

Strategic overview

Turn 6: Strategic Considerations

The Germans have not made any major gains or breakthroughs this turn, although they have managed to encircle a total of eight new divisions and two Airborne Brigades. The Germans have also taken more than 180.000 men prisoner, which means that the Red Army has grown by no more than 25.000 men this turn. Amazingly, even with such a high number of losses, the exchange rate of armor stands at 213 Axis AFV + SP/AC's for 407 Soviet ones.

Meanwhile, this turn has seen heavy fighting in the north and the center that has meant that Air losses have risen dramatically. The Exchange rate since my last turn stands at 85 for 631, which should indicate the viciousness of the fighting. Losses include 30 German Single Seat Fighters while Yak-1, LAGG-3 and MiG-3 losses are all below production (although not always by much). Losses of I-Type fighters is high with 297 lost this last turn. I still have 1970 in my reserve pools, so I can continue this exchange rate for a while.

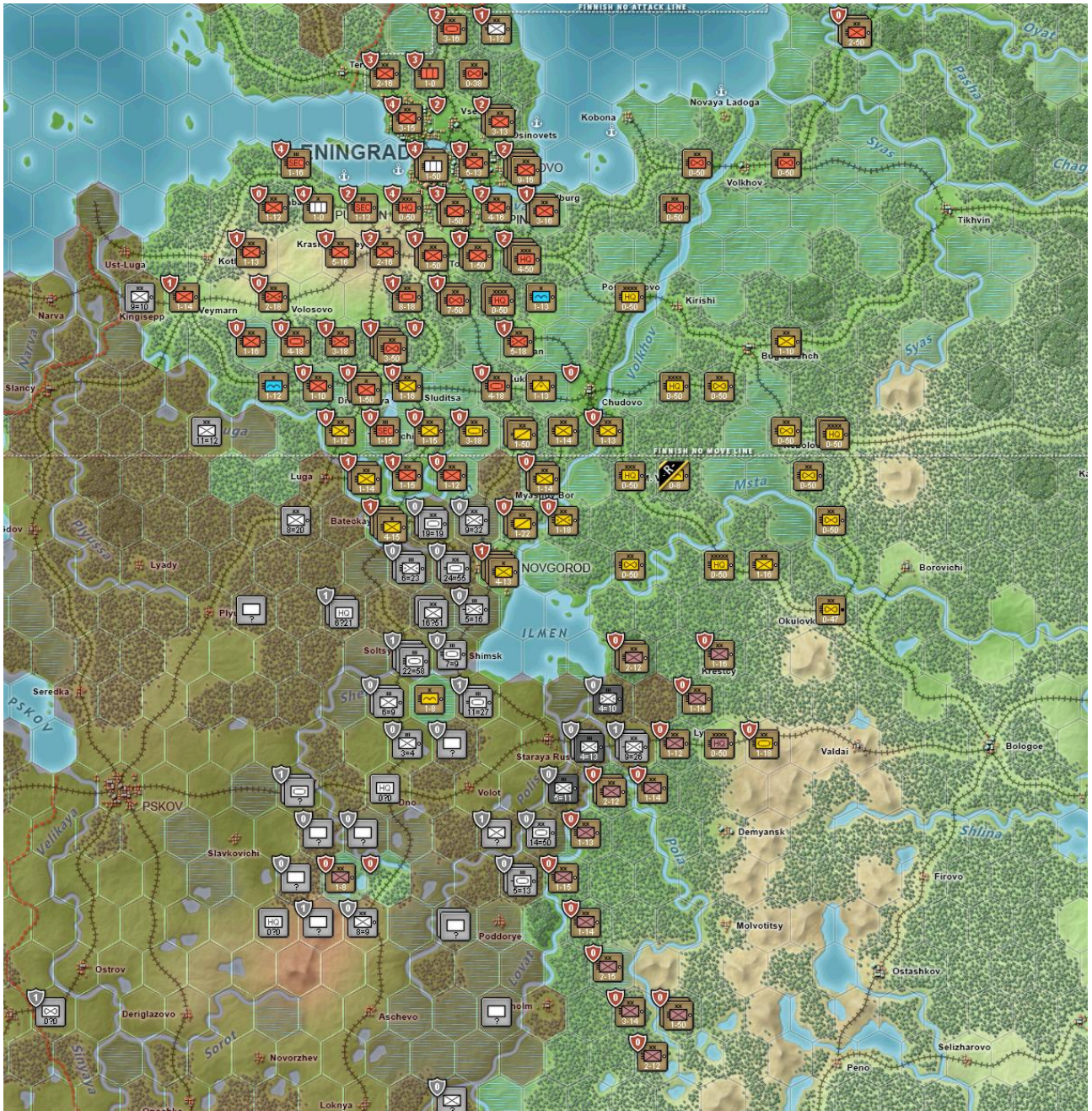
The air battles have effectively shattered the morale of my Air Regiments along much of the front. I have a lot of regiments with morale down in the low 30's. As always, I pull these regiments back to the National Reserve and replace them at the front with fresh regiments. This way, more than 50 Air Regiments have been pulled back this turn. The withdrawals has hit the Western Front especially hard, but also the Reserve Front and the Northwestern Front has been hit hard.

This has forced me to reconsider where I want to have a presence in the air over the coming turn. I have decided to focus my air presence on the Western Front and the Orel MD for now, as this is where I expect the heaviest fighting over the coming turns.

The only Air Regiment upgrades that have been done this turn are two I-153BS Air Regiments that have been upgraded to IL-2, so my fighter wing has not grown qualitatively stronger this turn.

Productionwise things are not desperate at the moment. The German advances in the north are well short of Leningrad (where I do not intend to evacuate anyway) and in the center the Germans are still west of Smolensk. In the south, all the cities along the Dnepr has had the industries evacuated, and the only production city in reach of the Germans is Gomel, which will be evacuated this turn.

The North



Situational assessment

North of Leningrad, the Finns are pushing forward towards the No Attack line, but as I now have nothing left north of the city, this is of little concern to me.

South of the city, the Germans have closed in on the Luga River while attacking in the vicinity of Novgorod. This city has been enveloped on three sides, and it is more than likely that it will shortly be encircled entirely. The strongpoints I established here last turn has not been attacked by the Germans.

South of Lake Ilmen, the Germans are also pushing forward with their Panzer Divisions. Surprisingly, the Panzer Corps here does not seem to be backed up by infantry. I do not think it will have the punch to push

forward fast alone, and I am wondering why it is here. When giving HJ the last turn, I spent some time really fearing a secondary Panzer Corps brushing my Rifle Divisions aside and then having the front corps rush through in a deep penetration. But thankfully, such an attack has not occurred.

In the air, the German attacks has seen some Luftwaffe support, but most of my recon missions at the beginning of the turn has not been met by interceptors. Nor have they revealed any forward Luftwaffe bases. It seem the Germans are still not prioritizing the north enough to actually have Luftwaffe stationed there during my turn.

Planning

As the Germans have continued to push northeast in the area around Pskov, I now see the main threat to Leningrad as being an attack against either the Tikhvin rail line or the eastern Ladoga ports. Because of this, I will spend the coming turn shifting the weight of my defenses in front of Leningrad to the east. The front row of units will be set up using the weak Northwestern Front, while I will use the strong Mechanized 23rd Army under Rybalko to create a set of (hopefully impregnable) defenses at Novgorod. Meanwhile, my strongest defensive units (the 30th Army) will stay close to Leningrad, in order to protect the city itself.

South of Lake Ilmen, I will concentrate two Rifle Armies with the northern flank against the lake itself stacked three high, in order to prevent the Germans from attacking in this direction. I remain curious to see what the Germans will do in this area.

In the air, I will bomb the German frontline units, as these have good detection levels, and the Luftwaffe is not keen to fly in the area. I am hoping to use this as a means to reduce the combat effectiveness of the German units.

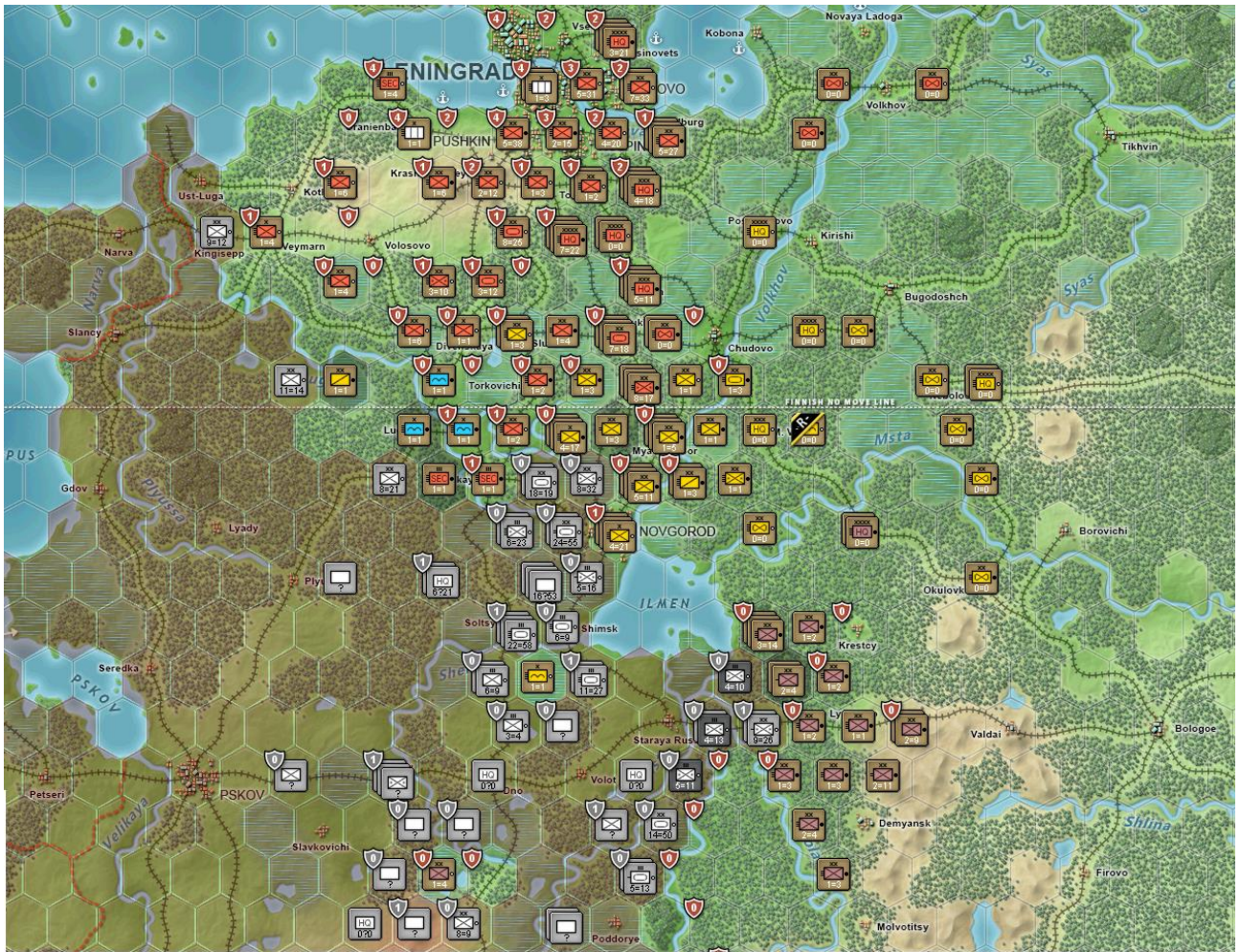
Execution

As I now have quite eight Air Regiments with Su-2's and IL-2's in the north, I have managed to cause some losses to the advancing Germans, although not really something they will feel acutely just yet. However, the losses will, I hope, accumulate over the coming turns, leading to a situation where the attack on Leningrad will eventually be impeded. All in all, the Germans have lost some 600 men to a loss of 14 Soviet Tactical Bombers.

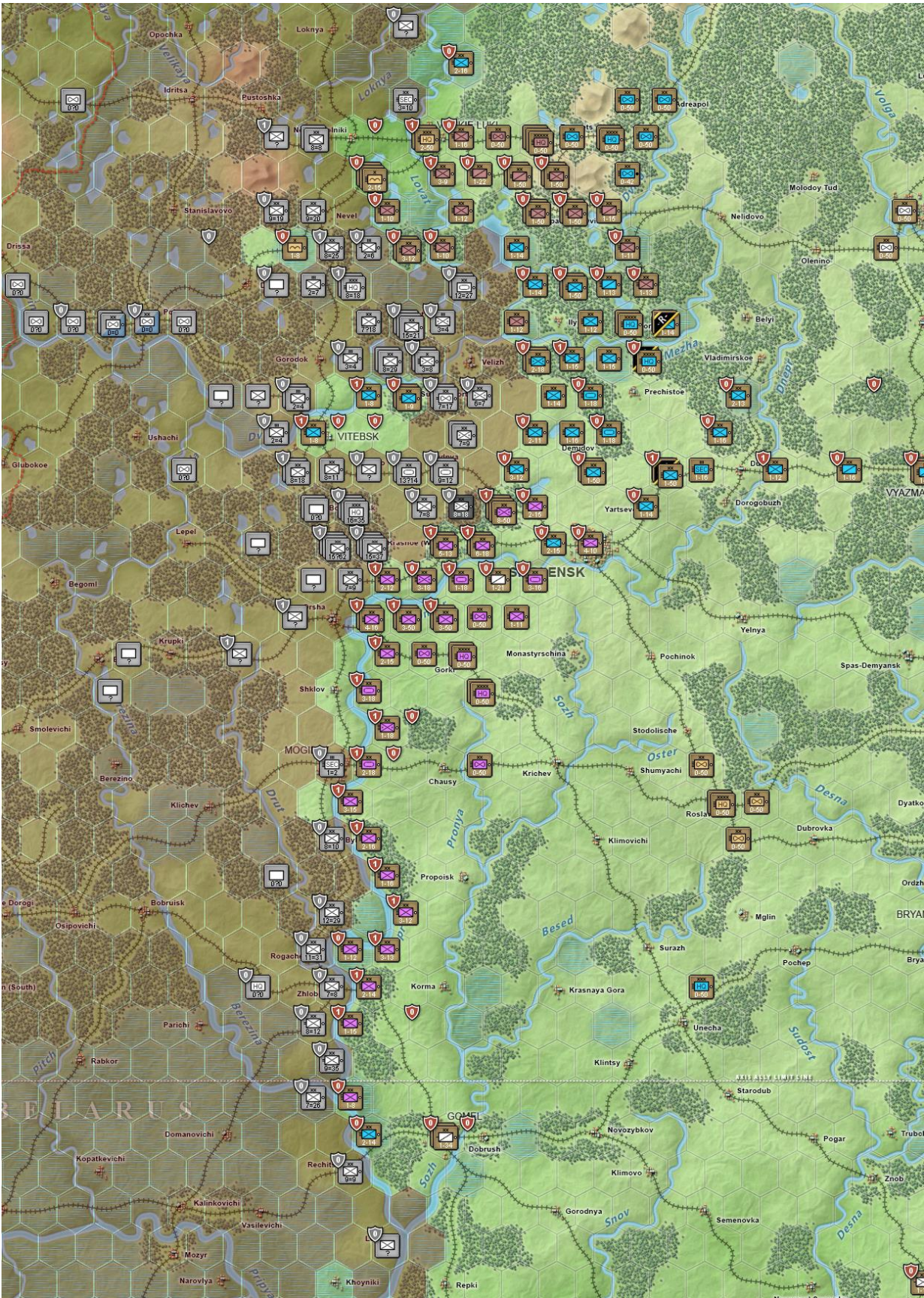
Axis Forces Defending:		< 2 of 3 > 81,24 - Clear - Clear Turn:6 1941-07-24 Forces Engaged		Soviet Forces Attacking:
53	-> SdKfz-10/4 SP Flak	DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0	ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0	Northern Air Command
12	-> 88mm Anti-aircraft Gun	DAM: men 30, art 5, afv 3	DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0	3 I-16 Type 24
9	-> 37mm Anti-aircraft Gun	LOST: men 68, art 8, afv 1	LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0	32 I-16 Type 29
17	-> SdKfz-6/2 SP Flak	DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	ATK: ftr 35, bmr 79, utl 0	30 Su-2
4	-> SdKfz-7/1 SP Flak	LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	LOST: ftr 0, bmr 1, utl 0	49 IL-2
		ground forces were BOMBED		
		Show Details Exit		

Apart from that, I have set up a few heavy stacks opposite the German advance, and I hope they will be able to delay the German attacks on Leningrad.

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



The Center

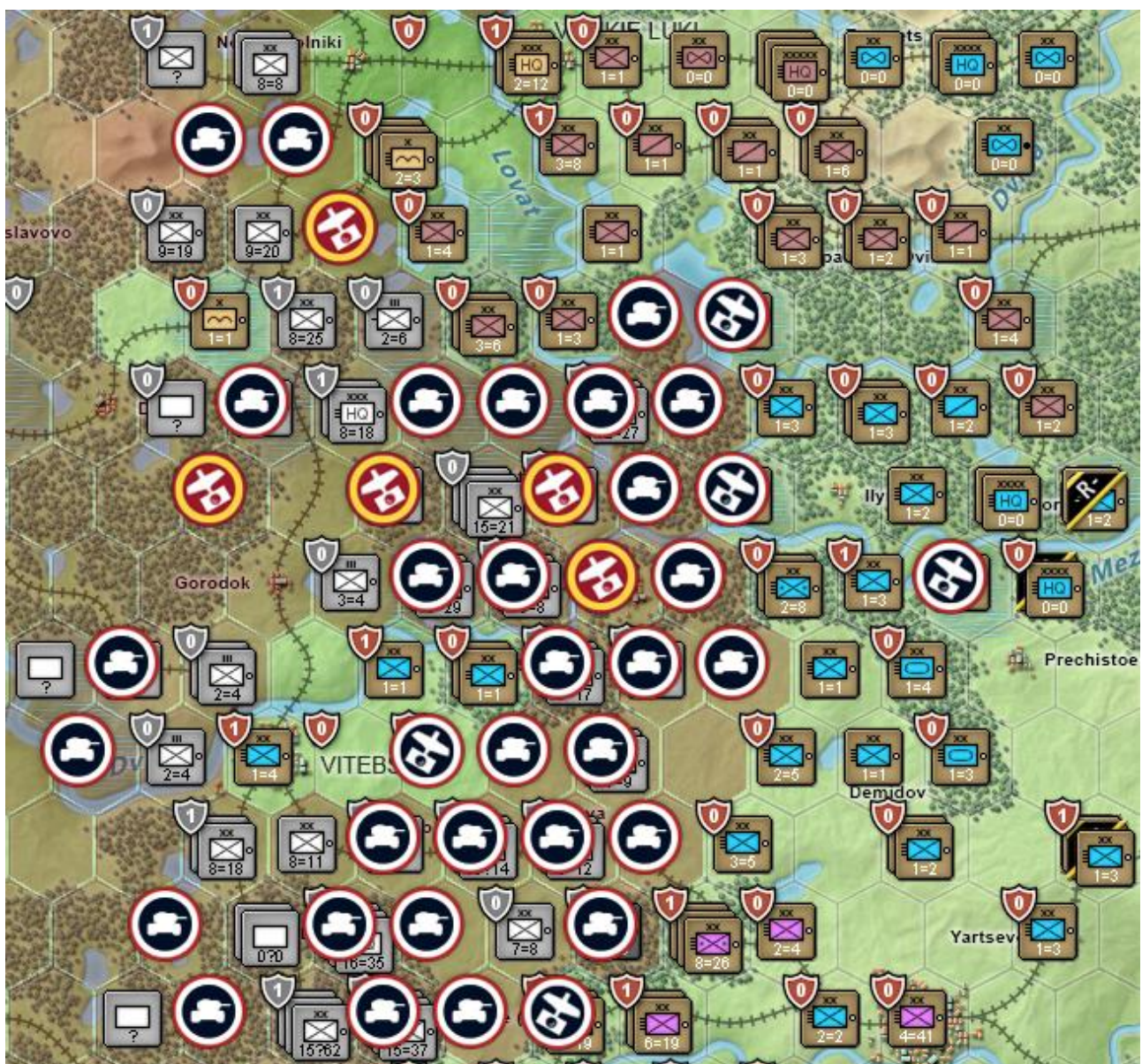


Situational Assessment

In the center, the Germans have pushed on in the area west of Smolensk. Even if my intention were never to get involved in a large scale battle west of Smolensk, it seems that is exactly what I have become. The Western Front has seen the brunt of the fighting, and it now looks as if that front is barely able to man a stretch of front 10 hexes wide. The result has been that the Germans have encircled four Rifle Divisions (about 41.000 men) and then pushed back the Soviets in front of the encirclement in a series of engagements.

The good news are that the fighting seems also to have hit the Germans in some ways, and I now see what appear to be a significant decline in the Germans divisional strength. Several of the Motorized Divisions in the area are now down to an offensive CV of six, and I also notice that the Infantry Divisions have taken a hit and are now at seven or eight CV.

Perhaps the scale of the battle can best be seen by the following graphic showing where battles have been fought during the German phase.



The viciousness of the fighting has left my air forces in the area in a complete shambles, and I virtually have to replace a very large part of the Air Regiments that I posted here last turn. Around Moscow, I have 20 Air Regiments with fighters that I can push forward this turn. However, the number of fighter Air Regiments available for next turn is somewhat lower, and I can only assign about 10 Air Regiments from the National Reserve this turn.

It does seem that the German Panzers in this area are quite low on fuel, and with a decent track back to their supply lines. It even seems that I will be able to increase that distance by placement of my forward divisions to cause attrition in the German ranks.

Further south, along the Dnepr, the Germans have now made contact with the Soviet defenses over a wide front. South of Mogilev, nine Infantry Divisions are now at the river, and in the deep south, the Germans have even extended their ZoC across the river, due to a lack of Soviet units opposing them. This does not concern me greatly, as the German supply lines are very long in this sector. The southernmost German division has no less than 48MP and 24 hexes to the nearest rail head.

Planning

At Velikie Luki, I will pull my units back behind the Lovat river, in order to free up units for the defense of other areas in this sector.

At Smolensk, I actually have a chance of attacking a 7=7 German Motorized Division with more than 15 CV's worth of Soviet Rifle Divisions in order to break the encirclement of the four Rifle Divisions. If successful, this should impede the German advance on Moscow by at least a turn. If not, I risk another encirclement of several Soviet divisions. In order to improve my chances of success, I will reorder my local forces quite a bit, including assigning Tolbukhin to command the attacking 13th Army, and I will prepare the air command by transferring several good Air Regiments (Yak-1's, I-153BS's and MiG-3's) to the command. That being said, I will be nailbiting watching the attack progress report.

Execution

At Velikie Luki, my resetting of the Russian frontline units has been made to ensure that no German units is without at least one adjacent Soviet unit (meant to cause attrition during the German phase). This is far from as expensive as might be imagined, as most of the units starting the turn encircled can be used for this.

Setting up for the main attack this turn, I manage to pull up six Rifle Divisions totalling 13 CV with another five Rifle Divisions in Reserve just to the rear. All these units being under the command of Tolbukhin with plenty of Support units in the 13th Army. Having my own divisions adjacent to practically every German unit in the vicinity, I hope for no German Reserve activations. Setting report level to seven, I proceed with the attack.

The first thing I see is the air combat where I notice the Germans winning easily, even if they are outnumbered four to one in fighters. I then notice two incidents where a Ju 87B shoots down a MiG-3, which I believe says all about the quality of the Soviet fighter wing at this stage of the war. In total, the following attacks by the Ju-87B's on the Soviet ground forces kill off some 287 Soviet Ivans before the ground battle commence in real. The ground battle sees no Soviet reserve activation whatsoever. The

battle also sees heavy Soviet losses, but ultimately Tolbukhin manages to convincingly force the the German division to retreat and break through the pocket to the four encircled Rifle Divisions.

Axis Forces Defending: XXXXVII Panzer Corps 29th Motorized Division (71) II/71st Artillery Battalion (0) 604th Howitzer Battalion (1) 1/59th SP Flak Company (1) II Fliegerkorps 9 Bf 109E-7 [v] CV: 73->96.4 Fort: 0.00->0.00 Comm HQ: XXXXVII Panzer Corps G Joachim Lemelsen	1 of 4 > 83,48 - Clear - Clear Turn:6 1941-07-24 Forces Engaged DEF: men 14386, art 193, afv 16 DAM: men 60, art 8, afv 1 LOST: men 186, art 9, afv 0 DEF: ftr 13, bmr 54, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 4, utl 3 ATK: men 68302, art 856, afv 83 DAM: men 600, art 18, afv 5 LOST: men 1387, art 23, afv 18 ATK: ftr 69, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 4, bmr 0, utl 0 29th Motorized Division RETREATED Show Details Odds 4.40 : 1 Exit	Soviet Forces Attacking: [^] 13th Army 161st Rifle Division (16) 56th Crps Art Rgt (1) 151st Crps Art Rgt (1) 86th Heavy AA Battalion (0) Western Air Command 35 MiG-3 [v] CV: 125->424.5 Eng Val: 2 Comm HQ: 13th Army GM Fyodor Tolbukhin
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At this point in the turn, I have become rather “cocky” so I decide to retake Mogilev from the Security Regiment currently holding it. To do this I muster five Rifle Divisions and make an attack where I have about a 20:1 superiority in manpower.

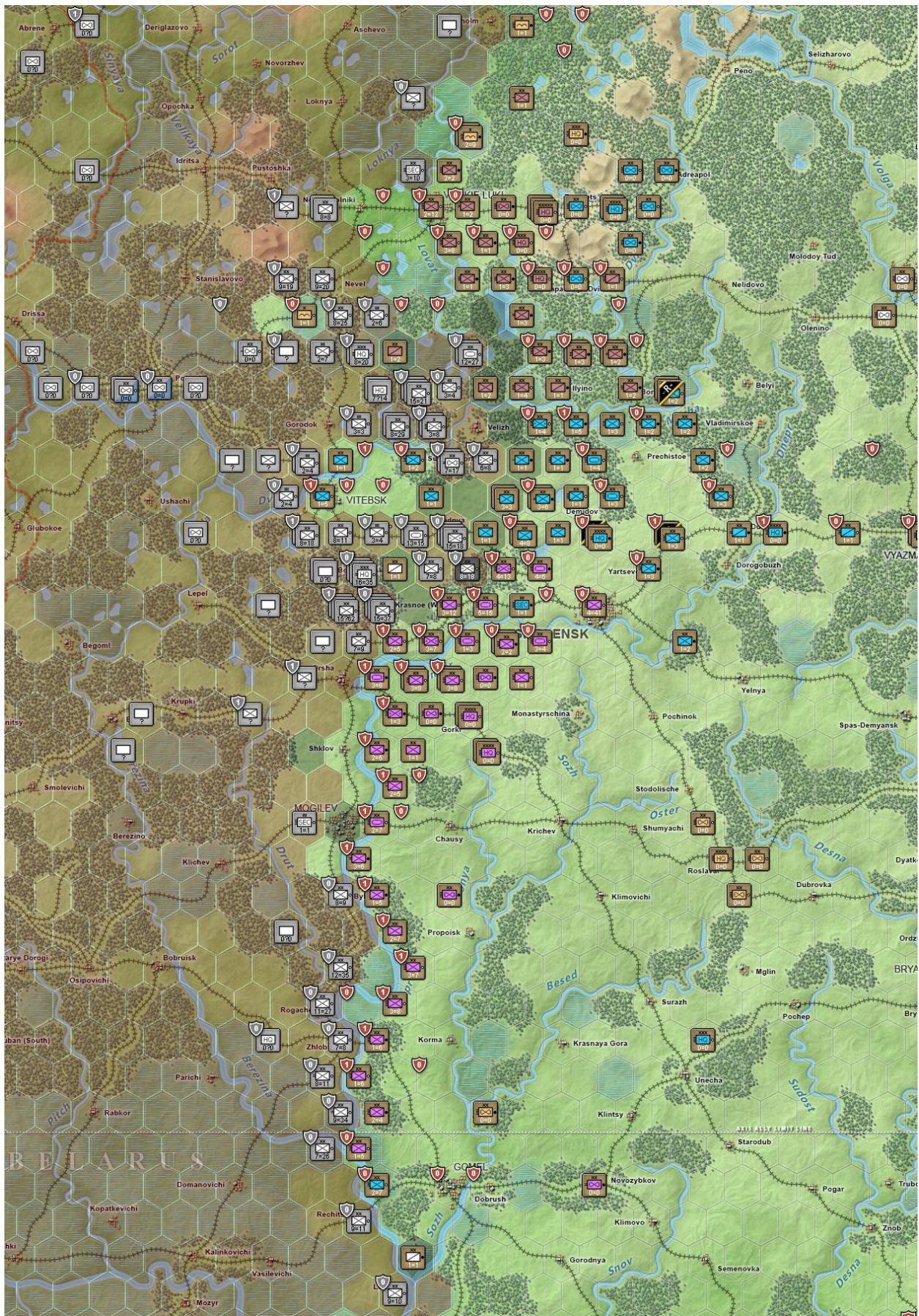
Axis Forces Defending: O.K.H. -20% 3/286th Security Division (16)	1 of 1 79,57 - City(Mogilev) - Clear Turn:6 1941-07-24		Soviet Forces Attacking: 20th Army 137th Rifle Division (21) 222nd Rifle Division (20) 21st Army -10% 53rd Rifle Division (8) 148th Rifle Division (10) 167th Rifle Division (4) 420th Crps Art Rgt (0)
	Forces Engaged DEF: men 2108, art 16, afv 0 ATK: men 56648, art 740, afv 54 DAM: men 37, art 2, afv 0 DAM: men 112, art 4, afv 1 LOST: men 114, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 135, art 1, afv 5 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 ATK: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		
	3/286th Security Division RETREATED		
CV: 16->3.2 Fort: 0.08->0.00 Comm HQ: O.K.H. GO Franz Halder	Show Details Odds 61.50 : 1 Exit		CV: 64->196.8 Eng Val: 2 Comm HQ: 20th Army GM Dmitry Gusev

These victories may not be gamechanging, but at least they show that the Soviets will have an increasing possibility to disrupt the German plans, and cause delays to the German timetable.

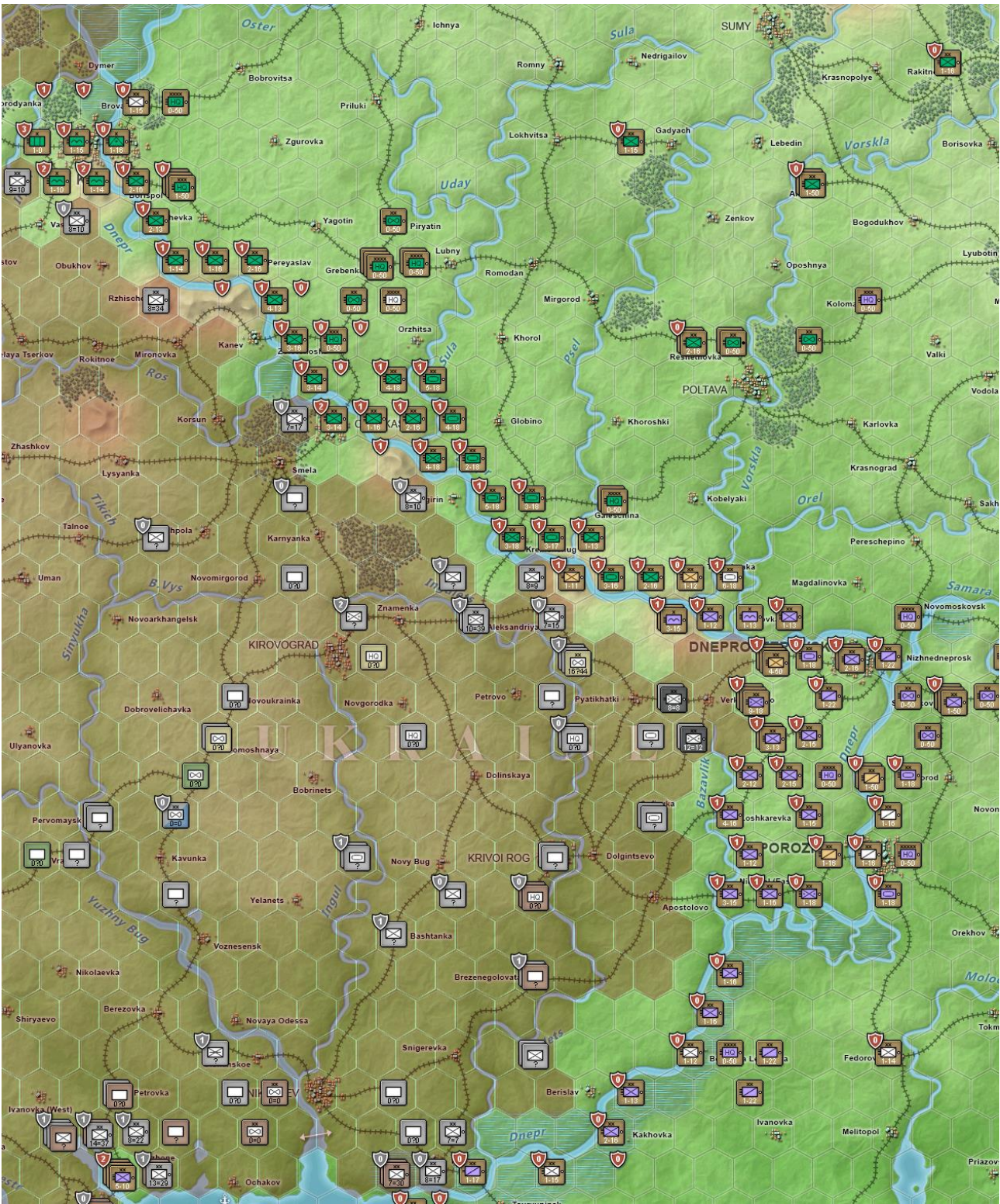
Setting up next turn’s Air Regiment reinforcements near Moscow, I get a total of 12 Fighter Air Regiments and 8 bomber Air Regiments ready for battle. This will not be enough, and I may well have to start cannibalizing the Northwestern and Southwestern Fronts to meet the requirements in the center.

Finally, I have my night bombers bomb the German units along the Dnepr, although with very limited results.

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



The South



Situational Assessment

The situation in the south may appear almost static, but it most certainly is not. While I still hold my lines along the Dnepr running northwest from Dnepropetrovsk and also have a strong presence behind the Ingulets river to the west of Zaporozhye, the pressure on the southern part of the Dnepr river is ever mounting. I believe that the German infantry will push across come next turn, but I may still hold them from penetrating very deep.

West of Odessa, the German Panzers have been conducting a series of attacks with one Panzer Corps, which suggest that they will not have an extraordinary amount of strength to put into the attacks on the Dnepr River.

At Odessa, I pay the price for staying in position. It seems my three Rifle Divisions were not even able to withstand one single attack against their fortified positions, and they have all been forced into an impossible situation. The only consolation is that they will require at least one more attack by the Germans to snuff out.

1 of 1		81,108 - City(Odessa) - Clear	Turn:6 1941-07-24
Axis Forces Attacking: XXX Corps -6% 198th Infantry Division (161) 8th Rum. Infantry Division (82) 13th Rum. Infantry Division (75) 14th Rum. Infantry Division (72) II/54th Artillery Battalion (1) I/77th Howitzer Battalion (1) 774th LW Lt Flk Bn (1) [v]	Forces Engaged ATK: men 158710, art 1746, afv 58 DAM: men 648, art 14, afv 4 LOST: men 728, art 1, afv 0 ATK: ftr 70, bmr 56, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		Soviet Forces Defending: 14th Rifle Corps 150th Rifle Division (313) 25th Rifle Division (387) 51st Rifle Division (404) STAVKA 638th PVO AA Regiment (14) 73rd KBF PVO AA Regiment (9) 27th PVO AA Battalion (2) [v]
CV: 1213->3266.5 Eng Val: 12 Comm HQ: LIV Corps GL Karl Adolf Hollidt	51st Rifle Division RETREATED 25th Rifle Division RETREATED 150th Rifle Division RETREATED Show Details Odds 2.87 : 1 Exit		CV: 1131->1136.0 Fort: 4.18->0.00 Comm HQ: 14th Rifle Corps GM Daniil Egorov

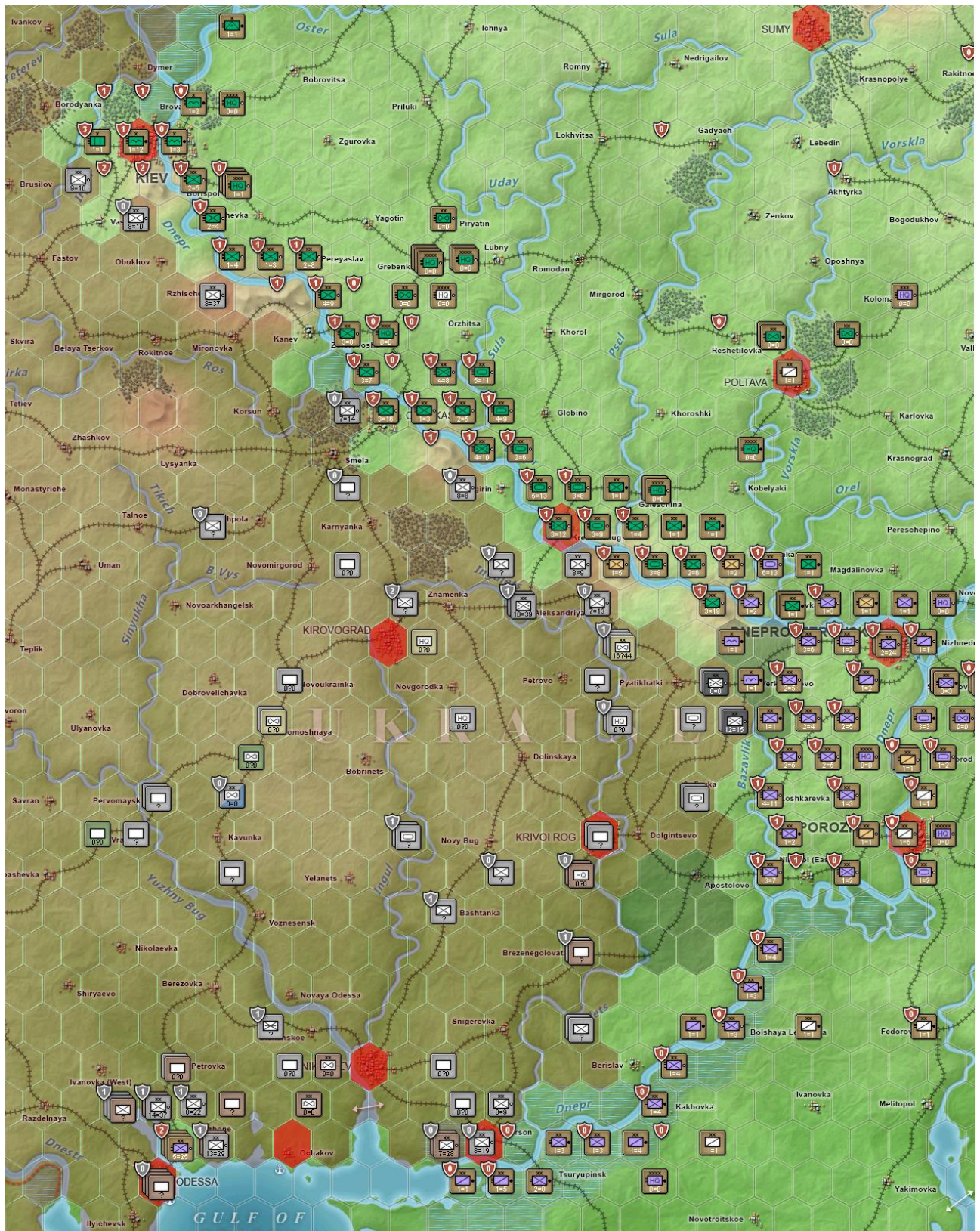
Planning

This turn, I will stay in position along the lines I have chosen for my defense. I will also move up a few more divisions to the lower Dnepr line, but I have no intentions of holding this line whatsoever.

In the air, I will use night bombing against as many of the front German units as I can, in order to inflict disruption and subsequent fatigue. I expect little visible result from this.

Execution

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



Conclusion

This turn I have evacuated the industries from Gomel, Poltava, Chernigov as well as the Vehicles from Kharkov. Even doing this, I have also focused on bringing units forward to the Moscow area, and I now have a few divisions around the city for future deployment.

On the ground, the Soviets have lost few during the Soviet part of the turn, mainly due to me only launching two ground attacks. Losses over the last turn are some 189.000 Soviets for 23.000 Axis soldiers. The good news are that the AFV exchange rate is currently around 2:1 (with 430 soviet ones destroyed for 217 Axis ones). With the difference in production, I can be very happy with such an exchange rate.

In the air, the heavy losses have continued, mainly due to my policy of continued bombings against the frontline German units in order to reduce CV and increase fatigue on the infantry. By now, total losses over the last turn stand at 738 Soviet machines for 104 Axis ones. The good news are that a total of 38 German Dingle Seat fighters has been lost, while losses of all the "high end" Soviet fighters are below production (although not by much). Similarly the loss of modern tactical bombers are below production figures as well, while the Germans have lost 10 Ju 87B. Of more concern is the loss of 43 I-153BS and 74 R-Z's. I will not have those second rate tactical bombers available for long.

My vehicle situation is pretty good however, with a vehicle pool of 144K versus a need of 132K. I can not help but wonder if the German vehicle pool is beginning to suffer from the extended supply lines to many of the German units.