

Strategic overview

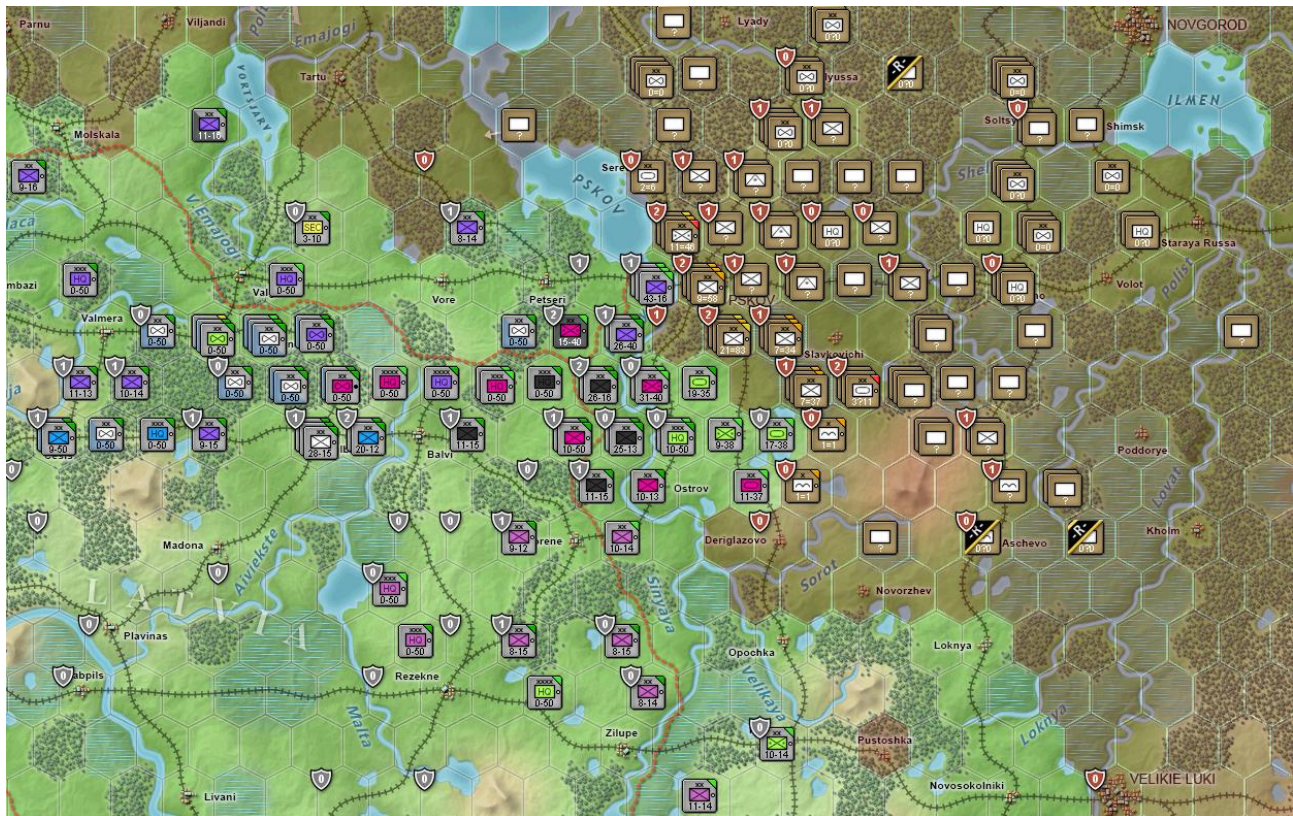
Turn 5: Strategic Considerations

In the north, the Soviets have pulled back slightly, so that their most exposed divisions are no longer at the front. In the south, the Soviets have pulled their units back from the Dnepr line, making the crossing this turn a certainty.

Meanwhile, in the air, the Soviets have conducted 71 Recon missions this turn, being a lot more interested in the center and the north than they are in the south. The Soviet logistics repair of damaged aircraft has caused the loss of another 114 aircraft this turn.

The collective Soviet OoB has risen by a massive 450.000 men and 4.000 guns last turn, which is quite worrying.

The North



Situational assessment

In the far north, the Soviets have left a few divisions on the Finnish border, probably because they have been unable to extract them.

Further south, at Pskov, the Soviets have pulled back from a couple of exposed hexes and have also conducted a single attack, throwing a mobile division of mine back one hex.

Axis Forces Defending:		1 of 3 > 75,32 - Clear - Clear	Turn: 4 1941-07-10	Soviet Forces Attacking:	
XXXIX Panzer Corps 20th Motorized Division (116) 51st Nebelwerfer Regiment (3) 1/52nd SP Flak Company (0) 1/8th Panzerjager Company (3)		Forces Engaged DEF: men 15651, art 240, afv 18 DAM: men 51, art 6, afv 1 LOST: men 154, art 6, afv 1 DEF: flr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: flr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		22nd Army -30% 132nd Rifle Division (18) 183rd Rifle Division (8) 191st Rifle Division (11) 387th Howitzer Regiment (1) 545th Crps Art Rgt (0) 11th Army -10% 166th Rifle Division (18)	
12 -> 88mm Anti-aircraft Gun 8 -> SdKfz-6/2 SP Flak		20th Motorized Division RETREATED		CV: 242->631.6 Eng Val: 6 Comm HQ: 27th Army GA Georgy Zhukov	
CV: 122->68.8 Fort: 0.24->0.00 Comm HQ: XXXIX Panzer Corps G Rudolf Schmidt		Odds 10:18 : 1		CV: 242->631.6 Eng Val: 6 Comm HQ: 27th Army GA Georgy Zhukov	
Show Details		Exit		[v]	

The Soviet defenses within one hex of Pskov are still very strong, with CV's of 11=46. 9=58 and 21=83. On top of this comes whatever reserves the Soviets have set up behind their front. To the southeast, the defenses in front of Slavkovichi looks a little less daunting with CV's of 7=34, 7=37 and 3=11. It seems I have the possibility to pull up the XXIII Corps to do a first attack on this sector and I can then follow up with my Panzers units in terrain that is slightly more suited to their strengths than a frontal attack on Pskov.

My Panzers looks to be in decent shape with movement around 35-40MP. A lot more important, my infantry have now arrived at the front, so I will be able to begin mounting some serious attacks in this sector.

In the air, the Soviets have some 1200 Ready fighters and slightly less than 600 bombers. It seems that they have swapped the position of the airfields northeast of Pskov with those placed further east, as the most damaged aircraft are now to the east. The Luftwaffe can field some 660 fighters, 180 Tactical bombers and 440 Level bombers opposite the Soviet airforces.

Planning

On the ground, my main thrust this turn will be directed at Slavkovichi. I will obviously use my infantry first, trying to create a breach in the Soviet defenses and pushing the Soviet units back a hex or so, and then follow up with my Panzers attacking the retreating Soviets. The exception to this is the clear hex to the southeast of Slavkovichi (3?11). I intend to hit this hex with my Panzers as it is clear, and I can expect a lot better results from using those units in this terrain. My hope is to outmaneuver the Soviets positions around Pskov, forcing a general retreat come the Soviet turn.

I will also conduct a single frontal attack on Pskov using the I Corps however. If this attack is successful and I take the city, the Soviet defenders to the southwest of the city (the 21=83 stack) might find themselves in a difficult position when it come to withdrawing next turn.

In the air, I will start by a bombing run against the frontline Soviet formations to see if the Soviets still fly interception. If they do, I will try to pull them in to another series of dog fights above Pskov, as I conduct my attacks this turn.

Execution

Below, I will try to detail my attacks at Pskov in a little more detail than I usually do. I think this might shed some light on the amount of details I "think" into an attack.

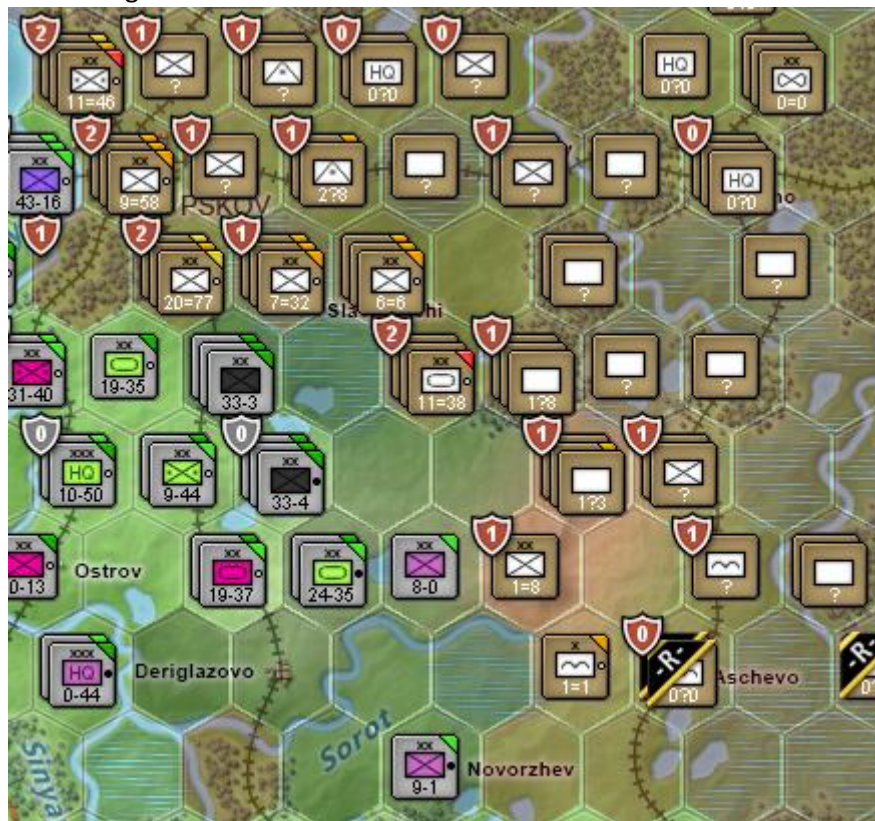
- 1) I start by focusing my attention on the Airborne Brigades southwest of Slavkovichi. On the first of those I then conduct a single Air Group Ju88 ground bombing attack to see what level of interception the Soviets have set. The attack did no damage with no Soviets flying against it.
- 2) I then moved an infantry division from Stanislavovo to the Swamp hex at Novozhev in order to find out what the Soviets had in this hex (making sure I had the six MP to attack also). This revealed a 1=2 Airborne Brigade that I proceeded to attack after having set ground support to 100 and ground support escort to 200. The attack forced a retreat.
- 3) The infantry division at Abrene then moved adjacent to the Airborne Brigade at Dariglazovo in order to do another attack. Having forgotten to do so on the previous attack, this time, I remembered to move the Corps HQ into position to support the attack. This attack forced a rout.
- 4) The next infantry division and HQ then moved into position to attack the remaining Airborne division, forcing another retreat.
- 5) An infantry division east of Abrene then moved to do a final attack on the Airborne units in front of the main Soviet lines, revealing a 1=8 infantry division (expected to be there) in the rough terrain previously "thought" to have been empty. The attack against the Airborne Brigade forced a retreat.
- 6) This led to the following situation.



- 7) As the main objective of the attack is to force my way towards Slavkovichi, I decide to leave the Soviets in the rough alone and focus on the three stacks forming an east/west line south of Slavkovichi.
- 8) As all the Airborne Brigades attacked thus far had been assigned directly to STAVKA, I assumed that interception would begin again at this point, so I did another JU88 bombing run, this time on the clear hex with the 3?11 stack. This attack was intercepted from four airfields costing me six JU88's, but acquired knowledge of the exact defense of the hex (11=34).
- 9) I then did a fighter sweep over the hex, causing the loss of 26 Soviet fighters for one German.
- 10) Moving the Panzer division southwest of Slavkovichi out of the way, I then moved the XXIII Corps into position and assigned new Pioneers etc to it.
- 11) I then did a 200 fighter strength air sweep over the swamp. This was only intercepted by 57 fighters leading to 12 Soviet fighters lost.
- 12) To verify if this signaled a general decline in Soviet interception ability, I did another similar sweep. This was intercepted by 95 fighters, leading to 14 Soviet fighters lost.
- 13) I then did a six division attack on the swamp hex, expecting a massive overkill, but thinking I would have little use of the XXIII Corps other than this attack, and also wanting to inflict extra losses on the defending Soviets. For some reason this led to a massive bomber support on my part with little fighter cover and opposite this was a really heavy Soviet fighter support. Thankfully, my support consisted of Do-17's and Ju88's. The attack forced a retreat with the result as follows.

Axis Forces Attacking: XXIII Corps 206th Infantry Division (171) 251st Infantry Division (159) 254th Infantry Division (177) 94th Infantry Division (171) 96th Infantry Division (163) 98th Infantry Division (167) 815th Hvy Hwz Bn (1) [v] CV: 1280->2961.3 Eng Val: 48 Comm HQ: XXIII Corps GL Walter Model	1 of 3 > 76,32 - Swamp - Clear Turn:5 1941-07-17 Forces Engaged ATK: men 117268, art 1227, afv 12 DEF: men 71758, art 967, afv 80 DAM: men 189, art 17, afv 1 DAM: men 128, art 23, afv 3 LOST: men 673, art 17, afv 0 LOST: men 1836, art 30, afv 11 ATK: ftr 18, bmr 108, utl 0 DEF: ftr 253, bmr 21, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 29, utl 0 LOST: ftr 16, bmr 4, utl 0 19th Rifle Division RETREATED 229th Rifle Division RETREATED 132nd Rifle Division RETREATED Odds 2.78 : 1 Show Details Exit	Soviet Forces Defending: 22nd Army 132nd Rifle Division (186) 107th Rifle Division (36) R 19th Rifle Division (217) 28th Motorcycle Regiment (3) 387th Howitzer Regiment (1) 457th Crps Art Rgt (1) 538th Howitzer Regiment (1) [v] CV: 646->1063.1 Fort: 1.20->0.00 Comm HQ: 22nd Army GL Maksim Purkaev
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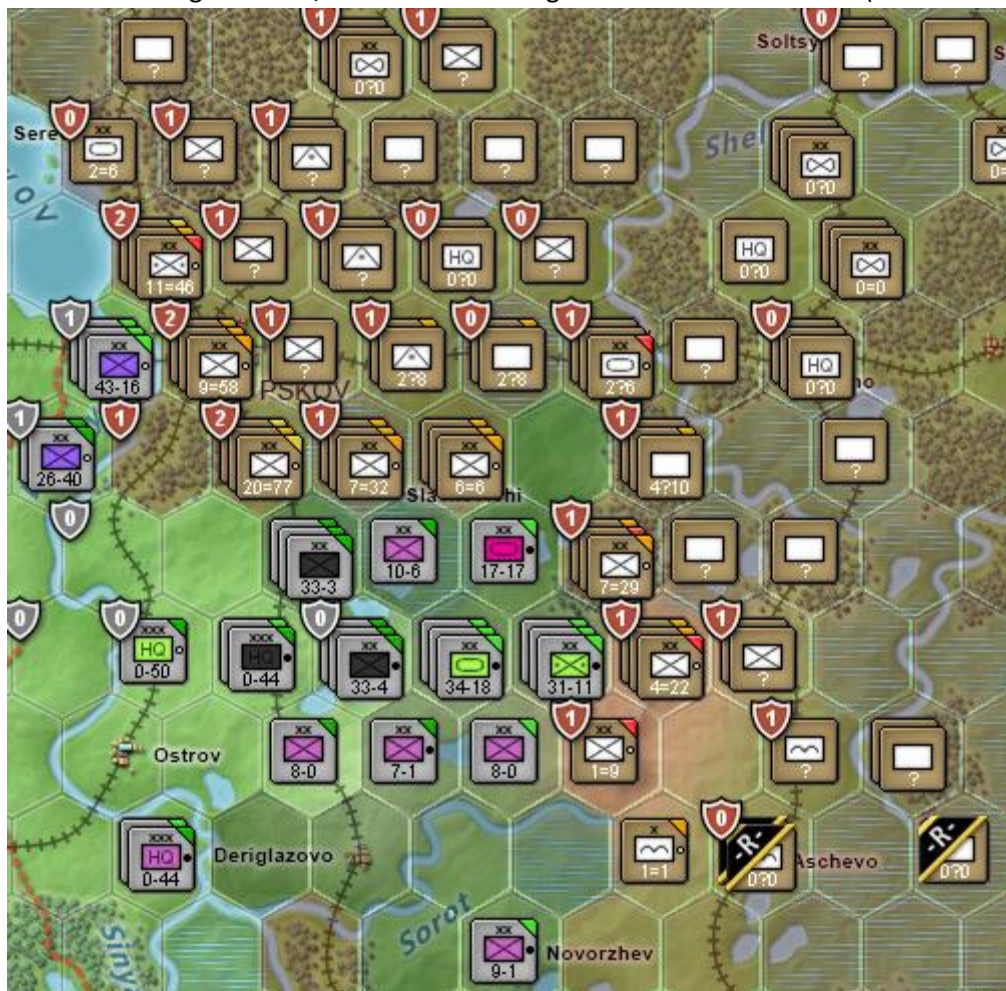
14) This led to the following situation.



- 15) At this point, the Luftwaffe mutinied (is that a word?) and refused to fly further sweeps over Slavkovichi, in spite of having plenty of fuel and and ammo, and having several Air Groups with low fatigue as well.
- 16) Turning ground support to 0 with high ground support escort, I then moved six mobile divisions into position for an attack on the 11=38 stack, while still reassigning my best Panzers to von Mansteins Panzer Corps for future action. This left me with an attack CV of 73 against the Soviet defense of 38. The result was another retreat for the Soviets and the report as follows.

Axis Forces Attacking: XXXXI Panzer Corps -36% 1st Panzer Division (66) 36th Motorized Division (58) 611th Gun Battalion (0) 11/59th Howitzer Battalion (0) 615th Howitzer Battalion (0) 601st SP Lt Flk Bn (3) 1/3rd LW Mix Flk Bn (1) [v] CV: 624->1576.3 Eng Val: 10 Comm HQ: XXXIX Panzer Corps G Rudolf Schmidt	1 of 3 > 77,92 - Clear - Clear Turn: 5 1941-07-17 Forces Engaged ATK: men 97815, art 1135, afv 794 DAM: men 169, art 22, afv 31 LOST: men 423, art 18, afv 23 ATK: ftr 30, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 DEF: men 71989, art 782, afv 619 DAM: men 202, art 18, afv 5 LOST: men 1994, art 15, afv 185 DEF: ftr 95, bmr 35, utl 0 LOST: ftr 9, bmr 11, utl 0 3rd Tank Division RETREATED 215th Motorized Division RETREATED 189th Rifle Division RETREATED Odds 3.43 : 1 Show Details Exit	Soviet Forces Defending: 8th Army 3rd Tank Division (100) 215th Motorized Division (154) 18th Rifle Division (34) R 11th Motorcycle Regiment (3) 524th Heavy Gun Regiment (2) 403rd BM Howitzer Regiment (1) 47th Crps Art Rgt (1) [v] CV: 366->458.4 Fort: 2.10->0.00 Comm HQ: 8th Army GM Fyodor Tolbukhin
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- 17) Moving up one infantry division with enough MP to conducting one attack to the swamps at Stavkovichi and one Panzer division under Manstein to the clear hex to the southeast of Stavkovichi (leaving it with 33MP), I first did an attack on the retreated Panzer stack east of Stavkovichi, forcing another retreat.
- 18) This led to the following situation, with me still having two mobile divisions left (each with 40MP).



- 19) Seeing a possible encirclement or near-encirclement of the Soviet units southeast of Pskov, I then moved all available infantry into position for a direct attack on Pskov, giving me a total of six frontline divisions (all under I Corps) with a total of 70 CV plus two reserve divisions under 18th Army with a total of 17 CV. The attack failed to Zhukov's leadership and the activation of three reserve divisions.

Axis Forces Attacking: 18th Army -3% 123rd Infantry Division (28) R I Corps 1st Infantry Division (73) 11th Infantry Division (116) 21st Infantry Division (84) 58th Infantry Division (28) 269th Infantry Division (99) [v]	1 of 174,30 - City(Pskov) - ClearTurn:5 1941-07-17 Forces Engaged ATK: men 120299, art 1391, afv 73 DAM: men 154, art 30, afv 1 LOST: men 794, art 21, afv 1 ATK: ftr 55, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		Soviet Forces Defending: 27th Army 193rd Rifle Division (221) 195th Rifle Division (189) R 108th Rifle Division (178) 182nd Rifle Division (141) 614th Crps Art Rgt (3) 103rd AA Battalion (0) 11th Army -10% [v]
	Defending Forces HELD		
	CV: 547->1087.9Eng Val: 14 Comm HQ: I Corps GL Karl Adolf Hollidt	Show DetailsOdds 1 : 1.37Exit	
	CV: 870->1494.9Fort: 2.18->2.02 Comm HQ: 27th Army GA Georgy Zhukov		

- 20) With an encirclement out of the question, I then moved forward a mobile division still having enough MP to do an attack and the attacked the retreated stack of infantry with two divisions, totaling 20CV. This attack failed, as several more Soviet reserves were activated.

Axis Forces Attacking: XXXXI Panzer Corps -16% 1st Panzer Division (76) 601st SP Lt Flk Bn (3) 702nd SP Inf Gun Coy (1) X Corps 290th Infantry Division (95) I/818th Gun Battalion (0) 846th Howitzer Battalion (1) [v]		1 of 176,31 - Clear(Slavkovichi) - ClearTurn:5 1941-07-17 Forces Engaged ATK: men 32939, art 332, afv 137 DAM: men 49, art 5, afv 9 LOST: men 218, art 5, afv 6 ATK: ftr 11, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 DEF: men 50604, art 730, afv 56 DAM: men 106, art 3, afv 0 LOST: men 555, art 6, afv 3 DEF: ftr 35, bmr 11, utl 0 LOST: ftr 3, bmr 3, utl 0		Soviet Forces Defending: 22nd Army 132nd Rifle Division (23) 19th Rifle Division (25) 233rd Heavy Mortar Battalion (0) 8th Army -30% 229th Rifle Division (18) 47th Crps Art Rgt (0) 228th Heavy Mortar Battalion (0) [v]	
CV: 177->183.6Eng Val: 2 Comm HQ: X Corps G Christian Hansen		Defending Forces HELD Show DetailsOdds 1.18 : 1Exit		CV: 82->155.5Fort: 0.00->0.00 Comm HQ: 22nd Army GL Maksim Purkaev	

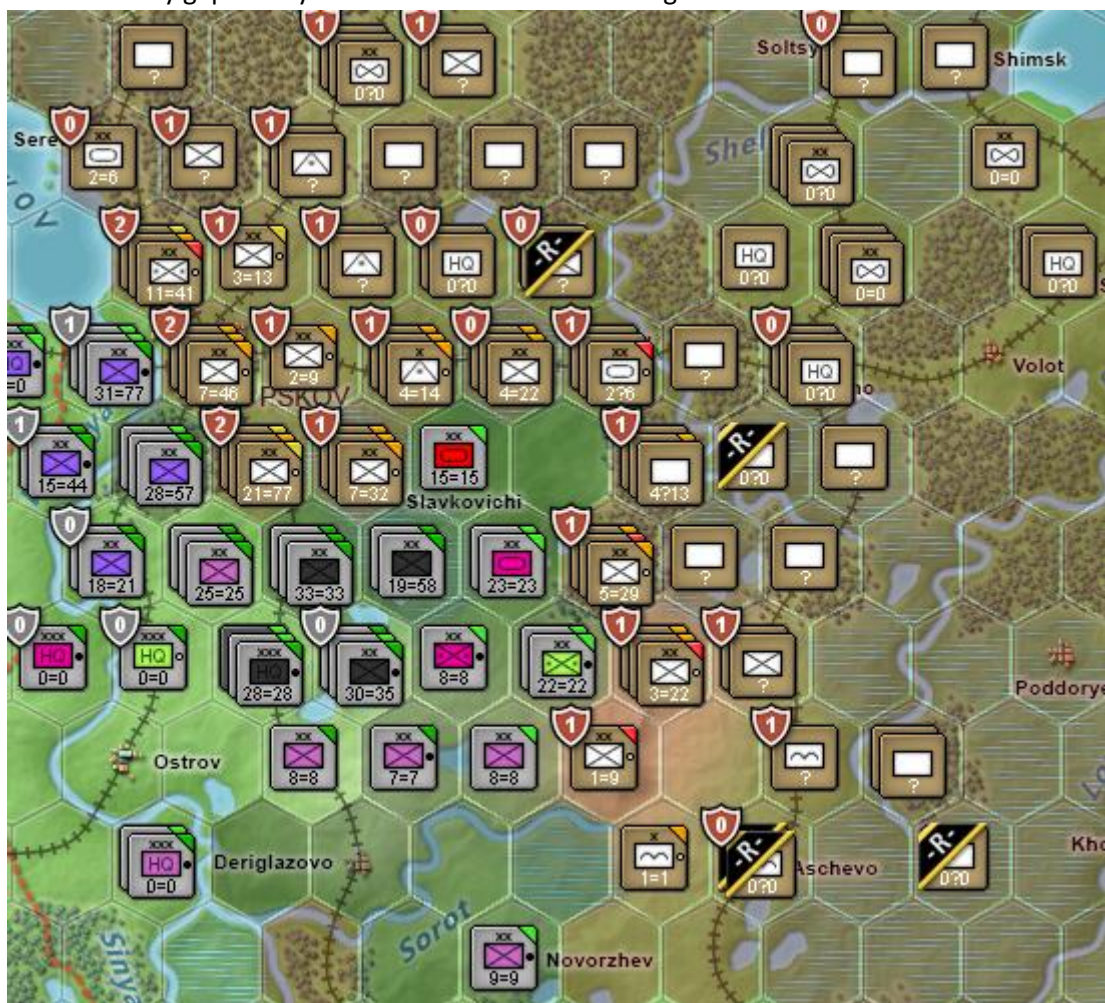
- 21) I then did another attack on the stack, this time with the Panzer division next to it, that was still capable of attacking with 17CV. This attack also failed to the Soviets due to activation of three reserve units.

Axis Forces Attacking: LVI Panzer Corps 8th Panzer Division (163) II/61st Artillery Battalion (1) II/23rd LW Mix Flk Bn (3) VIII Fliegerkorps 4 Bf 109E-3 4 Bf 109F-2 [v]		< 2 of 2 76,31 - Clear(Slavkovichi) - Clear Turn:5 1941-07-17 Forces Engaged ATK: men 17184, art 191, afv 215 DEF: men 70014, art 996, afv 66 DAM: men 26, art 1, afv 10 DAM: men 52, art 3, afv 0 LOST: men 59, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 514, art 10, afv 1 ATK: ftr 8, bmr 0, utl 0 DEF: ftr 38, bmr 11, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 1, bmr 3, utl 0		Soviet Forces Defending: 22nd Army 132nd Rifle Division (22) 167th Rifle Division (12) R 19th Rifle Division (23) 387th Howitzer Regiment (1) 545th Crps Art Rgt (1) 457th Crps Art Rgt (1) 538th Howitzer Regiment (1) [v]	
CV: 167->349.6 Eng Val: 0 Comm HQ: LVI Panzer Corps G Erich von Manstein		Defending Forces HELD Show Details Odds 1.66 : 1 Exit		CV: 94->209.8 Fort: 0.00->0.00 Comm HQ: 22nd Army GL Maksim Purkaev	

- 22) With the previous attacks having failed, I then settled for ending my actions in this area with another attack on Slavkovichi, hoping to take the city and force the Soviets to abandon their positions on Pskov. For this attack, I used my remaining two mobile divisions under von Manstein, moving them into the swamps before the attack. This massive attack finally took Slavkovichi for the Germans.

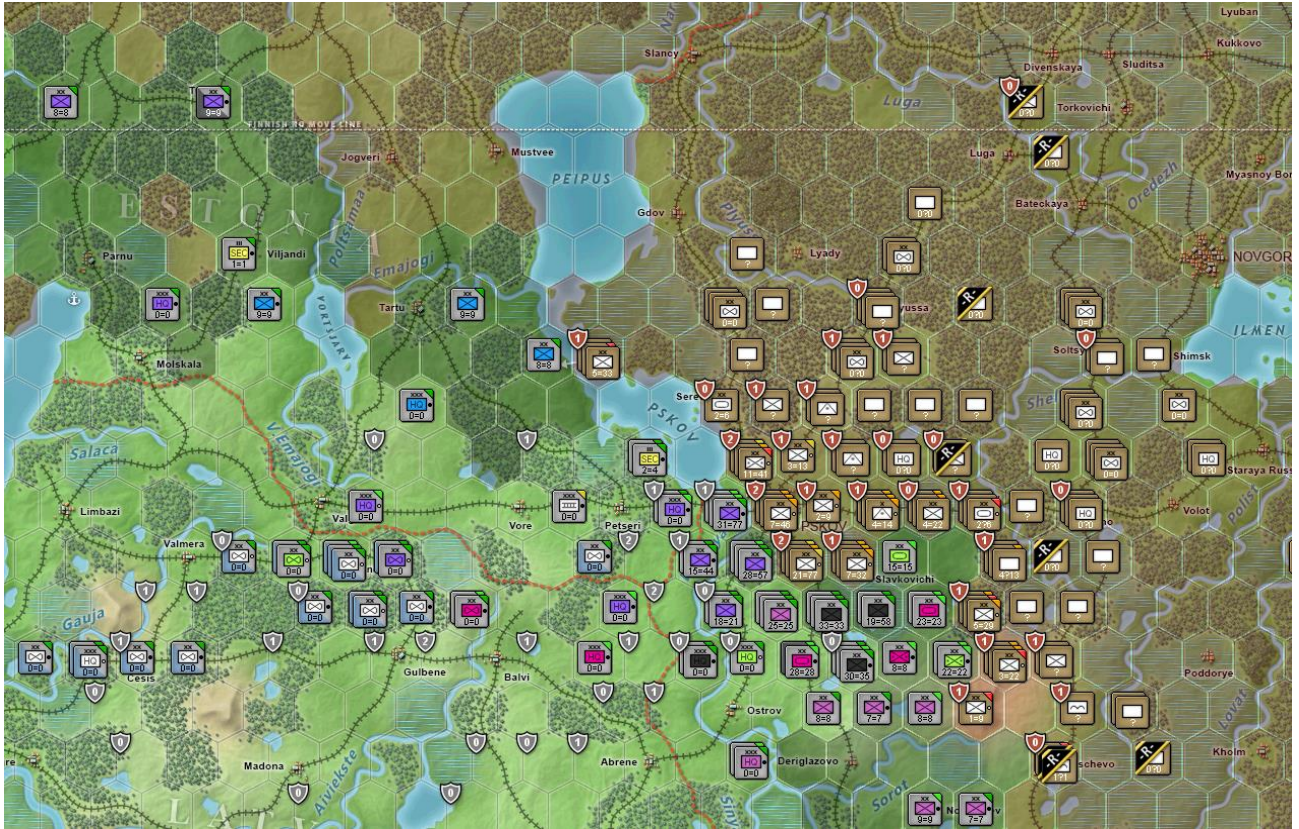
Axis Forces Attacking: LVI Panzer Corps 6th Panzer Division (152) Totenkopf SS Mot. Div (124) II/61st Artillery Battalion (1) 92nd LW SP Lt Flk Bn (7) 603rd SP Lt Flk Bn (7) 616th Jagdpanzer Battalion (10) VIII Fliegerkorps [v] CV: 301->618.1 Eng Val: 6 Comm HQ: LVI Panzer Corps G Erich von Manstein	< 3 of 3 76,31 - Clear(Slavkovichi) - Clear Turn: 5 1941-07-17 Forces Engaged ATK: men 36390, art 370, afv 298 DEF: men 42236, art 562, afv 32 DAM: men 3, art 5, afv 9 DAM: men 84, art 7, afv 0 LOST: men 80, art 3, afv 3 LOST: men 2125, art 28, afv 7 ATK: flt 10, bmr 0, utl 0 DEF: flt 37, bmr 12, utl 0 LOST: flt 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: flt 2, bmr 0, utl 0 19th Rifle Division RETREATED 229th Rifle Division ROUTED 132nd Rifle Division ROUTED Odds 8.66 : 1 Show Details Exit	Soviet Forces Defending: 22nd Army 132nd Rifle Division (22) 19th Rifle Division (23) 457th Crps Art Rgt (1) 207th Crps Art Rgt (1) 8th Army -30% 229th Rifle Division (16) 524th Heavy Gun Regiment (1) [v] CV: 65->71.3 Fort: 0.00->0.00 Comm HQ: 22nd Army GL Maksim Purkaev
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- 23) As the final action of this sector, I then reordered my units, moving them to optimize supplies and fuel and to fill any gaps in my front. This led to the following situation.

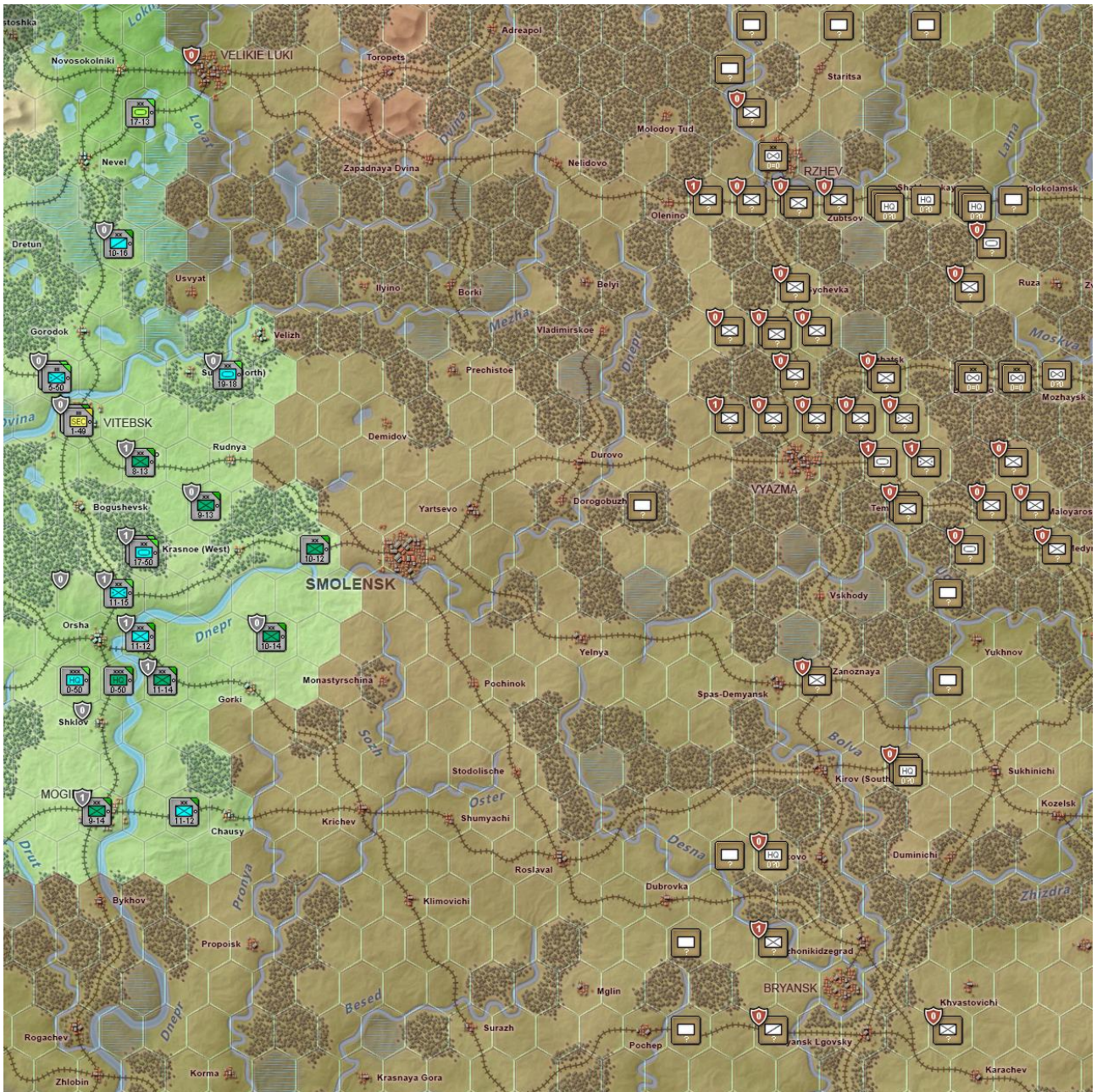


In the far north, The Finns have moved forward, and managed to encircle a total of three Rifle divisions and one Security Regiment.

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



The Center



Situational Assessment

In the center, there is still a lot of distance between the advancing Germans and the Soviet defenses in front of Moscow. As the forward German units are also around 25 hexes in front of their nearest rail heads, it will be a few turns before I can make effective contact with the Moscow defense ring.

Planning

I will simply continue to move my units forward, except for one Panzer Corps that will be sent back north. I have come to believe it was a mistake to pull it south, as there are simply no Soviets to fight here. If it had remained in the north, I would have the option of either using or not using it.

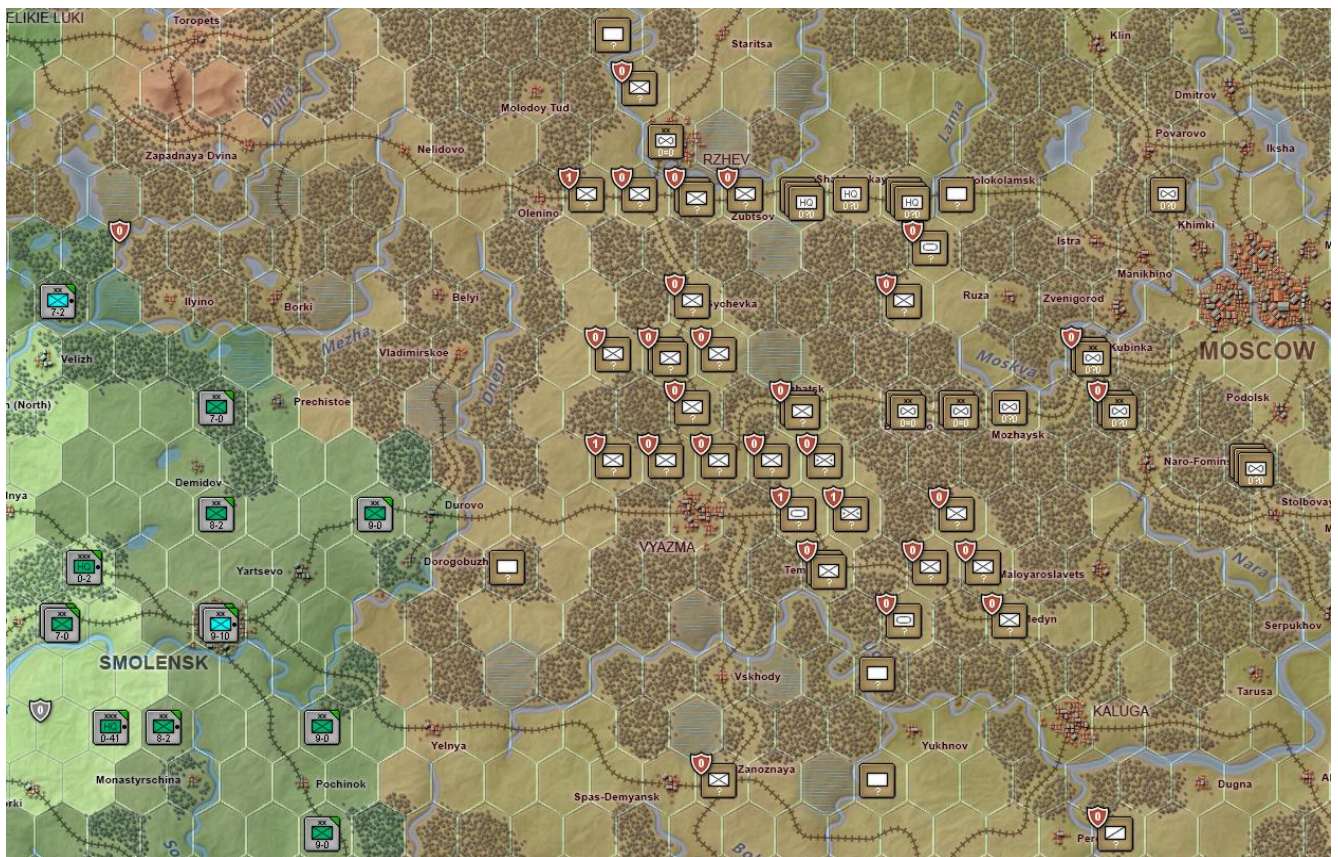
Execution

I have taken Smolensk and Velikie Luki this turn and my forward infantry divisions will be making contact with the first defenders of Moscow come next turn. Behind my infantry divisions, I have several Panzer formations stocking fuel for when the fighting begins in earnest.

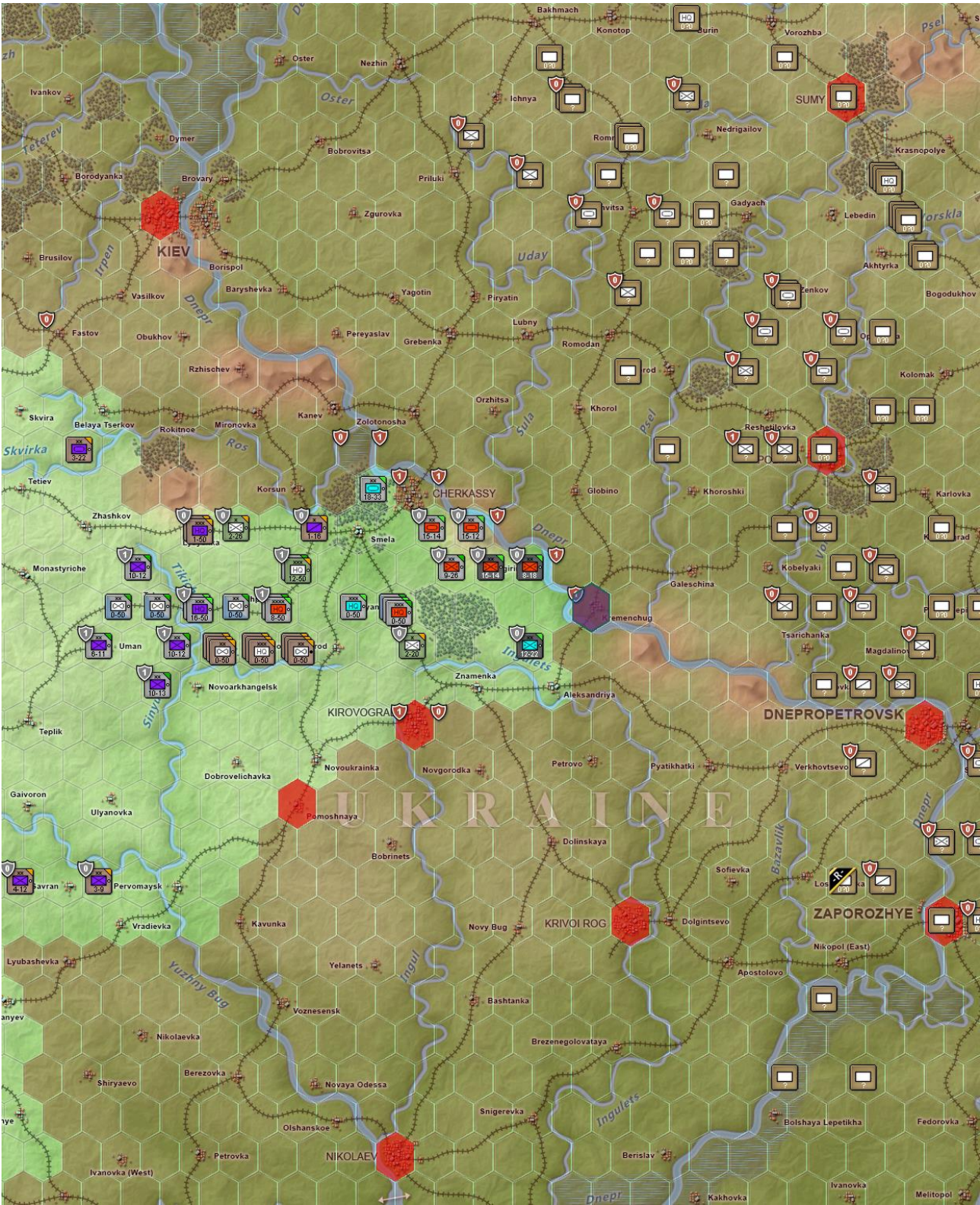
While historically, the area around Smolensk saw some really heavy fighting in 1941, the capture of the city this turn is completely “on track”. Historically, the city fell on the 16th of July.

In order to help flying supplies to the forward infantry, I have reassigned three airfields with Ju88's to the sector of the front. Maybe this will turn out to be an efficient use of my Ju88 bombers.

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



The South



Situational assessment

The Soviets have pulled back from the Dnepr this turn, and it looks very unlikely that I will be able to catch any stragglers by moving forward fast. As the Dnepr is at a supply distance of around 23 hexes from my nearest railhead, there seems to be little purpose in advancing fast towards Poltava.

The Soviets have evacuated all industry from Poltava and the vehicle production from Kharkov this turn.

Planning

As I have one Panzer Corps with plenty of fuel, I will try to catch a few Soviets, or at least convince STAVKA it is a good idea to keep pulling back. In order to do this, I will push forward one Panzer Corps, trying to get a better “feel” for the Soviet positions and then move the III Panzer Corps forward in order to catch whatever I can.

The remaining Panzer Corps will be moved back to where I expect to be able to do another “10 MP HQBU” next turn in order to get it fully filled with fuel.

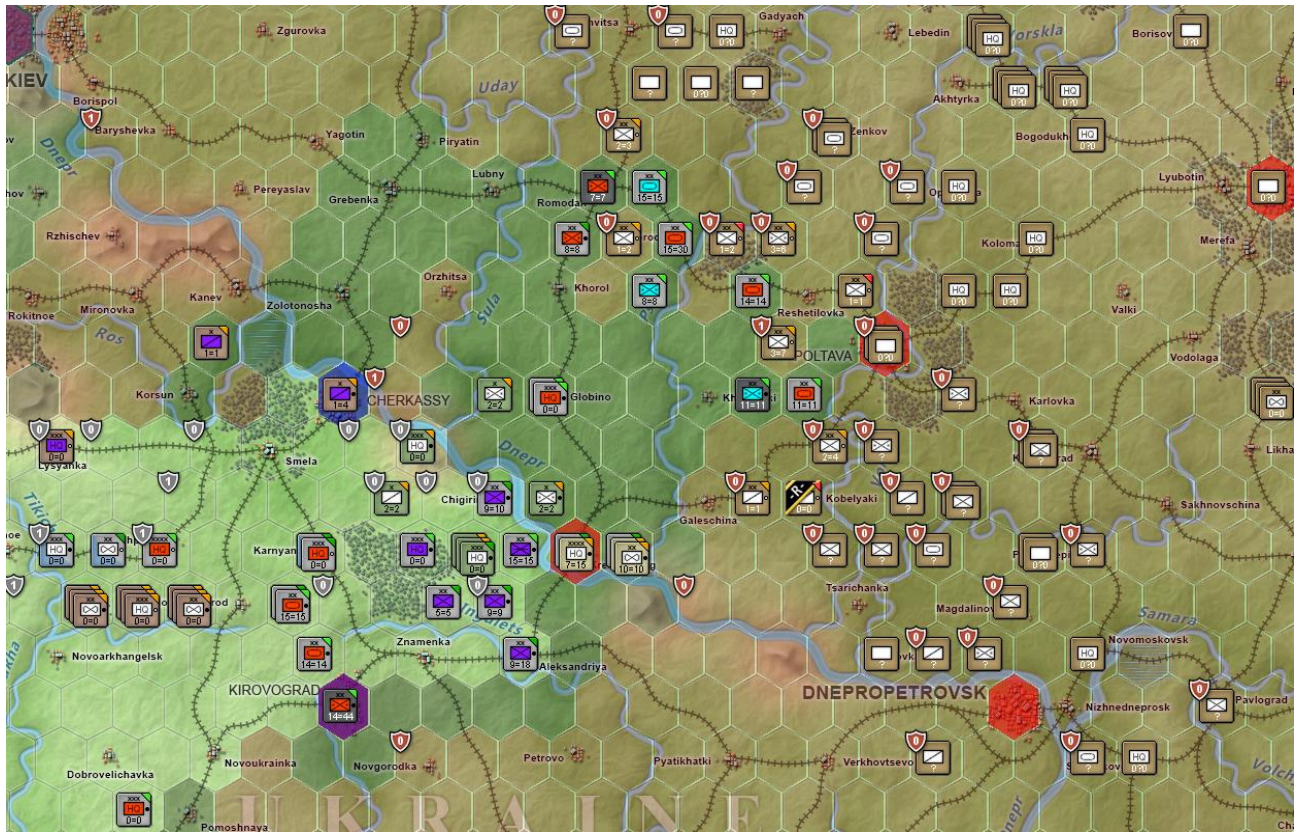
Execution

Moving my Panzers forward, I have managed to encircle one Rifle division and place a second in a position where it will likely be encircled on a future turn. The downside is that the Soviets may sacrifice a Cavalry Brigade in order to displace several of my HQ's, but if they do, that Cavalry Brigade will be effectively dead. Regardless of any Soviet attack in the area, it is unlikely that I will be receiving much fuel for my forward Panzers.

In the air, much to my surprise, I located a stack of three airfields with one one Air Group of SB-2 Rcn's on it. Being far from any fighter support, I did two bombing runs with my Rumanians killing at least 12 ready SB-2 Rcn's.

Finally, it looks as if Kiev is about to fall.

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



Conclusion

Another difficult turn, this one. HardLuck is, by far, the most skilled Soviet opponent I have played so far.

In the north, the attack on Leningrad has devolved into a simple slugging match that seems to just soak up my attacks. In the center, it will be at least another turn before I can make the first attack on the Moscow perimeter. In the south, the Soviets are pulling back while evacuating their industry and I am unable to catch many of their divisions.

In the air, I have had one really bad ground combat support leading to a total of 47 Axis planes lost since my last turn. The good news are that only one Bf109F has been lost. On the other hand, the Soviets have lost 273 aircraft, including 27 SB-2 Rcn's.