

Turn 7, Strategic considerations

In the air, it seems that moving my interceptor airfields into the hex with my fighter airfields has meant a lot for my ability to intercept the Soviet bombing attacks against my airfields. While I have still lost 18 fighters to the Soviet bombing attacks this turn, several of those are Bf 110's (unfortunately, my loss report at the start of the turn is borked, consistently showing no losses at all throughout the Soviet turn – my game says version 1.11 and my Logistics report says 1.09 – hints would be appreciated). In turn, I have destroyed a fair number of Soviet bombers. While this situation is not good, it has certainly improved.

11 Battles Selected																
Near	Loc	Atk	Result	Type	ATTACKER			DEFENDER			ATTACKER LOSSES			DEFENDER LOSSES		
					Ftr	Bmr	Utl	Ftr	Bmr	Utl	Ftr	Bmr	Utl	Ftr	Bmr	Utl
Pskov	74,30	Sov	BF Bombed	-	0	58	0	9	0	0	0	20	0	4	0	0
Pskov	74,30	Sov	BF Bombed	-	0	113	0	14	0	0	0	18	0	4	0	0
Minsk	68,56	Sov	BF Bombed	-	0	92	0	14	0	0	0	26	0	4	0	0
Kirovograd	87,94	Sov	BF Bombed	-	0	132	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	5	0
Minsk	68,57	Sov	BF Bombed	-	0	19	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0
Seredka	73,28	Sov	BF Bombed	-	0	88	0	10	0	0	0	12	0	1	2	0
Kirovograd	87,93	Sov	BF Bombed	-	0	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Beltsy	68,99	Sov	BF Bombed	-	0	58	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Pskov	73,31	Sov	BF Bombed	-	0	95	0	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0
Pskov	73,31	Sov	BF Bombed	-	0	64	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Minsk	68,57	Sov	BF Bombed	-	0	26	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

For this turn, I have extended my spreadsheet (I do love my spreadsheets) with a calculation of soviet bomber strength, as I wish to find out how long the Soviet long range bombers can keep up this level of pressure on the Germans. It turns out that the Soviet bomber campaign is beginning to take its toll on the Soviet IL-4's, but there are still plenty of DB-3B's and SB-2's in reserve. Consequently, it might be worth it hitting the Soviet IL-4 airfields with me He 111H bombers this turn. I need to further refine the formula in the spreadsheet, as several of the calculations do not take end of production into account.

Turn No.	7						
	Total		Losses	Start	Pool	Reinf.	Production
I-153BS	293		285	363	161	54	0
Su-2	201		182	287	12	0	84
IL-2	372		38	189	11	0	210
U-2VS	747		0	0	535	0	212
Total	1613						
SB-2	2386		839	1894	930	401	0
Ar-2	21		149	163	7	0	0
Pe-2	490		114	274	22	0	308
DB-3B	990		122	537	450	125	0
IL-4	579		411	813	75	0	102
TB-3	208		100	243	65	0	0
Pe-8	20		0	0	0	13	7
Yer-2	70		1	0	0	71	0
Total	4764						

Finally, the Soviets do not yet seem particularly disturbed by my campaign to destroy the Soviet Recon airforces. They have done quite a lot of recon missions this turn, which should indicate that there might well be enough targets to find.

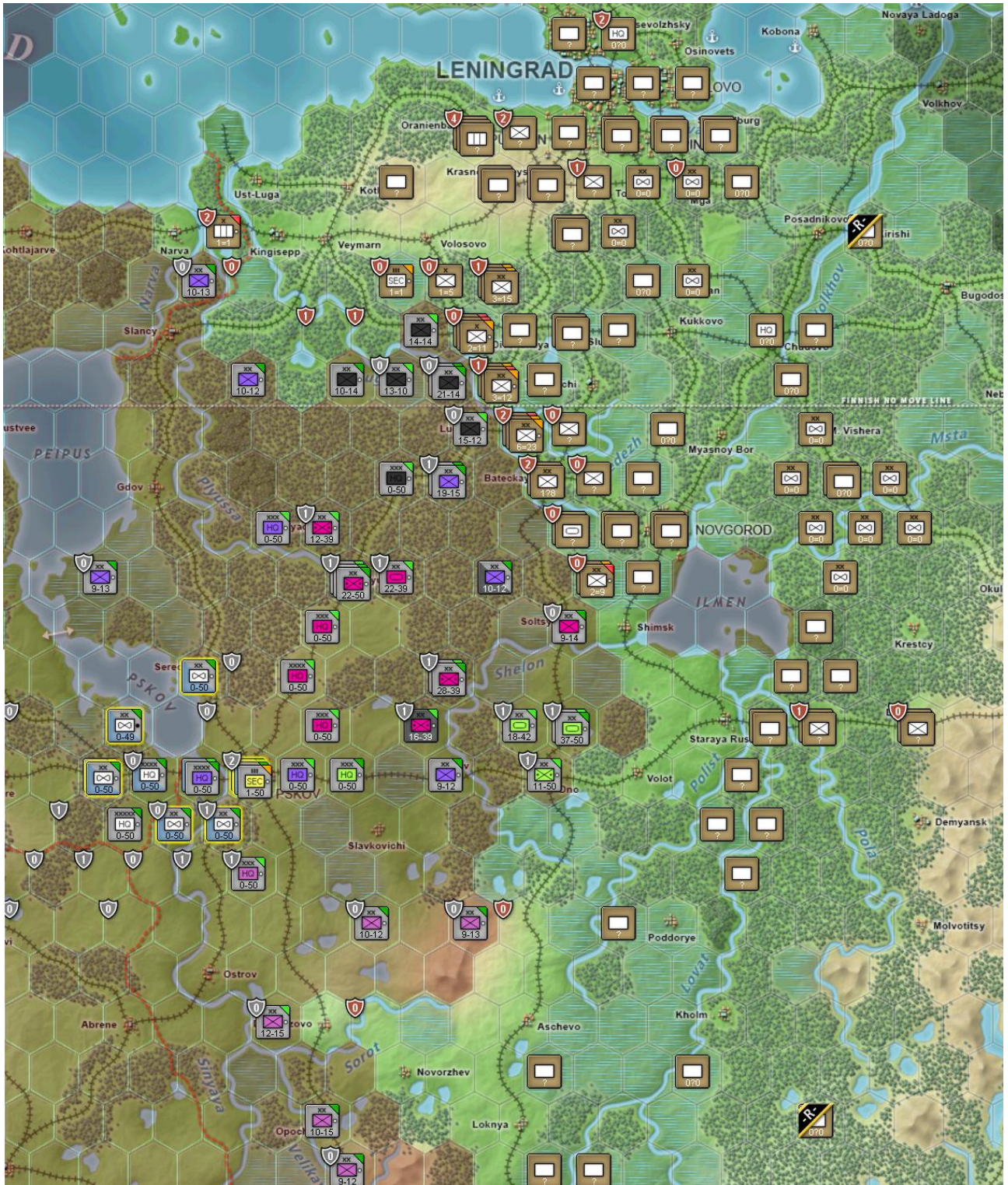
15 Battles Selected																	
Near	Loc	Attk	Result	Type	ATTACKER			Def	DEFENDER			ATTACKER LOSSES			DEFENDER LOSSES		
					Ftr	Bmr	Utl		Ftr	Bmr	Utl	Ftr	Bmr	Utl	Ftr	Bmr	Utl
Luga	77,24	Sov	Observed	-	4	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Soltsey	79,28	Sov	Observed	-	4	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Borisov	74,53	Sov	Observed	-	4	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Idritsa	75,39	Sov	Observed	-	4	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Polotsk	75,45	Sov	Observed	-	6	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dretun	78,44	Sov	Observed	-	6	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stanislavovo	75,43	Sov	Observed	-	4	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Soltsey	78,27	Sov	Observed	-	4	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nevel	77,42	Sov	Observed	-	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Idritsa	74,39	Sov	Observed	-	4	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stanislavovo	74,41	Sov	Observed	-	4	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Polotsk	74,45	Sov	Observed	-	6	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Dretun	76,43	Sov	Observed	-	6	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nevel	77,42	Sov	Observed	-	6	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pustoshka	77,39	Sov	Observed	-	4	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Productionwise, my pools of Bf 109F-2's have run out, and I need to start running my Bf 109F-4's into service. In another couple of turns, this will mean that the Luftwaffe fighter strength will start to decline.

On the ground, the Soviets are standing firm in the north and center, while they have withdrawn their forces in the Dnepr bend, perhaps hoping that I will send my Panzers that way. Those things will be dealt with in more detail in the sections below.

Once again, I have learned a valuable lesson regarding the supply system. This time by some "light reading" of the manual. Units drawing supplies from their HQ's do so *before* the emergency rail repair, meaning that in order to receive a bonus to fuel and supplies, the HQ needs to be placed within 10MP of the existing rail network at the end of your turn.

The North



Situational Assessment

Along the Finnish fronts, the Soviets are still holding the Janisjarvi line, while they have pulled back to Leningrad on the Karelian isthmus. The Finnish rail system is not yet fully repaired.

South of Leningrad, the Soviets are building their front along the Luga river. While their defenses look impressive, with CV's up to 6=23, my offensive capability in the area is a lot greater than that. Better still, my rail repair lines are reaching Pskov

South of Lake Ilmen, the Soviets are remaining in their positions along the rivers and swamps stretching south.

In the air, the Soviets have conducted a series of bombing attacks on my airfields this turn, but for once it seems they have almost come off the worse for it. In total, they have lost 52 long range bombers for 13 aircraft of mine. The local Soviet recon airfield is now up to 11 SB-2 rcn. Unfortunately, my own fighter Air Groups in the area are getting more and more fatigued, this turn beginning their fatigue at around 25 points.

Planning

Along the Finnish front, I will continue my attacks on the Janisjarvi line, trying to maximize my attacks to contain three divisions each. Hopefully, this will destroy enough of the Soviet fortifications to allow some better odds for next turns attack. North of Leningrad, I will not be particularly busy following the Soviets south, as all that would do is extend my own supply lines and reaching the "no attack line" long before the Germans reach Leningrad from the south.

South of Leningrad, I intend to hammer my way directly towards Leningrad through Divenskaya. One of the reasons for this is that although I need to commit a Panzer Corps for hammering the Soviet 6=23 stack, that Corps will have its HQ placed 10 MP from my rail lines next turn (before repairs) and thus it should receive plenty of fuel and supplies.

In the air, I will need to begin recycling my fighters to the rear, and for this reason my main bombing runs on the Soviet airfields will be done at night without fighter escorts. Depending on the outcome of the first attack or two, I will then either continue or discontinue the attacks. I will send the first of my fighter Air Groups back to the National Reserve this turn, and instead deploy a Bf109 E-3 Air Group scheduled for withdrawal in about six turns. This fighter airgroup will come with 40 aircraft and reinforcements turned off.

As I am pulling back the III JG53 next turn, and it has 37 ready Bf109 E-3's this turn, I will make sure to use this airgroup in every attack along the front. I will also be using the Ju88's of the area to support the Ju87 ground attacks.

Execution

After conducting a series of night time bombing attacks on the Soviet airfields with recons and bombers, I then proceeded to attack the 6=23 stack with two initial ground bombings followed by an attack by some 50CV of my own. This initially showed that the dog fighting in connection with ground combat is a lot more deadly to the Soviets than the "ordinary" bombing attacks. I then received an initial surprise when the initial combat odds were calculated in that I certainly did not have an initial 2:1 advantage. Thankfully, my commanding officer was Erich von Manstein, and things went according to plan

1 of 3 > 79,23 - Clear - Clear Turn: 7 1941-07-31		
Axis Forces Attacking: LVI Panzer Corps 14th Motorized Division (58) 60th Motorized Division (59) 269th Infantry Division (38) II/61st Artillery Battalion (0) 92nd LW SP Lt Flk Bn (4) II/23rd LW Mix Flk Bn (1) 600th Stug Battalion (6) [v]	Forces Engaged ATK: men 81225, art 960, afv 121 DAM: men 85, art 9, afv 2 LOST: men 167, art 3, afv 0 ATK: ftr 154, bmr 110, utl 0 LOST: ftr 1, bmr 2, utl 0 DEF: men 31501, art 393, afv 32 DAM: men 122, art 9, afv 1 LOST: men 1628, art 22, afv 6 DEF: ftr 67, bmr 48, utl 0 LOST: ftr 16, bmr 15, utl 0 181st Rifle Division RETREATED 23rd Rifle Division RETREATED 118th Rifle Division RETREATED Odds 3.28 : 1 Show Details Exit	Soviet Forces Defending: 11th Army 118th Rifle Division (53) 23rd Rifle Division (58) 181st Rifle Division (120) 615th Crps Art Rgt (1) 247th AA Battalion (0) Northwest Air Command [v]
CV: 285->641.1 Eng Val: 6 Comm HQ: LVI Panzer Corps G Erich von Manstein		CV: 232->195.2 Fort: 2.08->0.00 Comm HQ: 11th Army GL Vasily Morozov

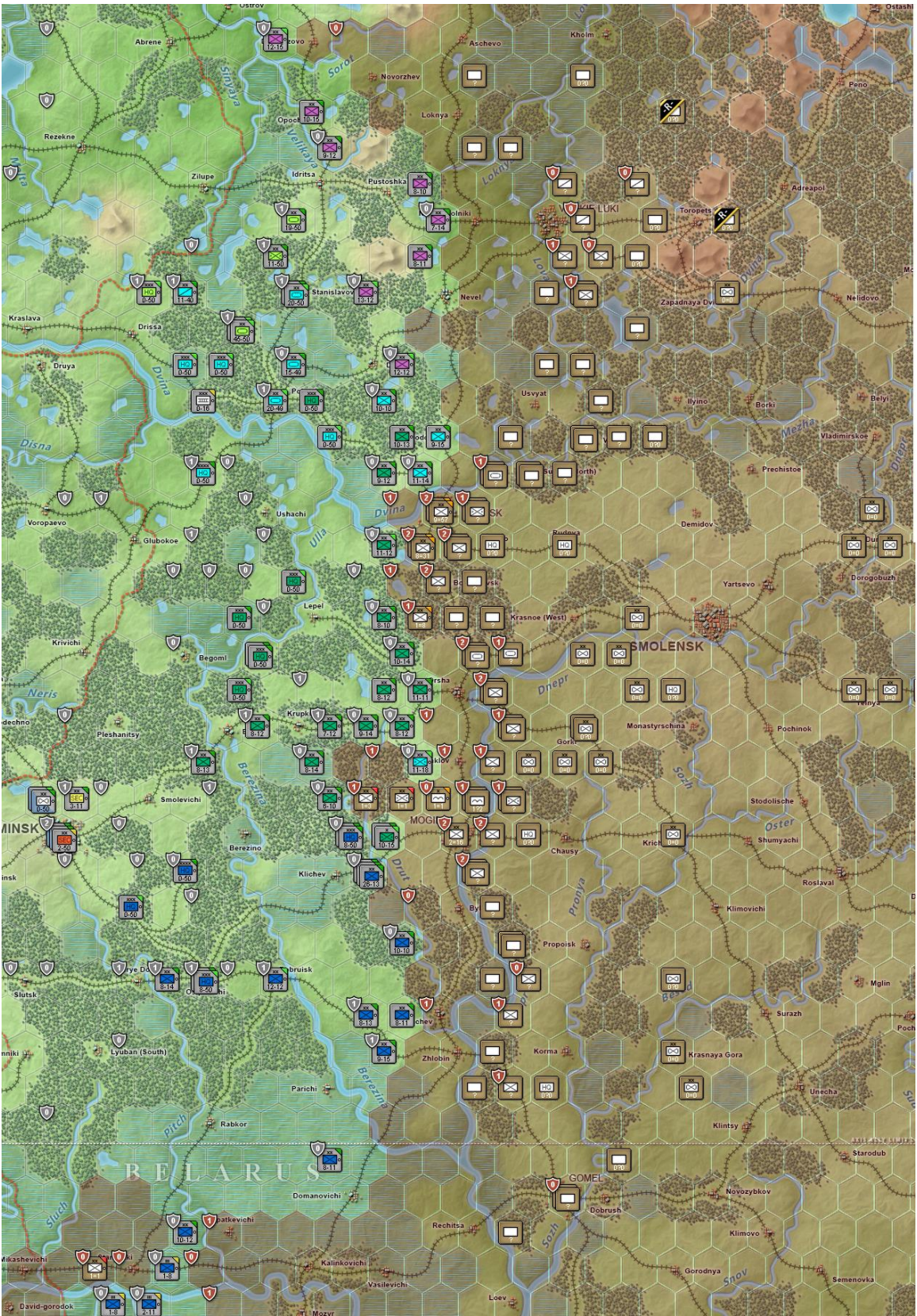
After that my advance quickly turned into a slugging match, where I gradually advanced towards the outskirts of Leningrad. Unfortunately, the hills southwest of the city are held in real strength by the Soviets and it will be another couple of turns, at least, before the city is encircled (by land).

This, in turn, will mean that it will be a long time before my Panzers in the north can be reassigned to other tasks, such as attacking Moscow.

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



The Center



Situational assessment

In the center, several of the Panzers I HQBU'ed last turn now have about 185% fuel. I am not sure how much is because of the HQBU, and how much is because the Corps HQ's are very close to their railheads. Either way, I am finally ready to throw my Panzers forward in this area once again.

Pushing one infantry division up to the front east of Vitebsk has revealed that the Soviet front here are held by Tank and Motorized units with CV's of 12=34 and 13=39 respectively. Further south, the Soviets have broken the pocket west of Mogilev and pulled most of their forces back east across the river.

In the air, the Soviets have been very active in ground attacks on the Panzers north of the Dvina which has caused some long range interception casualties on my part. I need to consider if I wish to keep intercepting the Soviet airforces in their attacks, or if I should simply let them "have the field" during the soviet turns. The soviets have also been bombing my airfields, but with limited results.

Planning

In the center, I will attempt to push southeast around Vitebsk and into the open terrain west of Smolensk. If this is successful, I might be able to encircle most of the Soviets south of Vitebsk at some later turn. In order to achieve this, I have several infantry divisions followed by three Panzer Corps. Depending on the success of this attack, I might follow up with an all infantry attack on the bend in the Dnepr west of Smolensk.

West of Mogilev I will reencircle the two Soviet divisions that have broken free, while south of the city, I will be pushing up to the Dnepr, in order to find out if there are weaknesses in the line here.

In the air, I will mainly be supporting ground operations this turn, although I will find the time to do an airfield attack against the Soviet Recon airbase behind Mogilev.

Execution

My attack around the eastern flank of Vitebsk has been a major success. I have even had enough high movement divisions available to encircle a series of Soviet divisions in a series of brutal attacks. While I have certainly lost a lot more than my production system can replace in these battles, the encirclement of four Tank divisions, three Motorized divisions and eight Rifle divisions is certainly a prize worth the cost I will pay. The severity of the fighting might best be seen in the following two reports

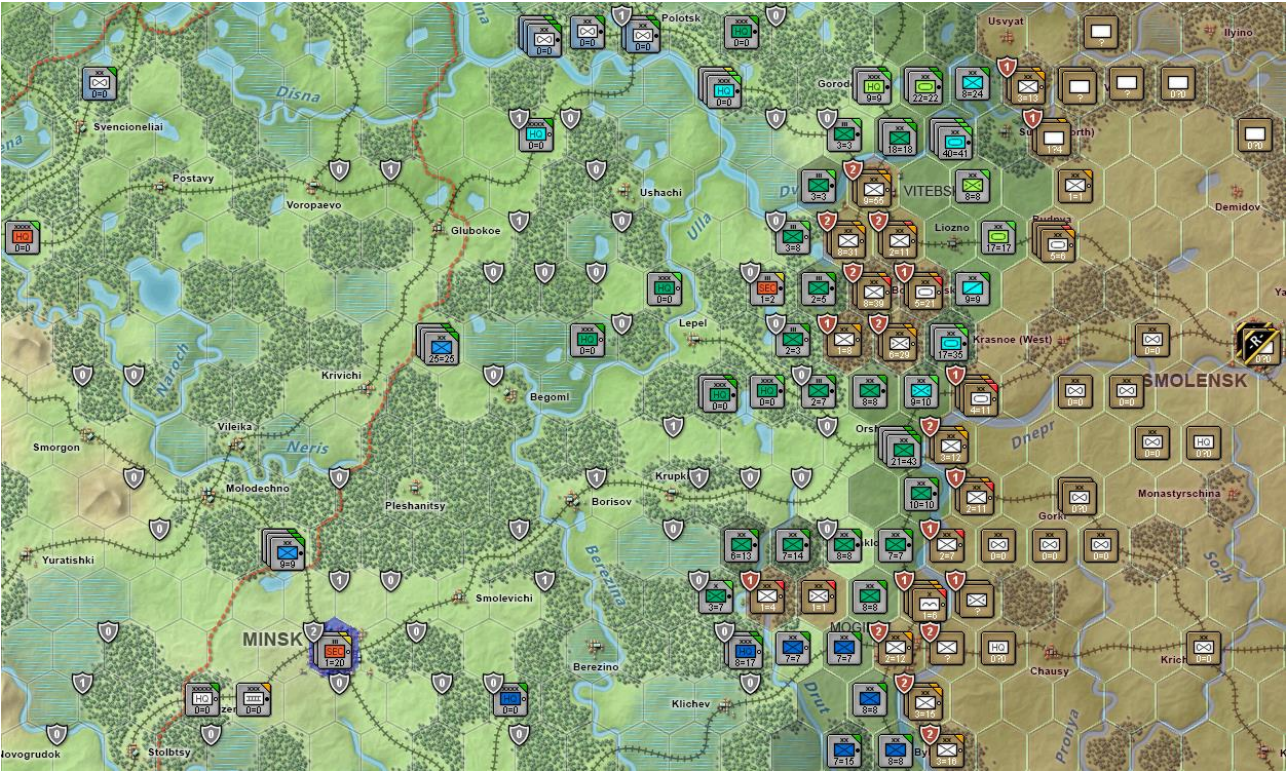
1 of 3 > 80,47 - Clear - Clear Turn: 7 1941-07-31		
Axis Forces Attacking: LVII Panzer Corps -16% 19th Panzer Division (73) 605th SP Lt Flk Bn (2) 101st Hvy Nbl.W. Bn (0) II Corps -36% 30th Infantry Division (50) XII Corps 31st Infantry Division (59) [v]	Forces Engaged ATK: men 99293, art 1214, afv 319 DAM: men 24, art 7, afv 14 LOST: men 82, art 1, afv 7 ATK: flr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: flr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 DEF: men 26799, art 200, afv 665 DAM: men 212, art 4, afv 27 LOST: men 1089, art 7, afv 157 DEF: flr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: flr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 11th Tank Division RETREATED 14th Tank Division RETREATED Show Details Odds 5.53 : 1 Exit	Soviet Forces Defending: 20th Army 14th Tank Division (126) 11th Tank Division (211) 438th Crps Art Rgt (1) 537th BM Howitzer Regiment (1) 301st Howitzer Regiment (1) CV: 340->128.4 Fort: 1.66->0.00 Comm HQ: 20th Army GM Arseny Borzikov
CV: 331->710.7 Eng Val: 12 Comm HQ: XII Corps G Walther Schroth		

Axis Forces Attacking: XXXXVII Panzer Corps 4th Panzer Division (175) 17th Panzer Division (164) 18th Panzer Division (123) 11/71st Artillery Battalion (1) 603rd SP Lt Flk Bn (8) 614th SP Lt Flk Bn (6) 611th Jagdpanzer Battalion (8) [v] CV: 485->1122.2 Eng Val: 8 Comm HQ: XXXXVII Panzer Corps G Joachim Lemelsen	1 of 3 > 80,48 - Clear - Clear Turn: 7 1941-07-31 Forces Engaged ATK: men 48765, art 424, afv 601 DEF: men 21272, art 137, afv 544 DAM: men 20, art 5, afv 40 DAM: men 126, art 2, afv 24 LOST: men 66, art 0, afv 7 LOST: men 1291, art 9, afv 130 ATK: ftr 129, bmr 112, utl 0 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 15th Motorized Division ROUTED 16th Tank Division RETREATED Show Details Odds 17.45 : 1 Exit	Soviet Forces Defending: 9th Army 16th Tank Division (128) 15th Motorized Division (168) 47 -> 37mm Anti-Aircraft Gun 8 -> 85mm Anti-aircraft Gun 5 -> 76mm Anti-aircraft Gun CV: 296->64.3 Fort: 1.64->0.00 Comm HQ: 9th Army GM Isif Khorun
--	---	--

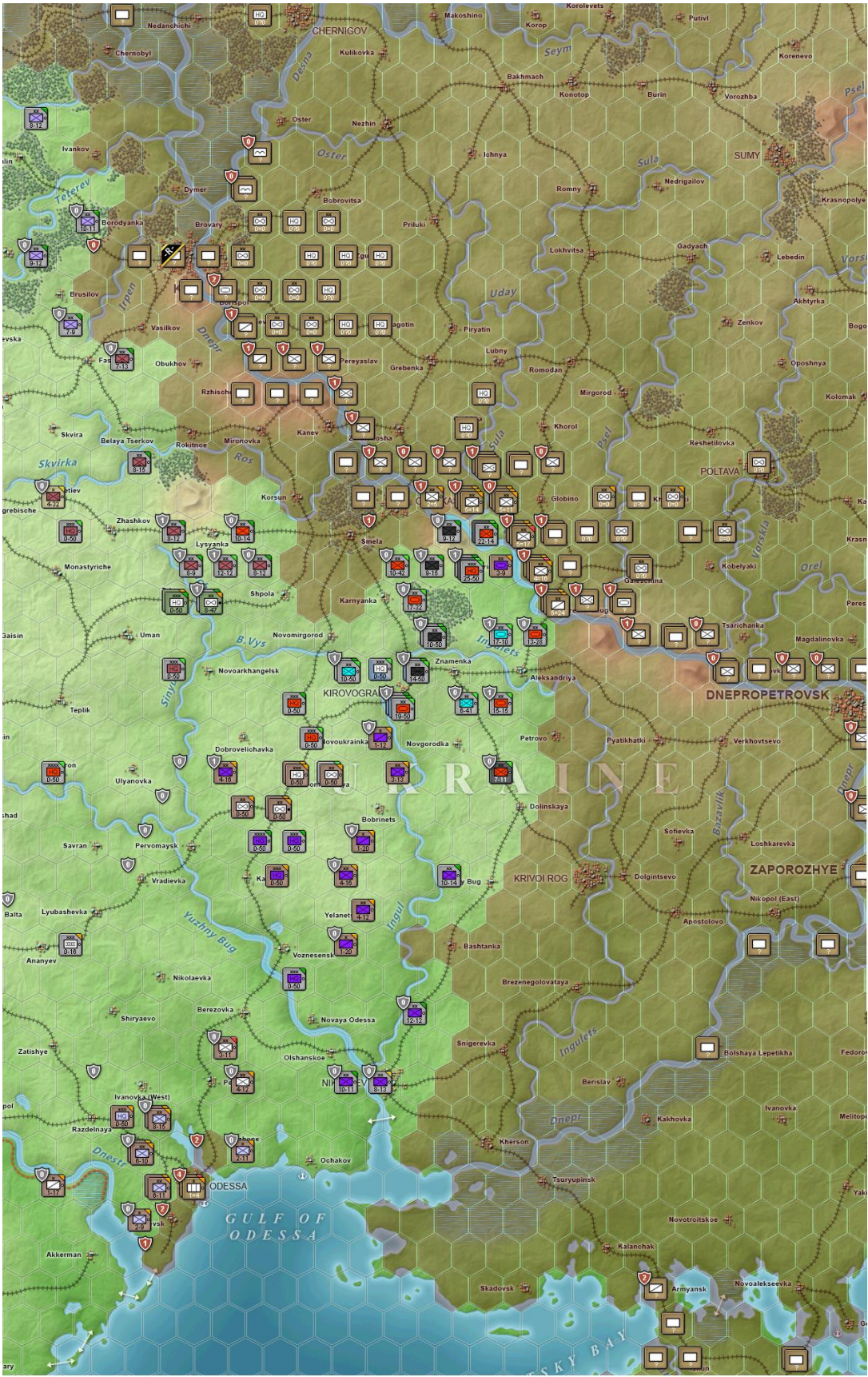
One interesting thing is that my Panzers are actually either well placed to receive new fuel supplies come next turn or else have more than 100% of their requirements already.

In the air, I have done only the one attack on the Soviet Recon airbase, destroying some 21 recon aircraft in the process. I wonder if and when the Soviets will begin feeling the loss, and I hope that the morale of those recon Air Groups is so low that the Soviets find their recon missions less effective.

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



The South



Situational Assessment

In the south, pushing across the Dnepr and securing that bridgehead has left most of my Panzers with little fuel. The Soviets, meanwhile, are quickly gathering their strength around the bridgehead and building a significant defense. In order to do this, the Soviets have pulled out of the Dnepr bend, and are now hinging their defense on the Dnepr all the way to Zaporozhye.

As a really good example of how little fuel my panzers can draw from the supply grid if they are not close to their HQ's, I have a Panzer division near Balta that is one hex and one MP from the nearest rail line. That division has managed to build its fuel stock to 33% and has 16 MP for the current turn. The lesson seems to be that mobile divisions MUST draw supplies from their HQ's if they are to remain effective.

In the air, the Soviets have a multitude of airfields all along the northern side of the Dnepr river. On my side, I have the Rumanians and the Hungarian airfields in position, and am in the process of bringing forward the Slovakian airfields.

Planning

I need to spend the turn gathering fuel for my Panzers, so any fighting will have to be by the infantry. I will try my best to expand the bridgehead by a series of infantry attacks, hoping to get a few more units across the Dnepr, although I doubt this will be possible (as I do not wish to send Panzers across). Further north, I will close in on Kiev with my infantry, hoping to find good places for attacks across the river, as it is now held by cavalry and mobile divisions in this area.

In the air, I will try to weaken the Soviet airforces by attacking the Soviet airfields with my Axis minor forces as well as my Luftwaffe airbases. I will focus on the Soviet bombers and tactical bombers, hoping to remove some of the Soviet bomber threat to my own airfields.

Execution

In the south, I started by bombing a series of Soviet airfields and did some damage, although nothing extraordinary.

I then proceeded to attack the hexes adjacent to my bridgehead across the Dnepr, and managed to take two of those hexes. Unfortunately things turned bad at this point, as my three fighter Air Groups all went below 20 fighters at the same time and thus refused to fly. I failed to notice this, resulting in a major bombing defeat for the Germans.

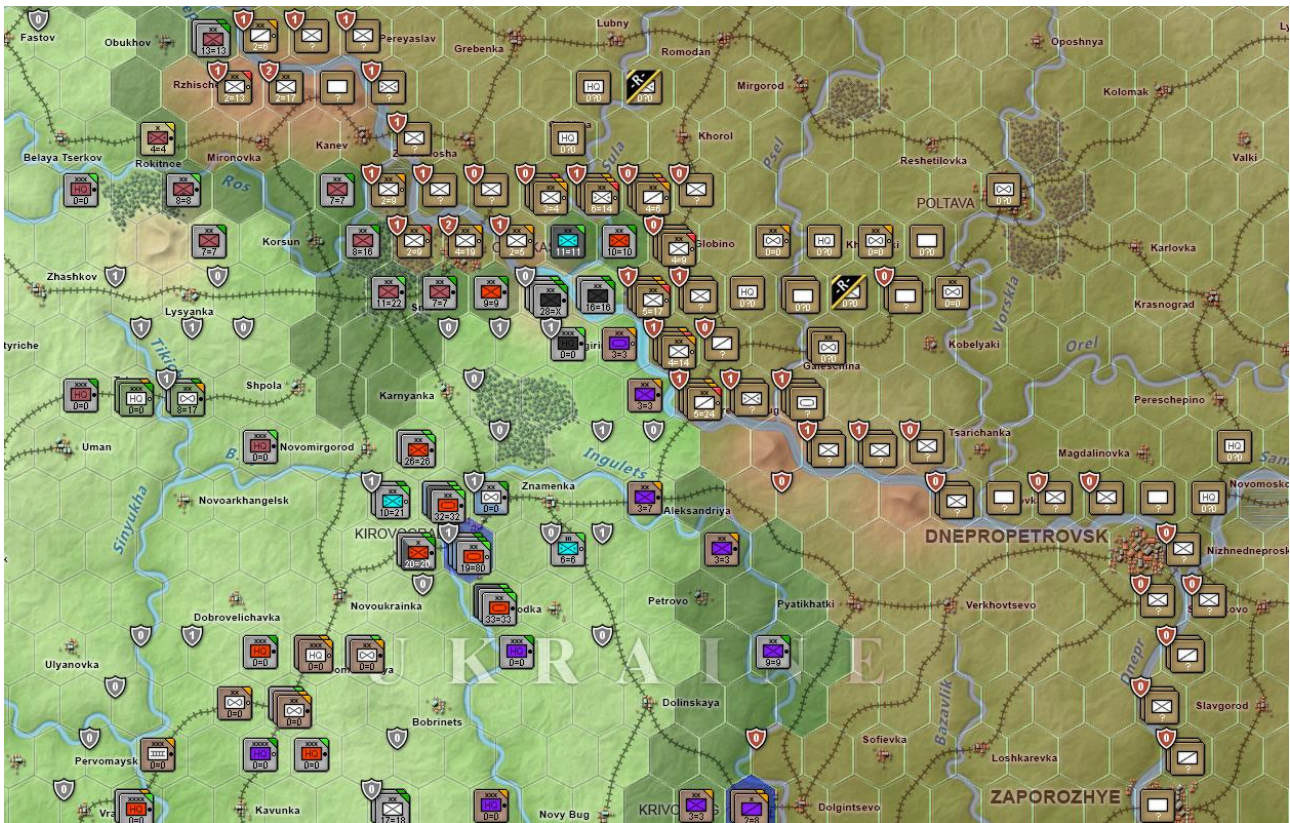
< 3 of 4 > 90,88 - Clear - Clear Turn: 7 1941-07-31		
Axis Forces Attacking:	Forces Engaged	Soviet Forces Defending:
✓ Fliegerkorps 58 Ju 87B 54 He 111H-4 86 Ju 88A	ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0	DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0
	DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0	DAM: men 54, art 1, afv 0
	LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0	LOST: men 131, art 4, afv 0
	ATK: ftr 0, bmr 198, utl 0	DEF: ftr 34, bmr 0, utl 0
	LOST: ftr 0, bmr 24, utl 0	LOST: ftr 5, bmr 0, utl 0
ground forces were BOMBED		
Southern Air Command 13 MiG-3 4 I-16 Type 18 9 I-16 Type 24 6 Yak-1 2 LaGG-3		
Show Details Exit		

I have also moved my Panzers in such a way that their HQ's are all within 10MP of an existing railhead and thus able to push extra fuel forward to the units. Come next turn I will have five infantry divisions available

for clearing the remaining adjacent hex, and I will then have clear passage across the Dnepr (without having to pay 18MP for crossing a major river to enter an EZOC).

Other than that, I have simply moved my infantry up to the front, in order to be able to push the Soviets up in future turns. Finally, I have moved up a fresh airfield of single seat fighters (one Air Group only), as I do not wish for my bombers to get caught unescorted during Soviet attacks.

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



Conclusion

This has been an interesting turn:

- In the north, I have smashed my way a few hexes closer to Leningrad, and I suspect I might have the city encircled within two or three turns.
- I have encircled a major part of what I suspect is the Soviet Western Front in the area west of Smolensk.
- In the south, I have almost cleared the bridgehead of adjacent enemies. While the Soviets may well counterattack and throw back one of my divisions, such a move will cost on MP and possibly enable me to catch some more units come next turn.

These events have come at a price. I have lost 113 aircraft and 48 AFV this turn, although some of these have been Axis minor equipment.