

Strategic overview

During the last Soviet “summer” turn, the main news are that the Soviets, once again, has pushed away two Panzer divisions lodged in light forest to relieve their three encircled divisions. Once again, they have done so without suffering horrendous losses. In all honesty, I find it quite ridiculous that the Soviets can use the +1 modifier to beat back two German Panzer divisions in the fall of 1941 and not suffer more than about 3.000 men lost in the process. This attack also revealed a stupid mistake on my part, as I had forgotten to turn off ground support at the end of the Soviet turn, and has suffered level bomber losses accordingly. Below I will outline the attacks that led to this situation.

Axis Forces Defending (C): XXXXI Panzer Corps 1st Panzer Division (330) 3rd Panzer Division (248) 52nd Nebelwerfer Regiment (3) 611th Gun Battalion (0) 11/67th Howitzer Battalion (1) 601st SP Lt Flk Bn (11) 83rd LW SP Lt Flk Bn (6) [v]	1 of 7 > 101,45 - Light Woods(Ruza) - Clear Turn:17 1941-10-09 Forces Engaged DEF: men 33911, art 352, afv 358 DAM: men 89, art 16, afv 14 LOST: men 273, art 10, afv 4 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 30, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 23, utl 0 Defending Forces HELD Odds 1 : 1.13 Show Details Exit	Soviet Forces Attacking: 33rd Army 137th Rifle Division (29) 20th Rifle Division (25) 133rd Rifle Division (37) 200th Rifle Division (45) 215th Rifle Division (28) 19th Motorcycle Regiment (3) 399th Howitzer Regiment (1) [v]
CV: 605->781.6 Fort: 0.20->0.10 Comm HQ: XXXXI Panzer Corps G Georg-Hans Reinhardt		CV: 294->685.7 Eng Val: 8 Comm HQ: 33rd Army GA Georgy Zhukov

Axis Forces Defending: XXXXI Panzer Corps 1st Panzer Division (288) 3rd Panzer Division (220) 11/59th Howitzer Battalion (1) 601st SP Lt Flk Bn (11) 4/55th SP Flak Company (2) 702nd SP Inf Gun Coy (3)	< 2 of 7 > 101,45 - Light Woods(Ruza) - Clear Turn:17 1941-10-09 Forces Engaged DEF: men 31007, art 271, afv 325 DAM: men 24, art 3, afv 12 LOST: men 10, art 0, afv 3 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 Defending Forces HELD Odds 1 : 85.35 Show Details Exit	Soviet Forces Attacking: 51st Army 49th Cavalry Division (7) 1st Sapper Regiment (3) 31st Sapper Battalion (1)
CV: 525->554.8 Fort: 0.10->0.10 Comm HQ: XXXXI Panzer Corps G Georg-Hans Reinhardt		CV: 11->6.5 Eng Val: 0 Comm HQ: 51st Army GL Vasily Sokolovsky

Axis Forces Defending (C): XXXXI Panzer Corps 1st Panzer Division (281) 3rd Panzer Division (210) 601st SP Lt Flk Bn (11) 83rd LW SP Lt Flk Bn (6) 4/55th SP Flak Company (2) 702nd SP Inf Gun Coy (3)	< 3 of 7 > 101,45 - Light Woods(Ruza) - Clear Turn:17 1941-10-09 Forces Engaged DEF: men 31397, art 260, afv 351 DAM: men 5, art 1, afv 4 LOST: men 0, art 2, afv 0 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 Defending Forces HELD Odds 1 : 23.79 Show Details Exit	Soviet Forces Attacking: 49th Army 90th Rifle Division (9)
CV: 513->495.0 Fort: 0.10->0.10 Comm HQ: XXXXI Panzer Corps G Georg-Hans Reinhardt		CV: 9->20.8 Eng Val: 0 Comm HQ: 49th Army GL Ivan Zakharkin

<div>Axis Forces Defending:</div> <div>XXXXI Panzer Corps</div> <div>1st Panzer Division (278)</div> <div>3rd Panzer Division (209)</div> <div>II/59th Howitzer Battalion (1)</div> <div>II/67th Howitzer Battalion (1)</div> <div>615th Howitzer Battalion (1)</div> <div>601st SP Lt Flk Bn (11)</div> <div>4/56th SP Flak Company (2)</div>	<div>< 4 of 7 > 101,45 - Light Woods(Ruza) - Clear Turn:17 1941-10-09</div> <div>Forces Engaged</div> <div>DEF: men 31944, art 291, afv 322</div> <div>DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 9</div> <div>LOST: men 0, art 1, afv 1</div> <div>DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0</div> <div>LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0</div>		<div>Soviet Forces Attacking:</div> <div>4th Airborne Corps</div> <div>9th Airborne Brigade (4)</div>
	<div>Defending Forces HELD</div>		
	<div>CV: 506->738.3</div> <div>Fort: 0.10->0.10</div> <div>Comm HQ: XXXXI Panzer Corps</div> <div>G Georg-Hans Reinhardt</div>	<div>Show Details</div> <div>Odds 1 : 999.00</div> <div>Exit</div>	<div>CV: 4->0.2</div> <div>Eng Val: 0</div> <div>Comm HQ: 4th Airborne Corps</div> <div>GL Alexei Zhadov</div>

<div>Axis Forces Defending:</div> <div>XXXXI Panzer Corps</div> <div>1st Panzer Division (274)</div> <div>3rd Panzer Division (202)</div> <div> 611th Gun Battalion (0)</div> <div> II/59th Howitzer Battalion (1)</div> <div> 601st SP Lt Flk Bn (11)</div> <div> 83rd LW SP Lt Flk Bn (6)</div> <div> II/411th LW SP Lt Flk Bn (7)</div> <div>[v]</div>	<div>< 5 of 7 > 101,45 - Light Woods(Ruza) - Clear Turn:17 1941-10-09</div> <div>Forces Engaged</div> <div>DEF: men 33091, art 278, afv 382 ATK: men 110183, art 1133, afv 110</div> <div>DAM: men 183, art 7, afv 8 DAM: men 149, art 3, afv 4</div> <div>LOST: men 168, art 5, afv 21 LOST: men 341, art 5, afv 3</div> <div>DEF: ftr 0, bmr 67, utl 0 ATK: ftr 181, bmr 10, utl 0</div> <div>LOST: ftr 0, bmr 49, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0</div> <div>3rd Panzer Division RETREATED</div> <div>1st Panzer Division RETREATED</div> <div>Show Details Odds 2.39 : 1 Exit</div>		<div>Soviet Forces Attacking:</div> <div>33rd Army</div> <div>137th Rifle Division (22)</div> <div>20th Rifle Division (19)</div> <div>133rd Rifle Division (29)</div> <div>200th Rifle Division (36)</div> <div>215th Rifle Division (22)</div> <div> 19th Motorcycle Regiment (2)</div> <div> 399th Howitzer Regiment (1)</div> <div>[v]</div>
	<div>CV: 506->651.8 Fort: 0.10->0.00</div> <div>Comm HQ: XXXXI Panzer Corps</div> <div>G Georg-Hans Reinhardt</div>		
<div>CV: 218->912.3 Eng Val: 8</div> <div>Comm HQ: 33rd Army</div> <div>GA Georgy Zhukov</div>			

On top of these attacks were two ground bombing attacks, neither of which failed to produce any significant results. As can be seen, the trick is to use weak units to attack repeatedly, inflicting ammunition loss and fatigue and then stacking up for a final strong stack attack. I especially “enjoy” the 4th attack, where one Airborne Corps is sent against two full Panzer divisions in order to force the Germans to use up ammunition for the “real” units to get off easily afterwards. The total Soviet loss to beat off two full Panzer divisions in defensible terrain and loaded with support units: 3.337 men!

I must admit that events such as this are seriously draining my enthusiasm for the game, as I see this game as a WWII simulation where the game setting should reflect the historical situation as much as possible. On top of this, if two full German Panzer divisions can not hold a Soviet attack in 1941, then it does not require an absolute genius to figure out what will happen to the German infantry divisions when the blizzard comes.

I will not hold it against HardLuck that he uses game mechanics to come up with an answer to the challenges he’s faced with, but I will state that I feel that this part of the game feels “broken”. I would also seriously like for the game to be able to cancel air missions that are seriously ridiculous (such as sending 67 level bombers into a daytime attack with no fighter cover having 1.000 Soviet fighters within range). Sort of a “scouting attack in the air” conversion.

West of Vysny Volochek, the Soviets have done a similar style attack, dislodging two strong infantry divisions in light forest and each with three Pioneer battalions attached (total CV of 40+). As the consensus on how to play the Germans in 1941 seems to be “encircle, encircle and encircle” I cannot help but reply “Why, if the Soviets can this easily break through and relieve the encircled troops”?

The Summer writeup

As we have now arrived at the mud turns, I believe it is time for a review of the summer campaign in it’s entirety.

In all, the Soviet strategy of concentrated battles in front of Moscow and Leningrad combined with the Soviet +1 modifier and the current game mechanics for the airwar makes the Soviet position very hard to crack in 1941. This strategy serves both to preserve Soviet strength and to safeguard important industries.

I have repeatedly found it very hard to conduct any real encirclements, as I would need to not only encircle the Soviet troops but also hold the encirclement against the soviet counterattacks. In this regard, the +1 Soviet attack modifier has made it all but impossible to do so with infantry or Motorized divisions, as those divisions have had a defensive CV of around 10 (or 20 in forest terrain). As can be seen at Moscow, such a defensive CV is all but useless against game mechanics and a +1 Soviet attack modifier.

I have failed to take either Moscow or Leningrad, but I have pushed the Axis lines very far forward in the south. This is not a problem to the Soviets, as giving up the entire Ukraine without a fight does not hold any negative consequences. With winter approaching, it is obvious from the Moscow fight above, that there is little possibility for actually giving the Soviets a fight. Once the blizzard starts, the Germans will just have to run.

In the air, the Luftwaffe is effectively suppressed by now. While I still have some 90 fighters or so in my reserve pools, it is obvious that I simply can not fly effectively against the masses of Soviet fighters. If I do not fly at least 150-200 fighters in an attack, the masses of Soviet fighter will brush past my own and slaughter the bombers. If I do fly more than that, I will effectively spend the entire fighting force on a very few battles, leaving 90% of events fully to the Soviets. Following that, the fatigue inflicted on the Germans will also allow the Soviets some easy pickings come their next turn.

I must admit that even before going into this game, I felt a lot more confident with playing the Soviets over the Axis. I felt, and feel, that the Soviets are in a far better strategic position than the Germans, partly because I do not feel that the loss of either Leningrad or Moscow is a game deciding factor (not playing Bitter End). With the coming nerf of Axis logistics this will be even more the case than it is already.

The Mud

I will not be doing any turn by turn reports during the mud. Instead, I will group the muddy turns with the first winter turn.

Turn 18

While the mud has arrived, weather is actually snowy in the area west of Lake Ilmen and in a narrow band of land at Voroshilovgrad. This allows for some continued limited German attacks in this area.

As described above, the Soviets have broken free of the encirclement west of Moscow, but otherwise little has happened in this area.

In the area south of the Oka, the Soviets have thrown their units ahead in the last pre mud turn, in some cases punching a hole in the German lines. By withdrawing slightly here and there (and abandoning Boguchar), I have reestablished a more or less continuous line and have no units under encirclement.

Finally, I have withdrawn all fighters to the National Reserve and assigned one mountain corps to Army Group Center. My plan is to have two mountain corps going north with a total of five mountain divisions, each with as strong a support units backup as possible, as well as with the best infantry commanders I can find.

Returning turn 18 to HardLuck, I am quite disillusioned. The fact that two full Panzer divisions cannot hold back the Soviets during summer, makes me consider if there is even a point in continuing to play through winter.

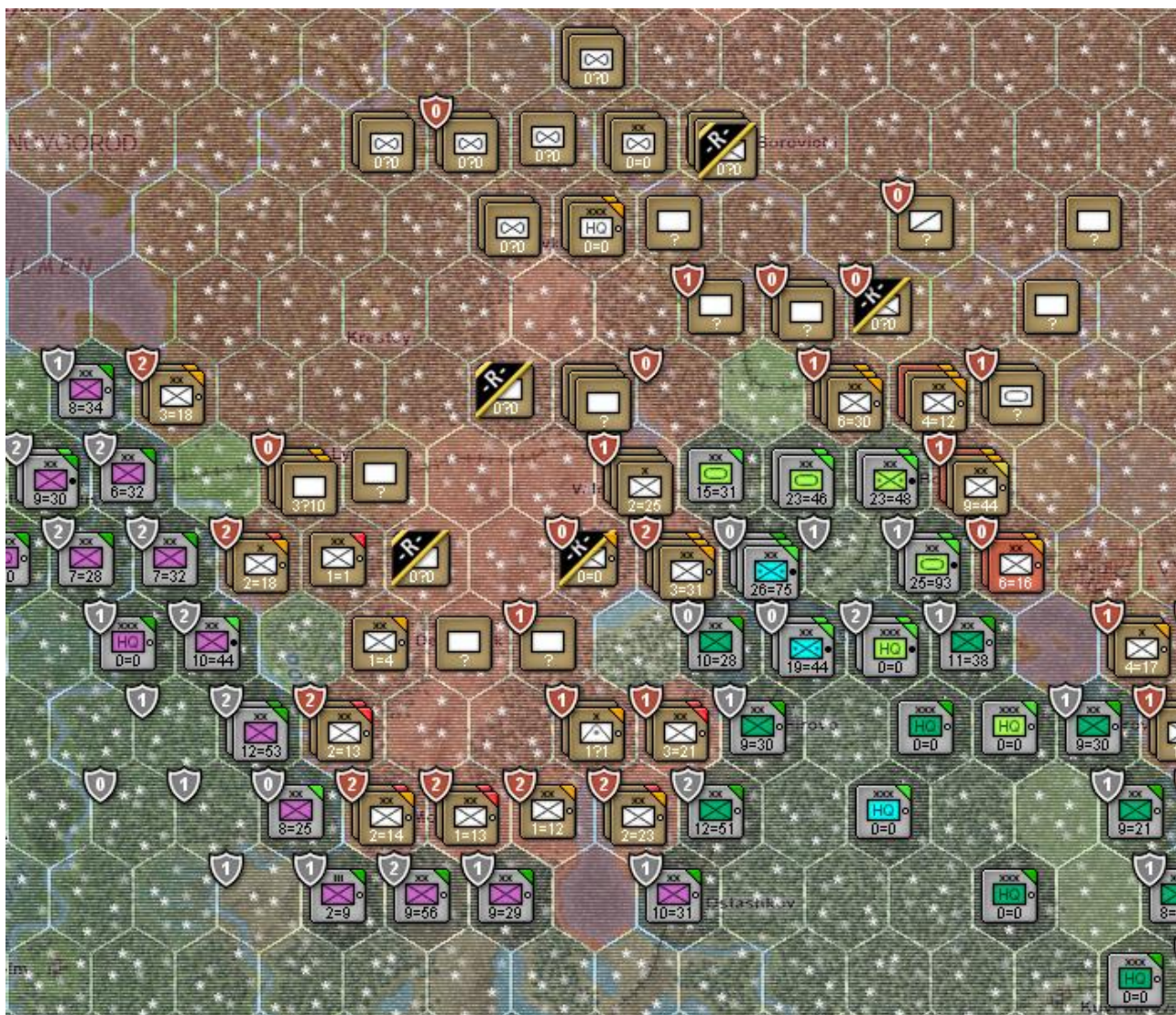
Turn 19

HardLuck has been commenting on how the weather gods are on the side of the Germans. This was before the current turn gave snow everywhere north of the Don! However, I have still opted to remain relatively passive along most of the front, as I am preparing for the blizzard to come.

The exception to this is the area around the Shlina river, where I have used the snowy weather to conduct a series of attacks aimed at destroying as many rail hexes as possible. Because of the attacks, it is beginning to look like there might be a possibility of throwing the Soviets out of the Demyansk area before the blizzard begins. Because of this, I have continued moving German Panzer units north, and I now have the first Panzers arriving in the area east of Pskov from where they can form the western pincer of an attack.

Much will depend on the abilities of the "magic" Soviets to displace the German Panzers and limit the German build up areas.

As I give the turn to HardLuck, the situation at Demyansk looks like this.



Turn 20

This turn has seen the weather prediction of blizzard in the north Soviet zone, which I have mixed feelings about. On one side it might give me an extra turn to put pressure on the Demyansk area which is good, but on the other it will mean that the rivers will freeze solid on the first turn of December.

The turn has also seen the first partisan attack in the area southwest of Moscow. This attack will delay the advance of my FBD moving south for two turns.

The “Magic Soviets” of last turn, being able to displace two full German Panzer divisions, have been somewhat less magic this turn, failing in three attacks to displace any German Panzers at Vysny Volochek.

I have conducted no attacks this turn, but focused entirely on digging in and gathering resources for the coming fight. I have also begun gathering my Luftwaffe bases into two groups in the north. My plan is to create two Luftflotte units grouped closely together where each group holds at least eight or so fighter Air Wings plus assorted support. I hope this will enable me to fight back against the Red Army aviation. If not, the entire winter will now belong to the Soviets.

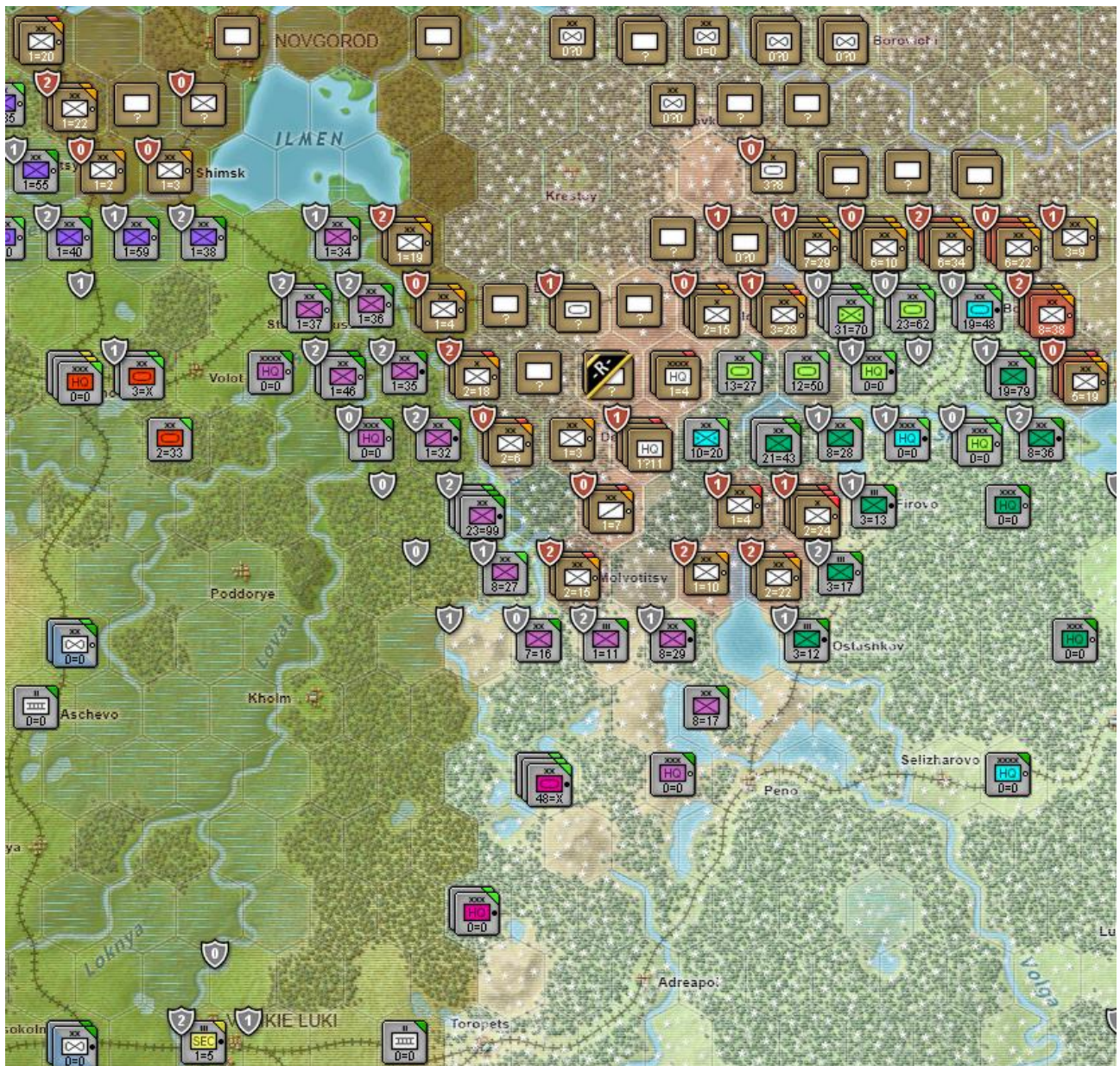
Turn 21

As predicted, weather in the Eastern Soviet zone is blizzard this turn. The Soviets have responded by massing heavily right up on the German lines with stacks of three divisions everywhere they can. Below an image of the situation at Moscow.



I believe this may have been done because the Soviets expect the Germans to suffer greatly from the blizzard. If so, they are in for a surprise, as the first winter rules only apply to blizzard turns between December and February.

At Demyansk, I have used the hard ground to conduct a series of attacks into the hills, aiming to shorten the German front before the real blizzard and hoping to catch a few Soviet units unable to get back to the main Soviet lines. All attacks have been preceded by two nighttime level bomber attacks on the hex in order to give fatigue and reduce combat worthiness. All of this has led to a rather eventful mud turn, and the situation looks like this, as I give the turn back to HardLuck.



My main concern in the area is that I am quite far from my supply lines, and getting fuel to the Panzers will be tricky over the coming turns. As Soviet recon seems to suggest that the Soviets are unaware of the German Panzer Corps west of Pskov, I have hidden that in the woods and given it a HQBU in order to ensure maximum MP when the snow comes in two turns. South of Demyansk, another Panzer Corps has been placed to receive another HQBU during the mud next turn.

Along the front stretching south from Moscow, I have done a series of attacks against the weaker Soviet formations to push them away from the German lines and cost them a few supplies.

Finally, I have redeployed the Luftwaffe fighters to the front, this time in two concentrated groups. Doing so I hope to negate the Soviet numerical advantage in numbers. This advantage, by now, is about 3.5:1, when not counting the Soviet I-Type fighters.

Turn 22

This turn, the Soviets have withdrawn the majority of the air wings to the national reserve, no doubt in preparation for the coming winter. I assume they will focus their entire fighterforce into two groups to counter the two Luftwaffe concentrations.

The Soviets have also landed what appear to be a couple of brigades on the northern shore of the Sea of Azov. Only one attack has been made, and the Soviets have also pulled back from several of the hexes next to the German lines.

On my side, I have used the absence of the Soviet fighter wing to conduct widespread daylight bombings of the forward Soviet positions. Once again, the results seem to suggest that something is not quite "right" when it comes to the air war. In one instance, I have bombed the same hex of three Soviet Rifle divisions twice (clear terrain, +1 fortification), inflicting a total of 617 "disrupted" results looking at the battle reports. Assuming a Rifle division holds 1000 elements, this equates the disruption (later converted into fatigue) of about 20% of all elements in the force. Still, looking at the defensive CV of the attacked hex before and after the attack, the Soviets are stronger going out of the turn than they were going into it! As the hex is adjacent to German ground forces, detection level has been 10 throughout the turn.

This has not been the first time I have experienced such a result, and I can not help but wonder what is going on. I am baffled by repeatedly seeing Soviet units having stronger CV's after being bombed than before.

This has prompted me to do a small test on a Soviet Rifle division in the first turn of a 1941 game. I simply started the game, ran two bombing attacks on a Rifle division and tested it's experience, morale and fatigue before and after the attacks. The results are spectacular: The Rifle division has seen its morale climb by 16 points and its experience by 12 points while it's fatigue has climbed by 24 points. Repeating the test on a Guards Rifle division at the beginning turn of the 1942 campaign, I see that the effects on experience and morale has vanished, but that the effects on unit fatigue are still there.

In short, an early war Soviet Rifle division grows quite a lot stronger by being bombed by the Germans! If you wish to use your level bombers on the Soviets, do so on units with high morale.

On the ground, the only noteworthy events this turn has been the battle for the landing zones on the northern shores of the Sea of Azov. In both locations, the Airborne Brigades that had landed ended up surrendering to a Motorized Brigade of Germans (1st SS Motorized Brigade) if anyone is counting.

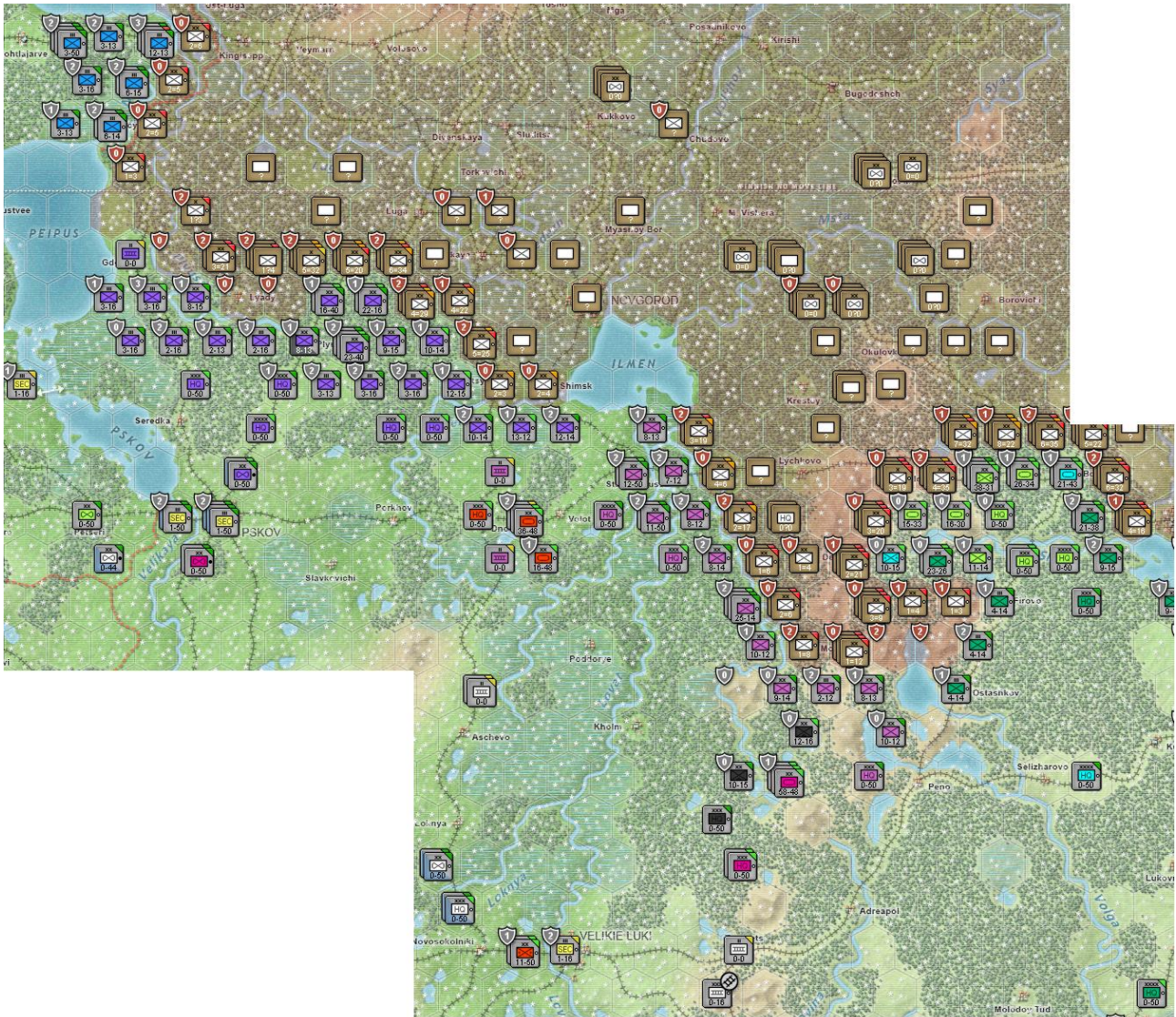
Next turn, the weather forecast promises snow, except in the central Soviet which will be blizzard. That will mean that the rivers at Pskov and parts of the lower Don might freeze one turn earlier than I would have liked (depending on future forecasts). Ice levels outside Moscow is three already, meaning full ice come the first week of December.

Turn 23, Strategic overview

At the beginning of turn 23, the frontline looks much like it has done for the past few turns. The Soviets have conducted no attacks and simply run a series of recon missions up and down the German front. The most exciting news are that the Soviets have redeployed their fighters to the airbases behind Moscow and northeast of Lake Ilmen.

Interestingly, the Soviets have pulled every single Guards division off the line. I recon they plan to create a couple of really strong armies for the coming blizzard offensive. The Soviets have also not deployed any of their approximately 500 or so IL-2's to the front, so I guess those aircraft will be meant to support the Guards in their attacks.

The North



Situational assessment

In order to describe the main events southeast of Lake Ilmen in an orderly fashion, I will treat all the areas west and north of Vysny Volochek as being part of the northern sector for now.

In this area, the Soviets are pulling slowly back from their endangered positions in the hills southwest of Demyansk. Looking at the morale and experience of the units present in the area, they are certainly not the best fighting forces of the Red Army. However, the amount of supplies in those units is surprisingly high, considering the long supply lines sustained throughout the muddy turns. The Soviets have grouped their forces into heavy stacks on the eastern side of the line, while the western side is thinly held by relatively weak units.

However, I have strong forces ready to attack in the area, with one Panzer Corps standing southwest of Lake Ilmen, another Panzer Corps to the south and further three Panzer Corps west of Vysny Volochek. A German FBD unit is arriving in the area, and some work on the supply lines can proceed this turn.

In the air, the Soviets have deployed strong fighter forces in the area behind the lines, and some dog fights can certainly be expected. Unfortunately, the Luftwaffe airfields at Pskov are in blizzard weather, while the Soviets are only in snow. This should mean that the Luftwaffe should be virtually unable to participate in the airbattles this turn.

Planning

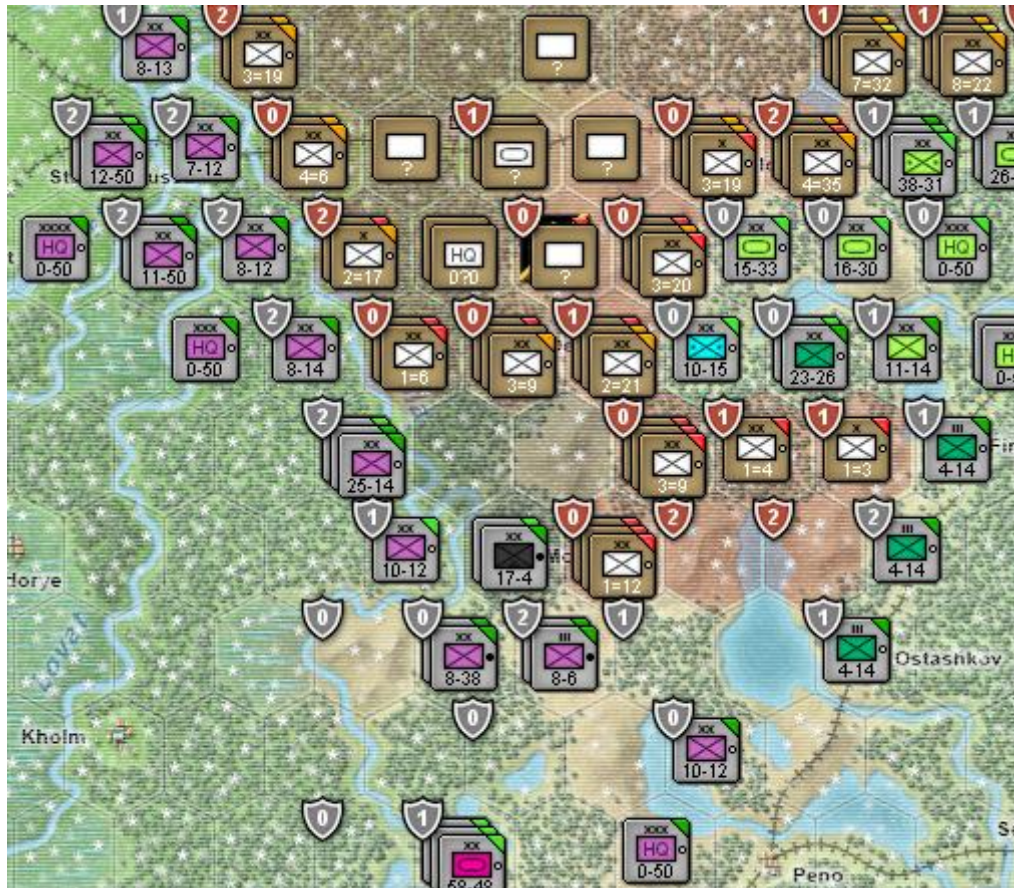
I will launch the Panzer forces to the south and west of the Demyansk area this turn. The plan is to use the local infantry forces to clear the defenders from the south of the western line and then push the Panzers into the gaps created by the infantry. I will then follow up with attacks from the forces to the east, hoping to reduce the area available to the Soviets.

As the blizzard prevents me from using my fighters this turn, I will instead shift my bombers to flying at night and using them to attack the Soviet positions as best I can in a series of ground bombing attacks before the main attacks are launched. But I expect to be able to conduct no more than four or so bombing attacks due to the weather, so I will have to be careful.

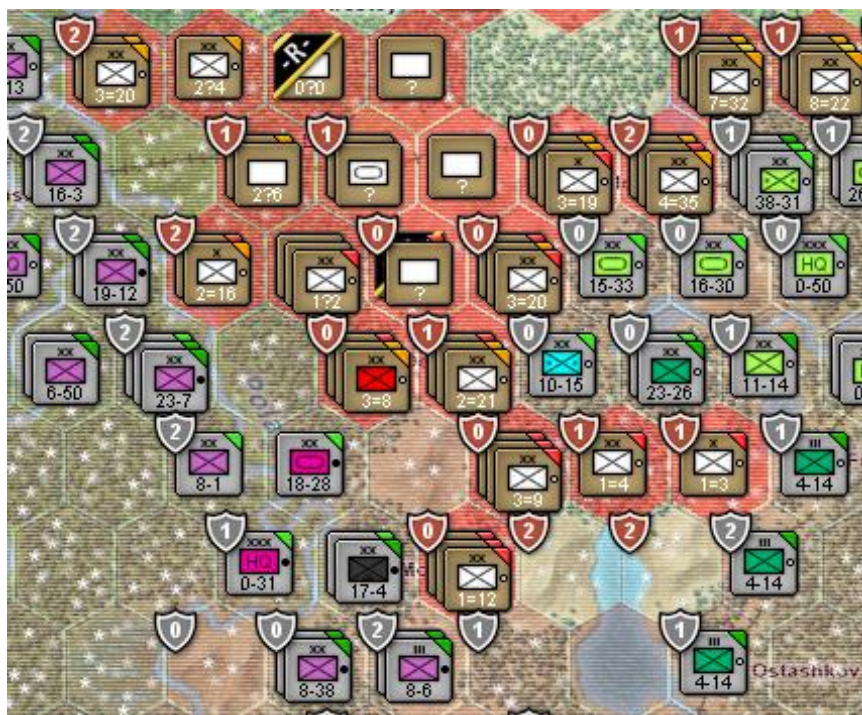
Execution

Below the order of attacks described in detail.

- 1) The first attack in the area saw a few German fighters from the airfields at Vyazma heading north to support the attack, which is a surprise, as I have turned ground support off. The attack succeeded, pushing the Soviet Rifle division back into the hills to the northeast.
- 2) This allowed me to push a Mountain division into the vacated position and then attack the division once again, resulting in another retreat.
- 3) I then moved the other Mountain division into the same hex as the first and proceeded to do another attack on the southernmost Soviet positions.
- 4) This led to the following situation



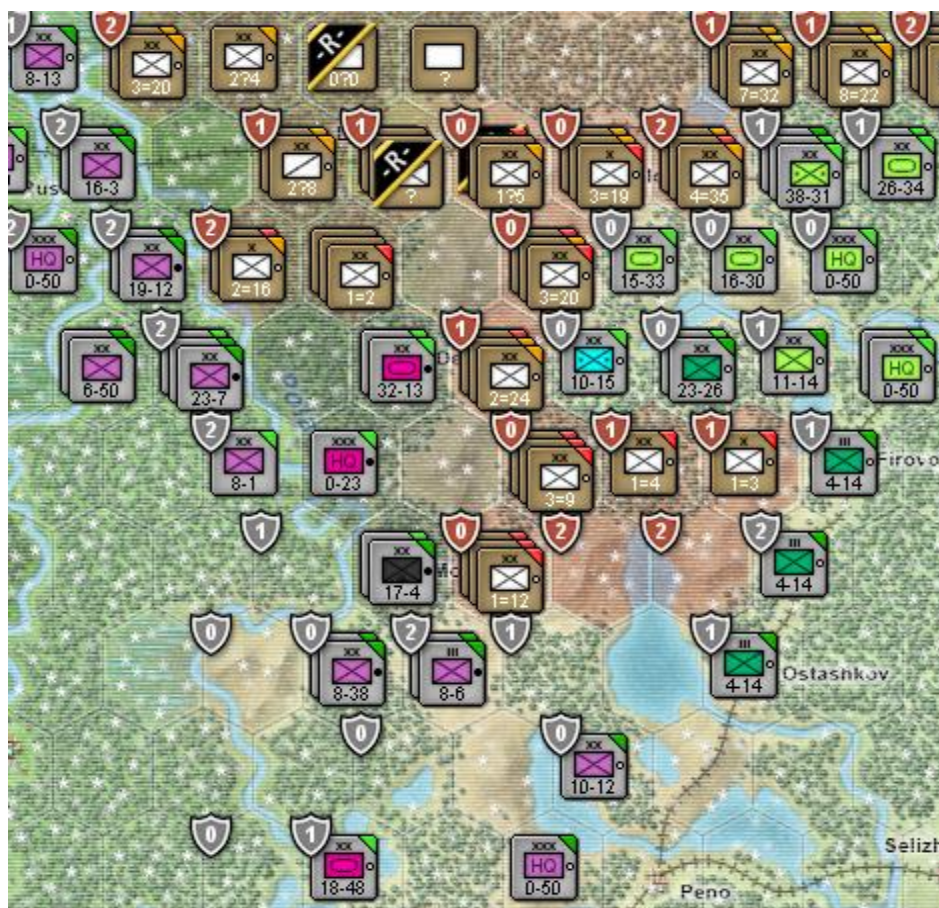
- 5) Turning to the units still west of the Pola river, I then reordered my divisions to the west of the Pola in order to maximize the attack potential before attacking the 1=6 Rifle division furthest southwest with two divisions and a total of 18 CV. This led to the withdrawal of one division and the routing of another.
- 6) Realizing I had forgotten to take the +2 MP cost of attacking in blizzard into account when attacking the northernmost hexes, I attacked the stack on the railway and displaced it before conducting a nighttime test bombing attack in the 2=17 stack with four JU-88's. This attack was intercepted by no less than 10 Soviet fighters. I then moved up a Panzer division and did a couple of nighttime bombing attacks on the 3=9 stack, which led to the following situation



- 7) Attacking with the Panzer division, I won the battle but once again, the number of retreat casualties suffered by the Soviets were light, even though two divisions were routed.

Axis Forces Attacking: LVI Panzer Corps 8th Panzer Division (168) 92nd LW SP Lt Flk Bn (5) 277th Mot. Flk Bn (1) CV: 174->515.3 Eng Val: 4 Comm HQ: LVI Panzer Corps G Erich von Manstein	<div>1 of 3 > 87,31 - Light Woods(Demyansk) - Snow Turn:23 1941-11-20</div> <div> Forces Engaged ATK: men 16987, art 174, afv 240 DEF: men 36721, art 416, afv 10 DAM: men 32, art 4, afv 12 DAM: men 522, art 11, afv 0 LOST: men 58, art 1, afv 1 LOST: men 199, art 22, afv 0 ATK: flr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 DEF: flr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: flr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: flr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 </div> <div> 55th Rifle Division RETREATED 278th Rifle Division Routed 272nd Rifle Division Routed </div> <div> Show Details Odds 3.90 : 1 Exit </div>	Soviet Forces Defending: 3rd Army 272nd Rifle Division (25) 278th Rifle Division (32) 78th Cavalry Division (6) R 596th Art Rgt RVGK (1) 364th Art Rgt RVGK (1) 151st Art Rgt RVGK (1) 55th Army -25% <div>[v]</div> CV: 90->131.9 Fort: 0.18->0.00 Comm HQ: 3rd Army GL Vasily Kuznetsov
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- 8) I then moved the already used Panzer one more hex forward to get a clearer image of the situation before deciding to go for the encirclement of the three southernmost stacks of three soviet divisions. I then moved up another Panzer division to the front which revealed that one of the stacks nearby consisted of two army HQ's and an already revealed weak division. I proceeded with the Panzer attack to the northeast and won that battle. This led to the following situation



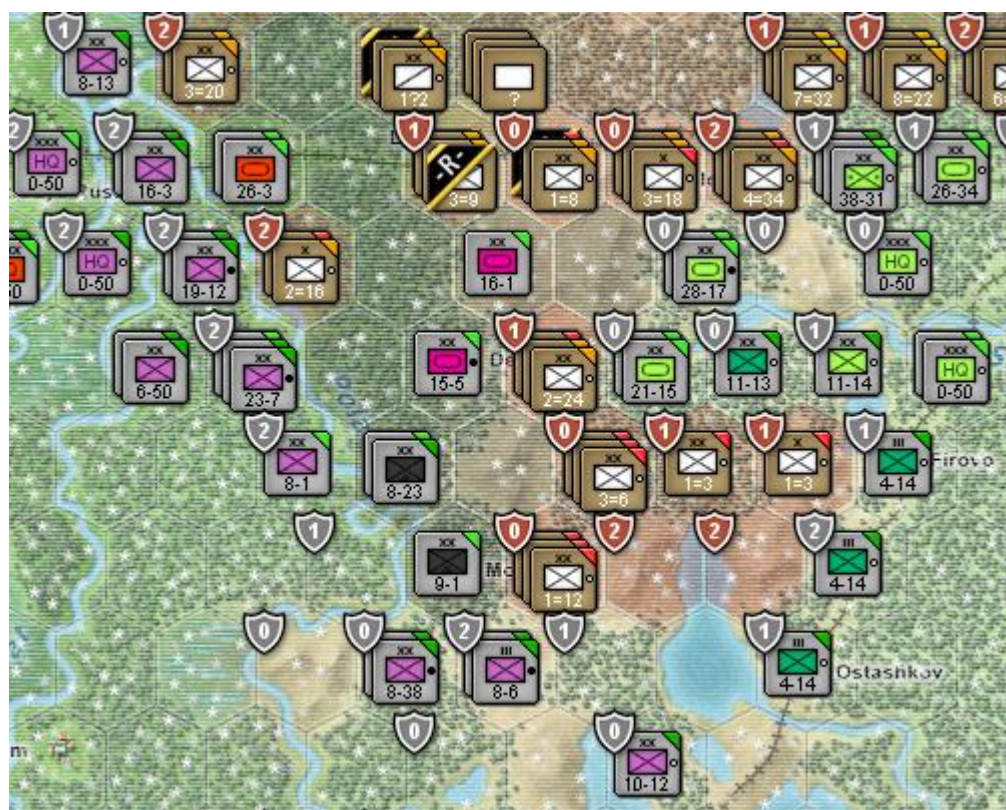
- 9) Deciding it was now time for the attack from the east (in order to establish its success before deploying the remainder of the western forces), I did a couple of nighttime bombing attacks on the 3=20 stack before moving four mobile divisions into position to attack it.

Axis Forces Attacking:		Forces Engaged		Soviet Forces Defending:	
LVII Panzer Corps 20th Panzer Division (115) 19th Panzer Division (119) 2nd Panzer Division (141) 101st Flammpanzer Battalion (17) 427th Gun Battalion (0) II/55th Howitzer Battalion (1) 816th Howitzer Battalion (1)		ATK: men 46639, art 466, afv 572 DAM: men 33, art 8, afv 15 LOST: men 70, art 7, afv 4 ATK: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0		24th Army 227th Rifle Division (97) 211th Rifle Division (138) 140th Howitzer Regiment (0) 141st Howitzer Regiment (0) 3rd Army -10% 170th Rifle Division (80)	
CV: 402->1145.1 Eng Val: 8 Comm HQ: LVII Panzer Corps GL Otto von Knobelsdorff		170th Rifle Division ROUTED 211th Rifle Division ROUTED 227th Rifle Division ROUTED Odds 3.95 : 1		CV: 315->289.5 Fort: 0.34->0.00 Comm HQ: 24th Army GL Stepan Kalinin	
[v]		Show Details Exit		[v]	

- 10) I then attacked the 1=2 stack with the two army HQ's with a hasty attack by one of my Panzer divisions to the southeast, displacing it easily.
- 11) At this point I was confused with the 2?8 stack showing cavalry above, so I moved a Panzer into the rail hex to the west, which revealed another cavalry division turning the stack into a 3=11 stack. As that stack was partly already withdraw units and partly cavalry reserves also having fought, I decided to move another Panzer up from the west in order to do a hasty attack on the hex

Axis Forces Attacking (H): III Panzer Corps 14th Panzer Division (70) 13th Panzer Division (82)	1 of 2 > 86,29 - Light Woods - Snow Turn:23 1941-11-20	Soviet Forces Defending: 55th Army 165th Rifle Division (59) 108th Howitzer Regiment (0) 110th Howitzer Regiment (0) 3rd Army -25% 14th Cavalry Division (28) 78th Cavalry Division (14) Western Air Command [v]
	Forces Engaged ATK: men 30628, art 275, afv 338 DAM: men 43, art 6, afv 21 LOST: men 151, art 6, afv 1 ATK: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 DEF: men 19796, art 234, afv 18 DAM: men 394, art 7, afv 1 LOST: men 124, art 9, afv 2 DEF: ftr 83, bmr 19, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 78th Cavalry Division RETREATED 14th Cavalry Division RETREATED 165th Rifle Division ROUTED Odds 3.84 : 1	CV: 101->101.8 Fort: 1.12->0.00 Comm HQ: 55th Army GM Mikhail Solomatin

- 12) I also used this stack to retreat a stack of two units including an Army HQ to the northeast of the just vacated hex.
- 13) This led to the following situation, where I had to realize that I did not have enough MP on my remaining units to encircle the 2=16 stack still in the area.



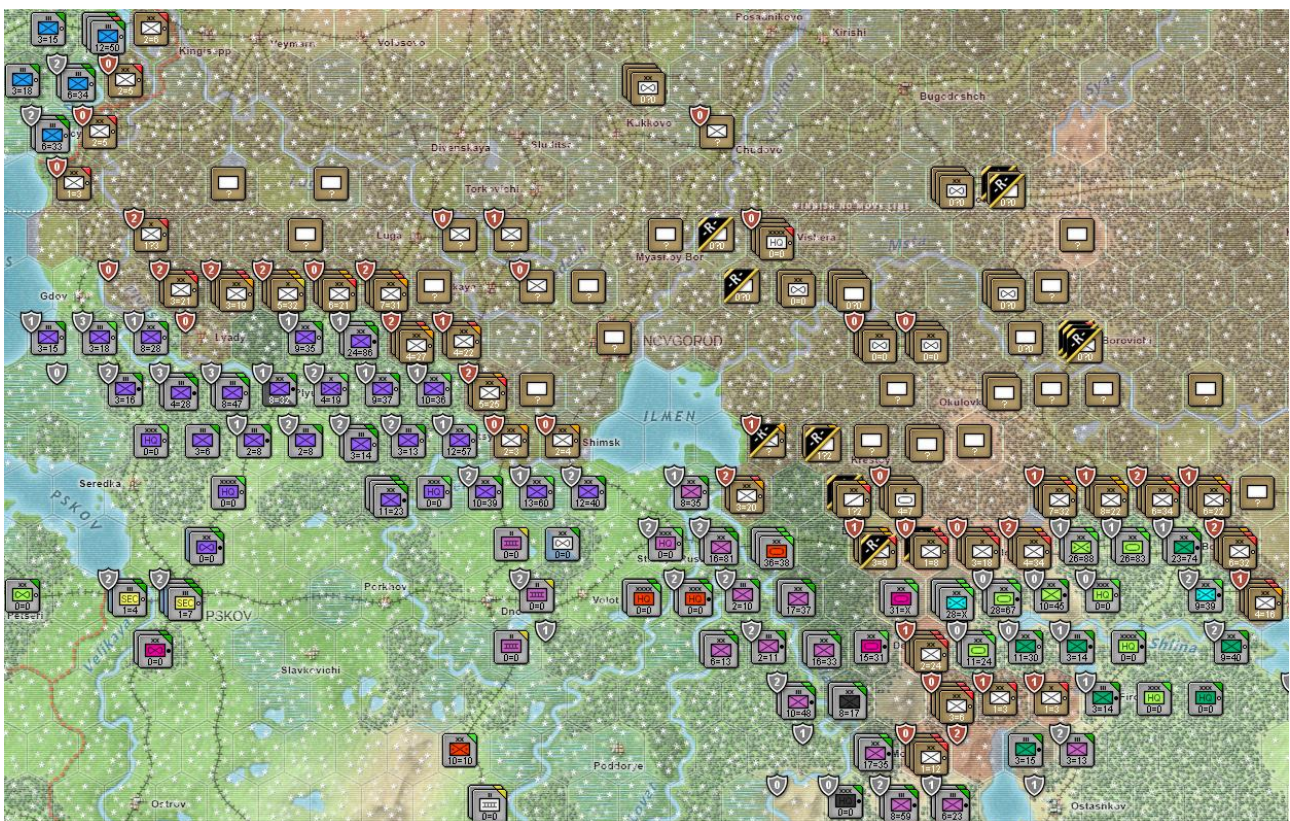
- 14) Because I could not encircle the 2=16 stack, and it could move into my rear and disrupt my flow of supplies, I decided instead to use my remaining units to try to force it to retreat. Before doing this, I wished to ensure that the Panzer division I had guarding the encircled units would not be beaten off by some Soviet relief force, so I did a couple of bombing attacks on the three unknown Soviets units in the center north of the above image, revealing three Tank Brigades. This made me reevaluate my plan to use my remaining good MP Panzer division in the attack, and instead I moved forward the third Panzer division from the Pskov area and did another hasty attack hoping for the best. The attack succeeded, but considering that the HQ of the stack had likely been retreated and that the stack had been bombed heavily over past turns, this may not be as surprising as on an initial glance.

Axis Forces Attacking (H): III Panzer Corps 16th Panzer Division (67) 14th Panzer Division (62) 13th Panzer Division (72)	1 of 2 > 86,30 - Light Woods - Snow Turn: 23 1941-11-20	Forces Engaged ATK: men 45604, art 406, afv 474 DAM: men 38, art 7, afv 20 LOST: men 190, art 7, afv 8 ATK: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0	Soviet Forces Defending: 55th Army 185th Rifle Division (63) 2nd Naval Infantry Brigade (84)
	2nd Naval Infantry Brigade ROUTED 185th Rifle Division ROUTED		CV: 147->114.1 Fort: 2.94->0.00 Comm HQ: 55th Army GM Mikhail Solomatov
CV: 201->295.7 Eng Val: 2 Comm HQ: III Panzer Corps G Eberhard von Mackensen	Show Details Odds 2.59 : 1		Exit

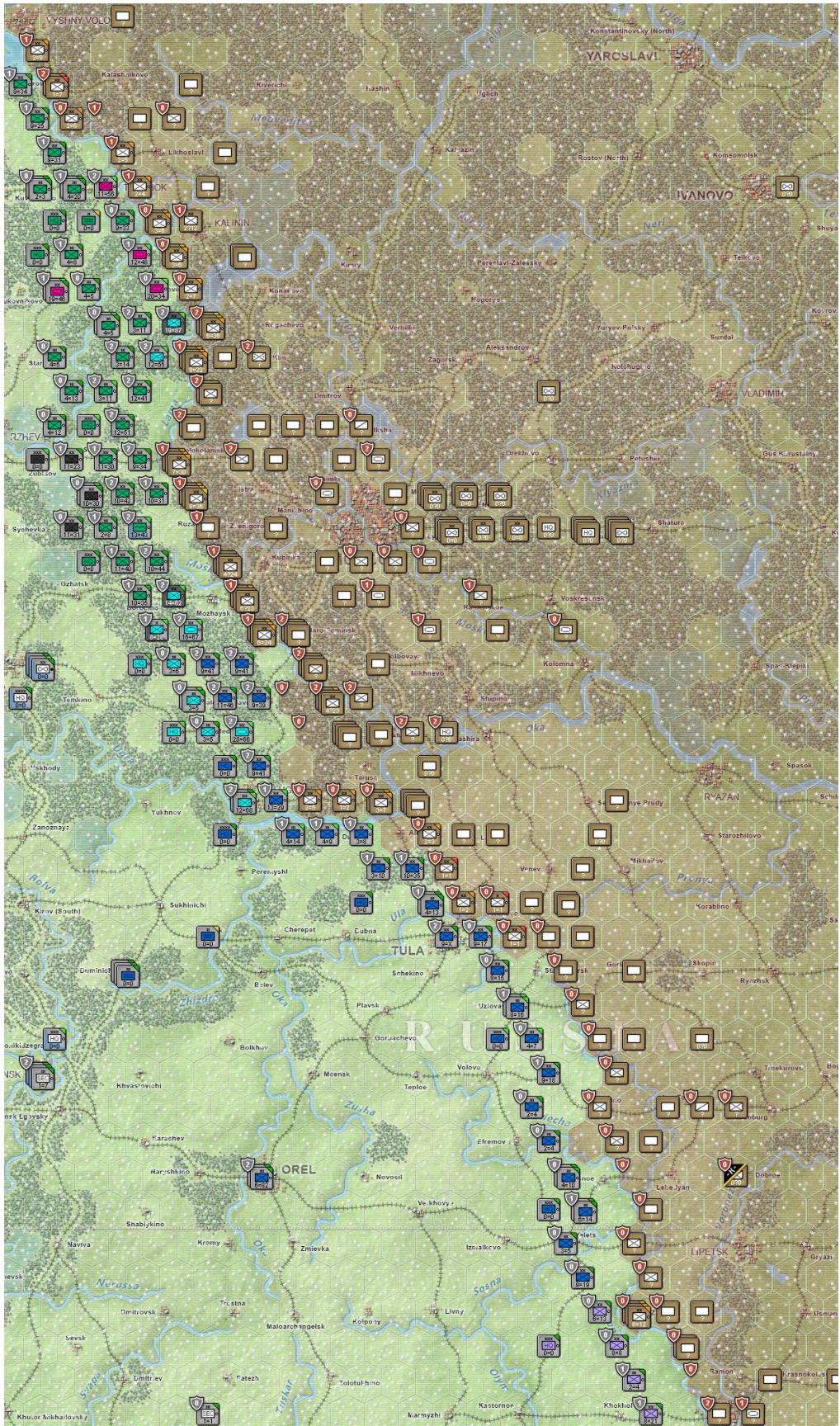
- 15) This left me with one good MP Panzer division in the western area. Fearing the reaction of the “Magic Soviets” I decided to use it to ensure that no relief attempt at the encircled divisions could succeed, so I simply moved it north and placed it defensively.
- 16) As my final act of the area, I reordered my units to ensure the best possible defense and also did an HQBU on one Panzer Corps I just left standing in its current positions on the line against the Soviets. Come next turn, I should have a few units with decent moves to continue the attack northwards.

West of Lake Ilmen, little has happened other than me moving a few units around to improve fortification efforts.

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



The Center



Situational Assessment

West of Moscow, the Soviets have not moved their units back next to the German lines. Instead they have remained all but inactive, apart from actually withdrawing in a few locations. Stretching south, all the way to Voronezh and beyond is a section of front that has seen very little action.

The only place along the front where the Soviets have remained “in touch” with the German lines are at Tula, where really weak Soviet units has been left – almost as an invitation to attack. I am considering the area south of the Oka as one of the “candidates” to get hit by the main Soviet attack. The area is thinly held by the Germans, and a concerted effort by guards divisions and strong airforces will surely break the front here into very small pieces. This is not as bad as it may sound, as I have plenty of ground to give in this area, and come winter, I will simply start to fall back every turn.

On my part, the FBD units currently assigned to connecting the northern rail sections to the southern rail lines are now only two turns apart, and I will soon have a direct line from Kharkov to Vyazma.

Behind Moscow, the Soviets have deployed some fighter strength (but not much). The main body of Soviet aircraft seems to be reserved for the winter fighting that will start in December.

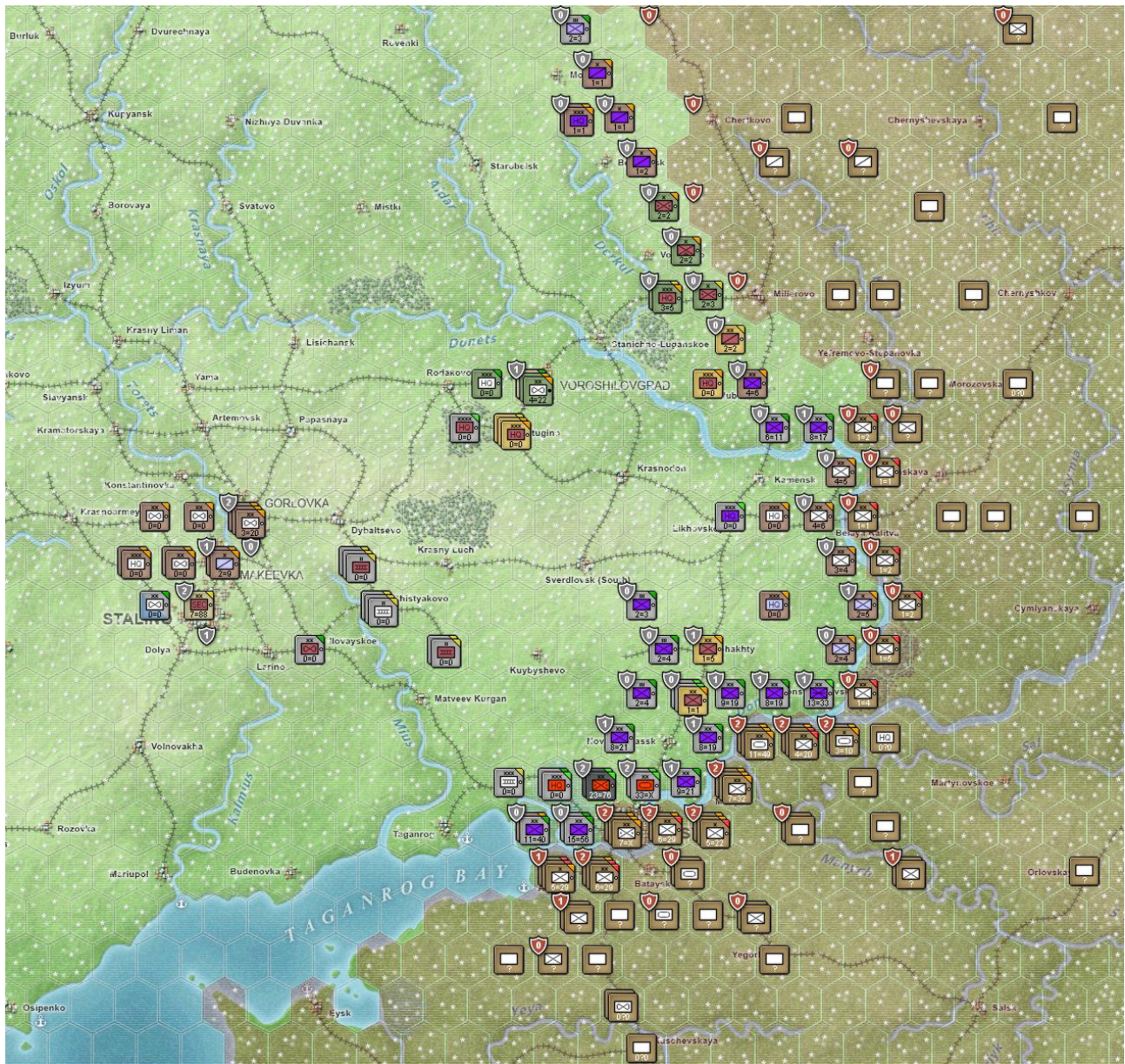
Planning

In the center, I will remain mainly passive in order to maintain fortification buildup. This is not to say that I will not do one or two attacks where the Soviet formations seem “ripe”.

Execution

Compared to the north, this sector has been entirely uneventful this turn, and I will not even bring an image of the situation after my turn, as it would basically be a copy of the image above.

The South



Situational assessment

In the south, the Soviets are still not showing any signs of aggression whatsoever. Northwest of Voroshilovgrad, they have even pulled back their forces from the area without rail connections.

On the plus side, the FBD unit advancing towards Rostov has reached the end of the line, and is now ready for deployment elsewhere.

Planning

Another uneventful turn is in the cards here, as I have no intention of shattering the “peace”. I will simply dig in and move my FBD westwards to help secure better supplies for the forces on the Crimea.

Execution

Once again, practically nothing has happened here this turn.

Conclusion

With one turn left before the blizzard, it will be very interesting to see if the magic Soviets can break through a stack of 100CV to relieve the encircled Soviet Rifle divisions. If they can, I will be more or less inclined to surrender on the spot, as there is simply no defense I can set up anywhere that can not be easily broken down by the Soviets. However, I doubt very much that they will be able to do much to relieve the beleaguered divisions. Next turn, I will have one turn before the blizzard to reduce the pocket and eliminate the divisions.

I do not think that I will see the deployment of the Soviet Guards divisions next turn. If I do not, they will use the last Soviet turn to reach the front by rail, which will limit the number of locations they can conceivably attack come the first turn of December. I have been looking for them with a series of deep recon missions, but I have not yet located them.