

Turn 4, Strategic considerations

In general, I am far from happy with the supply situation. I have too many Panzer and Motorized units with too few Movement Points. At Army Group Centre for instance, I have two Panzer divisions with no more than eight movement points.

Because of this, I will take drastic action to try to limit the amount of Vehicles and supply used by the infantry and gun support units of the Wehrmacht. This will be done by setting the TOE of both types of units to 80% in most cases (breakthrough infantry will remain at 100%). I really do not like tinkering with my TOE this way, but of course it is quite historic to prioritize where the various resources should go.

In the air, I have lost a total of 20 Luftwaffe fighter aircraft during the Soviet turn, all caused by airfield bombings by Soviet level bombers. The Soviets are clearly focusing on attacking the Luftwaffe fighters, as there has been no attacks on the bomber airfields.

This turn the first Finnish units have become active, which calls for a brief discussion of how I intend to use the Finns.

First of all, the possible use of the Finns rests entirely on whether the Axis capture Leningrad or not. If not, I strongly believe the Soviet players best bet is to ignore the Finns up until 1944 at least. The Finns are unable to attack anything important, and are thus irrelevant. If Leningrad is captured, the Finns can take over part of the frontline south of the city and thus free up German units for other fronts. They will still be unable to attack anything important, and can be used purely in a defensive role.

My plans for the Finns is to attack up to the Finnish "No Attack" line if possible, waiting for the fall of Leningrad. If Leningrad does not fall, I will likely pull the Finns back to Janisjarvi and let them dig in there for the duration.

In the north, I am still not able to get much fuel through to the divisions furthest east. I am wondering if I should just have destroyed the Soviet Rifle divisions to their west in order to further the advance of fuel and supplies. However, it is a little late to change last turn, so I will focus instead on this one.

In the air, I spy one airfield with SB-2 Rcn's (26) and two more some 15 hexes behind the front with long range bombers.

In order to get a better benefit from my HQBU this turn, I will begin by transferring one or two divisions between the mobile corps, based on their current MP status. I will then use infantry attacks to clear the encircled divisions before doing an attack with the local Panzers having good movement left.

The objective of that attack is to break out northeastwards from Pskov, and attack towards the Luga river. I will also try to get units moving in the direction of Lake Ilmen, so as to et the Soviet defenders out of position.

Farthest to the north, the Finns will begin advancing towards Leningrad and Janisjarvi.

In the air, I will conduct an attack on the SB-2 Rcn airfield northeast of Pskov and I might also attempt an attack on the long range bomber airfields to the rear. As the German Ju88's have been somewhat disappointing as interditors so far, I will use those aircraft in this role, hoping their high cruise speed will get them past the Soviet fighters unmolested. If not, I will simply cancel the attacks.

Execution

The initial attack of JU88's on the long range bomber airfield proved that the Soviets would fly interception, although without any success. However, the Ju88's are also very bad at hitting enemy airfields.

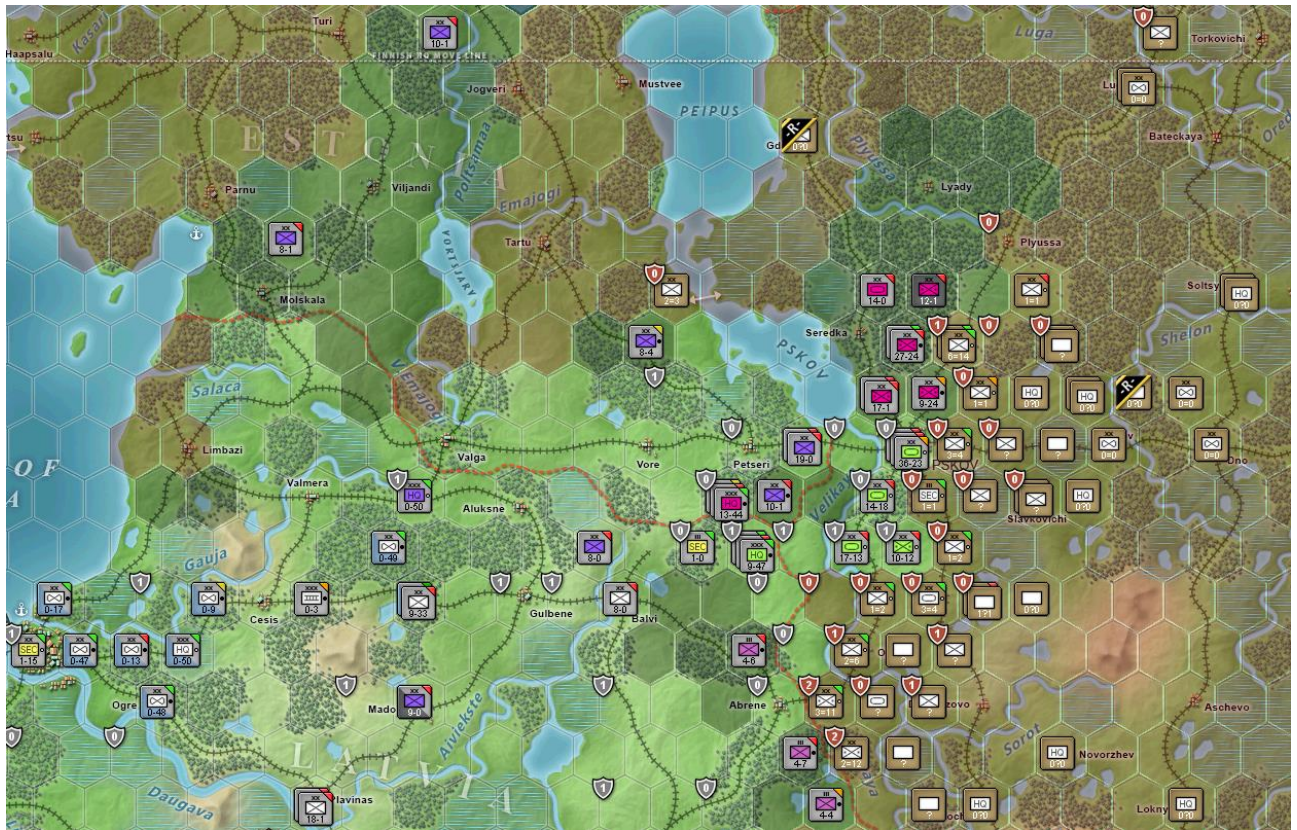
Axis Forces Attacking:		Forces Engaged		Soviet Forces Defending:	
I Fliegerkorps 24 Ju 88A		1 of 1	87.25 - Light Woods - Clear Turn: 4 1941-07-10	1 BAK Air Command 26 I-153	
		ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0 ATK: ftr 0, bmr 24, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DEF: ftr 26, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 1, utl 0	20 : 24 DB-3B 22 : 42 IL-4 23 : 36 DB-3B	
		airfield was BOMBED			
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I then proceeded to mess up another HQBU. This time, apparently, I am unable to assign and reassign units from a Corps HQ before doing an HQBU. I guess I will pick it up sooner or later, but for now it is just frustrating.

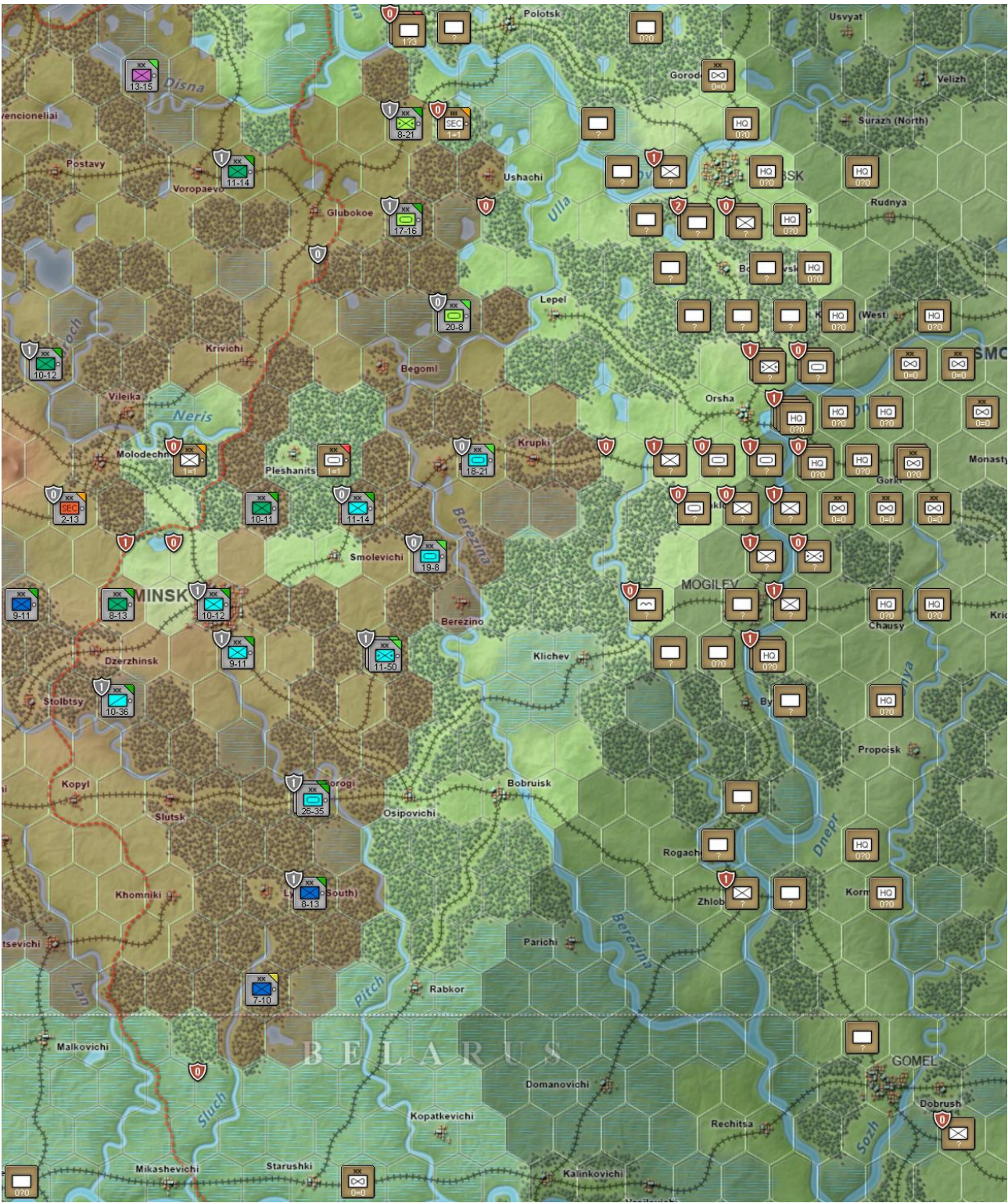
I have managed to destroy the encircled Soviet divisions and break northwards from Pskov. In doing so I have displaced a number of soviet airfields, taken a little fuel and destroyed a lot of damaged poor quality soviet airframes (and 12 Recon aircraft). I have deliberately left some movement on the Panzers and also placed my Panzer Corps HQ's 10 hexes from the future railheads and most of the Panzers within five hexes from their Panzer HQ's.

The battles in the area combined with the displacement of the Soviet airfields has meant a total of 209 Soviet airframes lost as I finish up my operations in the north.

Below is an image of the situation at Pskov, as I give the turn to Dontra.



The Center



Situational assessment

In the center, the supply situation is close to catastrophic this turn. My best bet is to gather the Panzers northeast of Minsk, while the Drissa rail repair moves eastwards. This should give some fuel to the Panzers over the coming turns, even if I do not invest in any HQBU's in this area.

In the air, I notice several long range bomber airfields behind the front and also the same Su-2 and Rcn airfields near the front I noticed last turn. The Soviet long range bombers have been attacking my Luftwaffe fighter airbase in Vilnius this turn, for a loss of 15 Bf 109F-2's.

Planning

I will start moving my Panzer units in this area north towards the "non river" defenses west of Smolensk. I do not really intend to attack these positions head on however, and would much rather attack through the woods to the north of the Dvina river. This should also further the advance of my Drissa Rail line repair. Such an attack is for a future turn to contemplate.

In the air, I will continue to hit the local Su-2 and Rcn airfields, while making sure my BF 109F-2's end their turn within Vilnius itself, hopefully getting some more cover there.

In short, this will be a dull turn in the center, as all I do is try to repair a rotten fuel situation. The fact that I am in such a situation speaks volumes of my (lack of) abilities when playing the Axis.

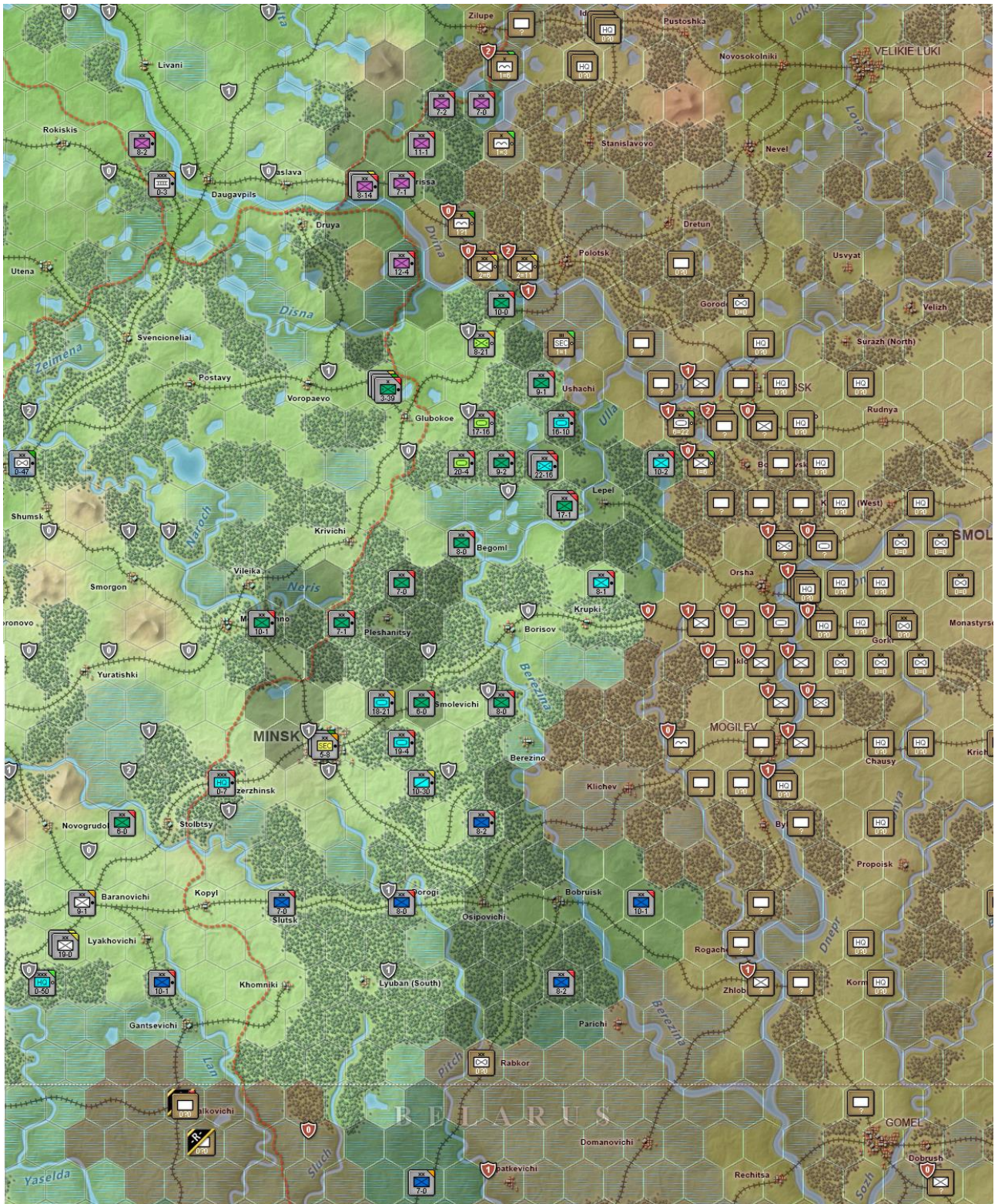
Execution

As I have few plans for major pushed in this area this turn, I have begun with the air attacks on the Soviet airbases. My fighter still enjoy numerical superiority in the dogfights over those airfields, and so I inflict heavy losses in the air as well as on the ground. The air attacks this turn has caused the Soviet air losses during my turn to rise to 305, including 35 SB-2 Rcn's.

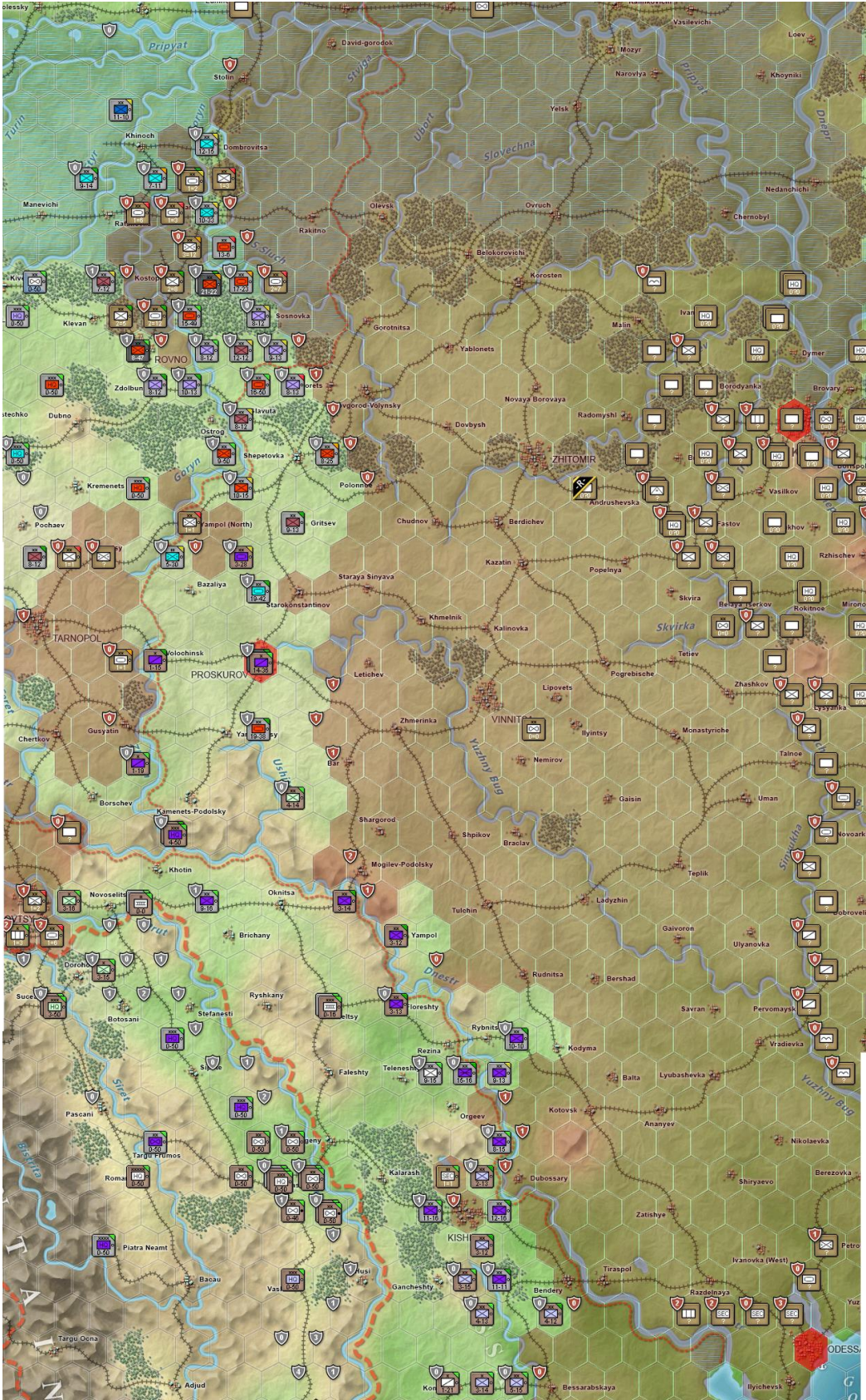
On the ground, the Bialystock pocket is now defeated, and I have more infantry units working their way east.

At the front west of Mogilev, very little has happened. I have focused on placing my Panzers in such a way that they can maximize their fuel intake while also being in position for future attacks.

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



The South



Situational Assessment

In the south, I find myself having made another big mistake last turn. I have several Panzer divisions east of Rovno with very little fuel and no HQ's within reach to give them the chance to do a proper HQBU. Once again, my lack of experience is quite telling.

The Soviets have pulled back in the direction of Kiev and established a new defensive line on the minor rivers stretching north from Nikolaev. At Rovno itself, the Soviets have reconnected to the main lines once more, but it is beginning to look as if it may be for the last time.

In the air, I spy two airfields with recon aircraft and another two that have not made it back to the main Soviet lines for some reason.

Planning

At Rovno, I will use my local infantry to close the pocket around the Soviets. Come next turn, I can hopefully begin the destruction of the Soviet tanks in the area.

The panzers however, need to get rolling again, and I will attack southeast into the area behind Vinnitsa this turn. The reason for this is twofold:

- First, I will get close to the rail lines advancing from Rumania and thus my supply situation should improve.
- Second, I will be able to strike either northeast towards Kremenchug and Cherkassy or directly east towards Dnepropetrovsk.

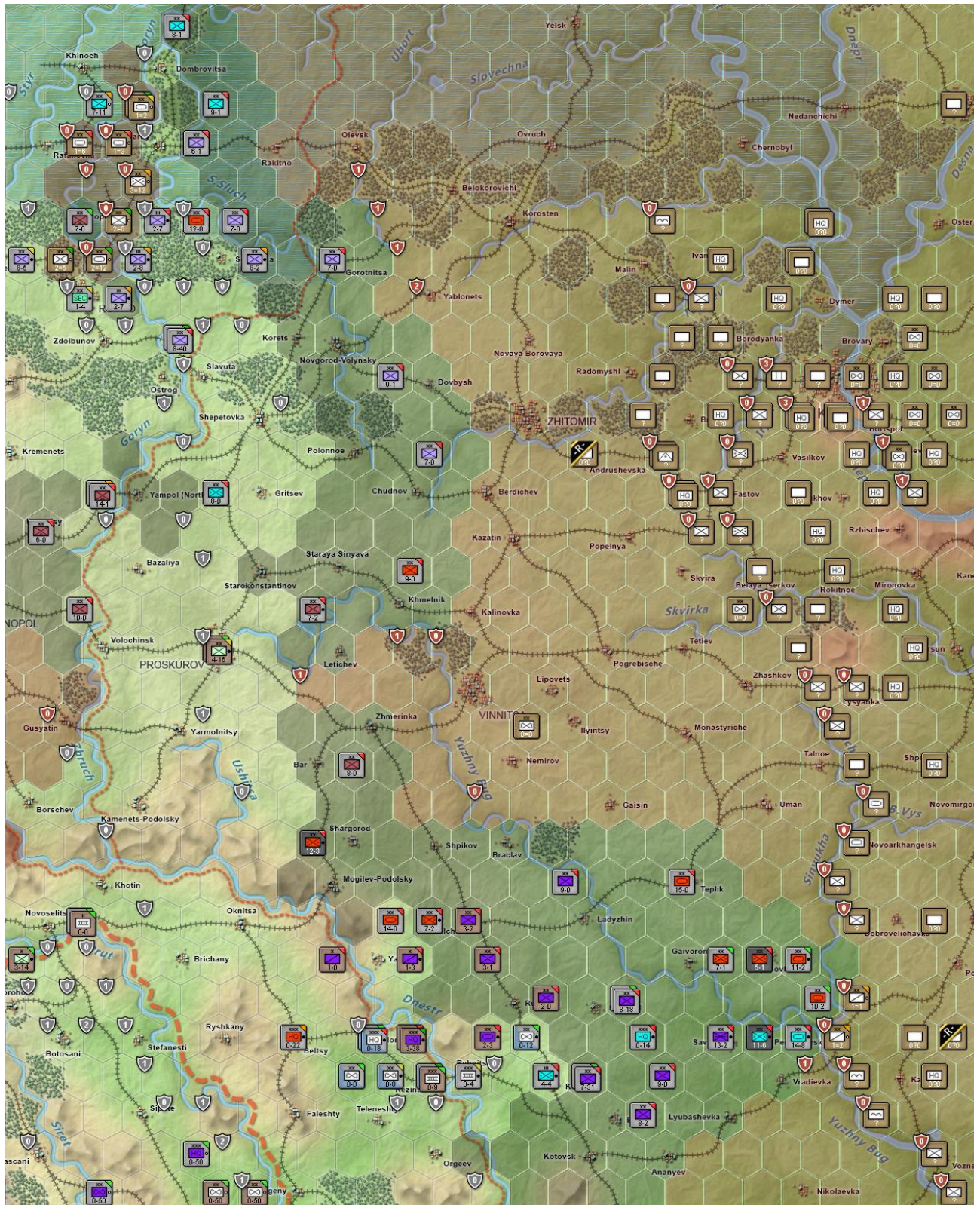
In the air, I will continue to hit the Soviet Recon airfields in the area, and the Luftwaffe airbases will follow the Panzers to the southeast, landing around the rail lines extending east from Rumania.

Execution

At Rovno, I have encircled the remaining Soviet divisions (four Tank divisions and one Motorized division). I have also begun the arduous task of moving my Panzers southeast, to the area where the Rumanian rail line enters the Soviet Union. Most of the Panzers should be well placed for receiving a massive amount of Movement Points come next turn.

Once again, due to my poor positioning over the last few turns, little fighting has happened in this area this turn.

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



Conclusion

It is pretty obvious to me that my first four turns have been less than optimal, to say the least. I have made a lot of mistakes, but I tell myself that I am learning from them as the game goes by. In any case, I really want to believe (and to prove) that this game is NOT won over the first five turns or so, but over the course of 225 turns.

The good news are that I now have some 113 T-34's in my reserve pools along with other assorted goods, courtesy of the Red Army. I have also destroyed another 45 Recon aircraft this turn. The bad news are that I am losing fighters at a far greater rate than I can replace them. By now, the losses of fighter aircraft stands at 131 over the whole game against an estimated production of about 50.

Last turn, I have assigned several LW Mixed Flak Battalions to the Fliegerkorps with the Luftwaffe airbases, but they have yet to be deployed in combat. This turn, I have placed my Vilnius fighters inside the city, hoping this will thwart any Soviet airfield bombing attacks.