

Strategic overview

Turn 2: Strategic Considerations

The Soviets have broken both the northern pocket and the large Lvov pocket this turn.

It also seems that the amount of MP's available to units may be seriously reduced this game (due to less supplies reaching the units), at least if I am to judge by the amount of MP given to several of my Infantry Divisions. Some of my Infantry Divisions have received no more than 11 or 12 MP's this turn, and we are only at turn 2!

In the air, I have made a grave error based on ignorance. Last turn, I finished up setting the Group Range for each of my Air Groups. Doing this, I assumed that this range was set in hexes rather than in miles. The result has been that many of my forward airfields have practically not been defended during the Soviet turn, and the consequent bombing attacks has been costly. Worse, the attacks have left my airfields with large numbers of damaged aircraft, and I will need some time to get back to full operational strength again. All told, I have lost some 36 single seat fighters due to this mistake, and I only produce 13 or 14 Bf 109F-2's pr turn.

Axis Forces Defending:		1 of 2 > 61,54 - Clear - Clear		Turn: 1 1941-06-22	Soviet Forces Attacking:	
		Forces Engaged				
8 : 19	Bf 109F-2	DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0	ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0		63	DB-3B
15 : 36	Bf 109F-2	DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0	DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0		94	IL-4
6 : 9	Ju 87B	LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0	LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0		14	TB-3
17 : 35	Ju 87B	DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	ATK: ftr 0, bmr 171, utl 0			
13 : 39	Ju 87B	LOST: ftr 18, bmr 0, utl 0	LOST: ftr 0, bmr 2, utl 0			
17 : 37	Bf 109E-7/U1	airfield was BOMBED				
17 : 34	Do 17Z-2					
[v]						
		Show Details		Exit		

Finally, the Soviets have been conducting a lot of air missions this turn, both bombing airfields and ground units, as well as conducting recon missions. Some of the unopposed Soviet bombing attacks seem to have reduced the morale of several of my Panzer Divisions by quite a bit also.

The map is a hexagonal board game map of Eastern Europe, showing the Baltic Sea, major rivers like the Dnieper, Dniestr, and Prut, and cities including Riga, Vilnius, and Kyiv. The map is overlaid with a hex grid and various game components like unit markers, rail zones, and terrain features.

Situational assessment

The Soviets are establishing their main line of resistance around Pskov, much as expected. There appear to be few units out in front of this defensive line (snapshot above taken after recon missions). The defense is backed by significant Soviet airforces, with short range bombers and I-Type fighters behind Pskov and some long range bombers based south of Lake Ilmen.

Further south, the smaller pockets at Kaunas still hold, entrapping three Rifle Divisions, a Motorized Division, an NKVD Regiment, an airfield and two HQ units. The defensive value of these units is dwindling fast.

At Riga, the Soviets have broken my encirclement of Courland, and in turn cut off the two Panzer Divisions that have taken the city.

Finally, I have a couple of FBD's repairing the rail line towards Riga.

Planning

Pushing some Infantry divisions north to reseal the pocket and get closer to tangling with the Pskov defense is a quite obvious "must do" this turn.

I will also be pushing my Panzers up towards Pskov, while providing aircover by placing an airfield close to the Daugava river and Air Transferring a couple of Bf 109F-2 units onto it.

Further south, I will begin reducing the pockets at Kaunas, hoping to free up some divisions for further attacks, while also capturing some Soviet equipment.

Finally, I will obviously continue building my rail line towards Pskov, while also branching off towards the Daugava river and Daugavpils (the future main rail line heading for Moscow).

Execution

I am pretty happy with progress in the north this turn.

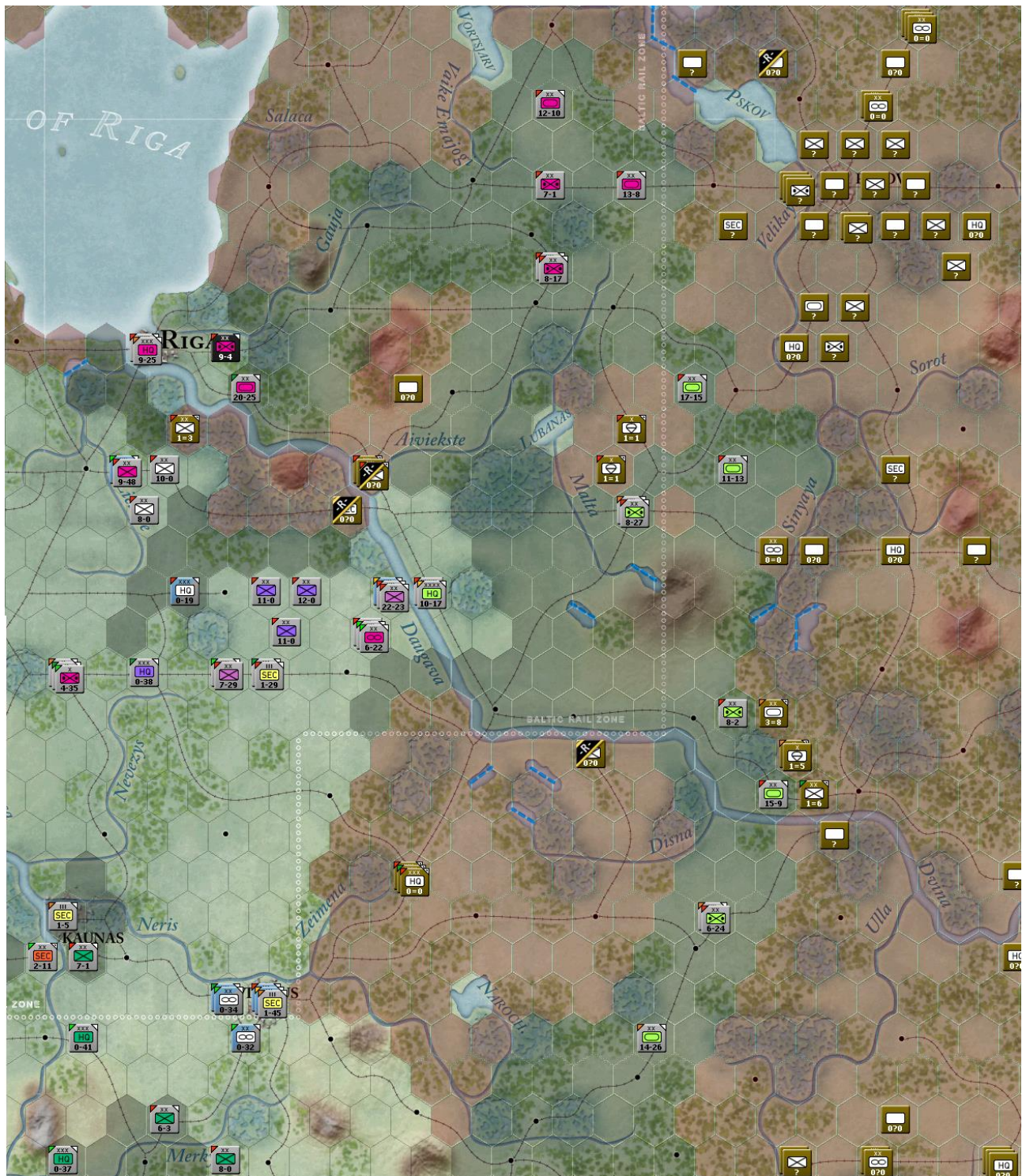
I have pushed my Panzers forward towards Pskov, as intended. I also encircled a few units in the process, although none of particular value. In the process, I have placed one Panzer Corps in position to strike towards Velikie Luki over the next turns, giving me some extra operational freedom and forcing the Soviets to divide their defensive strength.

Meanwhile, one small Panzer Corps is hanging back near Riga, saving up on fuel in order to be able to better attack over the coming turns.

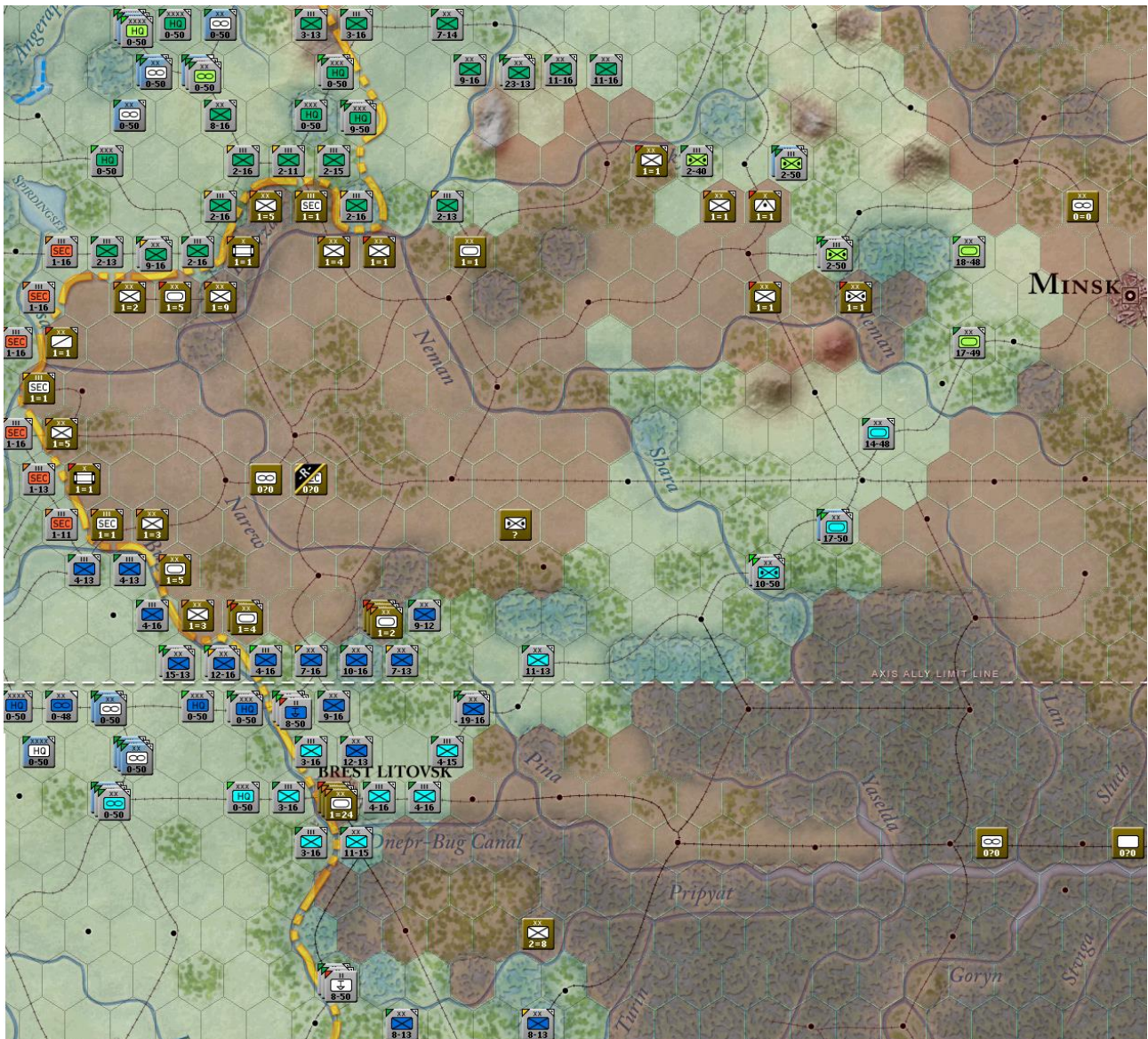
The Soviet units in west Baltikum has been reencircled, this time without hope of reprieve (unless they can use a broken port to avoid their doom), and I have destroyed two pockets around Kaunas.

Finally, my rail lines are progressing nicely in the area, and I am now more than half way to Riga.

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



The Center



Situational Assessment

In the center, the Soviets have pulled back to Mogilev and Vitebsk, leaving Minsk undefended. They have also done a series of ground attacks and ground bombings against my divisions, taking advantage of the fact that the Luftwaffe did not fly during the Soviet turn. Those attacks has led to few casualties.

Is also seems that the Soviets wish to hold out in Brest Litovsk, as they have been air lifting in supplies for the defenders.

At the division between center and south, there is one strong (2=8) Soviet Rifle Division frantically trying to get back to safety through the Pripjet Marshes. By using two of my own divisions, it should be possible to encircle that division this turn, probably ensuring its demise

Planning

In the center, I am faced with a proper decision:

- 1) Should I attack forward towards the Berezina and the Dnepr? If I do so, there will be little infantry support available for a considerable period of time and supplies will be very scarce, as I have no rail lines advancing in this direction.
- 2) Should I attack north from Minsk towards the area west of Vitebsk. If I do so, I will actually shorten my supply lines, as the Baltic rail line will be branching off towards Moscow in this area. I will also find it easier to shift forces between the north and the center.
- 3) Should I consolidate my position, take Minsk and then wait for the infantry to catch up before moving on.

I have decided doing a combination of 2) and 3), as I fear simply moving all Panzers north will lead to the Soviets pushing forward their forces, forcing me into a fight of attrition by infantry in the area around Minsk.

Behind all this, I will begin the reduction of the Bialystock pocket by attacking the weakest encircled units and also those farthest to the east, using the available infantry.

Furthest to the south, I will simply leave two divisions encircling Brest Litovsk and move to intercept the Rifle Division trying to disengage through the marshes.

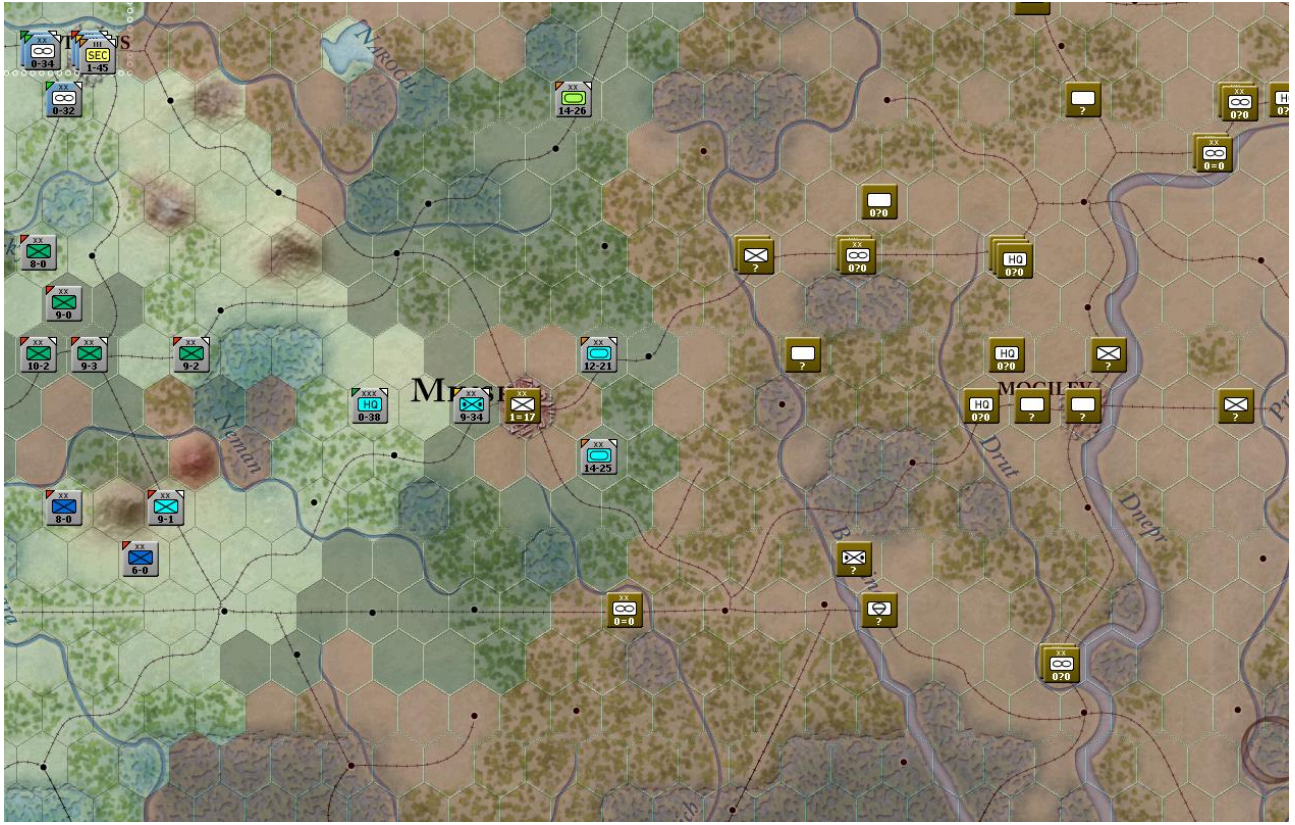
Execution

Moving a Panzer Corps north towards the Dwina has encircled a large piece of empty land (one broken Rifle Division and a few HQ inside), while also pushing up next to the river and connecting with the northern Panzer Corps.

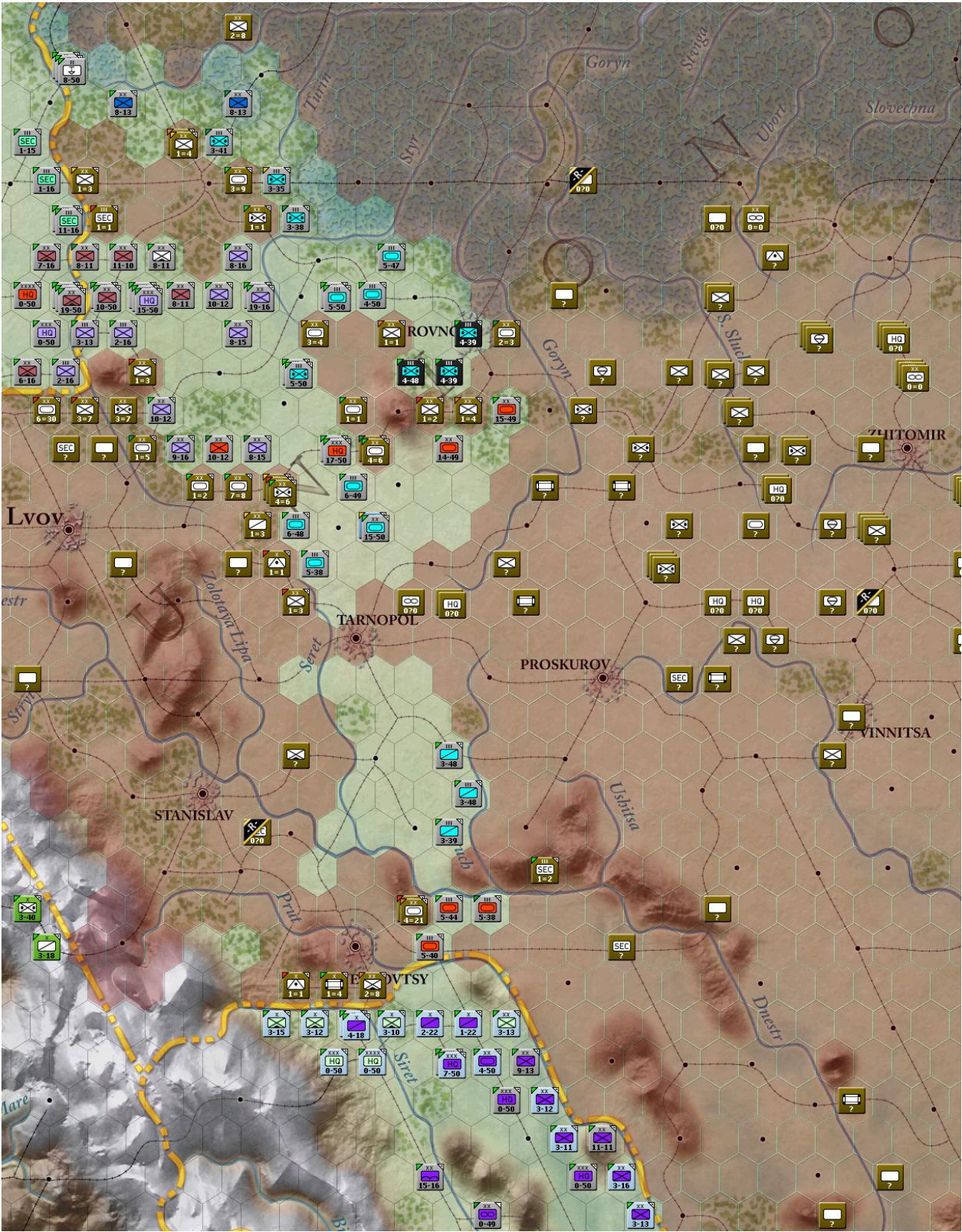
Meanwhile, at Minsk, it turned out the the Soviets have left behind a Rifle Division to hold the city. This surprised me, as I would not have done so myself in Sparkleys shoes. The Rifle Division is simply bypassed by my Panzers and left for the soon-to-arrive infantry to finish off. I do not believe holding Minsk for one or two turns validate the sacrifice of a Rifle Division. The chance is there that the Soviets will push forward other units to rescue Minsk, but I believe this would be a big mistake, as my Panzers would simply tear through any such units.

Meanwhile, the Moscow rail line is now turning east towards the Daugava, and I have begun constructing a second rail line towards Kaunas (this will be abandoned as soon as the primary line leave the Baltic Rail Zone). The Panzer strikes this turn has ensured that the German FBD's in this area will not run into Soviet combat formation for a while to come.

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



The South



Situational Assessment

The south is an interesting place this turn.

The Soviets have broken the large Lvov pocket, which I am certainly not happy about.

They have also placed a large force in the area west of Kiev, within striking distance of my Panzers. Interestingly, I see several Motorized Divisions in this area, which make for an appealing target. On the downside, I have no rail whatsoever going in the direction of Kiev, so I will need to shift direction on my attack soon enough, if I go in that direction.

Thankfully, the Soviets have left no units opposing the area where I will start the Rumanian rail line, so that leaves some Panzers free from tasks that would otherwise tie them down.

Another plus on my part is the fact that I have three more Motorized Divisions and one Panzer Division activate in the area this turn. While they may lack the movement to play a significant role in the battles this turn, they can certainly get into position for the coming turns, even keeping some fuel for future operations.

The Soviets have conducted a series of attacks with the forces that have no real hope of escaping the area.

Planning

I will start the turn here by eliminating the Kovel pocket in order to free some MP for the units moving forward.

After that, I will conduct an attack on the Soviet units west of river Sluch, hoping to bag another one or two Motorized Divisions. I have no fixed plan for this attack as I begin the movement in the sector, as I am both rather rusty and I need to see how the attacks progress before committing fully to anything.

At the Rumanian border, I will begin moving along the rail lines and repairing along the line through Beltsy.

In the air, I will generally stop focusing on the Soviet airfields already from this turn, focusing instead on ground support.

Execution

The initial destruction of the Kovel pocket ended up costing me more MP than I would have liked. While it is certainly a while since I last have played, I think that the 105 Morale does indeed cause the Soviets to more often make retreats rather than routs or surrenders. That alone should help the Soviet defence at the beginning of a game.

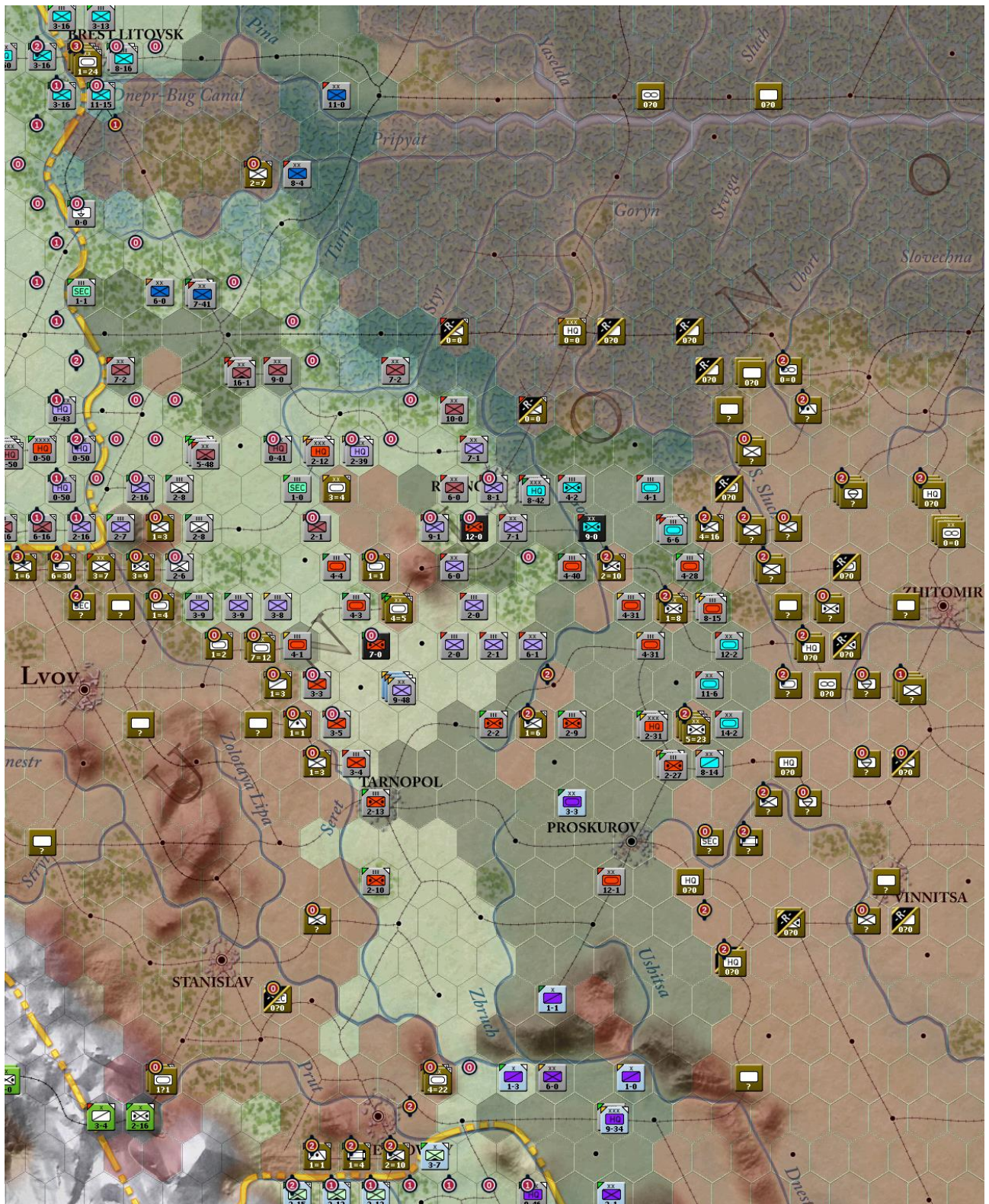
After that the attacks against the units to the east showed that the defensive value of the Soviets is better than I remember. Whether that is due to a lapse of memory or the game settings, I am unable to say. A few heavy battles occurred, and several Soviet units defended much better than I had anticipated.

Axis Forces Attacking: XXIX Corps 299th Infantry Division (75) 858th Howitzer Battalion (1) 2/48th SP Flak Company (1) V Fliegerkorps 24 Bf 109F-2 17 Ju 87B CV: 77->202.5 Eng Val: 2 Comm HQ: XXIX Corps G Hans von Obstfelder	1 of 1 62.79 - Clear - Clear Turn:2 1941-06-26		Soviet Forces Defending: 19th Mechanized Corps 43rd Tank Division (33) 21st Motorcycle Regiment (1) 8 -> GAZ-AAMG 10 -> 37mm Anti-aircraft Gun 12 -> 12.7mm Anti-Aircraft MG CV: 34->36.8 Fort: 0.22->0.00 Comm HQ: 19th Mechanized Corps GM Nikolai Feklenko
	Forces Engaged ATK: men 16921, art 202, afv 6 DAM: men 21, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 40, art 0, afv 0 ATK: ftr 24, bmr 17, utl 0 LOST: ftr 1, bmr 0, utl 0 DEF: men 10455, art 57, afv 272 DAM: men 204, art 5, afv 4 LOST: men 1182, art 10, afv 54 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		
	43rd Tank Division RETREATED Odds 5.50 : 1 Show Details Exit		

However, in the end, I more or less managed to achieve the objectives I had set for the turn. At the beginning of the game, the Germans simply have too many Panzers in the area for a forward Soviet defense, especially with two Panzer Corps moving south.

Further south still, I have moved the local forces forward a little, in preparation for railwork into the Ukraine. I suddenly realized the presence of a rumanian FBD unit, which is a new feature since last I played. This will allow the Axis to deply two FBD units in the south, speeding up the rail advance east quite a bit.

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



Conclusion

This turn, a total of two Rifle Divisions, one Motorized Division and one Tank Division has escaped the southern pockets. I had to conduct a series of attacks against “almost” encircled units in order to free up space for movement, and this led to those units routing out of the pockets. Those units routed tended to take some rather heavy losses in the process.

Axis Forces Attacking:	1 of 1	56.83 - Clear(Brody) - Clear	Turn:2 1941-06-26	Soviet Forces Defending:
	Forces Engaged			
	ATK: men 16372, art 141, afv 180 DAM: men 112, art 4, afv 11 LOST: men 92, art 0, afv 5 ATK: ftr 48, bmr 25, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0			
XIV Panzer Corps	DEF: men 26431, art 189, afv 701 DAM: men 6, art 1, afv 1 LOST: men 6079, art 75, afv 354 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0			8th Mechanized Corps
9th Panzer Division (150)				12th Tank Division (30)
60th Pioneer Battalion (5)				7th Motorized Division (28)
701st SP Inf Gun Coy (2)				15th Mechanized Corps -6%
				212th Motorized Division (17)
▼ Fliegerkorps				
48 Bf 109F-2				14 -> 37mm Anti-aircraft Gun
8 Ju 87B				6 -> 76mm Anti-aircraft Gun
	7th Motorized Division ROUTED 12th Tank Division ROUTED 212th Motorized Division RETREATED			
	Odds 4.36 : 1			
CV: 157->221.9 Eng Val: 6	Show Details	Exit		CV: 75->50.8 Fort: 0.00->0.00
Comm HQ: XIV Panzer Corps				Comm HQ: 8th Mechanized Corps
G Gustav von Wietersheim				GL Dmitry Ryabyshev

On the plus side, I have also encircled several units not previously encircled. This way, four Rifle Divisions, three Motorized Divisions, one tank Division and several minor units has been encircled, most beyond hope of rescue. Moreover, the turn has seen the loss of 2496 Soviet AFV for a cost of 19 Axis ones (including 3 Rumanian ones). I am guessing that the continues loss of vehicle heavy units will impact the transport capability of the Soviets at least until the end of the winter. All told, I now count 15 encircled Tank Divisions on top of the three already destroyed.

For the next turn, I expect the soviets around Pskov to remain stationary, the center to remain quiet and the Soviet forces west of Kiev to beat a hasty retreat towards the Dnepr.

My main concern is still the Luftwaffe fighter wing, which has taken to many losses so far in the campaign. During the German phase, losses were 7 Bf 109F-2's which in itself is not much, but when counting the losses over the previous turn, I need to be careful not to suffer too much attrition.