

Strategic overview

Turn 7: Strategic Considerations

While the Germans are making steady progress towards both Moscow and Leningrad, they have been unable to make any deep penetrations of devastating effect this turn. Having said that, they have encircled a number of Soviet divisions totalling 10 Rifle Divisions and an Airborne regiment. The bulk of those divisions will make contact with the Soviet lines again, but they will most likely be forced to surrender before long. In total, I have about 100.000 Ivans starting the turn encircled.

Ground losses during the German turn have been "light", with 119.700 Soviet Ivans being lost for 23.000 German landsers. The good news are that only 256 Soviet AFV have been lost for 165 German ones. Further, production of T-34's have now passed 100 per week (but the Red Army still needs more than 3.000 to make up for it's current deficits).

In the air, 567 Soviet aircraft have been lost for 109 Axis ones. Losses include 85 MiG-3's but also 30 German Single Seat fighters. Most of the German losses would probably have been withdrawn come next turn, but the numbers are still looking good. I am capable of fighting back in the air. I currently have 42 Air Regiments with morale less than 45, but for now, a substansial part of these are bomber Air Groups. Behind the front, I have plenty of Air Regiments ready on both my assembly bases at Moscow and in my National Reserve.

The North



Situational assessment

North of Leningrad, the Finns are closing in on the city and, due to neglect on my part, has drawn the LaGG-3's at Osinovets into a series of dogfights.

South of Leningrad, the Germans are shifting their focus to the west, which is basically what I intended for them to do with my setup last turn. In a series of attacks, the Soviets have been thrown back over the Luga at all of its length, and the Germans have begun pushing against the Soviet positions on the north side of the river. Notably, the Germans have yet to tangle with any of the heavy stack defenses I have in the area. Further, the 30th Army is yet to be involved in the fighting, and are continuing to fortify the positions closer to the city. Some of the fighting has caused heavy casualties on both sides, as can be seen on the example below.

Axis Forces Attacking (H): XXXXI Panzer Corps 6th Panzer Division (85) 12th Panzer Division (62) 52nd Werfer Regiment (1) II/59th Howitzer Battalion (0) 615th Howitzer Battalion (0) II/411th LW SP Lt Flk Bn (3) 607th SP Lt Flk Bn (2) [v]	1 of 3 > 81.22 - Light Woods(Torkovichi) - Clear Turn: 7 1941-07-31	
	Forces Engaged ATK: men 52174, art 567, afv 538 DEF: men 19693, art 196, afv 5 DAM: men 122, art 3, afv 14 DAM: men 170, art 3, afv 0 LOST: men 103, art 2, afv 10 LOST: men 1185, art 26, afv 4 ATK: ftr 76, bmr 49, utl 0 DEF: ftr 63, bmr 30, utl 0 LOST: ftr 3, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 7, bmr 2, utl 0	
	2nd Gd. Leningrad PM Rifle Division RETREATED 1st Leningrad PM Rifle Division RETREATED	
CV: 209->507.3 Eng Val: 4 Comm HQ: XXXXI Panzer Corps G Georg-Hans Reinhardt	Show Details Odds 7.80 : 1	Soviet Forces Defending: 28th Army 1st Len. PM Rfl Div (26) 2nd Gd. Len. PM Rfl Div (24) Northern Air Command 3 MiG-3 10 I-16 Type 24 50 LaGG-3 CV: 50->65.0 Fort: 0.66->0.00 Comm HQ: 28th Army GM Rodion Malinovsky

South of Lake Ilmen, the Germans have continued to push the Soviets back in a series of frontal assaults, with little attempt to outflank the defenders. The Germans still have one Panzer Corps holding the line here, but looking south it seems a fresh Corps of Infantry is moving north to support the Panzers.

In the air, the Luftwaffe have been supporting the Germans ground operations but, judging by the Soviet recon missions at the beginning of the turn, are not supporting every stack of German units north of the river Luga.

Planning

At the Svir River, I will begin assembling a line of 20% MaxToE AT Regiments and the like, in order to prevent the Finns from attacking south. This turn, I will have four such units in position, and come next turn another three will arrive.

South of Leningrad, I will concentrate my first line of strong stack defenses in a line stretching roughly northwest from Novgorod. With the German Panzers shifting west, the most likely path of German advance seems to be directly towards the city. In front of this line, I will leave some weak units as skirmishers, mainly intended to cause attrition o the Germans and to force them to use a little MP to advance.

Southeast of Lake Ilmen, I will push back up to the German Panzers, partly to cause attrition and partly to slow the German advance. I can not help to wonder if leaving the Panzers on the line like this is a clear mistake by the Germans or if they have some plan which I have yet to comprehend.

In the air, I will generally continue my mission of bombing the German frontline units to cause attrition and fatigue. I will generally focus on the Infantry Divisions, as fatigue points on those "hurt" more and because they will be instrumental in an attack on Leningrad itself.

Execution

I have sett up the defense line using mainly the Northwestern Front units near Pskov and the 23rd Army further north. This Army, under Rybalko, is probably one of the strongest armies that I have with five Tank Divisions, two motorized Divisions and three Rifle Divisions (all at full strength) and backed by 17 support units (AA, Artillery, Sappers and a motorcycle Regiment). The plan is to use this army in the forward defense of Leningrad and then slowly pulling it back across the Volchov river as the pressure mounts. To this end, I hope that the German Panzers in the area will continue to shift westwards.

Southeast of Lake Ilmen, I have refrained from attacking with my SB-2 bombers as the Northwestern Front Air forces are pretty much decimated and there is currently no Air Groups ready for Ait Tranfer to this area. Instead, I have assigned four Fighter Air Regiments and four SB-2 bomber Regiments to an assembly base

some distance behind the front. I simply hope that they will get to some results once the Germans attack again over the next turns.

In the air, I have sent two airbases with I-Types into Leningrad in order to battle it out with the Finns. Further, I have set the LaGG-3's in osinovets to fly only one hex. Should the Finns desire to continue the air battles against the I-Types, I will happily let them slowly bleed themselves against these aircraft.

I have also used my Tactical bombers in a series of attacks on the forward German units, often getting some decent results. In the attack below, I have disrupted about 480 landers, meaning that those guys will start next turn fatigued. Depending on the current fatigue levels of the unit, I guess that about half of them will be "newly" fatigued, which should mean a decline of CV on the German unit by about 1,5%. Attacking 17 times this way south of Leningrad, I guess there must be some sort of effect on the Germans.

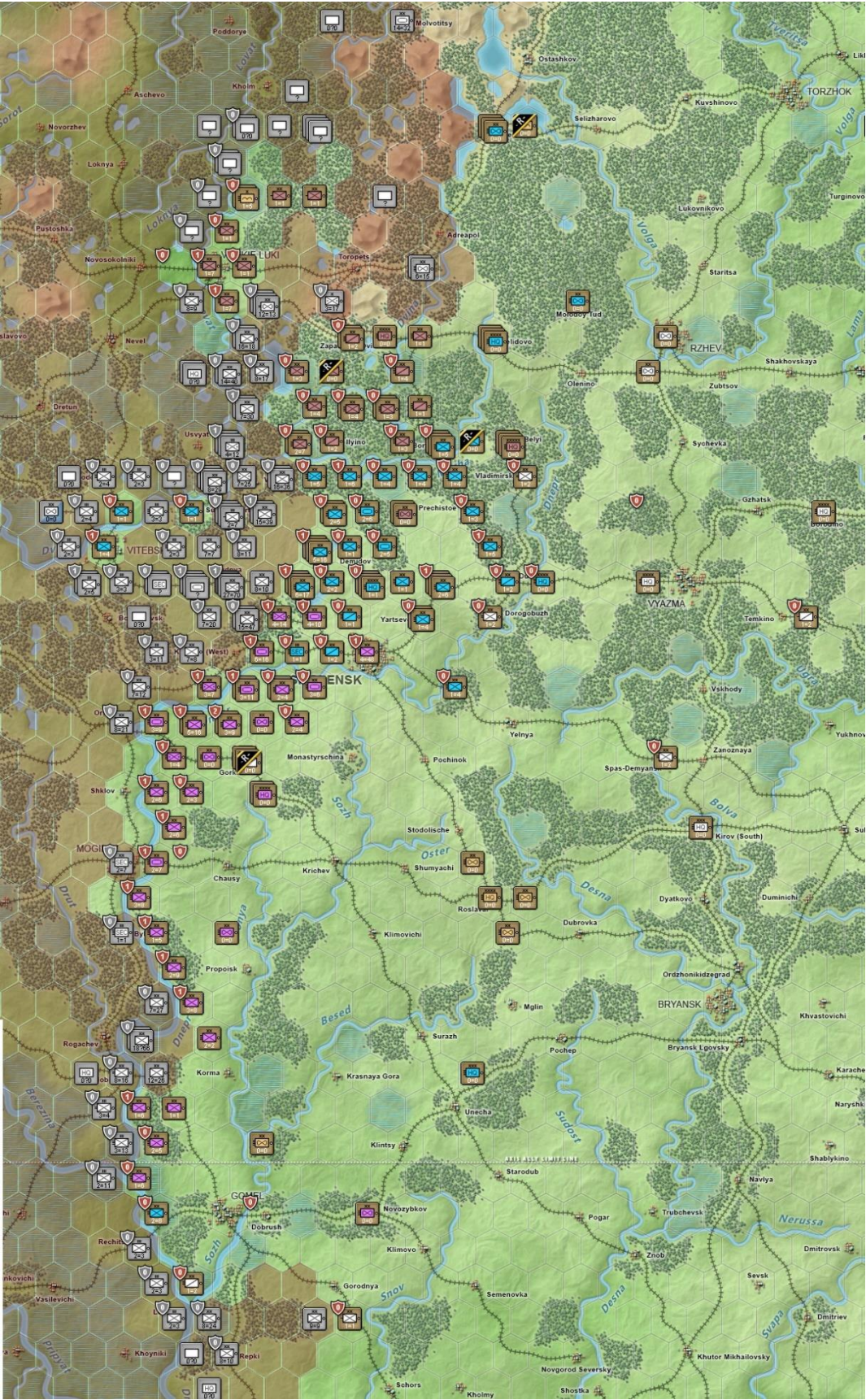
Axis Forces Defending:	< 2 of 2 77,21 - Light Woods - Clear Turn: 7 1941-07-31		Soviet Forces Attacking:
	Forces Engaged		
	DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DAM: men 18, art 5, afv 0 LOST: men 71, art 5, afv 0 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0 ATK: ftr 0, bmr 73, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	
	ground forces were BOMBED		
	Show Details	Exit	

At the end of turn seven it seems to me that if the Germans have any plans to take Leningrad in 1941, they will have to allocate some more resources to this fight. As the situation is now, I believe that any German attack will be stalled before reaching the city.

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 attacked into the weakly held area at the center of the Reserve Front. Thus, they have encircled seven Rifle Divisions and an Airborne Brigade in a move that has come as a surprise to me. I will have no trouble reestablishing contact, but the encircled divisions are in trouble.

In order to get a better view of the situation here, I have begun the turn by moving a few encircled units about so as to get better intel on the German positions. This has revealed that the Germans have moved at least three Panzer Divisions and a Motorized Division into the area between Cholm and Velikie Luki. This is interesting, as that area is both virtually undefended and a decent distance from the German supply lines (all the German Panzer Divisions end up at ranges between 38 MP, 14 hexes and 52 MP, 17 hexes to their nearest rail head. None of the German Panzers here show anything but "Red" in fuel.

Further south, three of the four forward Rifle Divisions have been reencircled (a total of 29,000 Ivans), this time without any hope of rescue. Next turn, Vitebsk will fall, and the turn after that, the German rail line will reach the city.

I still hold the northern section of the Dnepr line, but across from the Pripyat Marshes, the German Infantry Divisions are streaming forward, mainly due to the lack of Soviet resistance. The German supply ranges are up to 45 MP, 22 hexes in this area.

In the air, the German breakthrough has, unfortunately, overrun several of the airbases I have in the area. Surprisingly, this has not been enough to change their fuel situation to black, even with a couple of fuel drops by the Luftwaffe.

Planning

I will obviously break out of the northern pocket to give an extra turn of life to the encircled units. Moreover, I will use my local cavalry to create "obstacles" to the reencirclement of those units come next turn, hopefully forcing the Germans to commit a lot of resources they would otherwise use for the battle of Smolensk. In order to support my effort, I will also focus on bombing the German Infantry Divisions this turn and pull up some fresh Rifle Divisions from the south to create a "strategic reserve" of sorts, capable of counterattacking whatever design the Germans come up with in this area.

In order to cover the gaps in my line, I will continue to rail in reinforcements from the rear, and these will assemble along the Dvina river stretching south from Peno. They will be forming up in two separate Army commands directly under STAVKA.

At Smolensk, I will pull back to a line going straight north from Smolensk and anchoring on the woods north of the city (those woods will be fortification level one come the German turn). I will also leave some Western Front units guarding the Mezha river line in order to protect the southern flank of the Reserve Front.

South of Smolensk, I will pull back from the Dnepr line. Instead, I will create a new line based on the Sozh river, so as the Germans will find it harder to brush my defenses aside using infantry and then pushing through the gaps with their armor.

In the air, I will focus my long range night bombers on the German Infantry Divisions, leaving the fighters ready for the combats to come. Over the two next turns, the Luftwaffe will lose four Air Gruppen to withdrawals which will certainly relieve some pressure on the Red Army Aviation. For now, I will simply continue to fight defensively, but in two turns time, I might decide on another course.

Execution

On the ground, I have reestablished contact with the Soviet divisions encircled north of Velike Luki and in return encircled a couple of German units. I have no doubt they will be rescued next turn, and the main question is how many of my units will be encircled when I get the turn back. While I have put some more units into harms way, I feel the gamble is worth it. In total, I have also railed in two armies worth of reinforcements, which should help secure this area from deep penetrations in the immediate future.

At Smolensk, I have created a line of defenses several hexes deep, even though none of the positions are of any value currently. I hope to be allowed to dig in a little further over the next couple of turns, at least with the rearmost lines of defense.

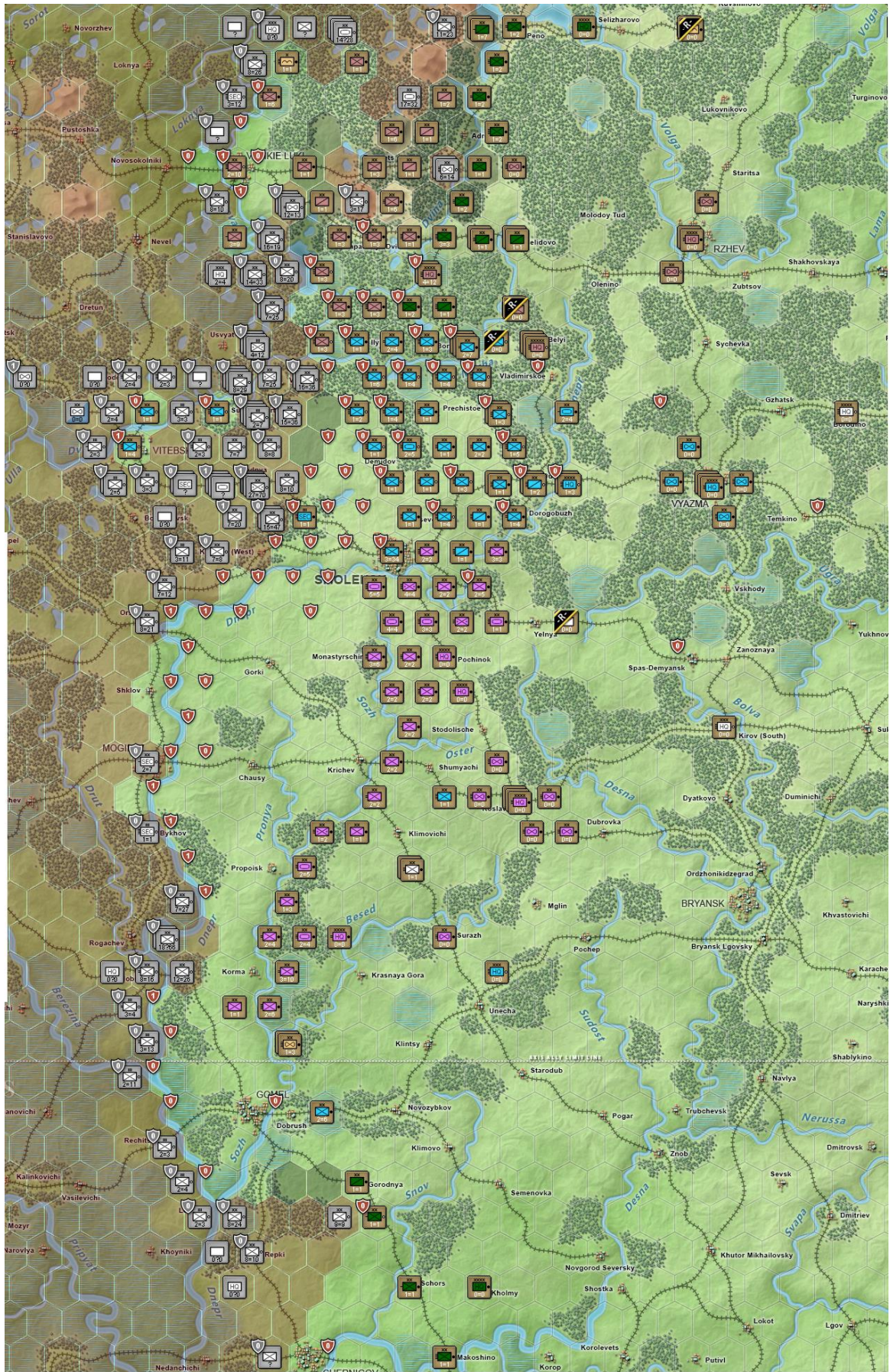
Further south, I have pulled back from the upper Dnepr line. Setting out this game to not really defend that line, I am amazed that it has actually held until turn seven.

In the air, the withdrawal of the Orel MD saw quite a lot of Luftwaffe interdictions with heavy fighter cover. Realizing that the Germans would be close to “flown out”, I then embarked on a bombing campaign against three Luftwaffe fighter airbases. While one of the fighter gruppen bombed this way will be withdrawn in the next couple of turns, each airbase also contained a “viable” Air Gruppe target. The bombings were costly in level bombers, but I have plenty of those to spare. The results however, were splendid (at least I think so). The eight airbase bombing attacks destroyed a total of 46 German fighters, including approximately 30 Bf 109F-2's.

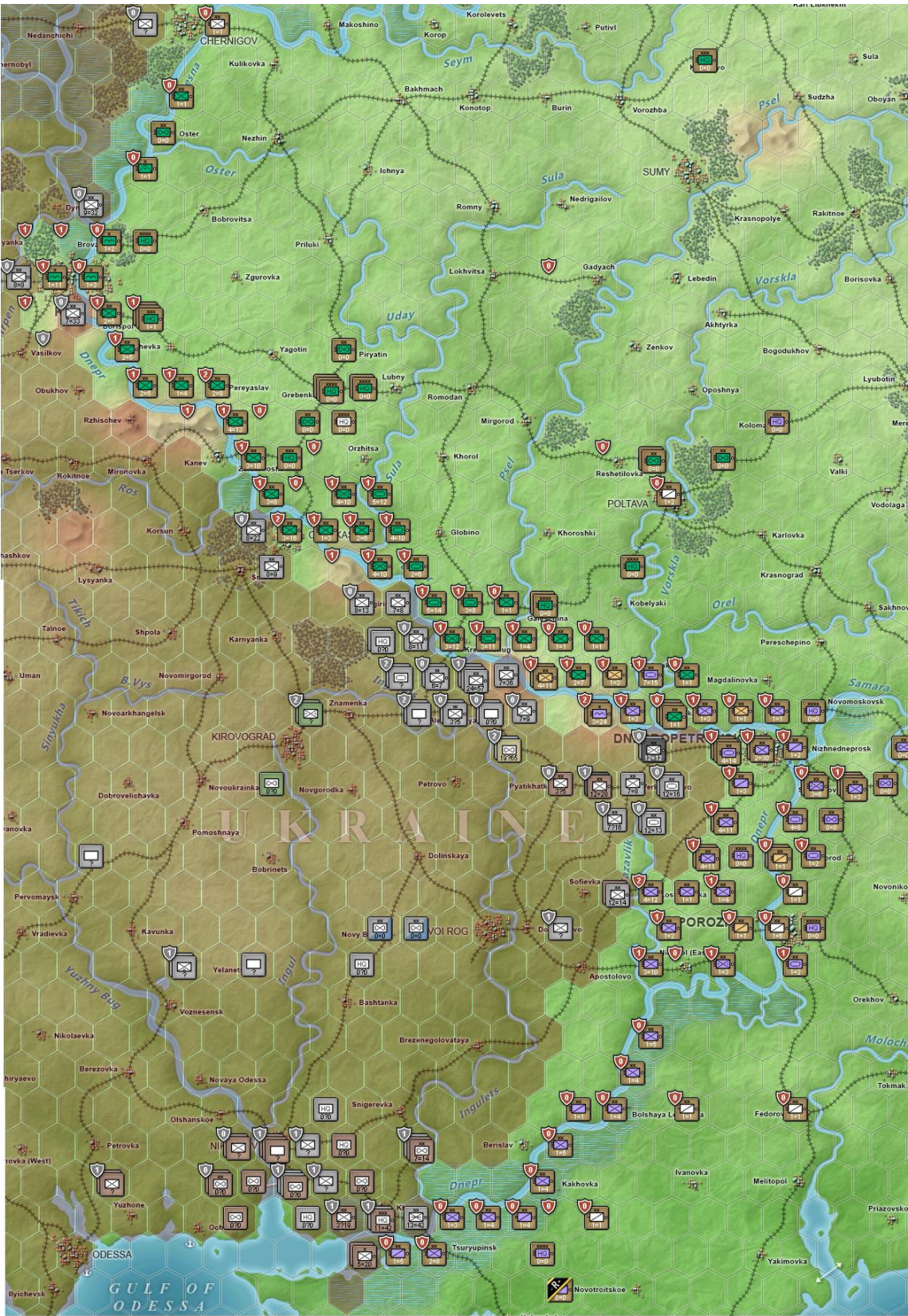
Axis Forces Defending:		< 2 of 2 80,49 - Clear(Liezhno) - Clear Turn: 7 1941-07-31		Soviet Forces Attacking:	
		Forces Engaged			
15 Bf 109E-7		DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0	ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0	7 MiG-3	
4 Bf 110E-2		DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0	DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0	4 I-153	
		LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0	LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0	10 I-16 Type 18	
5 : 18 Bf 109F-2		DEF: ftr 19, bmr 0, utl 0	ATK: ftr 40, bmr 117, utl 0	19 I-16 Type 24	
		LOST: ftr 8, bmr 0, utl 0	LOST: ftr 4, bmr 7, utl 0	96 SB-2	
15 -> 88mm Anti-aircraft Gun		airfield was BOMBED		21 Pe-2	
		Show Details	Exit		

Behind the front, I have placed 46 Air Regiments in positions to be Air transferred to the front next turn.

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



The South



Situational Assessment

The Germans have continued to steadily push on towards Dnepropetrovsk this turn, without any encirclements of Soviet troops.

Of more concern is the fact that there is a rather large group of German forces across the Dnepr at Kremenchug, which can easily be moved southeast and then force a river crossing at the weaker defenses directly above Dnepropetrovsk, which would place my defenders above the Dnepr west of the German attackers.

At the mouth of the Dnepr, the Rumanians have now had their first units cross the river, but I can probably still more or less hold the river line for another turn should I so desire. However, an attempt to do so will come with some risk, and there is nothing of value in the area that I can defend this way. At the Crimea, my defenders of the North Caucasus MD are in place, and I will be able to give battle here, should the Axis forces decide to attack the Crimea.

In the air, there are Luftwaffe assets in the area, but for some reason they seem to have been attached to the Slovakian Air Command, which is certainly not a move I would have expected.

1 of 3 > 98,96 - Clear - Clear Turn: 7 1941-07-31		
Axis Forces Attacking (H): [^]	Forces Engaged	Soviet Forces Defending:
Slovakian Air Command	ATK: men 33995, art 362, afv 257 DEF: men 19523, art 278, afv 11	19th Army
71 Bf 109E-7	DAM: men 110, art 5, afv 5 DAM: men 165, art 6, afv 1	158th Rifle Division (48)
36 Bf 109F-2	LOST: men 144, art 5, afv 4 LOST: men 401, art 6, afv 0	442nd Crps Art Rgt (2)
3 Bf 109F-4	ATK: ftr 111, bmr 32, utl 0 DEF: ftr 54, bmr 27, utl 0	471st Crps Art Rgt (1)
1 Bf 109E-4B	LOST: ftr 1, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 8, bmr 2, utl 0	272nd Crps Art Rgt (1)
32 He 111H-4		377th Crps Art Rgt (1)
	158th Rifle Division RETREATED	Southern Air Command [v]
CV: 134->242.9 Eng Val: 2	Show Details Odds 3.71 : 1	CV: 53->65.3 Fort: 1.30->0.00
Comm HQ: XIV Panzer Corps		Comm HQ: 19th Army
G Gustav von Wietersheim	Exit	GL Ivan Konev

Planning

I will abandon the defense of the upper section of the Dnepr river down to the Sula, on which I will base a flank of my defence for the coming turn. This will also allow me to free up a few divisions to strengthen the line on the river just northwest of Dnepropetrovsk. Unfortunately, it will also force me to leave one Airborne Brigade behind in Kiev, which will certainly be encircled come next turn. It will be interesting to see the final battle, as Kiev is also home to two weak AA Regiments and three weak AA battalions.

Further, I will pull my forces in the Dnepr bend back behind the river, and establish a line of defense here. In the bend itself, I will continue to use my AirBorne Brigades to get close to the Germans forcing them to spend MP on removing them as well as forcing some attrition on the German units.

Pulling back in the Dnepr bend will also force me to abandon my positions on the lower Dnepr, as there would otherwise be a rather dangerous gap on the river defenses southwest of Zaporozhye. I will pull the Southern Front units back on the Molochna river, in order to establish a new line here.

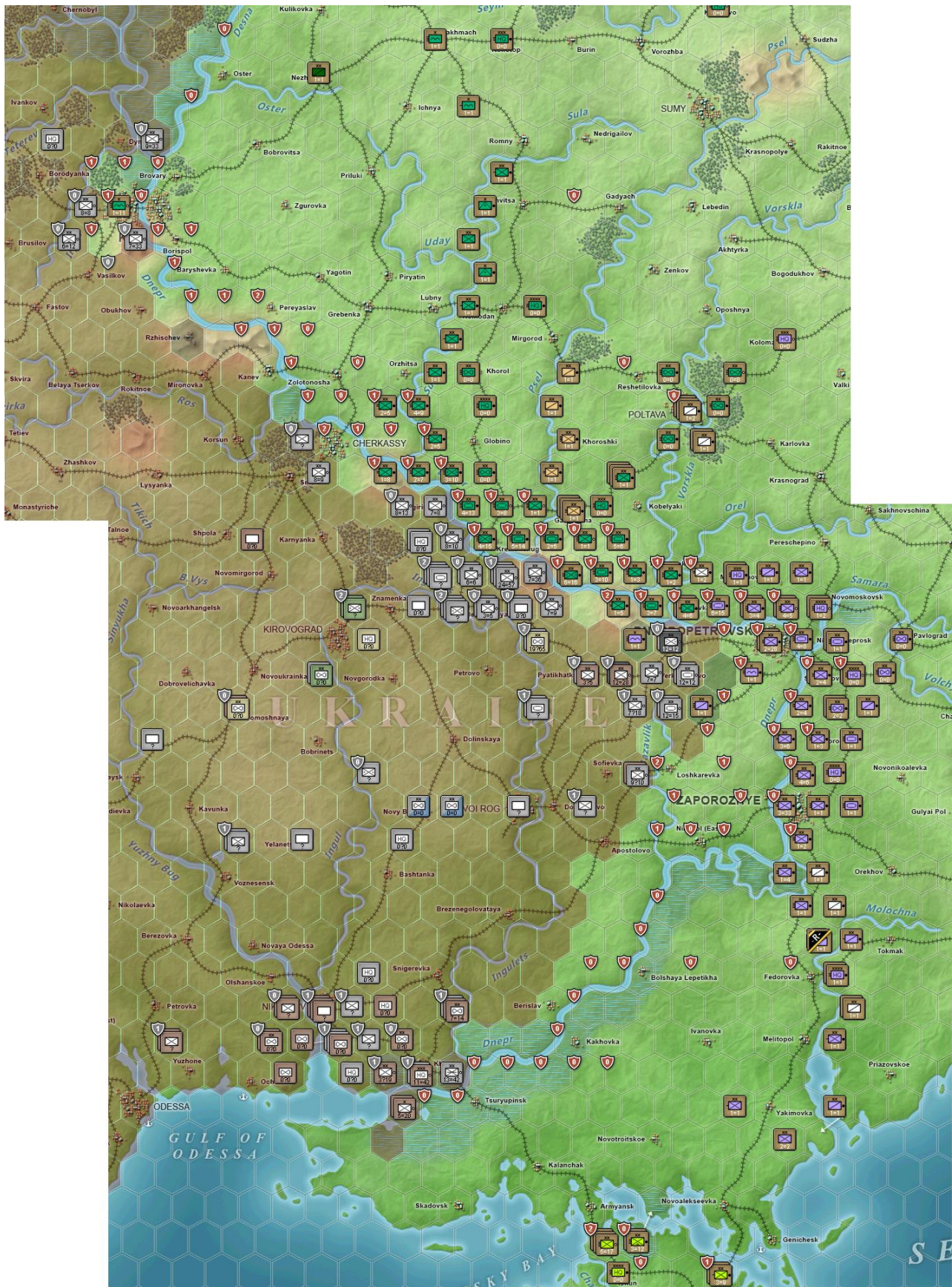
In the air, my main objective is to force fatigue on the German infantry ready to cross the Dnepr northwest of Dnepropetrovsk.

Execution

As planned, I have moved the Southwestern Front to the southeast along the river Dnepr, while pulling the Southern Front back behind the Dnper at Zaporozhye and the Molochna river. I have conducted no ground attacks, so there is relatively little to say of the situation in the south.

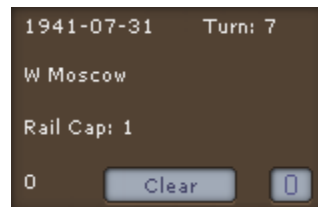
In the air, the Luftwaffe and the Axis Minors made another series of heavy interdiction attacks against my retreating Ivans in the south. I then decided to use up the Southern Front airforces for a number of ground attack, hoping to draw out the remaining Luftwaffe flight capacity, before doing a number of daylight airbase attacks on a couple of fighter airbases using the Southwestern Front units. I have noticed that the Germans have continued doing heavy interdiction after my bombing attacks, so I assume they have set interdiction high and interception relatively low. However, quite a few of the German casualties have been operational, so I also assume that the Luftwaffe must be pretty fatigued by now.

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



Conclusion

This turn, I have evacuated eight Armament Factories and nine Heavy Industry from the Moscow area (better to be prepared), as well as rail forwarding several divisions to the front line where they are needed the most. This has pretty much used up my rail capacity, as can be seen below.



Meanwhile my vehicle pool is looking quite good, with a surplus of 31.000 vehicles (161K to 131K).

Ground losses have been manageable this turn with 119.000 Ivans going for 24.000 landers. However, the Axis has lost 166 AFV + SP/AC's to 260 Soviets, which is good news, even though the Axis losses are a little on the light side.

In the air, losses have been huge on both sides. The Axis have lost 205 aircraft to 863 Soviet ones since my last turn. Noticeable is the fact that the Axis losses include 78 Bf 109F-2's and 25 Bf 109E-7's, for a total of about 4.5 turn's worth of fighter production. This is clearly unsustainable in the long run for the Germans. The Soviets have lost 119 MiG-3's which is about 1.5 turns of production, while losses of Yak-1's and LaGG-3's are at about 66% of current production. I am steadily degrading my opinion of the MiG-3 fighter (which was never that high to begin with), so I do not consider this a great calamity.

Of more note is the loss of 201 SB-2's and 55 Pe-2's. Should such losses continue, the Soviet reserve pools will be out of this type of bomber in about five turns. However, if I can keep up this exchange rate of Soviet bombers to German fighters for five turns, the Luftwaffe will be a pretty much spent force. All in all, I consider this turn's air battle a tactical Soviet victory, and the pressure is now on the Germans to find a way to change their approach (pretty easily done, by the way: Ramp up interception, scale down on interdiction and fly only short range for instance).

I think events this turn have pretty much vindicated my approach to the air war. I believe that with proper slow paced micro management of the Soviet airforce they are almost certain to gain the upper hand long before they did so historically. Also, the air war is a lot more "forgiving" of Soviet mistakes than it is of Axis ones.

All in all, I am pretty happy with this turn, even if I may lose between five and ten Divisions at the Reserve Front. It seems the situation at Leningrad is stabilizing itself, while I have had the first major victory in the air.