

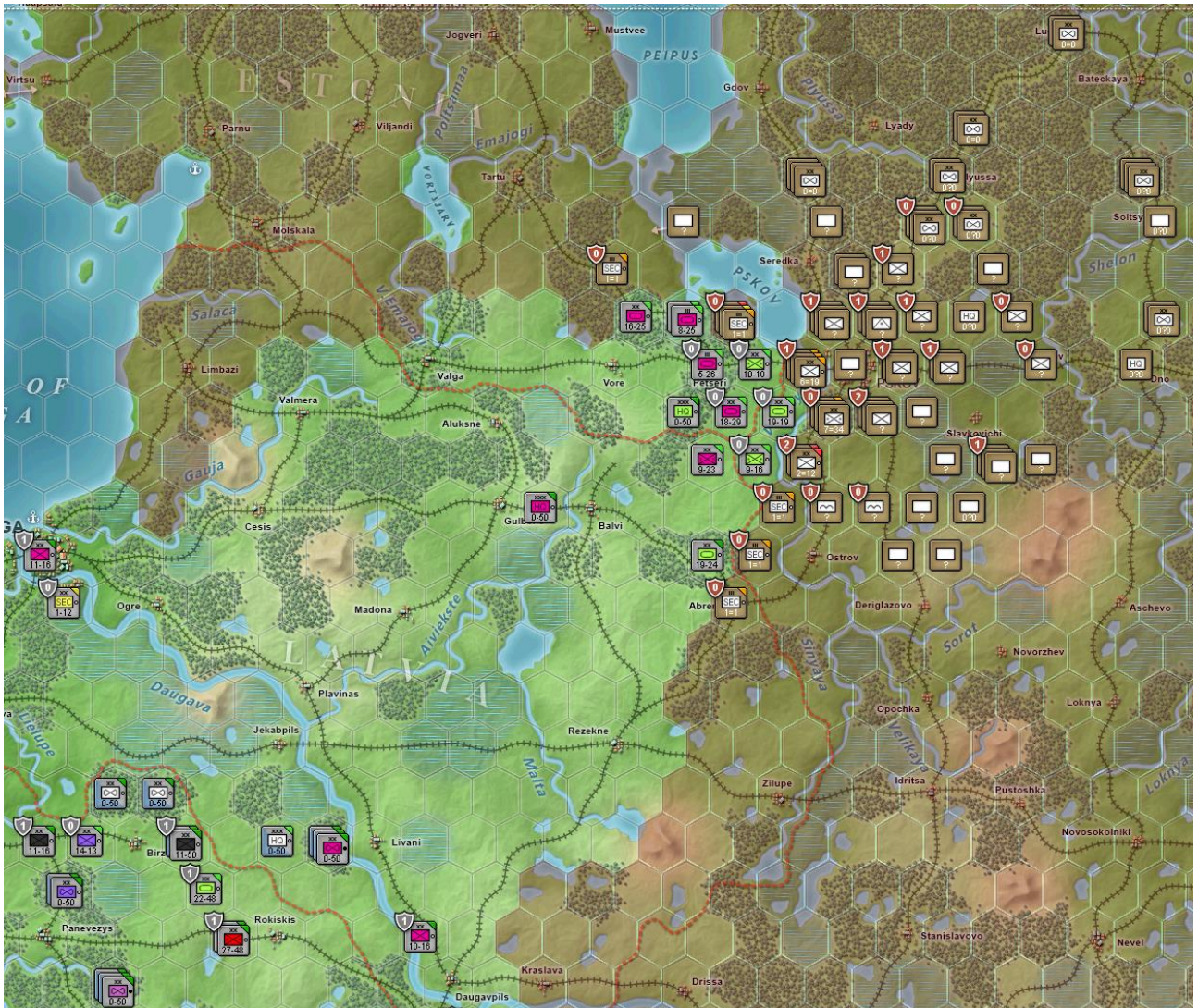
Strategic overview

Turn 3: Strategic Considerations

The Soviets have been surprisingly inactive during their turn, saving their strength for the battles to come. As such, there have been no combats fought neither on the ground or in the air. The only activity by the Soviets are the almost mockingly high number of recon missions undertaken by the Red Army Aviation, about 67 in total.

The Soviets is still mainly present in the Pskov area, but have also begun showing themselves in smaller numbers to the south. As the first wave of reassignments to the national reserve is now over, the Soviets have some 7500 machines showing in the OoB statistics. The only loss worth mentioning is eight SB-2 Rcn's lost due to Soviet recon activity.

The North



Situational assessment

In the north, the situation looks surprisingly similar to what I did when I gave the turn to HardLuck. The Soviets have placed a large amount of troops around Pskov, and from here on, it looks like moving north will be little more than a slugging match.

Looking at the Soviet fortifications, the hex west of Pskov I attacked last turn is back to a fortification level of 1, 40% while the hex to the southeast is now 0, 90%. Behind Pskov, the Soviets are building with values like 1 and 44%, 36%, 72% and 44% respectively. If I do not attack now, I can expect these hexes to reach level two before I get near them, making the slugging contest even worse for the Germans.

My own Panzers to the west of Pskov, has come surprisingly well out of the logistics phase with enough movement to conduct a single attack. Further behind the lines, new Panzers are in the process of being moved forward. The first of my infantry units should also arrive at Pskov this turn, although I will not have the movement to actually do any attacks this turn.

Behind the Soviet lines I see airfields with 1468 active fighters (including I-Types), 132 tactical bombers, 848 level bombers and 54 recon aircraft. In total, there is more than 2500 active aircraft in this area, which is a significant portion of the entire strength of the Red Army Aviation. On my part, I have around 600 Luftwaffe fighters, 210 tactical bombers and 540 level bombers to put up against the Soviets.

Planning

I believe that a prerequisite for me to be able to fight my way forward towards Leningrad is to control the skies over the local area. As such, I simply can not allow the Soviets to have massive airforces standing by just next to the front. Come next turn their level bombers could start hunting my own airfields and their tactical bombers could bomb my Panzers. All this would be covered by a massive 1500 fighter aircraft.

Consequently, I will focus the Luftwaffe attention this turn on removing as many of the Soviet aircraft as possible. In order to do this, I will start by some massive level bomber attacks on the Soviet airfield with tactical bombers (there is only one) and also against the airfields with high priority level bombers (the SB-2 are too numerous to do anything about this turn). After that, I will attempt to use my tactical bombers to attack the Soviet fighter airfields, hoping to remove a significant portion of the Soviet fighters in the process. At the end of the turn, I will then move the airfields back towards the safety of Riga and the Daugava.

After the air attacks, I will resume attacks on the ground

Execution

The first airfield attack against the Soviet Tactical bomber airfield was met with a huge wave of interceptors, forcing me to slightly reconsider my attacks, as I simply could not destroy enough enemy fighters to prevent the Soviets from reaching my own bombers.

Axis Forces Attacking:		<div>< 2 of 2</div> <div>76,25 - Light Woods - Clear</div> <div>Turn:3 1941-07-03</div>		Soviet Forces Defending:	
VIII Fliegerkorps		Forces Engaged		Northwest Air Command	
40	Bf 109E-7	ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0	DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0	84	MiG-3
47	Bf 109F-2	DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0	DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0	48	I-153
34	Do 17Z-2	LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0	LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0	44	I-16 Type 18
42	He 111H-4	ATK: ftr 87, bmr 76, utl 0	DEF: ftr 260, bmr 0, utl 0	62	I-16 Type 24
		LOST: ftr 0, bmr 10, utl 0	LOST: ftr 19, bmr 10, utl 0	22	LaGG-3
		airfield was BOMBED			
		Show Details		Exit	

I decided to move up another airfield with four single seat fighter Air Groups in order to strengthen my own cover of the bombers. I then proceeded with the attacks. At the end of the level bomber attacks (four in total), losses were 35 Luftwaffe aircraft (including four fighters) against 108 Soviet aircraft (including 87 fighters).

I then moved up my tactical bombers and resumed bombing the Soviet fighter airfields. The first of these attacks was a complete disaster, forcing me to immediately reevaluate my strategy for killing off the Soviet fighters.

Axis Forces Attacking:	1 of 1	73,26 - Light Woods - Clear	Turn:3 1941-07-03	Soviet Forces Defending:
	Forces Engaged			
	airfield was BOMBED			
I Fliegerkorps				Northwest Air Command
40 Bf 109E-3	ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0	DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0		49 MiG-3
133 Bf 109F-2	DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0	DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0		118 I-153
61 Bf 110E-2	LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0	LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0		98 I-16 Type 18
37 Bf 109E-7/U1	ATK: ftr 234, bmr 79, utl 0	DEF: ftr 472, bmr 0, utl 0		159 I-16 Type 24
42 Ju 87B	LOST: ftr 3, bmr 32, utl 0	LOST: ftr 25, bmr 0, utl 0		31 I-16 Type 29
				17 Yak-1
	Show Details	Exit		

Not willing to risk my tactical bombers any further, I reverted to doing pure fighter sweeps, over the remaining bomber airfields. This finally led to a casualty tally of 83 German (including 20 fighters) aircraft for 200 Soviet ones (including 179 fighters).

I then resumed attacks on the ground, forgetting to check if ground support was on for the first attack.

<div>Axis Forces Attacking:</div> <div>XXXIX Panzer Corps</div> <div>7th Panzer Division (177)</div> <div>20th Panzer Division (136)</div> <div>3rd Motorized Division (93)</div> <div>51st Nebelwerfer Regiment (3)</div> <div>101st Flammpanzer Battalion (30)</div> <div>620th Gun Battalion (0)</div> <div>605th SP Lt Flk Bn (5)</div> <div>[v]</div>	<div>1 of 173,30 - Clear - ClearTurn:3 1941-07-03</div> <div>Forces Engaged</div> <div>ATK: men 49359, art 518, afv 673</div> <div>DEF: men 52104, art 700, afv 70</div> <div>DAM: men 233, art 29, afv 40</div> <div>DAM: men 335, art 21, afv 5</div> <div>LOST: men 689, art 25, afv 32</div> <div>LOST: men 3200, art 41, afv 15</div> <div>ATK: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0</div> <div>DEF: ftr 175, bmr 43, utl 0</div> <div>LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0</div> <div>LOST: ftr 2, bmr 8, utl 0</div> <div>181st Rifle Division RETREATED</div> <div>182nd Rifle Division RETREATED</div> <div>179th Rifle Division ROUTED</div> <div>Exit</div>		<div>Soviet Forces Defending:</div> <div>27th Army</div> <div>193rd Rifle Division (46) R</div> <div>179th Rifle Division (57)</div> <div>182nd Rifle Division (64)</div> <div>181st Rifle Division (65)</div> <div>267th Crps Art Rgt (2)</div> <div>402nd Howitzer Regiment (1)</div> <div>613th Crps Art Rgt (1)</div> <div>[v]</div>
	<div>CV: 461->768.3Eng Val: 10</div> <div>Comm HQ: XXXIX Panzer Corps</div> <div>G Rudolf Schmidt</div> <div>Show Details</div> <div>Odds 2.80 : 1</div>		
	<div>CV: 236->273.8Fort: 1.40->0.00</div> <div>Comm HQ: 27th Army</div> <div>GA Georgy Zhukov</div>		

Noticing the high amount of Soviet fighters flying, I then set my own ground support escort very high, hoping to catch some Soviet aircraft in the process of further attacks. Unfortunately, my fighters were spent after the airfield bombings, and I did not manage to fly any ground support in the area.

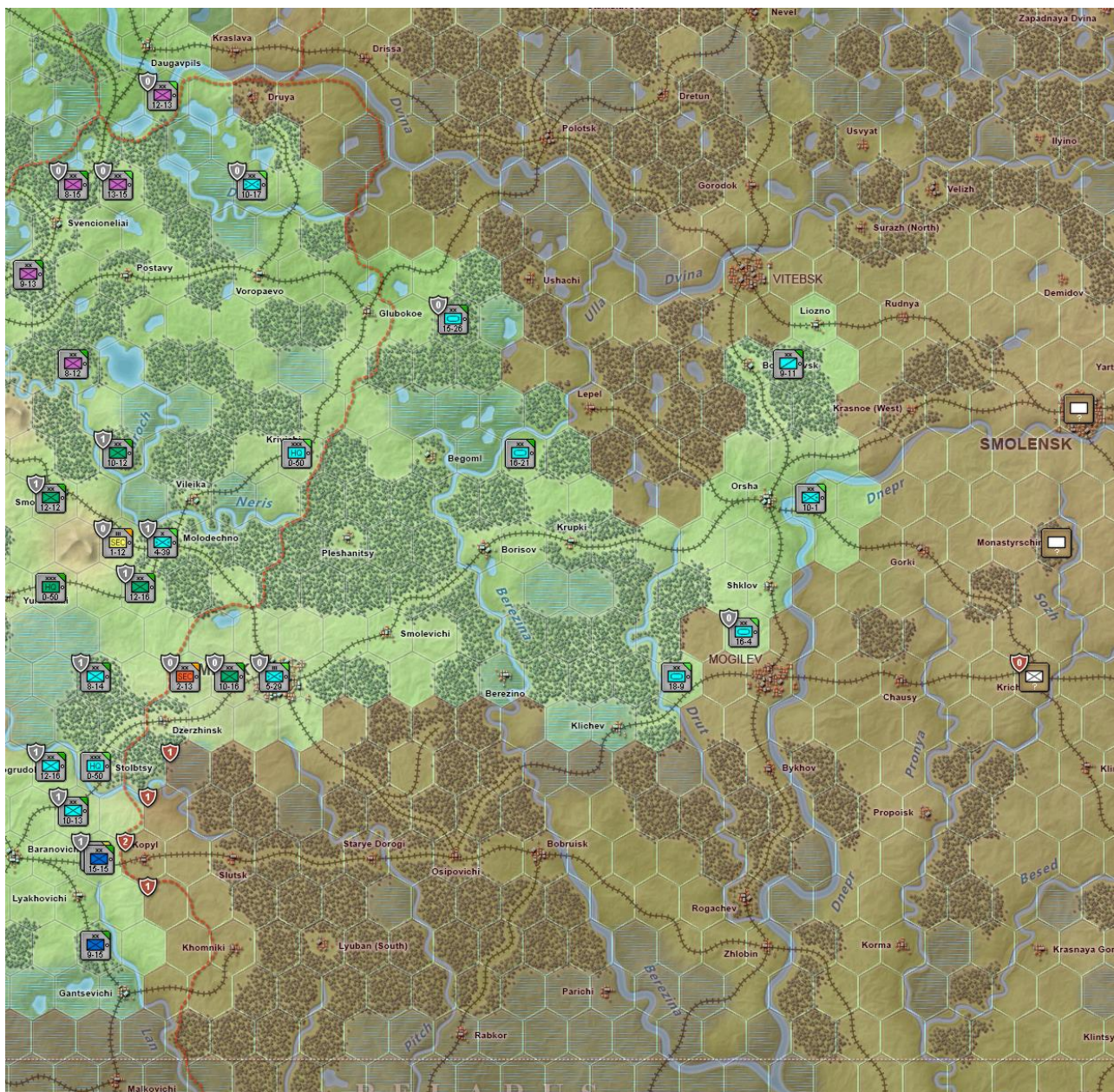
My ground attacks themselves showed me what the Soviets intend to use their Air Groups for in this area. With massive fighter ground support and some tactical bomber support, the Soviets often had 200+ aircraft flying in each combat. The battles themselves were extremely expensive in Panzers, and I need to consider how I use my northern Panzers over the coming turns.

<div>Axis Forces Attacking:</div> <div>XXXIX Panzer Corps 7th Panzer Division (177) 20th Panzer Division (136) 3rd Motorized Division (93) 51st Nebelwerfer Regiment (3) 101st Flammpanzer Battalion (30) 620th Gun Battalion (0) 605th SP Lt Flk Bn (5)</div> <div>[v]</div>	1 of 1		73,30 - Clear - Clear		Turn:3 1941-07-03		<div>Soviet Forces Defending:</div> <div>27th Army 193rd Rifle Division (46) R 179th Rifle Division (57) 182nd Rifle Division (64) 181st Rifle Division (65) 267th Crps Art Rgt (2) 402nd Howitzer Regiment (1) 613th Crps Art Rgt (1)</div> <div>[v]</div>
	<div>Forces Engaged</div> <div>ATK: men 49359, art 518, afv 673 DAM: men 233, art 29, afv 40 LOST: men 689, art 25, afv 32 ATK: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0</div> <div>DEF: men 52104, art 700, afv 70 DAM: men 335, art 21, afv 5 LOST: men 3200, art 41, afv 15 DEF: ftr 175, bmr 43, utl 0 LOST: ftr 2, bmr 8, utl 0</div>						
	181st Rifle Division RETREATED 182nd Rifle Division RETREATED 179th Rifle Division ROUTED						
CV: 461->768.3 Eng Val: 10 Comm HQ: XXXIX Panzer Corps G Rudolf Schmidt	Show Details		Odds 2.80 : 1		Exit		CV: 236->273.8 Fort: 1.40->0.00 Comm HQ: 27th Army GA Georgy Zhukov

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



The Center



Situational Assessment

The center is all but clear of Soviet units. It seems the Soviets may be beginning to build a new line around Smolensk, but evidence is sketchy.

However, I do think there must be one undiscovered Soviet Tank division north of Mogilev, as that is the only explanation of the wedge into my advance. Further, last turn, there was a Tank division on the southern bank of the Dvina river in this area.

Far to the west, there are still a few Soviet divisions left in the Bialystock pocket.

Planning

There will be little fighting done in this area this turn. My main effort will be to eliminate the Bialystock pocket and to advance my infantry units east to catch up with my Panzers. I will make a move to catch the expected Soviet Tank division and another to take Mogilev.

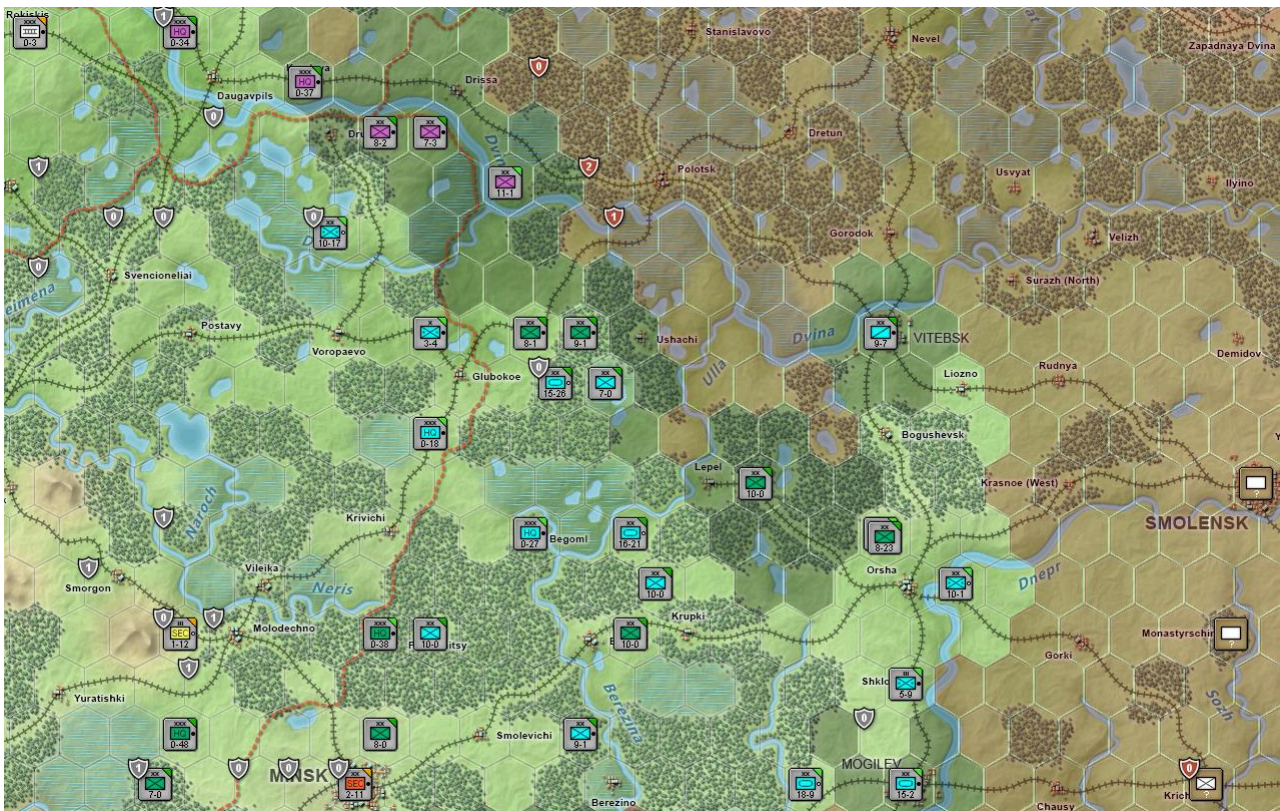
Finally, I will move another FBD unit to the Drissa Rail line this turn in order to put an extra hex or two to my rail advances every turn. As the Soviets are so focused on defending Leningrad, I will need to advance my rails towards Moscow as fast as possible. There should currently be few units in the area capable of delaying my advance, so the only limitation is due to my own supply lines being stretched to far.

Execution

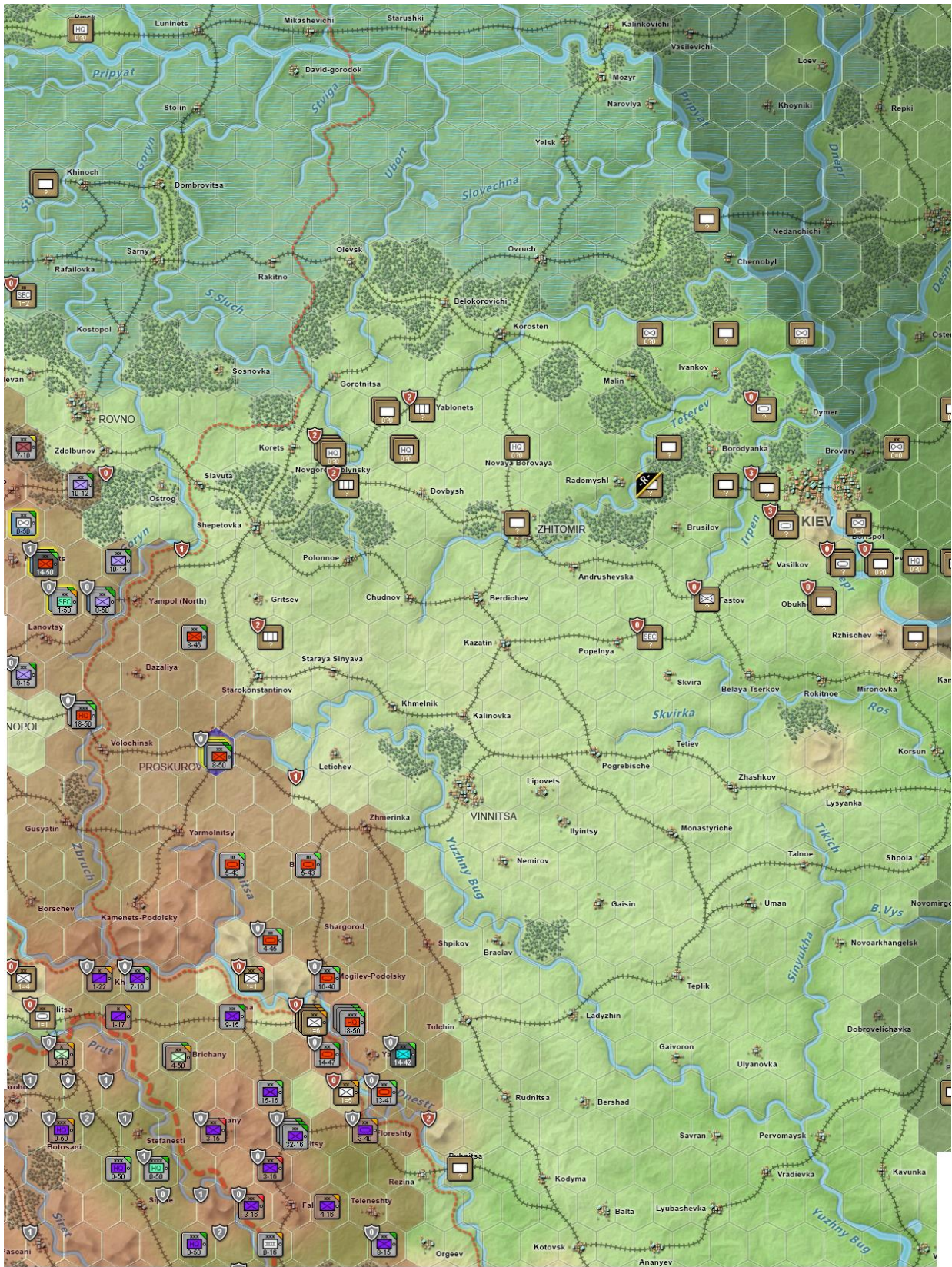
The center has been uneventful.

I have eliminated the Bialystock pocket, did not find any Tank division southwest of Vitebsk, moved my FBD towards Drissa and I took Mogilev and Vitebsk. All this was done without any resistance from Soviet troops that were not encircled.

Below is an image of the situation west of Smolensk, as I give the turn to HardLuck. Notice the FBD unit in the far northwestern corner of the map.



The South



Situational assessment

The main Soviet lines seems to have been withdrawn all the way to Kiev this turn. A Few Corps HQ's and Fortified Regions seems to have been left west of Zhitomir, but it is hard to find any fighting units anywhere near the German front lines.

At Kovel, the Soviets have broken the local pocket once again, as I simply did not have enough movement last turn to make it stick. Inside the former pocket are four Rifle divisions, and outside, I use a similar number of infantry divisions advancing east to make the pocket stick.

The Lvov pocket has held. I see quite a lot of various divisions inside the pocket, including five Tank divisions and two Motorized divisions. In the south, at Falehsty, I still have three more Soviet Rifle divisions encircled.

To the south, my FBD units are at Faleshty.

Planning

My plans for the turn are obviously to start reducing the various pockets and reestablishing the Kovel pocket once more.

Other than that, I will push my infantry forward towards Kiev and in the south towards Kirovograd. I will also use one or two Motorized divisions to flip terrain in the south in order to prepare for a next turn attack towards the Dnepr.

Execution

The reduction of the southern pockets are going according to plan.

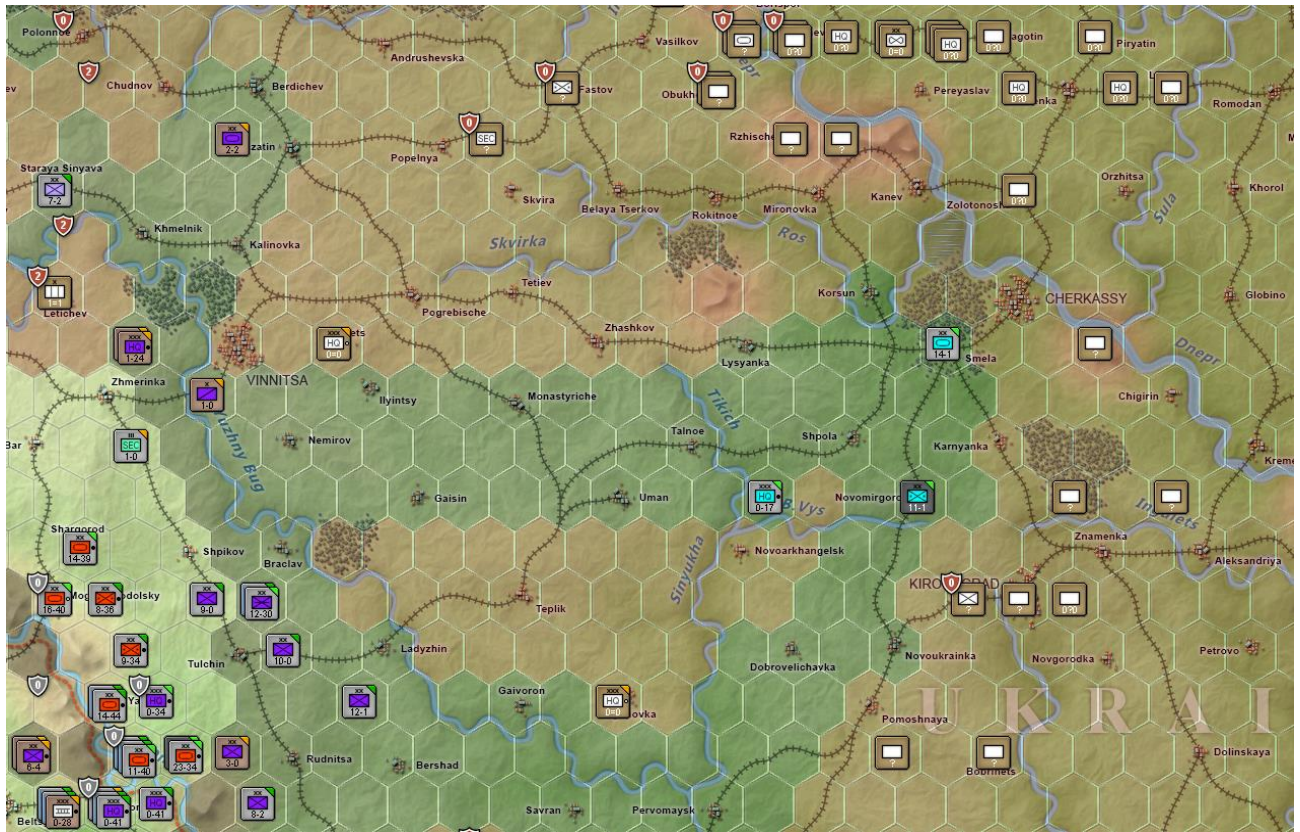
Further south, I have pushed two divisions forward in a terrain grabbing pincer move towards Cherkassy and Kirovograd. Unfortunately, I did not have the movement to push the front unit all the way up to the Dnepr river, so a crossing using a minimum move come next turn will not be possible.

These units should ensure, that my follow up Panzer move next turn does not pay "pending friendly terrain" costs, and should also allow for plenty of fuel to arrive at my Panzers currently so close to the Rumanian rail system.

In anticipation of a future attempt to cross the Dnepr, I have begun issuing Pioneers and Howitzer support units to the XI Corps and the subordinate infantry divisions.

In the air, I have moved the local Luftwaffe airfields to the area where my Panzers are. To the north, the Slovakian airforces are now active and moving towards the front.

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



Conclusion

Strategically, the Soviets are committing heavily to the defense of Leningrad. They probably do so, guessing that the defense of Moscow is not yet urgent due to the slow advance of the German rail lines. Because of this situation, I have gradually begun preparing an alteration of my overall strategy.

- 1) My Panzers in the north will shortly begin to disengage as the infantry arrive at Pskov. These Panzers will be sent to the center, to aid in the attack of Moscow instead. Given the high density of Soviet defenders at Pskov, any attack will turn into a slugging match, and for such things I prefer to use the infantry, rather than wasting the fast moving mobile forces.
- 2) Another FBD unit is being sent to the Drissa line. As there are virtually no defenders in the center, there are no battles, and thus there should be few partisan units created. Because of this, I will risk using two FBD's on one rail line, hoping to put so much speed into the Moscow advance, that the Soviets will not have time to establish a strong defense.
- 3) Infantry forces are being sent north, along with pioneers and gun support units. These units will continue the attack on Leningrad. To support them, I still have heavy Luftwaffe forces, but these forces will be used in a ground support role rather than for airfield attacks.

In total, this turn, the Soviets have lost some 176,000 men, 2,400 guns and 2,200 AFV + SP/AC. The Germans have also captured 3,000 vehicles. There are still plenty more units to destroy in the Lvov pocket. The Germans have lost some 3,500 men, 70 guns and 60 AFV + SP/AC's, mostly on the northern front.

In the air, losses stand at 108 Axis aircraft for 242 Soviet ones. Notable losses are 24 JU87B's for the Axis and a total of 193 fighters for the Soviets. Unfortunately, the Soviet losses more or less match their fighter production output, meaning that only the Luftwaffe has become weaker this turn.

HardLuck and I have had some friendly discussions on forums regarding the merits of the U-2. As part of these discussions HardLuck has posted images of him redeploying his U-2VS, U-2 Rcn and U-2 Transport productions forward to the German lines on turn three. It will be interesting to see, if he will do the same during our game.