

## Strategic overview

### Turn 1: Strategic Considerations

Starting a new game as the Soviets playing against Huw Jones. I have no real info on him, except he is a self professed "good" player. The few post I have read of him on the forums suggest he has a good level of insight into the game as well. I hope I am in for a good game.

I personally do not agree with what seems to be the majority opinion on the forums that the axis are the favorites in this game. The arguments I have heard for Axis superiority seems to center around the fact that losing Leningrad and Moscow will cost the Soviets so much manpower, that they will never be able to bounce back. This is often backed by references to games where the Soviets have tens of thousands of tanks and tens of thousands of aircraft sitting idly in their production pools.

Personally, I have a theory that in order to win, the Soviets will need to wear down the Wehrmacht. This can only be done by inflicting losses, and throwing vast amounts of infantry at the German lines one hex at a time is not the way to achieve this. Instead, through using the available hardware correctly, the Soviets will act to slowly strangle the life out of the Axis. In short, while the Axis plays like a viper (strike fast, inject venom and make the adversary collapse), the Soviets will play like a constrictor (begin squeezing, then squeeze a little more and continue to do this until the adversary suffocate). I believe that the all to frequent failures of the Soviets are partly caused by trying to play them as the Axis, and partly by people simply playing them to fast. The game will hopefully let me put my theories to the test.

On the ground, I will describe my initial strategy for defense over the first few turns below. My main focus will be the defense of Leningrad, which I will begin to establish at the very beginning of the game. My intentions are to establish a delaying action around Pskov, and a first line of defense on the Luga while building up my main line of resistance on Leningrad itself. While I do not think this will necessarily hold the city, it will require the commitment of heavy German resources to take the city. Establishing the first real defensive line at the Luga ensures that the Germans are a little deeper into Russia by the time I meet them head on, which should mean that their supply system is under just a little more strain.

Meanwhile, in the center I am going to run, run and then run some more. I intend to establish my first real defense in the area around Smolensk and then let it gradually stiffen all the way to Moscow. This way, the Germans will be at a stiff disadvantage to their supply system once the battle is joined for real. It will also allow me to pour the initial resources north into the defense of Leningrad.

In the south, my main line of defense will be established on the Dnepr River.

I have also done some planning on the Red Air Force for this game. It is no secret that I feel the Red Air Force is one of the main reasons why I feel that the soviets are the favorites in a standard WitE game. If used correctly, I believe they will have air superiority by the end of 1941 or so and this will be able to be used to great advantage over the remainder of the game.

I intend to fly mainly combat support with relatively little pre attack bombing, as the majority of losses are given in combat. I often see the Soviet Air Force used to bomb the German Panzers in order to cause fatigue and a drop in MP. I believe this is a poor use of the bombers, as Panzer MP are determined by the fuel reaching the units and not the fatigue levels of the units. Consequently, I will use my Air Force differently. I realize this will cause tremendous casualties to my air forces, but I hope to gain by it in the other end. My Air Strategy will center around ground combat support. In order to make life more difficult for the Germans, I will also set my ground support levels relatively low, either forcing the Germans not to

concentrate the Luftwaffe in a few battles, or else risking the increased chance of failed air battles when smaller forces are involved.

I will also place a number of Air Fields around Moscow using these as relay stations for Air Groups going to the front. This way, the “cycle” of Air Groups will be “Front line duty” to “National Reserve” to “Relay Stations” to “Front line duty”.

I intend to divide the Air Force as follows.

- 1) The vast majority of Soviet air craft will be set up in Combat Support Groups. The Combat Support Groups will initially be made up in one of three ways:
  - a. Class A Combat Support Groups will mainly consist of four IL-2 Regiments and four Yak-1 Regiments. These are the groups meant to go to the critical Fronts along the line. The idea is to reserve the best aircraft for these units.
  - b. Class B Combat Support Groups will mainly consist of four MiG-3 fighters with four Pe-2's. I still hope for some effectiveness from these Groups, although their effectiveness in the air will be rather limited (the MiG-3 is good at surviving, but terrible at shooting down stuff).
  - c. Finally, Class C Combat Support Groups will consist of I-Type Fighters and SB-2 bombers. This will undoubtedly make up the majority of my initial combat support wings, but the planes are there to be used and will certainly not get less obsolete as time goes by.
- 2) My long range bombers (mainly the DB-3B's and the IL-4's) will be sent to two concentrations of airfields (one east of Lake Ilmen and one behind Kiev) and set to night flying. From there they will support my partisans, fly supplies to encircled units and bomb the Luftwaffe airfields if and when they move.
- 3) My U-2VS will also be set to night flying and placed behind areas of the front of minor importance. Their job will be to bomb away (at night) at the German infantry, inflicting whatever casualties and fatigue they can. Imagine ten such attacks per turn killing just 50 men each. Over the course of two years that will add up to the Wehrmacht losing some 50.000 men lost. By my old experiences against Pelton, this is certainly not unrealistic.
- 4) I will also set up a number of interceptor airfields mainly with LaGG-3 or MiG-3 fighters initially. These fighters are either fast or very mean to bombers and should have some impact at least.
- 5) I will support this by a series of airfields with Recon aircraft and fighter coverage spread out along the front in order to better gauge the Axis intentions.

But without further ado, let's move on to the first turn. This turn has seen some very nice moves by Huw. He has basically done some very good pocketing of Soviet units in all three areas, that (on first glance) seems unbreakable. Huw seems not to focus on getting the “initial Air War record” for downed Soviet planes, but has still gotten a very good score of 4867 for 49 during the first turn.

Preparing my Air Force, I do the following:

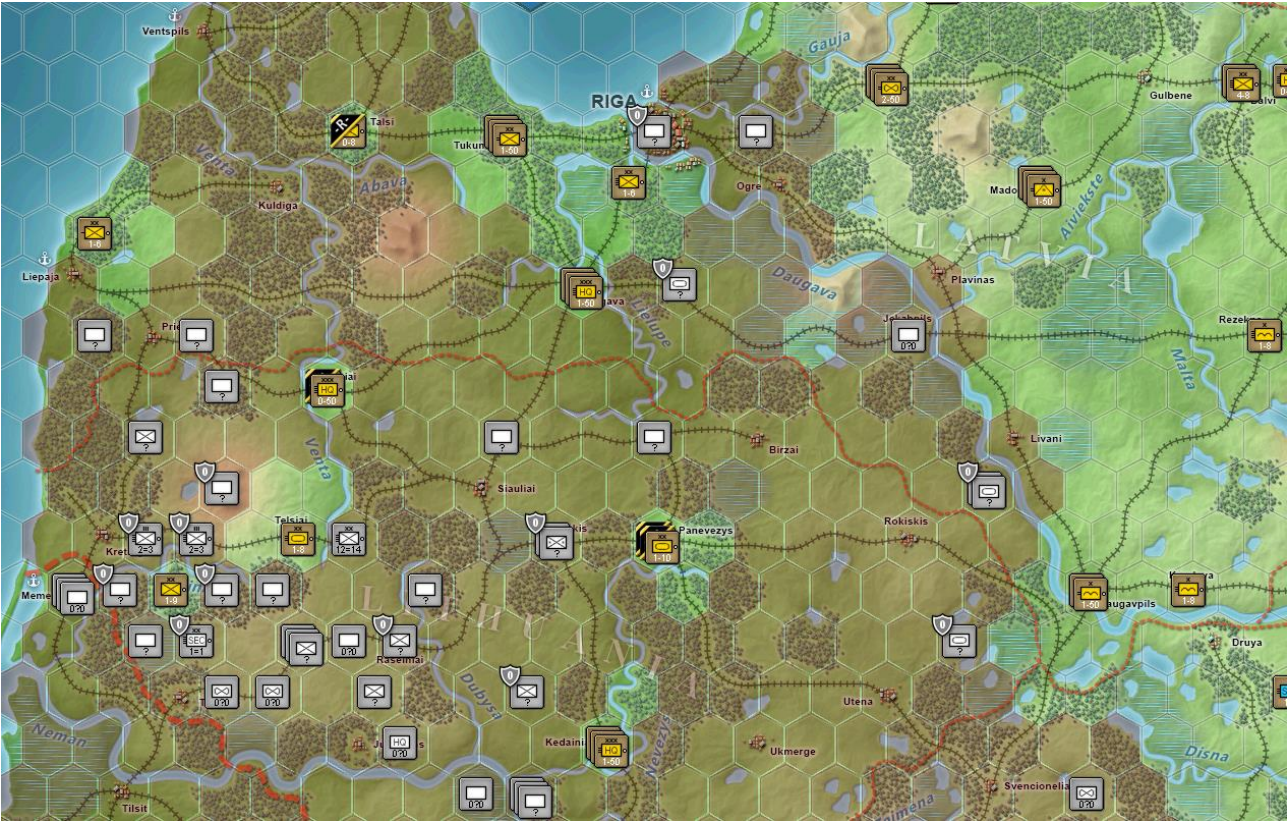
- 1) First, I set all upgrades to “Manual”. I do not intend to spend Admin points changing the types of Aircraft very often, but I do like deciding which Air Groups to switch back to “Auto” and thus have some level of control over the upgrade paths. The exception to this will be some of the ShAP units forming on turn two, that I want to shift to U-2VS.
- 2) Second, I set Replacements to “Off” on all Battalion sized Air Groups. I want my replacements to mainly flow to the larger Air Groups, as I want to spare the Soviets from repeatedly having Air Groups pulling back from missions before they have pushed past the expected screen of German Bf

109 fighters. I may often switch this back to "On" for those Batallions with a high Morale/Experience.

- 3) Third, I pull all Batallions with less than 5 Ready Aircraft back to the National Reserve.
- 4) Fourth, I pull back all Regiments with less than 16 Ready Aircraft and set Replacement to "Off".
- 5) Fourth, I pull back all Air Regiments with Morale less than 45 back to the National Reserve, and set Replacements "Off" on these Air Groups as well.

This has left me with 81 Air Group Regiments and 11 Air Group batallions on Non Frozen Air Bases with which to start the Air War. These forces include two LaGG-3 Regiments, four MiG-3 Regiments, two Pe-2 Regiments, two Su-2 Regiments and one IL-2 Regiments but no Regiments with Yak-1's. The beginning of the Air War is certainly not impressive for the Soviets.

The North



Situational assessment

The Germans have done a well managed first turn in the north, taking Riga and basically destroying or encircling all possible Soviet units beyond hope of rescue. The attack on Riga itself was a well executed hasty attack by two Panzer Divisions, but even so the end result ended up rather close. In any case, Riga fell and the war must go on from there.

1 of 157,34 - Urban(Riga) - ClearTurn: 1 1941-06-22		
<b>Axis Forces Attacking (H):</b> XXXXI Panzer Corps 1st Panzer Division (75) 6th Panzer Division (85) 618th Panzerjager Battalion (2) 62nd Pioneer Battalion (7) 52nd Pioneer Battalion (10) 702nd SP Inf Gun Coy (0)  I Fliegerkorps  CV: 179->406.7Eng Val: 2 Comm HQ: XXXXI Panzer Corps G Georg-Hans Reinhardt	<b>Forces Engaged</b> <div>ATK: men 33143, art 266, afv 467</div> <div>DAM: men 224, art 3, afv 11</div> <div>LOST: men 198, art 0, afv 5</div> <div>ATK: ftr 11, bmr 0, utl 0</div> <div>LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0</div> <div>DEF: men 13432, art 280, afv 27</div> <div>DAM: men 122, art 9, afv 0</div> <div>LOST: men 4718, art 132, afv 11</div> <div>DEF: ftr 29, bmr 22, utl 0</div> <div>LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0</div> <div>22nd NKVD Rifle Division RETREATED</div> <div>Show DetailsOdds 2.09 : 1Exit</div>	<b>Soviet Forces Defending:</b> Baltic Military District -10% 22nd NKVD Rifle Division (235) 402nd BM Howitzer Regiment (3) STAVKA 2nd PVO AA Regiment (5) 5th PVO AA Battalion (1) 29th PVO AA Battalion (0) 144th PVO AA Battalion (1)  CV: 245->193.7Fort: 2.10->0.00 Comm HQ: Baltic Military District GP Fyodor Kuznetsov

Perhaps more worthy of note is the fact that the Germans have not crossed the Daugava to the southeast. The Germans have moved at least two Panzer Divisions up to the river, but have not yet crossed it.

Further south, the German rail repair has begun on the Raisenai line to Riga, and this has advanced some four hexes. Due to really bad Soviet intel, I can not say if the FBD units has actually moved forward to the next hex. If so, it may be placed alone without any combat support (unlikely though that is).

## *Planning*

Among the encircled divisions south of Riga, I will simply move as best I can in order to lengthen the German supply lines. I believe I can create some extended lines for the Germans near Riga, which should reduce the amount of fuel the Panzers will receive next turn. However, the Panzers will have at least one more turn of full movement left, before the fuel begins to run out. Near Raisenai, I will move the depleted Tank division here southeast, hoping to find an unprotected FBD unit. This is unlikely, but I have no better use for that division.

At the Daugava River, I will ship in a lot of Airborne Brigades from the center and the south in order to create delaying positions for the German Panzers before they can reach Pskov. I will mainly try to place these units one hex behind a river, in order to force the EZOC penalties for crossing rivers with EZOC onto the Germans.

At Pskov, I will begin establishing my first line of "real" defense. To do this, I will pull in some units from the center and the south, in order to beef up the defenses a little. However, the mobile units here will instead move northeast towards the defense of Leningrad. Pskov is never meant to be any more than a distraction.

At Leningrad, I will construct a series of Fortified Regions and stuff these with Railroad battalions in order to give them some fortification points. I will also assign Zhukov to the Northern Front and pull some Sapper Regiments back from Hangö. Finally, I will move in several Rifle Divisions by rail in order to begin constructing what will be my close up defense of Leningrad. I realize that posting this here will inform Huw of some of my intentions pretty early, but there is not much here that will not be evident by doing a recon attempt or two by turn five anyways.

In the air, I will establish a few combat support groups behind Pskov and move some Air Bases into position near Leningrad, in order to build up a series of better combat support groups over the coming turns. Further back, I will begin concentrating a few airfields with long range bombers, in preparation for future supply missions into Bialystock and night bombing of German airfields.

## *Execution*

At Raisenai, my Tank Division move did manage to displace something, but I guess that something was a "normal" HQ, as the move has given me information on an FBD unit on the rail hex to the southwest. Other than that, the encircled units have been moved in order to restrict the flow of fuel to the Panzers as much as possible. The Panzer Division in Riga is now at 52MP and 17 hexes from its nearest supply source. Should that division be moved out of Riga, it will need to be replaced by other mobile divisions, or I will begin producing partisans in this area.

In front of Pskov, I have established a zone of NKVD and Airborne units to delay the advance of the Panzers as much as possible. I have generally tried to place my units in locations from where they restrict the German movement and can continue to do so after a retreat. I hope this will cause any German Panzer movement in the area to fall short of reaching Pskov.

At Pskov, I have begun forming up the Northwestern Front which include setting up three Combat Support Air Groups using I-Type Fighters and SB-2 bombers. These will then cover the troops around Pskov, but will not be used to defend the Airborne units out in front.

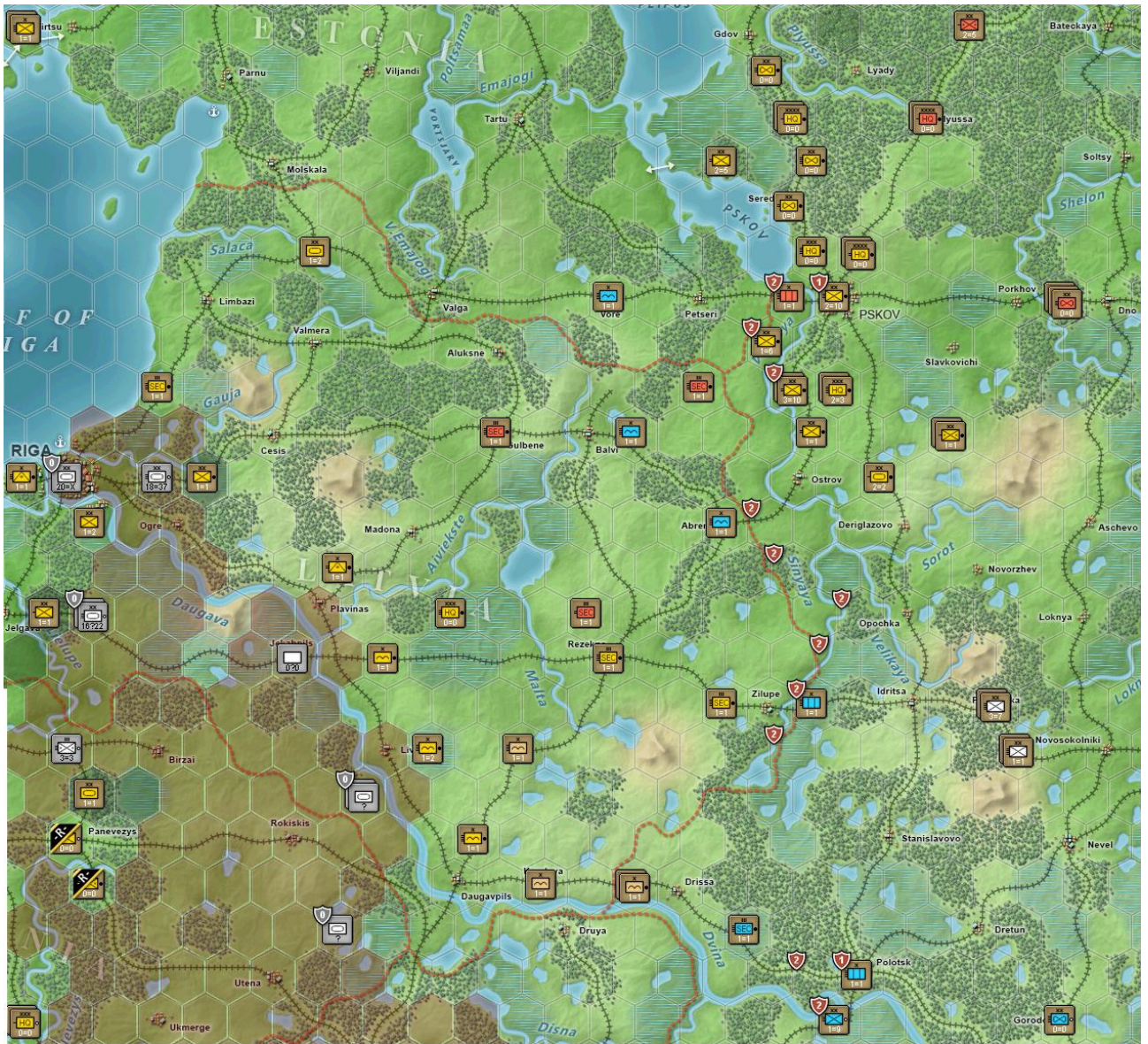


Finally, I have begun constructing the close up defenses at Leningrad, by placing Zhukov in command of the Northern Front and building three Fortified Zones (Osinovets, Shlisselburg and east of Pavlovo) as can be seen below.



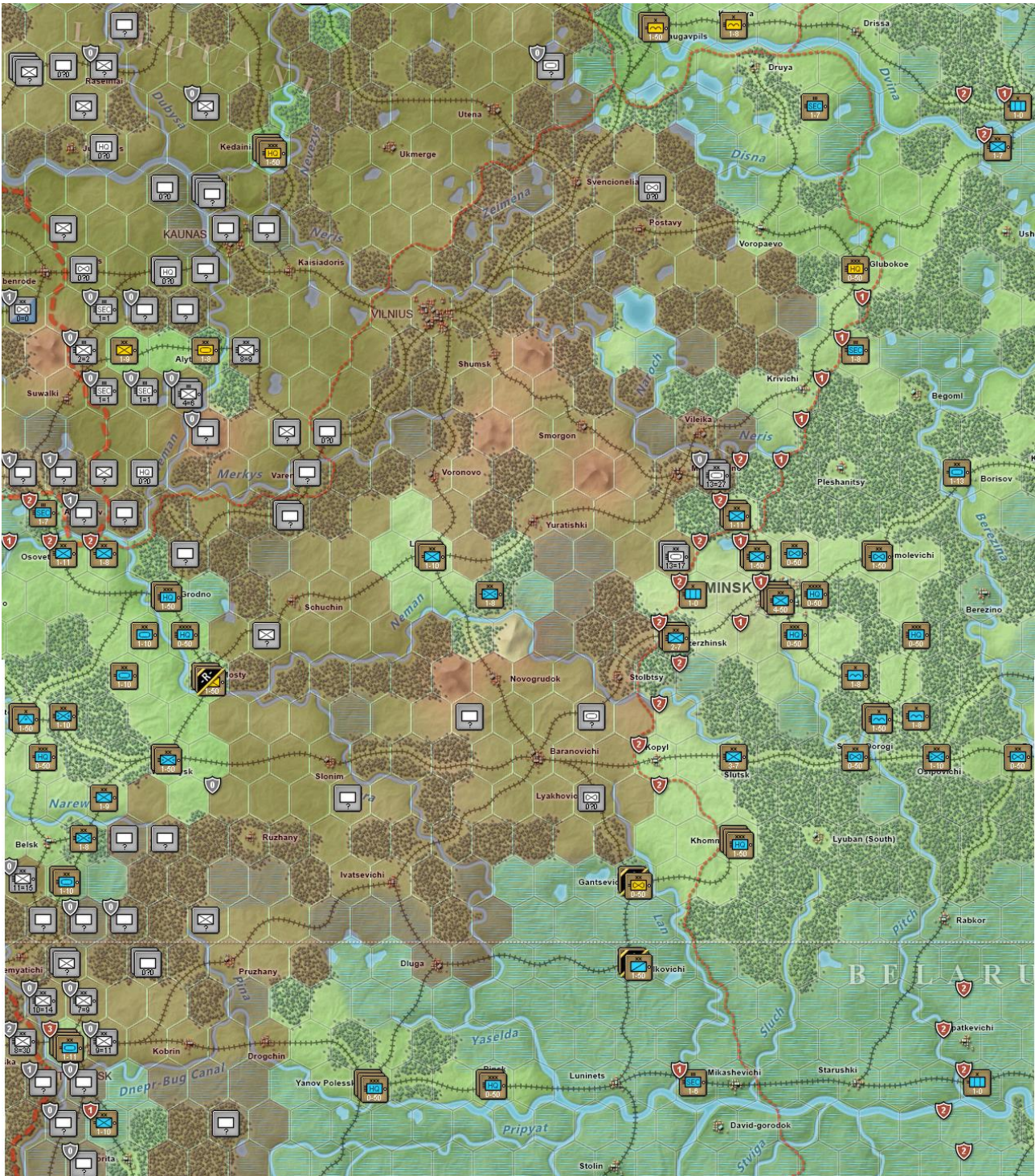
Below is an image of the situation in the north, as I give the turn to Huw.







The Center





### Situational Assessment

In the center, the Germans have done a pretty good job with the Bialystock pocket. While I may open up the eastern “sub pocket” this will not really give me any benefit.

Inside the Bialystock pocket, all Soviet Air forces have been completely decimated, and the Soviet ground units here are not looking good. I have little doubt that the Germans will be able to reduce the pocket in a few short turns, if they decide to do so. If not, they will pay some attrition for waiting.

The Germans have also pushed an FBD unit towards Kaunas, and their Panzer movement as a whole makes me wonder if they do not intend to conduct their main Panzer push in the direction of Moscow, rather than Leningrad. Much like in the north, I spy one German unit of unknown composition on the rail line outside Kaunas. If this is an unprotected FBD, I may push next to it and displace it.

At Minsk, I have several Rifle and Tank Divisions, but all of them are of little worth in a fight, and the wise choice is certainly to get them back towards the Dnepr and Smolensk.

### Planning

In the center, I will run as fast and far as my little Soviet legs can carry me. Practically all the forces near Minsk will pull back towards the Dnepr, taking up positions to delay a German thrust as they do so. The exception is one NKVD Regiment that will move forward to establish contact with the easternmost Bialystock Sub Pocket and the Airborne Brigades which will be railed north to stand in front of Pskov as a delaying action.

I will also move a few weak units into place along the Dvina, in order to make the Germans pay a little extra MP for going in this direction.

Behind the Dnepr, I will begin forming up the airbases meant to support the Western Front and give those airbases a few Combat support Groups.

### Execution

In the center, the Germans have done a few interdiction attacks on retreating Soviet units, but none of them with any real impact on the retreat.

As I was retreating the Western Front units around Minsk, I had one rather amusing situation. A completely irrelevant Corps HQ retreating through the city of Minsk was interdicted here, causing the AA guns in the city to take a few shots at the interdicting bombers and downing two. This is the first Soviet “victory” in the Air war in this game.

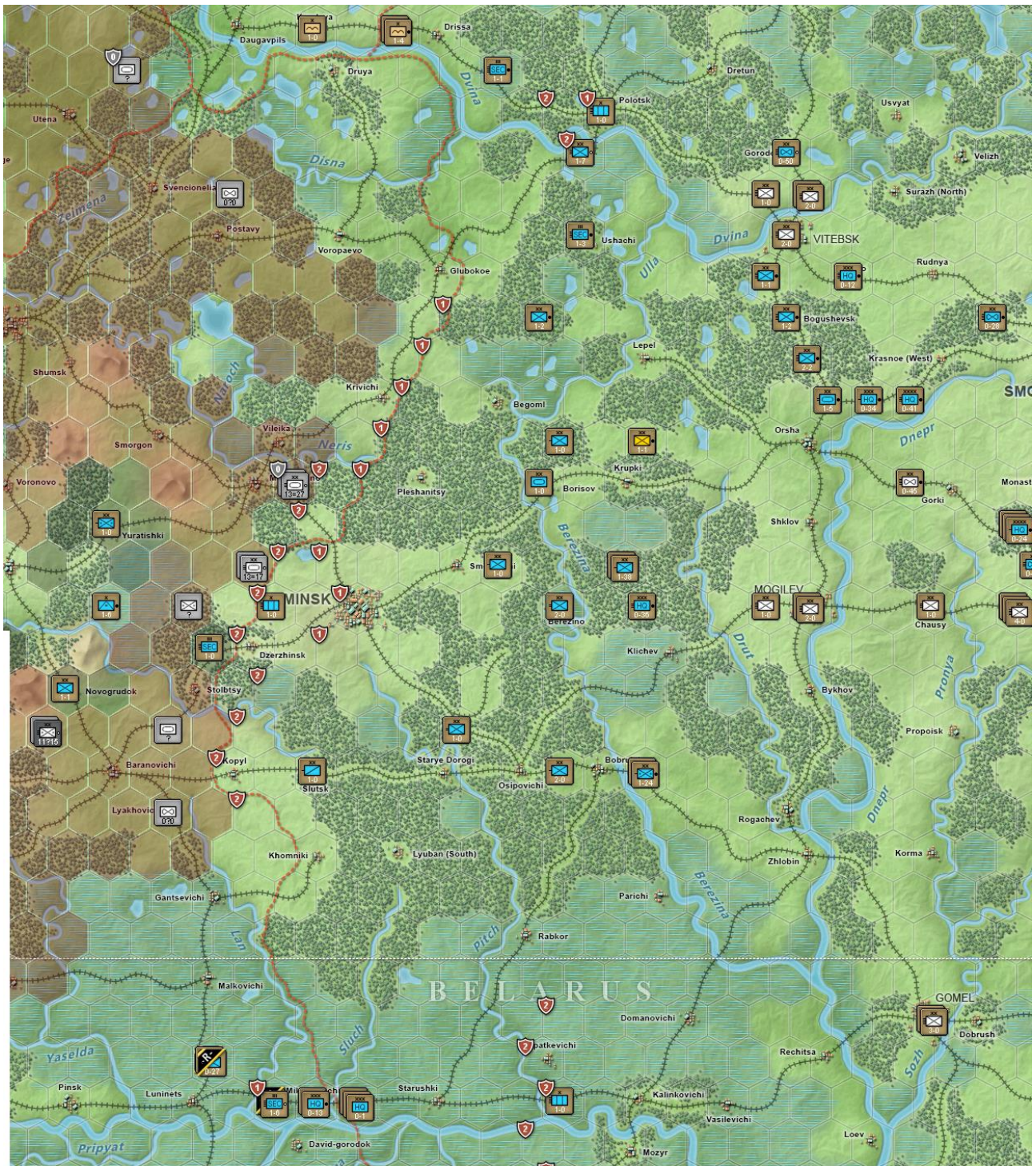
Axis Forces Attacking:		1 of 168,57 - Urban(Minsk) - ClearTurn: 1 1941-06-22		Soviet Forces Defending:	
		Forces Engaged			
		ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0	DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0		
		DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0	DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0		
2	Bf 109E-7	LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0	LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0	15	-> 37mm Anti-aircraft Gun
3	Bf 109F-2			58	-> 76mm Anti-aircraft Gun
4	Bf 110E-2	ATK: ftr 9, bmr 9, utl 0	DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		
9	Do 17Z-2	LOST: ftr 0, bmr 2, utl 0	LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		
		ground forces were INTERDICTED			
		Show Details		Exit	



Behind the front, I have begun concentrating Air Forces of the Western Front east of the Dnepr. From here they will be able to participate in the expected battle for Smolensk.

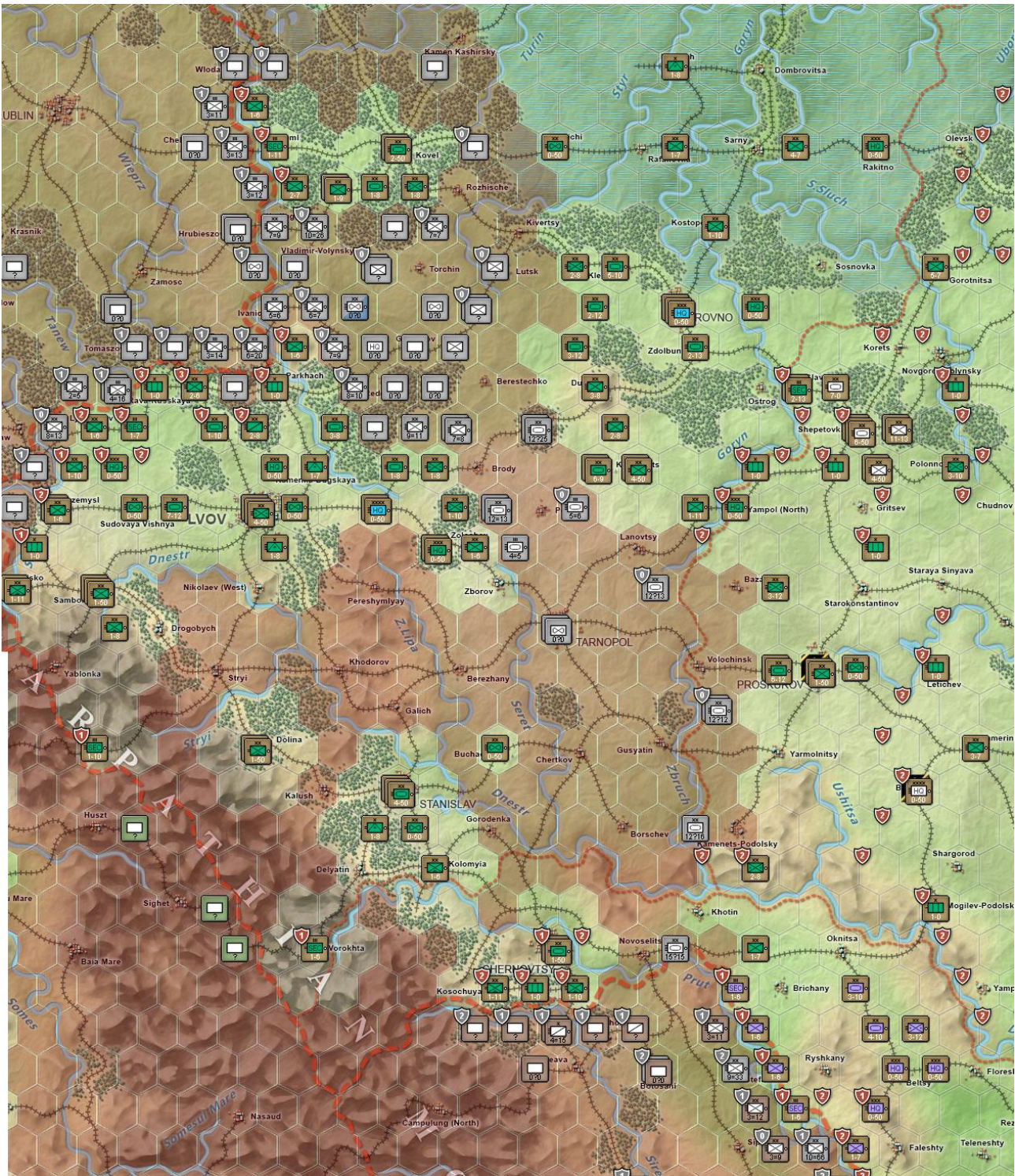
I am somewhat concerned about how far the Germans will be able to push forward over the coming turn, but as I do not really intend to make a strong stand west of Smolensk, my concern is more directed at the possibility of encircled Soviet units than at the loss of important terrain.

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





The South



### *Situational Assessment*

In the south, the Germans have done the Lvov pocket very nicely, and I see no chance of breaking it. Unlike the way I usually attack, the Germans have focused on keeping their Panzers together, signalling they prioritize getting max movement from their attacks come next turn. The Germans have also not attacked in the direction of Rovno. The Soviet divisions left untouched at Rovne are good for a combined 5.000 vehicles or so.

While I may not be able to break the encirclement of the pockets in the area, I may well be able to move my units to diminish some of the supplies reaching the German Panzers. This can be done in both the south and the north, but will require the sacrifice of a few good Soviet Rifle Divisions.

By the looks of the German Panzer placement, it seems that they plan to continue their push towards the Rumanian border at Kishinev, in order to make room for the advancement of the southern rail line. As there is no rail advancement in the area south of the Pripyat Marshes, I think it fair to assume that the southern route is the one planned by the Germans.

### *Planning*

My main move in the area this turn will be pulling back towards Kiev. This will be supplemented by using rail to send some good squads northwards for the close up defense of Leningrad. In order to "prevent" the Germans from disrupting the withdrawal too much, I will also establish some defenses along the rail line from Rumania. This should mean that the German Panzers will need to go here if the Germans want an early start for their rail advances. I realize this will probably cause a few encirclements, but I hope to restrict these to units that have too few MP to escape anyway.

During my recent shortlived game against Sparkley, I noticed that he abandoned the city of Stanislav very early on, letting it revert to German control, due to being inside a pocket. I do not know if this move by Sparkley was deliberate, but I still think it rather smart. The problem for the Germans is that a city with a population of 10 will generate 10 partisan squads per turn until garrisoned by the Axis. Early on, the Axis will find it hard to push troops through to Stanislav, unless they wish to have a mobile unit sitting idly by until the infantry can catch up. I will do the same in this game, and I hope to see some decent artisans forming as a result.

Behind Kiev, I will concentrate a group of long range bombers (using the Black Sea Fleet Air HQ) and I will also establish a few Combat Support Groups to support the fighting once it gets nearer to the Dnepr.

### *Execution*

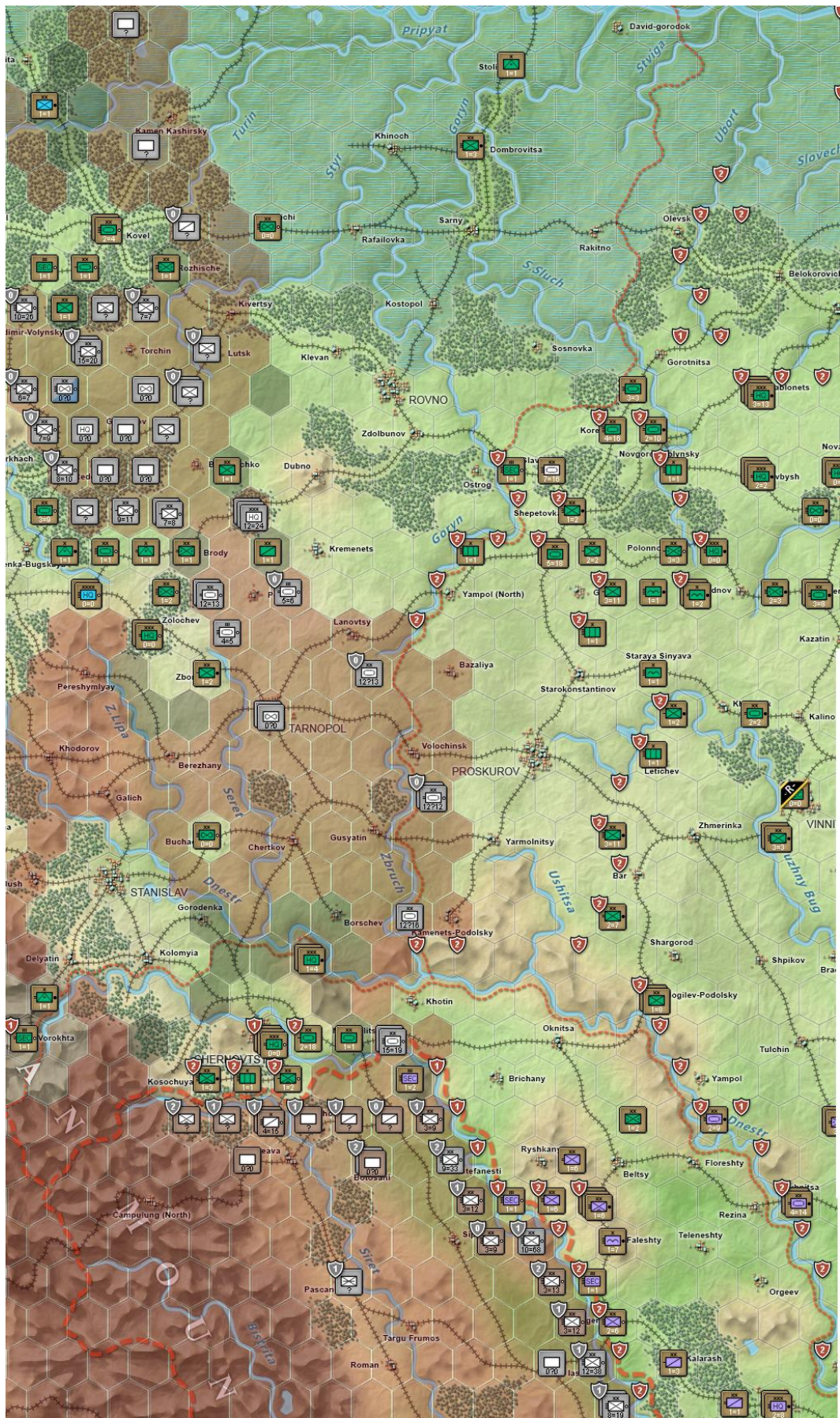
Having sacrificed two Soviet divisions to impose fuel supply restrictions on the advancing Panzers, I have pulled back the remainder of my units towards Kiev. In order to cover the retreat, I have set up three Air Combat Support Groups near Zhitomir with SB-2 bombers and I-Type Fighters. While I do not expect these to be heavily used, if the Germans decide to strike towards Kiev, they will be ready.

What I do expect is that the German Panzers will strike towards the Rumanian border at Faleshty, and I have concentrated some forces along the rail lines here, while setting up a series of other units to block the path of the Panzers should they try to advance on the eastern side of the Dnestr river. I fully expect this area to be heavily involved in fighting next turn, and I have set up some Air assets northwest of Odessa to help out as best they can (range will be a problem though).



Behind the front, I have begun concentrating long range bombers east of Kharkov. Once these have swapped to night flying, they will be available for various missions by turn three.

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





## **Conclusion**

I have not conducted one single attack this turn, but have focused entirely on salvaging the units that could be salvaged. Consequently, losses during the Soviet phase have been very low.

All in all the beginning of the game seems to be rather “traditional” with no real surprises so far.

I am looking forward to see the effectiveness (or lack thereof) the Soviet Air setup. Hopefully, I will be able to begin exchanging the current air frames for some more modern ones shortly.

As my air settings I have chosen to set minimum flight requirements to 40%. Ground support and ground support escort to 120%, Interdiction attack and escort to 80% and intercept to 100%. Over the coming turns, I will adjust from there.