

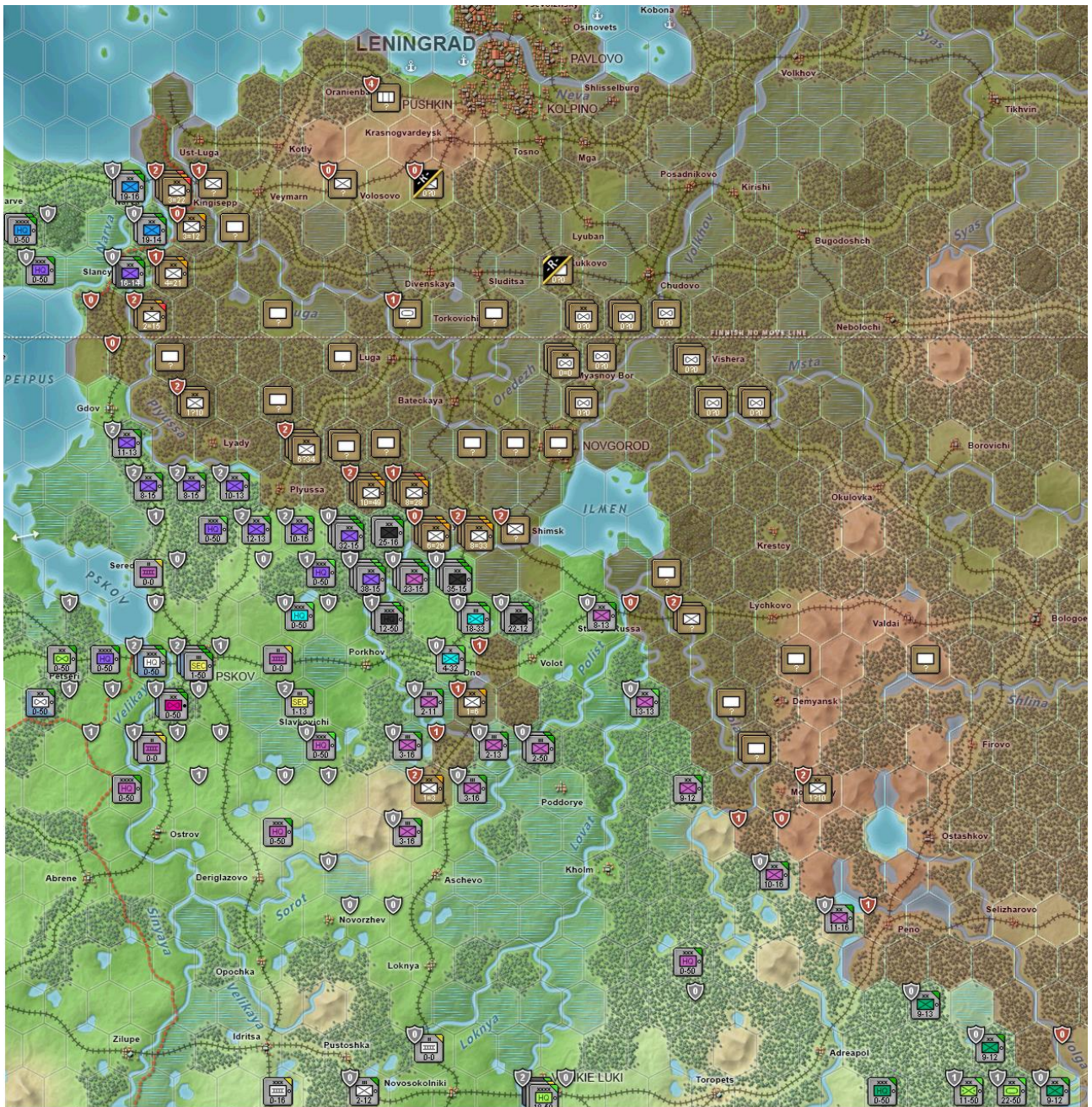
Strategic overview

Turn 12: Strategic Considerations

The Soviets have strengthened their defense of Voronezh with at least some 30 assorted divisions, making any further attempts to secure the industry in the city all but impossible. The upside to this is that those 30 divisions will not be available for the defense of Moscow or Stalino/Rostov.

On the forums, HardLuck has just posted a message that he is doubting if Moscow will hold this game. Personally, I have serious doubts in my ability to take the city. With the +1 soviet attack, the Soviets can easily muster enough forces east of the city to counterattack and break any encirclements. As I do not believe in taking the city by frontal attack, that means I have little faith in my ability to take the city at all. I will continue the attacks however, as I might be wrong and as I wish for the soviet reinforcements to be poured into this area, leaving the south more vulnerable.

The North



Situational assessment

In the north, the situation can best be described as a stalemate, where I have no further hopes of advancing this year. The Soviets have created a heavily defended frontline, knowing that I will be unable to exploit any breakthrough.

The Germans still have some of their best infantry units in this area, with both the I and the XXIII Corps present with heavy CV values. The two encircled Soviet Rifle divisions encircled last turn are still encircled

In the air, the Soviets are heavily present with more than 800 fighters ready to fly.

Planning

As my center screams for more infantry units (see below), I will begin extracting the XXIII Corps from this area and send them towards Moscow. Meanwhile the Lehr motorized Brigade and the GrossDeutschland brigade will be assigned to the 18th Army to act as reserves in case of Soviet attacks once I have moved even further forces out of the area.

I will conduct a single infantry attack in the north, mainly because two of the Soviet Rifle divisions have low morale, and I expect to be able to give extra casualties. In the main however, I will begin focusing on fortifying my positions, as I do not expect to be able to advance in the direction of Leningrad this year.

Execution

Little has happened in the north, other than the main part of the XXIII Corps disengaging.

I did do a few attacks in order to attempt to convince the Soviets that attacks on my part were still ongoing. This proved to be rather costly in terms of tactical bombers as my fighters for some reason did not fly much in the defense of my bombers, and the Soviets thus took out quite a few of my aircraft.

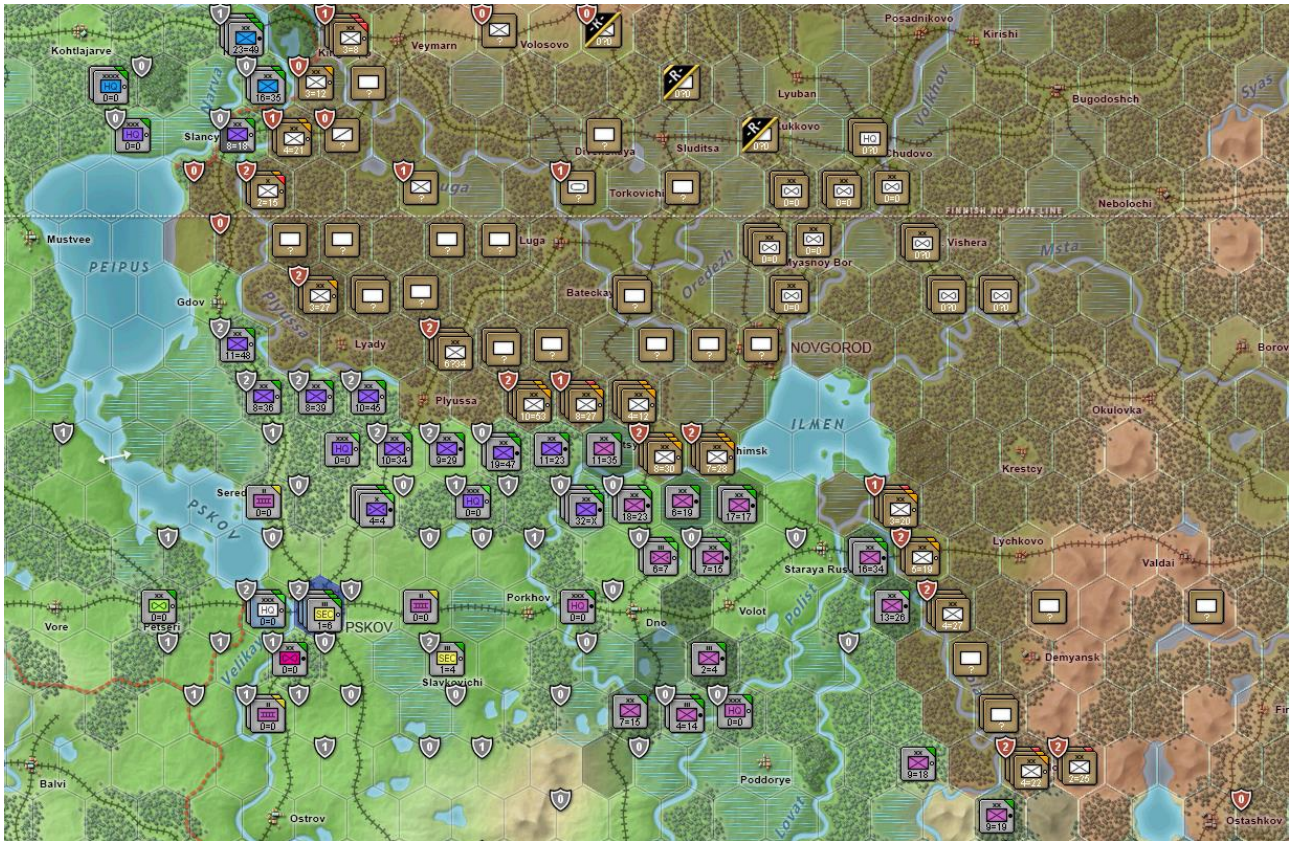
1 of 1 79/27 - Swamp - Clear Turn: 12 1941-09-04		
Axis Forces Attacking: I Corps 30th Infantry Division (79) 1st Infantry Division (127) 11th Infantry Division (189) 21st Infantry Division (121) 58th Infantry Division (67) II/58th Howitzer Battalion (0) 637th Howitzer Battalion (0) [v]	Forces Engaged ATK: men 106474, art 1286, afv 100 DAM: men 83, art 11, afv 3 LOST: men 271, art 8, afv 0 ATK: flt 84, bmr 64, utl 0 LOST: flt 1, bmr 29, utl 0 DEF: men 56010, art 651, afv 19 DAM: men 342, art 19, afv 0 LOST: men 506, art 18, afv 0 DEF: flt 335, bmr 59, utl 0 LOST: flt 23, bmr 18, utl 0 177th Rifle Division RETREATED 140th Rifle Division RETREATED 30th Mountain Division RETREATED [v]	Soviet Forces Defending: 27th Army 140th Rifle Division (228) 279th Rifle Division (30) R 30th Mountain Division (125) 138th Howitzer Regiment (1) 430th BM Howitzer Regiment (1) 376th Howitzer Regiment (1) 614th Crps Art Rgt (1) [v]
CV: 685->1107.9 Eng Val: 14 Comm HQ: I Corps GL Karl Adolf Hollidt	Show Details Odds 2.01 : 1 Exit	CV: 489->549.8 Fort: 0.88->0.00 Comm HQ: 27th Army GA Georgy Zhukov

With 300+ fighters flying every combat for the Soviets, they will swamp my own fighter cover and cause heavy losses amongst my bombers. Because of this, there is really no point in flying my bombers unless I have a really strong fighter presence myself. I could then choose to fly my own fighters in the area, and I would be shooting down a lot of Soviet fighters doing so (as can be seen from previous battles). However, this will only serve to build up Soviet experience as the planes themselves are easily replaced. Reaching a decision, I moved my bombers south and kept my fighters in place, but only to convince the Soviets of keeping their own airforces in the north.

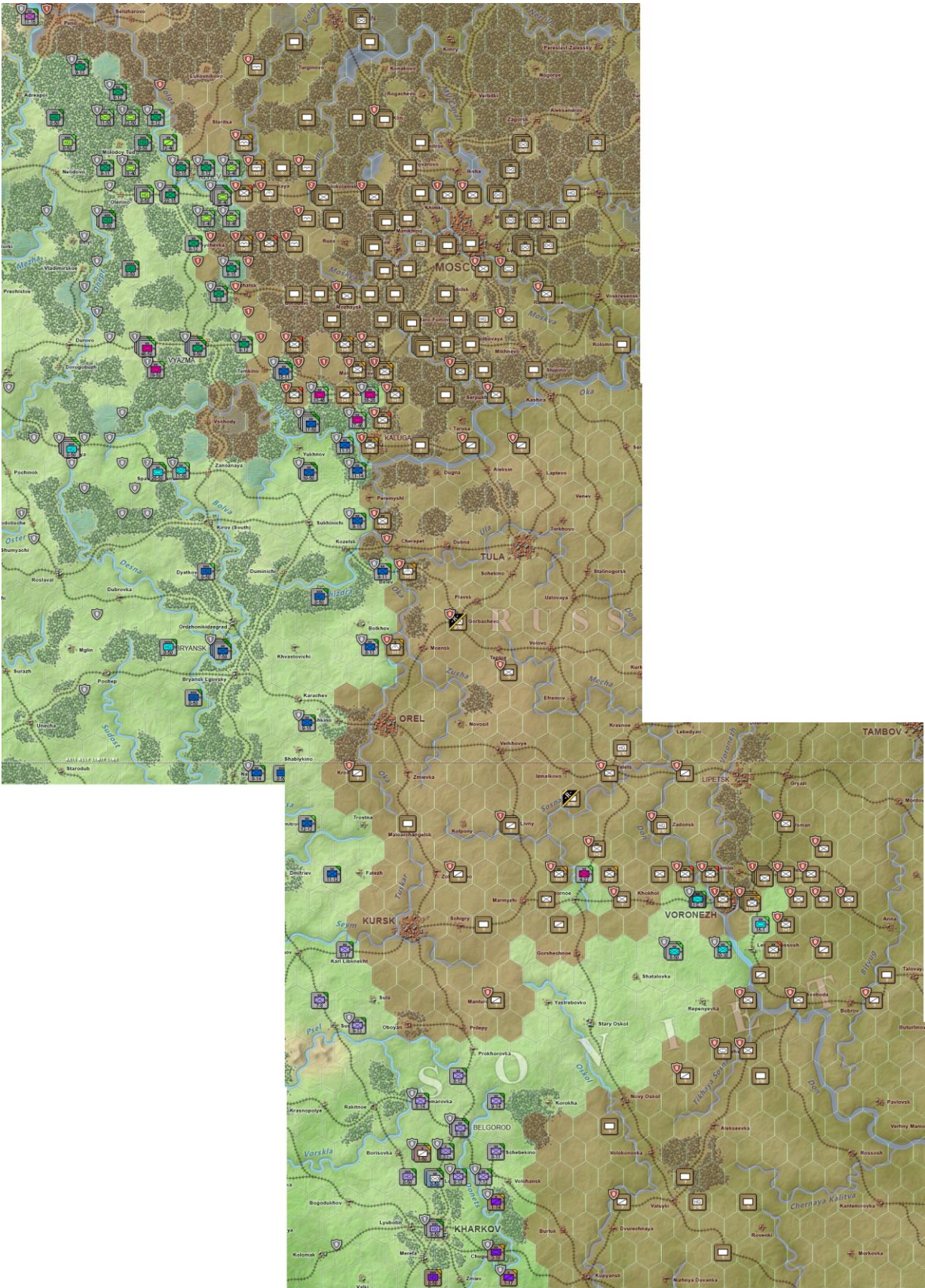
The experience gain of Air Groups is actually one of the things I feel is very much in the need of nerfing in WitE. At the beginning of the game, the Luftwaffe fighter Air Groups have experience ranging from 78 to 91. This experience, they have gained through superior training and through combat experience from Spain, Poland, France and the Battle of Britain. In short, at the beginning of the game, the Luftwaffe is, by far, the most experienced airforce in the world, while the soviet airforces were a complete shambles. Historically, it took the Soviets all the way to 1943 to gain "parity" in the air.

In this game, if played well, the Soviets will have a very experienced airforce very early in the game. In the AAR of Stef vrs Stelteck, Hardluck has shown this by an image of the Soviet fighter airforce having experience ranging from 67 to 89 by turn eight. Considering they start the game with experience ranging from 52 to 61 (which I think is way to high), this means that the Soviets will be able to gain an average of 2 experience points pr turn, flying against the Luftwaffe. In short, the Soviet airforce will easily gain parity with the Luftwaffe in the fall or winter of 1941.

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



The Center



Situational Assessment

In the center, there are two major areas of interest this turn: Moscow and Voronezh.

At Moscow, it is obvious that the Soviets are preparing a massive defensive line a few hexes east of the current frontline. In front of that main line of resistance, the Soviets have placed a lot of weak divisions to delay my advance. This includes several low morale Rifle divisions.

In the air, the Soviets have about 1000 Fighters and 500 level bombers placed on airfields behind Moscow.

Further south, at Voronezh, the Soviets have rushed forward some 30 or 40 divisions to defend the city. While plenty of those divisions look very weak, there are also some heavy infantry units arriving east of Voronezh, making the capture of the Soviet rail line out of the city all but impossible. I now pay for the lack of movement I suffered last turn on the divisions set up to attack the city.

I will not consider the attack a failure though, as I have forced the Soviets to deploy heavy forces in the defense of the city, that could otherwise have made progress at either Moscow or in the south all but impossible. I will very likely fail in taking the IL-2 production, but I have still forced the Soviets to commit to this area.

Planning

At Moscow, the attack will continue. This turn, all Panzers will be thrown into the attack, although two of the Corps needs to be placed to get an HQBU come next turn. At Rzhev, the attack will be focused on reaching Ruza and the Soviet lines beyond it while further south, I will try to clear the area north of Kaluga of Soviet forces.

I do not plan to focus on encirclements, as the +1 Soviet Attack modifier makes such encirclements very easy to break for a concentrated attack. Rather, I will simply try to push the units in the area back, inflicting as many casualties as I can in the process. In a few turns time, the arrival of the XXIII Corps will hopefully speed things up a little.

Further south, at Voronezh, I will move my Panzer back towards the Don, but keep it adjacent to the Soviet rail line. Meanwhile I will place a motorized division west of the river in reserve mode, thus hoping to thwart the Soviet attack I am sure will follow. While success is unlikely, if it occurs, I might still make a fight for the city's industries.

Meanwhile, obviously, the infantry to the west will be rushing forward to relieve the beleaguered Panzers.

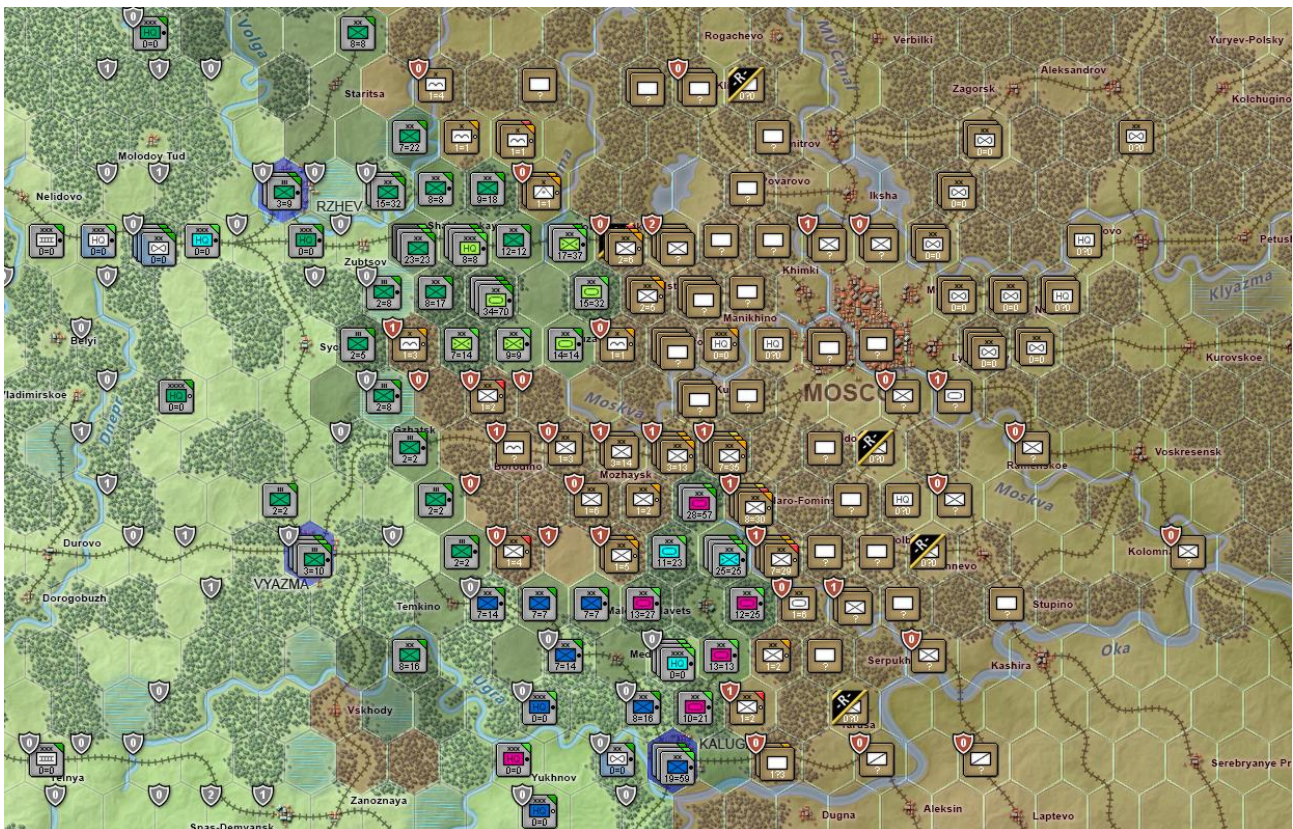
Execution

At Moscow, the northern pincer has moved forward another four or five hexes. Unfortunately, I have not yet made contact with the main Soviet line of resistance in this area, and the battle fought here has shown that the Soviets are getting stronger and stronger.

The southern pincer has reached the main Soviet defensive line, revealing stacks of CV's such as 7=29, 8=35 and 7=35. As I had enough movement on three mobile divisions on one of my corps in this area, I decided to do a single attack on the line, hoping to weaken it prior to future attacks. This attack was done with no more than 42 offensive CV (and a few reserve divisions potentially strengthening the attack) against a stack of 8=35, so I had little hope of actual success. The attack failed, with little reduction of the Soviet defensive modifier as a result.

Axis Forces Attacking: XXXXI Panzer Corps 1st Panzer Division (141) 18th Panzer Division (125) 36th Motorized Division (52) 52nd Nebelwerfer Regiment (1) 100th Flammpanzer Battalion (17) 611th Gun Battalion (0) II/59th Howitzer Battalion (0) CV: 349->916.5 Eng Val: 10 Comm HQ: XXXXI Panzer Corps G Georg-Hans Reinhardt	1 of 3 > 104,48 - Light Woods(Naro-Fominsk) - ClearTurn:12 1941-09-04 Forces Engaged ATK: men 52628, art 631, afv 501 DEF: men 44212, art 502, afv 31 DAM: men 95, art 11, afv 24 DAM: men 114, art 10, afv 2 LOST: men 213, art 6, afv 5 LOST: men 238, art 4, afv 4 ATK: ftr 64, bmr 12, utl 0 DEF: ftr 68, bmr 16, utl 0 LOST: ftr 1, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 2, bmr 1, utl 0 Defending Forces HELD Odds 1.37 : 1 <a>Show Details <a>Exit	Soviet Forces Defending: 54th Army 46th Rifle Division (139) 108th Rifle Division (110) 283rd Crps Art Rgt (1) 612th BM Howitzer Regiment (1) 375th Howitzer Regiment (1) 50th Army -10% 194th Mountain Division (55) CV: 309->668.7 Fort: 1.56->1.44 Comm HQ: 54th Army GM Aleksandr Vasilevsky
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At Moscow, this has led to the following situation, as I give the turn to HardLuck.



North of this area, I have a stretch of front where I am very vulnerable, as I only have three divisions guarding thirteen hexes of frontline. However, I half expect the Soviet counterattack to be launched in the Moscow area, as this is where the Soviets have their main forces lined up.

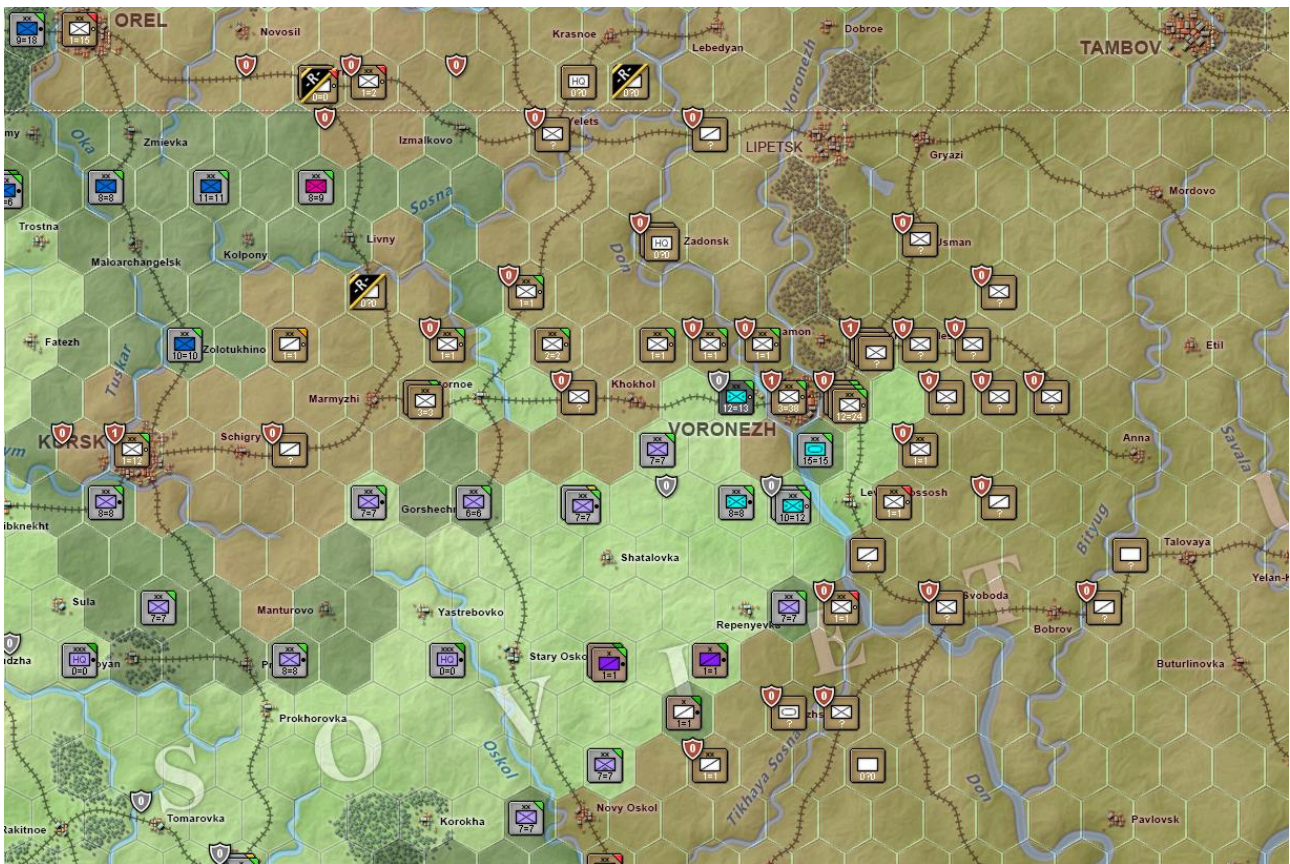
At Voronezh, I have done what I can to rush forward the German infantry to reach the Panzer's in front of the city. I have managed to create a very thin alternate line of defense right up to the city, but I still think the soviets might cause me a lot of trouble, if they are willing to risk losing units by pushing them forward.

At the city itself, I have moved my one Panzer division east of Don one hex back, so that it still blocks the evacuation of the city industries from it's current hex. The +1 soviet attack bonus makes it very likely however, that it will not withstand a concentrated soviet attack, so I have also set the two Motorized divisions west of the river into reserve status. Apart from this, I have not really moved this Panzer Corps much, preferring instead to retain it's movement for future combat. The Panzer division east of the river has been supplied by air, and now has some 34% of it's fuel requirements. The three motorized divisions

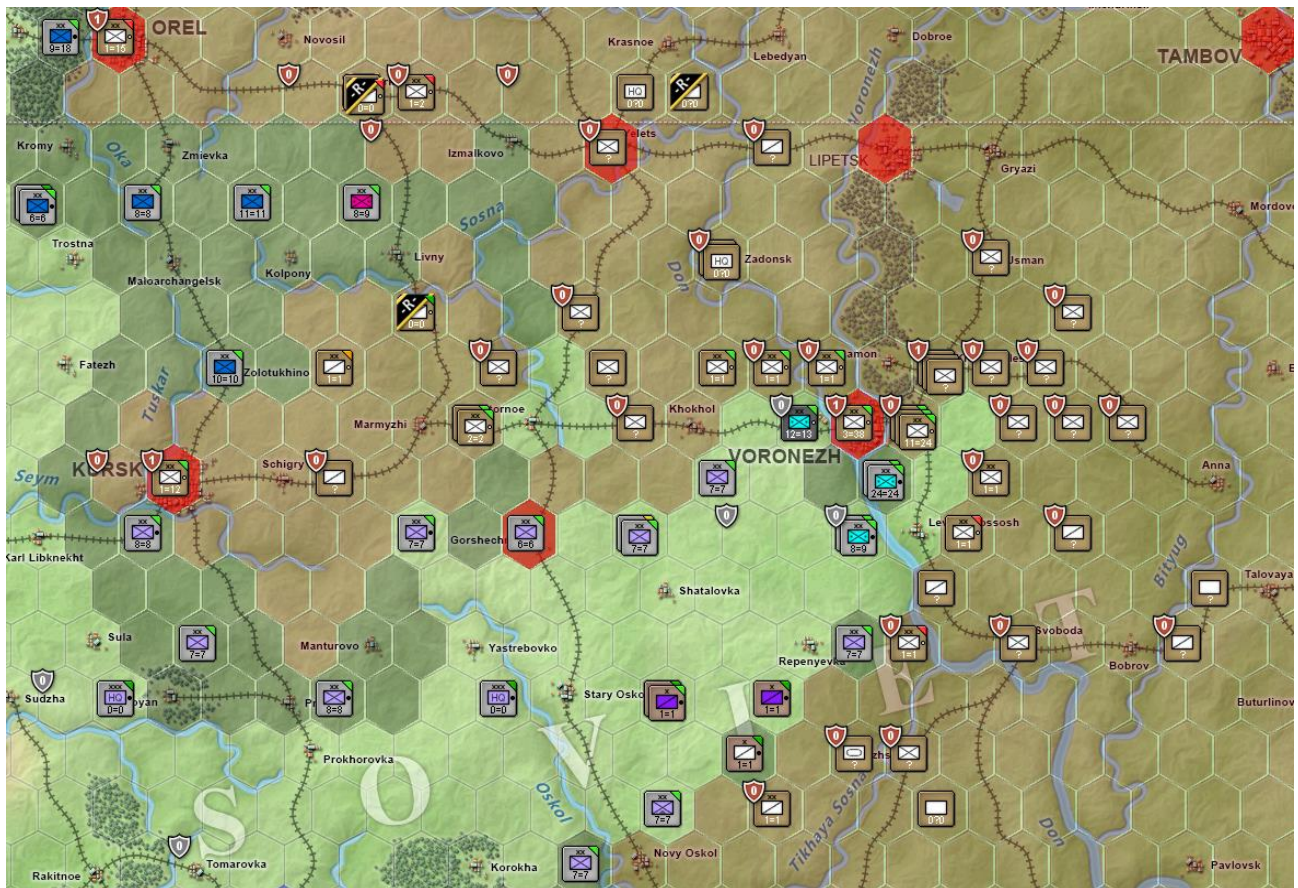
have 63%, 81% and 85% respectively. However, my chances of still capturing the Voronezh industries are slim at best, and relies on HardLuck making the mistake of attacking the Panzer division before moving other divisions into place to prevent my reserves from reaching the battlefield.

Finally, extracting the encircled Motorized division west of Voronezh has led to what must undoubtedly be one of the weakest encirclements in the history of WitE. That division is now 28 hexes from its nearest railhead and completely out of fuel.

This led to the following situation, that was my initial plan for giving the turn to HardLuck. However, as always, I ended my turn by looking over my positions once more, and I then decided to throw another Motorized division across the Don. The reason for this was the value of the potential prize: Half the IL-2 production of the Soviet Union for the rest of the war.

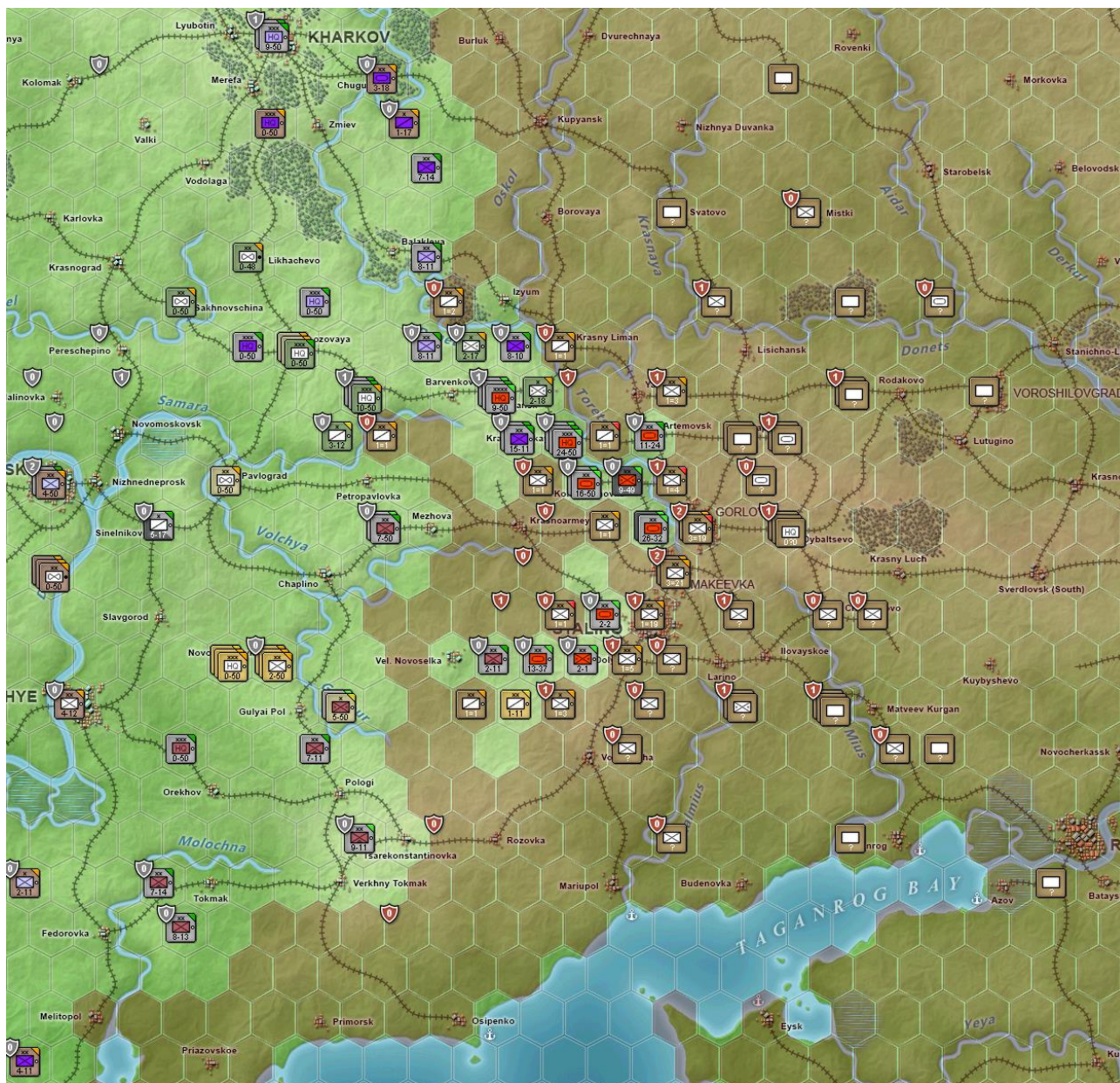


The final positions then became as follows.



I do wish I could target the heavy guns of the divisions just outside the city on the production facilities inside. At Leningrad, this more or less stopped the production of KV's at the Kirov factory during the encirclement.

The South



Situational assessment

In the south, my attacks last turn has prevented the Soviets from evacuating the industries from the stalinov area. However, the German positions needs to improve before I can take the attack much further east. The German Panzers are low on fuel and the German FBD unit is still two turns short of Dnepropetrovsk.

The Soviet defenders look very much weaker than the defenders of either Moscow or Leningrad, with several key hexes defended by one or two units with relatively little combat value.

I still enjoy virtual air supremacy in the area, and my bombers can fly at will.

Planning

My strategic goal for the 41 attacks in this area is to reach both the area around Svoboda south east of Vornezh and also the town of Likhovskoy in the Don Bend. Doing this will ensure that Soviet supplies will be hard bring forward to the units between those areas, and thus I will likely be better able to defend my positions in the south during the winter.

As such, I will focus more on preparing for further attacks eastwards, than I will be focusing on encirclements of single Soviet Rifle divisions. Consequently, strengthen the encirclement of the Soviet divisions west of Stalino, the exception being the western Cavalry. I really don't like the idea of having those divisions capable of breaking into my rear areas, and because of this, I will do what I can to remove them.

Execution

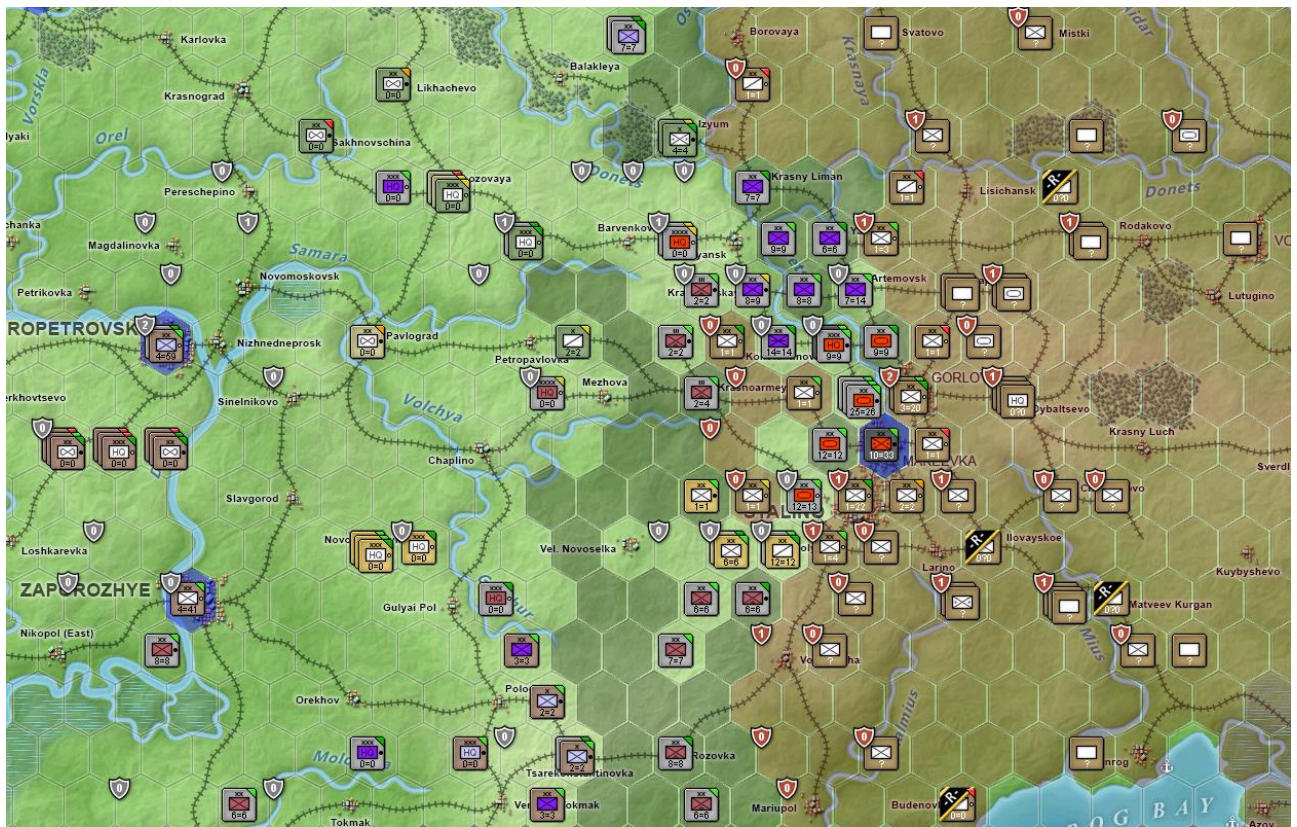
In the south, the moves to strengthen the encirclement of the Soviet Rifle divisions lead to an opportunity to attack Makeevka head on with four Panzers. The rationale behind such an attack was twofold. First, it would make a counterattack o free the encircled Soviets more difficult to conduct, and second, it would force the soviets to withdraw from south of Stalino, as a German attack could easily surround several Soviet divisions with their backs against the black sea.

The attack report can be seen below.

Axis Forces Attacking:		1 of 1	114,96 - City(Makeevka) - Clear	Turn:12 1941-09-04	Soviet Forces Defending:	
XIV Panzer Corps 9th Panzer Division (125) 11th Panzer Division (144) Wiking SS Motorized Division (104) 281st Mot. Flk Bn (1) 670th Jagdpanzer Battalion (10) 2/46th SP Flak Company (0) 4/31st SP Flak Company (1)		Forces Engaged				
		ATK: men 64975, art 644, afv 606	DEF: men 44184, art 501, afv 69			
		DAM: men 59, art 9, afv 27	DAM: men 220, art 15, afv 9			
		LOST: men 247, art 12, afv 7	LOST: men 500, art 19, afv 27			
		ATK: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0			
		LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0			
		339th Rifle Division RETREATED				
		127th Rifle Division RETREATED				
CV: 513->1017.4 Eng Val: 8		Odds 2.71 : 1			CV: 357->375.3 Fort: 2.10->0.00	
Comm HQ: XIV Panzer Corps		Exit			Comm HQ: 38th Army	
GL Karl Strecker					GL Andrei Eremenko	

Further south, the attack on Crimea is still slowly progressing, with the forward German units now approaching the outer defenses of Sevastopol.

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



Conclusion

In total, I do not think things are going my way at all.

South of Leningrad, I half expect a total Soviet offensive even before winter, bequating back my Germans with sheer numbers.

I am also far from confident in my ability to take Moscow before winter. It seems to me that I need to encircle the city and then maintain the encirclement against strong Soviet counterattacks (with the +1 modifier) before taking the city by an infantry attack. I do not think I have the time to do so prior to winter.

Further south, I fear my chance of taking the voronezh industries have already slipped away, but I am as of yet uncertain of the situation.

My own production are completely unable to keep up with losses of Panzers and tactical bombers. However, I have plenty of both fighters (some 167 in the reserve pool) and level bombers (531 in the reserve pool).

Further, Soviet losses at this stage of the game is not really impressive, with the total losses standing just above 1.5 million men (19 Armored divisions, 9 Motorized divisions, 52 infantry divisions, 9 cavalry divisions and 6 Mountain divisions).

The question is if the Soviets are winning or if they are just not losing?