

Strategic overview

Turn 4: Strategic Considerations

The Soviets have pulled out their main forces in the south, leaving behind those units with insufficient MP to make to back to relative safety. Only three counterattacks has been committed by the Soviets this turn, making Axis losses rather light.

The Soviets are continuing their policy of night bombing attacks, causing a few losses among the Axis ground forces, while losing some bombers in return. The initial Axis Recon missions has revealed that the Soviets do not appear to fly interception this turn. All in all another easy turn for the Luftwaffe.

With regards to supplies and fuel, I am beginning to see the effects of the 80% Logistics Modifier in this game. My Panzers that are some distance from the rail heads find it very difficult to build up the required fuel for conducting attacks.

Finally, I have reinstalled the map mod called "A Rainy day in Russia" as I simply love the map graphics. While the Baltic Rail Zone does not show in this map, I really love that even the smaller towns have their names printed on the map, and the cartography is more to my liking than the vanilla version.

This is a detailed hexagonal grid map of Latvia and surrounding regions, likely from a military simulation or strategy game. The map shows a dense network of hexagons, each containing a small icon representing a military unit or a numerical value. The units are color-coded and shaped to represent different types of forces: tanks (green), infantry (blue), artillery (red), and other specialized units (yellow, orange, and purple). The map includes labels for major cities and towns, such as Riga, Valmiera, Liepaja, and Jelgava, as well as numerous smaller locations. Major rivers like the Daugava and Nemunas are depicted, along with the Baltic Sea to the north. The map also shows various terrain features, including forests, water bodies, and roads. The overall layout suggests a complex tactical environment with many units positioned across the region.

On the ground, the Soviets are holding on to their positions. At Pskov, the Soviet front looks far to deep to penetrate in one turn, so some preliminary attacks will be needed to open the way for the Panzers to attack. The trap I set up last turn has not been sprung, as the Soviets have been too wise to risk any attacks from their prepared positions. In the area, I have the I Corps, with three available Infantry Divisions with 15-16CV each, as well as two Panzer Corps and more troops arriving every turn.

South of Pskov, the Soviet light troops are still a nuisance. I must admit that it was a mistake not simply routing these units away a couple of turns back. The result has been that they continuously hinder the Panzers from getting the optimal amount of fuel available.

Just north of the Dvina River, a heavy concentration of Soviet forces have broken the three encircled Soviet divisions free, the attack can be seen below. In the immediate area, I now count no less than 13 Soviet Rifle Divisions, mustering some rather serious CV. While my own forces are strengthening, my Panzers are positively short of fuel to conduct any offensive operations. I will need to change this, as I need to unblock the area for the railway moving towards Moscow.

Axis Forces Defending:		Forces Engaged		Soviet Forces Attacking:	
LVII Panzer Corps 18th Motorized Division (299)		DEF: men 12804, art 156, afv 9 DAM: men 87, art 9, afv 0 LOST: men 166, art 7, afv 0 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		22nd Army 162nd Rifle Division (56) 174th Rifle Division (49) 186th Rifle Division (56) 157th Rifle Division (42) 147th Rifle Division (35) 95th Rifle Division (40) 392nd Crps Art Rgt (1)	
9 -> 88mm Anti-aircraft Gun 3 -> 37mm Anti-aircraft Gun 2 -> Sdkfz-6/2 SP Flak		ATK: men 67448, art 867, afv 79 DAM: men 591, art 12, afv 6 LOST: men 941, art 5, afv 14 ATK: ftr 4, bmr 1, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		[v]	
CV: 299->315.0 Fort: 0.02->0.00 Comm HQ: LVII Panzer Corps G Adolf Kuntzen		18th Motorized Division RETREATED Show Details Odds 2.15 : 1 Exit		CV: 279->677.9 Eng Val: 2 Comm HQ: 22nd Army GM Ivan Galanin	

In the air, the Soviets have not been responding to my recon flights at all, prompting me to believe that interception is off for this turn. The Soviets do have quite a lot of airpower present in the area, including a very large portion of their tactical bombers. Most of these are based on two airfields with no less than 107 and 88 operational tactical bombers. Interestingly, I see very few modern fighters around, with only 75 MiG-3's, 18 LaGG-3's and 12 Yak-1's available. Opposite this, I have 267 operational Bf 109F-2's as well as many Bf 109E's and Bf 110's available as well.

Planning

This turn, I will try to provoke the Soviets into some heavy dog fighting above Pskov, by bombing both their ground positions as well as their airfields. The hope is to give them enough casualties that the subsequent ground attacks will have a heavy German advantage in the air.

After this, I will begin attacking the forward Soviet positions using my I Corps units, and one of the Panzer Corps. I will try to maximise the firing value of my troops, with only two divisions pr hex, and use the two Corps in different attacks. I am unsure if this is the best option, but there is a firing penalty for heavy stacks, and I hope the preliminary bombing attacks combined with the heavy German firepower will take out enough Soviets to make it worthwhile. If not, this will be another experience to take forward. Finally, I will do an HQBU on the stationary Panzer Corps west of Pskov and move up more infantry for the fight.

Further south, I will remove those pesky Airborne Brigades (I should have done this earlier) by routing them out of the area. I am annoyed that I chose not to do this earlier, as the encirclement value of these units ar all but non existent. Doing it this way will at least give some of my weaker infantry Divisions a few wins under their belt.

North of the Dvina, I am in poor position to do much attacking this turn. The only chance I see is forcing the 2=12 stack of Soviet divisions to retreat west into another pocket if possible. These are the units recently broken free, and if I can attack in such a way that they retreat over rout, they will have no option but to go west. If, on the other hand, they rout, they will suffer some retreat attrition. It is doubtful however, if I can make the encirclement stick in any way. Before doing such an attack, I will obviously bomb the units a couple of times.

The alternative to such an attack is moving the Panzers out of the area, but this would allow Sprakley to do the same to all those Rifle Divisions, which would again not benefit me in any way. I remain worried about developments here, as I soon need to move forward, if I am not to risk the advance of my FBD's in the area.

Execution

Initiating my turn with a couple of ground bombing attacks against the Soviet stack west of Pskov and an airfield with tactical bombers, the attacks saw no soviet flying at all, much to my surprise. I switched to bombing unexorted on the front line Soviet positions before making the main attacks on the positions at Pskov.

The first of those attacks immediately surprised me, as the Soviets did not fly heavily in ground support either (only a meagre 13 Tactical bombers showed up in the defense). I was not surprised to see Zhukov commanding the defenders, and both sides proceeded to take some losses. Unfortunately, the fortification reduction left the Soviet positions at exactly 2, which was a blow.

<div>Axis Forces Attacking:</div> <div>I Corps 1st Infantry Division (124) 11th Infantry Division (122) 21st Infantry Division (114) II/58th Howitzer Battalion (1) 637th Howitzer Battalion (1) 536th Howitzer Battalion (1) 185th Stug Battalion (8)</div> <div>[v]</div>	<div>1 of 3 > 73,30 - Clear - Clear Turn:4 1941-07-10</div> <div>Forces Engaged</div> <div>ATK: men 57105, art 629, afv 46 DAM: men 240, art 10, afv 4 LOST: men 301, art 6, afv 0 ATK: flr 96, bmr 29, utl 0 LOST: flr 0, bmr 0, utl 0</div> <div>DEF: men 43250, art 503, afv 824 DAM: men 293, art 6, afv 77 LOST: men 567, art 3, afv 107 DEF: flr 0, bmr 13, utl 0 LOST: flr 0, bmr 5, utl 0</div>		<div>Soviet Forces Defending:</div> <div>8th Army 3rd Tank Division (149) 163rd Motorized Division (164) 111th Rifle Division (117) 645th Crps Art Rgt (1) 116th Howitzer Regiment (2) 51st Crps Art Rgt (0) 73rd Crps Art Rgt (1)</div> <div>[v]</div>
	<div>Defending Forces HELD</div> <div>Odds 1.09 : 1</div> <div>Show Details Exit</div>		
<div>CV: 430->994.3 Eng Val: 20 Comm HQ: I Corps GL Walter Model</div>	<div>CV: 434->909.3 Fort: 2.24->2.00 Comm HQ: 8th Army GA Georgy Zhukov</div>		

I decided to respond to this by setting most Single Seat Fighters to a group range of 1 to reduce the amount of fighters participating in the upcoming battle, while leaving the JU87's on a high figure. I then moved the Panzer Corps into position, and had another go at the Soviet positions. This attack was another failure, but at least I brought the Soviet fortifications down to 1.86. The lesson seems to be that in order to overcome a position with the Germans, you should ignore the fire limitations and just stack CV as high as you can.

<div>Axis Forces Attacking:</div> <div>LVI Panzer Corps 8th Panzer Division (181) Totenkopf SS Mot. Div (109) 900th Lehr Motorized Brigade (34) II/61st Artillery Battalion (1) 92nd LW SP Lt Flk Bn (7) II/23rd LW Mix Flk Bn (3) 559th Panzerjager Battalion (9)</div> <div>[v]</div>	<div>< 2 of 4 > 73,30 - Clear - Clear Turn:4 1941-07-10</div> <div>Forces Engaged</div> <div>ATK: men 41030, art 454, afv 328 DAM: men 279, art 7, afv 21 LOST: men 419, art 9, afv 0 ATK: flr 38, bmr 140, utl 0 LOST: flr 0, bmr 1, utl 0</div> <div>Defending Forces HELD</div> <div>Show Details Odds 1.03 : 1 Exit</div>	<div>Soviet Forces Defending:</div> <div>8th Army 3rd Tank Division (109) 163rd Motorized Division (119) 111th Rifle Division (91) 106th Rifle Division (34) R 645th Crps Art Rgt (1) 275th Crps Art Rgt (3) 116th Howitzer Regiment (2)</div> <div>[v]</div> <div>CV: 359->707.9 Fort: 2.00->1.86 Comm HQ: 8th Army GA Georgy Zhukov</div>
<div>CV: 344->729.7 Eng Val: 8 Comm HQ: LVI Panzer Corps G Erich von Manstein</div>		

The Airborne brigades were easily removed. At the same time, I have encircled a lone forward Rifle Division, which is always a good thing. I do believe this is a very weak division however, and not one the Sparkley will miss overmuch.

At the Dvina, the attack to force the three Soviet divisions west into another pocket was a "partial" success. While the attack succeeded, all three divisions routed rather than retreated, and so I had to settle for the retreat casualties suffered this way. Those casualties were about 25% of the total strength of the three

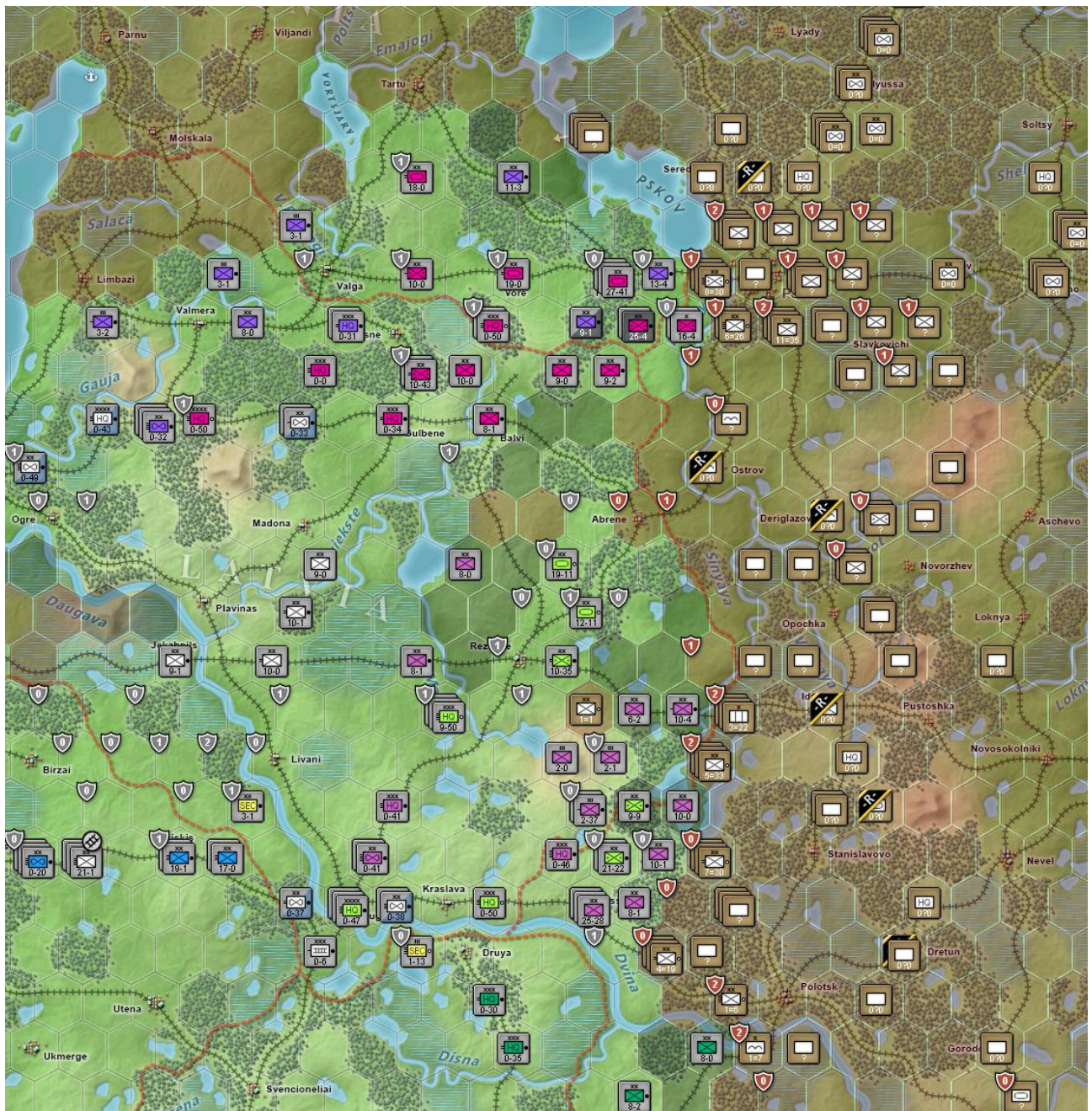
divisions however, so I cannot be entirely unhappy with the results. The Tank division at least, will not be in any shape to participate in combat for quite a while, I guess, having suffered about 75% losses to it's AFV.

1 of 6 > 72,41 - Swamp - Clear Turn:4 1941-07-10		
Axis Forces Attacking:	Forces Engaged	Soviet Forces Defending:
II Corps 12th Infantry Division (184) 32nd Infantry Division (204) 506th Howitzer Battalion (1) 600th Stug Battalion (5)	ATK: men 31744, art 368, afv 25 DAM: men 65, art 4, afv 0 LOST: men 107, art 1, afv 0 ATK: ftr 106, bmr 120, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	21st Mechanized Corps -20% 42nd Tank Division (48) 67th Rifle Corps -20% 102nd Rifle Division (39) Orel Military District -10% 222nd Rifle Division (62)
VIII Fliegerkorps 58 Bf 109E-7 [v]	222nd Rifle Division ROUTED 102nd Rifle Division ROUTED 42nd Tank Division ROUTED	Orel Air Command [v]
CV: 394->832.2 Eng Val: 10 Comm HQ: II Corps G Walter von Brockdorff-Ahlefeldt	Show Details Odds 4.10 : 1 Exit	CV: 149->202.9 Fort: 0.00->0.00 Comm HQ: Orel Military District GL Pavel Kurochkin

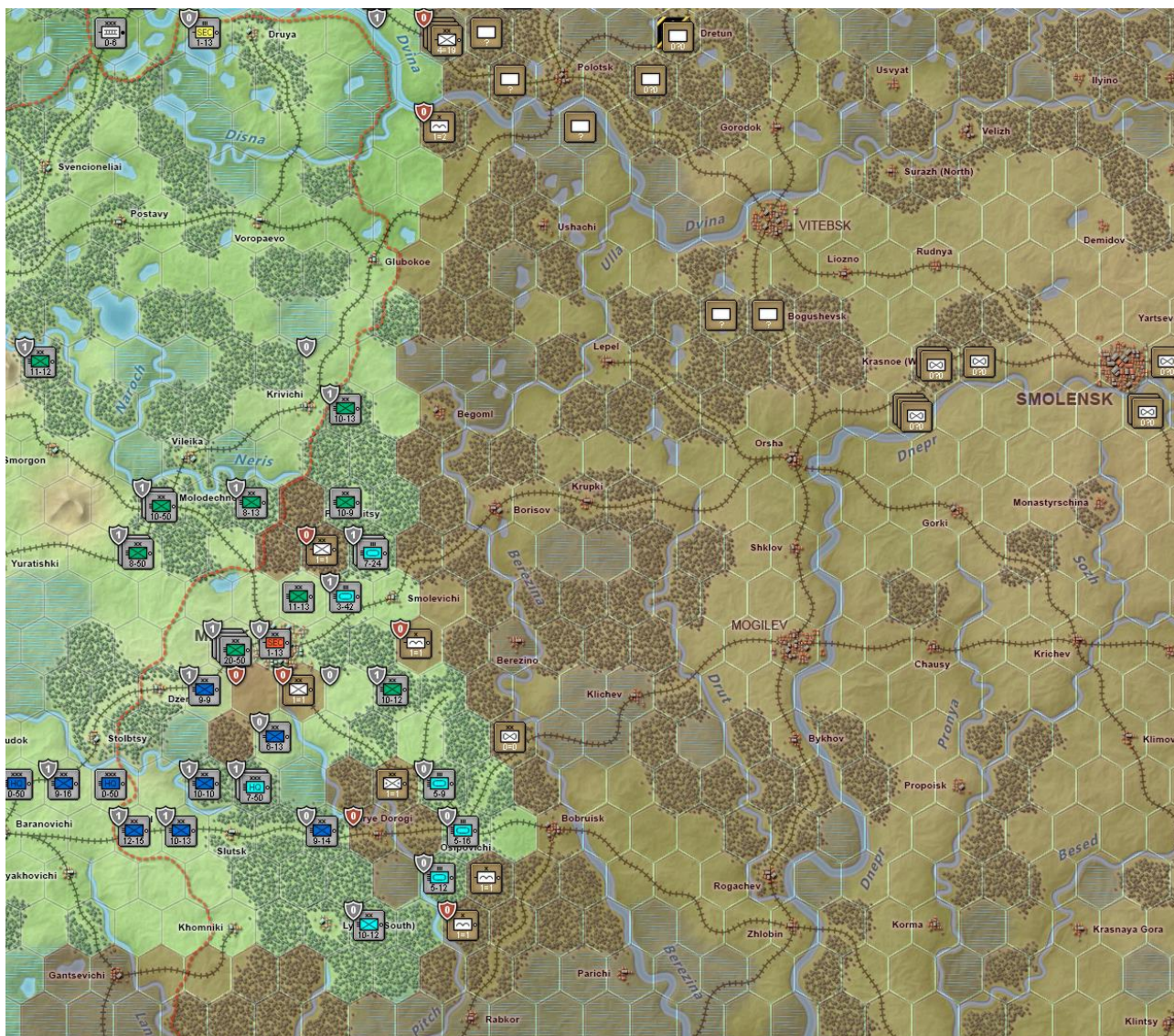
Moving up the reinforcing infantry has proved rather difficult this turn, as the situations at both Pskov and the Dvina require their presence. The result has been a compromise, with some units moving to both locations.

Finally, the Finns have come into play this turn. I have done a few attacks, trying to outmaneuver two Soviet Rifle Divisions. Pretty standard stuff, so no special reports from that front.

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



The Center



Situational Assessment

In the center, three Soviet divisions encircled at Minsk last turn are still encircled.

The main Soviet line is nowhere near the front, and recon revealed that they are building their main lines along the Dnepr and in front of Vitebsk.

The German fuel situation for the local Panzers is not good, and I really need to move closer to the railheads over the next turn or two.

The main objectives this turn need to be supporting the efforts in the north and the south, as both those locations have greater need than pushing on to the Dnepr and even further away from my own supply lines.

Far to the west, it seems the Bialystock pocket will finally fold in two or three turns.

Planning

This turn, I will send the 9th Army in a northeasterly direction towards the Dvina and Vitebsk in order to support the German thrusts in this area. My hope is to force the Soviets to weaken the front north of the Dvina in order to cover their flank.

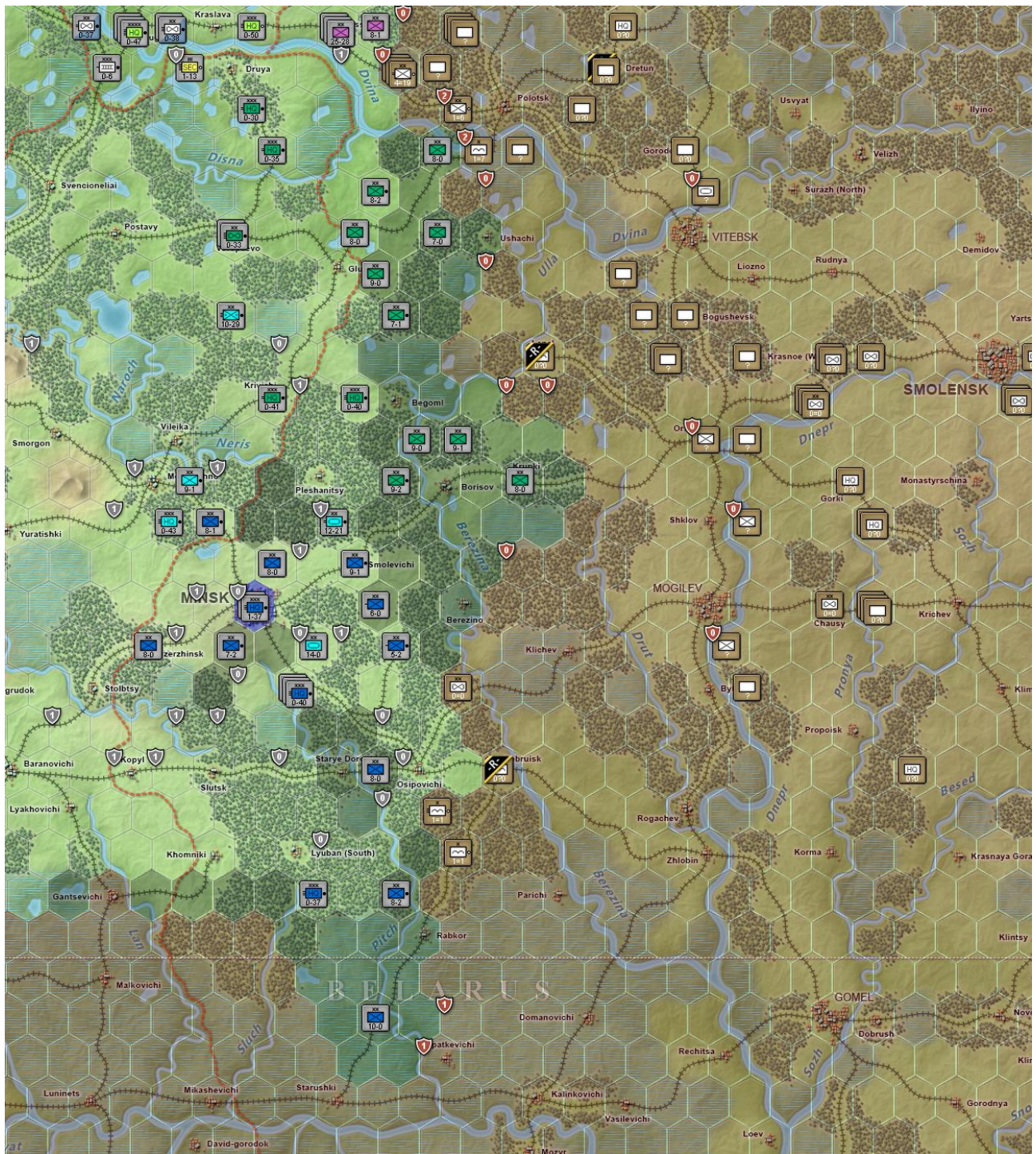
Meanwhile, the 4th Army will be charged with cleaning up the area around Minsk and moving on towards the Dnepr and Mogilev. This army will also dispatch a Corps into the Pripjat Marshes, as the northern pincer in an attack on the Soviet forces just south of marshes (see the Southern Sector below).

The 2nd Panzer Group (or the parts of it in this area), will be moving northeast, while placing a priority on shortening the supply lines for the Panzers.

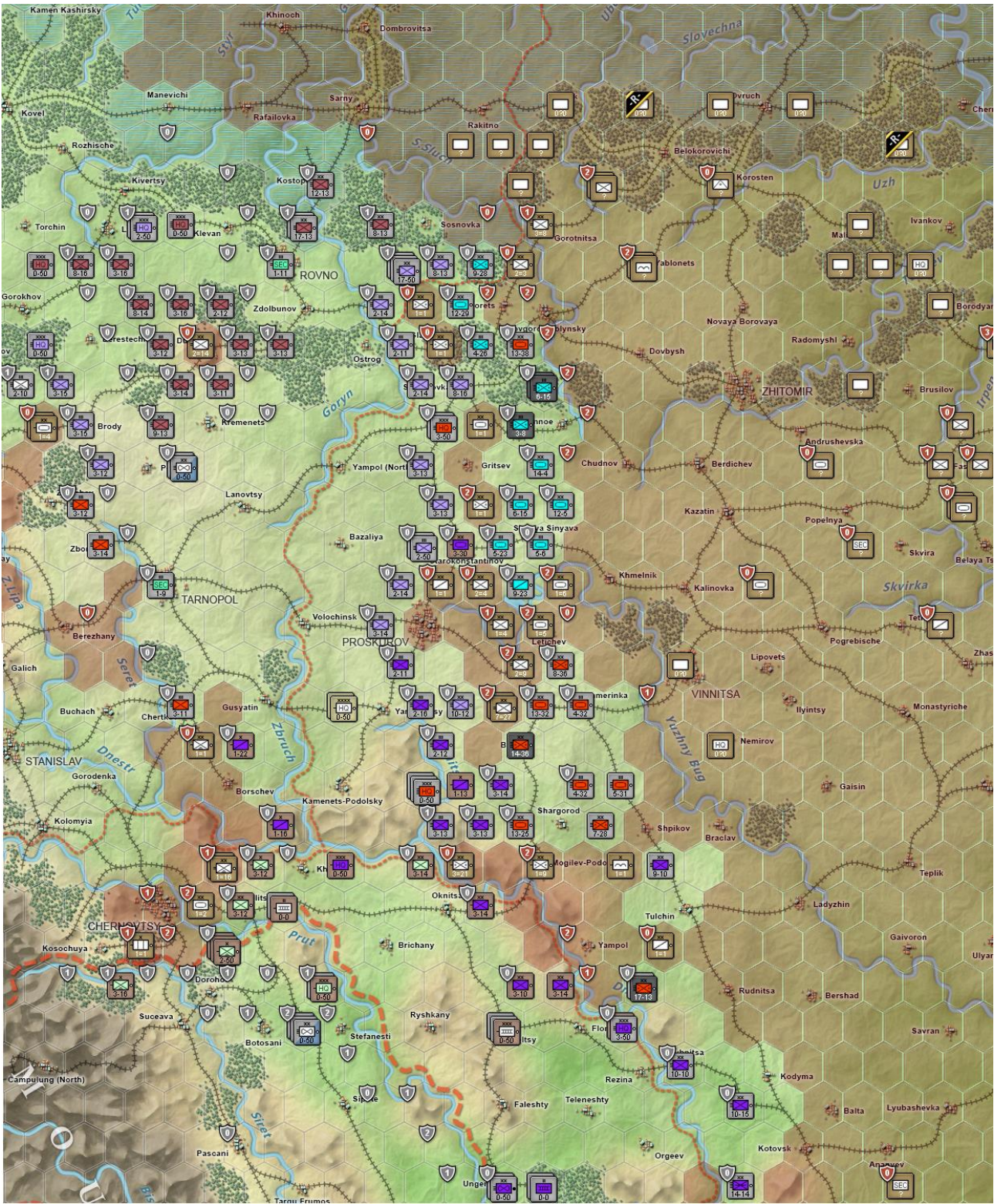
Execution

Few unexpected things happened during the execution of the plans for the Center, so there I very little to report.

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



The South



Situational Assessment

In the south, the Soviets pulled back from their forward positions, leaving what could not be evacuated behind. This has left an interesting situation with a group of divisions at Viinitza that are almost encircled, and another group of divisions trying to pull back along the southern edge of the Pripyat Marshes.

The main Soviet forces now appear to be placed southwest of Kiev with a few Tank Divisions out in front. I guess those are weak divisions that has been unable to make it back to the main Soviet lines this turn. It seems I could cut off those divisions by using my spare fuel stocks.

My own Panzers are beginning to show some real strain in some locations, with one Panzer Division starting the turn with no more than 4 MP.

In the air, the Soviet night bombing attacks have continued, although still with very meagre results.

Planning

As on the previous turns, I will begin my turn by cleaning pockets from west to east, freeing up units for movement to the east in the process.

South of the Pripyat Marshes, I will then attack with the local Panzers, hoping to trap several Soviet formations with their backs against the Marshes. Further south, northeast of Proskurov, I need to pull my Panzers back towards my own supply lines, as I have several Panzers that are very short of fuel.

At Vinnitsa, I have quite a few Panzers left with enough MP to conduct some sort of offensive action. I will use the smaller Corps for a large land grab in the direction of Cherkassy and Kirovograd, while the other will move towards the southern Rail heads in order to restock for further operations come next turn.

Execution

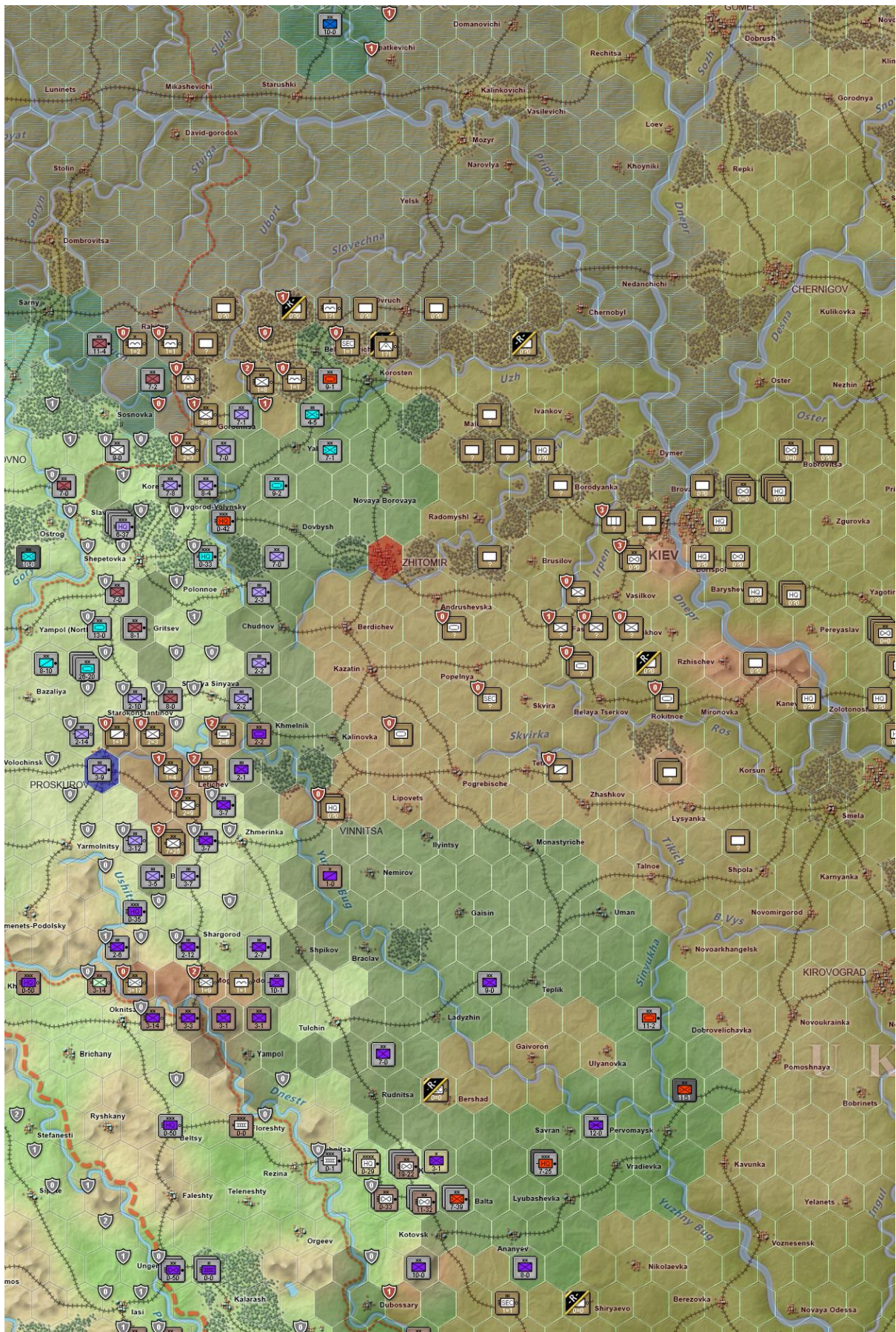
The reduction of the Soviet pockets have continued without much hindrance, and another batch of Soviet divisions has been eliminated. As planned, these attacks have left some German Infantry Divisions ready to attack further east, trying to catch a few Soviet units.

I then proceeded to almost making a complete mess of the attack towards Korosten and the Pripyat Marshes in order to trap some more Soviet units. A minor mistake was accidentally occupying Zhitomir, more serious was almost missing a rail line into the area.

At Proskurov, encircling another three Tank Divisions, four Rifle Divisions and an Airborne Brigade was merely a question of maneuver, and was achieved without much ado. To the south, two more Motorized Divisions and another Airborne Brigade was also reencircled.

Finally, I made a lunge into the open plains of Ukraine with two divisions, in order to ease the progress of the divisions coming later. I also sent an Infantry Corps in this direction, racing forwards to do battle over the Dnepr crossings before the Soviet defense becomes too well fortified.

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



Conclusion

Maybe the most noticeable thing to happen this turn is that, for one very brief moment, the Wehrmacht is actually numerically larger than the Red Army (by a margin of 6.000 men).

On the ground, the Axis has lost 3.000 men to 188.000 Soviets. The Soviets have also lost some 2.000 guns and 2.500 AFV. This turn alone, no less than eight Tank Divisions and six Motorized Divisions have been destroyed. As I still have five Tank Divisions and three Motorized Divisions encircled, those numbers will rise over the coming turns.

Air losses has been very light, due to the Soviets not really flying much. This has allowed all German Single Seat Fighter gruppen to have ready numbers above 30, and I am recuperating from the losses I made on turn one.

Compared to my last game as the Axis (I played HardLuck early this year), I am lacking far behind when looking at the terrain taken. However, I think that the destruction of so many Soviet Mobile units make up for that, and it will be very interesting to see what happens next.