

Strategic overview

Turn 23: Strategic Considerations

Situational analysis

SPECIAL						
-	Vehicle Repair	A	-	3208	194831	0
-	Port	74	1	0	0	0
-	Railyard	181	1	0	0	0
-	Manpower	2477	23	59213	3110711	0
-	Vehicle	114	0	220838	289780	0
-	Heavy Industry	195	1	0	1860000	0
-	Oil Production	128	0	0	1408000	0
-	Fuel Production	149	0	0	786720	0
-	Resource Production	160	0	0	3823000	0
-	Armaments Production	288	0	0	1440750	0

The Germans have forced the Mecha river and pocketed another 35.000 Soviet soldiers as well as an Army HQ of 20.000. Other than that, the Germans have conducted only local counterattacks and the front have moved little during the German turn.

Losses are still decent with the German losing 105 AFV and 29 SP/AC for a total of 372 Soviet AFV's + SP/AC's. In the air, the Germans have lost 113 aircraft including 12 transports for 297 Soviet aircraft. I am finally about to break even on the OoB's with the Axis now fielding only 12659 more men than I – but I do hold the edge on every other paramter with 931 guns, 1269 Armor and 4154 aircraft.

I have done a comparison of the forces with the forces fielded by Stelteck against Pelton in his game (without asking Stelteck for permission, so I hope it's OK). I have used my own turn 17 data unless otherwise specified. This shows that I have a significantly lower OoB than Stelteck (411.000), but so has Pelton (45.000 Germans and 30.000 Rumanians). Moreover, the German OoB is down by 2.000 guns, 50 Armor and 260 aircraft in my game compared to Steltecks. Finally, by turn 23, I hold 109 Population factories more than Stelteck does at turn 17 – even though I have managed to lose Moscow. Of course, such a comparison is certainly unfair to Stelteck, as I hold a +1 Soviet Attack bonus and he does not. However, I do think it shows how our different approach to the battle yield some different results.

Axis VP advantage is now 3.1 to 1.

The North

I have decided to conduct a limited offensive in the north after all. I want to create a situation where the Germans will have to hold more of their divisions in the north, in order to guard against Soviet attacks. So the strength I currently hold in the north will be used to attack the Germans. I don't want a situation where the Germans simply switch all divisions in the area to "Static" mode freeing up trucks for attacks in the south. Pelton would be likely to make such a move, and I will do what I can to prevent it.

That strength is fairly limited however, as I hold only one army in reserve (the 22nd Army of the Northern Front). This army will be able to go to some sector on the frontline and attack in conjunction with the forces already there. I will briefly describe my arguments for choosing my target below.

First, I see little point in attacking the Finns east of Lake Ladoga. It's the Germans I want to bleed and attacking in this area will not bleed them at all or force them to allocate forces to this theater.

Second, I am very certain that I do not have the strength to liberate Leningrad, even if I only have to fight the Finns. Another option is trying to cut the link between the Finns and the Germans by attacking to the Gulf of Finland. But that would create an extended front with a narrow neck that simply begs for the Germans to encircle my troops come the summer of 1942. So, an attack in the direction of Leningrad is not an option.

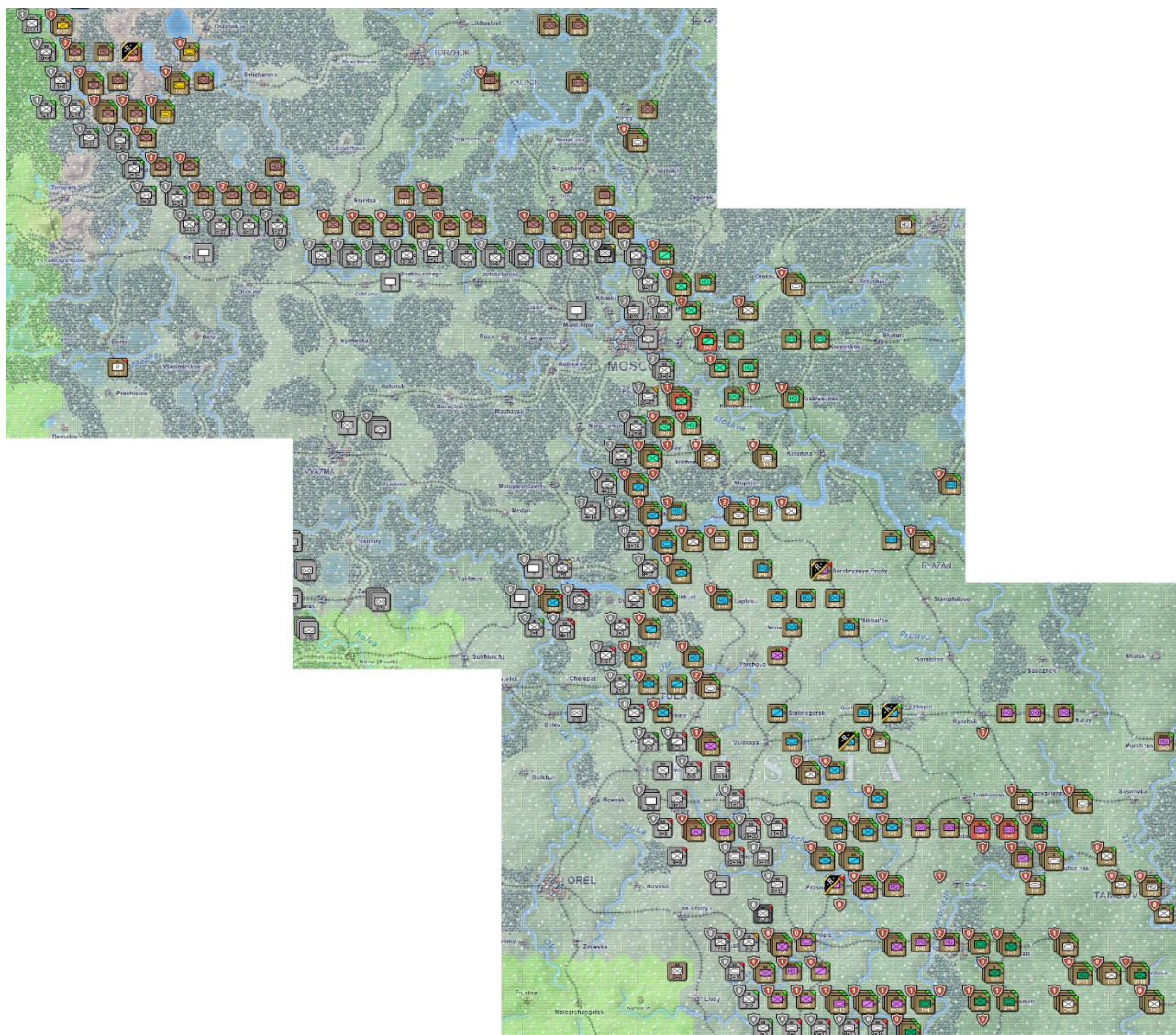
However, I can attack in the direction of Novgorod, trying to liberate the city. While the city does hold some population (10) that is not my prime objective with such an attack. If I take the city, I will extend the German frontline by two or three hexes without extending my own, and I would anchor my defenses in Novgorod on a city with a high defensive CV modifier. I would also be bleeding the Germans with such an attack.

This attack will require a few turns of preparations though, as the 22nd Army is currently partly on the front east of Lake Ladoga and I have no significant airforces in the area. I hope to be able to start the attack when the blizzard arrives.

Below is a picture of the area, as I turn the turn over to Pelton.

The Center

Situation Assessment



The Germans have continued their push in the Mecha area as I have stated above. As part of this, they have encircled another group of Soviet divisions and the HQ of the 32nd Army. IT seems unlikely that I will be able to relieve these forces this turn which would normally signal their doom. All might not be lost however, as the weather forecast signals mud in the Northern Soviet Zone for next turn. I will have to plan for getting them whatever supplies I can, hoping at least some of them will last long enough to be relieved.

Further north, part of the Kaluga pocket still toils on, having endured two ground bombings and three ground attacks costing the Germans 100 soldiers, 20 guns and two AFV's. If the weather goes my way, I might be able to keep them supplied for one turn until the blizzard and then we shall see.

Further north, the Moscow MD and the Kalinin Front has seen little action, except than one motorized division and two Panzer divisions are no in the Moscow area.

Planning

While the Kalinin Front will continue its attacks I have now received a number of ready infantry divisions as reinforcements. These divisions will go to the area between the Kalinin Front and the Moscow MD, and when the Moscow Defense Zone arrives in a few turns, I will then be able to strengthen the attack on Moscow considerably.

Meanwhile, the front stretching southwest from Moscow looks daunting, with German defensive CV's between 50 and 80. Even when the blizzard arrives, I will still be looking at defensive values of 40 to 60, so there will probably not be any breakthroughs in this area.

At the Bryansk Front, I will relocate the 32 Army HQ out of the pocket, gather my three strongest divisions in one stack and spread out the remaining two in order to limit the flow of German supplies to the forward Panzers. The stack will then receive whatever supplies I can send them.

I will also be moving forward the troops I have east of the German penetration, hoping for mud followed by blizzard and a reduced German CV on the Panzer divisions in the area. Even if the weather remains snowy, the Germans have only one turn left before the blizzard, so they need to start consider pulling out their Panzers or suffering casualties for staying put.

Needless to say, my local airforces will pound the seven forward German Panzers as best they can

Execution

I have been able to fly in supplies to my two main stacks of encircled divisions, so that they each have a defensive CV of ten for next turn. That will not be enough, if the weather is not mud as predicted, but if it is, the reduction of offensive CV's should ensure the survival of those divisions (except the two not in stacks).

At the far western end of the Kalinin Front two things have happened this turn. First I have done a series of night bombing attacks using the U-2VS of the local airbase. These attacks have caused 364 German soldiers dead as well as 23 guns destroyed.

I have then proceeded to attack with my local forces against one of the German infantry divisions in the area. The German defense here was heavily supported by the Luftwaffe, who brought forward a significant number of Ju 87D's and killed off 343 of my soldiers and destroyed 26 guns before my attack even got started. While I did manage to win the battle in the end, I also ended up having suffered more than a ration of 5:1 losses against the Germans. Before doing new attacks in this area, I will need to bring forward some decent fighters to support the ground combat.

On the eastern end of the Kalinin Front line, I decided to attack the German Motorized division placed on the front line with no fortification modifier, hoping to inflict some decent casualties. As the Germans do not fly against Ground bombing attacks, I then preceded the attacks on the eastern flank by attacks of large numbers of Pe-2's and IL-2's. Finally, I attacked with my local divisions, hoping for some heavy Yak-1 cover to intercept the Ju-87D's.

That attack was another complete disaster, as my aircover mainly consisted of I-Type fighters and only a third of the planes were actually Yak-1's. As a response to this, I learned the lesson never to have good and poor aircraft available for the same battles. Consequently, I have moved the I-Type airfields to the rear for now. A decision will have to be made on whether to throw them in a series of suicide attacks on the Finns or if I will simply change plane types and then let my I-Type's languish in the reserve pools. Finally, I have

reassigned some of the fighter air groups of the Leningrad Front to the reserve as they are the best fighter air groups I currently have. These air groups will be given Yak-1's shortly and sent to work near Moscow.

In short, the attacks of the Kalinin Front was futile this turn.

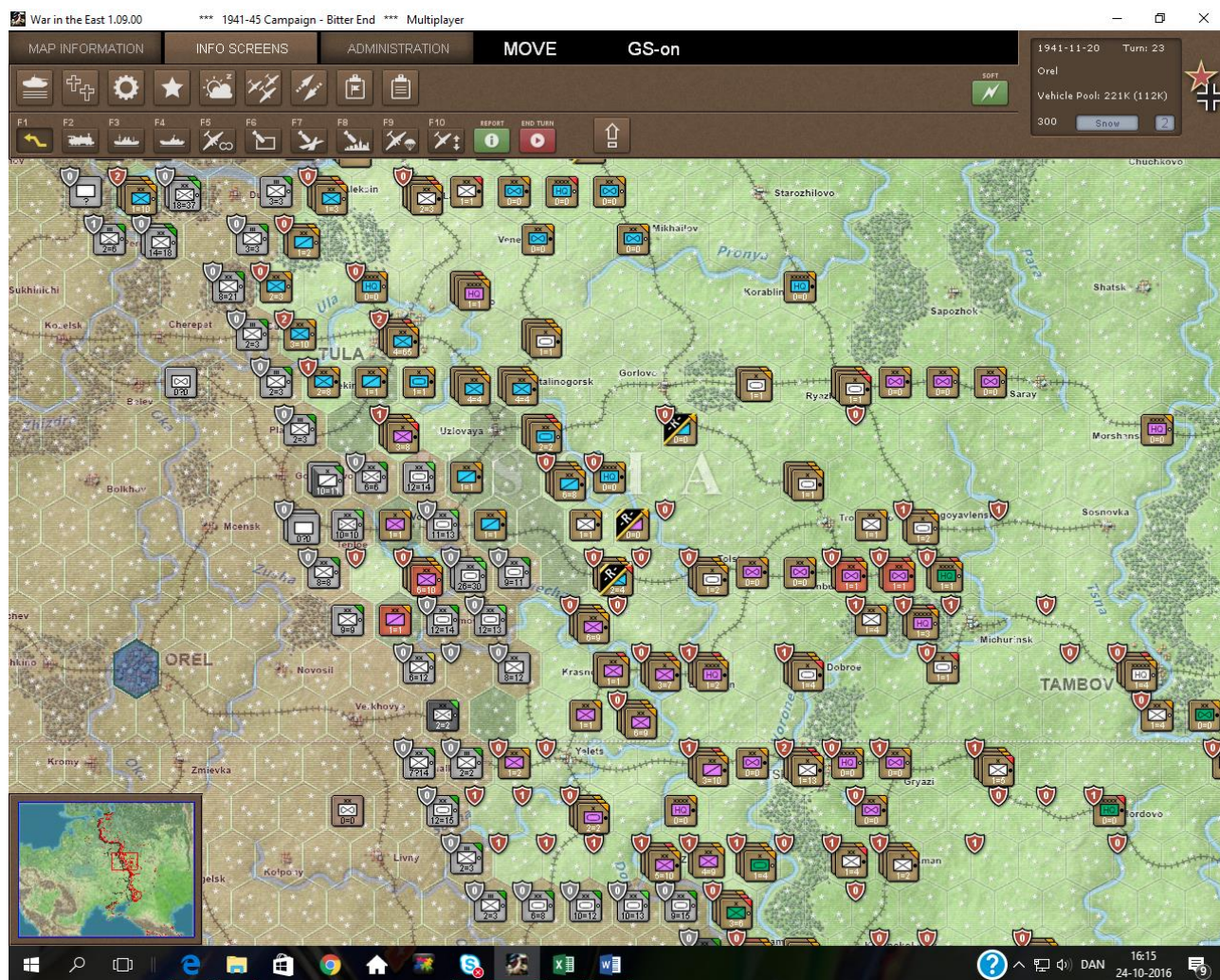
Further south, I have moved my forces of the Western and Bryansk Fronts to get as close to the Germans as I dare without risking too much.

If next turn is mud, there will be few, if any, attacks. Moreover, it will be unlikely that the Germans can destroy those encircled stacks of three divisions. In two turns time, the weather will likely be blizzard and I might be able to punch through to at least one of those stacks.

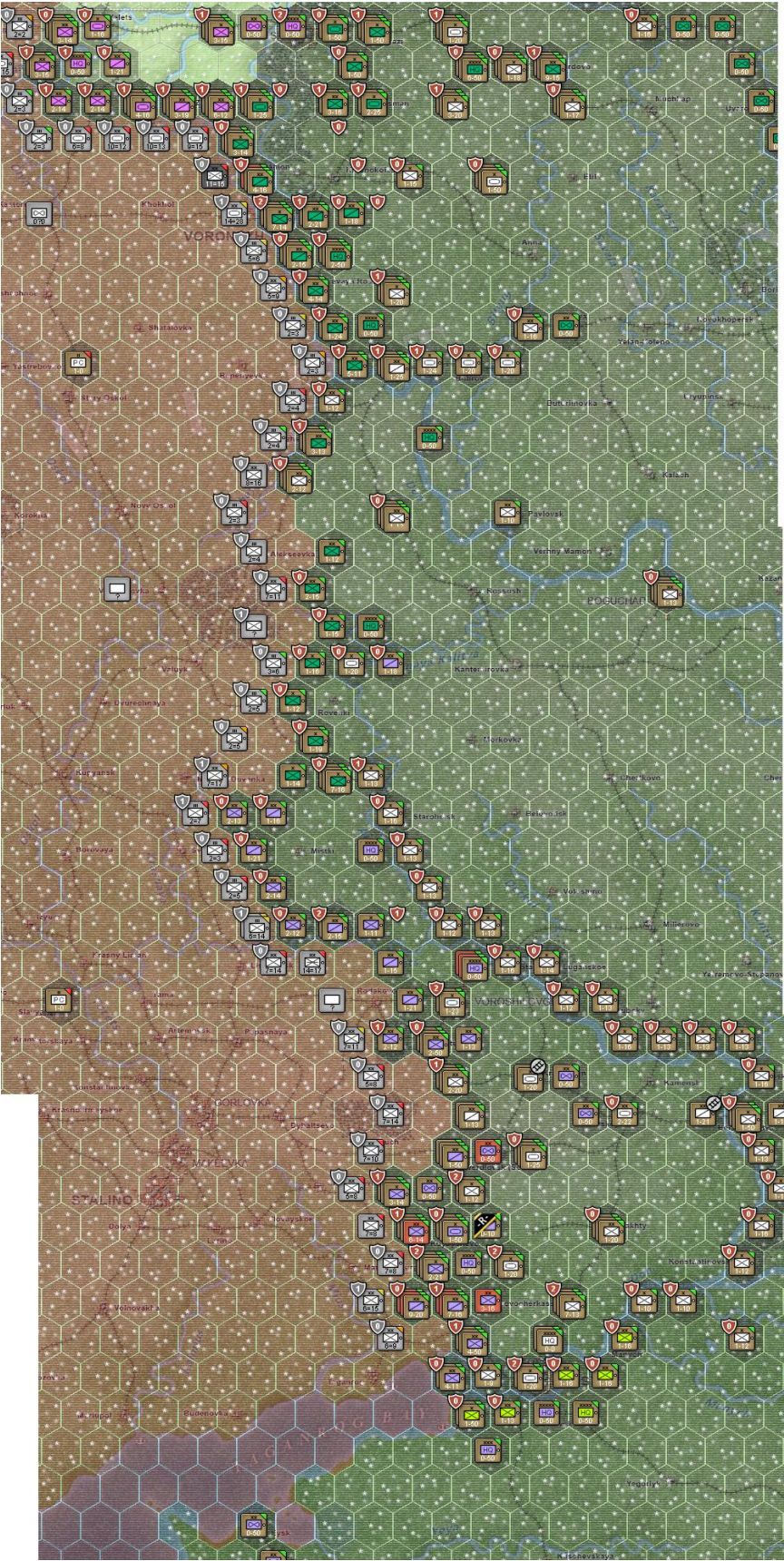
If next turn is not mud, the Germans will have the initiative for one more turn in this area. They can choose to continue their forward push, but if they do, their Panzers will be vulnerable come the blizzard. I think it more likely that they will simply annihilate those encircled divisions and then start extracting their Panzers from the front.

Needless to say, I am praying for mud.

Instead of a full image of the front, I have chosen to post a more detailed image of the parts of the central area where the fighting occurs.



The South



Situational Assessment

Some German attacks have occurred in the area, but nothing threatening the front as a whole. It seems the two opposing forces are mainly jousting for positions before the coming blizzard.

Recon missions performed after the above image was taken has revealed a German line of Fortified Regions stretching south from Stalino to the Sea of Azov. The good news are that these Fortified Regions have only brought the fortification level up by 4% towards level one so far. I guess that is why the Germans fight so tenaciously east of the Mius River.

Furthermore, the German Ju/52 airfield has been railed north, and is now positioned one hex north of Belgorod. It is still within reach of my SU-2 bombers, but only my PB-40 fighters will be able to reach it without relocating. There are also 18 flight worthy Bf 109E-4B's at the location. Combine this with the expected arrival of about 200 new Ju/52's from the Western Front, I expect that I will suffer a serious setback in my "Anti Ju/52 campaign".

Finally, infantry seems to be arriving in the area where I want to launch an attack southwestwards by the 6th Army of the Southwestern Front.

Planning

Outside Voronezh, the Armies of the Southwestern Front have become mixed in a rather bad way. I need to fix this, as any combat in the area will cause me some heavy penalties. Furthermore, the front at Voronezh is very strong, while there is practically nothing holding the line to the south. The Germans have profitted from this by attacking lone Rifle Brigades to inflict casualties. The worst example of this is shown below.

Axis Forces Attacking:		1 of 1	116,79 - Clear - Snow	Turn: 23 1941-11-20	Soviet Forces Defending:	
LV Corps -6%		Forces Engaged			STAVKA -20%	
2/168th Infantry Division (16)		ATK: men 11598, art 156, afv 0		DEF: men 9220, art 90, afv 1	49th Rifle Division (8)	
XXIX Corps		DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0		DAM: men 253, art 4, afv 0		
3/44th Infantry Division (25)		LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0		LOST: men 676, art 7, afv 0		
767th Howitzer Battalion (0)		ATK: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		
849th Gun Battalion (0)		LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		
858th Howitzer Battalion (0)						
133rd Hvy Nbl.W. Bn (0)		49th Rifle Division ROUTED				
CV: 41->154.0	Eng Val: 0				CV: 8->5.5	Fort: 0.16->0.00
Comm HQ: XXIX Corps		Odds 28.00 : 1			Comm HQ: STAVKA	
G Gotthard Heinrici		Show Details		Exit	MAR Kliment Voroshilov	

I will also continue to move the rest of the 6th Army into position for the December push. However, with the amount of German infantry in the area, I now expect little progress here.

The southern Front is much in the same situation as the Southwestern, with it's divisions badly mixed up. I need to begin fixing this while at the same time continuing my attacks on the Germans at the Mius River.

Meanwhile, there is apparently no German fighters in the area, but a heavy concentration of German Bombers (more than 200, mainly He 111H-4's). However, I will not be using my IL-2 to bomb those planes this turn, as I really want to inflict maximum damage on the unprotected German Infantry divisions at the Mius. The job of bombing the bombers will go to my SB-2's instead. I expect little result from this, as I always expect little result from anything done by SB-2's.

As I have lost Leningrad, there seems to be little reason in having another Front (the Volkhov Front) in this area. Instead I will move it south, and when it arrives at Voronezh it will soak up the STAVKA divisions here

and possibly take over a stretch of the front in order to free up divisions of the southwestern Front for other duties.

Finally, the situation north of the Crimean



As the Axis divisions are now pushing at the Western end of the front, I have to be a little careful going forward. I do not wish for an Axis breakthrough and subsequent loss of Soviet divisions here.

Because of this, my primary concern this turn is to push back that German Flieger division threatening the encirclement of the two westernmost Soviet divisions. If that fails, I will have to pull back those two divisions, hoping to establish a new line.

I will also try to push back the Italian and Hungarian units within five hexes of my Crimean crossing at Novoalekseev. If successful and the Germans to not push back, I might get a RR repair unit to go to work north of the crossing, ensuring some shorter supply path. I actually do not know if this will happen, or of the game engine will consider the Crimean Rail system to be cut off from the main Soviet rail system and refuse to work on it. We shall see (maybe).

As my main objective of this attack is to clear the front for a penetration of cavalry divisions, I will also continue my attacks in the east, although I will not send my infantry divisions further away from their supply sources than they already are. Instead, I will remember to allocate those three Li-2 transports to the airfield south of the Sea of Azov. These units should then be able to start supplying the forward divisions come next turn.

Execution

In the south, the main task has been to reorder my mixed up units this turn, so I haven't done as many attacks as I would have liked. Some have been conducted and I have been systematically bombing the southernmost German infantry divisions from the air as well.

The only result that is the least bit interesting is at the far southern end of the line, where I have pushed back the Germans yet again, effectively creating what might over time develop into a gap in their line, unless the Germans deal with it (which they undoubtedly will try to do).

In the air, I have destroyed another eight Ju/52's for a total of 20 this turn.

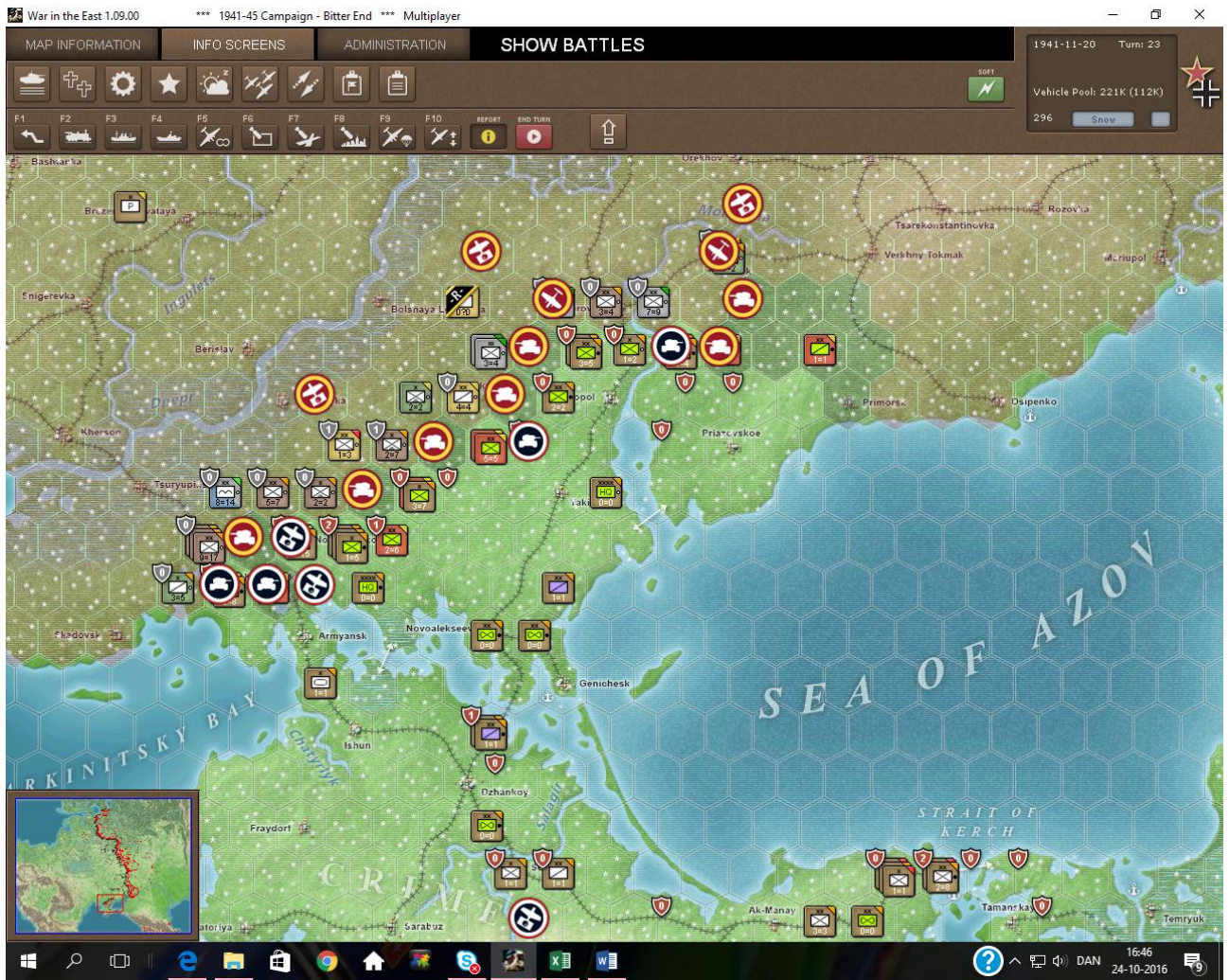
The image below is from this portion of the front (notice the German Panzer at the northern side of the image).



At the Caucasus Front, I have continued my localized attacks, and it seems the eastern end of the axis front is now becoming increasingly thin. The problem for me is that my western end of the front seems similarly exposed, and I do not know for sure if the Germans will be able to exploit this.

Finally, I have assigned some Li-2 transports to the Caucasus Front, so that I will be able to improve my supply situation come next turn.

The image below shows the outcome of the fighting at the Caucasus Front.



Conclusion

This turn appear to have been somewhat a disappointment for me:

- In the north, I need more time before I can launch my attack than I originally planned. The 22nd Army will not be in place until mid december
- In the center, my attacks were failures and cost me some troops. Worse, my Yak-1's were unable to manage a real fight with the Luftwaffe.
- In the south, I ended up spending a lot of time reorganising my armies and have done little attacking as a result.

Losses are not really high enough with 20 German AFV+SP/AC's and 41 aircraft for 23 AFV+SP/AC's and 69 aircraft lost.

The weather next turn will be very important in deciding the fate of the encircled Soviets. But no matter how it looks for the next turn, I am looking forward to the blizzard.