

Strategic overview

Turn 1: Strategic Considerations

I am playing Dontra85, this time playing as the Axis, which will be a new experience. I have never played as the Axis "Post Pelton" which means that I have virtually no experience to draw on for this game, and I am bound to make plenty of mistakes. If nothing else, this will provide a learning ground for me and some cheap laughs for the rest of you.

Dontra is an unknown to me, and I really do not know what to expect.

Situational analysis

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

Ground Strategy

On the ground, I realize I should probably play through the opening move as the Germans five or ten times in order to develop an optimal "scripted" starting turn. I will not, as I believe this is extremely boring and thus defeats the prime purpose of the game, which is having fun. Instead, I will try to play the first turn as any other turn, which basically mean you get one attempt at getting it "right".

I intend to attack along all three main vectors this game, moving one panzer corps north from Army Group Centre and moving another South. My main focus will be to grab some land and destroy as much Soviet manpower as possible.

It is a long time since I have looked at the starting setup from an Axis point of view, and there has been some changes. Most notably are the German interceptors around Berlin (making the Steldeck bombing of the German cities less attractive) and the presence of a Rumanian FBD unit. I also think there are more Soviet units in the path of the traditional Lvov pocket attack, but I can not be sure.

Strategically, I believe that the Soviets will eventually be able to produce whatever they need. Even against Pelton, where I suffered massive losses, my Soviets were producing AP and tanks for the pools by march 1942. The exception to this is the Soviet Vehicle production which is terrible for the first two years of the war. The abundance of Soviet production facilities for armament points should mean that the competent Soviet player will be able to evacuate the important productions while leaving only less important stuff for the Germans.

In short, I feel that there are two areas, where the Axis may hurt the Soviet production enough to be able to win the game: Vehicles and manpower. For this reason I will focus my war effort mainly on hitting those two "areas". As the Soviet Motorized Division holds 900+ Vehicles at the start of the game and the Soviet Tank division holds another 700+, such divisions are far more important targets than the ordinary Rifle division. Later on, the Soviet Tank Brigade, may hold about 350 vehicles, which will also make such units worthwhile targets.

Air Strategy

As always, I start the game by making a plan for how to utilize my airforces, in this case the Luftwaffe. My overall experience is that it is impossible for the Luftwaffe to defeat the Red Army Aviation, as the Soviet production numbers are simply far too great for the Germans to compete with. The Axis walk a tightrope in

this regard and one catastrophic loss can set the Germans back a lot, while one catastrophic loss as the Soviets will simply be replaced over a turn or two.

I believe that the sole purpose of the airforce is to support ground operations, either directly or indirectly. The task for the Luftwaffe is to remain an active asset capable of assisting the German Wehrmacht in the critical sectors of the ground war. I will not be focused on destroying the Red Army Aviation, as that is a task doomed to failure. The one exception to this is the Soviet Recon aircraft. The Soviets have a very low production of those (12 pr turn), and I will try to destroy as many as possible, hoping to "blind" the Soviets as much as possible.

I have assigned a series of airfields to various tasks to each Army Group, and will be moving Air Groups back and forth between the airbases as needed. Below, I will go through my types of main aircraft and how I intend to use them:

Bf 109F: At the beginning of the game, this fighter is simply the best dog fighter available to both sides. As such I plan to use it mainly in an offensive capacity against the Soviet fighters, escorting my own bombers on their missions.

Bf 109E & Bf 110: These fighters are actually more heavily armed than the Bf 109F's while they are less maneuverable. This makes them good choices for interceptors, flying against the Soviet bomber formations.

Ju 87: These aircraft are absolutely deadly in a ground support role. I have often seen how they kill off hundreds of soldiers in a ground combat before the first shot is fired on the ground. I intend to use these for ground support protected by the Bf 109F's. The low production figure of this aircraft type is a cause for concern.

He 111H: In my experience, this level bomber is the perfect choice for bombing enemy airfields. For this game, I intend to use them for bombing the Soviet Recon Air Groups. The Soviets have very low production of a mere 12 Recon planes pr turn, and if I can suppress this number, I might actually be able to partly "blind" the Soviets at a later stage of the war. The attacks will be conducted either at night, or covered by Bf 109F's.

Ju 88: The German bomber with the highest production numbers. I have struggled a lot to find a good role for this aircraft, as it simply carries too few bombs to really make an impact in ground support or ground bombing attacks. Instead, I have decided to try and use it for interdiction attacks against the withdrawing Soviets. If I can take out a few movement points from Soviet units this way, I might then cause entire divisions to get trapped and lost, that would otherwise have escaped.

Do-217: This is the German bomber with the heaviest payload. As such, I intend to use it for bombing Soviet positions, occasionally supported by Ju 88's. They are unable to defend themselves, and must be escorted by Bf 109F's.

The first turn air attacks

Planning

I have decided not to use my German Tactical Bombers for the first turn air attacks. The reason for this is that I wish to use them to support my ground based attacks, paving the way for my Panzers as much as possible. I realize I will get some scolding criticism for this, but the Soviet production system will easily cover any losses suffered, and quite frankly, I have little respect for the I-Type fighters and the Mig-3's that are situated all along the borders.

Instead, I will only use the Rumanians and the German level bombers for the airfield attacks, focusing on the Soviet Recon's as well as the few IL-2's and Yak-1's I can hit. I will also do a few bombing attacks on the local IL-4 bomber airfields.

I intend not to move the level bomber airfields much, saving a few vehicles for other supply operations.

Execution

Starting out with the Rumanian airforce bombings of Soviet airfields, I caused a total of 952 destroyed Soviet aircraft for a total of one lost Rumanian Tactical Bomber. I guess this might be about the last Rumanian success for the duration of the war, but at least, the Rumanians have enjoyed some success.

Following up with the German level bombers, I have done a series of attacks against the airfields with the highest priority targets (Recons first, then IL-2' and Yak-1's and finally IL-4's). In total, I ended the bombing campaign having destroyed 3336 soviet aircraft for a price of 36 Axis ones.

Of special interest to me is the destruction of 238 Soviet Recon aircraft.

Bf 109E-7	0	1	1
Bf 109F-2	0	9	9
Do 17Z-2	0	3	3
He 111H-4	0	3	3
Ju 88A	0	18	18
Blenheim I Rcn(R)	0	1	1
IAR 39	0	1	1
I-153	0	367	367
I-153BS	0	189	189
I-15bis	0	52	52
I-16 Type 18	0	322	322
I-16 Type 24	0	592	592
I-16 Type 29	0	19	19
MiG-3	0	707	707
Yak-1	0	57	57
Yak-2	0	72	72
Yak-4	0	24	24
Su-2	0	122	122
SB-2	0	252	252
SB-2 Rcn	0	142	142
Ar-2	0	143	143
IL-2	0	2	2
Pe-2	0	78	78
IL-4	7	161	161
TB-3	0	35	35

The North

Planning

In the north, my main objective for the turn is to advance north, capture Riga and cross the Daugava in strength. I will also try to encircle as much of the local Soviet forces as possible. To aid in this, I will move one Panzer corps north from Army Group Center.

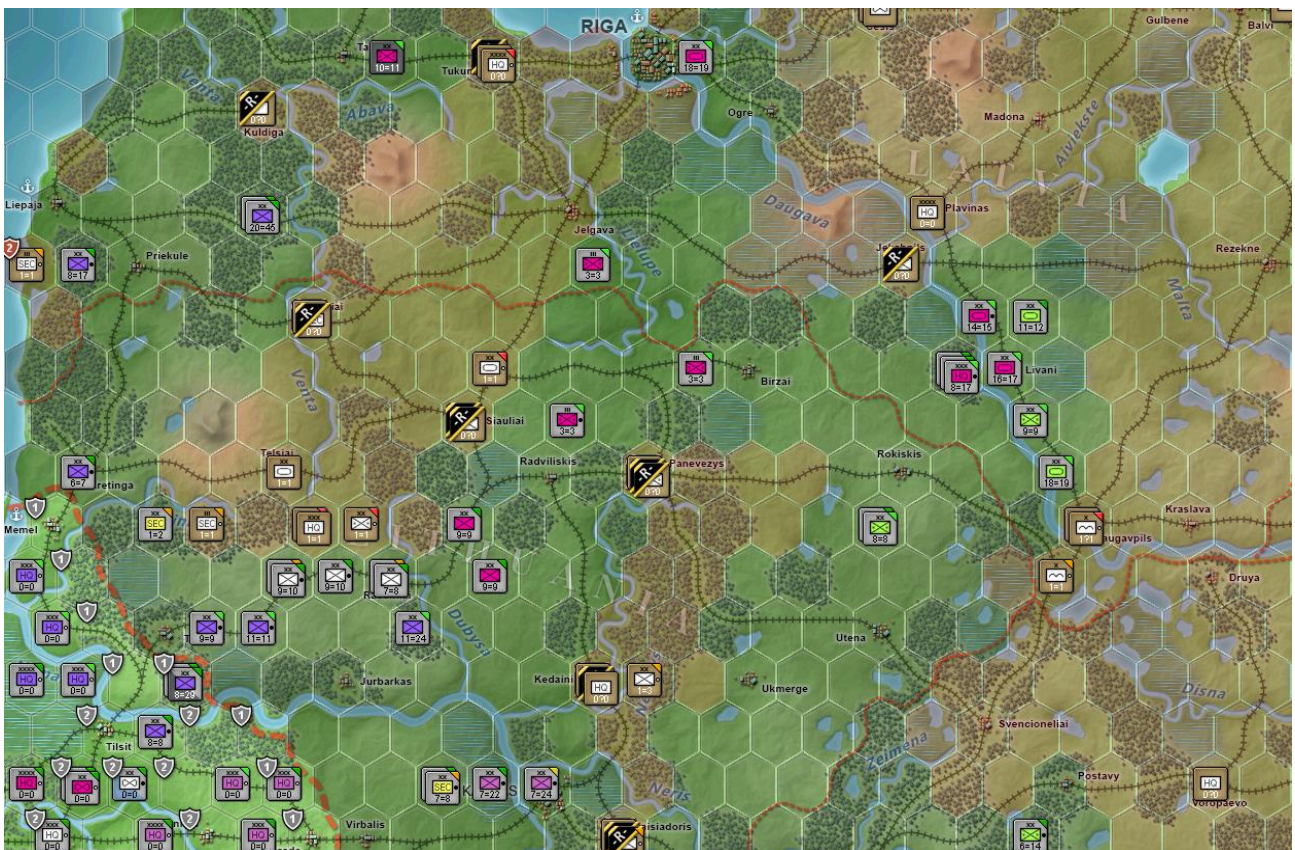
I will begin constructing rail in the Baltic area with two FBD's. While this means that there will be fewer hexes converted, it also means that I will be able to move further forward each turn. This first turn, I plan to reach Raseiniai.

Execution

Overall, the northern attacks have been successful. I have taken Riga and crossed the Daugava with no less than five mobile units, ensuring I can move further northeast come next turn. I have also encircled most of the local Soviet forces, and it seems to me that they will find it hard to break the encirclements.

I have also caught at least two Tank divisions and two Motorized divisions in the encirclements, which should add up to 3200 Vehicles lost for the Soviets.

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



The Center

Planning

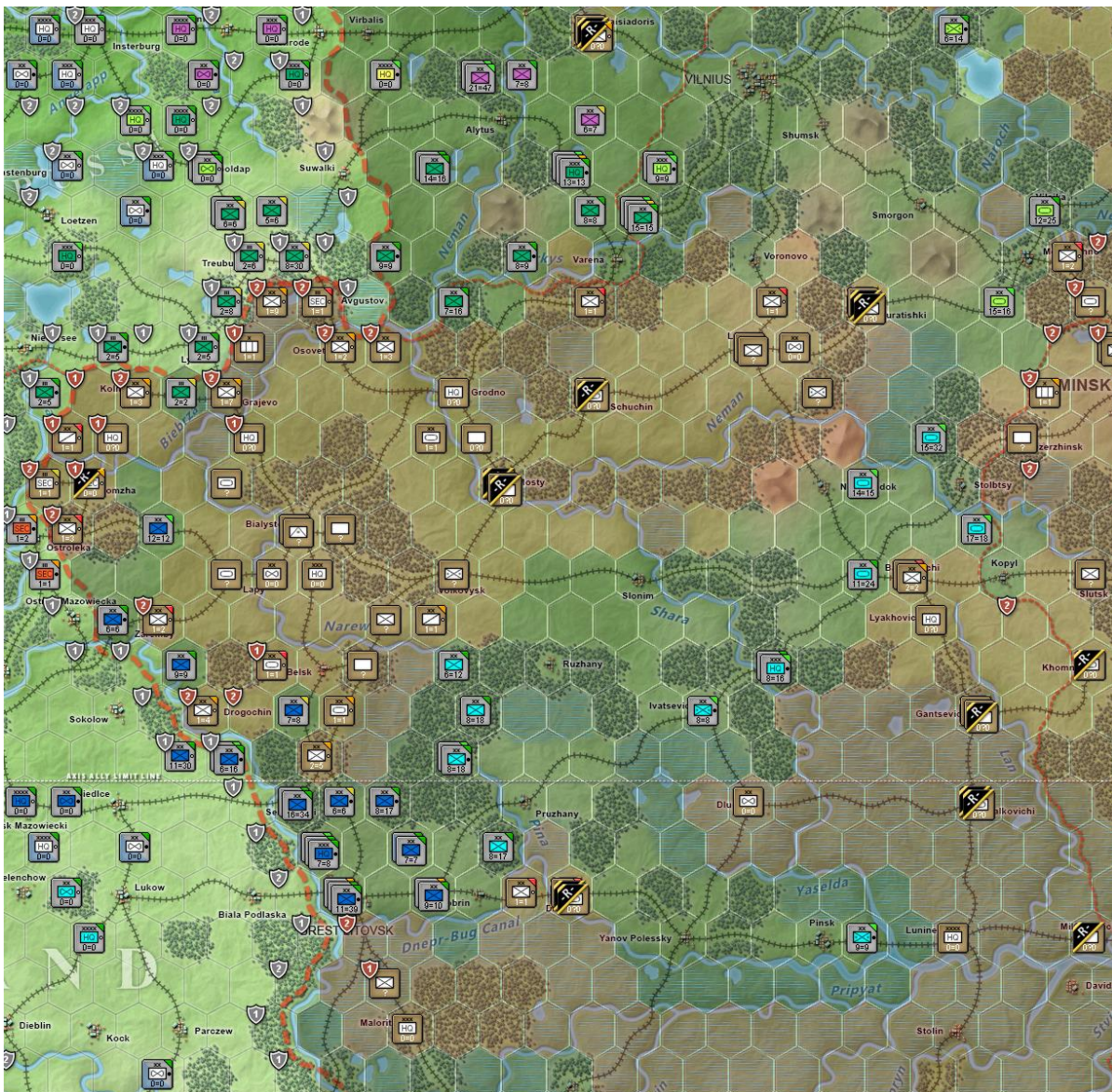
In the center, I will attack to create the Bialystock pocket and move forward towards Minsk.

Execution

I have succeeded in creating the Bialystock pocket, and as far as I can see, it might well hold. Inside the pocket are some six Tank divisions and two Motorized divisions for an estimated total of 6000 vehicles.

I have also routed a couple of Tank divisions into the Pripyat marshes, hoping to make their evacuation an impossibility.

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



The South

Planning

In the south, I will attempt to do the Lvov pocket. I do not intend it to hold however, as I also wish to outmaneuver the Soviet Tank formations in the Brody area west of Rovno.

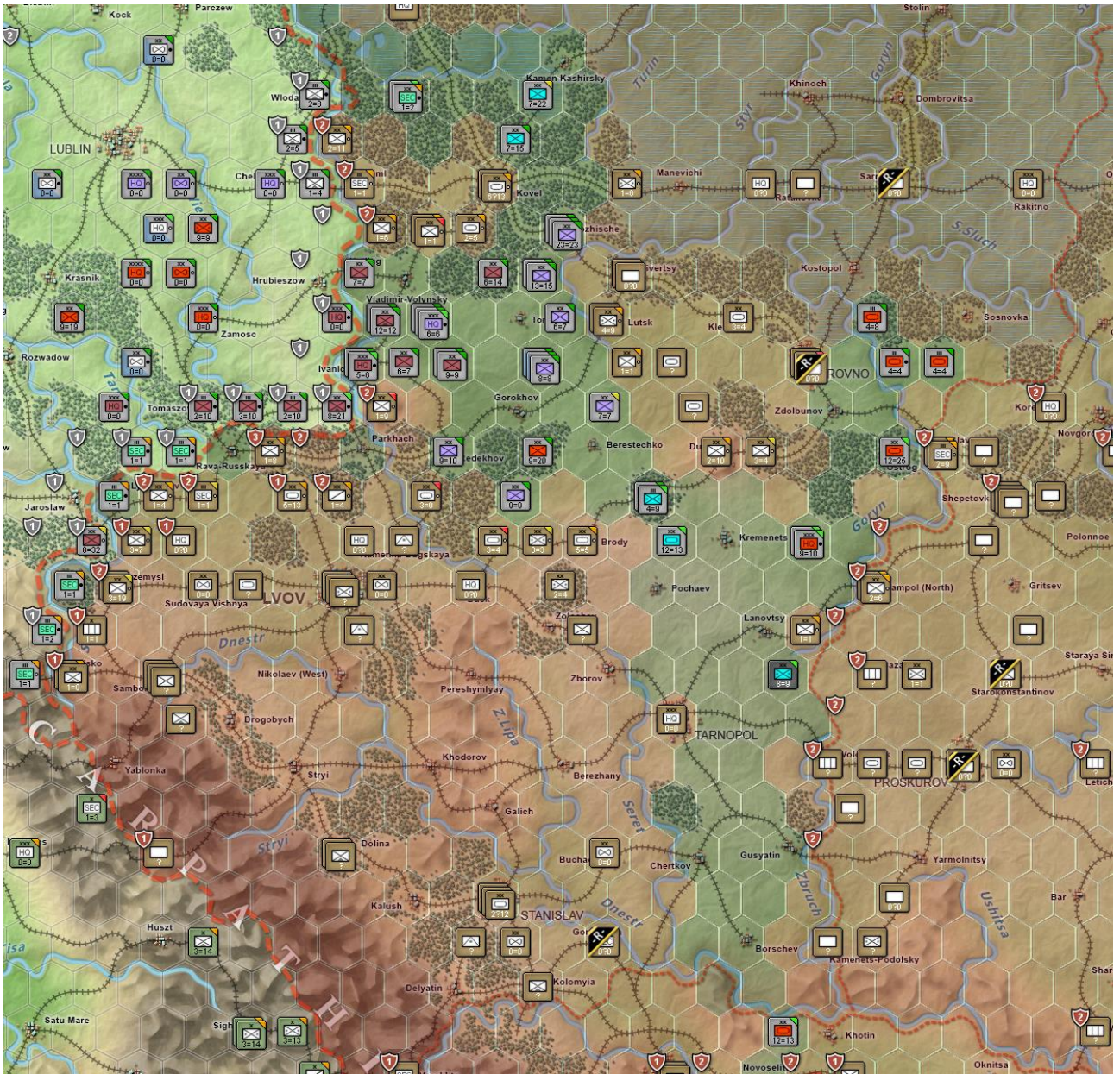
Finally, I will try to create a pocket around Kovel, with a few Soviet divisions in it.

Execution

In the south, I have found it hard to do a well executed Lvov pocket while also advancing on Rovno. While I have created both the Kovel and the Lvov pockets, both can easily be broken come next turn, and some of my Mobile units can be encircled themselves.

The good news are that at least ten Soviet Tank divisions and four Motorized divisions are either cut off or outmaneuvered. West of Rovno, for instance, are some four tank divisions and one Motorized division that is too far from the soviet rail lines to be able to escape. If the Soviets decide to break the kovel pocket, it is likely that another Soviet Motorized division will be destroyed in a few turns.

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



Conclusion

I have found it very difficult to execute the German attacks this turn, as I am not used to trying to estimate the Soviet movement capacity and thus their ability to break pockets. Because of this, I am rather curious to see how much of it I have got right.

In the air, the final casualty tally is 55 Axis aircraft for 3701 Soviet ones. I do not think the Axis ground support was very effective this round, and I need to work with this over the following turns. I have also destroyed a full fifth of the Soviet Recon air force.

On the ground, the Axis have lost 5.300 men for 132.000 Soviets. The Axis have also lost 62 AFV, which is above production. However this is expected, as I really need to inflict casualties on the Soviets, and thus have conducted quite a few attacks. The Soviets have lost some 1200 AFV, even though I have tried not to attack the Tank divisions I have been putting into encirclements.

Interestingly, I have captured 1006 Vehicles from the Soviets this turn.

The game has begun!

AXIS LOSSES			
Men	35	5327	5327
Guns	1	136	136
AFV	0	62	62
SP & AC	0	3	3
Men Killed	10	3539	3539
Men Captured	0	77	77
Men Disabled	25	1711	1711
Men Returned			0
SOVIET LOSSES			
Men	5232	132016	132016
Guns	45	2275	2275
AFV	0	1227	1227
SP & AC	2	303	303
Men Killed	63	7834	7834
Men Captured	4716	114660	114660
Men Disabled	453	9522	9522
Men Returned			0