

Chapter 1: Conquest of France

Introduction to the After-Action Report (AAR)

This AAR is of a NetPlay game of Global War played by G (Allies) and S (myself - Axis). We used many of the optional rules, such as: divisions, carrier planes, offensive chits, oil, limited overseas supply, amphibious units, combat and construction engineers, variable reorganization costs, the 2D10 land combat CRT, and [important for G's naval strategy] In The Presence Of The Enemy. Once we had agreed on the optional rules, I started the game and G joined in by simply logging into the Private WIF NetPlay Forum. A couple of mouse clicks later we were underway.

For communicating with each other during game play, we used Skype. It is a free download and worked very well for us. NetPlay as implemented in Matrix Games World in Flames (MWIF) handles all the communications between the two computers, each of which runs its own copy of the program and maintains its own internal copy of the "game state".

When one player moves a unit, NetPlay sends a message to a Matrix Games NetPlay server, which forwards it to the other player's computer. The other player's computer then updates its copy of the game state. This keeps the computers in synch as to what is happening in the game. Because MWIF uses the NetPlay server, neither players' computer needs to act as a 'master' or 'slave'.

There are some phases of the game where the players make decisions simultaneously. For example, that happens during the Production phases and when deciding whether air units fly as fighters or bombers. The way NetPlay handles those phases is that it collects all the decisions, and once both players have finished the phase or subphase, NetPlay sends the decisions en masse to the other computer. Play then resumes as usual.

First Attack into France

I have chosen to start this AAR with the conquest of France. In the game, as in the actual war, this was a major turning point. This chapter ends with Germany having occupied Paris. As Germany decided historically, I chose to declare Vichy France after having taken Paris. The second chapter of this AAR describes the war prior to the Germans attacking into France proper.

But we start with the screenshot from Mar/Apr 1940, Impulse #10 (Figure 1-1) with the Axis to decide whether to declare war on any other countries. Germany is at war with both France and the Commonwealth, while Italy is still neutral. This is late in the 4th turn of the game and the first time in 1940 that the weather has been Fine in the North Temperate weather zone.

G used the fine weather in the previous impulse (#9) to have the Commonwealth attack along the coast, destroying a German 5-3 Militia and advancing into a hex of Belgium. Shore bombardment from the North Sea doubled the attack strength of his land units. And he got a decent die roll for the combat. Although the weather hasn't been all that great this turn, the air forces have flown some missions, with all the Commonwealth bombers and fighters now disorganized (as indicated by the small orange circles above the units). Likewise, a couple of the German fighters and bombers are disorganized. Disorganized units are unable to move or attack, which usually happens at the end of the turn.

The French are down to 3 air units, all of which are still available to fly this turn. Note that very few land units are disorganized. Exceptions are 2 of the 3 German HQs. They used their reorganization points to reorganize units in their front line that had been successfully ground struck by British bombers.

Since this is Mar/Apr, the good attack weather might not last. Also, there is a 40% chance (impulse #10 - 6) that the turn will end after this impulse. Even if the turn does continue, the Allies have a 50% chance of ending the turn after their impulse (impulse #11 - 6). So, all in all, this looks to be the Axis last impulse in Mar/Apr. I decided to commit all attacking assets (except an offensive chit) for land attacks. Conversely, I kept Italy neutral for the time being.

Excluding the Maginot Line [they have blue hexside lines with black crenellations], there are 6 hexes in the Allied front line to consider attacking. Any attack on the Maginot line would be an Assault and far too likely to fail. The same is true of an attack on Lille (due east of Boulogne). Lille has 3 printed factories in a city which gives the defender a -4 die roll advantage. I had no interest in attacking the British. Those units aren't going anywhere. Continuing their advance along the coast would be suicidal, since the next coastal hex would be Antwerp, necessitating an Assault into a city. I just needed to add another corps during land movement this impulse for a solid defense of Antwerp.

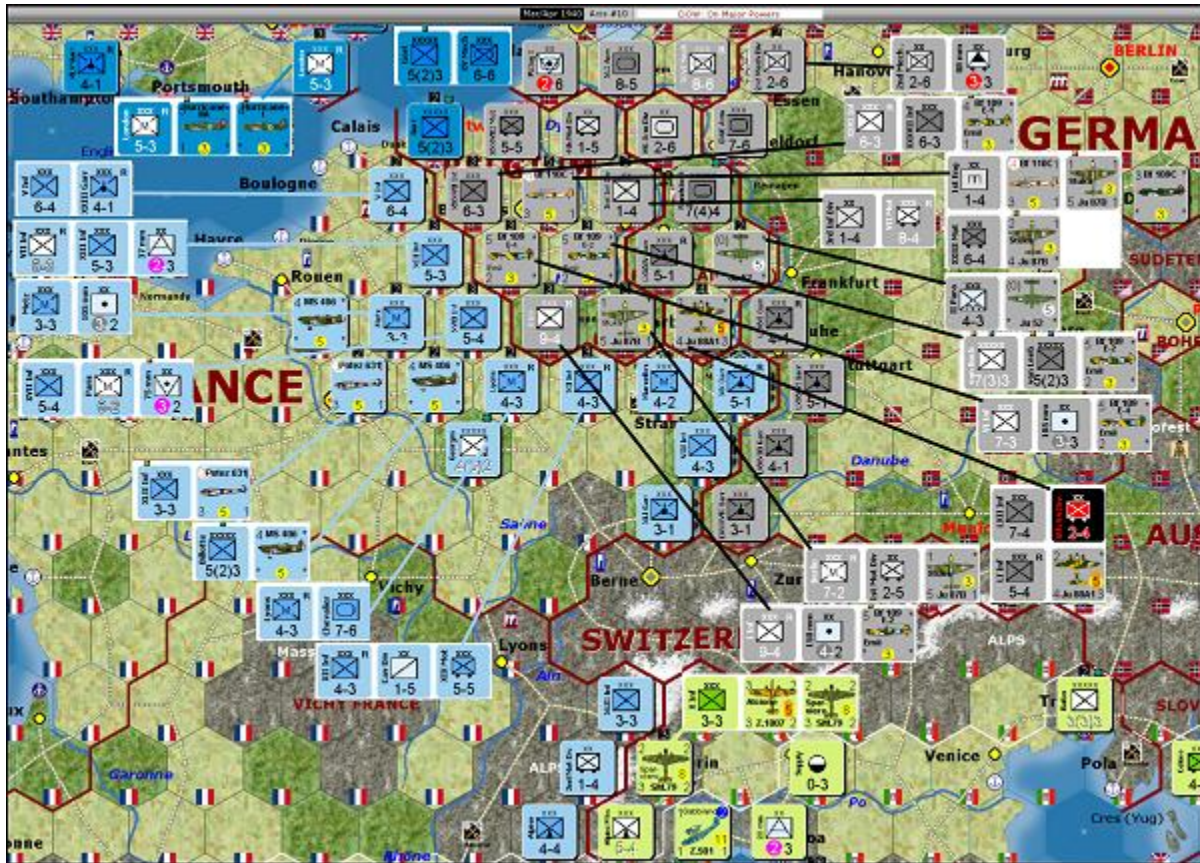


Figure 1-1

So, we are down to 4 clear terrain hexes, each occupied by 2 French corps. But only the two hexes due southeast of Lille can be attacked from two German front line hexes. A third hex, held by the French XII Inf, is protected by a river to its northeast. That makes my calculation of German attack hexes against it as 1.5, since attacking across a river halves the attacking land combat strength. Of the two hexes southeast of Lille, I chose to attack the first one since there is an empty hex behind it - ideal for an advance after combat by the armored units if the attack succeeds with a B result. G says: Leaving that empty hex next to Rouen was a big mistake.

Virtually all the German units can reach either of the two attacking hexes. Choosing carefully, I put three armor units into the attack, one of which was the German HQ, Rundstedt. Joining him were the 8-6 mechanized, the 2-6 mechanized division, and the 2-5 motorized division. These 6 units are my typical Blitz attack from two hexes. The armor is necessary to gain the choice of Assault/Blitz table. If only one armor unit attacked, then the Allied player would be able to choose Assault, because his AA division would count as 1 armor point and ties (i.e., 1:1) go to the defender. The 2-5 motorized division is there to take an attacker loss if the die roll goes badly. Because this will be a Blitz attack, the five other German units each provide +1 as a die roll modifier (DRM), which more than offsets the defender's -1 DRM for his AA division.

It would have been possible to put together a second so-so attack against the French XII Inf. But I didn't see enough of an upside to offset the high risk of losing good German units. I forget what I did about ground strikes and what we both did for ground support. Though G did use the artillery division behind the attack hex as ground support. The Axis die roll was wonderful (a different adjective is used by G to describe it). The B result let the German armor blitz/advance two hexes into France.

The next picture, (Figure 1-2) is a collection of screenshots. The time line starts in the upper left, (May/June 1940, impulse #1, Axis DOW on Majors), then goes to the upper right (May/June 1940, impulse #1, Axis Combat Resolution), then down to the lower right (May/June 1940, impulse 1, Axis Air Rebase done), over to the lower left (May/June 1940, impulse #3, Axis DOW on Majors), and ends in the bottom center (May/June 1940, impulse 5, Axis Land Movement done).



Figure 1-2

In the upper left screenshot, you can see the German advance after combat from the attack at the end of the previous turn. That turn ended after the Axis impulse on a die roll of 3 (groan from G). Then the Axis won the Initiative (anguished cry from G) and I elected to move first (duh!). This is the deadly “end the turn” and “start the next turn” combination that no World in Flames player has ever found a defense against. G’s comment: 3 excellent die rolls in a row!

At this point I had Italy DOW France (not the Commonwealth). That let the 3 bombers in northwestern Italy (refer back to Figure 1-1) fly ground strikes against the French units in and around Paris. Due to surprise, neither the French nor the British could interfere with those ground strike missions and the effectiveness of each bomber was doubled. Each of those attacks had a poor chance of success, but there were a lot of them. Many failed, but not all.

Given that it is May/June, the Fine weather in the North Temperate weather zone was to be expected. The upper right screenshot, with magnified insert, shows the two German attacks in May/June impulse #1, which are quite nice. Both the +15 DRM and the +8 DRM on the Blitz table succeeded. There was no advance two hexes because G has a solid secondary line. In the lower right corner is the position after the advance after combat and rebasing a German Stuka to the front line.

The screenshot in the lower left shows the position after the French adjusted their front line. I had been careful to not leave German units vulnerable to quasi-good attacks by the Allies. That was somewhat challenging to do because of the fairly long front line. By choosing to attack through the clear terrain hexes between Lille and the Ardennes forest hex, maneuvering units next to Paris became awkward. Enemy zones of control into adjacent hexes prevented freedom of movement, so German unit placement devolved into which units could reach which hexes. The main objective though was to get control of a third hex adjacent to Paris by making that attack as good as possible. At this time, no other attacks seemed necessary for preparing to take Paris. All other German units were positioned to achieve two goals: (1) to make the final attack on Paris next Axis impulse, and (2) to defend.

The bottom center shows the result of the attack on the hex due east of Paris. This gave Germany 3 hexes on Paris. It is now impulse #5 and Germany has repositioned its units to maximize the attack factors on Paris. I also chose to

expend an Offensive chit on Rundstedt to make taking Paris guaranteed (+21 DRM). The O-chit doubled the offensive combat strength of 8 German land units. Other players might have decided to save the O-chit for attacking Russia in 1941, since even without it the Paris attack would have been pretty good. But I had troubles in Yugoslavia and Greece that needed help from the German units in France and the Lowlands. By finishing off France in May/June, those units would have all of July/Aug to wend their way east and clean up the mess in the Balkans. Taking all the French units off the map really simplifies things for the Axis. I didn't want to risk a few bad die rolls messing up the German timetable.



Figure 1-3

Paris Taken

The last screenshot in this chapter (Figure 1-3) shows the position after Paris was taken. The French don't really have any feasible suicide attacks. If they attempt some and fail, the Germans may have a chance to capture more French resources and rail lines to get them back to German factories. The turn continued for several more impulses, but nothing of significance changed in France.

Conclusion

What happened here? The Germans had an excellent position in Belgium at the start of Mar/Apr 1940. Even though the Allies won the initiative and moved first in that turn, and the first 3 weather rolls were poor, Germany was ready to attack once the weather turned fine. Although it was only the 4th turn of the game, Germany had enough armor/mechanized corps and divisions to optimize a Blitz attack, albeit only against 1 hex. Reinforcements in the May/June turn were 2 more mechanized corps, an armor HQ, 2 Stukas, and a good fighter/bomber. All 6 of those units were crucial to the 4 successful attacks in the turn leading to the capture of Paris. Prudently, no unnecessary attacks were made by the Axis. By the end of the turn, the Axis losses were negligible - unless you count the expenditure of the O-chit.

In the second chapter in this AAR, I'll go back to earlier turns to show how Germany was able to achieve its lovely position shown in Figure 1-1 of this chapter. Spoiler alert, the luck of the die rolls ranged from awful to delightful for the Axis - or delightful to awful from G's perspective.

Chapter 2: German Conquests 1939

A typical sequence of events in MWIF is for Germany to conquer Poland and Denmark in the first turn (Sep/Oct 1939). Then, pretty much despite the weather, conquer The Netherlands in the second turn (Nov/Dec 1939). The conquest of Belgium usually waits until the German paratroop unit arrives in Mar/Apr 1940, turn #4. The impulse following Germany's DOW on Belgium, France often gets the opportunity to occupy four hexes in Belgium on the French border. Although 3 of those 4 Belgian border hexes are clear terrain and vulnerable to blitz attacks by bombers and armored units, they provide another layer of hexes between the Germans and Paris. Getting through them takes 2 or 3 Axis impulses with good die rolls.

This game did not follow that path.

Poland

The first screenshot (Figure 2-1) shows the position with Germany deciding about declarations of war at the beginning of the third impulse of the first turn. G's setup was a common solid defensive position for the Polish land units while the air units were placed out of harm's way in far northeastern Poland. The air units rebased to a neutral minor country during the second (Allied) impulse, thereby becoming 'interned'. That permanently removed them from the game, but gave the Commonwealth two additional pilot units arriving in Great Britain at the start of the second turn.



Figure 2-1

G placed four Polish corps in Lodz and Warsaw. Because those cities contain factories, Poland is only conquered if Germany captures both of them. Spreading out the other 3 corps, G placed a single corps north of Lodz/Warsaw, one

in Poznan (two hexes west of Lodz), and one in Krakow. The last corps was the 3-4 cavalry unit, which in the screenshot hasn't moved from Krakow. The sole divisional infantry unit he placed in the forest hex currently occupied by von Leeb.

To attack Lodz and Warsaw I prefer to have at least 3 adjacent hexes. G's setup prevented that. So, during the first impulse of the game, I took out the corps north of the cities, the corps in Poznan, and the division. Those attacks were certain victories and disorganized no German units. Prior to those land moves and attacks, the German air force flew 4 ground strikes, 2 each on Lodz and Warsaw. 3 of the 4 Polish units in those cities were disorganized (as indicated by the small orange circles above the units). That also accounts for the 4 disorganized German air units visible in the screenshot. MWIF uses small colored circles around the units as status indicators. The only other status indicators shown in this screenshot are the dark green ones above the HQ units, which indicate they are secondary supply sources.

While the first two impulses went about as expected, the bad weather roll at the start of the third impulse was painful for Germany. The splatter of short black lines in hexes indicates Rain over most of the map. The more numerous parallel black lines in the east indicate Storm. In fine weather most hexes cost 1 movement point. That cost is doubled in Rain and Storm. Note the German units just south of Denmark. Crossing a straits hexside (shown with red connecting arrows) costs an extra movement point for land units. If Germany declares war on Denmark, Denmark is always devoid of land units. The only land unit Denmark has is a reserve unit, which doesn't arrive until the turn after the Axis declares war on it. However, Germany wants to move immediately into Copenhagen and the two Danish minor ports. Failing to do so would give the British the opportunity to reinforce those hexes, making the conquest of Denmark much more difficult. The German units positioned to conquer Denmark have movement allowances of 4, 5, and 6 respectively. Only two of them are needed to take out the ports and city. But the weather has to be Fine for them to reach their destinations. Hence, Germany did not declare war on Denmark in the third impulse.

Additionally, Rain makes movement for the German units in Poland more difficult. Even worst, all the land attacks receive a -2 DRM (die roll modifier). Also aggravating, the air units have their ground strike and ground support factors halved in Rain. I decided on attacking just Lodz from 3 and a half hexes, with very good odds. Sadly, a bad attack die roll only destroyed one Polish unit in Lodz, leaving the hex occupied by the other unit and remaining under Allied control. The German HQs were able to reorganize all the German units disorganized by the failed attack.

Mercifully, after the Allies moved in impulse #5, the weather turned Fine again (impulse #7). Still, attacking both Lodz and Warsaw wasn't really feasible. Those attacks could have been executed, but a failure of the attack on Warsaw would have made taking it out in the first turn impossible, since the German units would have been disorganized. Instead I chose to just kill off the Polish unit in Lodz and prepare for an attack on Warsaw from 6 hexes in the following impulse. In the meantime, the Fine weather meant that Germany declared war on Denmark and captured both minor ports and Copenhagen as planned.

The Netherlands

Alas, G's die roll ended the first turn after his impulse (#8) - a 20% chance. So, Poland survived through to Nov/Dec 1939. Subsequently, a Polish reserve reinforcement (6-3) was placed in Krakowice (Figure 2-2). That was possible because the Polish cavalry corps had scurried to that hex during G's final land movement phase of the first turn. G had also had the USSR claim Eastern Poland and the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) as shown in the screenshot. The flags in the hexes indicate which are held by Germany, the USSR, and the Commonwealth. No flag means the country controlling the hex is neutral (e.g., Belgium).

Now we pick up the action at the start of the second turn (Nov/Dec 1939). Since the Axis won the initiative (yaa!), chose to move first (obviously), and then the weather was Fine (yaa!), Germany declared war on The Netherlands. The German units lined up on the border with the Netherlands are mostly the reserve units that Germany placed on the map when France and the Commonwealth declared war on Germany at the start of the second impulse of the first turn. Their placement was planned for just this situation.

Happily for the Axis, the Commonwealth has their naval transports in the Mediterranean and unable to reach the North Sea. What this means is that it will be impossible for the Allies to send a land unit to help The Netherlands. Usually, the Commonwealth keeps at least one transport available specifically for that task. Then, even if Germany captures Amsterdam, the Commonwealth can land one or more units in Rotterdam. Holding Rotterdam is very helpful for protecting Belgium. It is also a very strong defensive hex with rivers on the two hexsides through which the Germans would have to attack.

In the game, Germany easily captured Amsterdam then occupied Rotterdam in the next Axis impulse.



Figure 2-2

Note that Germany conquered Denmark last turn and all the Danish hexes are now controlled by Germany. In Poland, Germany will attack and capture Warsaw - finally. In southern Poland, the 9 combat factors in Krakowice are a bit too much to take on right now. G used those two units to annoy me for the rest of the turn. But the main focus of the German army turns to the Lowland countries. That means that most of the German units, both land and air, headed west.

Belgium

After the bad luck in the first turn, the Axis was more than compensated by good luck in the second turn. Figure 2-3 shows the position at the German DOW phase of the 11th impulse of the second turn. The weather is Fine. To reach this state, the Axis had to have several more good land movement weather rolls: Fine or Snow. Taking advantage of that, the mass of the German army, accompanied by the air force, has moved from Poland to the Belgian border. Then the weather turned Fine for the 11th impulse, letting Germany declare war on Belgium with certainty of success. As mentioned earlier, a German paratroop would be very helpful here. But it doesn't arrive for two more turns. Given the sunny skies and eager troops in their jump off positions, taking out Belgium this early in the game couldn't be resisted. G has three Belgian land units to place anywhere in Belgium. He chose one of the best setups for them: the 3-5 cavalry in Liege and the other two corps in Antwerp. Belgian and French zones of control adjacent hexes prevented the Germans from reaching Brussels. This is where the paratroop unit would have been a big help.

Regardless, the benefit of the rivers for defense evaporates during the surprise impulse following a declaration of war. So, Germany has two attack hexes on Antwerp plus 4 on Liege. The air unit tactical factors are doubled during the surprise impulse, and Belgium's allies are unable to fly air missions to support them. A good land combat die roll on Antwerp wiped out the Belgian defenders. That was followed by the Axis ending the turn (50% chance) and going first the next turn (Jan/Feb 1940). Moving first enabled the Germans to occupy all of Belgium. It fell at the end of the third turn. This achieved all that the Axis could have hoped for in Jan/Feb 1940. The rest of the third turn was boring. The weather was bad with the impulse number advancing by 2 or 3, making the turn quite short.



Figure 2-3

Yugoslavia

If you look over to the southeast on the screenshot, you will see that both Hungary and Yugoslavia have entered the war. Italy, although not at war with France or the Commonwealth, is at war with Yugoslavia. All of this came about because of the two annoying Polish units that survived the first turn. In order to protect Vienna and Bratislava, I had to align Hungary to Germany. But that wasn't permitted unless Germany was at war with Yugoslavia. While trying to prevent the Poles (and the Yugoslavians) from taking out German cities, and concurrently preventing dangerous Allied counterattacks, the Axis forces are poorly positioned in Austria and Czechoslovakia. Poland will be conquered at the end of the turn, which will remove the last two Polish units from the map. Until then, they needed careful monitoring. MWIF is never easy - even with mostly good die rolls.

Conclusion

The Germans were able to conquer Denmark on schedule in Sep/Oct 1939. But the conquest of Poland was delayed until Nov/Dec 1939. That persuaded Germany (and Italy) to declare war on Yugoslavia and then align Hungary. All of which was helpful for the Allied cause. In recompense, the gods of chance had the second turn run long with good weather, letting the Germans conquer both The Netherlands and Belgium in 1939. As a coup de gras for the Lowlands, the Axis ended the second turn at the best possible time and moved first in the third turn (Jan/Feb 1940), thereby occupying all of Belgium.

Chapter 3: Production

In this chapter, I want to give some insight into the decisions I made to produce the Germany army and air forces that fought in 1940 and 1941 in Europe. Getting this right was crucial for the Axis success in both western Europe and later against the Soviet Union.

Unit Review					
Unit	Location	Unit	Location	Unit	Location
7(4)4	Cologne, Germany [52, 34]	2-6	Essen, Germany [50, 35]	1-5	Belgium [51, 32]
6(4)5	Production	2-5	Force Pool	2-5	Belgium [54, 33]
6(6)5	Force Pool	3-6	Force Pool	2-4	Production
2-6	Germany [51, 33]	7-5	Production	5-5	Antwerp, Belgium [51, 31]
3-5	Force Pool	7-6	Production	6-4	Belgium [53, 32]
8-5	Arnhem, Netherlands [50, 33]	9-5	Force Pool	5-4	Force Pool
7-6	Düsseldorf, Germany [51, 34]	6-6	Force Pool	7-4	Force Pool
7-5	Force Pool	8-5	Force Pool	6-5	Force Pool
8-6	Force Pool			7-5	Force Pool
9-5	Force Pool				

Jan/Feb 1940 End of Turn

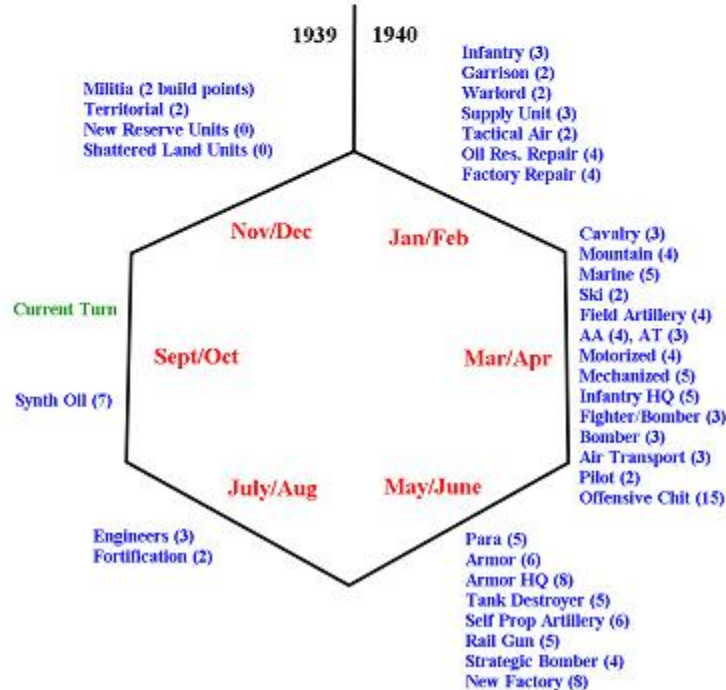


Figure 3-1

German Production Choices (by S)

The top of Figure 3-1 shows the armor, mechanized, and motorized units available for Germany to build in 1939 and 1940. The hexagon in the bottom of the figure shows the time required and build point cost for each type of land and air unit.

When considering which units to build, I visualize this hexagon. The winter turns are at the top: Nov/Dec and Jan/Feb. The summer turns are at the bottom: May/June and July/Aug. The spring turn is on the right and the autumn turn on the left. In the picture, the list of units to arrive as reinforcements for each turn are positioned based on the current turn being Sept/Oct. If Germany builds a Militia unit at the end of the Sept/Oct 1939 turn, then it arrives as a reinforcement at the beginning of Nov/Dec 1939. Militia cost 2 build points and take 1 turn. Regular infantry corps cost 3 build points and take 2 turns. Thus, they arrive in Jan/Feb when built in Sept/Oct. The long list of unit types shown for Mar/Apr take 3 turns to arrive.

For building units other than in Sept/Oct, you only have to rotate the list of units. Units that take 3 turns (e.g., mountain) always come in on the opposite side of the hexagon. So, building a mechanized unit in Jan/Feb means it will arrive at the start of July/Aug. Besides worrying about the cost of each unit, and how long before it will arrive on the map, production also has gearing limit restrictions. You can only build one more unit of a gearing 'class' than you built in the previous turn. Armor and mechanized units are in the armored class. If you build one armor unit in Sept/Oct, you will be permitted to build no more than 2 in Nov/Dec. This all gets rather complicated, especially when the enemy is bombing your factories and thereby reducing the number of build points that you have available at the end of the turn. Plan ahead, then expect to have those plans thrown out the window (e.g., from wind gusts caused by falling bombs).

Getting back to the top of the picture, choosing whether to build armor, mechanized, and motorized units is important for Germany. Armor is best, but costs more and takes longer. Motorized is cheapest, but doesn't have the same benefits as the other two unit types. Operationally, having armor in an attack often lets the owner choose whether the attack is resolved on the Assault combat results table (CRT) or on the Blitz CRT. Usually the Blitz table favors the attacker. To be specific, the Blitz table gives the attacker a die roll modifier (DRM) of +1 for each armor or mechanized corps/division in the attack. Put together a group of those unit types and good attack odds are almost certain.

Motorized units do not contribute to the DRM. But of great importance, that unit type can take any required first loss in lieu of an armor or mechanized unit being the casualty. Like armor and mechanized, motorized can also advance two hexes if the combat result is a B (Blitz!). In combination, these three unit types work very well blitzing across clear terrain in fine weather.

Some of the listed units are corps (three or four x's across the top of the unit symbol), while others are divisions (two x's). Divisions cost less to build (the hexagon only shows the cost for corps sized units). Divisions are useful because only two corps can be placed in a hex. A division can be added as a third unit - beefing up the total attack factors in the hex. It can also take a loss in place of a corps unit. Alongside each of the listed units is the unit's current location. Some are on the map. Some are already in production. And some are in the Force Pool, available to be built in Jan/Feb 1940.

German Reinforcements 1940 and early 1941

Figure 3-2 shows all the reinforcements Germany received in our game for 1940 and the first half of 1941. Counting backwards based on how long it takes to build each unit type, you can figure out what Germany built when. In Jan/Feb 1940, most of the units are minor country reserve units which were placed into production at zero cost. Likewise, the Rumanian tactical air unit is arriving because Rumania entered the war the previous turn. The only units in this upper left list that Germany spent build points producing are the Stettin Militia and the pilot.

The big turn for German reinforcements is May/June 1940. Two mechanized corps, an armor HQ, and three good air units come in. Best of all, they can be placed directly in west German cities where they can help with the attack on France. In July/August 1940, two more mechanized units arrive. I had planned on them helping out in the conquest of France, but by then France had fallen. Instead I brought them in in southeastern Germany and to help conquer Yugoslavia.

In the middle rows of this picture, the count of reserve pilots and offensive chits are shown for each turn. You can see that Germany had two offensive chits but spent one in May/June 1940. Thereafter they only had one - being saved for the Barbarossa campaign against the USSR in 1941. Pilots in the reserve pool fluctuated from turn to turn, dropping to zero starting in July/Aug 1940. However, you can see that more pilots kept arriving. Most of those were

built, some were the result of air combat losses (the plane was shot down but the pilot survived), and a few came in because I voluntarily removed an air unit from the map. Removing an air unit gains the owner a pilot in reserve while simultaneously the air unit goes into the Reserve Pool. The list of units in the bottom of the picture show which air units Germany had in reserve each turn.

Figure 3-2

For each air unit that arrives as a reinforcement, the owner decides whether to give it a pilot so it can be placed on the map, or whether it should simply go into reserve. All three fighters in reserve in Jan/Feb 1940 got pilots and were placed on the map. The JU 52 was left in reserve for the first turn of 1940, but got a pilot assigned in Mar/Apr. That was so it could join the paratroop unit that arrived that turn. Together they threatened to perform a paratroop on the French. That never happened, but I considered doing it every Axis impulse. I'll leave it to you to examine the due-to-arrive forces Germany will have on the map come May/June 1941, for the invasion of the USSR.

Allied Production Choices (by G)

In some ways the Allies have more difficulty planning their production for Europe, mainly because the Commonwealth (and the USA) need to build up their navies. That includes naval transports, amphibious units, and a stockpile of convoys to keep resources flowing into the United Kingdom from around the world.

France is the easiest for which to plan production simply because they don't have a lot a build points, not a very wide range of choices in their force pool, and they are just trying to protect Paris for as long as possible. That means building land units to arrive before May/June 1940, and perhaps another fighter.

In the short term, the Commonwealth has to worry about building convoys, carrier planes, and accompanying pilots. While Germany is all about making sure it has the maximum offensive units for May/June 1940 and then again May/June 1941, the Commonwealth's production plan is for the long term. That's also true for the USA. Building a ship takes 2 years.

Chapter 4: Greece & Yugoslavia

Conquest of Greece

The Commonwealth starts the war with a good navy, some land units, and a scattershot of air units. For the air units, the Allied player has to decide whether to assign pilots to carrier air, fighters, naval air, tactical bombers, or strategic bombers. Even with the two extra pilots G got from interning the Polish air units, he still had too few pilots. Therefore, some Commonwealth air units had to be placed in reserve. Over the course of the war the Commonwealth can build more units to supplement its starting forces. The selection from which to choose is wide and the available build points never enough.

Depending on how the Allied player sees the future year of the war going, he can build land units, air units, pilots, or naval units. Since G planned on using strategic bombing to reduce the number of build points generated by the European Axis factories, strategic bombers were on his wish list. So were pilots. G also likes to use the Commonwealth carriers against the Italians, meaning more pilots needed to be built. Like most players of war games, he likes to pick on the weakest opponent - the Italians in this case.

G notes: An important goal for the Commonwealth in 1940 is to take out as many Italian ships as possible to protect the Med and help conquer North Africa. Keep in mind that the Commonwealth needs to move ships in late 1941 and 1942 to counter the Japanese in the Pacific. So, taking out the Italian navy before then is crucial. If the Italian player keeps his ships in port then Commonwealth carrier planes need to fly port strikes. The 3 naval factor carrier planes should come in separate waves, 1 at a time each impulse, to hopefully get through the AA and fighter interceptions. Port strikes are all about the surprise rolls each side gets.

The biggest decision for the Commonwealth is where to deploy their land units. The choices range from Norway and Denmark in the north, to support in France and the Lowlands, to the Balkans, and down to North Africa. There are also demands for units to defend the United Kingdom from German invasion, and to garrison India, Burma, and Malaysia against partisans. Since land units can arrive in any Commonwealth home country, naval transports are needed to pick up new reinforcements from Canada, South Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand, and any of the Commonwealth controlled minor countries around the globe (where territorial units may arrive). Dragging land (and air) units across the oceans to the combat zones takes planning - and remembering to execute those plans.

One crucial decision is what to do with the 2 HQ units with which the Commonwealth starts the game. One is in the United Kingdom, and G took him across the English Channel to help out France. The other HQ starts in Egypt. He could have been sent to France for additional support. Or he could have led a charge through Libya, heading to Tripoli (an Objective city in the game). G decided to have the second HQ spearhead an invasion of Greece. Athens is also an Objective city, as indicated by having its name in Red.

G notes: The decision to attack Greece was very risky, but had several advantages. If the Allies can land 4 corps in Greece AND take Athens, then Yugoslavia aligns with the Allies. Aligning Yugoslavia with the Allies in early 1940 causes problems for the Axis when they are concurrently attacking France. The Axis always has a hard time helping Greece while Yugoslavia and Bulgaria are neutral. The other nice benefit is that Athens is a victory city and once the Allies are in Greece, it is very hard for the Axis to push them out. I should add that this encourages the Italian navy to sortie to assist Greece, giving the Commonwealth the opportunity to sink Italian ships at sea. Weather in the Med has a better chance of being clear during the winter months than in France and Poland. That provides the best possible weather for land attacks in Greece.

Figure 4-1 shows Greece prior to begin invaded in Nov/Dec 1939. The first wave of invaders were the divisional units. Because we were playing with the optional Amphibious rule, sea-borne invasions could only be performed by: (1) marine corps aboard transports or amphibious units, (2) infantry corps aboard amphibious units, and (3) divisional infantry units aboard a surface ship (e.g., a battleship or a cruiser). The Commonwealth has no marines and no amphibious units. That means until those units were built and arrived as reinforcements, infantry divisions had to perform all sea-borne invasions of enemy controlled hexes. Actually, paratroop units could do airborne invasions, but alas, the Commonwealth doesn't have any of those units at the start of the war either.

Both France and the Commonwealth declared war on Greece, which chose to align with Germany. The Commonwealth 1-4 division in the Eastern Mediterranean and the French 1-3 division in the Italian Coast are threatening to invade. The Axis has two Greek corps to place on the map. One of them is a mountain unit, whose defensive strength in a mountain hex is tripled (the defensive strength of regular infantry units in mountain hexes is only doubled). Take note of the other Commonwealth naval units in the Eastern Med 3 section box (that's where the HQ Wavell is). They have a lot of shore bombardment factors. Once the land units get into position to attack Athens, the shore bombardment factors can almost double the total attack factors.



Figure 4-1

Figure 4-2 shows the progress of the invasion of Greece. The time line begins in the top left, goes across the top, switches to the bottom left, and goes across the bottom.



Figure 4-2

I placed the Greek defenders to hold Athens and Peloponnesus. Once the Allies capture Athens, Greece will be conquered and their land units removed from the game. Getting corps units ashore is very difficult. Unless they are invading, they can only land in friendly ports or in a hex occupied by a friendly HQ. Every hex in Greece has a notional defending unit worth 1 combat factor. That is reduced by 1 during the surprise impulse. It is increased by 1 if the hex is a city or if the hex is in the zone of control (ZOC) of a friendly corps sized unit.

The positions of the Greek corps in the upper left screenshot exert ZOCs into Patras and Kalamai. Those ports have a notional value of 1 (i.e., 1 + 1 - 1). Since Salonica is a city, it also has a notional value of 1. On the other hand, most of the Greek coastal hexes have a defensive value of zero during the surprise impulse. That makes them easy pickings for the Allied divisions. A defense of zero means certain success for any invader. Invading takes all of a unit's movement points - they stop in the invasion hex and can't move until the next friendly impulse.

In the top center screenshot, you can see that the Greek mountain unit moved to help defend Athens from the north. Meanwhile the Commonwealth landed 3 corps, including the HQ. The British divisional unit first moved into Salonica to make it Allied controlled. That let the two motorized corps land there. In the top right, the two opposing sides met. Note that some of the Allied units are disorganized (orange status indicator), caused by moving into mountain terrain during Rain.



Figure 4-3

By the time Jan/Feb 1940 rolled around, the Greeks had gotten their reserve unit reinforcement and placed it in Athens. That's shown in the lower left. They also moved the 4-3 Inf alongside the 4-4 mountain unit. The extra exertion to reach that hex disorganized the 4-3. What happened to the British 6-5 motorized unit? It broke down

(voluntarily) into the 1-5 and 2-5 motorized divisions at the end of the Nov/Dec 1939 turn. The Jan/Feb 1940 turn was extremely short. The Axis moved first, the Allies moved, then the Axis moved and ended the turn (10% probability). 3 impulses total!

So, we advance to Mar/Apr 1940 in the center bottom screenshot. The Allied divisional units are filtering around the Greek western flank. In particular, the French division changed control of Patras from Axis to Allied. By the end of the turn, the Commonwealth had landed a 7-3 Inf in Patras. That threatened to attack Athens in the next Allied impulse. Although there would only be two British attacking units (the 7-3 and the 1-4), their attack factors of 8 would be doubled by shore bombardment and possibly even more by air ground support. The little 3-2 Greek militia unit might be swept out to sea! Having just one defender in a hex is never good. It isn't that hard to kill off a single defender and capture a hex.



Figure 4-4

Advancing to May/June 1940, as shown in Figure 4-3 (top left screenshot), the Greeks have pulled back so two units are in Athens. In the top right screenshot, you can see the result of the attack the Commonwealth launched on Athens. It did not go well despite having a 64% chance of success. The Greeks lost the 3-2 militia and the Commonwealth lost the 2-5 motorized. In the bottom left screenshot, the Greeks have pulled back both their corps into Athens. That meant there wasn't room for the 3-2 Militia unit to arrive as a reinforcement. But 8 defensive factors are better than 7. Regardless, by the end of May/June 1940, the Commonwealth had taken Athens. The screenshot in the lower right shows the conquest of Greece. Some British units have returned to Salonica to stave off the Germans soon to descend through southern Yugoslavia. The conquest of Yugoslavia is next.

Conquest of Yugoslavia

As mentioned in a previous chapter, Germany felt compelled to declare war on Yugoslavia so it could align Hungary. That let it bring in the Hungarian units and halt the wanderlust of the Polish units. As shown in Figure 4-4, G chose to place the Yugoslavian units one to a hex. He says: This is a cheap trick but a single unit can cause a lot of havoc if not taken out.



Figure 4-5

Partly that was to leave room in the cities for the impending reinforcements - as shown having arrived in Figure 4-5. By then Germany had also aligned Rumania and brought down some of the excess German units in Poland. Italy is also drifting over some corps units. Moving motorized and mechanized units through the mountains costs 3 movement points per hex in Fine and Snow weather. Other weather doubles the cost. It takes time for the Italians to move adjacent to Zagreb, their target destination. I should add that aligning Rumania in 1939 was a big mistake on my part. If I had delayed that action until 1940, the Axis would have gotten the Rumanian HQ and an air unit, with pilot, as reinforcements at zero cost. Building them later cost 9 build points. The slight offset was the Rumanian ZOC prevented the Commonwealth from using a resource point for production. Nevertheless, the early alignment was a terrible decision.

Figure 4-6 shows the Axis beginning to surround Zagreb and Belgrade. Each of those cities contains a factory so they both have to be captured to conquer Yugoslavia. This is similar to Poland. Leaving single Yugoslavian units alone in a hex is dangerous for the Allies. The Germans can build up a pretty fierce attack against single units which have 4 or less combat factors.

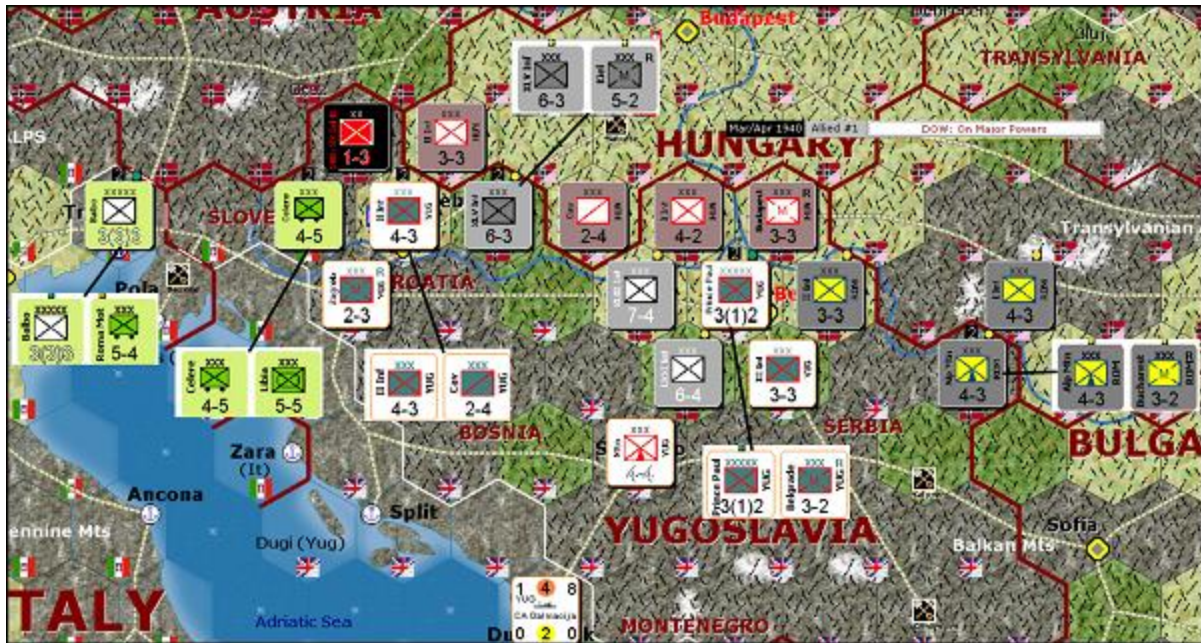


Figure 4-6



Figure 4-7

In Figure 4-7 the Axis has pulled closer to the cities, despite the previous impulses bad weather. By late in Mar/Apr 1940 (impulse #10) the Allies have brought air units into Yugoslavia. Mostly they are positioned there to perform

strategic bombing missions against German factories. In combination with strategic bombers flying out of England, virtually every German held factory and oil resource needs fighter protection. That's from Lille to Stettin to Lodz to Vienna to Ploesti. G says: Another reason to take Greece is the threat to the Rumanian oil by the Allied bombers.



Figure 4-8

Figure 4-8 shows the noose tightening on Zagreb. Paris has just fallen and the Germans have started rebasing bombers - the Stuka Ju 87D is within range of Zagreb. By the first impulse of July/Aug 1940, (Figure 4-9), Zagreb has fallen. The Germans were able to rail the von Bock HQ into Rumania before the May/June turn ended. Then he was reorganized at the end of the turn and be available for the attack on Belgrade. As is my normal practice, I took my time attacking the two Yugoslavian factory cities, taking one per impulse and making sure the attack odds were overwhelming. The Axis can't afford losses if they are going to have enough units for the USSR.



Figure 4-9

G says: If France had held out longer [e.g., by not having two “end the turn then start the next turn” by the Axis], the Yugoslavian battle would have been harder for the Axis. With the Allies coming up through Greece, it would have been an interesting “Churchill” Balkan scenario. The first “end the turn then start the next turn” occurred in Nov/Dec 1939 to Jan/Feb 1940 letting Germany conquer and occupy all of Belgium. The second occurred in Mar/Apr 1940 to May/June 1940, letting Germany rocket into France and move adjacent to Paris.

Lastly, Figure 4-10 shows Belgrade taken and the Germans threatening to liberate Greece. In reality, I had no intention of fighting through to recapture Athens. The British navy was too strong. We were playing with defensive shore bombardment, so a couple of Commonwealth units in Athens would have been doubled. Again, I did not want to lose any German units.



Figure 4-10

Conclusion

As happened historically, the Balkans were a sideshow. In this case the Allies held onto Athens (an objective city and a victory point). But a couple of Axis units positioned north of Athens discouraged the Allies from venturing any farther. Yugoslavia fell on schedule, giving the Axis time to move the units fighting there east and up to the Rumania-Russia border. In the long run, the Yugoslavian and Greek resources added to the German build point total every turn thereafter.

Chapter 5: German Buildup in the East

Where To Next?

After capturing Paris and declaring Vichy in May/June 1940, the Axis needed to decide whether to go west, south, or east.

West to the United Kingdom seemed high risk. There wasn't enough German sea lift (1 naval transport and 1 amphibious unit) to get a lot of units across the North Sea quickly. A few divisions, a paratrooper, and a couple of corps sized units could get there in the first wave. Having the sea lift return to port and be reorganized by an HQ could let a couple more corps be ferried across to the UK in the same turn. It might even be possible to repeat the trick and reorganize them a second time to get a fifth and sixth corps across by the end of July/Aug 1940.

Expecting the Commonwealth to stand idly by and watch all that happen would have been delusional. G had kept a handful of land units in England and Scotland. There were a half dozen British air units present as well. More hazardous to the well-being of the German army was the British navy, which could cut off supply to the Axis soldiers in England from the German homeland. In particular, if the British had one good set of naval search rolls in the North Sea (low Allied roll and high Axis roll), one or both of the essential two Axis sea lift units could be lost at sea. Making the attempt to take out the United Kingdom was doable. I wasn't confident of it being a successful attempt though.

South to Gibraltar to isolate the Mediterranean from the Allies was also a potential direction for the German forces currently massed in France. To start, Germany would have collapsed Vichy and moved its armies and air force down to the border with Spain. Then a DOW on Spain and a fight through the mountains on the border would have followed. Slogging through the rest of Spain to reach the hexes around Gibraltar would have taken to the end of July/Aug 1940 - at best. In the fall (Sept/Oct), the weather is pretty nice in the Med, so conducting some attacks on Gibraltar could probably have been done in the following turn. But the Rock is a tough nut to crack. Putting the Allied units there out of supply is pretty much required.

That means the Axis has to control both the Western Med and the Cape St. Vincent sea areas. The Italian navy and air force, with help from the German air force, might be able to drive the British out of the Western Med. In this game I was able to do that for one turn, by having Italy DOW the Commonwealth and using the subsequent surprise impulse to get a bunch of surprise points for the naval combat. But soon the British were back in strength. Doing the same in Cape St. Vincent would have required the German naval forces to move to the French ports on the Bay of Biscay then on to Cape St. Vincent. Operationally that would have required several naval moves for Germany, and a significant amount of luck at sea. Those pesky Brits would have gotten in the way I am sure. If all went well and Gibraltar fell, then perhaps the USSR could have been attacked in 1942. All in all, it would have been another plan with high risk.

Of the three compass directions, going east was my preference. It did not engender the risk of bad search rolls at sea sending the entire operation down the drain. Staying on terra firma, the German army could take on the Russian army face to face. There would be no coastal hexes in the path of the advance, where the Commonwealth could double the defensive factors of enemy land units. To take on the USSR meant building up a massive German force along the border.

Breaking the Nazi-Soviet Neutrality Pact

It wasn't until late in the Mar/Apr 1941 turn that the relative garrison levels along the Axis-Soviet border and the weather were favorable for Germany breaking the Nazi-Soviet Pact. It had taken extensive planning and resources for the Germans to generate a sufficient garrison level to break the Nazi-Soviet pact. In Figure 5-1 you can see the option to break the pact was offered to Germany in the DOW Majors phase of the 11th impulse of the Mar/Apr 1941 turn. I did so. And then I had both Germany and Italy declare war on the USSR.

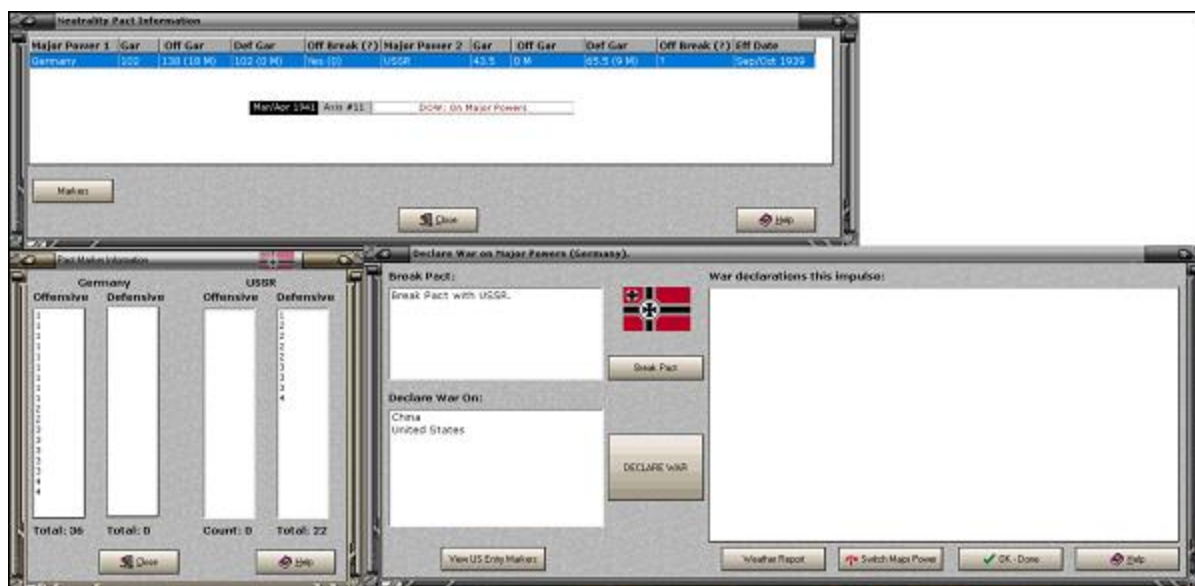


Figure 5-1

The German garrison level was 102 plus 36 in offensive markers. Compared to that was the USSR garrison level of 43.5 plus 22 defensive markers. 138:65.5 is greater than 2:1, so Germany could break the pact. Another 4 garrison points for the USSR and breaking the pact would not have been possible. The USSR had units worth 6 garrison points available that were either disorganized or not close enough to the border. Why weren't they organized and closer? Because offensive markers are never shown to the other side. The values of defensive markers are visible to both sides. Disorganized units do not count towards garrison levels.

Germany had to drag every unit with garrison factors to within 3 hexes of a hex controlled by the USSR. Italian units didn't count, so they were primarily placed in occupied countries (i.e., France and Yugoslavia) to prevent partisans from arriving. But units belonging to minor countries aligned to Germany did count towards the garrison level, so they all journeyed to the critical border area. In the end, I had the entire German air force desert their posts protecting Axis factories and rebase east to the garrison zone. These extreme measures just barely got the job done.

While this was a tense time for the Axis, it was equally stressful for the USSR. Having all its forces so close to the border put them in danger of being overwhelmed by the German blitz. According to the rules, Germany gets two neutrality pact markers each turn and the USSR gets one. In theory, the total value of those markers should be 2:1 in favor of Germany. In this game, they were far from that. Either Germany should have had 44 points in markers or the USSR should have only had 18. From G's point of view, if the German markers were worth 39 instead of 36, the USSR getting 5 more garrison points closer to the front wouldn't have prevented Germany from breaking the pact. This was all a very hairy time for both sides.

As it turned out, Germany had sufficient garrison points to break the pact at any time during the Mar/Apr 1941 turn. But the weather wasn't Fine in the Arctic weather zone. So, I held off. The benefits of surprise from a DOW only lasts for one impulse and most of that would have been wasted by starting the war when the weather was Rain, Storm, or even Snow. So, I waited, and G waited, both of us biting our nails, until the 11th impulse of the turn.

G says: Yes, this is a very difficult situation for Russia. Keep your forces close to the border and risk getting surrounded, or pull back just in the nick of time. For Russia to survive it must try to save as many units as possible during 1941.

German Forces in the North

I was planning to attack Russia from as far back as the end of 1939. Which units I built and where they would be positioned were worked out in advance. Every turn I revisited the plan and modified it due to losses in combat and build points lost to strategic bombers. Cobbling together garrison points and finding places for all those units along the front required continual adjustments.

Figure 5-2 shows the disposition of Axis forces in the north just before the DOW. The dashed turquoise line indicates the separation of the northern forces from the Axis forces in the center. Those starting in the row with Brest-Litovsk and above were destined to go north.



Figure 5-2

Looking at the HQs, there is von Bock, Rommel, and von Leeb dedicated to keeping the Axis units in supply. I chose the slower moving HQs, von Bock and von Leeb for the north because they don't need to travel as far to reach the Soviet forces as those going through the Ukraine. Rommel was added partially because he arrives late in the war, and to provide an armor HQ to reorganize armor and mechanized units at a cost of only 1 reorganization point. Most of the units in the north are infantry. The 4-2 artillery and 2-3 AT units were placed in the north because they had small movement allowances. Infantry units with only 3 movement points were almost all placed in the north for the same reason.

For the air force, the short-range Stukas were all placed in the north. A couple of longer-range bombers were present, including an Italian naval air unit. The last is a flying boat (as denoted by the blue circled number in the upper right) and had to be based in a coastal hex. Supply for that unit couldn't have been provided by the Rumanian capital or HQ, so placing it near German supply sources was paramount.

In combat factors, the Axis totals were 156 land (29 armor/mechanized) and 25 tactical air. In addition, there were 3 'pure' fighters. Some of the units in the front were destined to rail to the rear to garrison occupied countries. Likewise, some of the fighters needed to head back west to protect factories against strategic bombing. But those were the exceptions. Everyone else's orders were to move east and attack Russians.

German Forces in the Center

Figure 5-3 shows the disposition of the Axis forces in the center. Here the two HQs are Guderian and Graziani. Both are armor HQs but Graziani only has 3 movement points. Another encumbrance on Graziani moving east is that Italy will often take a Combined Action to make its naval units active. That will leave the Italians capable of moving only two land units.

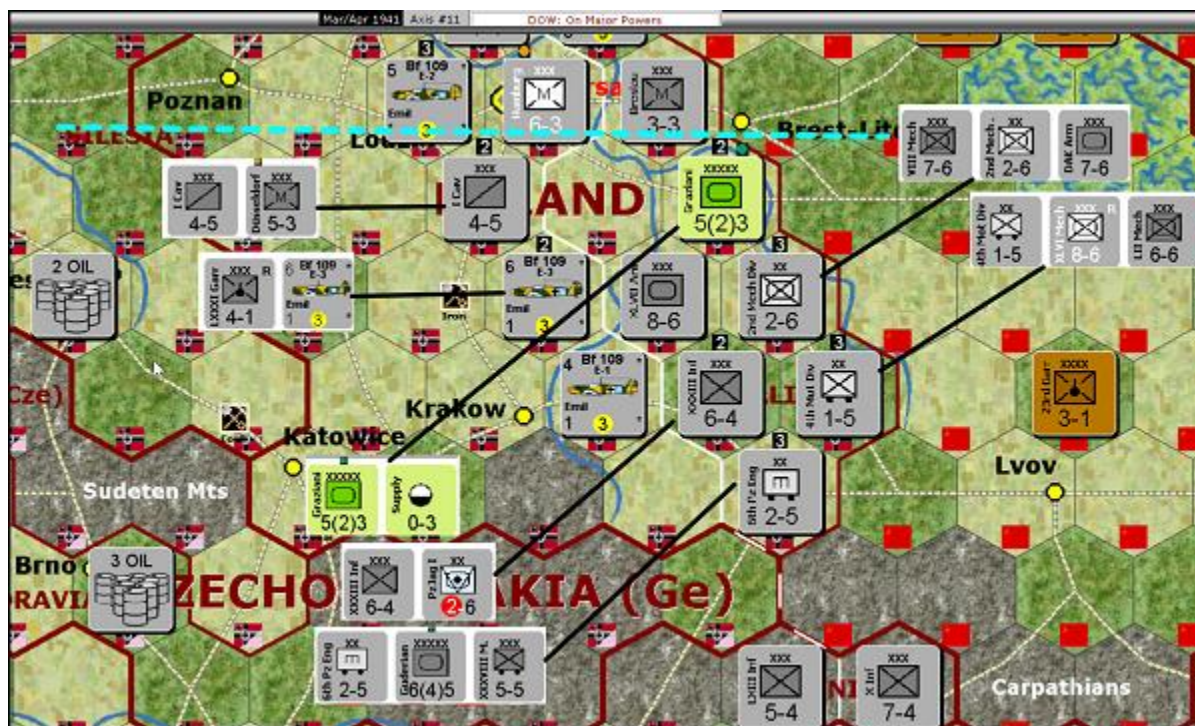


Figure 5-3

Note the movement points for all the units in the center. Except for the Italians, a garrison and a militia unit, none of them has less than 4 movement points. Indeed, the armor and mechanized units, for the most part, have 6 movement points. They've got a lot of ground to cover to reach Kiev and the Dnieper. Perhaps they will find some Russian units to run over along the way.

Very few air units were deployed in the center. The jumping off hexes were simply too far away from USSR units for air units placed here to do any good. The fighters had just rebased here from central Germany and would soon be heading back from whence they came.

Counting the sheer number of units, the center had fewer than the north. But these were good units: 90 total combat factors, of which 51 were armor/mechanized, and 12 others with 5 movement points. This force was able to move quickly through the Ukraine and do damage to any enemy forces in their way. Realistically, I expected the units in the center to quickly link up with those in the south, and the combined forces to function as a whole.

German Forces in the South

Figure 5-4 displays the Axis units in the southern force, as separated from the center force by the dashed turquoise lines. The 5-4 and 7-4 infantry units in the upper left were assigned to the center because they were going to head northeast before turning due east. All the rest of the units shown here were in Rumania or Hungary.

The two Hungarian infantry and the nearby four Rumanian corps were not intended to attack into Russia. Instead, they were staying in their home countries, to satisfy the restriction that many units belonging to aligned minor countries cannot wander outside their countries' borders. In practice, they performed double duty, by moving adjacent to the border with Yugoslavia and thereby exerting a zone of control into Yugoslavia, helping to discourage the creation of Yugoslavian partisans. At the moment, they are close enough to the USSR controlled hexes in eastern

Poland to count toward Germany's garrison level along the border. The Italians in Belgrade will head east once the pact is broken and the minor country units have moved back to take over the garrison duties.

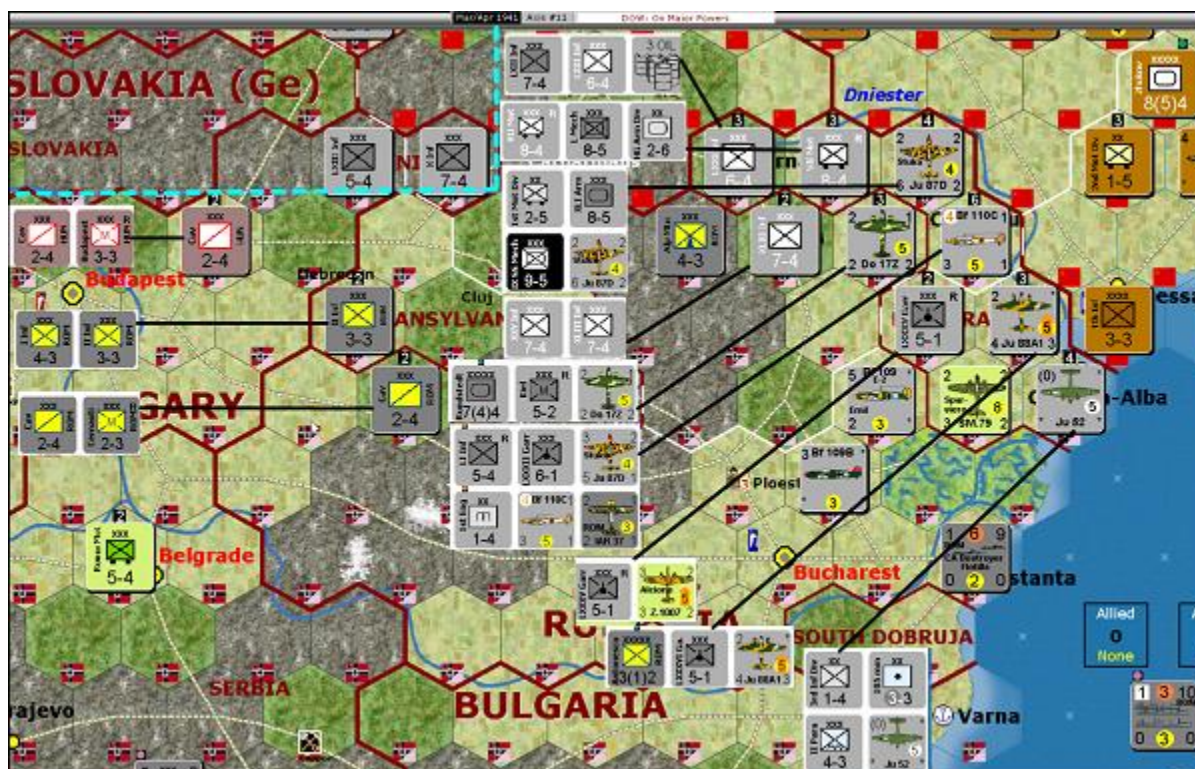


Figure 5-4

Getting all those units into Rumania wasn't easy. The mountains in the middle of Rumania made walking there from the west time consuming, especially when the weather turn nasty. Short turns with only a couple of impulses per side didn't help either. So, many of them railed into Rumania. When the railed units were armor, mechanized, or motorized, that necessitated expending oil later to reorganize them. Playing with the optional Oil rules puts the Axis at a disadvantage since they have so few oil resources. You might notice that a couple of the German units are disorganized. That's because they rail moved in earlier in the turn. If bad weather had persisted through to the end of the turn, then they would have been reorganized at the end of the turn (zero oil cost) and contributed to the garrison value at the start of the next turn.

The German front line here is very crowded. Two corps in every hex, often a divisional unit too, maxing out the stacking limit. On top of the land units in each hex are air units, with 3 air units (maximum stacking) in the sole city in the front. Of major importance for this deployment in Rumania was the fact that G had not claimed Bessarabia. The extra 8 hexes were put to good use. Besides placing the Axis forces closer to the Dnieper and other points east, controlling the two cities in Bessarabia with Axis units reduced the number of required Assault attacks the Germans would have to conduct before getting into the USSR proper. I had expected G to claim Bessarabia, thereby taking over Cernauti (the hex holding 3 oil points) and Chisinau (the hex with 3 air units).

There were two HQs in the south: Rundstedt and Antonescu. Rundstedt was the slowest moving armor HQ, so I placed him closer to the Dnieper. Looking at the total combat factors, and excluding the 6 minor country units moving southwestward, there are 113 land (36 armor/mechanized, plus 10 motorized) and 39 tactical air. When the center joins up, there will be 203 land combat factors, of which 87 will be armor/mechanized, advancing on the Russian forces in the Ukraine. The south has only 1 'pure' fighter and he will stay behind to protect the oil resources in Ploesti from strategic bombing by the Brits in Greece. This is where the longer-range Axis bombers were placed. Ground strikes and ground support are an essential element of the German blitzkrieg. The air transport with his ever-present paratroop unit were also here - just to make the Allied player nervous.

Conclusion

All tolled, the Axis had assembled 359 land combat factors with 64 tactical air factors to initiate Barbarossa. Getting to start it in Mar/Apr was a big bonus. That not only gave them an extra impulse of Fine weather for the campaign, it also meant that the whole air force could fly missions and then be reorganized at the end of the turn - so they would be fresh as a daisy at the start of the May/June turn.

In overview, the Axis spread out their HQs and armor/mechanized units over all three groups. Care was taken as to which units were placed where, considering not only unit types, but also their movement points and combat factors. Even little details, like putting the mountain units in the north for later attacks against Leningrad in the far future (mountain units gain a +1 DRM when attacking in Snow weather) were attended to. The north was also heavy with infantry units because they only pay one movement point to move into Forest hexes, while motorized units pay two. A 6-3 infantry could move 3 hexes through the woods, while a 9-5 mechanized could only move two. In the same vein, the cavalry unit was in the center. It had 5 movement points, just enough to move into a swamp terrain hex in the Pripet Marshes without becoming disorganized. Only cavalry have that ability. Attention to all these little details made the German armed forces much more powerful than they would have been if which units were assigned where had been done haphazardly.

G says: It was obvious where the Axis main attack was coming, in the south. The Axis wanted to advance fast in the south to get to the Caucasus oil, and if really lucky, to reach the Turkish border to bring in Turkey on the Axis side. That's why you see the best Russian units in the south. When pulling back from the border, the Russian units should try and keep out of Stuka range - without giving up too much territory.

The next chapter covers the Russian side of this front.

Chapter 6: Russian Buildup in the East

Reinforcements 1940 and Early 1941

The USSR gets far fewer build points than Germany at the beginning of the war. Primarily that is because of the difference in their production multiples. In 1939, while each Germany factory is generating 0.75 build points (BPs), each Russian factory is generating only 0.25 build points. In 1940, the comparison is 0.75 to 0.50. In 1941 it is 1.0 to 0.50. Partially to compensate for this painful disadvantage, G kept the USSR out of conflicts, so he wouldn't take any losses. The USSR claimed Eastern Poland and the Baltic States as per the Nazi-Soviet Pact. But they did not claim Bessarabia or the Finnish Borderlands. Nor did they declare war on Persia or Japan, which many Allied players choose to do. The passivity of the USSR had the other important benefit of not impeding the entry of the USA into the war (i.e., no additional losses of US Entry Markers due to Russian aggression).

G says: The USA entry pool was very low so the Allies and Russia had to be careful about not causing a bad US reaction by declaring war on neutrals like Persia. In China the Japanese were advancing fast and capturing Chinese cities but not one US entry roll had been successful for the Allies for those cities.

G timed his builds so that all the armor and mechanized units in the USSR force pool would be on the map in time for defending against Barbarossa. That means he built them early and put most of the infantry units into production later. See Figure 6-1 for what specifically arrived when. As the turns advanced, he removed an air unit from the east (i.e., Siberia), placing a pilot and air unit in reserve. Then the next turn he brought them back onto the map in European Russia. That transfer of air units from Siberia to Europe cost nothing and was a lot easier than having to rebase an air unit 9 hexes per impulse across all of the Soviet Union. In the figure you can also see that he built pilots for reserve air units: 4 new pilots but only 1 new air unit arrived as reinforcements. That accounts for the drop off in the number of air units in the reserve pool. Besides the air units being useful in fighting the Germans, they served a dual purpose as garrison points along the Polish and Rumanian border. Each pilot cost 2 BPs. That translates as only 2 BPs for 1 garrison point, which was a good deal.



Figure 6-1

Barbarossa - USSR North

Figure 6-2 shows the disposition of the USSR forces in the north, just prior to Germany breaking the Nazi-Soviet Pact and declaring war on the USSR. It clearly shows that G was “stuffing the border”. That is, he was making it difficult for Germany to break the pact, by placing numerous Russian units within 3 hexes of a hex controlled by Germany. Only 5 units are too far away to count as garrison: the 4-1 unit in Estonia, the 3-5 cavalry in Novgorod, the 6-3 infantry in Riga (Latvia), the 2-6 armor division at the bottom of the screenshot, and the 4-2 artillery in the lower right corner of the screenshot. There were two other ‘lost’ garrison points: the disorganized 3-5 motorized and the 5-3 infantry corps (as indicated by the small orange circle above those units). They were disorganized because G had just rearranged his front line in the previous impulse, during bad weather.



Figure 6-2

About the 4-1 garrison unit in Tallinn, G didn't want Germany to invade that city from the sea, thereby liberating Estonia at the end of whichever turn Germany declared war on the USSR. That's also why there is a unit in Riga, the capital of Latvia. If G hadn't been stuffing the border, he would have set up a defensive line behind the Dvina river, running from Vitebsk to Riga. Aside from a couple of sacrificial lambs, the rest of his forces would have been out of range of the Stukas.

The standard placement of units about to be hammered by superior forces is to hide in cities and forests. Here, hunkering down in three forest hexes and a city are all the units to which the Germans can move adjacent. In the front line, the 4-1, 6-1, and 2-1 garrison units, plus the 3-4 cavalry unit, are all fondly known as "speed bumps". They won't cause a lot of difficulty for the German army, but will slow them down. Other units, with more movement points, will withdraw gradually north and east to better defensive positions. Being within 3 hexes of the German front line runs the risk of ground strikes by German bombers. The 3 Stukas are particularly menacing.

You might have noticed that Leningrad is defenseless at the moment (naval units can simply be overrun by any land unit). That's not a problem because the USSR will have reserve units to place on the map once Germany declares war. Specifically, a very nice infantry unit arrives in Leningrad. Similarly, reserve units are likely to be placed in Minsk, Vitebsk, and Pskov. All the reserve units arrive disorganized and are unable to move until the turn following the DOW. There will also be a unit going to Murmansk in the far, far north. The cavalry unit in Novgorod has the task of moving up to the Finnish border west of Lake Ladoga (east of Leningrad). That's important to keep the Finns from rampaging around the lake and messing up the rail line north of Lake Ilmen connecting Leningrad to Moscow.

Barbarossa - USSR South

Figure 6-3 shows the biggest problem for the USSR in 1941. Where are the forests and cities for the defenders to hide in? All those clear terrain hexes in the Ukraine, combined with Fine weather during the two summer turns, means the enemy tanks will be hard to stop. This is why G put his armor and mechanized units in the south, along with the super HQ, Zhukov. Timoshenko is also present. G likes to use his HQs to reorganize his defending units that get into trouble in the front line. When attacked, a disorganized defending corps gives the attacker +2 DRM. Two disorganized corps in a hex sums to a +4 DRM, a juicy target for the opposing side.



Figure 6-3

Becoming disorganized is a likely occurrence for the Russian units in the first impulse of Barbarossa. Germany has bombers galore in the south, with the majority of them having a range of 4 or more. The better Stukas deployed in the south have tactical air factors of 5 and 6. Performing doubled ground strikes during the surprise impulse (when the Russian air units are forbidden to fly) gives them a 75% and 84% chance, respectively, of disorganizing each unit a bombed hex. That accounts for the USSR forces being spread out: "Spread out men! So they don't get us all with one burst!". Notice the engineer division in Sevastopol. He is there to discourage a paratroop invasion. The other units in Crimea are within 3 hexes of a German controlled hex and count as garrison for the neutrality pact.

Conclusion

The USSR is dealt a difficult hand to play when Germany masses on its western border and declares war. Placing the majority of units close to the border can delay Germany from breaking the pact for a while. Choosing that option has its own risks, since so many units are vulnerable to the classic blitz attack by armor and air units. In the next chapter, I'll show the first round of attacks that kicked off Barbarossa.

Chapter 7: Barbarossa Attacks

Attacks in Mar/Apr 1941

This chapter covers land combat in Russia in the last impulse of Mar/Apr 1941 and the entire May/June 1941 turns. As such, it shows all 6 land attacks by Germany against the USSR in that initial impulse of Barbarossa. The turn ended immediately thereafter. Picking up the thread, the story then continues with the Allied and Axis impulses in May/June 1941 through to that turn's conclusion.

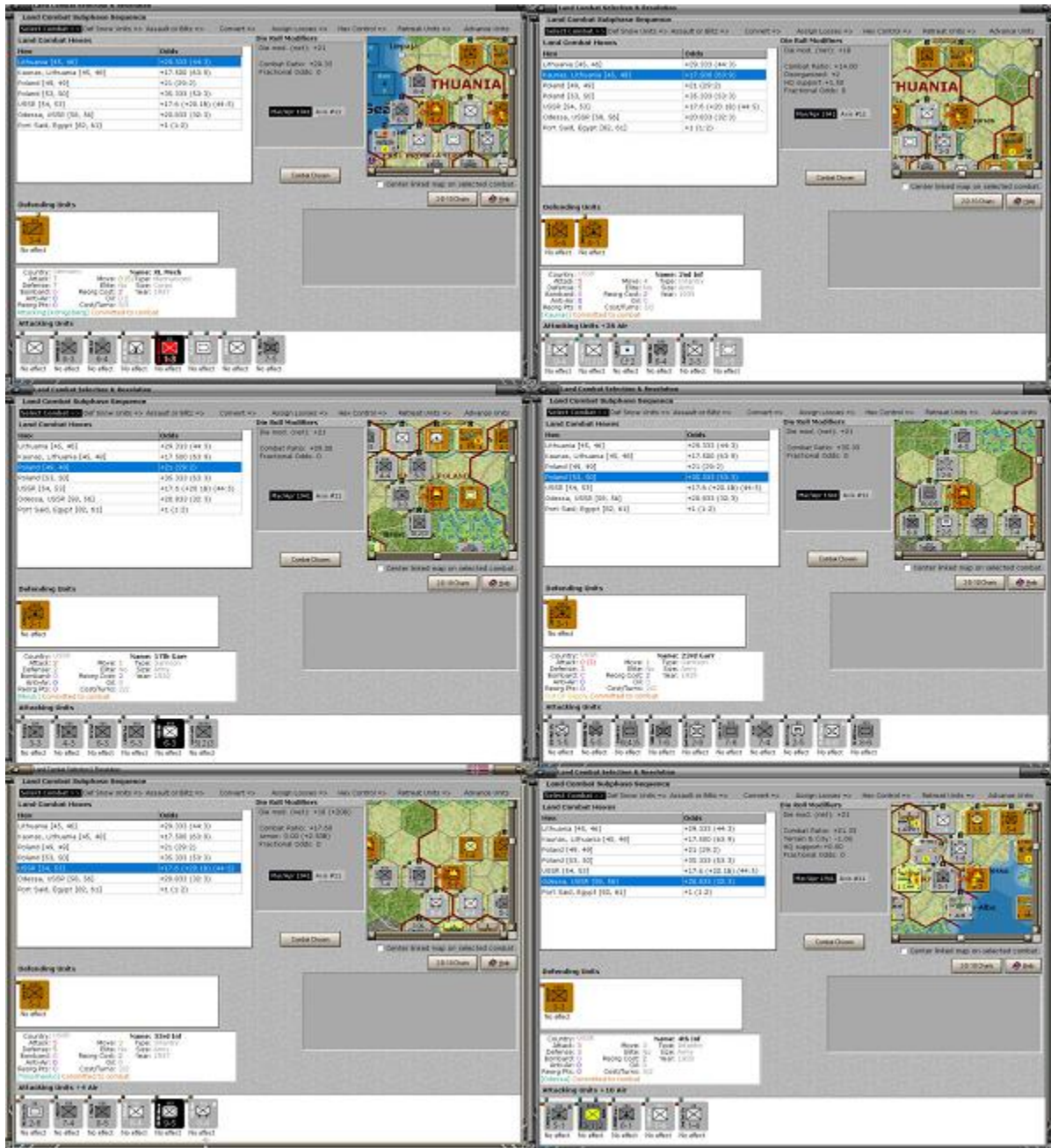


Figure 7-1

Figure 7-1 displays all 6 German land combats in impulse #11 of Mar/Apr 1941. Each of the Land Combat Resolution forms lists all the combats in the upper left, with one of them selected/highlighted. The selected hex is shown in the small insert detailed map. At the bottom of the form, the defending and attacking units involved in the combat are

displayed separately. A few of the combats have air units providing ground support, which appear as +XX Air above the attacking unit depictions.

Look at the top center of the 6 Land Combat Resolution forms in the figure. Directly under the bold text Die Roll Modifiers is the net/final die roll modifier for the selected combat. The 6 German attacks were all at excellent odds, as is to be expected in Fine weather during the surprise impulse following a declaration of war. +21 is guaranteed success: all the defenders are destroyed, none of the attackers are harmed in the least, and the advance after combat is 1 or 2 hexes. The latter only happens when the Blitz combat result table is chosen.

Four attacks were at +21. There were two lesser attacks: +18 on Kaunas (upper right corner of the figure) and a +20 blitz on hex [54,53] (lower left corner). A +18 is guaranteed to take Kaunas since there are only 2 defending units in the hex. Likewise, the +20 blitz will get a B* result, killing off the sole defender in that hex. The attacking armor and mechanized units will then be able to advance 2 hexes, overrunning and destroying the 1-4 Russian division to the northeast of the attacked hex. The 7th attack listed in each of the 6 screenshots is the feeble invasion by the Italians on Port Said - it failed.

The North May/June 1941

As stated above, the turn then ended (50% probability). The Allies won the initiative and chose to move first in the next turn. Figure 7-2 shows where they retreated in the north. The position is for Axis to move in the second impulse of the May/June 1941 turn. 5 Russian corps are blocking the Finns in the north from moving any further south. Actually, the supply line for the Finnish HQ (Mannerheim) is already stretched to its limit (4 hexes to a rail line connected to Helsinki). The two other Finns near the Finnish HQ could wander 4 hexes from the HQ and still be in supply, if the path were not interrupted by Russian units or their ZOCs.



Figure 7-2

The general German advance from the bottom left of the screenshot to the north and east, was halted by three Russian controlled hexes: next to Riga, Vilna, and Minsk. Although the Russian bomber alone in the hex can be overrun, it will merely rebase up to 30 hexes away. G would have done that already if not for the limit on how many air missions (3) he could fly during a Land Action. Other Russian units are scurrying to the rear, getting out of range of the German bombers whenever possible.



Figure 7-3

Continuing the narrative of what happened in the north, Figure 7-3 shows the Allies to move in impulse #3. There is a strip of land to the west of Riga (at the time, G said he was aware of this; but now he is not sure if he was) which let the German units avoid the ZOC of the Russian corps and move into Riga from the hex to its west. Like Kaunas, Riga is the capital of a minor country and gaining control of it by the end of the turn will liberate those countries. Tallinn is the third of the Baltic States and Germany hopes to capture that this turn, completing the liberation of the set of three: Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. They will then be aligned to Germany and their capitals will act as secondary supply sources for German units (but not Italian or Finns). The successful assault on Vilna was the only other attack that Germany made in the previous impulse. Now the Russians intend to pull back farther.

Which they did, as shown in Figure 7-4: Axis to move, impulse #4. The 5-1 garrison unit next to Riga was out of supply (small yellow circle above the unit), cut off by German ZOCs. If it had moved, it would have become disorganized, still been out of supply, and had its defensive combat strength reduced to 1. Remaining where it was left it at full strength. However, it will be destroyed by units crossing to the far side of the Dvina, so their combat factors won't be halved when they attack.



Figure 7-4

G has chosen to evacuate Minsk - not something I would have done. This was in keeping with his main goal in the north to lose as few units as possible. Any left in Minsk would have died. Two Stukas were present to perform either ground strikes or ground support with fighter protection from the Bf 109 E2. As it is, those bombers now have no one to hurt this impulse. Instead, Germany took on the 2 Russian corps in the forest hex due south of Vitebsk - without air support. There were only two hexes adjacent from which to launch that attack and though it was a blitz attack, no DRM modifiers applied. Those are only given to the attacker for blitzing a clear terrain hex which doesn't contain a city.

Onward, ever onward, to the rear. That is the USSR marching song at the beginning of the war against Germany. See Figure 7-5, Allies to move. Danger! the Stukas have rebased farther forward. Luckily for the USSR the attack in the forest south of Vitebsk had a mediocre poor result for the Axis. A German SS mechanized division was lost and half of the other attacking units became disorganized. The Russians lost both defenders from the map, but they were merely shattered and magically reappeared as reinforcements in the next turn. The Germans should have brought wooden stakes to drive through the Russian hearts. Or used silver bullets. I'm not sure which would have worked best in this case. Despite that quasi success, the Russians have oodles of problems. Germany has units across the Dvina in force. At the moment the way across the upper Dnieper (through Mogilev) is wide open. Even Smolensk, a key city for the Russian defensive line, is vulnerable to the advancing Germans.



Figure 7-5

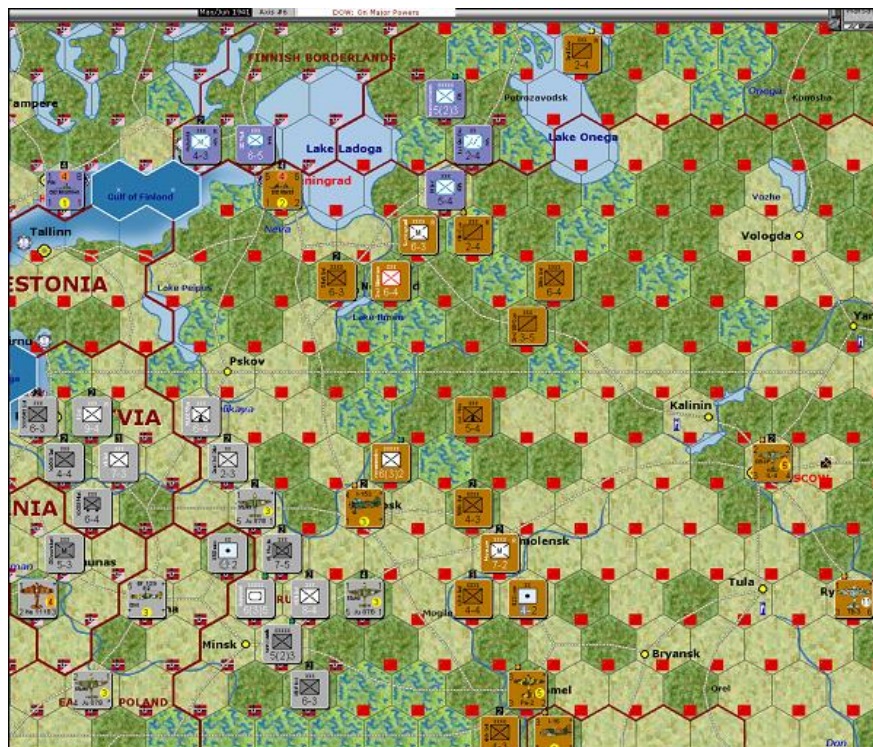


Figure 7-6

In Figure 7-6 you can see how the USSR rebuilt the front line in front of Smolensk and behind the upper Dnieper. A volunteer stepped forward to hold Vitebsk, but Pskov was deserted *en masse* in favor of holding Novgorod. Between those two cities swamp hexes prevent the Germans from moving through the line. Swamp hexes disorganize all units that enter them except cavalry that have a 5 movement point allowance. Well, that's not always true. In Snow weather, swamps are transformed into the equivalent of forest hexes. Then leg infantry can move freely through them at a cost of 1 movement point. That's something to keep in mind when the weather gets cold. All the Germans can do here is occupy the two empty city hexes and overwhelmingly attack Vitebsk. Many of their units can't even reach hexes adjacent to any Russians.

At last the weather roll was something other than Fine in both the Arctic and Northern Temperate weather zones. Figure 7-7 shows the USSR deciding to move in the 7th impulse of the turn. Snow doesn't hinder movement of land units but it does have a major impact on land combat: -4 DRM. Leningrad has become vulnerable to attack. The lake hexes have been frozen and are treated as if they were clear hexes (although the attack factors of units in frozen lake hexes are halved). While Snow will give the defender in Leningrad a -4 DRM, it also gives each attacking German mountain and Finnish unit a +1 DRM. There are 8 of those units available to attack Leningrad. Von Bock is just south of Novgorod and can not only join in the attack on Leningrad, he can also maneuver close enough to Mannerheim to put that HQ in supply too.



Figure 7-7

Vitebsk has fallen and the Germans see an empty hex across the Dnieper. Gomel is also vacant. How to rearrange his defenders is a difficult decision for G. But it didn't matter all that much because G had all the Allied major powers except the USSR choose Pass Actions. That increased the probability of the turn ending from 10% to 20% and the gods of the dice smiled upon the Allies, ending the turn.

G says: It is important for the Allies to plan on pass actions, except Russia, during the summer of 1941. The Axis should strive to move on the other fronts to force the Russian allies to not pass. Here the Allies took the opportunity this turn and it worked.



Figure 7-8

Figure 7-8 shows the position in the north at the end of turn May/June 1941. I have turned off the weather overlays to make the screenshot easier to understand. The USSR has abandoned Novgorod. Leningrad will get a corps reinforcement, which will return it to its normal impregnable status over the coming summer turn (July/Aug 1941). The rest of the Russian line in the north looks pretty solid, especially after some reinforcements arrive in the cities immediately to the rear. In the north the USSR has survived the first summer turn of 1941 in good shape, even if the Axis moves first in the next turn.

The South May/June 1941

So, what about the Ukraine? In Figure 7-9 we turn back the clock to the second impulse of May/June 1941 with the Axis to move. What a pretty line the Russians have formed! The Russian fighter alone in the hex adjacent to the Black Sea is invulnerable presently. The hexside to its west is an impassable all-sea hexside so any German units wanting to reach the fighter's hex will be stopped by the ZOC of the mechanized corps to its north. Similarly, a swamp hex prevented the Germans from moving into the forest hex in the north, near Kiev. Basically, the Germans could occupy only the 5 clear hexes adjacent to the Russian front line.



Figure 7-9

The air force, on the other hand, was free to bomb the numerous Russians within range, if they were willing to risk being shot down by the Russian fighters. They weren't. [G: Very important to pull Russians out of bomber range and/or out of Axis fighter cover. The one weakness the Axis have is the limited number of air actions during an impulse: only 4 with a Land action.] Germany wants friendly fighter cover for its bombers whenever possible. To do so, they needed to rebase fighters farther forward, which couldn't happen until the end of the impulse.

So, the Germans advanced up to the Russian line and loudly revved the motors of their armor units to intimidate the Russians. See Figure 7-10. An argument could be made that my move here was a mistake. I agree that placing a 7-6 mechanized unit in the top right hex with only the 6-factor fighter to keep it company was unwise. But creating the other weak hexes in the front line, pure infantry, was intentional. Why this intentional weakness? I didn't want the Russians pulling back behind the Dnieper. They could have formed a sound defensive line where all the German units would have been forced to make assault attacks or be halved for attacking across the river. I was seriously considering having to use the offensive chit to double the attack factors of 8 units to force a breach in the Soviet defensive line if it looked solid behind the Dnieper. There were also all the Russian bombers and fighters still available for the Russian defense.

G saw an opportunity to attack and did so with a vengeance. He used his offensive chit on Zhukov to double the attack factors of 10 units and threw all his armor and mechanized units against the German infantry. That gave him 3 good attacks: (1) on the 7-6 mechanized at the top of the line, (2) on the hex with the 1-4 German infantry unit, and (3) on the hex containing the 7-4 German infantry corps at the point of the German front line. The combat die roll results were, respectively: excellent, awful, and good. [G: I would normally not have done it, but with Russian losses so minor up to this point I took the chance. It was not a good decision.]

Not only did the 7-6 mechanized get vaporized, a wonderful Stuka, that was sent as ground support, was destroyed (with its pilot) in the preceding air-to-air combat, thereby eliminating ground support for the doomed German mechanized corps. In the middle attack, disaster for G. I think the die roll was a 4 on the 2D10 table. In any event, the Germans only lost the divisional unit and the other defender was unaffected. But all the attacking Russian units became disorganized. That included Zhukov. If Zhukov had remained organized, he would have reorganized 10 of the Russian units - a benefit of the expended offensive chit. Without him, the Russian line was vastly weaker: easy to

attack and unable to move or counterattack later in the turn. [G: This was a very bad result with consequences for the future.] The attack on the bottom hex was mostly successful for the Russians, forcing the Germans to retreat and leaving only half the attackers disorganized.



Figure 7-10



Figure 7-11

Figure 7-11 shows impulse #4, with the Axis to move. The insert shows the losses at that point. The USSR 6-1 garrison was destroyed in the north. Licking my wounds, I chose to attack the hex with the 5-6 mechanized unit. All 3 defending units were disorganized, giving me a +5 DRM. I could also get enough armor on the hex to force it to be a Blitz attack and gain some more +DRM from the attacking armor and mechanized units. Taking a crazy chance on rolling well, I made a second attack on the 5-2 militia unit alone in the forest hex. That was also a blitz attack but no die roll modifiers applied.

The attack on the militia failed, costing the Germans the maximum casualties: one motorized division and two disorganized corps. The USSR did fly a bomber to provide ground support, so at least that was a partial gain for the Axis (all air units that fly combat missions are disorganized immediately thereafter). The result of the attack on the Russian mechanized unit (and friends) also wasn't very good. Germany lost two divisions: another motorized and a mechanized. In recompense, two Russian units were destroyed: an AA division and the 5-6 mechanized. The hex remained Russian controlled. Figure 7-12 shows the position with the Allies to move. The insert list of destroyed units includes the 3-5 SS mechanized division which had just died in the north. All the other German losses were in the south. Not visible here is that Guderian was voluntarily disorganized in order to reorganize the 4 German armor and mechanized corps in the front line that had just attacked.



Figure 7-12

Moving on to impulse 6, Axis to move, the Russians have pulled back one hex in the bottom of their line. See Figure 7-13. They have added a 7-6 armor corps to join the disorganized 6-6 mechanized corps north of Zhukov. I decided on two attacks here, against the hexes on both sides of Zhukov. The goal was to surround him and attack him later from 4 hexsides. He was disorganized and not going anywhere. A couple of more Stuka reinforcements had rebased down from Königsberg at the end of the previous Axis impulse, so there are 16 tactical factors available. At this point I believe all the Russian fighters have flown missions and are disorganized. The cavalry unit is continuing its slow, uneventful progress along the rail line through the swamp hexes in the top of this screenshot.



Figure 7-13



Figure 7-14

The attacks were very successful, as shown in Figure 7-14. Both of them achieved Blitz results and advanced two hexes eastward. Now the weather has turned very nasty, leaving the Germans next to Dnepropetrovsk out of supply (3 hexes away from Rundstedt). Zhukov and the hex next to him are both out of supply too. They would have been cut off by German ZOCs even if the weather had stayed Fine. At this point the Russian position in the south looks hopeless. But it's not so terrible that ending the turn, bringing in reinforcements, and going first next turn can't fix it. That is what happened. The body count for the two sides is shown in the lower right corner of the picture.

Concluding the account of the war in the south in May/June 1941, Figure 7-15 shows the ending position (the weather overlays have been turned off for clarity). The Russians have pulled back where they could and some units in the rear have moved towards the front. Ye gods! Look at the reinforcements the Russians are getting: 18 corps (inserted picture). Some of those are arriving because they were shattered in the previous turn. 6 of them are militia units that have just been built. Joining that mass are the units that G built in advance, knowing that they would be needed come July/Aug 1941. Oh well, at least Zhukov and the mechanized corps keeping him company will stay disorganized. They are cut off from reaching necessary oil resources by German ZOCs.



Figure 7-15

Conclusion

Germany killed off a lot of Russian units including very valuable armor and mechanized corps. They took some losses, but not very many. They advanced up to the Dnieper in both the north and the south. But the war is far from over. Smolensk, Kiev, and Dnepropetrovsk are still held by the Soviet Union. No German unit is across the Dnieper. The Russian line is intact behind a river line from the Black Sea up to Smolensk. Leningrad has yet to be taken. One more long turn of summer remains and then comes the fall, followed by winter. Whom will the gods of the dice favor?

G says: What a difference it would have made if the Zhukov attack roll had been average. But orders from Moscow have to be obeyed.

I hope you have enjoyed this abbreviated AAR. Missing from it are:

- The incessant strategic bombing of the European Axis by the Commonwealth.
- The Commonwealth wearing down the Italian navy in the Mediterranean and their successful invasion of Iraq and Persia.
- The Japanese exploits in China, where they reduced the Chinese to zero build points but were unable to capture Kunming or Lan Chow.
- The earlier than necessary DOW by the Japanese on the US, the Commonwealth, and Free France, and their struggle to eventually take the Netherlands East Indies, Singapore, Burma, and the Philippines.
- The progress of the US across the Pacific, controlling the Marianas, the Coral Sea, and the Bismarck Sea, which led to the recapture of Rabaul by the US.
- And of course, the continuing war between Germany and the USSR.