

Turn 6, Strategic considerations

The Soviets are producing a lot more guns than I like, and consequently their man2gun index is climbing. Over the past two turns, it has risen from 123,3 to 111,3. At the same time, the Red Army has increased its manpower by 220.000 men.

In order to test the merit of using only Ju88's for interdiction attacks, I ended my last turn by setting all other bombers to night flying only (as I did not expect many attacks by the Soviets. During the Soviet phase, this has led to a total of five interdiction attacks by my aircraft with very limited results. In short, it seems the use of Ju88's for interdiction is not really valuable at all.

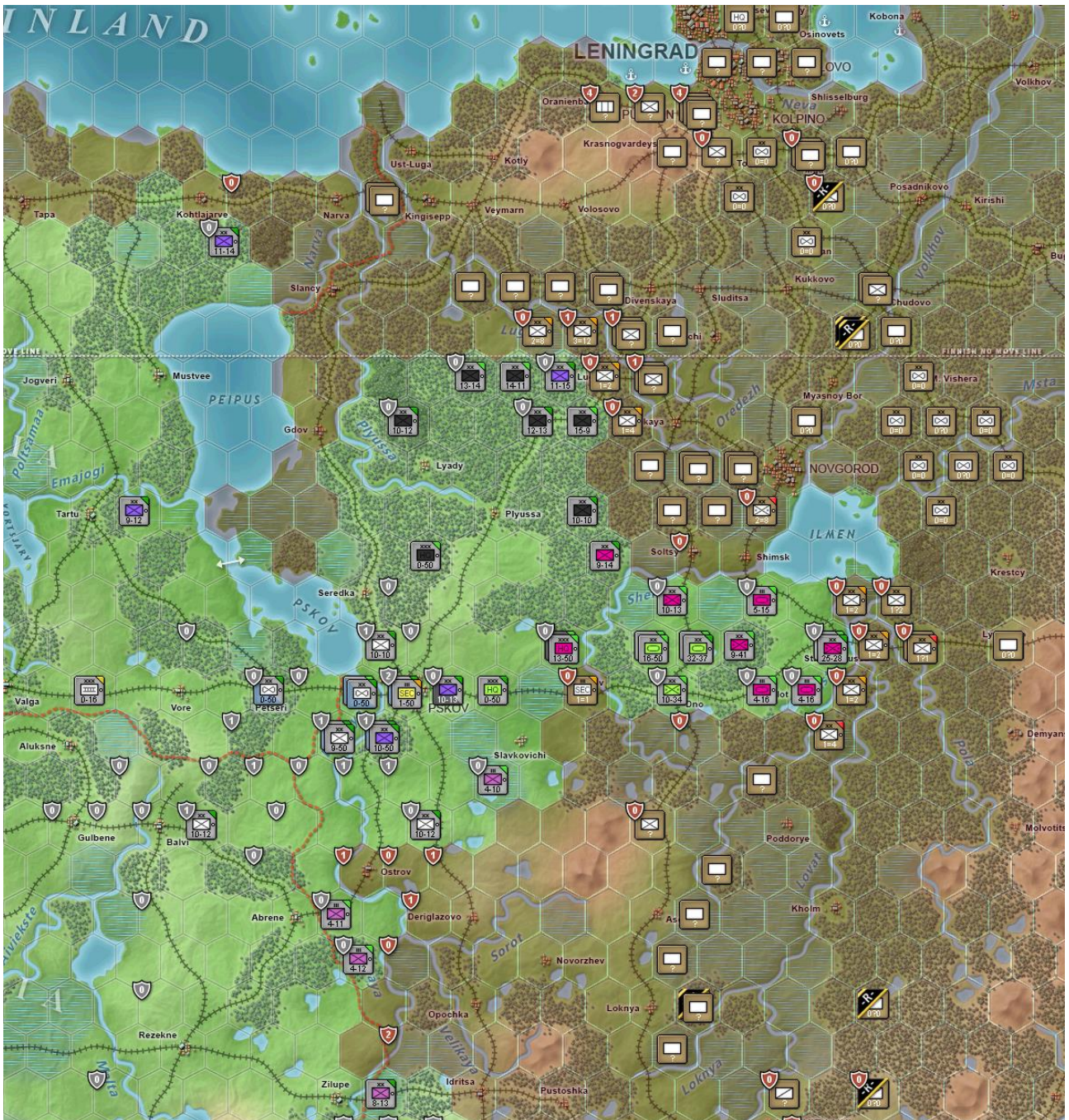
5 Battles Selected																			
Near	Loc	Attk	Result	Type	ATTACKER			DEFENDER			ATTACKER LOSSES			DEFENDER LOSSES			DEFENDER ESCAPED		
					Men	Guns	AFV	Men	Guns	AFV	Men	Guns	AFV	Men	Guns	AFV	Men	Guns	AFV
Dretun	77,43	AX	Interdicted	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	31	0	0	0	0	0
Gorodok	78,45	AX	Interdicted	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	1	0	0	0	0
Staraya Russa	85,28	AX	Interdicted	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Novosokolniki	79,40	AX	Interdicted	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Velikie Luki	83,42	AX	Interdicted	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Meanwhile, the Soviets are continuing their bombing campaign against the Luftwaffe airfields, causing heavy casualties amongst my fighters. Even though I have unused fighter bomber airwings standing by that have not flown at all during my own phase, my Luftwaffe officers generally refuse to send up more than three or four fighters to intercept every attack (my interception is set to 140 and night fighter intercept to 200), preferring instead to be slowly bombed into submission. At every bombing site, I have the commanding Fliegerkorps within two hexes.

11 Battles Selected																
Near	Loc	Attk	Result	Type	ATTACKER			DEFENDER			ATTACKER LOSSES			DEFENDER LOSSES		
					Ftr	Bmr	Utl	Ftr	Bmr	Utl	Ftr	Bmr	Utl	Ftr	Bmr	Utl
Vilnius	60,50	Sov	AF Bombed	-	0	103	0	3	0	0	0	6	0	11	0	0
Pskov	74,30	Sov	AF Bombed	-	0	37	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	5	0	0
Vilnius	60,50	Sov	AF Bombed	-	0	119	0	12	0	0	0	27	0	5	0	0
Vilnius	61,50	Sov	AF Bombed	-	0	72	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	0
Petseri	71,30	Sov	AF Bombed	-	0	93	0	4	0	0	0	2	0	1	7	0
Koduma	73,98	Sov	AF Bombed	-	0	135	0	3	0	0	0	5	0	0	4	0
Koduma	73,98	Sov	AF Bombed	-	0	48	0	4	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0
Petseri	71,30	Sov	AF Bombed	-	0	62	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vilnius	61,49	Sov	AF Bombed	-	0	46	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0
Vilnius	59,51	Sov	AF Bombed	-	0	67	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	0
Vilnius	59,51	Sov	AF Bombed	-	0	9	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0

Of course I could simply withdraw the Luftwaffe from the scene, but that seems rather excessive. Instead I will deploy every LW Flak battalion available to the local Fliegerkorps, although this will probably not be of much immediate value. As I already have four on each Fliegerkorps for the current results.

The North



Situational Assessment

In the far north, the Soviets have invested eight rifle divisions in holding the Janisjarvi line. They have some really impressive defenses here already, and I have little doubt that it will take some serious fighting to throw them out of these lines. I am not overly worried however, as the forces committed to holding Janisjarvi are greater than the forces needed to hold the Finnish no attack line between Lakes Ladoga and Onega.

West of Lake Ladoga, the Soviets have given up Vyborg, and are slowly withdrawing south.

South of Leningrad, the Soviets are holding the line at Luga, and have also posted troops to the front stretching south from Lake Ilmen. My Panzers in the area are generally low on fuel, with only three or four mobile divisions having movement points in the 30's.

In the air, the Soviets have been bombing away at the Bf 109 and Ju 87 airfields in the area, inflicting some losses. Behind Lake Ilmen stands two airfields with long range bombers and one airfield with a single air group of SB-2 Rcn. My own BF 109 airfield is stationed in Pskov city.

Planning

As the Finns are all but irrelevant to the game until Leningrad is taken, I intend to use them for heavy attacks against the Soviets north of Leningrad. The Finns do not really have the capacity to make encirclements, so instead I will simply just slowly grind my way forward using brute force. I will care little about losses inflicted on the Finns (including their airforce), as long as they in turn inflict similar losses on the Soviets.

South of Leningrad I deem my attack south of Lake Ilmen doomed to failure. I cannot supply the forward panzers sufficiently, and conducting hasty attacks will mean heavy losses for no gain (based on last turns results), while conducting full attacks will slow progress to a crawl. Instead I will disengage the Panzers and place them to restock on fuel and supplies for a future push directly towards Leningrad. While this means admitting the Lake Ilmen attack was wrong, admitting this is better than persisting with my error.

The I Corps of infantry meanwhile will be beginning to attack the Soviets between their positions and Leningrad, while I will also bring up new infantry units for helping with next turns push.

Execution

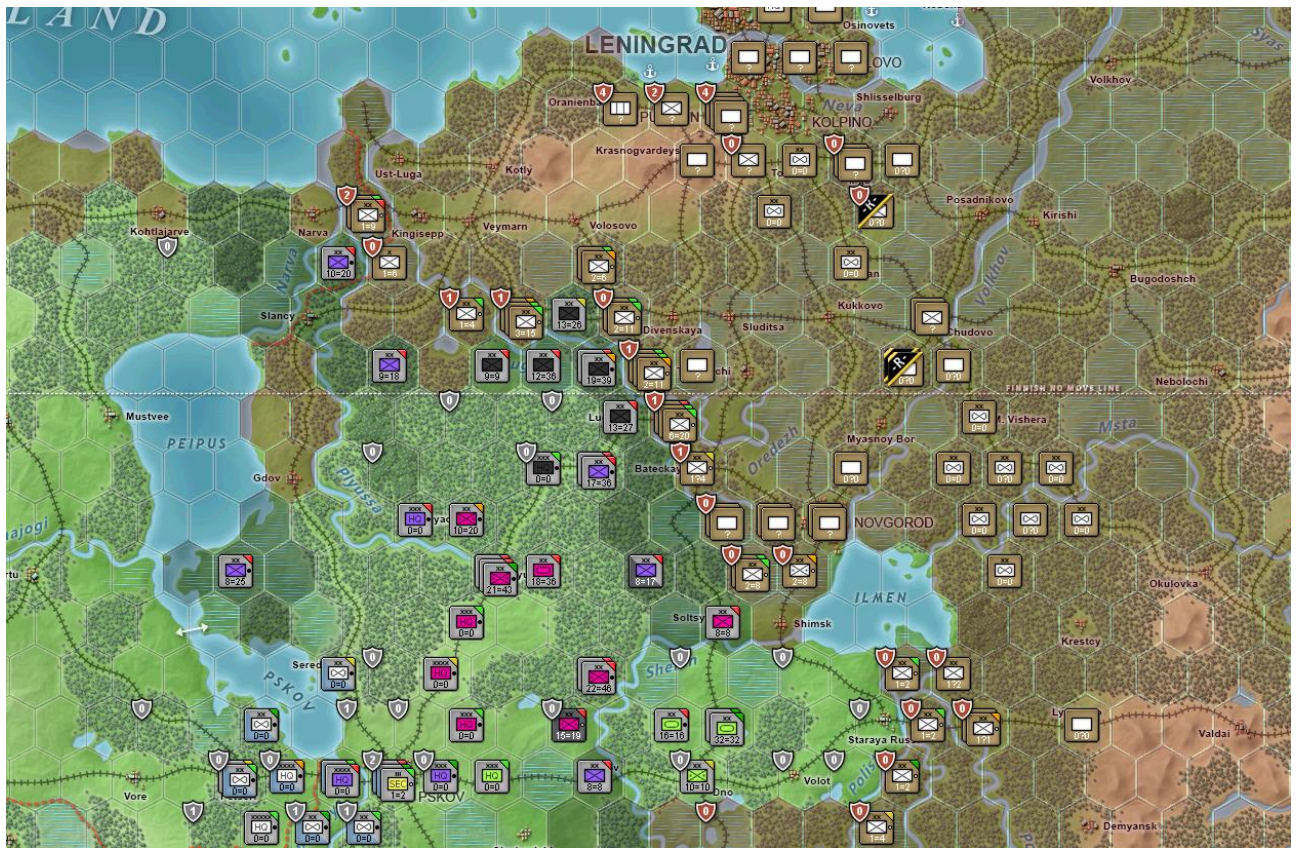
Along the Finnish front I have done a series of attacks including several airfield bombings on the local soviet airfields. This has caused some numerically high fighter losses for the axis, but as I do not really value the Finnish currently, I am little concerned.

Further south, I have disengaged the Panzers from their positions south of Lake Ilmen, and conducted a single HQBU in the process. I have also assigned several new StuG support units to the local Motorized divisions in order to drive up their CV. The infantry meanwhile has cleared the southern banks of the Luga river and positioned itself for attacks further north.

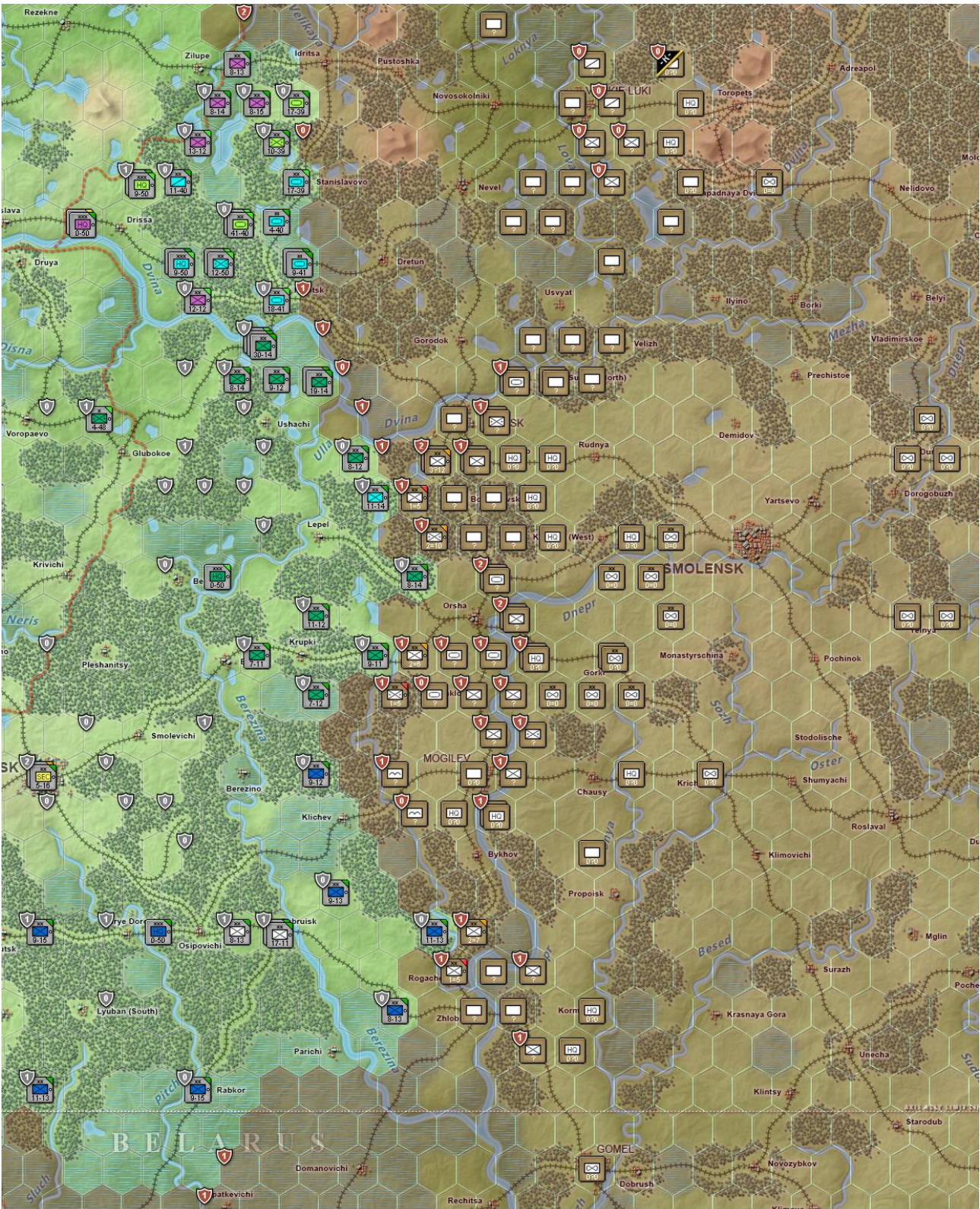
Finally, I have brought forward the various higher commands, such as Army Group North, Luftflotte I and the 18th Army. In order to strengthen the I Corps for the upcoming attritional battles, I have assigned six more artillery Support units to this corps, all of them being issued with heavy artillery (five of them with 12 210mm howitzers each).

In the air, the Luftwaffe has conducted a series of attacks, but none of them with significant results. In an attempt to see if it is the distance of one hex between the Bf 110 airfield and the airfield bombing attack that makes the Bf 110's unable to respond in strength, I have placed both fighter airfields within Pskov for now.

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



The Center



Situational assessment

In the center, the Soviets have pulled back to the north of the Dvina river. Their defenses are now hinged on Velikie Luki, and there is now about five hexes between me and the Soviets. South of the river, the Soviets are still holding on to their line stretching south from Vitebsk. The Soviets also retain forces west of Mogilev and three Heavy industry factories inside the city.

In the air, the Soviets are present in strength around Smolensk with quite a few airfields with various fighters and bombers and one airfield with 39 Recon aircraft stationed. The Soviet attacks on my airfields at Vilnius has cost me 19 fighters and five bombers this turn, and my own forces seem very reluctant to fly in defence of the airfield.

Planning

This turn, I will push forward my infantry to the Soviet main line of resistance but I will not follow with my Panzers. Instead I will leave them where they are, hoping to build some substantial fuel reserves for the coming turns. While I might be able to push forward through the terrain left by the Soviets, the "Pending friendly terrain" MP costs will drain fuel and I will have that much less movement for future turns.

At Mogilev, I will push my infantry into an attack on the Soviets still west of the city. It is my hope that I will be able to push through the Soviet lines and possibly encircle the foremost Soviet Motorized division. If not, reaching the outskirts of Mogilev will ensure that the Soviets will need to pay a stiffer fine for evacuating the industries within the city.

In the air, I will continue to hit the Soviet Recon airfield and also do what I can to support the infantry attack at Mogilev.

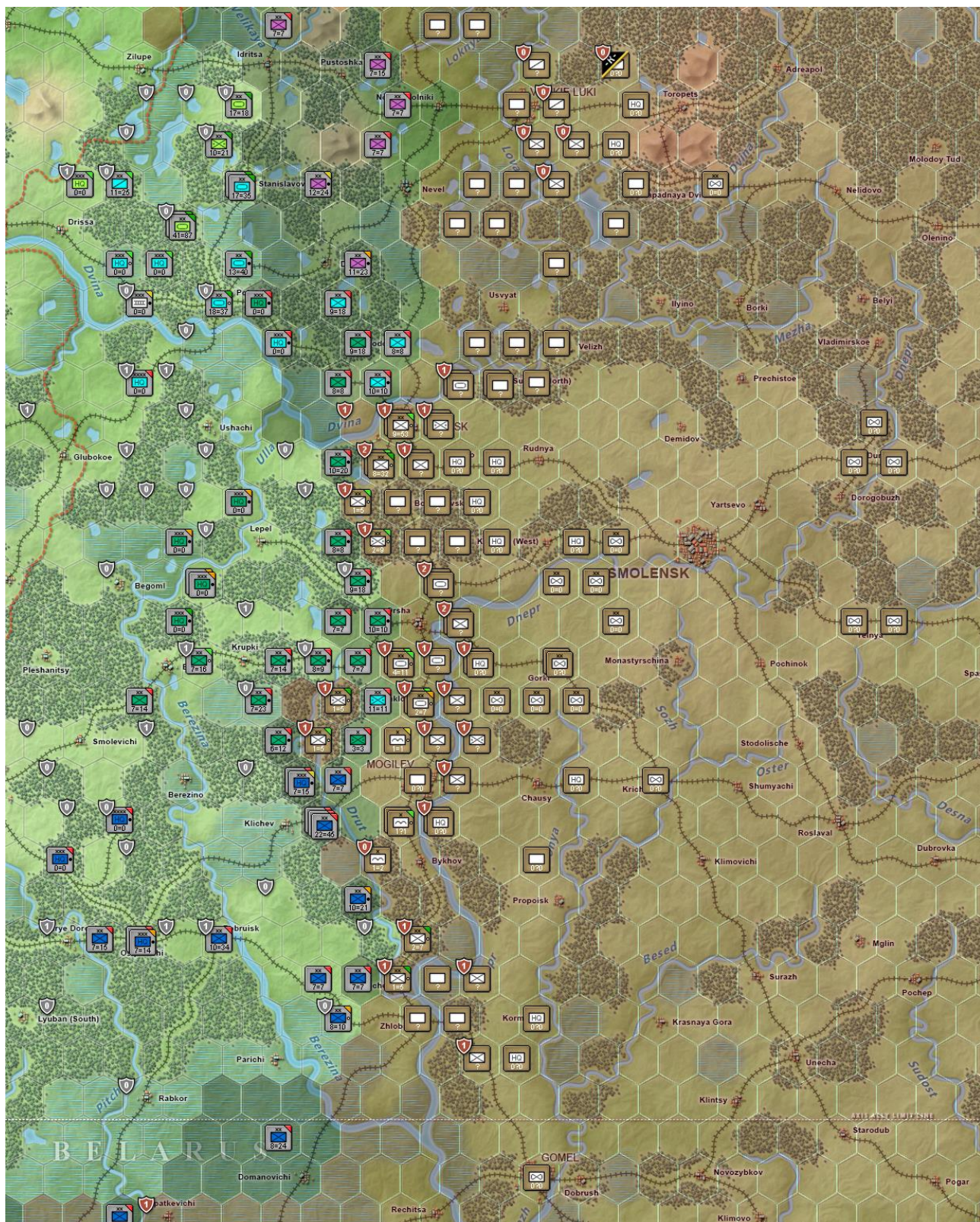
Execution

In the northern sector, I have pushed forward my local infantry as far as they could go, while I have done two HQBU's on my Panzer units. The reason for this is, that I wish to see if they can accumulate more than 100% fuel stores on doing this. If they can, I should have plenty of fuel for at least two turns of attacking.

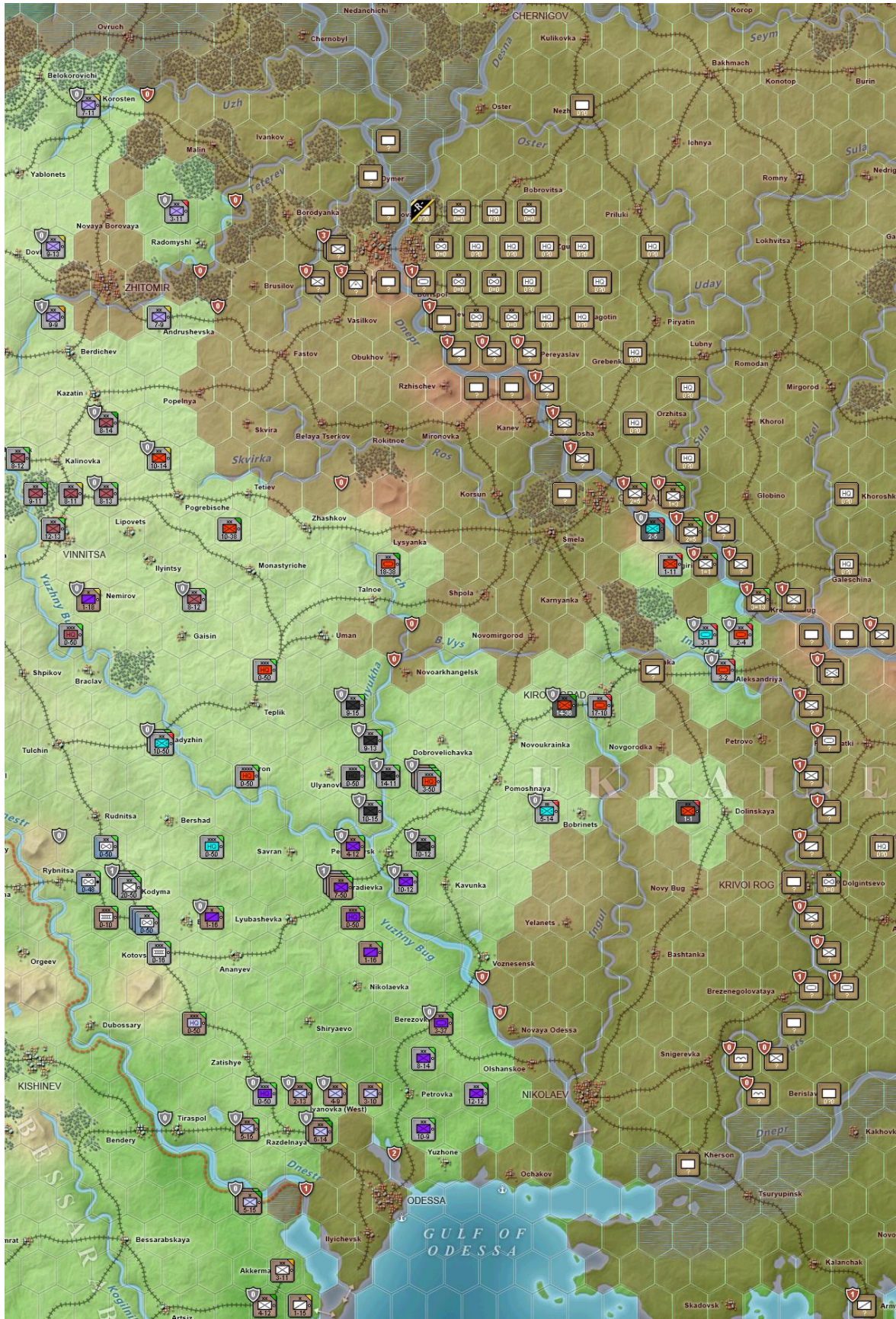
Further south, at Mogilev, I have done my infantry attacks. I reluctantly ended up having to deploy a Motorized division from the north in order to encircle one Soviet Motorized division and one Rifle division.

In the air, another attack at the Soviet Recon airfield has caused the destruction of some 24 recon aircraft.

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



The South



Situational Assessment

In the south, I have made yet another series of bad mistakes. First of all I have failed to secure the supply lines for my forward Panzers and the Soviets have been able to cut off the supply lines. Worse, I have failed to realize that I could have a good chance to actually cross the Dnepr this turn by attacking with several divisions from the south of the river, and then crossing it with some other divisions making a minimum move if the attack was successful. Instead, I have wasted some movement on some worthless moving around. As it is, I have only one Motorized division to make the attack, and the outcome is uncertain (at least to me).

In the air, the Soviets have begun ground bombing attacks against my mobile divisions in the area. These attacks are done mainly by fighter bombers with some SB-2 and tactical bombers, so strengthening the attacked divisions with some light flak might prove prudent. Outside Kiev, I spy one airfield with 24 recon aircraft.

Planning

I will try to cross the Dnepr, even though I have prepared poorly. To do so, I will assign two available pioneer battalions to the Motorized division with enough movement to attack, conduct two full scale bombing attacks with all available aircraft, move up the Corps command and do a prepared attack against two Rifle divisions on the other side of the river. If successful, I will push another two divisions across the river by minimum movement, if allowed. I will then move my remaining divisions to support this attack, if successful.

In the air, I intend to become a lot more aggressive with my Hungarian and Slovakian airforces from this turn forward. Most of these aircraft are not very good, but they will simply become more and more obsolete, if I preserve them. Whatever chance they have at inflicting losses upon the Soviets, they need to do so now. There is also the fact that a major portion of these airforces will be withdrawn come the early winter. The Rumanian airforce will send its short range aircraft forward, while keeping its long range bombers in the rear for now.

Execution

The initial two bombing attacks on the hex destined for my attack, did a total of about 200 casualties and 20 guns destroyed, which is not much, considering I dedicated a total of 300 bombers to the attacks. My Ju87's did for about 2/3 of those casualties, once again showing that the level bombers are just not that good when it comes to bombing ground targets.

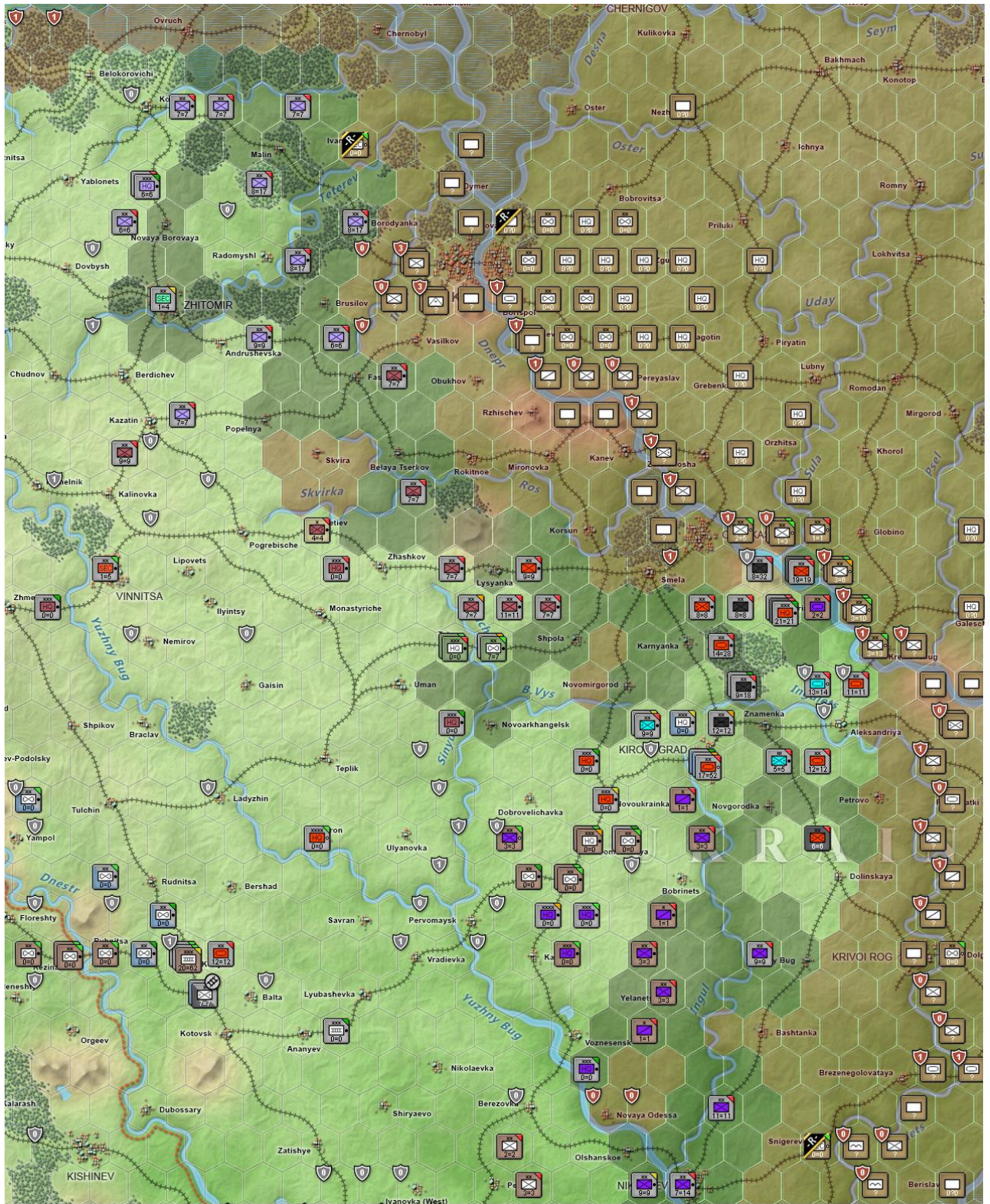
I then assigned the two pioneer battalions to my Motorized division, moved a Panzer division up close and putting it into reserve and finally moved the Panzer Corps within command range before launching my attack. The result was as follows.

Axis Forces Attacking: XIV Panzer Corps 11th Panzer Division (54) R Wiking SS Motorized Division (50) 670th Jagdpanzer Battalion (2) 627th Pioneer Battalion (6) 260th Pioneer Battalion (6) 5/47th SP Flak Company (0) V Fliegerkorps		1 of 4 > 89,89 - Clear - Clear Turn:6 1941-07-24 Forces Engaged ATK: men 35698, art 344, afv 283 DAM: men 10, art 0, afv 9 LOST: men 21, art 1, afv 0 ATK: ftr 53, bmr 27, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 DEF: men 24562, art 317, afv 12 DAM: men 234, art 3, afv 0 LOST: men 1671, art 20, afv 3 DEF: ftr 11, bmr 7, utl 0 LOST: ftr 2, bmr 1, utl 0 269th Rifle Division RETREATED 134th Rifle Division RETREATED Show Details Odds 9.11 : 1 Exit		Soviet Forces Defending: 19th Army 134th Rifle Division (30) 442nd Crps Art Rgt (1) 137th BM Howitzer Regiment (1) 268th Crps Art Rgt (1) STAVKA -35% 269th Rifle Division (10) Southern Air Command	
CV: 118->227.0 Eng Val: 6 Comm HQ: XIV Panzer Corps G Gustav von Wietersheim				CV: 43->24.9 Fort: 1.00->0.00 Comm HQ: 19th Army GL Ivan Boldin	

I can not help but think that crossing the Dnepr is not really that hard, when considering how badly I bothced the preparations for the attack. After the attack, most of the movement of the turn was done to ensure the unhindered crossing of men and materials while also optimizing my own supply of fuel and supplies.

In the far south, it seems Odessa will be given up more or less without a fight. The city itself is held by one fortified region and two NKVD regiments.

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



Conclusion

Progress this turn has been limited in space, but I have managed to reorder my Panzers for future combat I hope. At Leningrad and in the center, my Panzers are once again ready to strike forward, while in the south, I have pushed the first two divisions across the Dnepr.

Losses have been light this turn, except for the fact that I have destroyed 53 Soviet Recon aircraft.