

Strategic overview

Turn 1: Strategic Considerations

As my opponent this time is HardLuck, I expect to be in for a rough ride. Personally, I do not think there are any better players currently out there (including myself), so I would not advice betting money on my chances in this one. I will be playing the Axis once again, which suits me just fine, as I still need to improve on my skill at playing this side.

As I will be writing my usual AAR on the proceedings (five turn delay) and let HardLuck have access, I expect him to be quickly on to whatever strategies I decide to use against him. While some will obviously see this as a great disadvantage to me, I see it as the opposite. I simply need to stay on my toes and improve on my game, and over the cause of several games my own gameplay will get better a lot quicker than if I hid my intentions.

We will not be playing the Bitter End Scenario, so it is not a viable strategy for the Axis to simply ignore one of the three main lines of advance.

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 will more or less play a pretty standard strategy, by moving one Panzer Corps north from Army Group Center and another one south from the same Army group.

Air Strategy

In the air, I will do some things different from my recent game against Dontra85, as I have found several of the choices I made to have been less than effective. Mainly, I do not believe the use of Ju88's in an interdicator role is very good, especially against an opponent as experienced as HardLuck.

Nor will I refrain from using the Ju87's to hit the Soviet airfields near the border on turn one, as I really need the long range bombers to be ready to hit the Soviet bomber airfields to the rear. Failing to kill off a lot of Soviet bombers on turn one, will just cost me a lot of airfield attacks on future turns, and thus the loss of several of my fighters.

The role I see for my various types of aircraft is described below.

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 tactical 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.

Ju87: These aircraft are absolutely deadly in a ground support role. I have often seen how they kill of 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, although I expect hardLuck to catch on to this strategy from turn one (especially as I used it in my previous game against Dontra85). 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. It will be interwesting to see if HardLuck sacrifices his own production of U-2 Rcn’s as is his habit. If he does, that is half the Soviet production of recon aircraft out the window.

Ju 88: The German bomber with the highest production numbers. Against Dontra, I tried using this bomber as an interdiction aircraft, but its success was doubtful to say the least. Against Hardluck I will turn off interdiction and interception as he will exploit it to my detriment, which means I must find another use for my Ju88’s. I intend to use them for unescorted pre ground attack bombers against the hexes I will attack during the turn. I do not expect them to be particularly effective at this, but I have failed to find a better use for them.

Do-17: The early versions are merely packing a few 250kg GP bombs and will be used in conjuction with the He111’s, while the later versions pack two 1000KG GP bombs and two 500KG GP bombs. Those aircraft will be used together with my tactical bombers for ground support.

The first turn air attacks

Planning

I think I need to give the Red Army aviation a sound thrashing on turn one, if I am to stay competitive for long in the air. As such, I plan to use my tactical bombers against the Soviet airfields closest to the border until there are only a few aircraft left on those airfields.

This will leave my longer range bombers free to look for targets further inside the Soviet Union. My priority targets will be the Soviet Recons, followed by the long range bombers, followed by the good quality fighters and the SB-2 bombers.

Execution

As there is often debate on how to conduct the initial airfield attacks by the Axis, I will detail my own attacks against HardLuck. While this strategy might not necessarily be the best out there, I have decided to focus on killing as many Soviet aircraft as possible while also focusing on what I believe are high priority targets.

As always, starting with the Rumanians, the attack sequence was as follows:

1. I have conducted extensive Recon missions against the Soviet Airfields I expect to hit over the coming turn.
2. Beginning with the Rumanians with the shortest range I have moved the 12th Rumanian airfield forward towards the front, in order to save on the mileage flown over the coming attacks.
3. I then conduct a series of twelve airfield attacks on Kishinev with the aircraft of this airfield only, eventually killing off all aircraft on this airfield.
4. I then moved the 14th Rumanian airfield as close to Razdemaya as possible, only to find that the Air Groups of this airfield had spent so much movement that they were unable to attack. The good news are, that they will be closer to the front on subsequent turns.
5. I then moved the 13th Rumanian airbase forward and began bombing the Razdemaya airfield with this airbase and the leftovers from the 12th Airbase. At the end of this bombing series, there were still 45/74 aircraft left on Razdemaya.
6. Moving up the 1st Rumanian airbase, I continued the bombings with fighter cover from the 9th. At the end of those attacks, there were still 15/35 aircraft left at Razdemaya.
7. Moving up the 2nd Rumanian airbase, I then used the Potez bombers against Razdemaya, killing of the rest of the Soviet aircraft in one attack.
8. Moving focus to the airfield southwest of Odessa, I continued bombing with the Potez bombers giving them some fighter cover from the available IAR80A's. this brought the Odessa airfield to 121/172 aircraft.
9. I then moved up the 4th Rumanian airbase and took over bombing with the Rumanian HE111H-3's covered by He112B's and Bf109E's. These attacks left the Odessa airfield with 65/83 aircraft.
10. The last Rumanian aircraft I used were the PZL bombers. Moving them close, I did one attack with those bombers bringing the total of aircraft at Odessa down to 8/17.
11. I then switched target to the Soviet airbase west of Simferopol, as that holds some priority target bombers, killing off 88 bombers in three attacks before the mileage proved to be too high to continue.

This wrapped up the Rumanian attacks which left me with a total of 936 Soviet aircraft destroyed for five Rumanian ones.

Following up with the Luftwaffe attacks, I began with the Tactical Bombers attacking the airfields closest to the border.

12. I moved the 15th LW Airfield close to Siauliai and Kaunas, assigned it to the I Fliegerkorps and moved the local BF109F airfield and the Corps command close.
13. I then removed the Soviet aircraft from the above airfields in three attacks total, where my Stukas were covered by Bf109F air groups during each attack.
14. I then moved the airfields and the Corps command to attack Vilnius and proceeded to do so in two attacks leaving that airfield with 21/45 aircraft.
15. Moving the 16th LW Airbase and assigning it to V Fliegerkorps and then moving the Corps HQ and the 21 LW Airbase with it, I placed them all between the airfields in Pruzhany and Lapi.
16. Bombing each of those airfields in three attacks, they were left with 9/20 and 14/24 aircraft respectively.
17. In order to make room for the remaining German Ju87 airfield near Parkhach, I then turned ground support off (x key), destroyed the two neighbouring fortified zones and moved two infantry divisions out of the hex.
18. I then moved the 10th and 18th LW airbases to Parkhach along with the II Fliegerkorps (adjacent) and proceeded to bomb the airfields in Lvov and Sudovaya Vishnya. Those were practically empty in four attacks with one being 0/0 and the other being 5/5.
19. I then did one attack on the Lutsk airbase, bringing that down to 13/16.
20. As I still had mileage left on the stukas, I then attacked the Soviet bombers in Tarnopol, killing them all off in two attacks.
21. Moving on to the Dorniers, I went for the Soviet airbase in Lida. I moved it forward, assigned it to the I Fliegerkorps and proceeded to bomb covered by my Bf109F's. This brought the Lida airfield down to 32/40 aircraft.
22. I then did my Ju88A's from north to south, going first for the Recon aircraft in Ogre. In order to do this, I moved up the 5th LW Air base and began bombing. That took three attacks (the second and third with only part of the local bomber strength) to remove the Recons in Ogre.
23. The remaining attacks on the 5th LW airbase were then spent on the Soviets in Cesis.
24. I then moved up the 3rd and 44th LW Airbase and continued bombing Cesis. Strengthening those attacks with the leftovers from previous attacks, this left Ceseis airbase with 50/61 aircraft.
25. The next Ju88 airfield was the 8th LW airfield, which I moved up to Brest Litovsk before beginning to bomb the Soviets at Smolevichi. This left Smolevichi with 50/62 aircraft.
26. The 23rd LW Airbase was then used to bomb the Soviets at Vasilkov. While the airbase at Korosten was nearer, the Vasilkov airbase was a much higher priority, due to its many Recon aircraft. One attack from this airbase cause 40 Recon's destroyed leaving the airbase with 3/3 aircraft.
27. Switching target to the airbase at Fastov, the remaining attacks from this airbase brought the Soviet one down to 73/96.
28. The last of the Ju88 airbases, the 22nd LW airbase, was used against Stanislav, bringing that airfield to 51/61.
29. Doing the He111's from north to south, I started with the 9th LW Airbase. Moving it close to Brest Litovsk and doing one attack on the Bobruisk airfield killed off 194 Soviet bombers.
30. Following up with an attack on the Gorodok airfield, that killed off another 111 Soviet bombers.
31. With the remaining mileage on this Airfield, I then did a minor attack on the Soviets at Fastov airbase.

32. The 9th LW Airbase was used to do a series of attacks against the long range bombers southeast of Kiev. This brought that airfield down to 51/71.
33. Finally, the 20th LW Air base was used against the remaining high priority or high numbers Soviet targets.

The above series of attacks has caused the destruction of 4859 Soviet aircraft for the cost of 34 Axis ones. Notable losses are 10 Bf109F-2's for the Axis and 233 recon aircraft, 237 SU-2's and 152 IL-4's for the Soviets. Those numbers will certainly climb, as I go through the ground attacks for the turn.

The North

Planning

In the north, I will try to do a pretty standard attack this turn. My objectives are to capture Riga, push several Panzers across the Daugava and to encircle the maximum possible amount of Soviet troops. I will also do what I can in order to advance my rail lines to Raisenai (by using two FBD units).

In order to achieve these objectives, I will let one of the Panzer Corps from Army Group Center aid in the northern push. Once Leningrad has either fallen or I have had to give up on that objective, this Panzer Corps will be moved south once more.

In order to assist in the northern attacks, I plan to issue the XXIII Corps with six infantry divisions, all at 100% strength and at "Refit" mode. I will also assign some Heavy Nebelwerfer Support units to the Corps Command and I will issue several Pioneer battallions to the divisions under the Corps. The Corps itself will be placed under Model and given a black color on the map. In time, I can reassign the Corps to serve directly under OKH, and then move it about to wherever I need the strength to attack with heavy infantry.

Before I start to do the attacks in the north, I will assign von Kluge to OKH and also make sure that my two RHG Commands have four construction battallions each. I will use those HQ's to advance my rail repair in areas where I do not have an FBD available. Finally, I will set all infantry divisions and artillery support units to 80% ToE while my Panzers and Motorized divisions will be set to 100% and "Refit" mode. I do believe I need to maintain what Heinz Guderian labelled "Stosskraft" (Punching power) in my mobile units.

Execution

Starting out by using the local infantry to clear a path through the northernmost Soviet defenders along the border, I then proceeded to assign two Pioneers to the 6th Pz division and moved it up to Riga. Here, unfortunately, the first three attacks on the city failed, and in the end I moved up a second Pz in order to give my attack enough power to cause the fall of the city. While the fourth attack succeedd, the loss of 43 AFV to take Riga is certainly bad news.

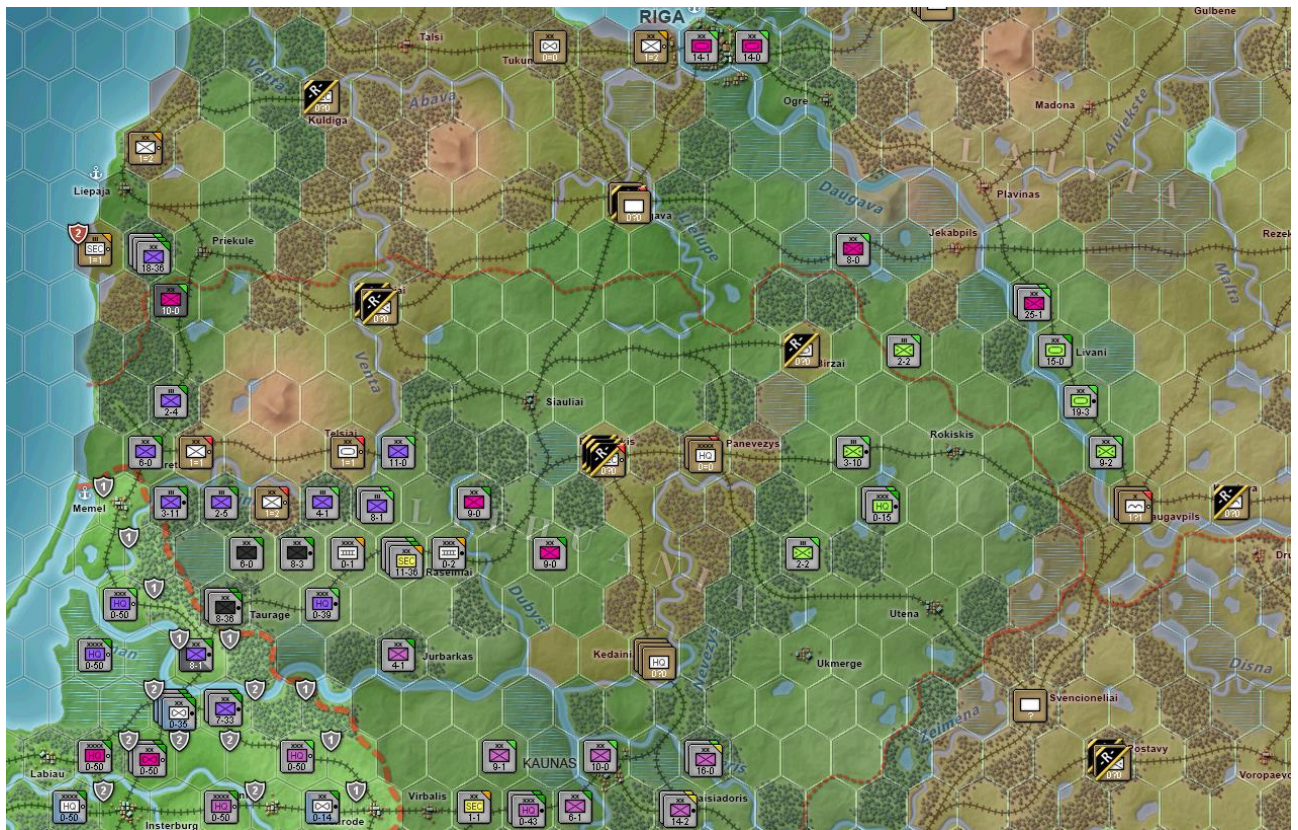
Along the Baltic coast, I was able to push a Motorized division all the way up to Ventspils, and then begin pulling it back south again until it stands 10MP and four hexes from the nearest German Railhead.

The attack across the Daugava also went according to plan, as I ended up having three Panzer divisions and two Motorized divisions across the river, and the two owning Corps HQ's at 32MP and 13 hexes from the nearest German railhead. This figure will get better, as the pending friendly terrain will turn friendly and as the Soviets will be unable to sever the supply connection (I hope).

My FBD's have advanced to Raisenai as planned, and I do not see any possibilities for them being displaced. However, the smart Soviet player would move any encircled good order units into the rail hexes northeast of Raisenai, as that would turn those hexes into pending friendly terrain when I have to take them again nextturn, thus delaying my FBD's a little.

I expect the Soviets to close the western access path to Riga during their turn, but I think there is little I can do to prevent this other than risking to rout the Soviets out of their pockets. On the other hand, as far as I can tell, the Soviets will not be able to close the eastern corridor and break the pockets of the north.

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



The Center

Planning

In the center, I plan to do the Bialystock pocket, but as I am uncertain of how easy it is to break, I wish to be cautious about it. So if in doubt, I will simply rout the Soviet forces away.

Other than that, I will do a fairly standard attack in order to encircle Bialystock and bring my own units up towards Minsk.

Execution

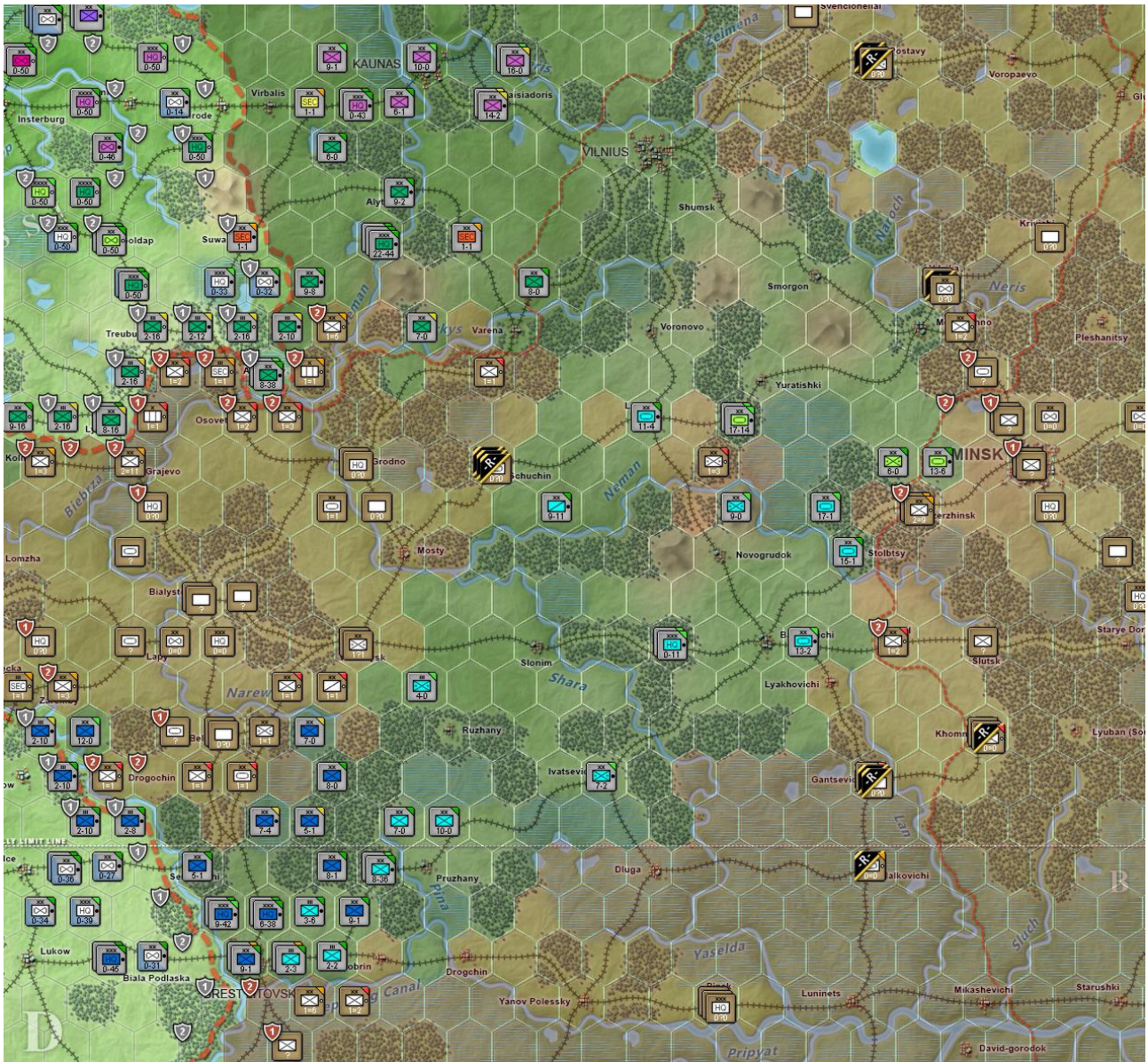
Beginning the attacks around Brest Litovsk, I find myself uncertain as to exactly what strength I need to destroy the forces inside the city. I decide to be cautious about it and use three divisions from the 4th Army as well as an infantry division from the 2nd Panzer Group. The attack succeeded, but barely.

Axis Forces Attacking:		1 of 1 51,68 - City(Brest Litovsk) - Clear Turn:1 1941-06-22		Soviet Forces Defending:	
LIII Corps -6% 293rd Infantry Division (130) 132nd Hvy Nbl W. Bn (0) XIII Corps 17th Infantry Division (183) 78th Infantry Division (169) XII Corps -16% 45th Infantry Division (94)		Forces Engaged ATK: men 66808, art 920, afv 4 DAM: men 133, art 22, afv 0 LOST: men 258, art 11, afv 0 ATK: ftr 37, bmr 29, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 1, utl 0		14th Mechanized Corps -6% 22nd Tank Division (88) 28th Rifle Corps 6th Rifle Division (126) 42nd Rifle Division (215) 447th Crps Art Rgt (5) 455th Crps Art Rgt (0)	
[v]		22nd Tank Division ROUTED 42nd Rifle Division RETREATED 6th Rifle Division RETREATED		Western Air Command [v]	
CV: 576->820.2 Eng Val: 8 Comm HQ: XIII Corps G Hans-Gustav Felber		Odds 2.26 : 1 Show Details Exit		CV: 434->362.0 Fort: 3.10->0.00 Comm HQ: 28th Rifle Corps GM Vasily Popov	

As I did the attacks, I found myself doing some errors in my moves and attacks, which shows that I am yet not familiar with the way the Axis should be used.

After the attacks were done, I spotted a major error in that I had left a Soviet Cavalry division that might be able to break the encirclement, and even if it did not, could severely hamper the flow of supplies to my own units. Because of this, I had to divert one Motorized regiment originally from a Panzer Corps originally intended to go south. I could only hope, that this would not prove fatal in my attempt to create the Lvov pocket.

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



The South

Planning

In the south, I will attempt to do the Lvov pocket. I would like it to hold, but I have yet never been able to make that happen. That is a price I must pay for not reading and rereading every piece of documentation ever made on the conduct of the Axis turn one, I guess.

Execution

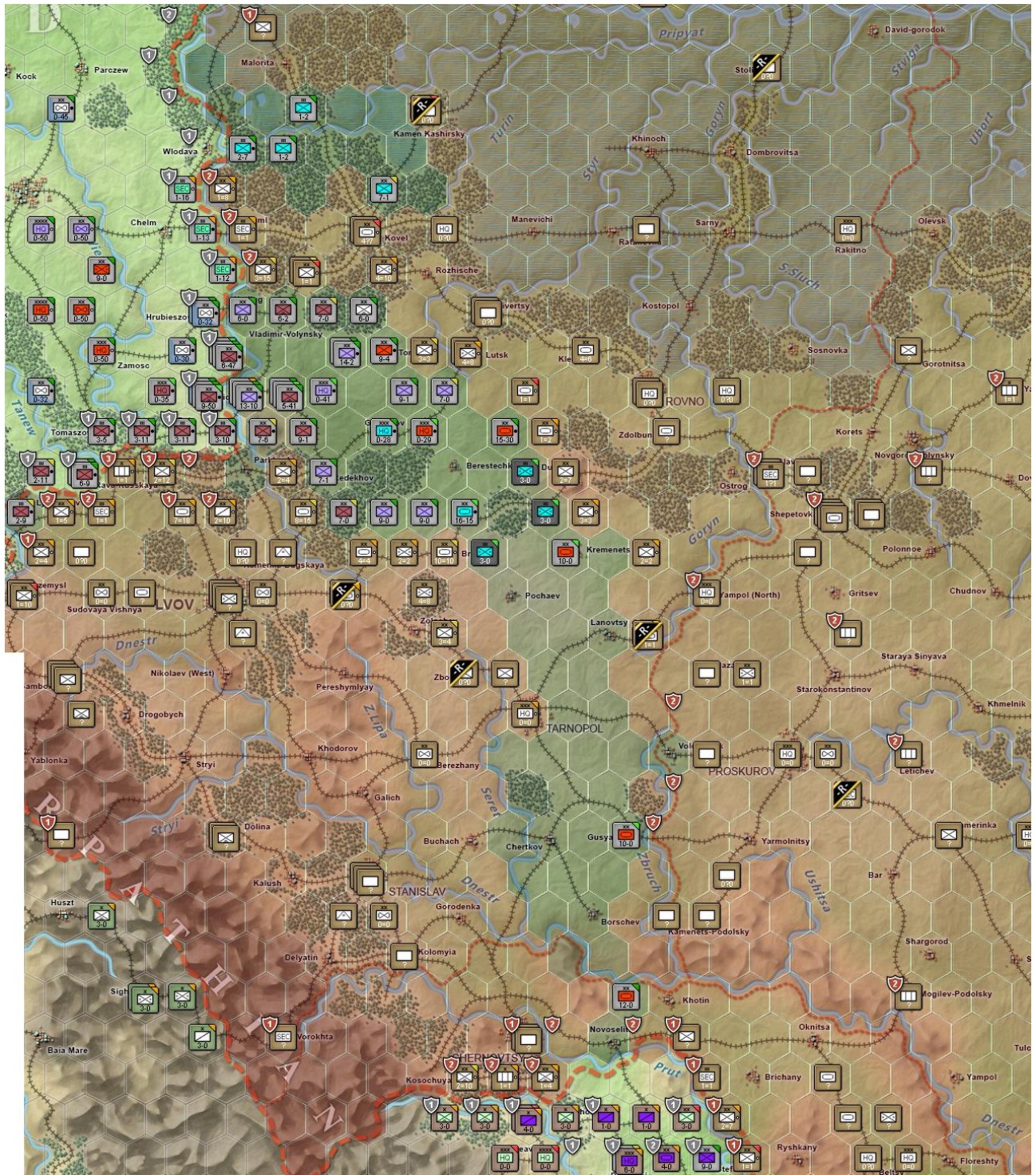
While I have made the Lvov pocket, it is obvious that it will not hold. This became clear to me very early in during the attacks, and so I swiftly changed my objectives to securing a decent flow of supplies for my forward units, so that they may make the pocket stick on a future turn. In my game against Dontra, I had my Panzers getting stuck with low fuel in the area behind Rovno for way to long, and I do not wish for that to happen again.

Unfortunately, two of my Panzers are outside the covered route of supplies, and I am fairly certain that one of these will be encircled during the Soviet phase. For that reason, I have focused my Air supplies of the turn on that division, so that it will not be hopelessly behind come next turn.

North of Kovel, I have pushed forward two infantry divisions in order to outmaneuver the Soviet divisions here. While those divisions are not encircled, I do hope they will find it hard to escape on future turns.

In short, I am far from happy with the situation in the south, and I fear it will be a few turns before I start gaining real ground in this area.

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



Conclusion

On the ground, I have lost 106 AFV this turn! Half of those losses were suffered at Riga, making those attacks by far the most costly for the Germans this turn. Losing this many AFV at this stage of the game is bad news, as I am certainly going to miss them in a few short turns.

In the air, things are looking a lot better. In total, I have destroyed 4951 Soviet aircraft for a price of 42 of my own. I have even been able to assign a few fighter Air Groups back to the national reserve, as the Soviets have very little aircraft left anywhere near the front.

The game has begun!