

Strategic overview

Turn 1: Strategic Considerations

The Soviets have established an amazingly strong presence in the area around Pskov. Looking at the reports from Recon flights over the area, there appear to be at least 10 to 15 divisions there, as well as airfields with some 2000 aircraft.

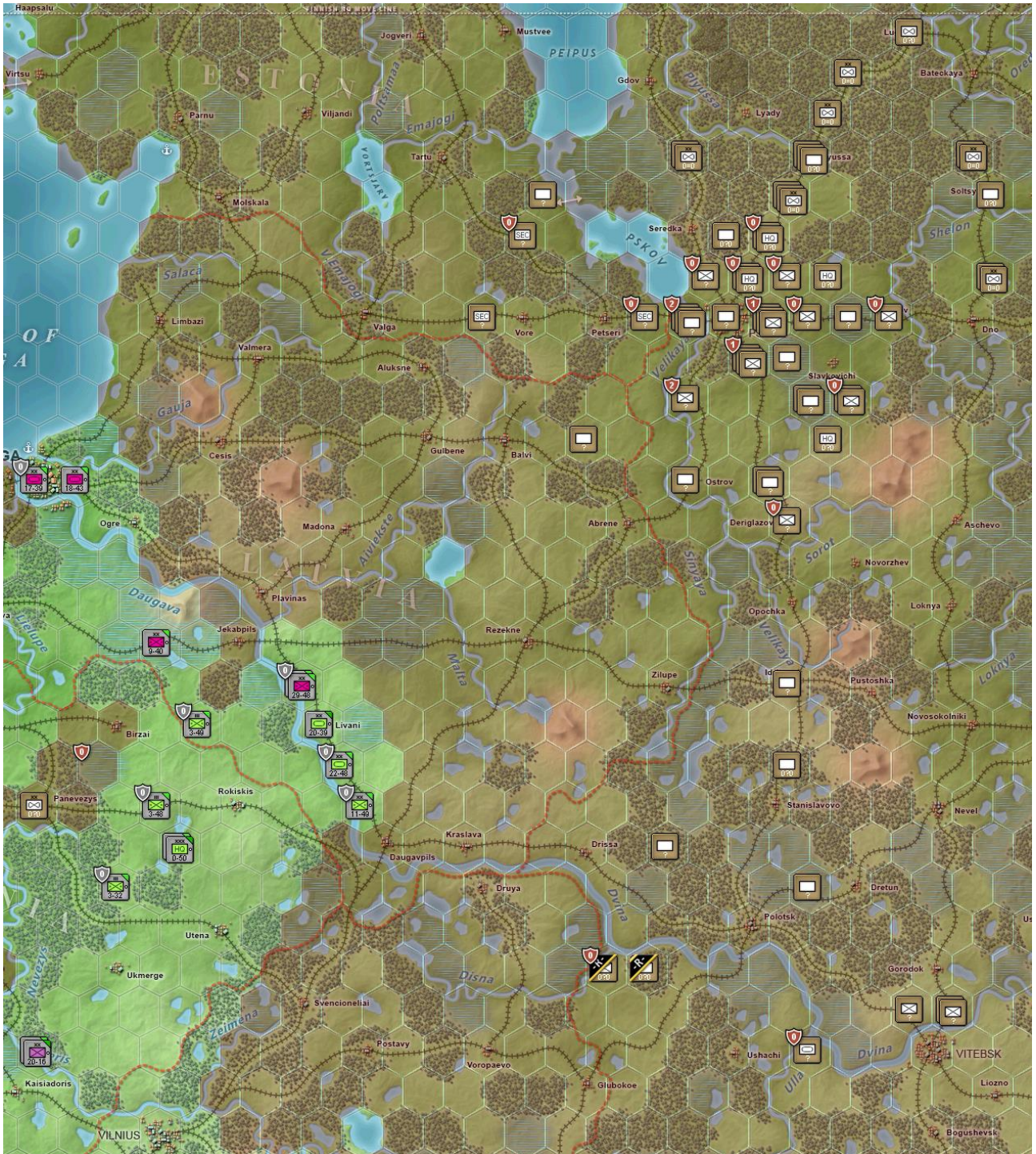
The divisions have obviously been brought up mainly from the center, as there is not enough rail MP available to bring up the divisions from the south and yet get them off then trains and into position in one turn. This has been verified by intensive recon missions flown over the center. It appear as if there are virtually no Soviet divisions left here, and the area south of Vitebsk appear to be entirely undefended.

In the air, the presence of so many Soviet aircraft indicate a force concentration of more than 50% of active Soviet aircraft in one sector of the front. Recons seem to verify this, as the Soviet Airfields in the center and south are all well behind the front and well outside the effective range of German attacks.

Strategically, I will react to this by moving the remainder of the 3rd Panzer Group north. As there few Soviets to fight in the center, I can very quickly advance as far as my fuel stores allow with the remainder of my Panzers, and I do not really need any strength to do this. Once advanced, I will need to wait for the arrival of my rail system, before I can advance further in the direction of Moscow. Thus, moving some Panzers north for a time seem like a good idea.

The situation is much similar in the air, where there seems to be few foes left to fight in the center and plenty available in the north. For this reason, I will move the majority of my airforces from the center northwards, as I expect the fighting in the air will be bitter over Pskov.

The North



Situational assessment

In the north, the Soviets are mustering at Pskov as already mentioned. The limited effect of my recon missions make it hard to make a precise estimation of the defensive formations deployed here, although I have a decent evaluation of the airforces up here.

To the Southwest, and mainly outside the image above, the pocket in the southern Baltics still hold, and my divisions will need to mop up the Soviet defenders on their way north. My FBD units are at Raseiniai and will need to have some terrain cleared of Soviets in order to be able to advance much further.

My own Panzers at the Daugava have around 100% fuel left, but any attack north from here will bring them far outside their effective fuel range, as it is already about 24MP and 14 hexes. An attack to the gates of Pskov will bring the expected MP gain of the Panzers next turn to be around eight measly MP. In short, I have one turn of attacks before I need to wait for fuel and for the infantry to catch up.

In the air, the Soviets have moved their airfields in order to amass their forces in the area where they are. Because of this, I assume their Air groups are either fatigued and low morale from last turns bombing or else newly assigned. However, my own fighters are way to far south to be able to effectively support daytime operations over the Pskov area.

Planning

The first attacks of the turn will be done by my infantry moving northwards towards Pskov and clearing up the pocket as they go. I will leave the XXIII unused in this fighting as I need that corps to move quickly towards the north. I will also begin assigning pioneers to this Corps, as the expected fighting in the north will be brutal over the coming turns.

My Panzers will begin the turn by assigning the available AA Support units and then begin the move northwards, in order to see if I can find some gaps in the Soviet lines. I need to ensure that I do not risk encirclement, as I may not have the MP to break any rings for the first turn or so.

In the air, I intend to start the turn by a few nighttime attacks on the Soviet airfields. I will do the first attack by a series of Ju88's in order to assess the Soviet fighter response and the danger of me committing my He-111's to further bombing.

Execution

The first few infantry attacks in the south has revealed to me that the Soviets are flying ground support in assistance of their ground units. This came as a small surprise to me, but I decided to enable my own interceptors to fly against the Soviet bombers. Moving the local Bf 110 airfield up to Raseiniai, setting the ground support option to "on" while removing all bomber support and finally moving the local Fliegerkorps next to the airfield, I resumed attacks. The interception part of the pocket attacks turned out to be a failure however, as I proved unable to catch any of the Soviet bombers.

Having finished the southern pocket, I advanced my FBD's getting my northbound FBD within four hexes of Riga. This begged the destruction of an encircled Soviet Rifle division west of Riga, but that withstood the initial attack by a full motorized division. I then had to deploy another Motorized division to the area in order to prevent that division potentially stopping my FBD come next turn.

Before launching my Panzer advance on Pskov, I did my first nighttime attack by Ju88's was all but futile, but it did reveal that the Soviet fighters do not fly interception at night. The follow up attacks by my He 111H airfield moving up from the center was useless, so I cancelled further attacks preferring instead to keep my fatigue down on the Air Groups, much as I disliked it.

Moving my Panzers north, it soon became obvious that the Soviets had placed NKVD in alternate hexes all in front of the main defenses in Pskov. Attacking those, a funny situation emerged, as I ended up having encircled three NKVD regiments with their backs to Lake Pskov. This was hardly planned, but it seems

better to let them stay encircled rather than risking having to push them aside again in a few turns. In the end, I used four divisions to brush the NKVD's aside and another two west of Riga leaving me only two Panzers and two Motorized divisions for the push on Pskov. One of those Panzers did not have the MP to reach and attack at Pskov, leaving me with one Panzer and two Motorized divisions.

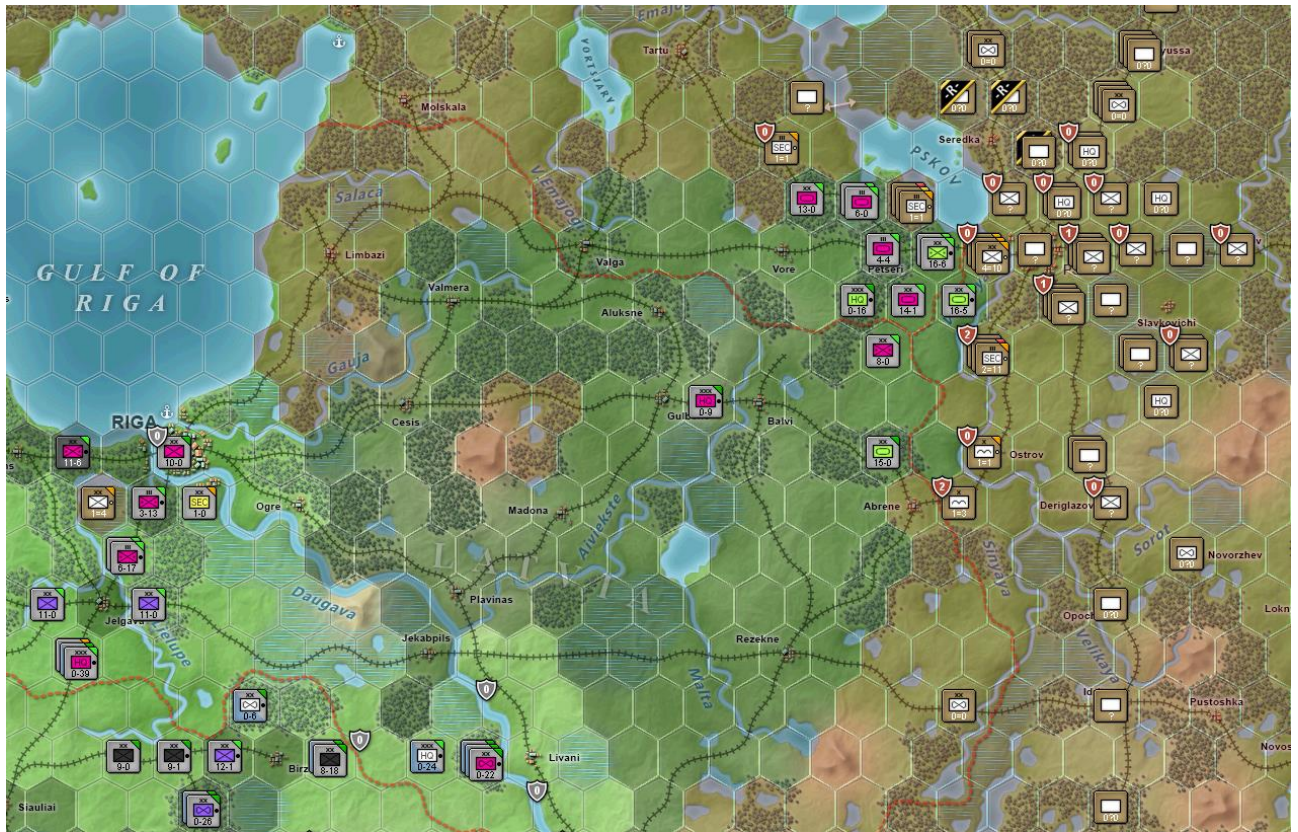
Moving those divisions and the Corps HQ up to the main line of defense west of Pskov, with 38CV against a stack of 6=25. Watching the attack report in detail, I noticed two things. First, Georgy Zhukov has been assigned as a commander in this area and second, my tanks are really prone to breaking down in combat. The attack failed, but on the plus side, the defensive modifier of the hex has been brought down to 0.92.

Axis Forces Attacking:	1 of 1	73,30 - Clear - Clear	Turn:2 1941-06-26	Soviet Forces Defending:	
	Forces Engaged				
	27th Army				
XXXIX Panzer Corps	ATK: men 46617, art 488, afv 377	DEF: men 33552, art 475, afv 53		179th Rifle Division (75)	
7th Panzer Division (177)	DAM: men 110, art 6, afv 29	DAM: men 110, art 2, afv 7		182nd Rifle Division (80)	
3rd Motorized Division (87)	LOST: men 189, art 4, afv 11	LOST: men 506, art 7, afv 12		181st Rifle Division (75)	
20th Motorized Division (90)	ATK: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	DEF: ftr 69, bmr 14, utl 0		390th Crps Art Rgt (1)	
1170th Artillery Battalion (0)	LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	LOST: ftr 1, bmr 2, utl 0		267th Crps Art Rgt (2)	
605th SP Lt Flk Bn (4)				402nd Howitzer Regiment (1)	
643rd Jagdpanzer Battalion (8)					
1st Lehr Pioneer Battalion (8)					
[v]	Defending Forces HELD			Northwest Air Command [v]	
CV: 380->505.6	Eng Val: 12			CV: 234->315.5	Fort: 2.10->0.92
Comm HQ: XXXIX Panzer Corps				Comm HQ: 27th Army	
G Rudolf Schmidt	Show Details	Odds 1.60 : 1	Exit	GA Georgy Zhukov	

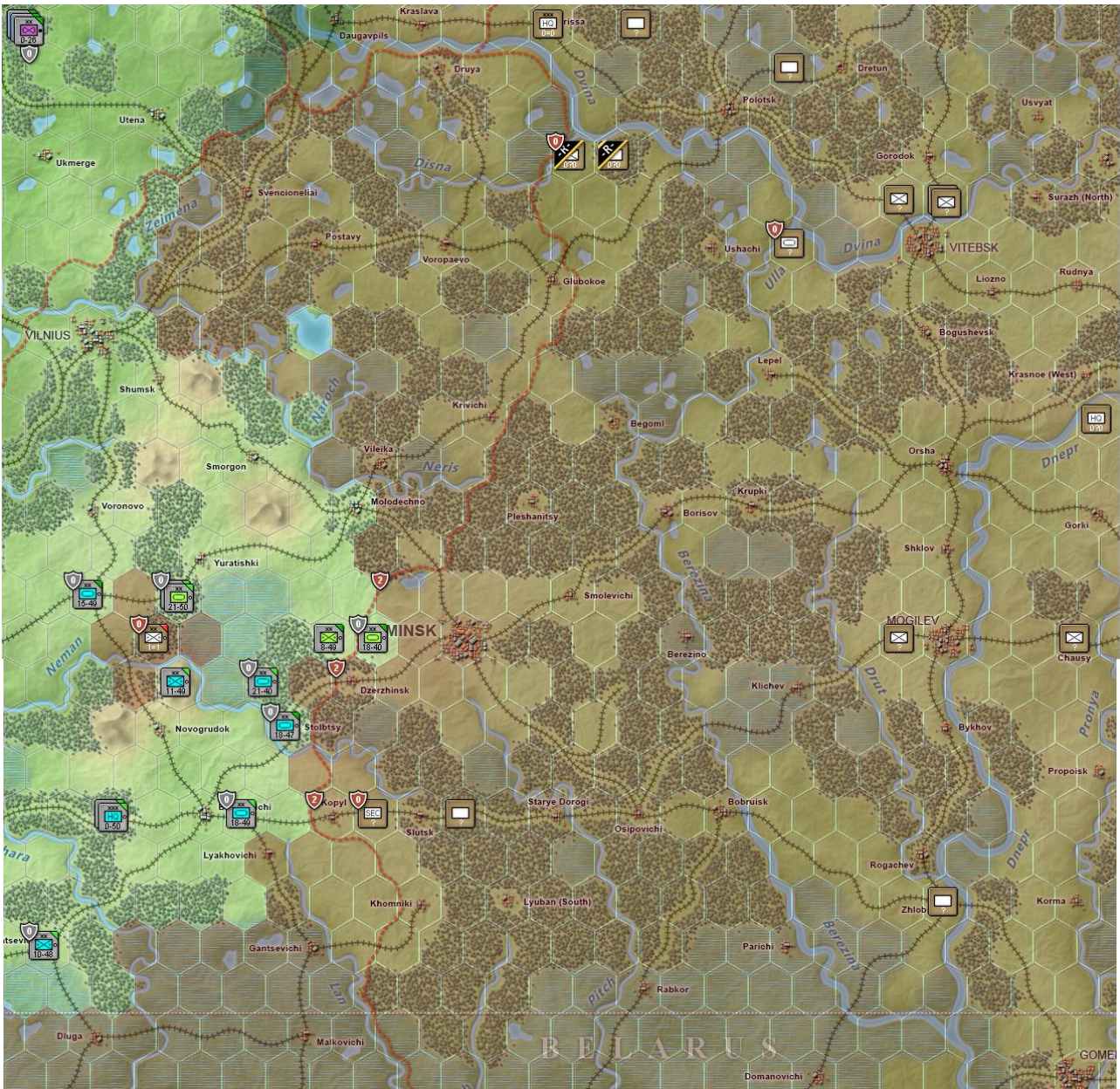
My final action in this area was moving the airforces of Army Group Center to the north and reassigning them to Luftflotte I and subordinate Fliegerkorps. I also deployed a few JG I had available in my national reserve. I hope to be able to push some major air attacks on the Soviet airfields behind Pskov come next turn.

While I will be sorely pressed for MP on my Panzers come next turn, at least the Motorized divisions at Riga should have plenty to spare, as their Corps HQ is now ten MP and six hexes from its nearest railhead. Furthermore, as I move up the Panzer Corps from the center, those units will be placed close to railheads come the end of the turn.

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



The Center



Situational Assessment

As stated above, it seems there are few defenders left in the center. The above image was taken after I did more than 20 recon missions spread out across the area. I was especially focused on the area south of Vitebsk, where five recon missions have failed to spot a single Soviet unit digging in.

To the west of the image above, the Bialystock pocket is still encircled.

I also notice than my recon missions have failed to locate a single Soviet airfield, and I assume that there are none left in the area.

As stated above, the 3rd Panzer Group will be moved north in a strategic move this turn, so these Panzers are not available for action in this area. My other Panzers actually have around 95-100% fuel stores and 45-50 MP, due to being refueled by the local Corps HQ's. However, I need to take into consideration that any further advancements of my take will bring them very far from their supply lines, and it will take some turns before the situation can improve.

Planning

This turn, I will begin the reduction of the Bialystock pocket, hoping to muster a good deal of HIWI's in the process. However, I will take care not to use too many of my infantry divisions bound for the eastward journey this turn.

First, I will bring one corps of the 16th Army up towards the Drissa Rail line. I need infantry advancing along this line in order to keep it ready for my FBD unit as it moves forward. This will be important once I get ready for the assault towards Moscow.

Meanwhile, my Panzers will advance in the direction of Vitebsk. I realize that will bring them out of fuel supply for a turn or two, but the FBD currently in Radviliskis will be advancing fast towards the east, and the area I advance into will be the best springboard I have for renewing the attacks east in this area.

Execution

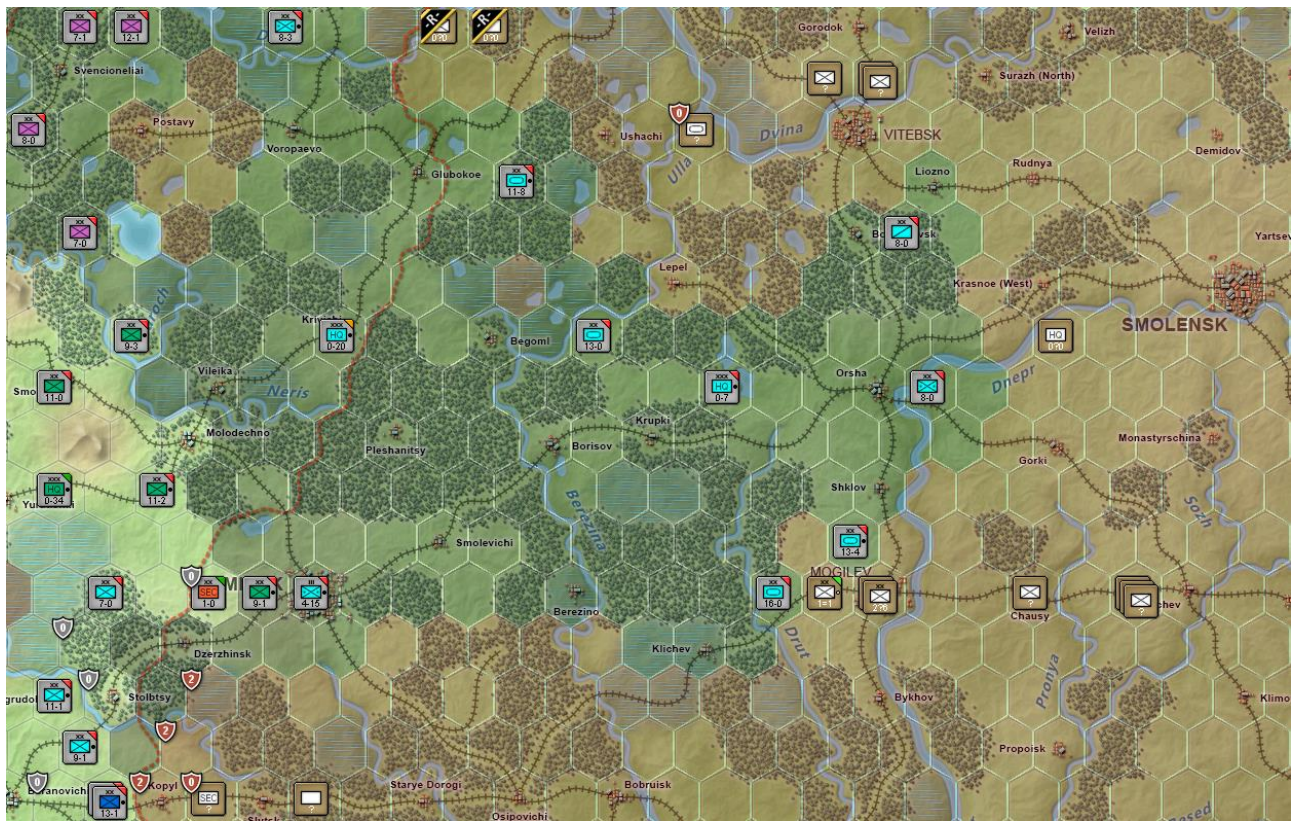
The initial clearing of the Bialystock pocket went much as expected. While I was unable to clear the entire pocket, I reduced it quite a lot and also made sure that no units would escape and cause further trouble.

In the northern parts of this sector, my infantry are pushing towards Kraslava, and are now advancing in parallel to the Dvina river.

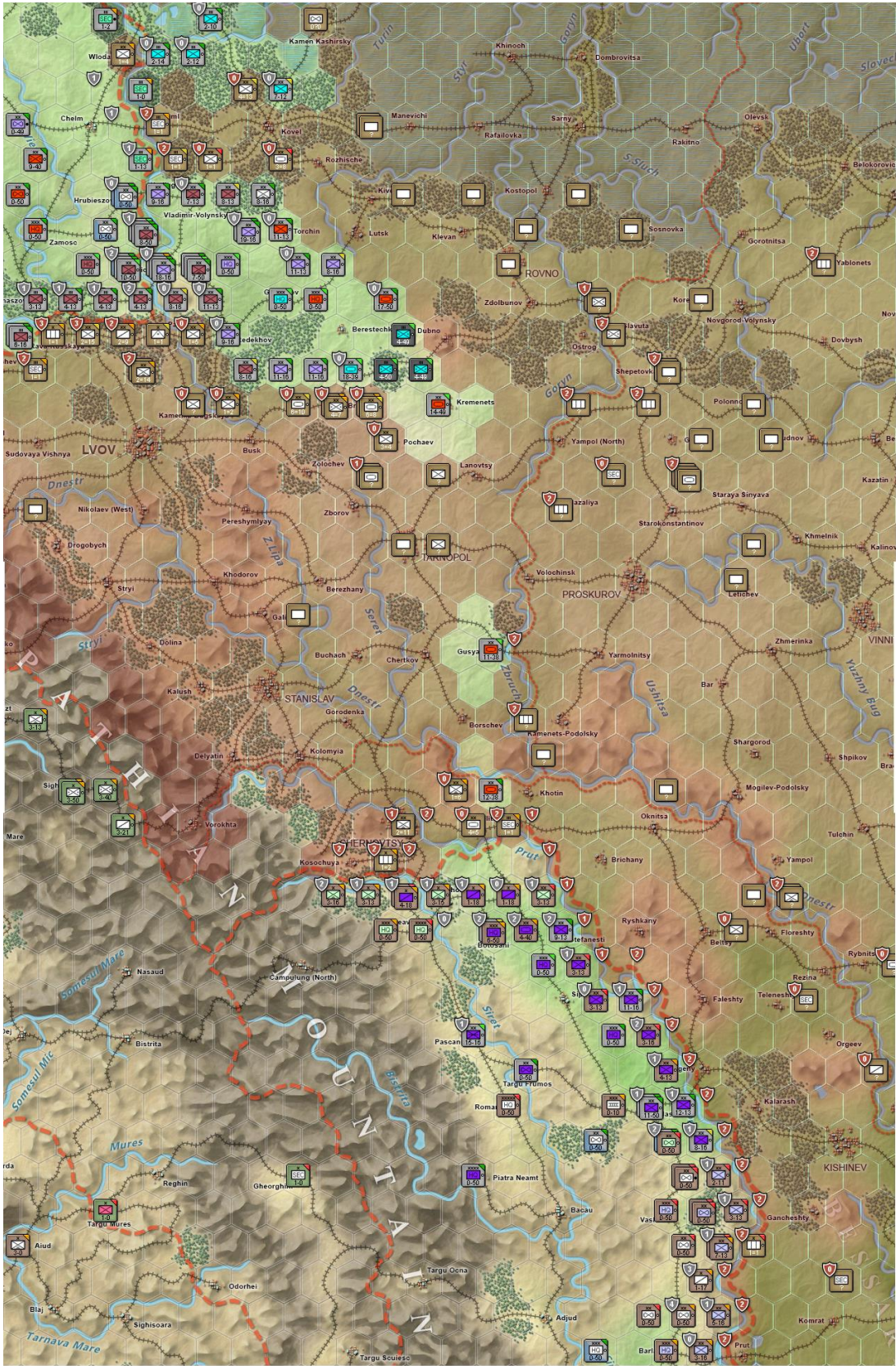
As for my Panzers, I have moved some to the northern sector as planned and used the remainder for pushing east. While I did manage to reach the Vitebsk railway (thus forcing Soviet northbound railtransport to pass through Vyazma) and while I have also crossed the Dnepr, I am still somewhat concerned. If the Soviets have enough movement and morale on that Tank division west of Vitebsk, it may move south and cut off my forward Panzers. He will need four MP to reach Lepel, and (depending on his morale) an estimated eleven MP to reach the hex where my Corps HQ is currently located.

That would leave my Panzers in a very dangerous position as they will have practically no fuel come next turn. I expect them to have no more than five to ten MP's to use, which is not really enough. I might well have to pull back from my forward positions come next turn in order to save my units from destruction. However, if I can maintain the bridgehead across the Dnepr, it will be well worth it.

Below is an image of the situation west of Smolensk, as I give the turn to HardLuck.



The South



Situational assessment

In the south, the Lvov pocket has broken and the Soviets have conducted a single ground attack.

Axis Forces Defending (W):		Forces Engaged		Soviet Forces Attacking (H):	
XXXXVI Panzer Corps 3/Das Reich SS Mot. Div (36)		DEF: men 5570, art 70, afv 14 DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 1 LOST: men 25, art 1, afv 0 DEF: ftr 44, bmr 12, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	ATK: men 27222, art 196, afv 728 DAM: men 128, art 1, afv 29 LOST: men 561, art 5, afv 75 ATK: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	8th Mechanized Corps 12th Tank Division (42) 7th Motorized Division (22) 15th Mechanized Corps -6% 212th Motorized Division (9)	
II Fliegerkorps 18 Bf 109F-2 26 Bf 110C-4B 12 Ju 87B		3/Das Reich SS Motorized Division RETREATED		20 -> 37mm Anti-Aircraft Gun 4 -> 76mm Anti-aircraft Gun	
CV: 36->47.8 Fort: 0.00->0.00 Comm HQ: XXXXVI Panzer Corps G Heinrich von Vietinghoff		Show Details Odds 3.34 : 1 Exit		CV: 73->112.0 Eng Val: 0 Comm HQ: 8th Mechanized Corps GL Dmitry Ryabyshev	

Surprisingly, the Soviets have also moved their forces at Rovno eastwards rather than setting up a few blocking units in places like Dubno. By the looks of it, it seems the Soviets are establishing a defensive line beginning east of Rovno and then running southeast towards Vinnitsa. That is no certainty however, as the recon reports may be inconclusive.

In the air, it seems the Soviets have vanished as much in the south as they have in the center.

My own Panzers are generally in good shape, even the two that have been encircled this turn, and thus received no fuel (I refuelled them both to 100% at the end of last turn).

Planning

My plans for the turn are twofold. First, I wish to reestablish the Lvov pocket, hopefully in a manner that will make it unbreakable next turn. To do this, I will use the infantry marching east and southeast to advance as far as possible while also using the newly activated Panzers to cover the southernmost portions of the advance.

I will also use the Panzers already inside the "attack wedge" to advance towards the Rumanian border at Faleshty. Doing so will enable them to draw fresh fuel for the coming turns and enable my assault on the Dnepr river.

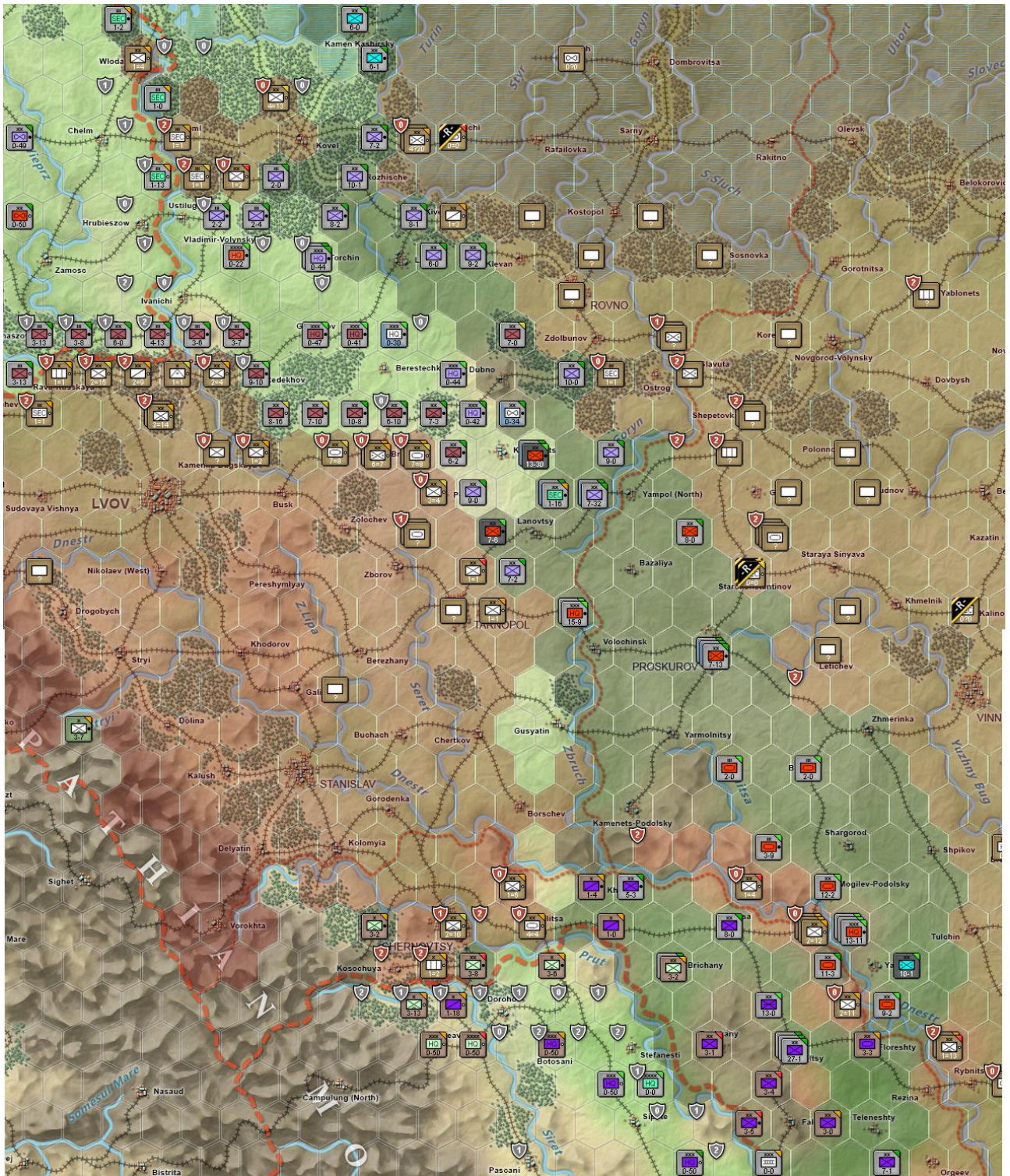
As the Luftwaffe can find no enemy aircraft to combat, they will focus mainly on supporting the ground operations.

Execution

While I have managed to both reestablish the Lvo pocket and the move to the Rumanian border, I am far from happy with the outcome of the events in this area. This is mainly because I almost ended up in a very poor supply situation in the south, where the Soviets could virtually cut off all supplies to my Panzers. To avoid this, I had to do a series of attacks that I would rather have been without and even so, the Soviets have the possibility to restrict the flow of fuel to my Panzers. The good news are that I have encircled another three Rifle divisions.

I really hope that the Lvov pocket will hold, and I see no real danger that it will not. If it does, the reduction of the pocket will begin next turn.

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



Conclusion

The major event this turn has been the heavy Soviet focus on defending Pskov, and the consequent abandoning of the defensive positions between Vitebsk and Mogilev. Because of the distance between the main Soviet lines and the advancing Germans, little fighting has occurred except in the reduction of the pockets. This also means that the German losses have been light during my phase, while the Soviets have lost some 189,000 men, 2,800 guns, 1,600 AFV + SP/AC's and 2,700 vehicles captured by the Germans.

In the air, losses have been all but nonexistent. But with both the Soviets and the Germans marshalling their airforces at Pskov, this will soon change, one way or the other.