

Strategic overview

Turn 1: Strategic Considerations

I'm playing Pelton. I expect him to play exceptionally well by my standards, and make no mistakes. On the other hand, I have only ever played one very short campaign vrs an experienced player (HardLuckYetAgain). In this game I was clearly outmatched and looking back on it today, I shudder to think of all the mistakes I made. Consequently, I go into this game expecting to lose, but I will attempt to achieve a different result.

Strategically, I expect Pelton to push me hard along all three critical "lines" of attack: North towards Leningrad, Center towards Moscow and South towards the Dnepr bend and Stalino industrial complexes. I will not make assumptions on how much he will send on any given "line", but I personally think the Southernmost line is the most critical one of the three. My overall strategic consideration is to maintain the Red Army as best I can and avoid as many pockets as possible.

Finally, the game will be fought with random weather, +1 Soviet attack bonus and mild blizzard. I see this as being to my advantage. The random weather might give me a mud turn in the fall of 1941, which will be needed in order to just reach the winter before the defeat is complete. If I manage that, I will actually have exceeded my own expectations. The attack bonus and the blizzard rules only become relevant if I survive until winter.

I'm not a quitter however, and I have also decided to continue playing almost regardless of how bad it gets. If Leningrad, Moscow, Voronesh and Rostov all fall in 1941, the standard Pelton rules kick in, and I will have lost. Other than that, I'll let it be up to Pelton to decide, if he wishes to discontinue the game.

For the upcoming game, I have prepared my own "C2IS" (Commmand and Control Information System), which I will append to this post. And yes, I know it's far from a real C2IS, but it's what I've got. A few key points of note:

The first tab is fairly straight forward, simply calculating the differences in OoB sizes for the different turns.

The second tab is for planning my ground forces.

With the forces already at the front at game start, I will do little other than reassigning a lot of support units back (SU's) to STAVKA. I often end up with 20 or 30 SU's on the Southwestern Front alone and this serves no purpose that I can see. Retreat attrition can quickly build up, when HQ's are encircled and forcibly relocated. One corps artillery regiment holds more than 1800 Armament Points which is the equivalent of the production from six armament factories for a full turn. If I use 30 Admin Points to evacuate those, that's the equivalent of half the Soviet armament production for a turn.

I also have some thoughts on how to use the various unit types assigned to me, and I will describe these briefly below.

Fortified regions are close to a waste of space in my opinion. I will reset them to a MaxTOE of 20% on turn and then leave them to hopefully soak up a few german MP's.

AT Brigades are also close to useless in the early stages of the war. These will also be set to a MaxTOE of 20%. I will try to keep these units alive however, in order to hopefully use them later combined with defensive divisions.

Infantry divisions are the main force I have available. As I will be aiming to keep my troops alive, I will generally set my MaxTOE to 100%, but will limit it in the cases I expect an encirclement to occur within the next couple of turns.

Cavalry units are similar to fast moving infantry in the fall of 1941, and they will be used as such.

Motorised and armored divisions have little offensive punch in 1941. The maximum of 18 MP's in early war mean that they are virtually incapable of any worthy offensive moves. My plan is to max them out and use them defensively, possibly in reinforce mode.

The armies I equip as I muster the red army will be formed around a "best case" template for various army configurations depending on what I want my armies to do and on the cost of equipping these armies. I will set out to assign only units in the "Ready" category and as far as possible also use primarily units whose morale is out of the "Red".

Standard armies are formed around nine infantry divisions set at MaxTOE 100%. These will then be augmented by a sapper battalion or regiment and two artillery regiment SU's. These armies will form the backbone of my forces in the summer and autumn of 1941.

Penetration armies are tasked with punching through the german lines when the winter comes. These units also will contain infantry, but will have heavier artillery (three battalions), more sappers (three full regiments) and a construction unit attached. This army template can also be used defensively (eg in Leningrad).

Exploitation armies will basically be fast moving armies able to push through any gaps in the german front (unlikely event) or moving fast to plug holes in my own front (likely event). They will also be nine divisions strong, and contain armor, motorised and cavalry units.

The third tab is my template for planning my use of Red Army aviation.

Basically, I intend to use my airforces somewhat aggressively from game start. I believe that there is at least 80% chance of me losing in the summer and fall of 41 and so the red army air force should be used as best I can in this period to avoid this result. Also, with production numbers of fighters and bombers both reaching 200+ by turn 11 (and most of good quality by Soviet standards) this really calls for using soviet aviation aggressively from the start. I will not be super aggressive about it though, and intend to rotate units with a morale lower than National Morale back to the National Reserve.

My template basically contain a number of airfields with different tasks and assigned to the HQ's where they are needed. In general each airfield will have five air units assigned, as I don't want to present too much of an easy target. I will obviously update the template as the campaign progress. The main ideas are as follows:

Each front have one airfield of SB-2's and three airfields of I-Type fighters to give some air cover to all parts of the front. I fully expect these units to be slaughtered in great numbers as I intend to keep them close to the front. Their main task is to provide some air cover until the Soviet air production kicks into gear. I also have some VVS units with TB-3's, DB-3B's and Li-2's ready for supplying whatever surrounded units and partisans will spring up. I have one BAK unit of three airfields with IL-4's that I will use for night bombing attacks on secondary airfields, supplying surrounded units and the like. Finally, I have concentrated my SU-2's, IL-2's and Yak-1's in one BAK HQ. I will keep these a little distance from the front (about 15 hexes or so), move them up for attacks versus armored and motorised units (IL-2's) and Infantry (SU-2's) and then move

them away again in order to escape Luftwaffe retribution (fat chance of avoiding that, I know). This BAK unit I plan to send south, as this is the key sector in my opinion.

This is all based on some calculations I tried to do in the fourth through sixth tab, where I tried to evaluate the value of the different planes available to the two sides. I will not try to explain the math I've used, but only say it's all based on my personal guesswork and is certainly off in a lot of places. However, it's the best I've got, and so I will use it and correct it over the course of the game. Basically, I have calculated a "dogfighting value" for each plane type based on what plane type it is fighting against. Based on that I tried to divide the fighters into classes based on their inherent quality. My gut feeling is that planes of a lower class can achieve some success vs fighters one class higher, but anything more than that would invite heavy losses with nothing to show for it. Also bear in mind, that the numbers I use are only the inherent numbers for the planes themselves. Morale, leadership and so on all comes on top of this.

Fighters

Class I: The I-Type Fighters. The worst fighters of the game. They are obsolete in 1941, and things can only get worse, as newer German fighters reach the front. If they come up against unescorted German bombers however, they can do some damage. As this is Pelton I'm playing, this will not happen.

Class II: Lagg-3's and Mig-3's. These are better than I-type's but not good. One interesting feature is that the Mig-3 is manoeuvrable but armed with nothing but the pilot's curses while the Lagg-3 is heavily armed (for Soviets) but manoeuvres like an airborne brick. Consequently, I will use the Lagg-3 for interceptor duties and the Mig-3 as an escort fighter.

Class III: Yak-1's and Bf 109E's. The Yak-1 is by far the best early war Soviet dogfighter. But it will still come up short against the newest German fighters.

Class IV: Bf 109F's. Better than anything the Soviet has, these planes carry less punch than the Bf 109E's but are far more manoeuvrable, so should expect significantly fewer losses in a dogfight.

Class V: FW 190A's. The most manoeuvrable and best armed fighter around. Thankfully, there are not too many of these things available to the Germans in 1941.

Bombers

SB-2's and Pe-2's are level bombers carrying no more than 100kg bombs that is a lot better at disrupting stuff, than it is at killing it. Because of this, I believe those bombers are best used for combat support and not to carry out operations on their own. The main difference between the two is that SB-2's in a dogfight have a survivability rate worse than ice cubes in Death Valley.

U-2VS bombers also carry only 100kg bombs, but are designated as night flyers. As they are dirt cheap I will use them to get close to the front and then start continuously bombing German infantry, hoping to pile up losses over time. This use will probably not begin until the winter of 41/42.

SU-2's are also carrying 100kg bombs, but is a tactical bomber which probably means it has a lot better chance of actually hitting a target. For this reason I will use them to attack infantry units while guarded by Mig-3's and possibly Yak-1's as these become available later on. I will also conduct a raid or two against enemy airfields with these planes, but once night fighters are in place, I have to stop that practise.

IL-4's are also carrying only 100kg bombs, but this "lack" is somewhat offset by their incredible range. I intend to use them mainly for supply runs to encircled troops and night time attacks against enemy airports that is not guarded by night fighters.

IL-2's are still carrying only 100kg bombs, but this is augmented by rockets and a heavy Machine Cannon. As the IL-2 is a tactical bomber, I assume it will be better able to hit stuff than the level bombers. In short, the IL-2 is the best Soviet ground attack plane in the early war. I will use them against mobile units in order to give whatever casualties they can.

There are many more types than the ones discussed above, but those are the ones with low or no production occurring at the start of the war. For those types, I intend to match them against the above groups as best possible, and then using them as part of that group.

Situational analysis

Armament points: 370.

Heavy Industry: 236.

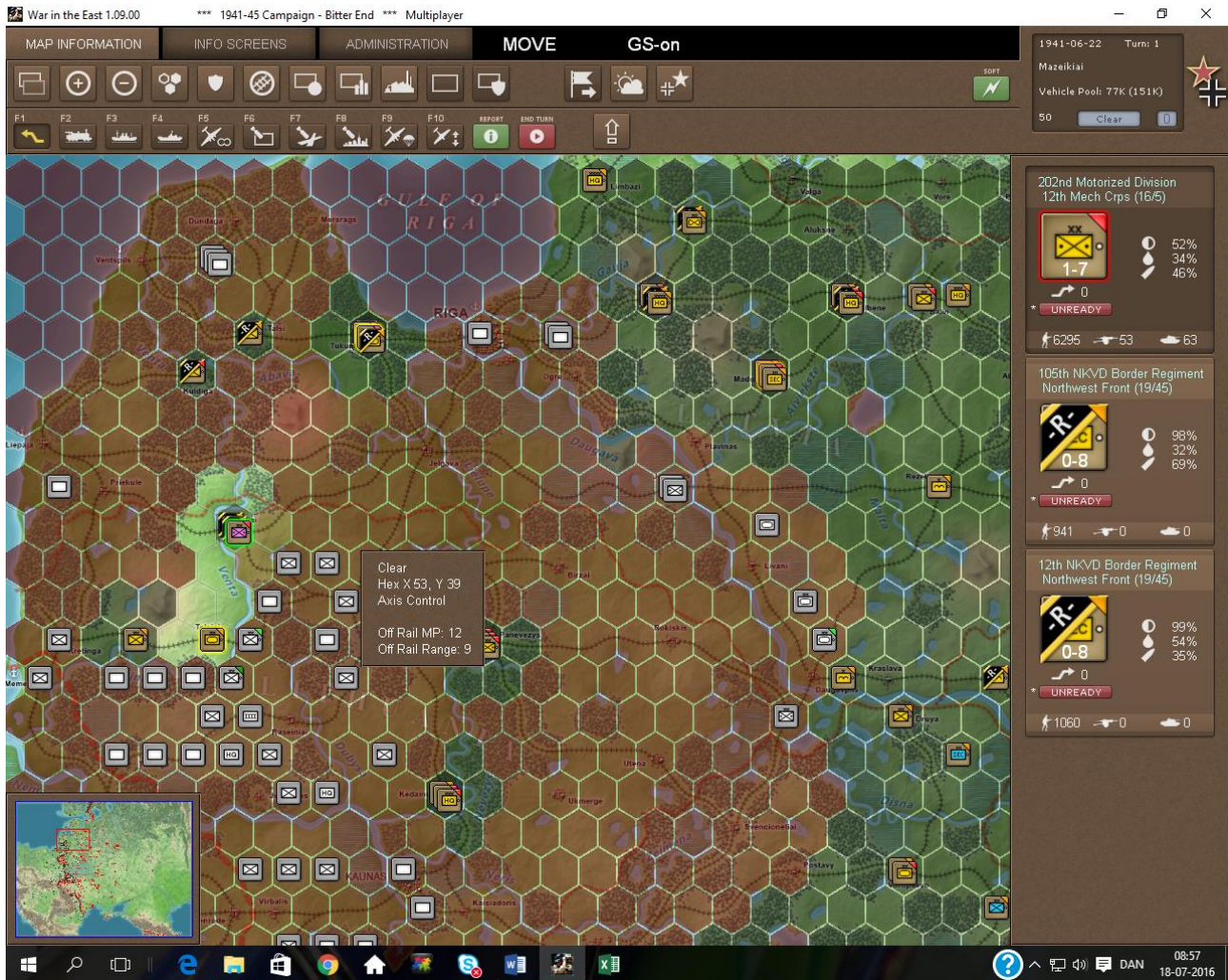
I notice that Pelton has not committed fully to destroying Soviet aviation, killing only 4000 Soviet aircraft in turn one. There were no long range attacks against the airfield behind Minsk, south of Kiev or in the Crimean peninsula. Similarly, not all of the close up airfields have been fully bombed. Kishinev for instance, is left with 98 functional aircraft.

Pelton has cut off a lot of Soviet units and has done so in a way that has created numerous smaller pockets. This is fully what I expected, and since I have not been able to "sit at the table" yet, there's nothing I could have done about it.

Reports show no fuel drops anywhere.

Axis VP advantage is 9.1 to 1.

North

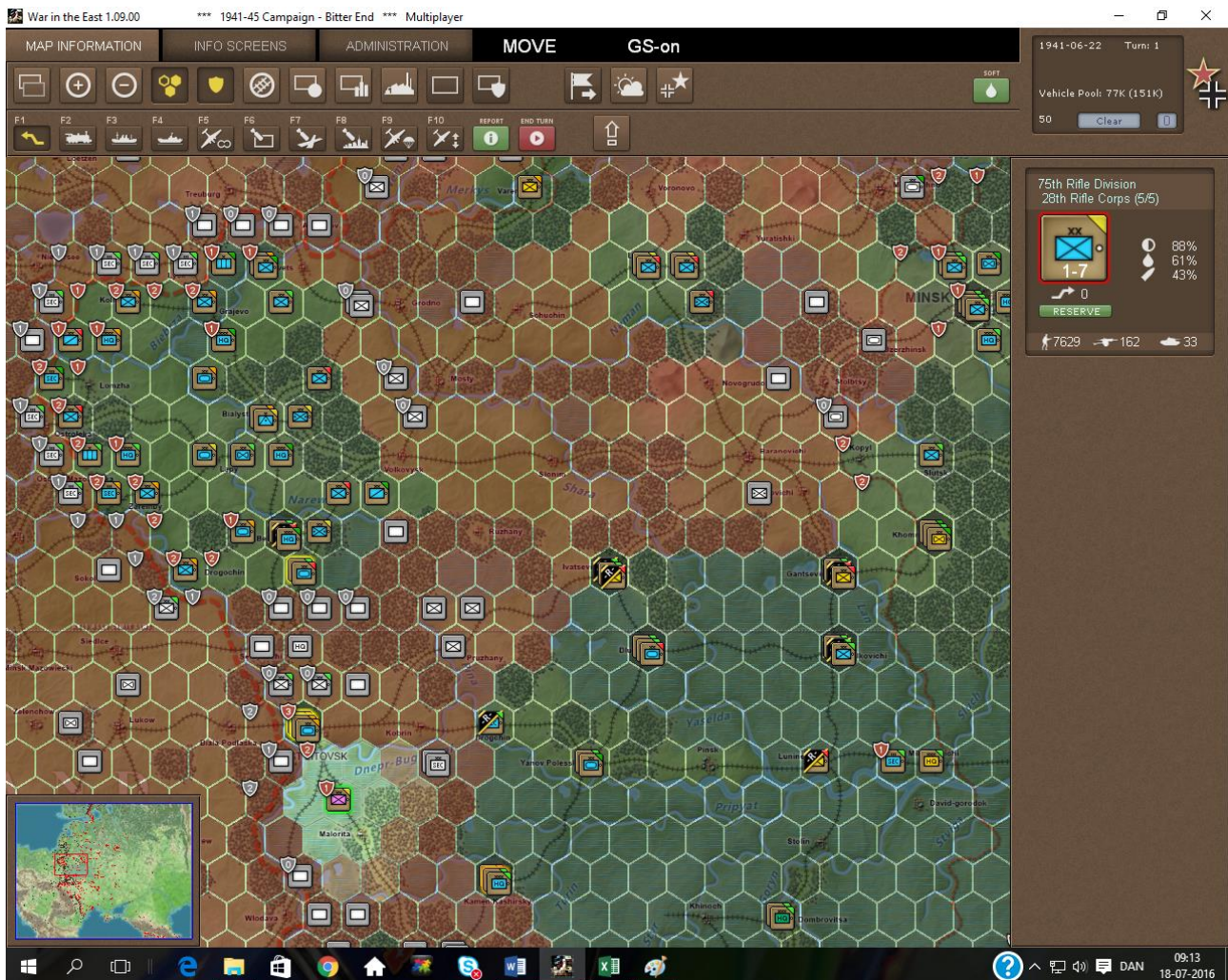


I will be unable to break any of the pockets and I lost Riga. German panzers are across the Daugava in strength and well positioned for an attack on Pskov. The one Panzer I have good intel on shows fuel in the yellow and I assume it is the same story for the remaining panzers.

I am expecting a panzer push on Pskov next turn. The northern road around Peipus would place the panzers at the far end of fuel supply and Pelton has three panzers and two motorized standing by for the assault on Pskov.

German FBD is at X51, Y44 just west of Raseiniai.

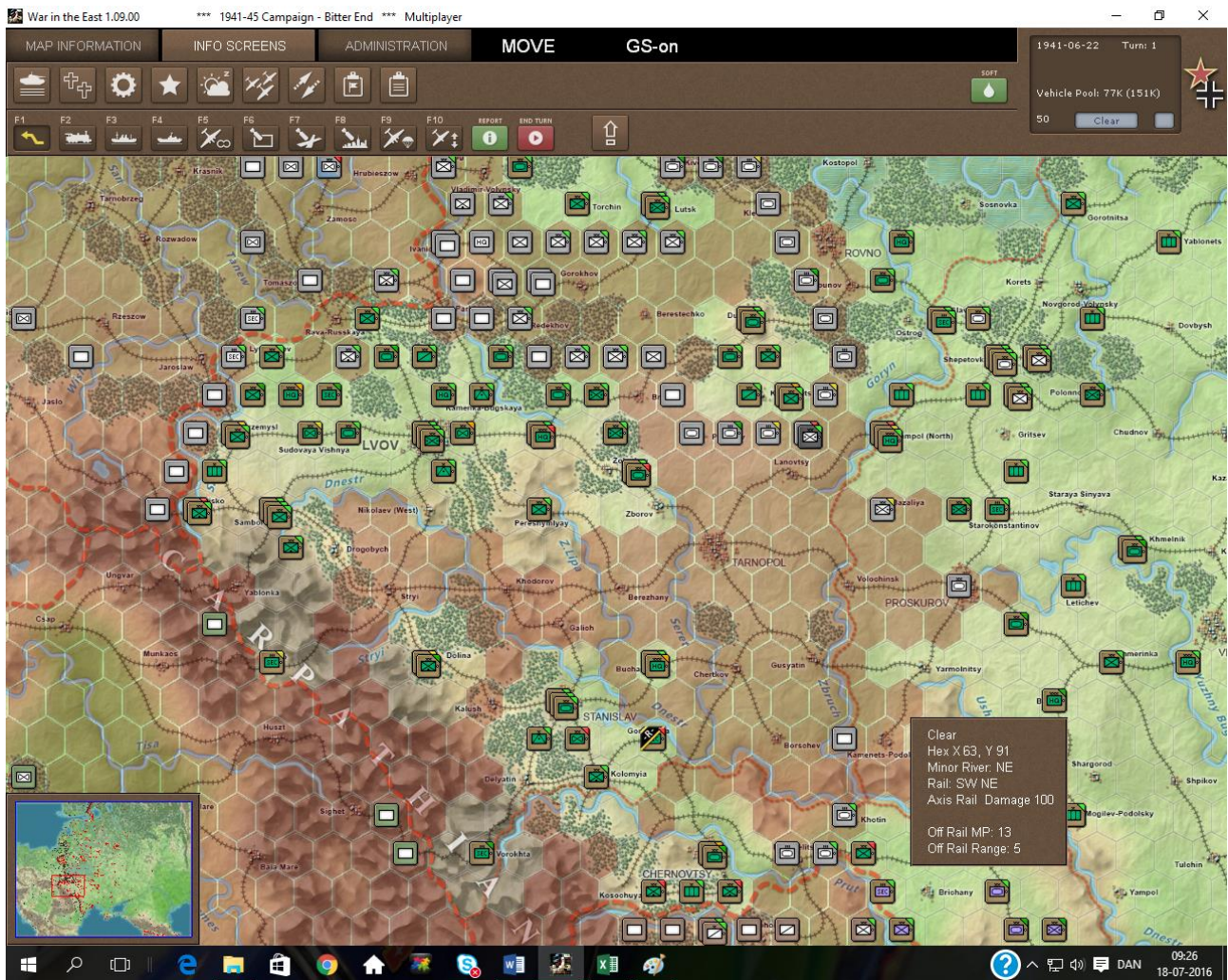
Center



The standard large pocket around Bialystok is in place as well as several smaller pocket. I should be able to break the Brest Litovsk pocket. I count only three panzers west of Minsk, and expect the standard Pelton reinforcement of the south has taken place.

I can not spot any german FBD's in the area but suspect this is due to poor reconnaissance. I reckon FBD is working its way towards Kaunas. Should the german panzers push east next turn, they will be at poor supply range by the end of that turn. I expect the germans will conduct mainly cleanup operations in the area for next turn.

South



Lots of pockets. I will be unable to break any of them. Supply stores in Lvov (1715), Stanislaw (746) and Chernovitsy (366) will soon be depleted. Both Proskurov and Rovno has fallen. On the outside of the pocket I will be unable to encircle any of the advance german units.

German panzer and motorized unit fuels are generally in the yellow, although Das Reich Northeast of Tarnopol is in the green. I fully expect a german attack southeastwards as this will both threaten the encirclement of the entire Southern Front as well as position the panzers for an attack in to the Dnepr bend. I need to plan accordingly.

I do not spot any german FBD's but take notice of one peculiar situation: In both the north and the center Pelton has been very careful to surround his FBD's with protective units. Assuming he has done the same in the south it seems his FBD is heading towards Gorokhov. I dismiss the idea of Pelton taking the northern route as that would cost his FBD an extra turn to get to Gorokhov, which leaves the center and south route. Those routes however both require the use of hex X49, Y80 in Poland that is within the reach of one of my infantry divisions. Alternately, I can encircle one german mountain division that is suspiciously placed in a way that makes this possible.

I fully expect the fourth german FBD to be on it's way to Rumania. It should be stuck on the Hungarian border currently, if I remember the rules correctly (no germans in Hungary on turn one).

Planning

In general, the high level of fuel supply in all German armored and motorized units mean that I will be severely outmaneuvered if I stay too close. I need to pull back my forward units in such a way as to delay the German advances without risking too many units of my own. As I can not yet evacuate any production facilities, I will use my rail to evacuate as many units as possible.

As I have received neither newly activated units or reinforcements from off map, there is little planning involved in where to reinforce my fronts.

North

My encircled units are all effectively dead. The only thing that remains is to make the Germans pay as much MP's as possible in order to make them stay dead. I plan to relocate some of my HQ's in order to get them out of their pockets and then (hopefully) next turn spending AP's to reassign support units to STAVKA. I'm hoping that this practice will ease the strain on my armaments production significantly in later turns (I don't have experienced on this already). I also plan to link the two pockets west of Riga and move an infantry unit so as to narrow the German supply corridor as much as possible.

North of the Daugava the Northwest Front is a complete mess. I will withdraw what I can hoping to create a checkerboard defense base on the fortifications south of Pskov and the Velikaya river.

Center

The Bialystok pocket is lost. Even if I have significant forces here, there's no chance I can get any of them out or defend myself for a prolonged period. I will relocate some HQ's (the one's with most support units attached) in order to reassign support units to STAVKA. The remaining units I will spread out, so as to force the Germans to conduct a series of attacks.

I will break the Brest Litovsk pocket. Brest Litovsk itself holds 543 supplies. I will pull the panzer division there east into the open terrain and one infantry division south into the marshes. Pelton will then have to either reencircle them or risk them routing out of the pocket.

Even if I don't expect any significant German advances in the center, I will not take any chances with my unencircled units. The time is NOT for a forward defensive line. Overall, I will withdraw units towards the "landbridge" and the Dnepr. However, as Minsk is unfortunately well supplied (5337) and fueled (12246) I will leave an infantry division behind to protect the city (together with that AA unit garrisoned in Minsk).

South

The two northern pockets that I can not reconnect to the Lvov pocket will go into hedgehog defense. I will try to place the units there for maximum nuisance rather than maximum defense, but I expect little good to come of it.

I intend to reconnect the southern pockets to the Lvov pocket, and will plan as if they were one big pocket. I need to do a series of things with this pocket:

- As always I will relocate relevant HQ's and reassign support units to Stavka
- I will form hedgehog defenses around the supplied cities and towns
- I will place units for maximum nuisance
- I will deploy mountain divisions for mountain "fortress" south of Delyatin which holds 400 supplies.

- I will use that northernmost infantry division to cut the railline in X49, Y80 hopefully slowing the advance of a german FBD unit.

The units I have west of Kiev I plan to withdraw. I will create a very thin screen of fortified regions and NKVD regiments in front of the german advances and the get as much as possible back towards Kiev. However, I can not ignore the threat of a german thrust towards the southeast and the potential surrounding of my entire southern Front. I will need to create som sort of screen here to give the Southern Front time enough to escape.

I will also start preparing the defense of Odessa, although I will not sacrifice many units in a vain attempt at holding the city. Meanwhile, tha main part of the Southern Front will be pulling back towards the east.

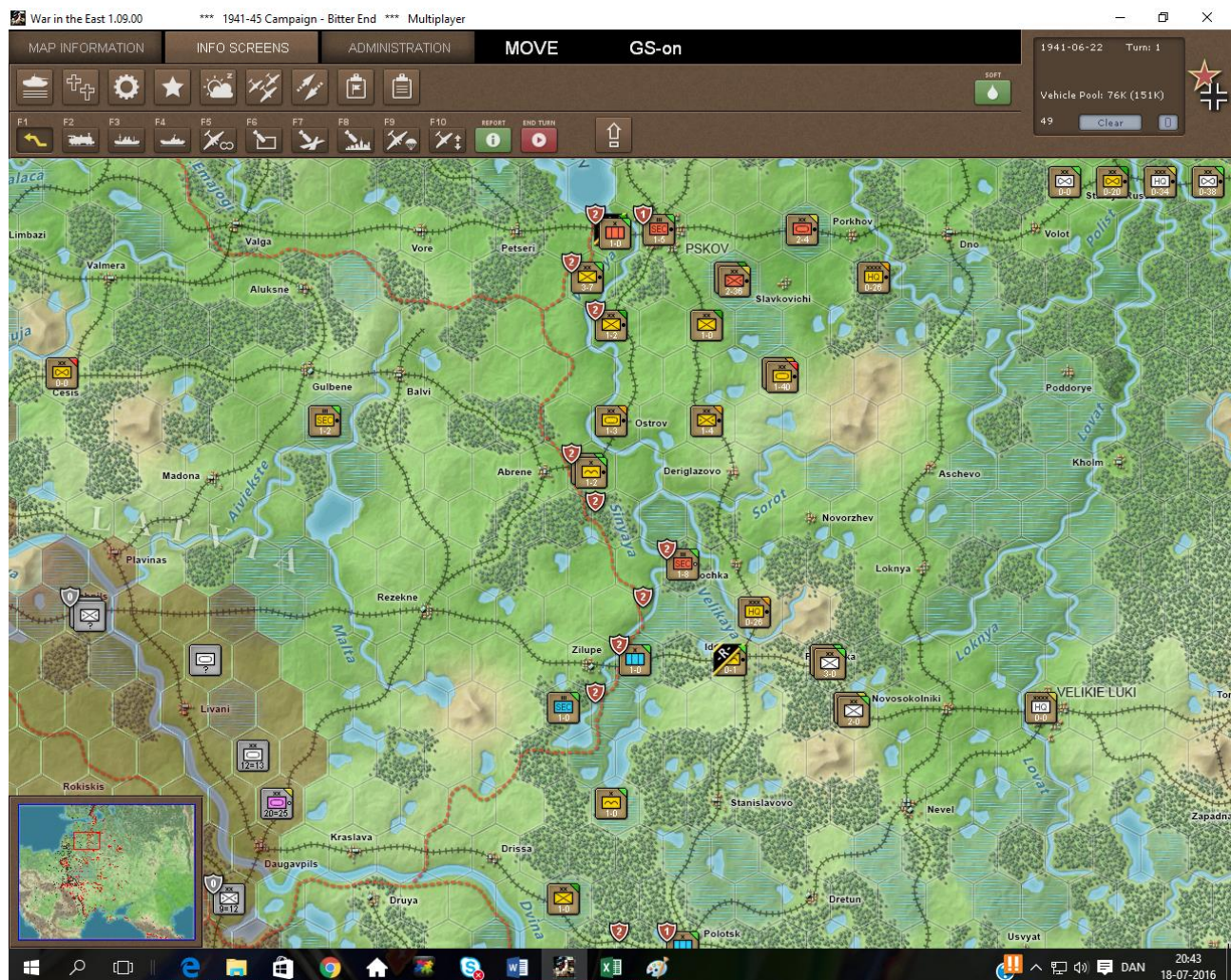
Execution

I have begun the tedious task of reassigning my airforce according to my C2IS. This shows as Pelton actually having more planes than I, as planes en route to National Reserve does not show on OoB screen.

I have decided to save most of my administration points, as I don't think the defensive bonus from reassigning divisions are very important right now, I have also refrained from changing Front command, as I would just hate to put Zhukov in charge of the Southwestern Front only to see him shot for losing the Lvov pocket.

All in all, I'm somewhat happy with what I have done this turn. I'm probably in for a rude awakening as I suspect Pelton didn't get his reputation as a brilliant player from being lucky. But what is done is done, and I will have to see what happens next.

North



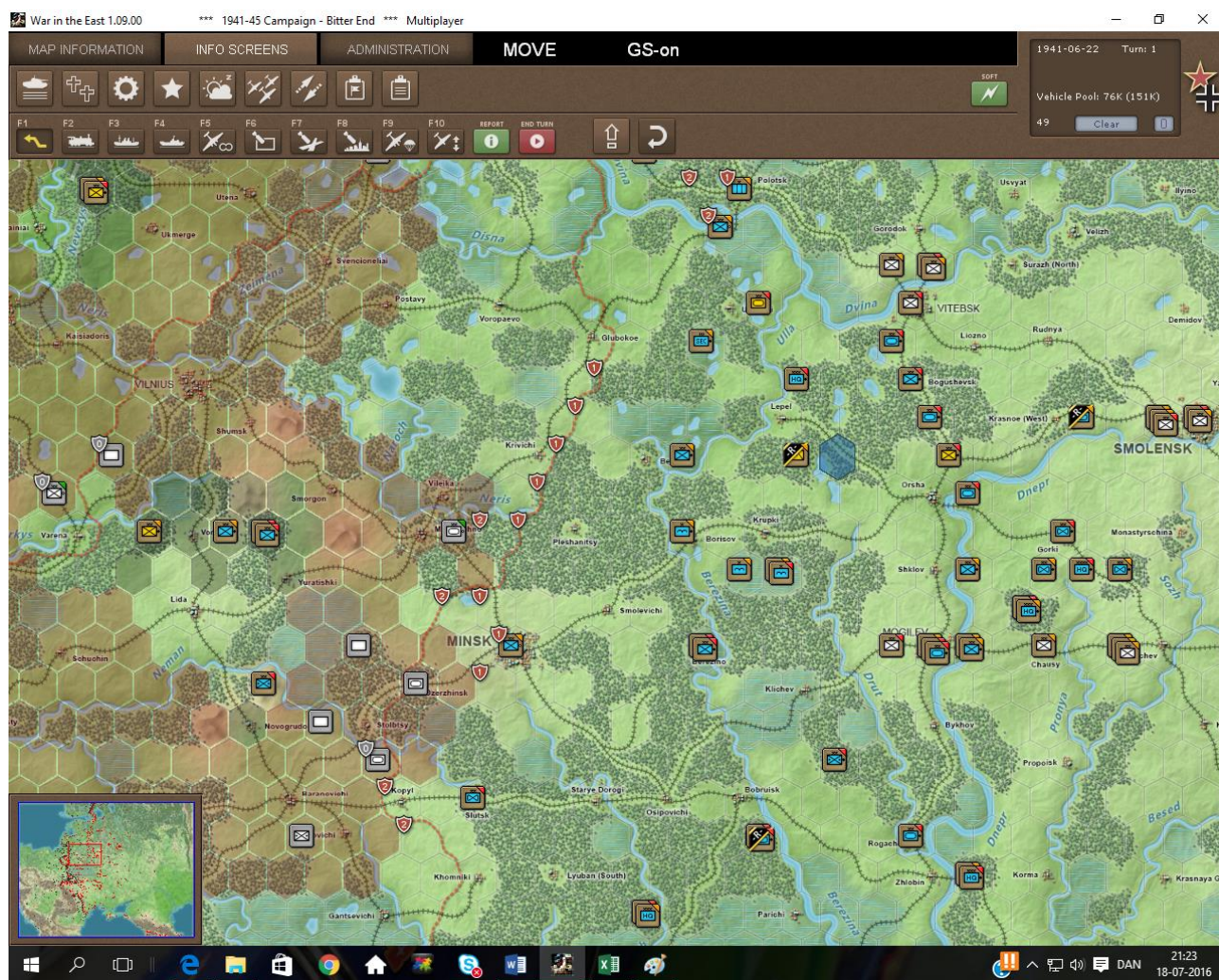
Overall, I'm far from happy with the results of this turn. I fear the german panzers will easily drive up to Pskov and dislodge my defenses there, effectively forcing my units south of the city to withdraw eastwards rather than northeastwards towards Leningrad. I could have defended the area around Pskov more heavily, but that would have invited an attack east of Pskov threatening the encirclement of my units as they

withdraw northwards. All in all I think my position is so weak I can't defend against all threats, and I have tried to choose the lesser of two evils.

I made a rookie mistake when assigning airunits to the airfields in Northwest Front. I assigned two units to an airfield that should have been pulled back first. The only remedy is to withdraw everything else on the airfield and move it as far back as possible. I just managed to land it on one of the fortified hexes off the Velikaya (that position is occupied by infantry also).

The airfield in the far west was replaced and the sec unit at Gulbene didn't have movement to get back, so I placed it so as to cost the german panzers a few more MP's if possible.

Center

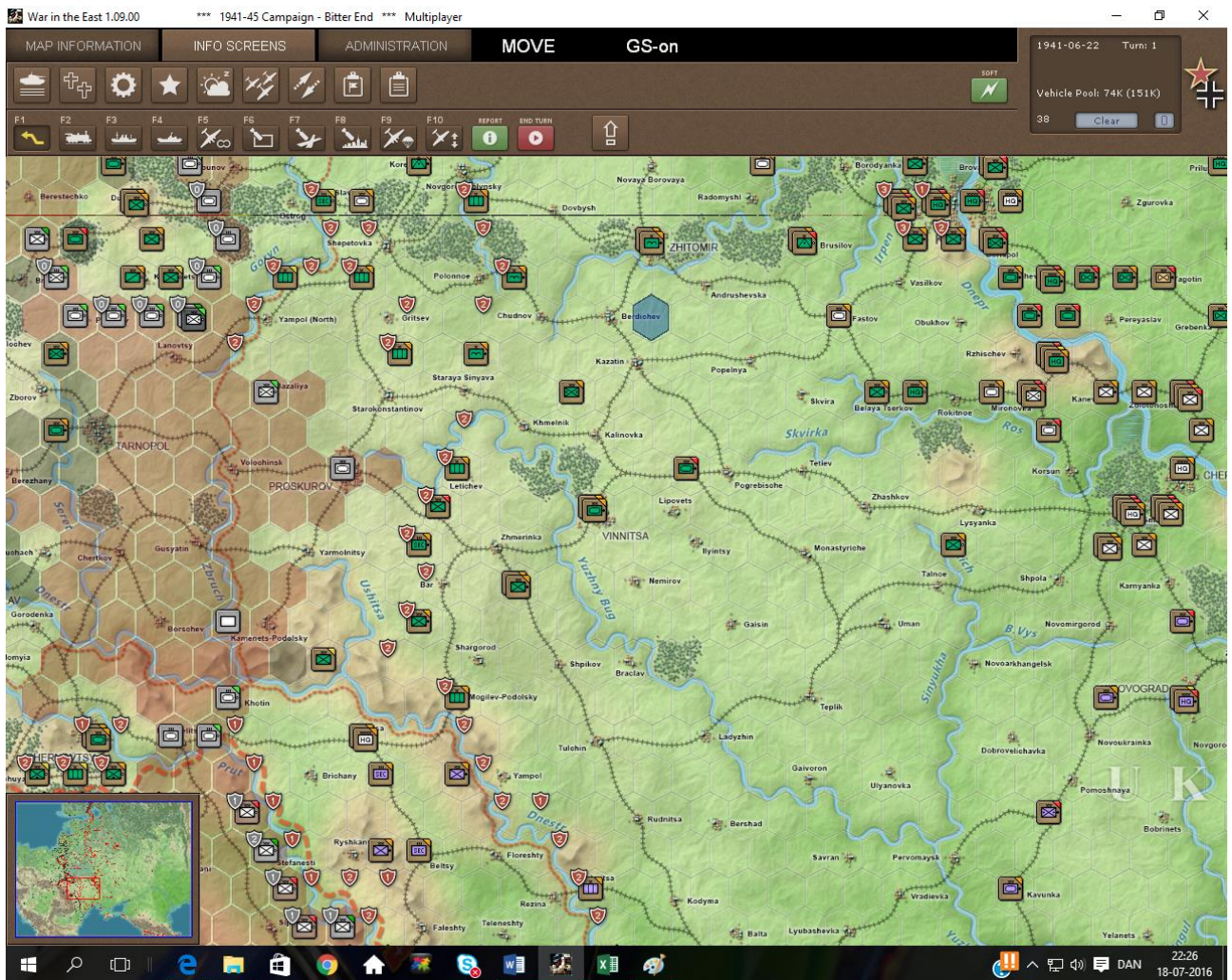


The good news: The HQ's relocated out of the Bialystok pocket all went to the Pripjet marshes where they are unlikely to get encircled by the Germans. Next turn I should be able to salvage some of the support units here. Also the Brest Litovsk pocket was broken as I intended, but that is unlikely to cause Pelton to surrender.

The bad news: There are no more good news! I have used rail transport to get the unbroken units in the Pripjat marshes back to the area between Dvina and Dnepr. The screen I have set up certainly does not

look impressive on the above image, but truth be said it is even worse than it looks. The units forming a front west of Smolensk are all unready.

South



Most of the HQ's I relocated out of the Lvov pocket went to the Pripjat marshes. This is good news, as it will let me reassign a few more support units to STAVKA instead of having them die with the rest of my units. I will not consider the logic of having a Russian army HQ withdraw through three lines of german landsers AND getting their precious 152mm artillery pieces with them. But that is what my sixth army just did.

I have established a very thin "alternate hex" defense along the front. This consist of fortified zones, NKVD squads, AT regiments and the odd division or two. It will not prevent the germans from breaking through to the Southeast and I will probably have some of the southern Front encircled. However, I did manage to pull out the high value targets from this front (using rail). Those units will come in handy later on, when there's a frontline to be established.

I also remembered to take the rail line in X48, Y80. All I risk is one surrounded infantry division which will die soon anyway, and I might just delay an FBD unit for a turn or two. Fingers crossed here.