

Mud season, Strategic Considerations

As the mud has arrived it is now time to do a status report on the progress of the war so far, and also to start planning for the blizzard, arriving at the beginning of December. For that reason, I will not do a turn by turn AAR during the muddy period, but rather one AAR for the entire mud period. This AAR should be released on the first turn of the blizzard.

Of course, the estimation of who has won what so far is largely subjective and as such, the following is simply my personal opinion, and one very subject to disagreement. When considering how the war is going so far, I think you will have to look at five different topics, namely:

Axis Progress North

In the north, the Axis has reached Leningrad and the Volkhov. I strongly believe that the main deciding factor of Axis progress here is whether or not Leningrad has fallen or is just about to fall. I believe that it will not. Come next year's German offensive, I will be creating Infantry Corps to defend the Neva river crossings making any attacks on Leningrad all but impossible. However, the Germans have not been stopped well short their historical progress, so the outcome of the battle in this area can best be described as a draw.

Axis Progress Center

In the center, the Axis forces were historically stopped very short of Moscow (within one or two hexes). Tula had also fallen. While the Germans may yet use the snow turns to advance on Moscow, I consider it all but impossible for them to advance ten hexes and take a well defended city in the short timespan they have left before the blizzard. As I still hold a wide expanse of territory before Moscow, I consider the battle in this sector a minor Soviet victory so far.

Axis Progress South

In the south, the Axis forces historically wintered on the Mius river west of Rostov. Kharkov and Crimea had fallen, and only Sevastopol was still in Soviet hands. The German Army Group South HQ wintered in Poltava. In this game, the Axis are very short of obtaining that advance, and so I consider the battle in this area a major Soviet victory so far.

Soviet Industrial Buildup

As I have managed to evacuate all named industry in full while maintaining a high production of both Heavy Supplies and Armaments, I consider the Soviet evacuation of industry to be almost perfect. To my knowledge, the only industry I have lost so far, was that of Riga and Minsk. In my book, this equals a decisive Soviet advantage for the coming battles.

Soviet losses

The Soviet losses so far has been very low, in my opinion. While I stand to lose some 100.000 men at Rzhev when the snow arrives, this is the first major encirclement of the war since the Bialystok pocket was smashed in the opening battles. The Red Army now stands at more than 5.5 mio men, 53.000 guns, 10.000 tanks and more than 7.000 aircraft. This would have been a major Soviet advantage, had it not been that the Wehrmacht still stands at 5100 tanks as well. Historically, I believe they were down below 1500 at the beginning of the blizzard. In total, I consider this a minor Soviet advantage for the future.

To sum up, I believe the Soviets have done quite well this summer and fall, given what they have had to work with. While I have no experience with playing the game after the summer of 1942, I believe the

situation currently points at some sort of minor Soviet victory. The task ahead is to improve my situation further, so that I may play it through to either a major or a decisive victory – while of course avoiding to lose my advantage letting the Germans have a win.

The following strategy brief will discuss how I intend to go about achieving that in the winter of 41/42.

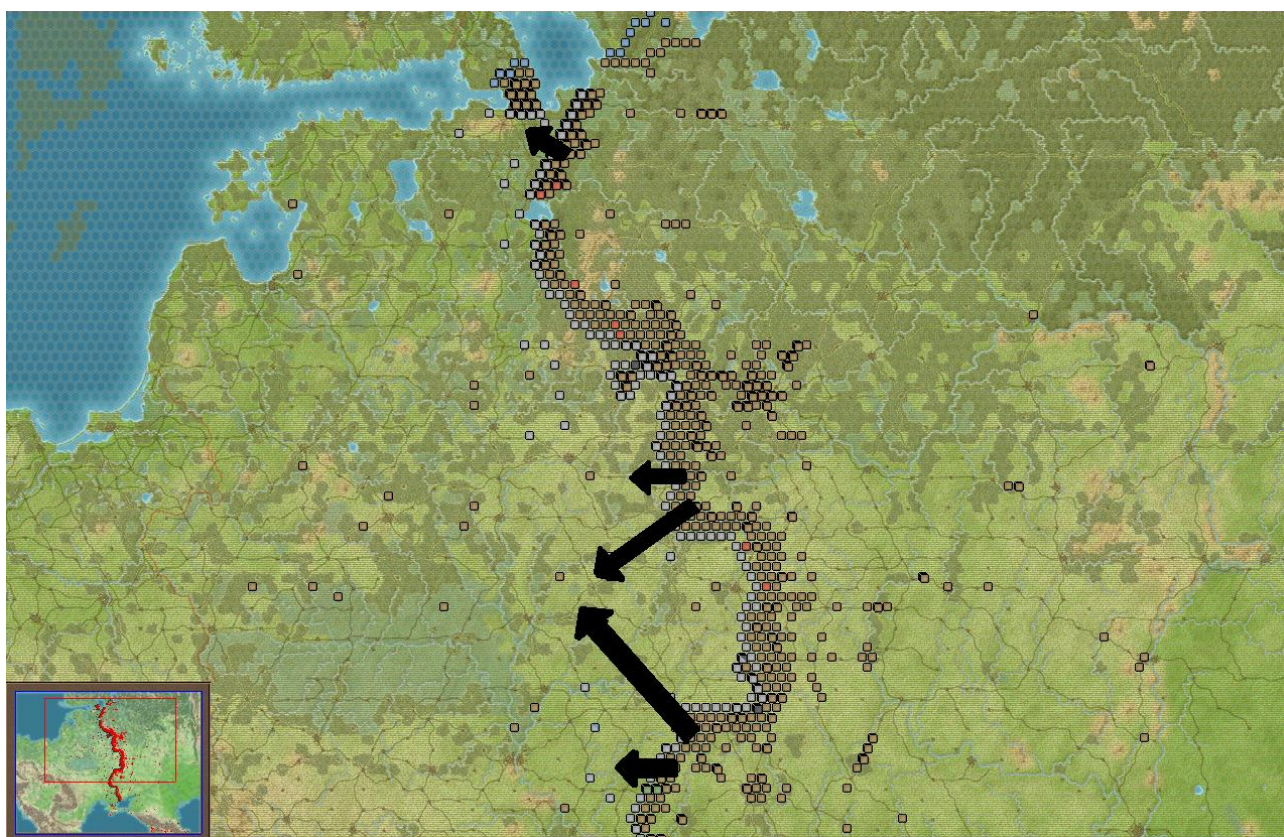
Strategy for the winter of 41/42

I strongly believe that the main objective for the Soviets during the winter of 41/42 are twofold:

- To improve their positions before the German summer offensive of 1942.
- To inflict as many casualties on the Wehrmacht as possible.

I think that the best way of doing this is to launch a series of planned strategic offensives rather than just attacking where the opportunity arises. For this winter, I am currently planning two such offensives, but may decide to launch further attacks, should my industrial capacity and ability to supply the forces warrant that.

The two planned strategic offensives can be seen on the map below, and will be discussed in further detail below:



The Leningrad offensive

In order to link up with the besieged forces of Leningrad, I intend to launch an attack across the Volkhov combined with a breakout attempt from Leningrad itself. There are several benefits to a successful attack, namely:

- Possibly encircling and destroying the German forces along the northern parts of the Volkhov.
- Improving my positions, so that a German attack in 42 to link up with the Finns on the Svir is less likely.
- Making supply of the forces in Leningrad easier, freeing up vehicles for other tasks.

The main attacks will be launched by the armies of the Leningrad Front, who already have some of the best leadership the Red Army has to offer. I plan to launch the attack as soon as the Volkhov freezes over.

The Kursk offensive

This is by far the larger of the two planned offensives. The plan is to attack southwest at Bryansk using the Western Front while simultaneously attacking northwest from Sumy with the southwestern Front. If successful, the two attacks should link up in the vicinity of Klimovo possibly encircling a huge portion of the German Wehrmacht.

This is a tall order, but I have some advantages that will help me along the way:

- The Southwestern Front and the Western Front have some of the best troops and leaders of the Red Army.
- The German supply lines are quite extended in this area, and I have a lot of partisans in the German rear.
- Both of the main Soviet attacks will hit area where the Germans defenses consist partly of Infantry Regiments that have not been dug in properly.
- To support the Western and Southwestern Front units, I am forming up two mobile armies to exploit any breakthroughs (Batov's 56th Army in the north and Rokossovsky's 4th Army in the south).

In order to prevent German reinforcements flowing into the area, I intend to expand both the two main attack wedges by running attacks directly west on the flank of those attacks.

Turn 18

The Armies of the Leningrad Front have all been set to "Refit" to ensure that they reinforce to their full potential. Further, reshuffling is begun so that I will be better positioned for the coming attack.

Outside Moscow, the 3rd Army of the Western Front is being moved south along with the 56th Army under STAVKA. In order to take up the positions vacated by the Western Front, several divisions under the Moscow MD and STAVKA are being moved up.

In the south, the Armies of the Southwestern Front has all been set to "Refit". I have also begun preparations for moving those armies into their starting positions for the coming attack.

Turn 19

I have continued to slowly move my troops into position for the winter offensive. Realizing that the departure of the Western Front from the Moscow approaches leave a vacuum, I have set a number of newly arrived STAVKA divisions in the area to "Refit". I will then move a Transcaucasus Army HQ up here and create a new army for the defense of Moscow. Once the Volkhov Front arrives, that too will go to Moscow.

The Luftwaffe is back flying in the east, and have been busy intercepting my bombing campaign against the German forces. The total casualty tally has ended up at 70 Axis aircraft (including 47 single seat fighters) for 215 Soviet ones (evenly distributed between Fighter Bombers, Tactical Bombers and level Bombers). Once again, the Soviet losses can be easily covered by production, while the German losses will inflict attrition on the Luftwaffe. On the ground, the bombings have cost the Axis some 244 guns in total.

Turn 20

The weather in the Northern Soviet zone has been snowy instead of mud this turn, and the Germans have used the weather to push one more hex towards Moscow. I have used the weather to continue moving my Western Front units southwards to their staging areas for the winter offensive. To cover the space left behind, and to make it look as if defending Moscow is still my first priority, I have filled every hex between the Germans and Moscow with units – mainly low quality STAVKA units.

In the air, the Luftwaffe has been recalled to Germany once more, resulting in a loss rate of 61 Soviet aircraft lost for zero Axis ones. On the ground, my bombing campaign has cost the Axis 291 guns and 4300 men.

Turn 21

Weather is mud everywhere, so the front has moved little. The Germans have pulled back from Kursk, enabling me to reconnect to the city. In the south, they have done the same at Melitopol, but I have had to little MP to really get back to safety with my three cavalry divisions.

The Luftwaffe is back flying, which has led to some heavy losses in the sky. The total casualty tally is 91 Axis Aircraft for 345 Soviet ones. The numbers cover the loss of 88 German single seat fighters and also the loss of 116 U-2VS and 53 Soviet Long range bombers. All things considered I am content, as such Luftwaffe losses will soon cost them the ability to fight in the skies. Most of my losses have been suffered while bombing the Luftwaffe bases, but as my losses are mostly covered by production, I see little reason to stop.

Next turn, the weather will be snow.

Turn 22, Strategic Considerations

PRODUCTION		CAPACITY	DAMAGED	POOL	BUILT	UNITS
____ AIR ____						
SU	P-40B	15	0	67	105	2
SU	I-153	0	0	1122	0	2
SU	I-16 Type 18	0	0	404	0	0
SU	I-16 Type 24	0	0	765	0	13
SU	I-16 Type 29	0	0	428	0	1
SU	MiG-3	72	0	100	1440	60
SU	Yak-1	75	0	159	903	33
SU	LaGG-3 '11 Series'	22	0	52	327	13
SU	LaGG-3	66	0	193	1383	54
SU	Pe-3	5	0	40	75	2
SU	Hurricane IIB	28	0	101	196	5
SU	I-153BS	0	0	283	0	0
SU	Su-2	12	0	106	252	10
SU	IL-2	88	0	258	1020	30
SU	U-2VS	84	0	477	1092	39
SU	Ar-2	0	0	42	0	2
SU	Pe-2	60	0	301	1158	34
SU	Yer-2	0	0	46	0	1
SU	DB-3B	0	0	637	0	17
SU	IL-4	15	0	615	302	20
SU	Pe-8	1	0	30	21	0
SU	SB-2 Rcn	0	0	326	0	6
SU	U-2 Rcn	6	0	126	126	0
SU	Pe-2R	6	0	79	79	0
SU	U-2 (transp)	12	0	804	243	0
SU	TB-3G-2	0	0	25	0	3
SU	Li-2	9	0	64	147	9
____ GROUND ____						
SU	T-60 M1941	82	0	2	501	23
SU	Matilda II	10	0	16	70	4
SU	T-34 M1941	155	0	116	1938	82
SU	Valentine III	18	0	0	70	4
SU	KV-1 M1941	51	0	43	560	88
SU	BT-7M M1939	-	-	259	0	21
SU	GAZ-AAMG	30	0	32	630	335
SU	BM-13-16 Rocket Launcher	28	0	267	267	0
SU	BA-20 Armored Car	10	0	22	210	96

As the mud has turned to snow across the theater, the Red Army has reached two new milestones. The Red Army has now reached a size of six million men, and at the same time it is one million stronger than the opposing Axis Armies combined.

At the same time, the Soviet production system is getting ever stronger. By now I produce 285 fighters, 260 bombers, 82 light tanks, 183 Medium tanks and 51 Heavy tanks every turn.

Axis VP are now 196, which is getting close to a major victory, should the front remain stable for the remainder of the game.

The North

Situational assessment

The German lines at the Volkhov is getting ever stronger. I am beginning to think I may not have a quick and decisive breakthrough and subsequent encirclement of major German forces after all. Behind the lines, some 60 Luftwaffe single seat fighters are protecting the infantry forces at the frontline.

Planning

As I am basically in position for the attack north of Novgorod, my only action in this area will be a series of bombing attacks against the German troops in the area. I continue to bomb the Luftwaffe airfield with fighter on it. I realize this will cost me some casualties, but I feel I can sustain losses far better than the Germans.

Execution

It seems as if leaving the Luftwaffe pilots in place combined with the improved weather conditions has been good for the Luftwaffe fighters. The northern bombings gave an exchange rate of three German single seat fighters for 27 Soviet ones plus the loss of four bombers. It seems I might have to wait for the blizzard before I can effectively force casualties on the Luftwaffe in this area.

Below is an image of the situation south of Leningrad, as I give the turn to Hermann.



The Center

Situational assessment

The Germans have crushed the remaining part of the Kaliningrad Front pocket, as expected. They have also used the snow to conduct further attacks in the direction of Moscow, advancing one or two hexes. This actually suits me quite well, as such attritional attacks will be far worse on the German OoB than it will on mine – even if I suffer greater losses than the Germans.

In the southern part of the sector, Kursk has fallen.

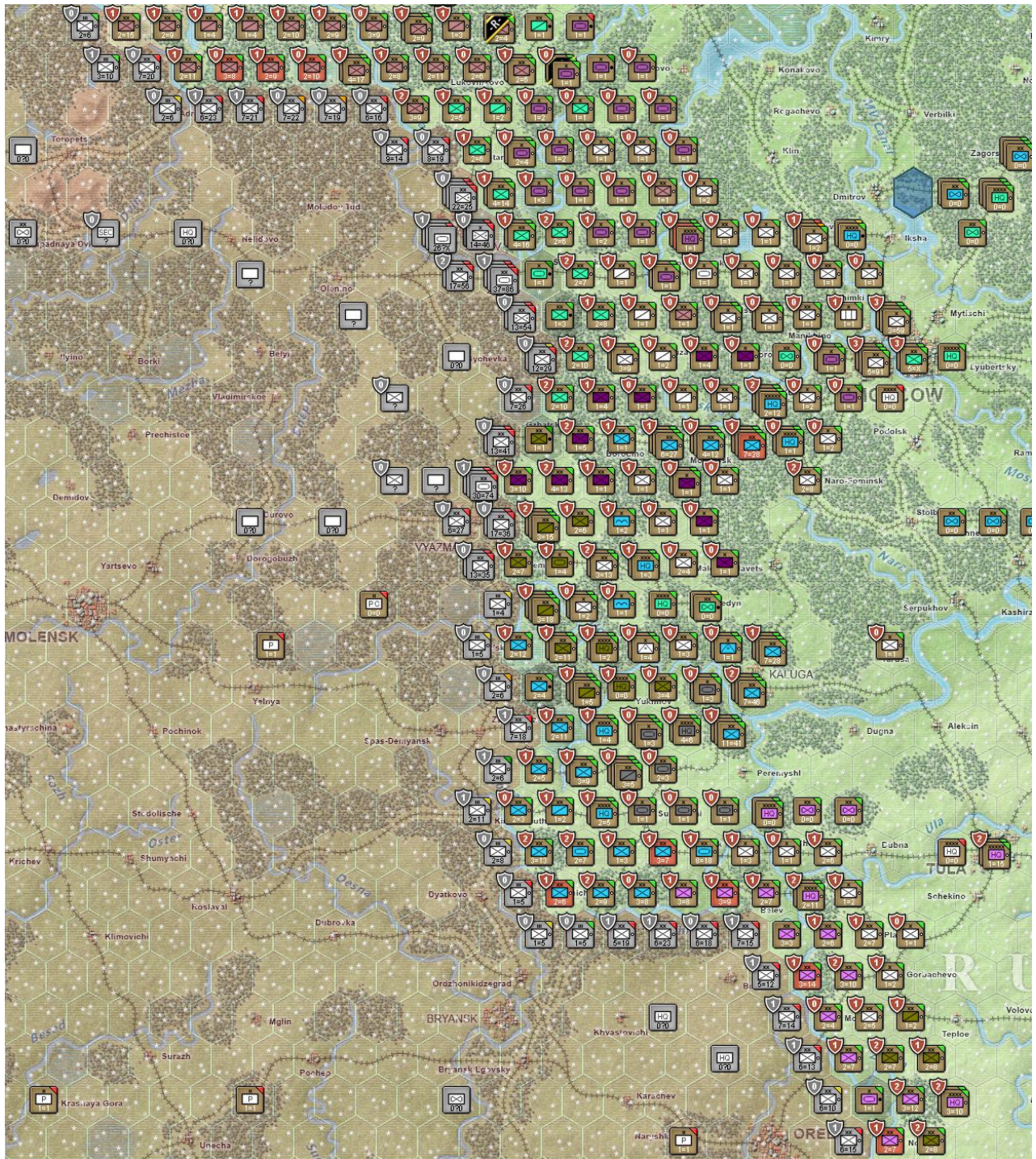
Planning

I will do little other than filling up my front and conducting a series of bombing attacks on the German troops on the front lines.

Execution

The absence of the Luftwaffe over the central area has meant that my bombing campaign in this area has progressed more or less according to plan. There has been little development in the area.

Below is an image of the front at Moscow, as I give the turn to Hermann.



The South

Situational Assessment

The front in this area is more or less frozen into place, and very little is happening here.

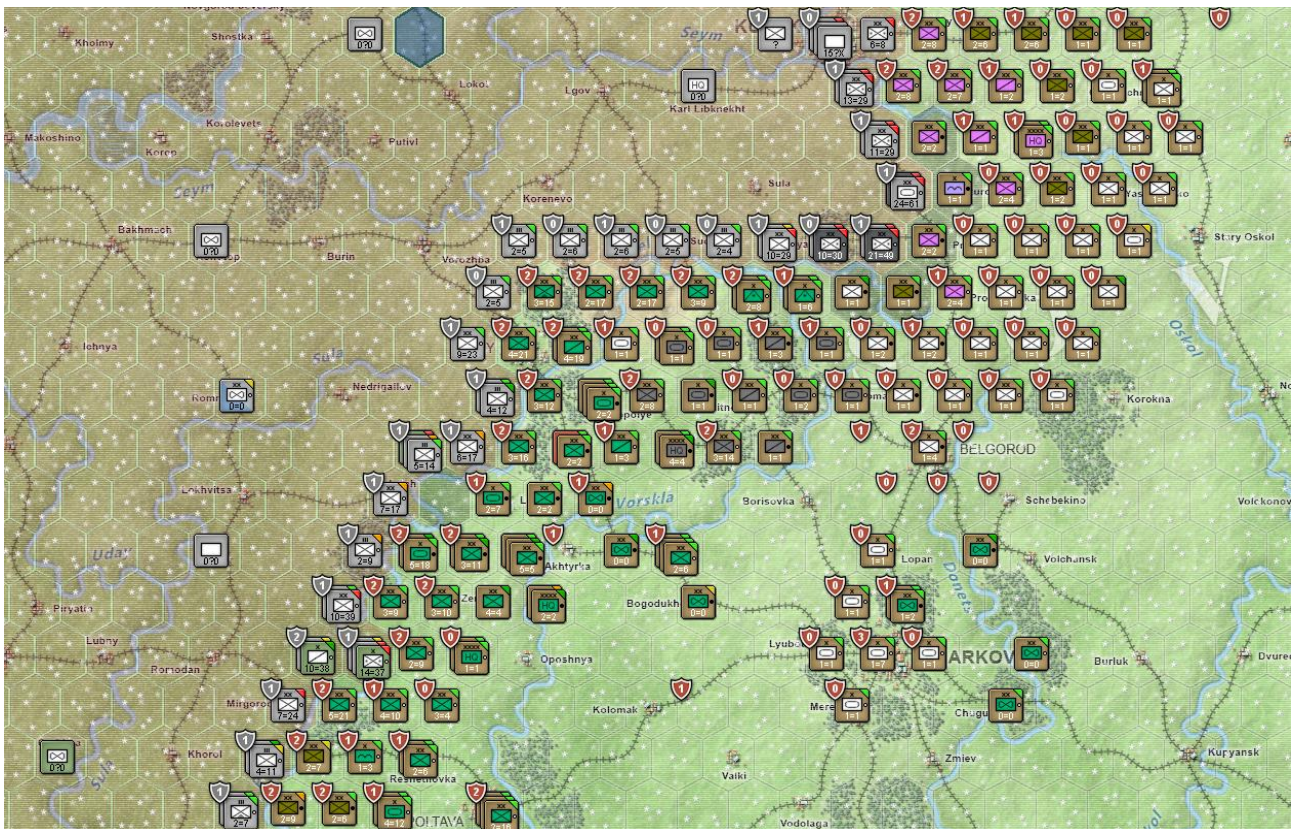
Planning

I will do little here, except move another army into a little bit of a better position for the blizzard attack. Of course, I will also do the traditional bombing attacks.

Execution

There is very little interesting to say.

Below is an image of the area northwest of Poltava, from where I plan to launch my southern pincher of the Kursk offensive.



Conclusion

With 148 Soviet aircraft lost for 10 Axis ones, this turn has certainly been an arial defeat for the Soviets. Not because of the exchange rate, which can be easily covered, but because the German losses has been far below their production. I need to do more damage to the Luftwaffe, or they will eventually come back in strength.

On the ground, I have destroyed another 191 Axis guns, and the German Man2Gun index number is now 117,1. The Man2Gun index is a number I calculate to show the "mechanization" of the Wehrmacht and the Red Army. I index the ratio between men and guns to be 100 at the start of the war, and then track the progress of this number turn by turn. A German number of 117,1 means that by now, there is 17,1% more soldiers to each gun in the wehrmacht, signalling that the German production of Guns can not keep up with the expansion of the army.

There is now only two turns left before the blizzard, and hopefully I will be able to unleach a major offensive on the first blizzard turn.