

Strategic overview

Turn 18: Strategic Considerations

Situational analysis

____ SPECIAL ____						
-	Vehicle Repair	A	-	3855	140272	0
-	Port	89	16	0	0	0
-	Railyard	197	7	0	0	0
-	Manpower	2547	90	47587	2496128	0
-	Vehicle	114	0	234768	283120	0
-	Heavy Industry	195	8	0	1516000	0
-	Oil Production	128	0	0	1088000	0
-	Fuel Production	149	0	0	607920	0
-	Resource Production	160	0	0	3016000	0
-	Armaments Production	288	10	139671	1159500	0

The mud has arrived. Consequently, little action has taken place along the front. The weather forecast last turn proved inaccurate, and no blizzards have occurred.

German losses are virtually non existent, the only thing worth mentioning is the 11 transport aircraft lost tranporting fuel to the German Panzers.

Because of the mud, I will deviate from my usual "Assess", "Plan", "Execute" style when writing the AAR, and instead focus briefl on each sector of the front (no maps though) and instead dwell a little on what I think I have done poorly and what I have done well so far in the game. Finally, I will do a few comments on where I feel the game itself could improve come WitE 2.0.

Axis VP advantage is 2.5 to 1 and climbing steadily.

Three things I have done poorly

The significance of the German supply distance

I went into this game with an idea of trying to preserve my forces for battles to come. I saw no need to waste my few and very weak divisions in futile stands against the Germans that would just result in major encirclement battles that I was bound to lose, and so I ran when I had the chance.

In this I failed to appreciate what I have since called “the German supply distance”, which is effectively the distance the Germans can effectively supply their units. In the fall of 1941 this distance (I think) is basically 25 hexes in front of their railheads. If the Germans advance beyond this distance, they will soon find that they quickly become unable to sustain any further advances, as they simply run out of fuel. If they stay within this distance, the Russians will find it hard to stop the Germans, as the Germans have way better units at this time.

If I had applied this concept from game start, I would have realized that Leningrad would be within the German supply distance from as early as turn three or four, Moscow by turn nine or ten and Stalino by turn 15 or so. The numbers I mention try to take into account the speed of the German FBD's.

In short, the strategy of running is only (partly) viable in the south, as you simply will run out of places to run very quickly. I believe Peltons way of saying this is that you need to build your defenses from north to south.

My Evacuation order

Related to the above, as a Russian player you need to evacuate (and give up) your factories in the right order. In this game I started out by evacuating Odessa in turn three and Bryansk in about turn six or seven. That was a severe mistake, although due to the above mistake maybe not one with a severe impact.

My advice by now is this: Always look at the possible German advances and evacuate factories from the most likely avenues of advance. In hindsight it seems blatantly obvious that the Germans would ever apply much pressure on Odessa, and evacuating the city production was just wrong. If I had left it there, I doubt the Germans would have done much to take it earlier on – their eyes were always fixed on larger prizes.

Assessing the German tactical potential

This one is difficult and it relates directly to the supply system. A German Panzer unit has a basic 50 MP's every turn and loses some of them due to lack of supply. If said Panzer unit has fuel showing red and is at the far end of it's supply distance (see above) you could expect it to gain little fuel in the logistics phase and maybe end at around 60% fuel or so. This figure is by no means definite and should be seen as nothing more than my best guess.

60% fuel equates 60% Movement Points leaving the Panzer with 30 Movement Points to spend in the upcoming turn. To add some complexity you also have to take into consideration the Germans doing HQBU's and refueling by air.

Knowing these things, the question then becomes this: How much can a group of X Panzers achieve if they each can be assumed to have Y movement points? If you can answer this correctly, you will be able to assess when to pull back and when to stay put. I failed in this task repeatedly.

Three things I have done well

Going APE

Yeah, I know. This is why I settled on the abbreviation. Actually, it stands for “Assess”, “Plan”, “Execute”. I have tried to focus my game turns on first assessing the situation in depth, the planning what to do and finally executing my plans. I believe this has allowed me to play better (or less poorly, if you prefer it so) against a good German player.

I have certainly spotted a few possibilities, that I would have missed if I just began every turn by moving pieces around on the board.

My Evacuation Priorities

Going in to the game, I decided to only evacuate those factories that would not cost “doubles”. The reason being that the Germans would likely continue their attacks and simply place new factories at double cost for evacuation.

While I am in deep trouble with only 288 Armament factories left, I shudder to think of what I would have remaining, had I chosen to try to evacuate at double cost.

My Aviation designation

While I must admit that the Germans have been “relaxed” in their approach to the use of aviation, I do feel that I have been very focused on using the right planes for the right tasks. I could claim that the high Luftwaffe losses bear witness to this, but in honesty, I think I need to play a German player that is more watchful of his aviation than Pelton before I make such a claim.

Three things I feel the game fails at

The Luftwaffe nach Berlin strategy

While I will not fault Pelton for playing his airforces the way he did, I will fault the game for making it viable for a competent player to use (or not to use) the Luftwaffe the way Pelton does.

I have enjoyed virtual air supremacy over large parts of the front for a considerable time, not because I have beaten the Luftwaffe, but because Pelton decided against moving his airbases thus saving truck for resupplying his ground divisions. Historically, it would never have been intelligent for the Germans to not use the Luftwaffe to suppress the Soviet air forces. A single example of this is the fact that I probably killed some 4-500 Level Bombers in unescorted bombing attacks over Leningrad, losing virtually nothing myself.

The Purchasing of Soviet Support Units

I have received an advice (undoubtedly sound in game terms) of building at least 150 Sapper Regiments by the end of 1941. In short, the sapper regiment is a REALLY good unit and you should spend at least three turns worth of Admin Points to build them and accept the loss of manpower that will effect in your other units.

Meanwhile, I have other support units that are basically a waste of time and space. For instance the TD Battery. I would purchase this for 1 Admin Point and it would give me a support unit with a staggering four!! Ground elements. When I attach this element to an army, there is a chance that it would prevent other elements from reaching the combat due to the way the combat deployment works.

Imagine an army with one Sapper Regiment attached (that's 81 sapper squads). Now add a TD Battery (four ZiS-30 TD's) to that army. Now the chance of attaching the sapper is slightly less than before, while there is an extra chance to deploy the TD battery. For this attachment to be worth while the reduction in the chance of a sapper deployment must be less than 1/20 of the chance of deploying the TD Battery. If not, all other things being equal you will have less elements in battle after adding the TD Battery than before. In effect the TD Battery is a liability that costs you one Admin Point to produce.

The Partisan system

With the way the game is played, partisans basically have a very small chance of producing a shattering effect, and a very large chance of producing nothing whatsoever. If a critical railline is hit, this will decimate the flow of supplies to the front. If a critical railline is not hit, the attack will have no impact whatsoever.

The War

I have begun restructuring both my airforces and my support unit allocations to accommodate the way I wish to fight during the upcoming winter. This will take another turn or two to complete, but basically I am reassigning my aircraft and support units to the critical sectors (around Moscow and at the Southern Front)

The Northern

In the north, I still have encircled one Finnish regiment at the far eastern end of the front east of Lake Ladoga. I will strengthen the line in this area as best I can, but I expect the Finns to break out next turn. If they don't, I intend to try to destroy that lone regiment (although it would probably be withdrawn in a turn or two regardless of my actions).

East of Lake Ladoga, the Germans have pulled back and shortened their front. While the shortening of the German line will release a couple of divisions, it will also free up more of my own, that I can then concentrate for the upcoming attacks. The 11th Army of the Northwestern Front will concentrate next to the Kalinin Front and help in the upcoming attack here.

The Center

In the center, I have done one or two attacks but nothing has come of them.

I have also redeployed a large amount of fighter aircraft to just north of Voronezh. Should the Germans continue their refueling missions, I hope to deal some real damage to the Ju/52's next turn.

The south

In the south, the Germans have established a continuous line, making my cavalry advances futile. The only unit in position to (possibly) achieve anything, is the Cavalry division from the North Caucasus MD. This division continues north, even though I deem the advance unlikely to have any real impact. For some reason, my transports on the Crimean are not able to bring in supplies.

As the port damage in Odessa is up to 85%, I have reluctantly given the order to abandon the city. I am very happy that the defense lasted as long as it did, however.

Conclusion

For now, everything is drowning in mud. The Germans find it almost impossible to move forward supplies and fuel and attacks by either side is almost suicidal.

How the situation will look in three turns, when the mud turns to snow is uncertain (at least to me). The Germans seem content to leave all of their panzers standing outside Voroneszh. It seems they are very intent on taking the city before winter.