

Strategic overview

Turn 53: Strategic Considerations

Situational analysis

SPECIAL						
-	Vehicle Repair	A	-	3148	579799	0
-	Port	69	0	0	0	0
-	Railyard	180	0	0	0	0
-	Manpower	2457	4	43405	6185945	0
-	Vehicle	114	0	145547	330773	0
-	Heavy Industry	195	0	0	4803550	0
-	Oil Production	128	0	0	3328000	0
-	Fuel Production	149	0	0	1859520	0
-	Resource Production	157	0	0	8785000	0
-	Armaments Production	288	0	341948	4060175	0

Another horrible situation has come about. The Germans have encircled another 30 or so Rifle divisions in the north. While they can easily break out this turn, it seems more than unlikely they can escape for long.

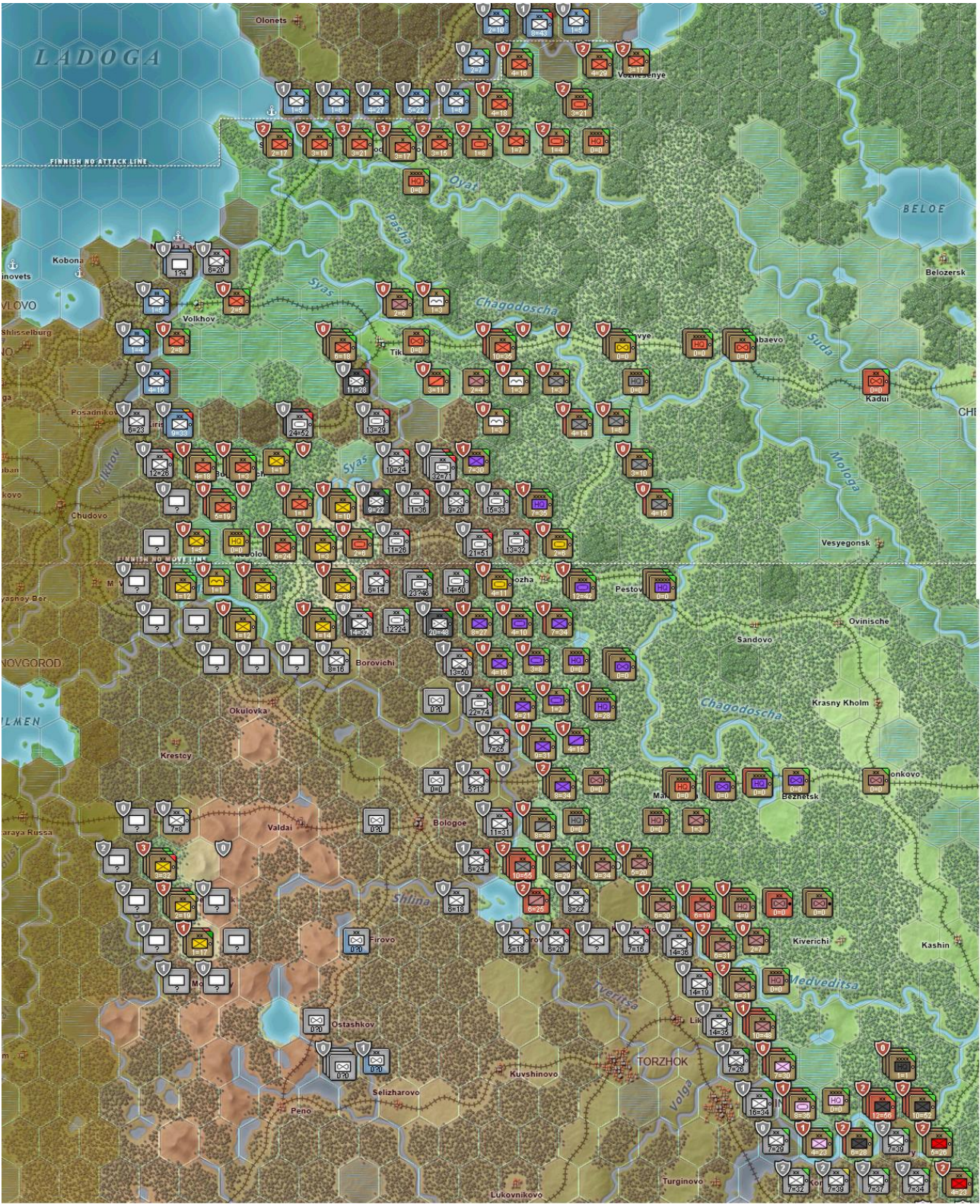
Other main news are

- West of Voronezh, the Germans have pushed about ten infantry divisions into the attack, which is more than I thought they would have available. Two Rifle divisions and a Cavalry Corps has been encircled.
- At Rostov the mud has stopped all action.
- Spring is now ending. Next turn is clear weather all over.

On the strategic level, the German attack is in effect creating a huge buffer in front of Leningrad, ensuring that it will take a long time before I can reclaim the city. This again will mean that the Germans will receive a lot of Victory Points placing them in a better position to win the game. The logical move to make once this buffer has been created is to attempt creating a similar buffer in front of Moscow. Because of this, I will start moving my rear area diggers (some Rifle Brigades currently doing fortification work around Stalingrad) to the area east of Moscow, where they will create fortifications for an upcoming battle for the area.

Axis VP advantage has dropped once more and is now 4.0 to 1. Bear in mind that it is only the ratio that has dropped. The Axis are still getting a lot more points than me.

The North



Situational Assessment

The Germans have made a major breakthrough in this sector and encircled no less than about 30 Rifle Divisions. The encirclement itself is easily broke, but the chance of retracting the major part of the Rifle Divisions to safety is long gone. The Germans have 13 Panzer divisions and 10 Motorized divisions in the area, and I simply have not yet found a way to prevent such a force from making major breakthroughs.

Fuelwise (shown as Soft Factor above) the northernmost Panzers are low on fuel, but a few hexes south, about eight German mobile divisions are in the green. The ten most northerly German divisions are drawing supplies and fuel through "the arm" connecting the wedge to the Volkhov sector while everything else draws fuel and supplies from the south.

When the Germans destroyed the pockets of resistance in the south, my Red Army airforce foolishly decided to get involved in a series of air battles. The result has been that the airforces belonging to the Kalinin Front has been all but obliterated and are now low on morale and drawing in new planes from the reserve pools.

While the immediate threat of future German movement indicates a thrust to the northwest and the firm encirclement of major parts both the Northern and Northwestern Fronts, I fear a thrust to the northeast more. Such a thrust is only five or so hexes from cutting the railines to everything I have west of such a thrust. I need to be careful about rushing reinforcements west, in order to avoid even greater encirclements if such a strike materializes.

Planning

I have decided to refrain from pouring reinforcements in to a position that is effectively already lost. That means there will be no massive relief attempt made in order to save the divisions encircled east of the Volkhov River. While those divisions will of course break the encirclement this turn, they will be charged with forming a hedgehog defense that will hopefully last for a few turns, delaying the German thrust east. Their supply will be tasked to the long range bomber commands of the Western Front that will be rushed north and to the local VVS forces that will be reinforced with whatever transports I can muster.

Instead the forces holding the front between Lakes Ladoga and Onega will swivel back around a "hinge" and try to form a new defensive line. I will also evacuate Vyshny Volochek in order to free up some units belong to the Volkhov Front and moving those north to help form the new lines.

I have also decided to withdraw my lines a hex from the Germans, and I intend to start giving a little way from now on in this region. I have plenty of space to trade, and my divisions are simply not good enough to fight the German Panzers straight on yet.

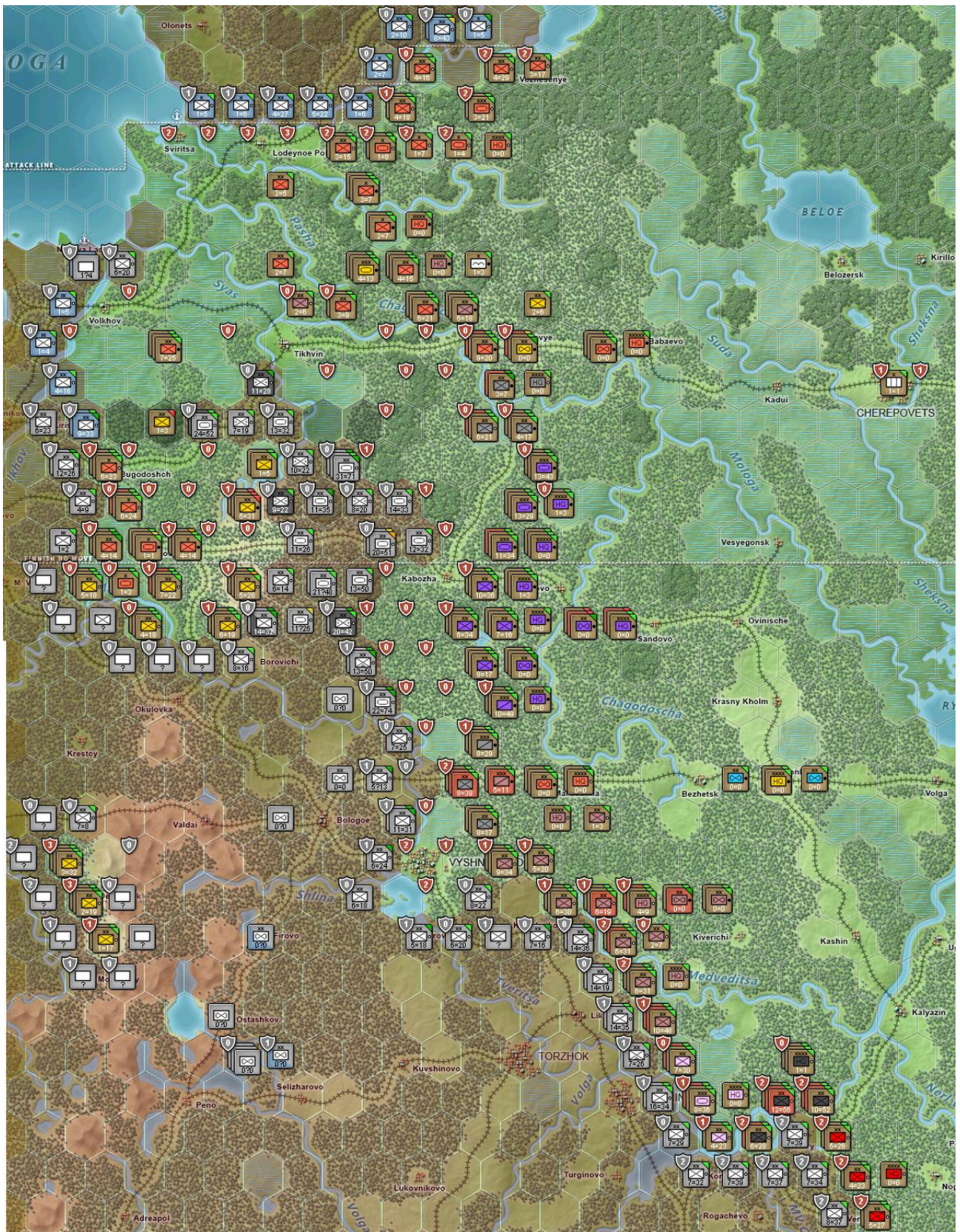
In the air, apart from the usual bombing of the German Panzers, I will move a couple of North Front airfields to the south and fill them with Hurricane IIB's and SB-2's. Those airfields will then be charged with making night attacks on the German fighter air bases. This is an attempt to make better use of my Hurricanes as I find them inadequate in a daytime dogfight with the German fighters. If they can relieve pressure on my other airforces then that is good news.

Execution

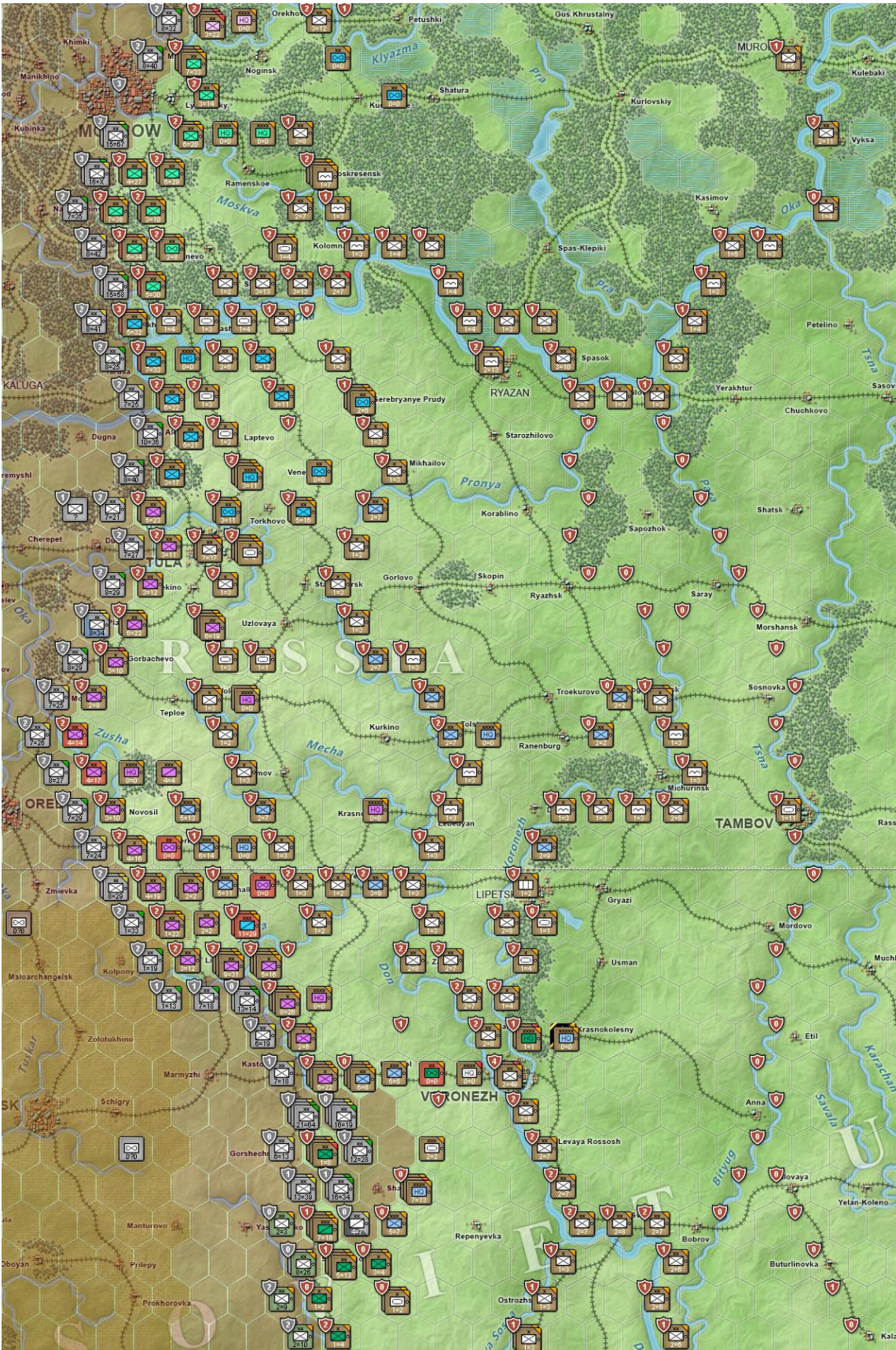
I have pulled my divisions back from the Germans a bot and also placed the effectively encircled divisions in as good a hedgehog position as I can, using available terrain to my advantage.

In the air, I have done a series of Ground bombing attacks on the German Panzers, but nothing much has come of it.

Below is an image of the North, as I give the turn to Pelton.



The Center



Situation Assessment

In the center, it seems Pelton might be right in that it was him who is on the offense. I now have two Rifle divisions and a Cavalry Corps encircled west of Voronezh. I still have some good order forces in the area, and I will be able to mount a relief attempt.

We might well be in for a slugging match in the area, so I will have to decide at some point, if I shall simply fall back on the Don river and the defenses stretching north towards Lipetsk.

Planning

I will keep forming units for the Voronezh Front and will mount a relief attempt on the encircled divisions using the Corps already available in the area.

Execution

The first relief attack on the Germans encircling my three divisions were a success in that it succeeded in beating back the Germans.

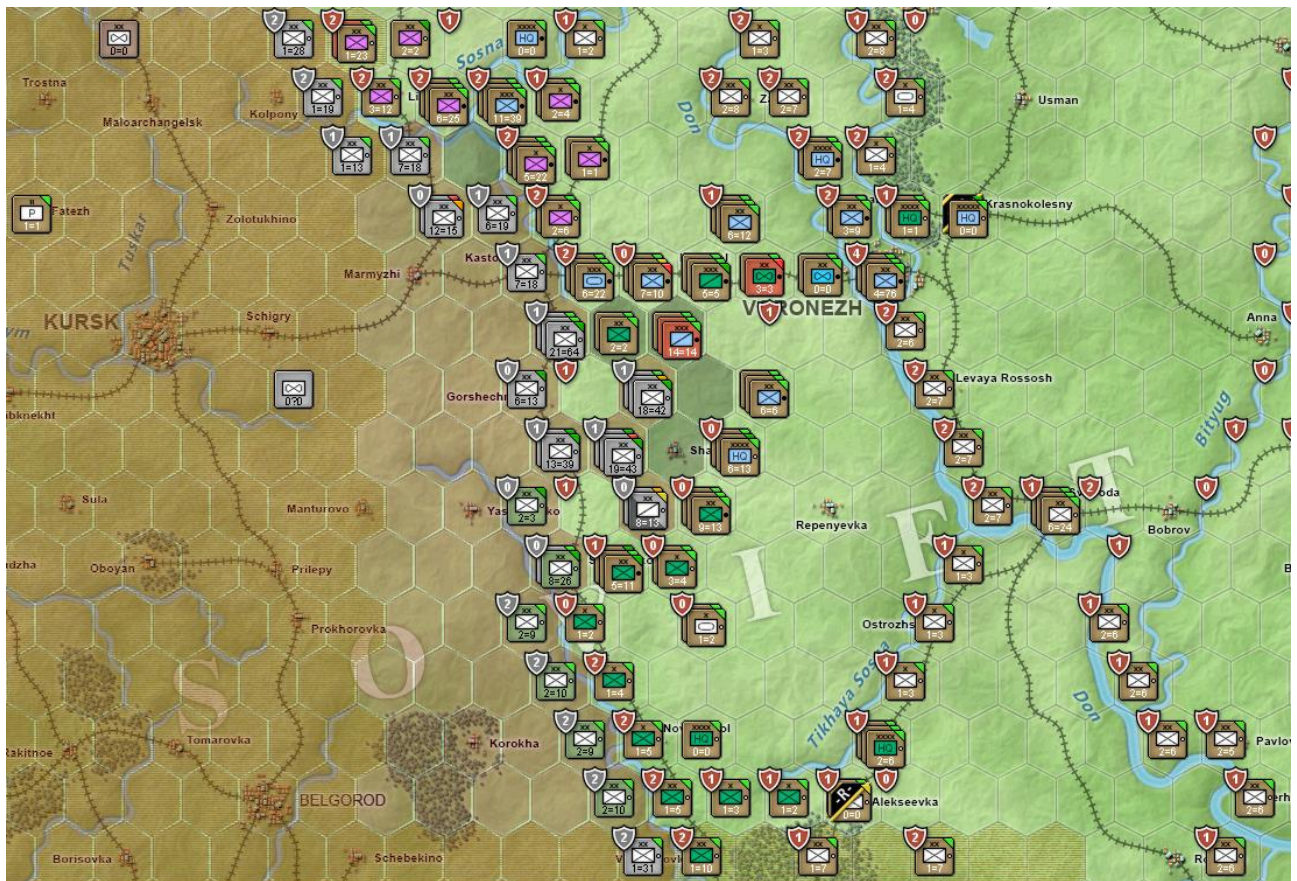
Axis Forces Defending: VII Corps 258th Infantry Division (66) 255th Infantry Division (59) 68th Infantry Division (76) 1818th Gun Battalion (0) 841st Howitzer Battalion (1) 275th Mot. Flk Bn (0) Rum. Combat Air Command [v] CV: 202->209.6 Fort: 0.10->0.00 Comm HQ: VII Corps GO Karl Adolf Hollidt	1 of 7 > 112,72 - Clear - Clear Turn: 53 1942-06-18 Forces Engaged DEF: men 43372, art 395, afv 0 ATK: men 132025, art 1786, afv 343 DAM: men 640, art 14, afv 0 DAM: men 1277, art 5, afv 25 LOST: men 397, art 25, afv 0 LOST: men 1066, art 5, afv 7 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 12, utl 0 ATK: ftr 141, bmr 37, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 10, utl 0 LOST: ftr 1, bmr 0, utl 0 68th Infantry Division RETREATED 255th Infantry Division RETREATED 258th Infantry Division RETREATED Show Details Odds 3.04 : 1 Exit		Soviet Forces Attacking: 39th Army 19th Tank Corps (20) 7th Rifle Corps (43) 61st Rifle Division (19) 69th Rifle Division (27) 129th Sapper Regiment (1) 150th Sep. Tank Bn (1) 153rd Sep. Tank Bn (1) [v] CV: 293->639.0 Eng Val: 14 Comm HQ: 39th Army GM Andrei Grechko
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Two of the German infantry divisions retreated to the town of Shatalovka, which is on the frontline. I proceeded to make another attack, as I deemed the German divisions must be somewhat weakened by the first attack. This gave the following result.

Axis Forces Defending: VII Corps 258th Infantry Division (51) 255th Infantry Division (45) 841st Howitzer Battalion (0)	1 of 6 > 113,74 - Clear(Shatalovka) - Clear Turn: 53 1942-06-18		Soviet Forces Attacking: 42nd Army -10% 20th Tank Corps (16) 10th Army 2nd Rifle Corps (55) 1st Rifle Corps (51) 455th Army Art Rgt (1) 124th Howitzer Regiment (1) 130th Army Art Rgt (1)	
	Forces Engaged DEF: men 27220, art 215, afv 0 ATK: men 96655, art 1306, afv 200 DAM: men 460, art 2, afv 0 DAM: men 692, art 6, afv 7 LOST: men 337, art 24, afv 0 LOST: men 335, art 1, afv 3 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 ATK: ftr 184, bmr 44, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0			
	255th Infantry Division RETREATED 258th Infantry Division RETREATED			
CV: 96->113.1 Fort: 0.00->0.00 Comm HQ: VII Corps GO Karl Adolf Hollidt	Show Details	Odds 3.89 : 1	Exit	CV: 175->440.0 Eng Val: 10 Comm HQ: 10th Army GM Konstantin Golubev

This shows me that I can indeed fight the German infantry, even if they are a tough nut to crack. In the area west of Voronezh, the Germans have twenty infantry divisions meaning that I will certainly not be breaking through the frontlines anytime soon. The Voronezh Front is continuing to form, employing several Cavalry, Tank Corps and Rifle Corps. I also have virtual air supremacy in the area. I hope to use this to ensure, that I can grab some of the initiative here.

Below is an image of the front west of Voronezh, as I give the turn to Pelton.



[illegible]

Situational Assessment

The mud has put a strong dampener on the fighting in this area, but the Germans have been using the pause to get the Panzer fuel supply into the yellow and the green. The Germans now have seven Panzer Divisions and two Panzer corps south of the river, and I fully expect a couple of HQBU's this turn followed by massive German fuel stocks come next turn and the clear weather. As a result, I need to plan based on an expectation of full German movement availability next turn.

The Germans have two options for a strike next turn. They can strike out southwards into the open plains east of the Crimea. If they do so, they will have a "moving battle" on their hands, where their Panzer strength will quickly vanish on the vast steppes (much like historically). There will simply not be enough units available to cover the front. Furthermore, they will be attacking south without any hope of having their rail lines following as I still control Rostov. I simply do not think the Germans will attempt any such thing.

They can also focus on taking Rostov and establishing a bridgehead they can strike southwards from at some later date. With HQBU's behind them, the Germans will easily be able to do several attacks on my forces just west of Rostov (CV of 5=20 in clear weather). Those forces will then almost certainly break, and the encirclement be a fact. With Rostov encircled its terrain modifier will fall to seven, but that is still quite a lot. This is the attack I need to prepare for.

Planning

My first order of business will be to form a Rifle Corps based on the troops in Rostov. I will then form another Rifle Corps of the troops just west of the city and move those troops into the defense of Rostov as well. Finally, I will move the 47th Army, their commanding HQ into the city, giving a total of six divisions defending the city along with an Army HQ sporting plenty of support units.

The forces I have outside the city of Rostov will be pulled back a little (not much due to the mud), and I will then try to form up forces capable of counterattacking the besieging Germans.

Execution

My defense of Rostov now contains two Rifle Corps with a total of six Rifle divisions. CV in clear weather should be (12=201). But this number will be reduced due to the coming encirclement. On top of this is an Army HQ with the following support units attached (remember that more SU's can be included in city fighting),

- One Separate Tank Battalion
- Two AT Artillery Regiments
- Two Sapper Regiments
- One Sapper Battalion
- Three Guards Light Rocket Regiments
- Three BM Howitzer Regiments

This adds up to 74731 men, 886 guns and 108 AFV defending Rostov. On top of this comes two AA regiments attached to Rostov city itself. Leading this force is Lelyushenko



In total, this gives me a supply need of 318 while Rostov itself stores 2159. Fuelwise I have a need of 78 with 501 stored in Rostov. Behind the city, I have two airfields with strategic bombers, ready to fly supplies to the city. As the only rail lines into the Caucasus goes through Rostov and Stalingrad, I hope to prevent any attacks on Caucasus for a long time to come. I am very curious as to how the Germans are going to react to this.

The air war continues to rage in this area. The Germans are employing several Air Groups with two engine fighters and are beginning to post one engine fighters to the area as well. I still feel I have air superiority in the area, but if the Germans keep throwing more fighters into this area, that can soon change.

Below is an image of the situation at Rostov, as I give the turn to Pelton.



Conclusion

By far, the most important event this turn has been the encirclement of most of my northern divisions. I will need those divisions to keep fighting for as long as possible, in order to delay and/or diminish any further German attacks. But it is certain, that my OoB will take a severe hit.

In the center, the question is whether the Germans will be able to continue pushing towards the Don river and Voronezh or if I will be able to grab the initiative. This area is of secondary importance for now, but if I can halt a German offense entirely in this area, I will consider that a major victory.

In the south, I am curious to see what the Germans will make of my defense of Rostov. I hope that it can last for a long time, effectively preventing the Germans from making any far reaching attacks into Caucasus.

In the air, the Germans have suffered almost no Bf 109G-2 losses. I expect to suddenly see a number of airfields with this new fighter type available. In the meantime, aircraft losses are high on both sides.