

Strategic overview

Turn 1: Strategic Considerations

Returning from hibernation, it is about time I get back into the habit of playing WitE. I will be playing SparkleyTits (whom I will refer to as "Sparkley" from now on) in a modified game, and I will control the Axis.

Looking over the debate on the forums, it seems to me that the game setup currently favors the attacker quite a bit, with HQBU's and far reaching breakthroughs. The modifiers Sparkley and I have agreed upon, seeks to avert this, while not simply nerfing the late war Axis into oblivion. We have set the following modifiers:

Morale is set to 105 for both sides. This should favor the weaker units, as routs will more often turn into retreats and attrition losses will be smaller than otherwise. Currently I deem this to be a benefit for the Soviets, the Rumanians and the late war Germans.

The Fortification modifier is set to 110, which should speed up fortification by about 10%. This is obviously a benefit for whomever is on the defensive, as digging in should help quite a lot.

Finally, the logistics modifier is set to 80, and I believe this to be the deciding modifier. With only 80% supplies and fuel reaching the units (including from HQBU's), this should severely limit the scope for deep game ending breakthroughs.

Having reviewed the Sparkley vrs Stef AAR, it seems I am in for a very tough fight (even if I am the Germans). Sparkley is a very advanced player, who knows the ins and outs of the game very well. He also seems to be a "slow paced" player (no insult here, I am one myself), who spends the time needed for optimizing each turn. I believe this to be another key factor, as each turn is made up of literally hundreds of small decisions, and the side making the fewer mistakes will win eventually. Taking the hours needed for each turn is simply an immense advantage against "fast paced" players (I believe Stef is one such??). Imagine a chess game between two master players where one player gets four hours to conclude the game, while the other gets 45 minutes.

The AAR will be open for all, and published with a five turn delay (probably treating the muddy period as one turn).

Situational analysis

As this is the first turn of the game, I really don't want to spend time analyzing the strategic situation, but would rather spend time talking about what I wish to do about it.

Ground Strategy

On the ground, I will try for an extended Lvov pocket (never done one before), and a standard advance in the center and the north. I will be moving two Panzer Corps south from AGC and another one north.

Air Strategy

In the air, I will do my best to deliver a knockout punch to the Red Army Aviation. I have found that a pretty solid way of doing this by applying the following method:

- 1) Pick a level bomber airfield and air transferring the bombers out. This will leave you with an empty airfield with plenty of fuel and ammunition
- 2) Move the empty air base close to the front, once it approaches a Soviet airfield you wish to target.

- 3) Air transfer a dive bomber and fighter group onto the airfield.
- 4) Now start bombing away from this position.
- 5) Repeat as best possible.

The first turn Rumanian air attacks

Starting out with the Rumanian attacks on nearby airfields, the first attack proved to be a nasty little shock, if it was a sign of things to come over the remaining part of the turn.

Axis Forces Attacking:	Forces Engaged	Soviet Forces Defending:
11 Bf 109E-3(R) 5 IAR 37 24 IAR 39	ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0 ATK: ftr 11, bmr 29, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 3, utl 0	21 MiG-3 3 I-16 Type 24 44 : 54 MiG-3 50 : 54 SB-2 5 : 5 Pe-2
airfield was BOMBED		
Show Details		Exit

I proceeded with the attacks without much thought (as there was little else to do). The general result was as expected, although the Rumanians did take heavier losses than I had expected.

Splitting the Rumanian airforce into three groups depending on operational range, I finished off Kishinev airfield, followed by the ones near Odessa, and finally started hitting the airfields in the crimea with my Rumanian long range bombers.

At the end of “the Rumanian air phase” the results were, that I had destroyed almost all aircraft at Kishinev and Odessa, and given some losses to the fighters in the Crimea. The cost for this was some nine Rumanian aircraft (incidentally, the MiG-3 seems to be somewhat adept at shooting down IAR 39’s).

Air Losses	----- Permanent Losses -----			Recent Battle & Non-Combat Casualties	----- Permanent Losses -----	
	BATTLE	TURN	TOTAL		Current Turn	Total
He 111H-3(R)	0	1	1			
He 112B(R)	0	1	1			
IAR 39	0	6	6			
IAR 80A	0	1	1			
I-153	0	55	55			
I-153BS	0	26	26			
I-15bis	0	24	24			
I-16 Type 18	0	94	94			
I-16 Type 24	0	205	205			
I-16 Type 29	0	19	19			
MiG-3	0	194	194			
SB-2	0	106	106			
SB-2 Rcn	0	37	37			
Pe-2	0	29	29			
				AXIS LOSSES		
				Fighter	0	2
				Tactical Bomber	0	6
				Level Bomber	0	1
				Air combat Losses		5
				Flak Losses		0
				Lost On The Ground		0
				Operational Losses		4
				TOTAL LOSSES	0	9
				SOVIET LOSSES		
				Fighter	0	194
				Fighter Bomber	0	397
				Tactical Bomber	0	26
				Level Bomber	0	135
				Strategic Recon	0	37
				Air combat Losses		6
				Flak Losses		0
				Lost On The Ground		767
				Operational Losses		16
				TOTAL LOSSES	0	789

The North

Planning

In the north, I will try to do a pretty standard attack this turn. My objectives are to capture Riga, push a couple of Panzers across the Daugava and to encircle the maximum possible amount of Soviet troops. I will also do what I can in order to advance my rail lines to Raisenai (by using two FBD units).

Hoping to get as many encircled Soviets as possible, I will do my moves in a “sweep”, where I start with the southernmost Panzer Corps moving north, moving units of this corps to capture as many towns (rally points) as possible. I will then follow up with the coastal assault blocking the ports and taking more towns, before finally moving the main Panzer Corps thrust towards Riga.

In order to achieve these objectives, I will let one of the Panzer Corps from Army Group Center aid in the northern push.

Execution

In general things went according to plan in the north, with one glaring exception: I almost failed to take Riga.

I have a really bad track record with this city, and in this game I moved two full Panzer Divisions against the city only to see the first assault fail, before succeeding in a second attack with my remaining forces.

Axis Forces Attacking (H):	1 of 2 > 57.94 - Urban(Riga) - Clear Turn:1 1941-06-22	Soviet Forces Defending:
XXXXI Panzer Corps 1st Panzer Division (76) 6th Panzer Division (83) 616th Panzerjager Battalion (1) 62nd Pioneer Battalion (6) 52nd Pioneer Battalion (8) 702nd SP Inf Gun Coy (0)	Forces Engaged ATK: men 33143, art 266, afv 467 DAM: men 218, art 2, afv 17 LOST: men 108, art 0, afv 5 ATK: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	Baltic Military District -10% 22nd NKVD Rifle Division (130) STAVKA 2nd PVO AA Regiment (9) 5th PVO AA Battalion (0) 29th PVO AA Battalion (2) 144th PVO AA Battalion (1)
[v]	Defending Forces HELD	Baltic Air Command [v]
CV: 174->448.3 Eng Val: 2 Comm HQ: XXXI Panzer Corps G Georg-Hans Reinhardt	Show Details Odds 1.67 : 1	CV: 142->268.2 Fort: 2.10->1.08 Comm HQ: Baltic Military District GP Fyodor Kuznetsov
	Exit	

In the air, I have moved one Luftwaffe airfield forward and done Air Transfer onto it in order to strengthen the airfield bombings done throughout the turn.

Below is an image of the situation at Riga, as I give the turn to Sparkley.

The Center

Planning

In the center, I plan to do the Bialystock pocket using two Panzer Corps. I will try to make the pocket solid, but I have little experience playing the Axis, and there is certainly a chance that I will fail.

Execution

In the center, things went more or less according to plan.

Unlike my previous games, I have simply encircled Brest Litovsk, leaving a Tank Division and two Rifle Divisions in the city.

Further north, the Bialystock pocket has formed, and I am somewhat confident it will hold (although I have certainly been proven wrong before).

Once again, I have sent a Luftwaffe airfield forward with the attacking forces, and I now have two airfields within ten hexes of Minsk. These airfields have been used to demolish the local Red Army Aviation forces, and once my attack moves are over, they can be used as staging bases for long range bomber attacks on the airfields around Vityebsk, Smolensk and Bryansk. Those airfields hold a lot of Soviet long range bombers, as well as a significant portion of Su-2 tactical bombers.

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

The South

Planning

In the south, I will attempt to do the Lvov, Kovel and Rovno pockets. I would like the pockets to hold through the Soviet turn, but this is not imperative. What is imperative is capturing as many Soviet formations as possible.

Execution

Beginning the attacks with a hasty attack against a fortified region, I had another surprise, as I really expected those units to always collapse when attacked by a full division (even a low strength one).

Axis Forces Attacking (H):	1 of 2 > 51.79 - Clear(Ivanich) - Clear Turn: 1 1941-06-22	Soviet Forces Defending:
LII Corps 101st Lt Inf Div (17)	Forces Engaged ATK: men 11887, art 138, afv 0 DAM: men 74, art 1, afv 0 LOST: men 73, art 1, afv 0 ATK: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	5th Army 2nd Fortified Region (7)
CV: 17->50.9 Eng Val: 0 Comm HQ: LII Corps G Kurt von Briesen	Defending Forces HELD Odds 1.60 : 1 Show Details	CV: 7->31.8 Fort: 2.10->1.10 Comm HQ: 5th Army GM Mikhail Potapov
	Exit	

Continuing with the attacks, the first airfield attack was against the airfield west of Rovne, where I moved an airfield close, transferred a fighter and a dive bomber gruppe as well as a dive bomber stab, and then proceeded to attack from a two hex distance. The results seems to vindicate the tactic of using air transfers to get close to the opponent.

Axis Forces Attacking:	< 3 of 3 57.78 - Clear(Lutsk) - Clear Turn: 1 1941-06-22	Soviet Forces Defending:
29 Bf 109F-2 36 Ju 87B	Forces Engaged ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0 ATK: ftr 29, bmr 36, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	8 I-153 12 I-16 Type 24 2: 2 I-153 6: 9 I-16 Type 24 1: 5 I-153BS
	airfield was BOMBED Show Details	
	Exit	

In order not to subsequently move an airfield with functioning units on it, I then proceeded to use these aircraft to destroy the airfields at Lvov.

Continuing the attacks, I soon arrive at the Tank divisions blocking the way to Tarnopol, and find that the opposition is certainly there. Note that Detection Level is 10 on the 8=19 Tank division in the woods.



Being uncertain of the result of a combat (due to my long hibernation??), I decide to do an overkill attack with two full Panzer Divisions, halfway expecting a complete overkill. Watching the attack progress in a detailed report, I began to realize that the impressive CV of that Tank division was not so impressive after all. Once the Soviet Tanks started dying off in great numbers, the CV of the division as a whole would drop drastically. On a side note, the Soviet air force taking part in the ground attack was large enough to bypass my few fighters (setting was 20), although with limited results. However, I decided to up my ground support escort setting from 20 to 40 because of this battle.

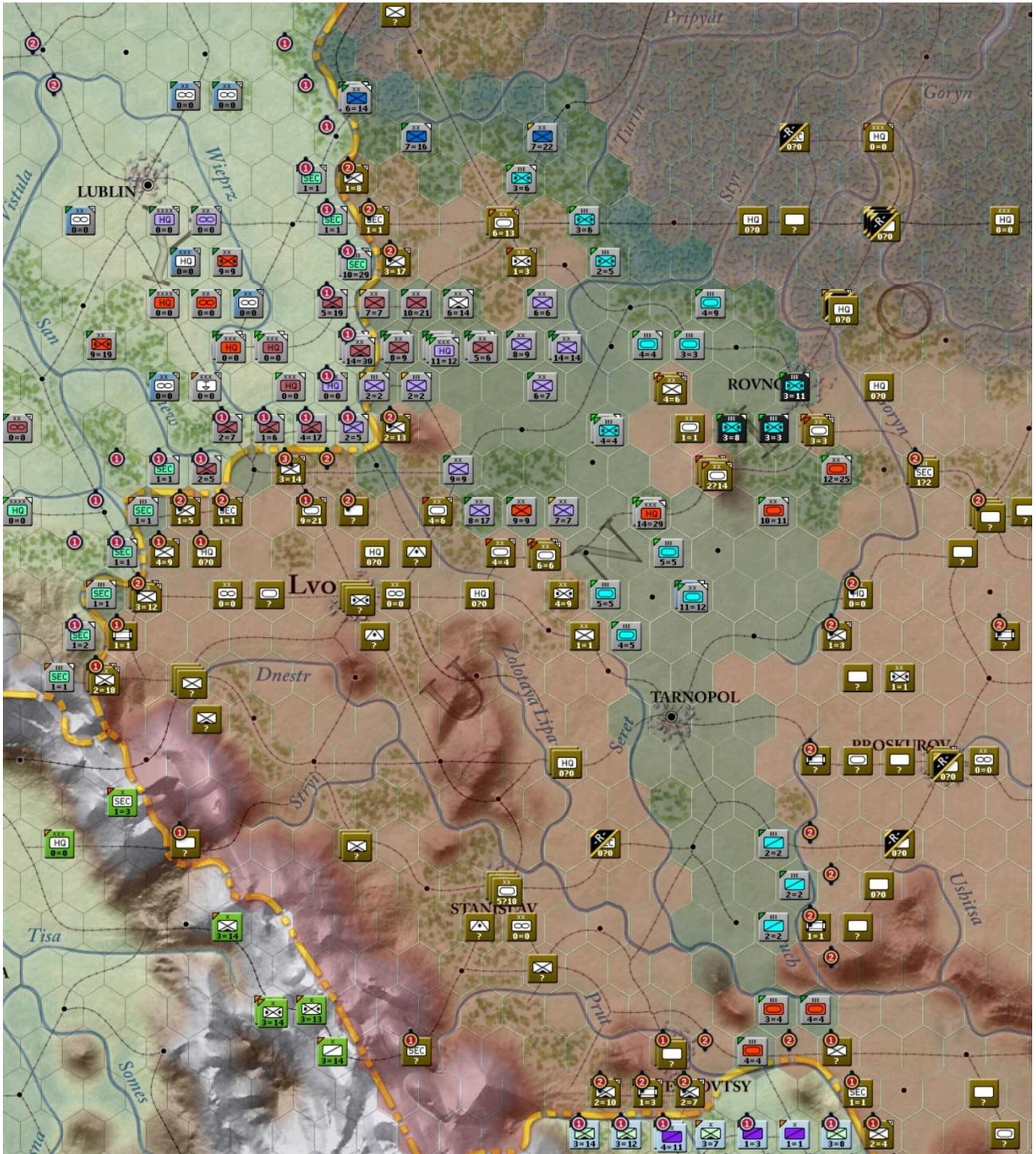
Axis Forces Attacking:	1 of 1 58,82 - Light Woods - Clear Turn:1 1941-06-22	Soviet Forces Defending:
XXIV Panzer Corps 3rd Panzer Division (176) 4th Panzer Division (167) II/69th Gun Battalion (0) II/42nd Howitzer Battalion (1) 616th Howitzer Battalion (1) 45th Pioneer Battalion (8) 255th Pioneer Battalion (6)	Forces Engaged ATK: men 35345, art 324, afv 435 DAM: men 139, art 4, afv 13 LOST: men 102, art 1, afv 14 ATK: ftr 13, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 DEF: men 7619, art 42, afv 408 DAM: men 104, art 1, afv 24 LOST: men 1126, art 5, afv 187 DEF: ftr 26, bmr 13, utl 0 LOST: ftr 2, bmr 0, utl 0 34th Tank Division RETREATED	8th Mechanized Corps 34th Tank Division (149) 2nd Motorcycle Regiment (1) Kiev Air Command 11 I-16 Type 18 15 I-16 Type 24 10 Su-2
CV: 363->927.0 Eng Val: 12 Comm HQ: XXIV Panzer Corps G Leo Geyr von Schweppenburg	Show Details Odds 13.28 : 1 Exit	CV: 150->69.8 Fort: 0.00->0.00 Comm HQ: 8th Mechanized Corps GL Dmitry Ryabyshev

As my advance reached the outskirts of Tarnopol, I repeated the airfield attacks by moving the airfield forward, assigning another fighter and dive bomber gruppe to it, and proceeded to "clean" the Tarnopol, Stanislav and Proskurov airfields of soviet aircraft. After this was done, the airfield kill/loss ratio was as follows (having done only the Rumanian attacks and the south up to this point):

Air Losses	----- Permanent Losses -----			Recent Battle & Non-Combat Casualties	----- Permanent Losses -----	
	BATTLE	TURN	TOTAL		Current Turn	Total
Bf 109F-2	0	3	3			
Ju 87B	0	3	3			
He 111H-3(R)	0	1	1			
He 112B(R)	0	1	1			
IAR 39	0	6	6			
IAR 80A	0	1	1			
I-153	0	180	180			
I-153BS	0	169	169			
I-15bis	0	24	24			
I-16 Type 18	0	326	326			
I-16 Type 24	0	552	552			
I-16 Type 29	0	19	19			
MiG-3	0	315	315			
Yak-1	0	93	93			
Yak-2	0	15	15			
Su-2	0	100	100			
SB-2	41	201	201			
SB-2 Rcn	0	37	37			
IL-2	0	8	8			
Pe-2	35	74	74			
				AXIS LOSSES		
				Fighter	0	5
				Tactical Bomber	0	6
				Dive Bomber	0	3
				Level Bomber	0	1
				Air combat Losses		6
				Flak Losses		2
				Lost On The Ground		0
				Operational Losses		7
				TOTAL LOSSES	0	15
				SOVIET LOSSES		
				Fighter	0	315
				Fighter Bomber	0	1194
				Tactical Bomber	0	277
				Level Bomber	76	275
				Strategic Recon	0	52
				Air combat Losses		65
				Flak Losses		0
				Lost On The Ground		2025
				Operational Losses		23
				TOTAL LOSSES	76	2113

At this point it was becoming increasingly clear, that did not have the skillset to both secure the large Lvov pocket and create a second pocket west of Rovno. As I really value pocketing the Soviet Tank divisions (due to them having so many vehicles), I decided to go for the Rovno pocket, while also trying to ensure that any breaking of the Lvov pocket would have to use troops moving forward from the east. I am certainly not sure that I have succeeded in this.

Below is an image of the situation in the south, as I give the turn to Sparkley (snapshot taken before moving FBD's and aligning the HQ's properly).



Conclusion

Having concluded all my gground moves, I still had all of my level bombers unused this turn (as planned), so I shifted a few He-111H's forward and began bombing away at the airfields still holding Soviet aircraft. The result of this was a personal record of Soviet aircraft destroyed, although I probably have paid to much in supplies and ammunition for the last ones. In any case, during turn one, I have destroyed a total of 5691 Soviet aircraft for a cost of 51 Axis aircraft. My hope is that the shock inflicted this way will mean that the Soviets will find rebuilding their airforce just a little bit harder.

Air Losses	----- Permanent Losses -----			Recent Battle & Non-Combat Casualties	----- Permanent Losses -----	
	BATTLE	TURN	TOTAL		Current Turn	Total
AXIS LOSSES						
Bf 109E-7/U1	0	1	1	Fighter	0	14
Bf 109F-2	0	12	12	Tactical Bomber	0	8
Do 17Z-2	0	2	2	Dive Bomber	0	5
He 111H-4	0	4	4	Level Bomber	0	24
Hs 123A	0	1	1			
Ju 87B	0	5	5	Air combat Losses		18
Ju 88A	0	17	17	Flak Losses		10
He 111H-3(R)	0	1	1	Lost On The Ground		0
He 112B(R)	0	1	1	Operational Losses		23
IAR 39	0	6	6			
IAR 80A	0	1	1	TOTAL LOSSES	0	51
I-153	0	692	692	SOVIET LOSSES		
I-153BS	0	356	356	Fighter	0	689
I-15bis	0	122	122	Fighter Bomber	0	2866
I-16 Type 18	0	763	763	Tactical Bomber	0	540
I-16 Type 24	0	938	938	Level Bomber	0	1353
I-16 Type 29	0	68	68	Strategic Recon	0	241
I-16 Type 5	0	168	168	Transport	0	2
MiG-3	0	689	689			
Yak-1	0	114	114	Air combat Losses		158
Yak-2	0	111	111	Flak Losses		7
Yak-4	0	19	19	Lost On The Ground		5468
LaGG-3	0	1	1	Operational Losses		58
Su-2	0	163	163			
SB-2	0	713	713	TOTAL LOSSES	0	5691
SB-2 Rcn	0	111	111			
Ar-2	0	130	130			
IL-2	0	21	21			
Pe-2	0	148	148			
DB-3B	0	57	57			
IL-4	0	226	226			
TB-3	0	79	79			
Li-2	0	2	2			

On the ground, I have almost met my first turn objectives. I have failed to occupy Riga however, and I am still a little uncertain as to the situation in the south. Sparkley will probably open up the Rovno pocket, as it is unlikely he can evacuate the divisions partly enveloped, but I am hoping that he will not find the MP to open up the large LvoV pocket.

In any case, compared to my previous openings as the Germans, this has gone pretty well.