost only three single seat fighters during the Soviet turn (including one Rumanian Bf 109E). I have also begun producing the Bf 109F-4, but it will be some time before I can put that aircraft into the line.

I have clearly forgotten a lot of the small tricks to advance your FBD's as the Germans, and my rail line is not as far forward, as it should have been.

The North



Situational assessment

The Soviets have broken out of the small pocket east of Riga once more. In doing so, they limit the flow of supplies flowing to the forward Panzers. Southwest of Pskov, they have used their previously encircled Airborne Brigades to limit the amount of supplies that will reach the forward Panzers this turn. The result has been that very few MP are available to those Panzers.

The Soviets have bombed all forward Panzers relentlessly, but without the Germans flying in response. This seems to suggest, that they are bombing at night (or that I have forgotten much more than I realize). They have left the Luftwaffe airfields alone, and the local aircraft now have fatigue in the manageable levels as well as enough aircraft ready to fly effectively.

Some distance south of Pskov, the Soviets have pushed forward a sizeable formation of mostly Rifle Divisions, and they now hold a forward position on the Sinyaya River.

Meanwhile, the German Infantry Divisions have crossed the Daugava, and will begin reaching the front near Sinyaya this turn. Likewise, the German FBD units look able to proceed quite nicely this turn.

Planning

This turn, I will do several things in the north.

First, I am going to rout the Rifle Division west of Riga, that has broken my supply lines from Riga to the forward Panzers. This will ensure that more fuel and supplies will reach those Panzers over the coming turns. The two Soviet units still south of the Daugava will be "hugged" closely, in order for me to destroy them over the coming turn or so.

Second, I will move the Infantry Divisions of the 18th Army in the general direction of Pskov, in order to begin the battle of that area over the next few turns. In order to get a good start with that attack, I will rest the northernmost Panzer Corps for a turn. I did consider doing an HQBU, but decided against it. I prefer doing HQBU's with Panzer Corps practically sitting on a Rail head, as the amount of fuel delivered by the HQBU this way is so much larger than if done with an HQ some distance away.

Third, the Infantry Divisions of the 16th Army will be advancing towards the Soviet formations on the Sinyaya River. Supplementing this with some limited movement by the local Panzer Corps, I hope to hug that 4=11 Soviet stack (two Rifle Divisions and a Tank Division) so tight that it will lack the MP to pull back. Doing so will also place the HQ of the Panzer Corps in a position where it can do an HQBU next turn if needed.

Fourth, the destruction of the trapped divisions in the Courland area (not visible of the screendump above) will continue. Meanwhile, the German Infantry divisions arriving from the west will continue to be sent to this area.

Fifth, the FBD will advance in two directions: Towards Riga and towards the Daugava. The FBD at Kaunas will be sent directly towards the Daugava river in order to help in this area next turn.

Execution

The removal of Soviet "obstacles" east of Riga and the movement of forward 18th Army divisions went according to plan, with little of interest to note.

However, the attacks of the 16th Army did hold some surprises, especially the following defense by a Soviet airborne Brigade against a German Panzer Division trying to clear up the supply path of its Panzer Corps

Axis Forces Attacking (H): LVII Panzer Corps 12th Panzer Division (78) 427th Gun Battalion (0) II/55th Howitzer Battalion (0) 816th Howitzer Battalion (0) 47th Pioneer Battalion (8) VIII Fliegerkorps CV: 86->197.3 Eng Val: 2 Comm HQ: LVII Panzer Corps G Adolf Kuntzen	1 of 5 > 72.44 - Swamp - Clear		Turn: 3 1941-07-03		Soviet Forces Defending: 2nd Airborne Corps 3rd Airborne Brigade (53) 5 -> 12.7mm Anti-Aircraft MG CV: 53->200.7 Fort: 0.00->0.00 Comm HQ: 2nd Airborne Corps GM Fyodor Kharitonov	
	Forces Engaged					
	ATK: men 16792, art 158, afv 242 DAM: men 28, art 0, afv 7 LOST: men 4, art 0, afv 0 ATK: ftr 10, bmr 19, utl 0 LOST: ftr 1, bmr 0, utl 0					
		Defending Forces HELD				
		Show Details		Odds 1 : 1.01	Exit	

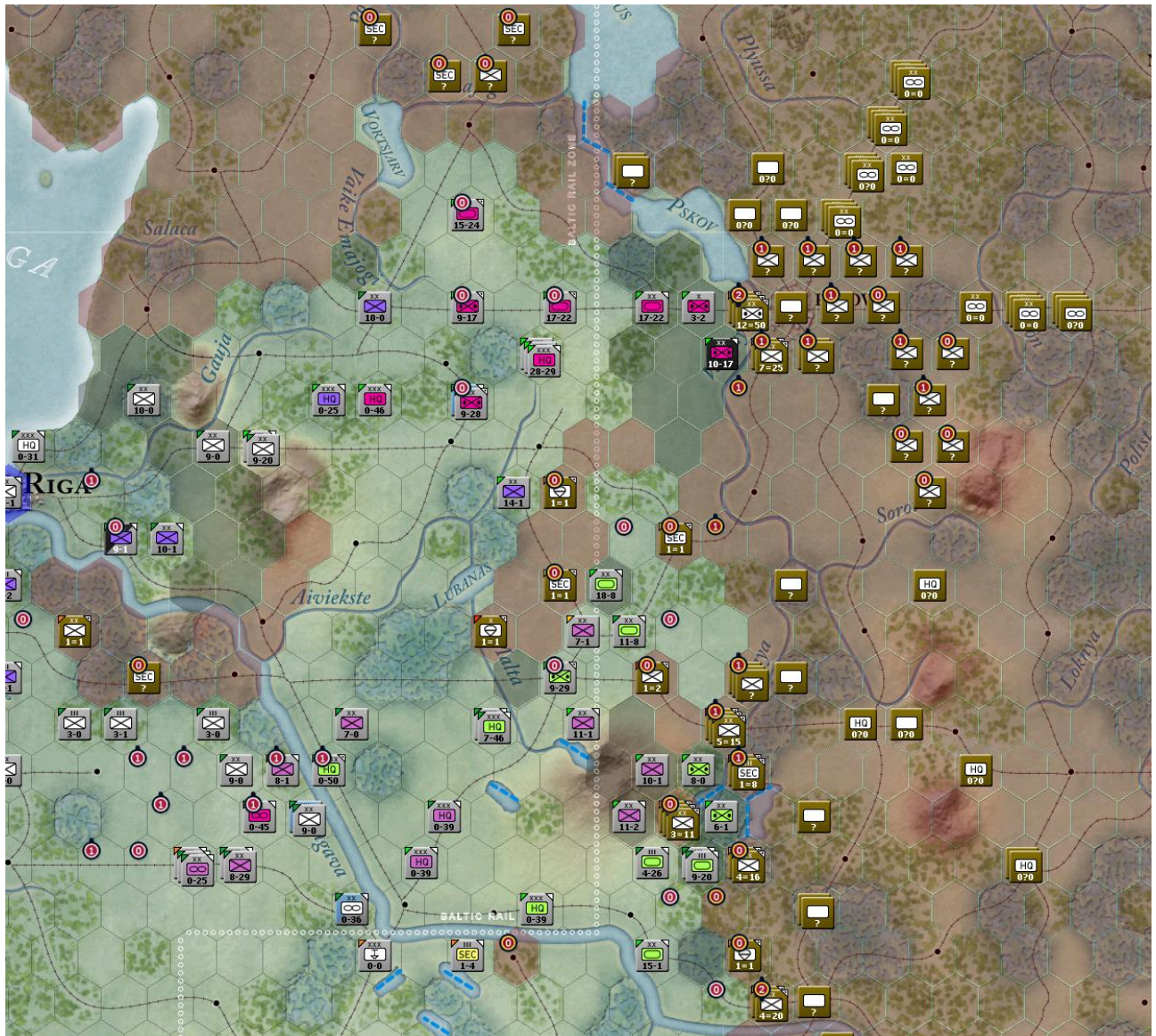
The follow up attack was more successful and in the end, I could encircle the three Soviet Divisions entirely.

German FBD's proceed as planned this turn, and further Infantry reinforcements are brought up from central Germany, and will be ready for use in the area within a few turns.

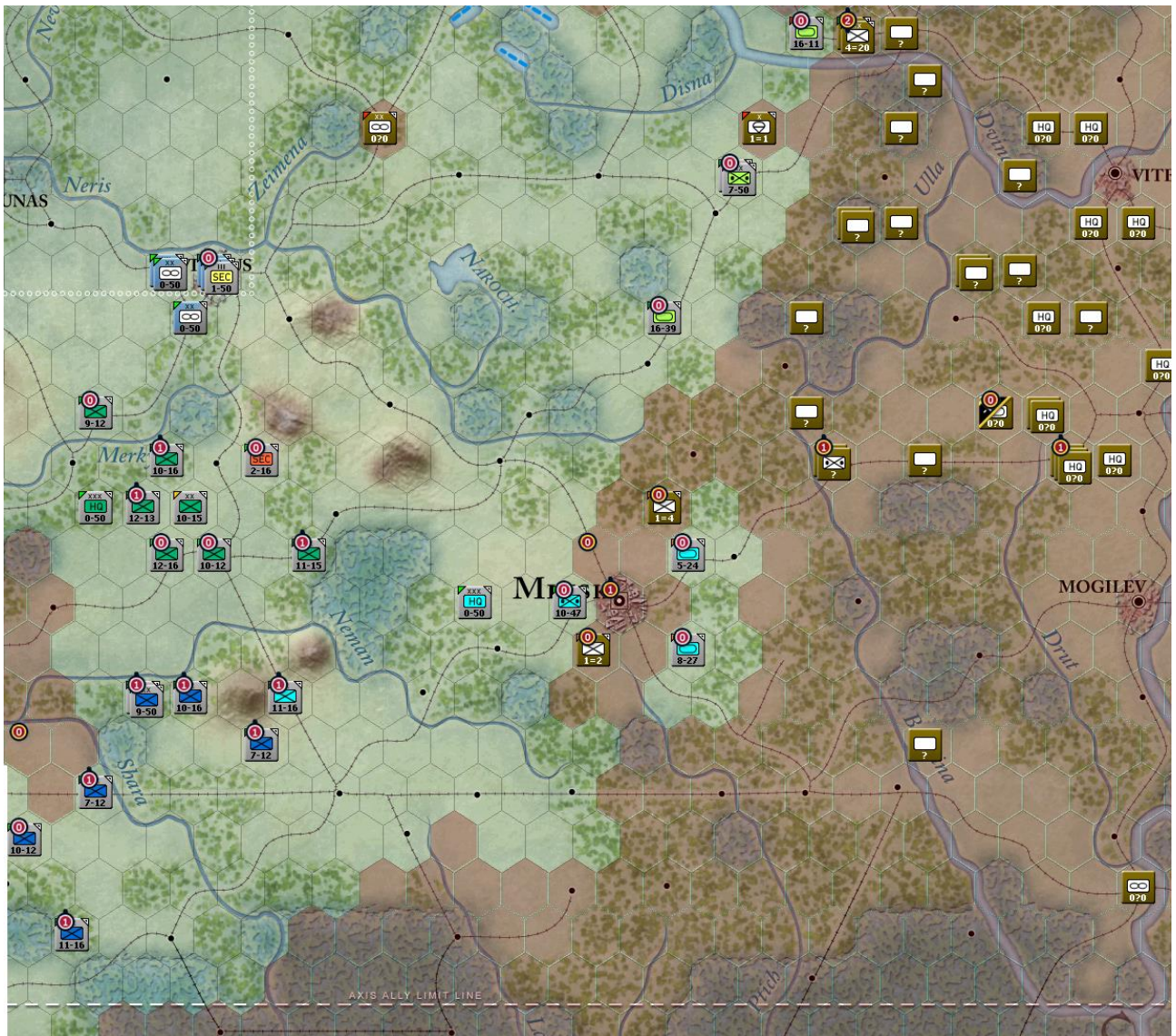
Having finalized my planned movement, I decided to move the Panzers at Riga up to Pskov, as I will not then need to pay MP to enter enemy hexes come next turn. I followed up this movement by making a few bombing attacks on the Soviet defenses at Pskov, but without much success. Come next turn, I will have the I Corps ready to attack the forward Soviet positions with at least three Infantry Divisions loaded with Pioneers and StuG's, hoping this will help pave the way for the Panzers.

Finally, I set up a trap of sorts west of Pskov, having one Motorized Brigade standing next to the Soviet defensive position in Pskov (2=2 vrs 12=50), but with a German Panzer Division in reserve to the rear. Should the Soviets attack, there is a real chance that the Pskov attack will be a little easier.

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 Soviets have pushed forward again, as I have moved one Panzer Corps out of the area in the previous turn. While I have my two foremost Panzers encircled, I see this more as a sacrifice of yet another Rifle Division, as my forward Infantry Divisions will arrive in the area this turn.

Again, the Soviets have been bombing my Panzer formations at night, but without achieving much. At Vilnius, I now have a rather large group of Luftwaffe aircraft, including many Bf 109E's and level bombers.

Far west of the screendump above, the Soviets have continued to drop supplies to the garrison beleaguered in Brest Litovsk. The Bialystock pocket is weakening considerably, with two of the three Tank Divisions inside now being only 1=1.

Planning

This turn, my main objective in this area is to take Minsk (easily done), trap the two forward Rifle Divisions and move forward my Infantry units to kill them off come next turn.

At the Bialystock pocket, I will use my local forces to begin destroying the pocket for real this turn. I wish to free up units for pushing east.

Out of pure interest, I will also do an attack on Brest Litovsk this turn under high detailed reporting. I want to get back into “the know” of how heavy attacks work.

The newly activated 2nd Army will move east in the direction of Minsk, as I usually find myself in need of infantry to cover the center front during the fall of 1941.

Execution

Cleaning up the Bialystock pocket has begun in earnest this turn, with most of the southern units inside the pocket being obliterated.

The battle for Brest Litovsk was a success, with relatively limited losses for the Germans.

1 of 3 > 51,68 - City(Brest Litovsk) - Clear Turn:3 1941-07-03		Forces Engaged	
Axis Forces Attacking:		Soviet Forces Defending:	
XII Corps 45th Infantry Division (114) 1/31st Infantry Division (71) 1/34th Infantry Division (35) 2/31st Infantry Division (68) 3/31st Infantry Division (68) 2/34th Infantry Division (58) 3/34th Infantry Division (20) [v]		14th Mechanized Corps -6% 22nd Tank Division (62) 28th Rifle Corps 6th Rifle Division (73) 42nd Rifle Division (153) 3 -> 37mm Anti-aircraft Gun 2 -> 76mm Anti-aircraft Gun	
ATK: men 53133, art 724, afv 47 DAM: men 153, art 9, afv 3 LOST: men 197, art 4, afv 0 ATK: ftr 36, bmr 74, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		DEF: men 16407, art 260, afv 269 DAM: men 83, art 3, afv 4 LOST: men 16043, art 255, afv 265 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	
CV: 458->894.3 Eng Val: B Comm HQ: XII Corps G Walther Schroth		22nd Tank Division SURRENDERED 42nd Rifle Division SURRENDERED 6th Rifle Division SURRENDERED Odds 4.68 : 1 Show Details Exit	
		CV: 288->190.9 Fort: 3.10->0.00 Comm HQ: 28th Rifle Corps GM Vasily Popov	

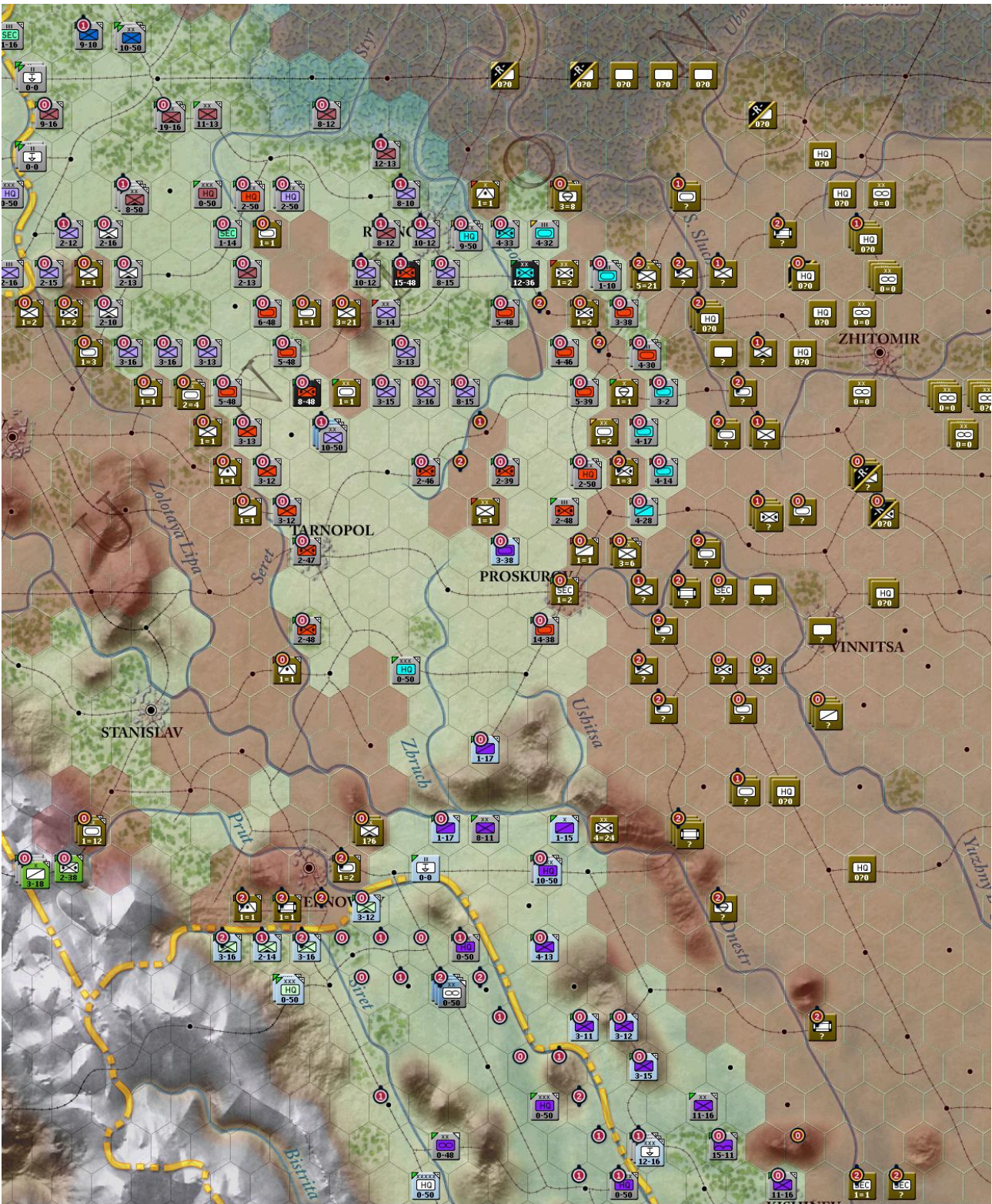
Considering the Germans have about 250 Divisions and have suffered 15740 men to attrition this turn, that adds up to slightly more than 60 men lost to attrition pr turn. As the Germans have quite a few divisions not in contact with the Soviets, the attack was actually less costly than simply leaving two or three Divisions to encircle the city for another turn.

Moving the infantry east towards Minsk and the Dnepr, I have discovered another Motorized Division southeast of the city that I have so far been unaware of. Accepting the offer, I have moved my local Panzers slightly, in order to encircle it, as well as the two known Rifle Divisions in the area. Come next turn, I will have to start pulling these Panzers back, as they are a very long way from my rail heads.

Speaking of which, the central rail line is now approaching the Daugava, and I expect to cross this river next turn, meaning that I will be able to put more and more force into the attack in the center.

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

The South



Situational Assessment

In the south, the Soviets have encircled several German Panzer Divisions and reestablished contact with their newly encircled Motorized Divisions.

Axis Forces Defending: XXXXVI Panzer Corps 1/10th Panzer Division (43) 706th SP Inf Gun Coy (1) 6 -> SdkFz-10/4 SP Flak		1 of 3 > 65,79 - Clear - Clear Turn:2 1941-06-26 Forces Engaged DEF: men 5044, art 45, afv 75 ATK: men 54171, art 732, afv 75 DAM: men 55, art 5, afv 1 DAM: men 528, art 12, afv 6 LOST: men 206, art 6, afv 7 LOST: men 529, art 4, afv 11 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 ATK: ftr 6, bmr 5, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 1/10th Panzer Division RETREATED CV: 44->38.6 Fort: 0.02->0.00 Comm HQ: XXXXVI Panzer Corps G Heinrich von Vietinghoff Show Details Odds 7.51 : 1 Exit		Soviet Forces Attacking: 16th Army 132nd Rifle Division (27) 46th Rifle Division (34) 152nd Rifle Division (42) 542nd Crps Art Rgt (1) 645th Crps Art Rgt (1) 320th Crps Art Rgt (1) 467th Crps Art Rgt (1) CV: 124->290.2 Eng Val: 2 Comm HQ: 16th Army GL Nikolai Vatutin	
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The Soviets have also been bombing the Panzer divisions using level bombers flying at night. Once again, the attacks have been fairly ineffective, but still unopposed by the Luftwaffe.

The Soviet defensive setup is still extremely aggressive, and I count some 11 Tank Divisions and three Motorized Divisions in the area on top of the forces previously encircled. Given the carnage in the area last turn, I expect at least some of these units to be less than full strength. The main Soviet Mobile forces seems to be placed west of Vinnitsa. On my side, I have some eight Motorized or Panzer Divisions available with 30+MP each.

To the west, the Rovno and Lvov pockets are secure. Interestingly, the Soviets have been flying in supplies for the Rifle Division in the Rovno pocket. The German Infantry Divisions are well placed to both continue reducing the pockets and move forces east, to participate in the battle raging west of Zhitomir.

The Luftwaffe is strongly present in the area, with plenty of level bombers, dive bombers and single seat fighters available.

Further south, the Rumanian rail link looks able to progress as planned, even without assigning any Panzers to cover it. This, I believe, is a mistake by the Soviets. By diverting no more than three of four mobile units to defend here in conjunction with the forward defense at Zhitomir, I would be forced to either split my forces or accept that the German rail lines in the south would not proceed as planned.

Planning

I will begin my attacks by removing some of the encircled units in the Lvov and Rovno pockets, as this will free up infantry for the push east. I consider such attacks pretty obvious moves at this point.

Another obvious move in the south is to reestablish the encirclement of the Soviet mobile divisions west of Zhitomir. In order to do that, I will mainly be using the Infantry Divisions arriving from the west, while leaving my mobile divisions open for other orders.

I wish to direct my main armored assault on the units west of Vinnitsa, as this will bring my own Panzers closer to their supply lines, and thus make them more capable of follow up attacks over the next turns. I decide to use my Panzers to attack the southwestern flank of the Vinnitsa defense, mainly in order to get as close to my own supply lines as possible for next turn, as I am pretty concerned with the dwindling fuel stocks in the local Panzers.

As I have little information on the strength of the Soviet formations opposing me, I decide to do a reconnaissance in force using a Rumanian cavalry brigade to move closer to the forward Soviet positions. This revealed a 6=15 Rifle Division and a 8=28 Tank Division guarding the southwestern flank of the Vinnitsa defense.

Execution

The reduction of the Lvov and Rovno pockets are progressing more or less as planned. Nothing special to say here.

What is worthy of mention is that I find the German infantry attacks on the Soviet main line a lot less effective than I remember them. I am wondering if this has anything to do with the Morale modifier of 105 inn this game.

At the Vinnitsa attack, a couple of bombing runs by the He-111H bombers in Rumania changed the information on the Tank Division guarding the Soviet flank at Vinnitsa from 8=28 to 6=22 and the Rifle Division from 6=15 to 4=15, probably mainly due to better intel (read higher detection level). After that came what must be the biggest Tank battle of the campaign so far (although still not much when compared to what will happen later on).

Axis Forces Attacking: XIV Panzer Corps 9th Panzer Division (134) Wiking SS Motorized Division (129) 275th Mot. Flk Bn (1) 670th Panzerjager Battalion (9) 60th Pioneer Battalion (6) 2/46th SP Flak Company (1) 701st SP Inf Gun Coy (1) [v]	1 of 3 > 67,91 - Clear(Bar) - Clear Turn:3 1941-07-03 Forces Engaged ATK: men 35487, art 387, afv 285 DEF: men 12541, art 84, afv 268 DAM: men 100, art 3, afv 9 DAM: men 147, art 3, afv 6 LOST: men 126, art 2, afv 6 LOST: men 663, art 6, afv 77 ATK: ftr 95, bmr 32, utl 0 DEF: ftr 77, bmr 20, utl 0 LOST: ftr 1, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 20, bmr 4, utl 0 11th Tank Division RETREATED		Soviet Forces Defending: 2nd Mechanized Corps 11th Tank Division (195) 527th BM Howitzer Regiment (1) Southwestern Air Command 13 MiG-3 16 I-153 17 Yak-1 [v]
	CV: 281->485.1 Eng Val: 6 Comm HQ: XIV Panzer Corps G Gustav von Wietersheim Show Details Odds 5.45 : 1 Exit		
	CV: 196->89.0 Fort: 2.06->0.00 Comm HQ: 2nd Mechanized Corps GL Yury Novoselsky		

During the follow up attacks the number of AA guns available in some locations surprised me quite a bit. The following bombing attack was made on a Tank Division and a Cavalry Division.

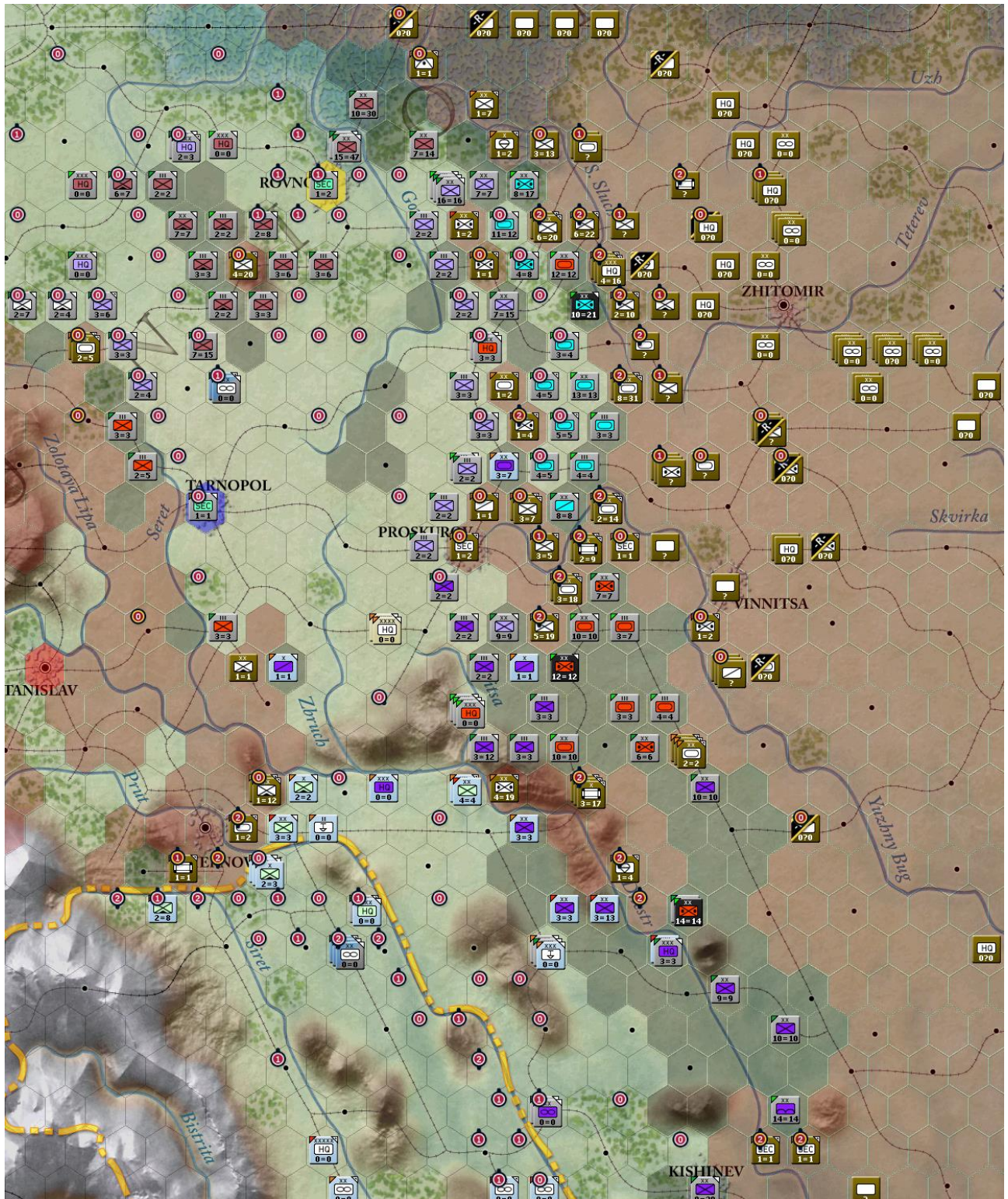
Axis Forces Attacking:		1 of 1		69,93 - Clear - Clear		Turn:3 1941-07-03		Soviet Forces Defending:	
		Forces Engaged							
21 10	Bf 109E-7 He 111H-4	ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0		DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0		37		-> 37mm Anti-aircraft Gun	
		DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0		DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0		83		-> 76mm Anti-aircraft Gun	
		LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0		LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0					
		ATK: ftr 21, bmr 10, utl 0		DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0					
		LOST: ftr 0, bmr 2, utl 0		LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0					
		ground forces were BOMBED							
		Show Details Exit							

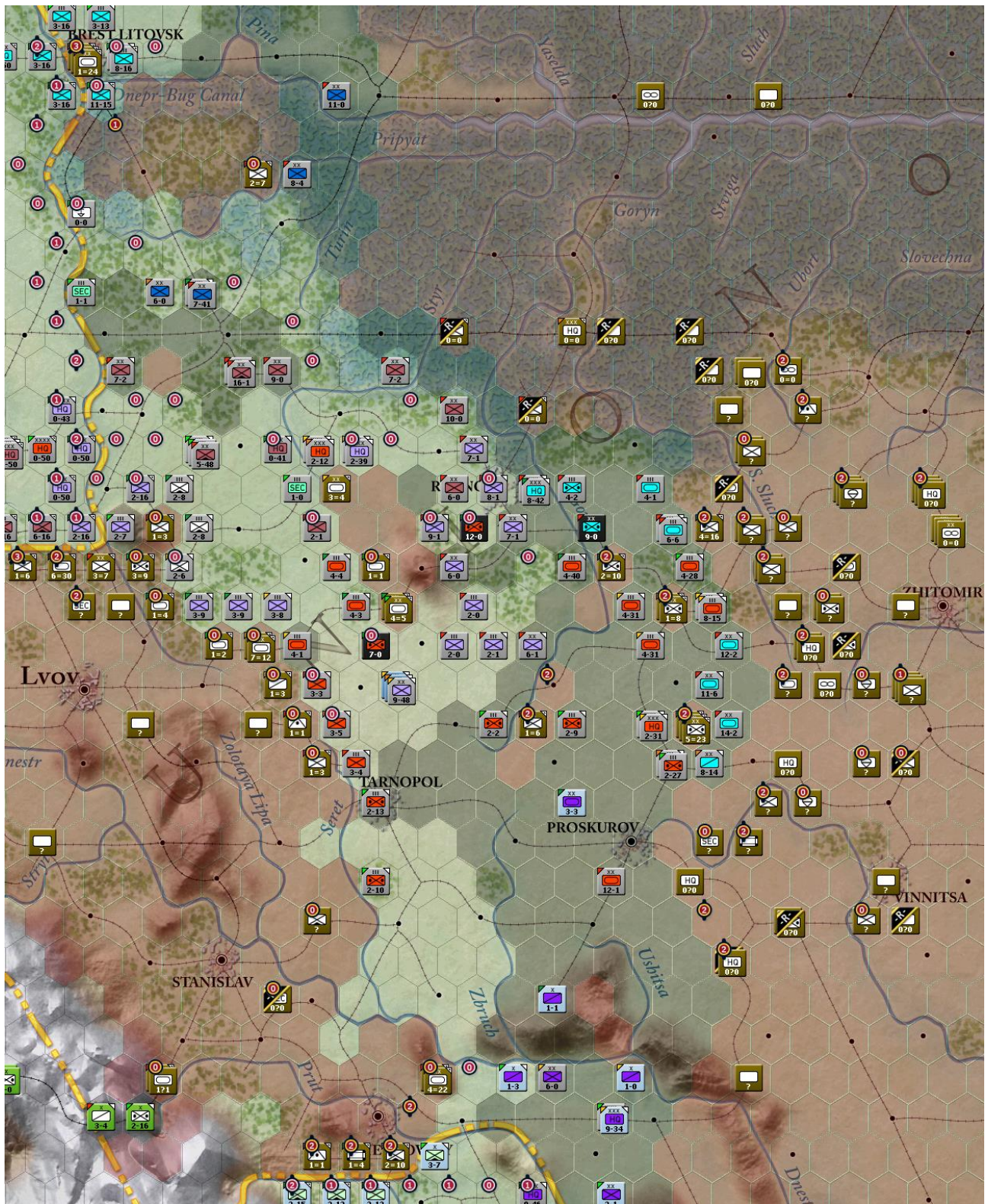
Another large Tank battle took place in the region just bombed above, and læed to the biggest German Tank losses of any single battle so far in the campaign. The losses suffered included five Panzer IIIG's and three Panzer IIIE's.

Axis Forces Attacking:	1 of 2 > 69,93 - Clear - Clear Turn:3 1941-07-03		Soviet Forces Defending:
	Forces Engaged		
III Panzer Corps	ATK: men 29540, art 350, afv 182	DEF: men 21102, art 188, afv 226	2nd Mechanized Corps
14th Panzer Division (118)	DAM: men 151, art 7, afv 11	DAM: men 173, art 1, afv 11	16th Tank Division (88)
16th Motorized Division (67)	LOST: men 199, art 2, afv 15	LOST: men 1006, art 10, afv 89	515th BM Howitzer Regiment (2)
277th Mot. Flk Bn (1)	ATK: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	2nd Cavalry Corps -6%
6/31st SP Flak Company (1)	LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	5th Cavalry Division (41)
	16th Tank Division RETREATED		
	5th Cavalry Division RETREATED		
CV: 187->401.5 Eng Val: 6	Odds 4.00 : 1		CV: 131->100.3 Fort: 1.10->0.00
Comm HQ: III Panzer Corps	Show Details	Exit	Comm HQ: 2nd Mechanized Corps
G Eberhard von Mackensen			GL Yuriy Novoselsky

It quickly proved to be all but impossible to create a lasting encirclement of those Soviet units west of Vinnitsa. (as I had estimated prior to beginning the attacks). However, an opportunity to create a new loose encirclement southwest of the city soon presented itself. Doing this presented what appears to be a gaping hole in the Soviet defensive lineup south of Vinnitsa. The Panzers I have in this area now have HQ's within 12MP and 6 hexes of a friendly rail head.

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





Conclusion

This turn, one Rifle Division and one Airborne Brigade has been routed out of previous pockets. However, at the same time three Rifle Divisions, three Motorized Divisions and a Tank Division has been placed in new encirclements. Moreover, I estimate that seven Rifle Divisions, a Motorized Division and a Tank Division are now in dire need of a hasty retreat if they are to avoid being encircled during turn four.

Air losses are a mixed blessing, as the Axis have lost 25 for 104 during the Axis phase. Since my last turn however, losses are 33 to 310 (including nine German single seat fighters).

On the ground, AFV losses are worrying, with the Axis losing 188 for 2.336. However, with 10 Tank Divisions and 8 Motorized Divisions currently encircled, that number is certain to climb.

All in all, the initial pockets in both the north, the center and the south are collapsing, while the Germans continue to create new pockets. While these may not initially last, the Soviets breaking the pockets are often themselves badly positioned to deal with the German attacks come next turn.