

Strategic overview

Turn 11: Strategic Considerations

This turn, the Soviets have taken a VERY defensive stance in the area north of Pskov. When looking at the soviet reinforcements (the Kalinin Front arriving with a large number of Admin Points), my best guess is that this is because of a series of reassignments of Soviet leadership to the Moscow area. The current Soviet strategy of giving ground in front of the German advances will not last, as that would mean giving up Moscow within a turn or two, and I certainly do not see that one coming.

The Soviets have evacuated most of the industry in Tula this turn, leaving both the Sturmovik and the Katyusha production still in Voronezh. Apparently, there are few units guarding the approaches. Unfortunately, the German allotment of MP to my attacking units has proven faulty, leaving only 40MP to the two Motorized divisions charged with reaching the city, crossing the Don and cutting the evacuation possibilities.

In the air, the Soviets have finally begun bombing the Luftwaffe airfields, destroying 23 German single seat fighters in the process. As I still have 175 single seat fighters in my reserve pools, I need to be concerned but not yet worried about this turn of events.

The North



Situational assessment

As stated in last turns report, the Finnish front has become all but irrelevant.

Moving south, the soviets have withdrawn from their positions in the swamps west of Narva, and pulled back across the river. The Soviets have then established a front stretching southeast, through the forests towards Lake Ilmen.

South of the Lake, the Soviets have pulled back across the Pola river, making my planned advances that much easier. This will leave me with some time to conduct another offensive, which I will need to begin planning.

In front of the Soviet lines are three Rifle divisions either left behind or unable to get back to safety.

The Red Army Aviation now have some 1000 fighters standing by in the area around Novgorod.

Planning

My plans for the north aim at achieving four goals this turn:

1. Encircle the three left behind Soviet rifle divisions, so that they can be destroyed come next turn.
2. Move forward to the Narva line and Staryia Russa.
3. Challenge the Soviets in a series of ground attacks to find out if the leadership has indeed changed.
4. Prepare for a push towards the Luga river.

To support this, the Luftwaffe will be deployed in a purely ground support role

Execution

Doing the attacks east of Pskov, I had a Soviet Rifle division escape certain doom by unfamiliar ways. Before attacking it, I had ensured that it had only two friendly adjacent hexes, one of them being adjacent to the attacking infantry division. As I understand the rules, this should have meant a certain retreat to the other hex (even though that hex was adjacent to eight or so German divisions). However, the retreating Soviet division instead pulled "back" to a hex adjacent to the attacking German infantry division, and thus managed to escape certain doom.

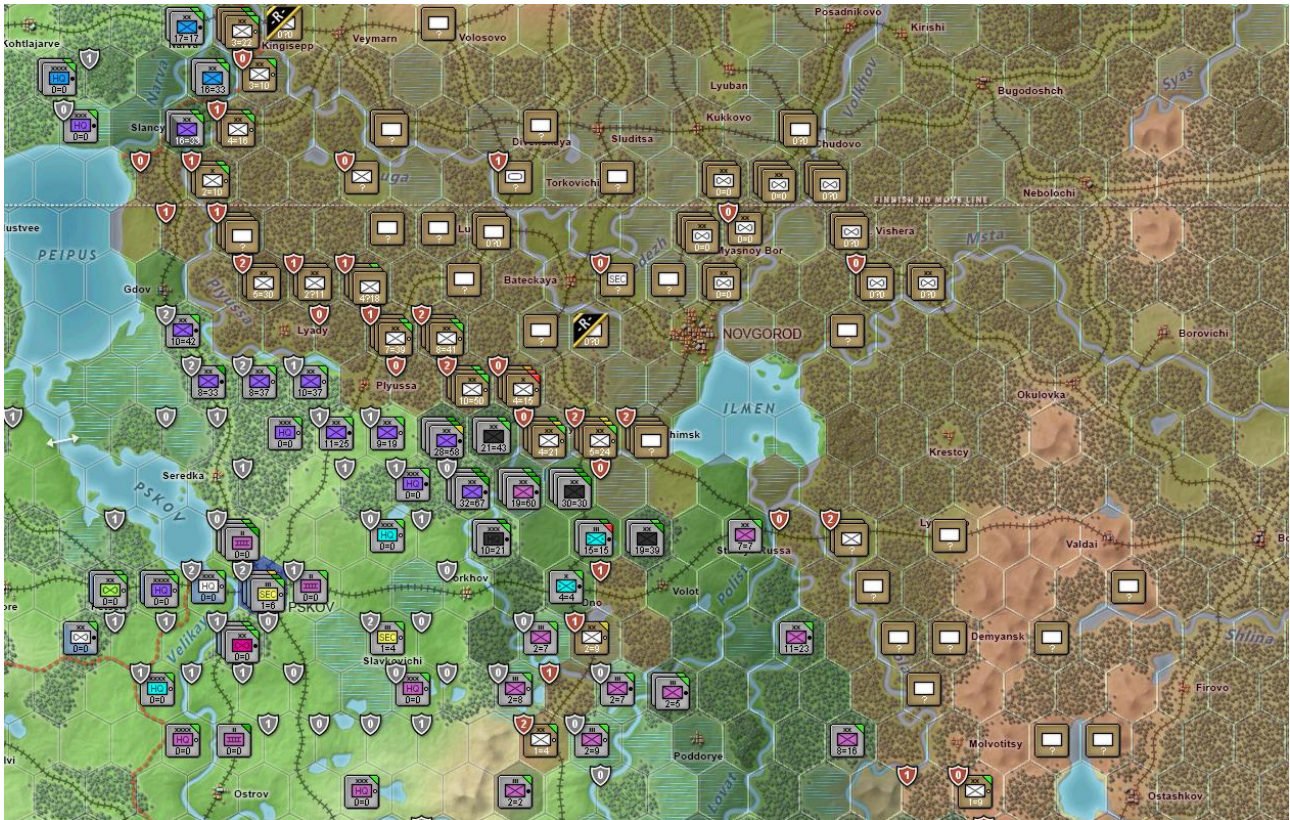
Other than that, the heavy attacks in the area showed that Zhukov was in fact still in command of local forces, which came as a surprise to me.

Axis Forces Attacking:		1 of 1	79,27 - Swamp - Clear	Turn: 11 1941-08-28	Soviet Forces Defending:	
X Corps -13% 290th Infantry Division (64) 339th Static Division (64) 1818th Gun Battalion (0) 846th Howitzer Battalion (0) 850th Howitzer Battalion (0) XXIII Corps 254th Infantry Division (103)		Forces Engaged				
		ATK: men 84531, art 857, afv 4 DAM: men 63, art 16, afv 0 LOST: men 356, art 6, afv 0 ATK: ftr 145, bmr 95, utl 0 LOST: ftr 7, bmr 8, utl 0	DEF: men 47481, art 486, afv 24 DAM: men 71, art 5, afv 0 LOST: men 534, art 9, afv 0 DEF: ftr 294, bmr 48, utl 0 LOST: ftr 35, bmr 19, utl 0			
[v]		Defending Forces HELD			[v]	
CV: 508->787.6 Eng Val: 16 Comm HQ: XXIII Corps G Walter Model		Show Details	Odds 1.18 : 1	Exit	CV: 387->665.0 Fort: 0.72->0.52 Comm HQ: 27th Army GA Georgy Zhukov	

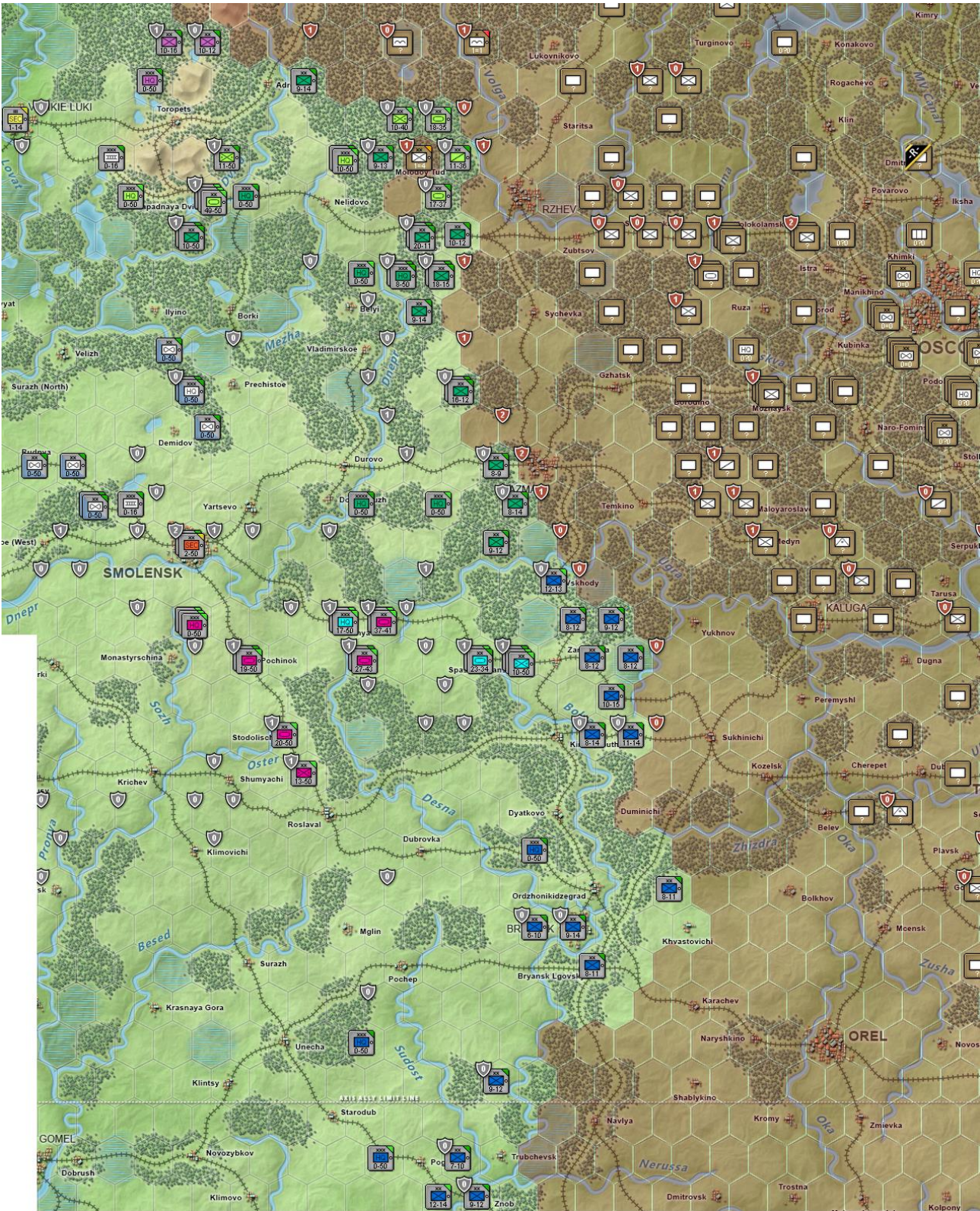
This led me to slightly readjust my plans and seek better odds when attacking the local Soviet forces. At the same time, the Soviet fighter level of ground support meant that I upped my own fighter support to better the odds when attacking the Soviets. In all, few battles were fought in the north, and apart from the one reported above, only one large engagement is worthy of note.

Axis Forces Attacking:		1 of 1	78,27 - Light Woods - Clear	Turn: 11 1941-08-28	Soviet Forces Defending:	
I Corps 30th Infantry Division (99) 11th Infantry Division (120) 21st Infantry Division (124) 58th Infantry Division (89) 269th Infantry Division (99) 536th Howitzer Battalion (1) 604th SP Lt Flk Bn (6)		Forces Engaged				
		ATK: men 102916, art 1161, afv 103 DAM: men 177, art 27, afv 3 LOST: men 301, art 12, afv 0 ATK: ftr 109, bmr 83, utl 0 LOST: ftr 1, bmr 1, utl 0	DEF: men 33889, art 427, afv 32 DAM: men 189, art 7, afv 0 LOST: men 1043, art 24, afv 9 DEF: ftr 131, bmr 40, utl 0 LOST: ftr 22, bmr 12, utl 0			
[v]		5th Naval Infantry Brigade RETREATED 268th Rifle Division RETREATED 61st Rifle Division RETREATED			[v]	
CV: 672->1362.4 Eng Val: 14 Comm HQ: I Corps GL Karl Adolf Hollidt		Show Details	Odds 6.42 : 1	Exit	CV: 220->212.0 Fort: 2.02->0.00 Comm HQ: 27th Army GA Georgy Zhukov	

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



The Center



Situational Assessment

In the center, are still pulling back in front of Moscow, this turn giving me three to four hexes without putting up a fight. Obviously, this will not last, as Moscow itself is now only 10 hexes from the Soviet front lines.

The Soviets have evacuated the industries in Tula this turn, leaving Voronezh untouched, The placement of an HQ unit to the east of the city seems to suggest that there are some divisions in the city itself in order to defend it (my recon has just not shown this).

I have two Panzer Corps in the area with full MP (one at Rzhev and one south of Smolensk). The remaining panzers have decent mobility (in the 30's regarding MP).

In the air, 878 Soviet fighters, 138 tactical bombers and 271 level bombers stand ready to defend Moscow. Opposite this, I have 332 fighters, 74 tactical bombers and 534 level bombers.

Planning

In the center, I will launch my northern pincer in the attack against Voronezh this turn. Next turn, I have no doubt the industries will have been pulled out of the city, and I doubt I will have improved my own positions in any meaningful way regarding such an attack. Launching the attack will flip a lot of population centers and give me some ground to "sell" for time come the winter months.

As the Soviets have pulled back from the Germans, I would spend a lot of MP just reaching the Soviet lines. Because of this, I intend to do HQBU's on the Panzer Corps without full MP, while launching only the two that did an HQBU last turn. The northern Corps will be pushing in the direction of Rzhev. The southern Corps will dispatch units to Voronezh to hook up with the Panzer Corps moving in from the south and thus flip a lot of terrain, but the main force will be launched on Kaluga and the shortest route to Moscow. With the industry having been moved out of Tula, there is now little strategic purpose in taking that city.

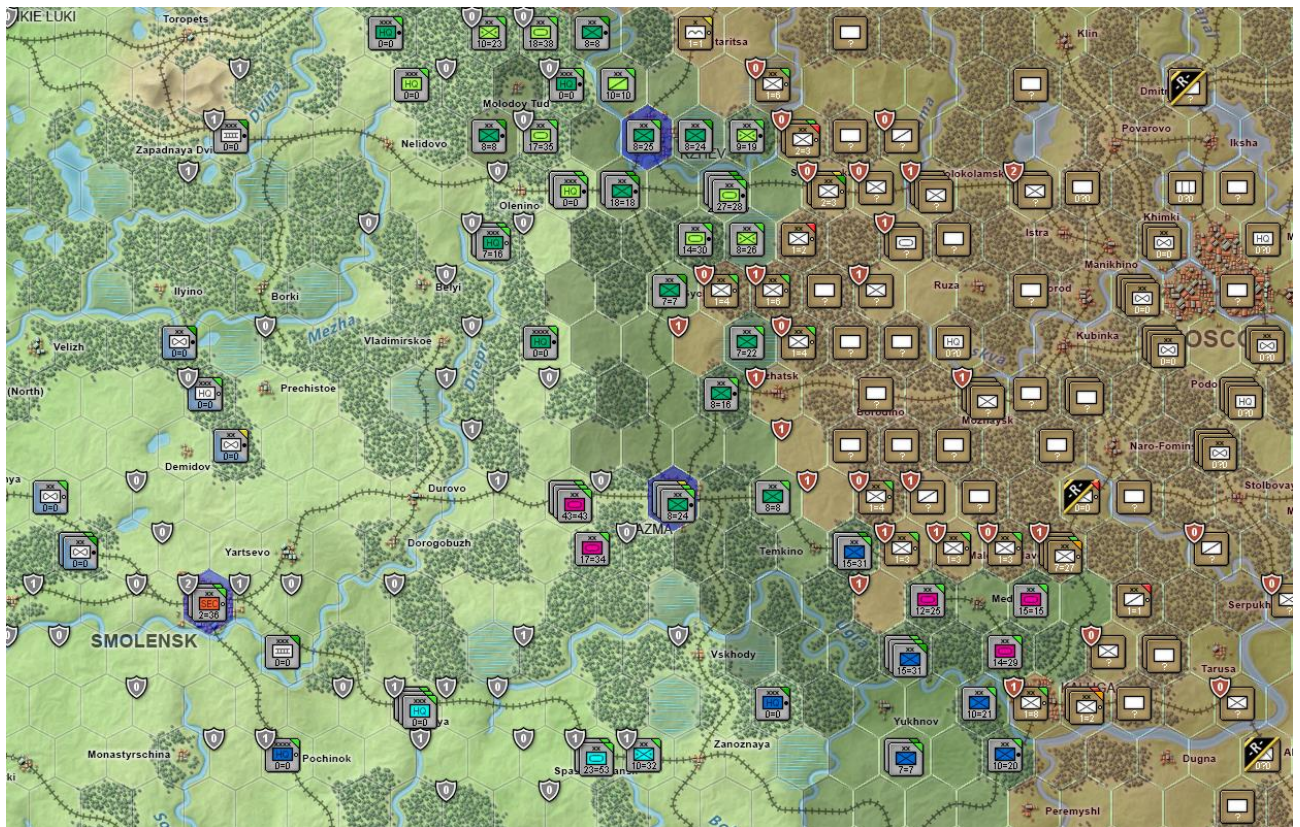
Execution

As expected, I have taken both Vyazma and Rzhev this turn, pushing forward in the direction of Moscow. However, the three HQBU's I have done this turn has somewhat limited the number of attacks I have been able to do, and progress has not been extraordinary.

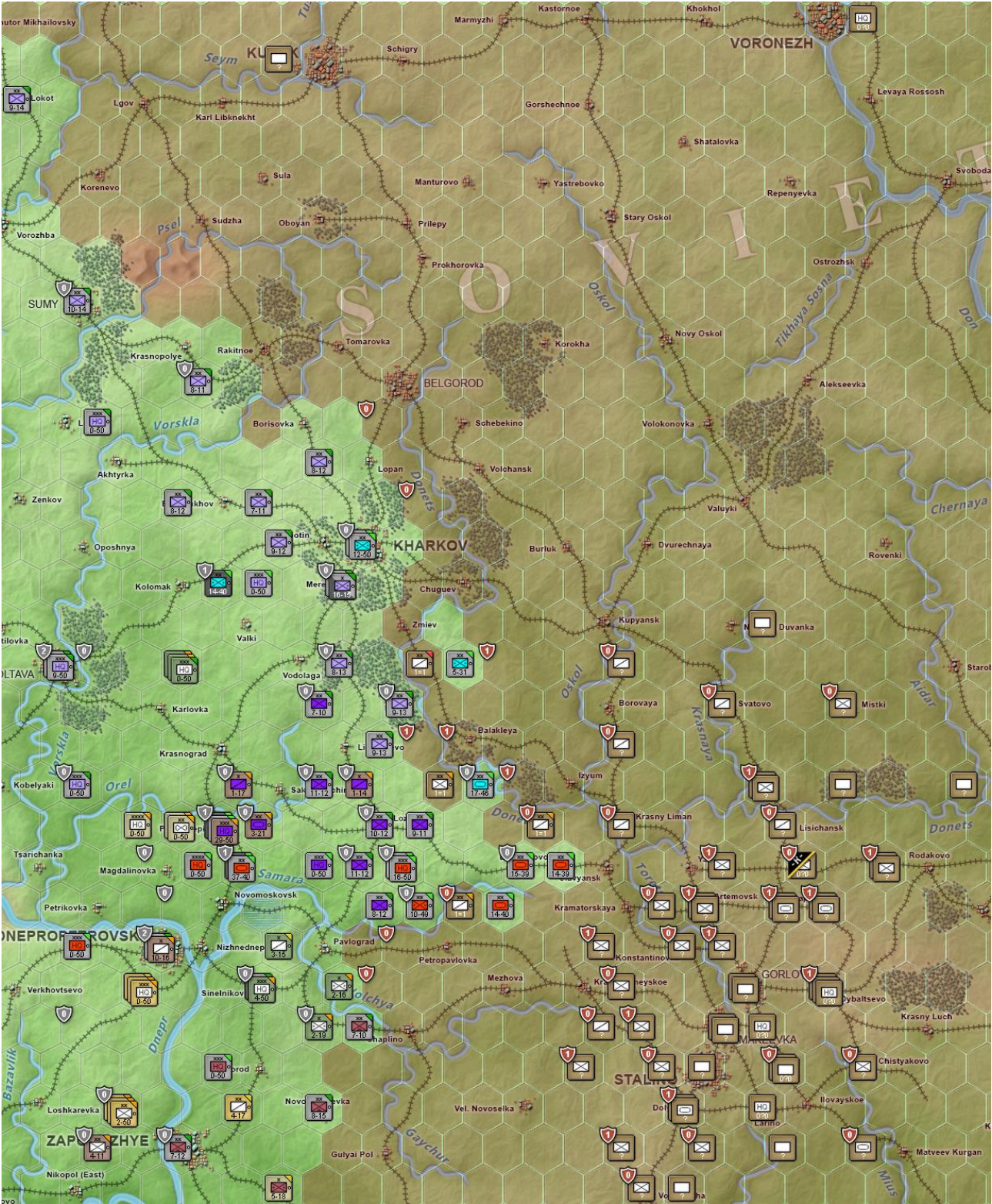
Still, my forward units are now no more than seven hexes from Moscow itself, and I am still only at turn eleven. The Soviet plan for the defense of the city must rest on a big fight over the next few turns.

The Soviet units in the area are somewhat weaker than the ones I am facing at Leningrad, and they have had less time to fortify their positions, meaning they are easier to attack.

Below is an image of the situation west of Moscow, as I give the turn to HardLuck.



The South



Situational assessment

In the south, the Soviets are still concentrating around Stalino. There are many defending units in the area, but as of yet, no significant air forces, leaving me with virtual air supremacy.

With regards to industry, there are still three Heavy industry left in Gorlovka, three Heavy industry in Makeevka and twelve Armament Points and five heavy industry in Stalino.

Planning

Apart from launching my attack on Voronezh with the units around Kharkov, I will also attack in the direction of Stalino this turn, hoping to cut off the industries left in these cities. While I do not have really good movement on my Panzers, I do have some and I haven't got enough Admin Points to do HQBU's in both the center and the south.

Execution

In the south, I initially started by attacking towards Voronezh with two of my Motorized divisions belonging to the 2nd Panzer Group. As calculated, the lack of 10MP prevented me from crossing the Don at Lavaya Rossosh and then move northeast to cut the rail links to Voronezh with those divisions. I also had a Panzer division with a few more MP's ready to attack, and throwing that division north, I was able to cross the Don and move into the rear of the city. I was still two measly MP short of actually cutting the rail lines running east from the city.

The result is that the Soviets will not be able to evacuate the industry this turn (due to rail being adjacent to German unit). If they throw back the Panzer, they will (but I see no units nearby able to do so). The Soviets now have to decide if they wish to reinforce this area heavily, or if they will give up the production.

To put the impact of this decision into perspective, we are talking about a production of some 88 IL-2 per turn for some 175 turns (after repairs, given evacuation). In reality, we are talking about the production of some 15.000 IL-2. On top of this comes the saving of about half of the Katyusha production of the Soviet Union.

The fuel situation of the Panzers at Voronezh is desperate, and it will be at least a turn before my infantry can make ANY impact on the situation at Voronezh. However, I can post another Panzer Corps from the center to this area if need be, and they will then arrive with some 20-35 MP come next turn. I also have the option of motorizing a few infantry divisions in order to hasten them forward to the front at Voronezh.

However the situation, the city has not fallen, and much will depend on the reaction of the Soviets. Will they use their rail capacity to move in reinforcements and try to hold it? If they do, those forces and that rail capacity will not be available in other areas. If they do not, the city will fall once the German infantry arrives.

In short, I am taking quite a gamble here, risking the life of a Panzer division and possibly some Motorized divisions, but the prize is well worth it in my opinion.



71 - Voronezh (16)
 Light-Urban
 Hex X 116, Y 71
 Minor River: E SE SW W NE
 Rail: E W
 Fort 1 (48%)
 Soviet Rail

PRODUCTION
 Armaments Production 3
 IL-2 33
 BM-13-16 Rocket Launcher 9
 **BM-31-12 Rocket Launcher 1
 IL-2 33
 **IL-10 1
 Railway 2
 Manpower 16
 Heavy Industry 3

Off Rail MP: 7
 Off Rail Range: 1

Further south, during the attack on Stalino, the following situation arose, with the Germans still having four Panzer divisions able to move.

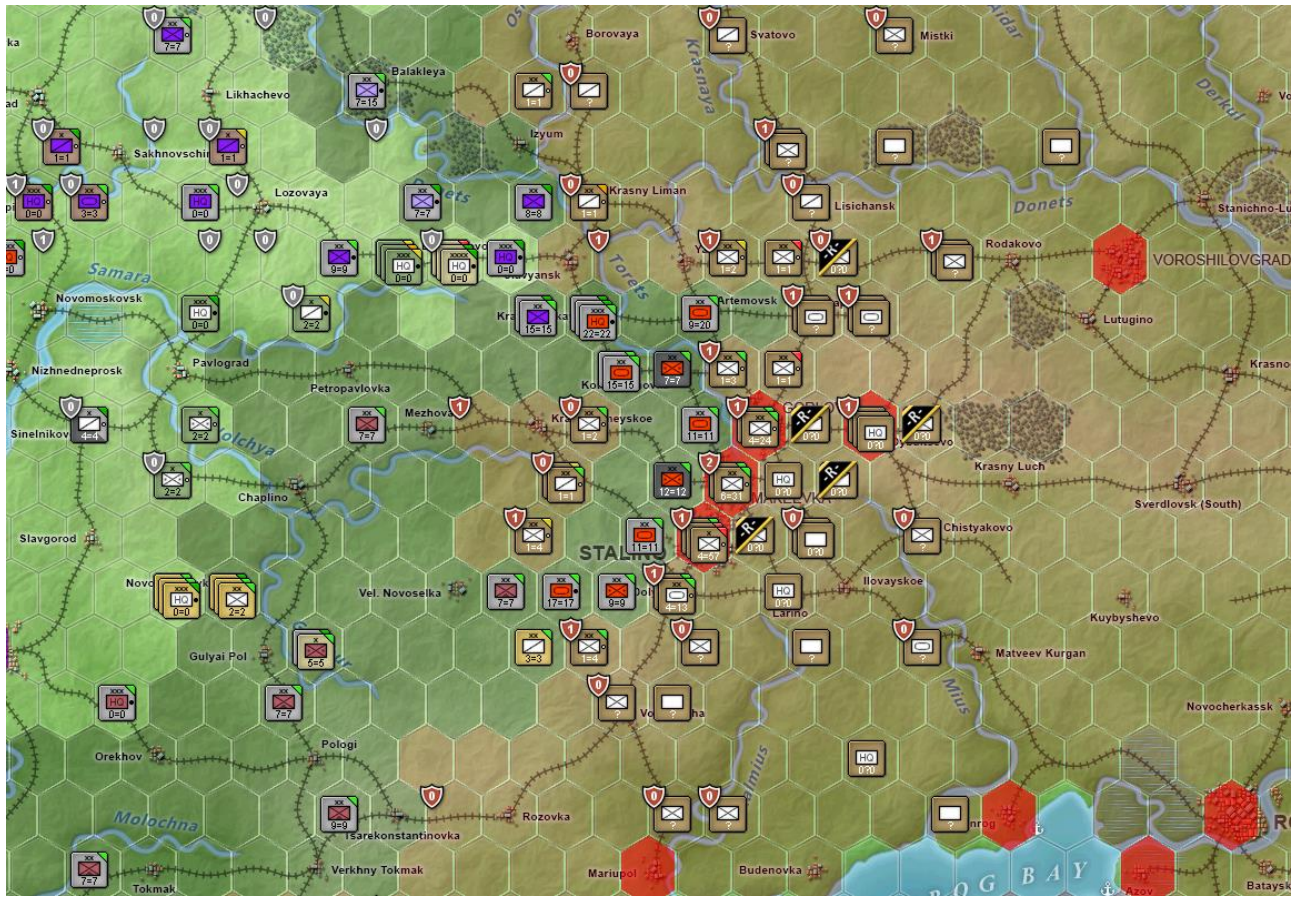


The choice at this point stood between strengthening the pocket as best I could, in order to destroy those four divisions, or else attacking north of Gorlovka, in order to further develop the threat on the area behind the cities. It was a hard choice to me, as even strengthening the pocket certainly did not mean its doom, as a counter attack from Stalino could easily break it once again. A continuation of the attack north of Gorlovka, would mean that the position of the Soviet forces in Stalino would become very vulnerable, and eventually force a withdrawal from the cities

In the end, I decided to strengthen the pocket, mainly because my attacks were getting quite far ahead of my railheads, and thus my ability to continue the push would be limited. Even with attacks breaking the pocket, the divisions inside would still be vulnerable, and both the German infantry and the supply lines would get a little time to catch up.

Finally, I have been able to cross into the Crimea in a series of battles that are completely unclimactic (as the Soviets have not really tried to defend the crossings).

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



Conclusion

This turn, one event is paramount to everything else that has happened. The Germans have been able to launch an attack on Voronezh and the Soviet IL-2 production there. If this attack succeeds, that is a “game changer” in my honest opinion. The attack was a VERY close call, as the Motorized divisions intended to cross the Don simply did not have the movement to do so. However, one Panzer did – much to my fortune. The lesson is that I need to be much sharper when preparing attacks such as these.