

Turn 36, Strategic Considerations

WEATHER

Europe Zone: Blizzard, Ice Level 10 (Forecast: Snow)
South Soviet Zone: Mud, Ice Level 9 (Forecast: Snow)
Central Soviet Zone: Blizzard, Ice Level 10 (Forecast: Blizzard)
North Soviet Zone: Blizzard, Ice Level 10 (Forecast: Blizzard)

The time has come to end the Soviet winter offensive of 41/42. With the weather being “mud” in the south Soviet Zone, and a prediction of “Snow”, the Soviets no longer have the “punch” to conduct large scale offensive maneuvers against the Wehrmacht.

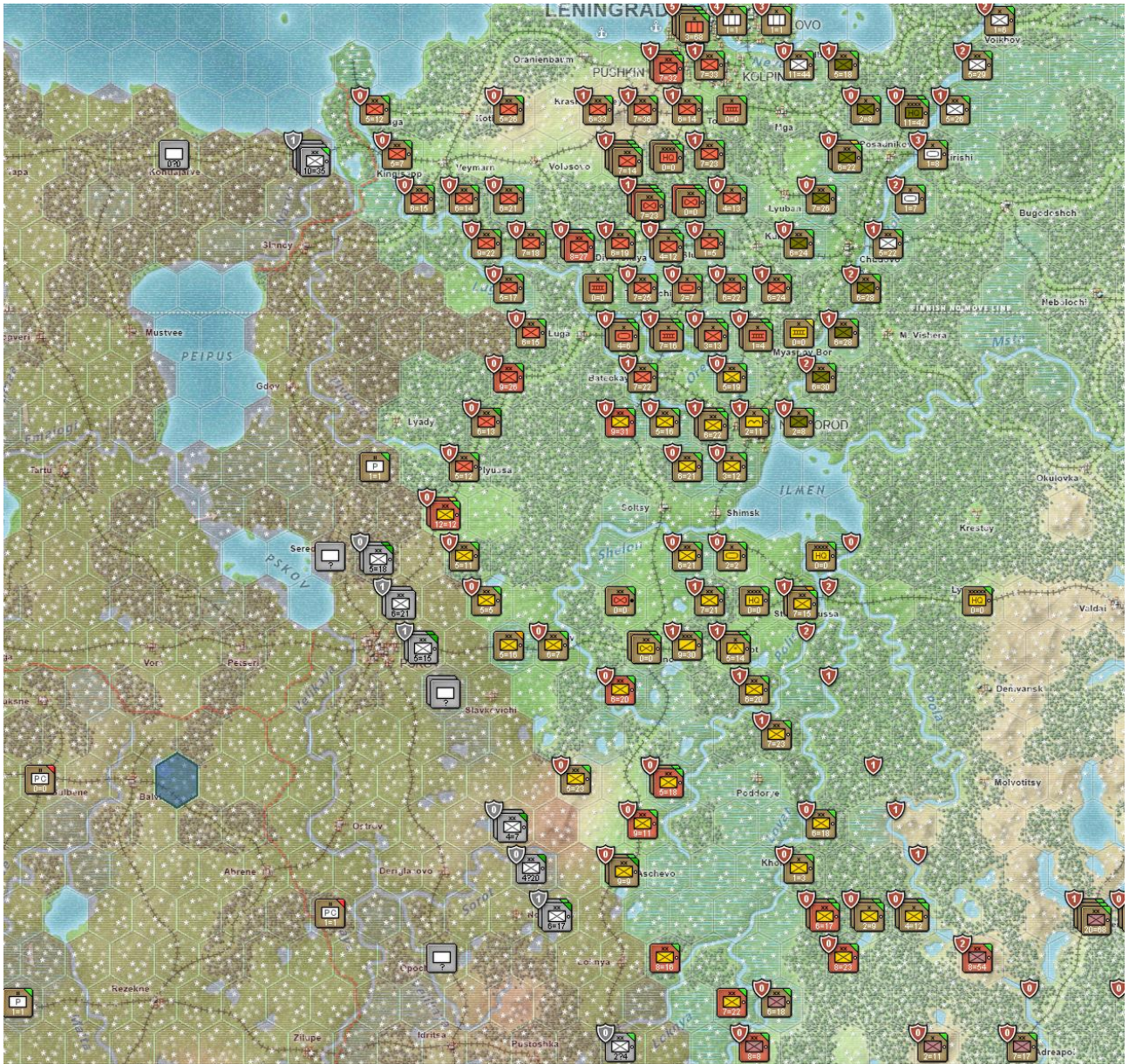
A brief analysis of the outcome of the winter battles is described below.

- **The North.** In the north, the German siege of Leningrad has been lifted, and the German front has been pushed all the way back to Narva and Pskov. Historically, the siege of Leningrad was lifted in the spring of 1943, so I consider this situation a minor Soviet victory.
- **The Center.** In the Center, the historical situation was very confused with a very complex frontline running west of Moscow. In some locations, I am no further than the historical situation, in others I am a long way in front of it. Once again, I consider this a minor Soviet victory.
- **The South.** In the south, the historical frontline at the end of the winter was at the Mius river, less than five hexes from Rostov. Having advanced some 10-15 hexes during the winter, and now being up to 30 hexes west of the historical front is a major victory in my honest opinion. The chances of a successful German Caucasus offensive is practically non-existent, when looking at the frontline alone.
- **The Red Army.** The Soviet armed forces have increased by some 800.000 men and 30.000 guns over the blizzard months. On top of this, I am now producing more than enough of practically everything but light tanks.
- **The Wehrmacht.** The German army has suffered a decisive defeat this winter. Having lost nine Panzer divisions, eight Motorized divisions, 34 infantry divisions plus and an assortment of brigades, regiments, support units and fortified zones, the Germans alone have had their OoB decline by 500.000 men, 3.000 guns and 1.100 AFV plus SP/AC's. On top of this comes the losses suffered by the Axis Minors.

Due to the lack of an effective Soviet unit organization, I predict the Axis powers will have the ability to do some localized attacks over the coming months. With the introduction of first the Soviet Tank Corps and later the Soviet Infantry Corps, I predict the Germans will find it continuously harder to conduct offensive maneuvers. Once the fall and winter of 42/43 arrives, I think the Soviets will be getting more and more aggressive, and they will remain so until the fall of Berlin.

For now, Axis VP are 179.

The North



Situational assessment

The north has been uneventful this turn.

The Germans have launched a series of air attacks on my positions opposite Narva. The attacks have been conducted by escorted Ju-87's. Unfortunately, the Red Army Aviation has decided not to fly in response to these attacks

Further south, a few local attacks have thrown the Soviets back from the area in front of Pskov. While the attacks have cost the Germans a few units, they should also have ensured that the Germans suffer less from battle attrition this turn.

Planning

I will be pushing my second line of defenders forward this turn, to create a new second line of defence slightly behind the first. The cost in supplies is of less importance now that I am ending offensive operations in the south, and no longer need full supplies being delivered to those troops.

West of Leningrad, I will push a single airfield with interceptors (LaGG-3) close to the front, hoping for a repetition of the German Ju-87 attacks on the Soviet front. I will also launch a series of night bombings by my long range bombers against the possible Ju-87 airfields in the German rear. If I can locate the one with the Ju-87's, I might launch a massive IL-2 attack come next turn. With IL-2 production being 90 climbing to 170 I can easily sustain heavy losses to these aircraft while the Germans will struggle to survive losses to their Ju-87's.

At the Northwestern Front, I will close the last remaining German rail hexes and begin creating a continuous front.

Execution

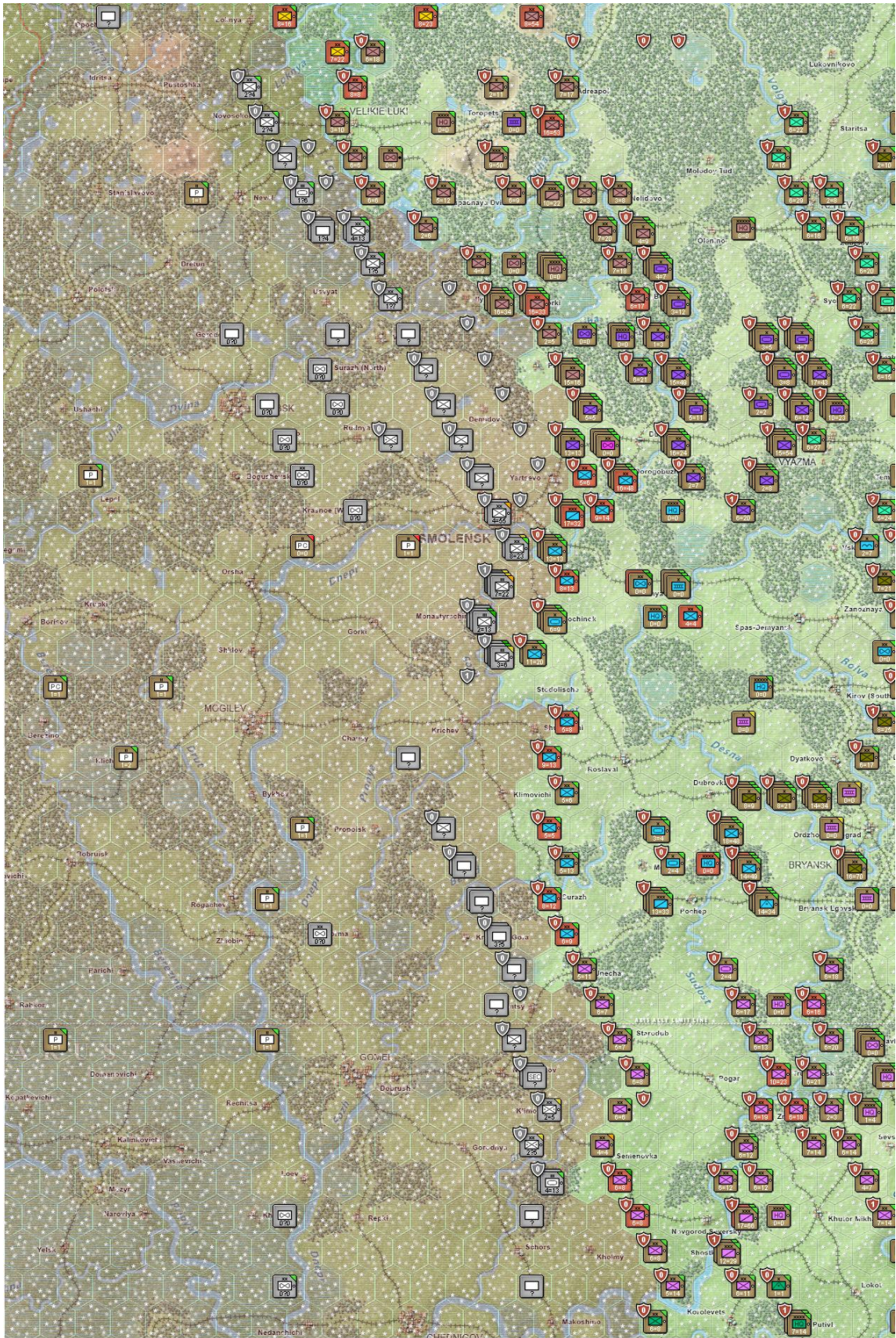
The night bombing attacks on the airfields west of Narva has revealed that the German Ju-87's are at the Tapa airfield. Apparently, there are no flak units assigned to guarding the airfield, but an attack by IL-2 will suffer somewhat from the range at which the attack needs to be made.

Other than that, I have simply moved to reorder my lines, and conducted a series of ground bombing attacks on the local Germans (as always).

Below is an image of the situation at Pskov, as I give the turn to Hermann.



The Center



Situational assessment

The Germans are continuing their withdrawal in front of Moscow. There are now 23 hexes between Moscow and the Germans.

At Smolensk, the Germans have launched some minor counterattacks, and supported these by large scale air attacks by unescorted level bombers against the Soviet units of the area. While the majority of machines used has been obsolete bombers, there have been a few He 111H-6's and such involved in the attacks.

Planning

I will begin reordering my lines in this area, once again beginning to establish a second line of defence slightly behind the first. I will try to do so, without involving the Volkhov Front in such measures, as I want to use this Front as another strategic reserve for the coming battles.

As a response to the air attacks at Smolensk, I need to do some restructuring of my own airforces in the area. I will reassign a interceptor airfield (LaGG-3) from the Moscow Defense Zone (MDZ) to the Western Front and every other MDZ airfield to the Volkhov Front. I will also upgrade one of my local Western Front airfields to hold more Yak-1's which I will use offensively along with the local IL-2 and SU-2 airfields. Finally, I will replace all of the MiG-3 aircraft on one of the local airfields with LaGG-3, so as to be fully prepared for the coming battles in the air.

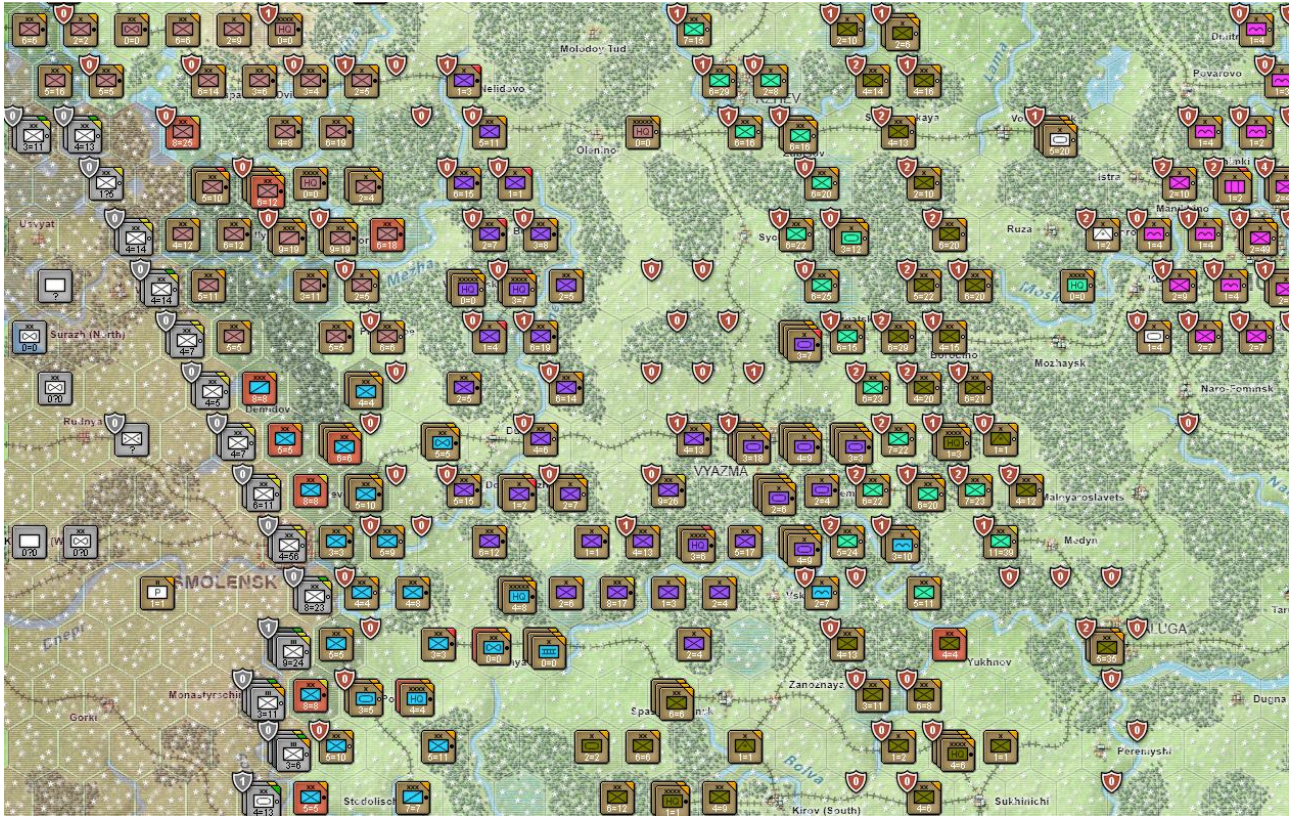
On the ground at Smolensk, I will advance all the way up to the Germans, hoping to provoke either another withdrawal, or a series of late blizzard counterattacks. Such attacks would probably cost the Germans more in lost men and guns than the attrition involved in just staying put for one more turn.

Execution

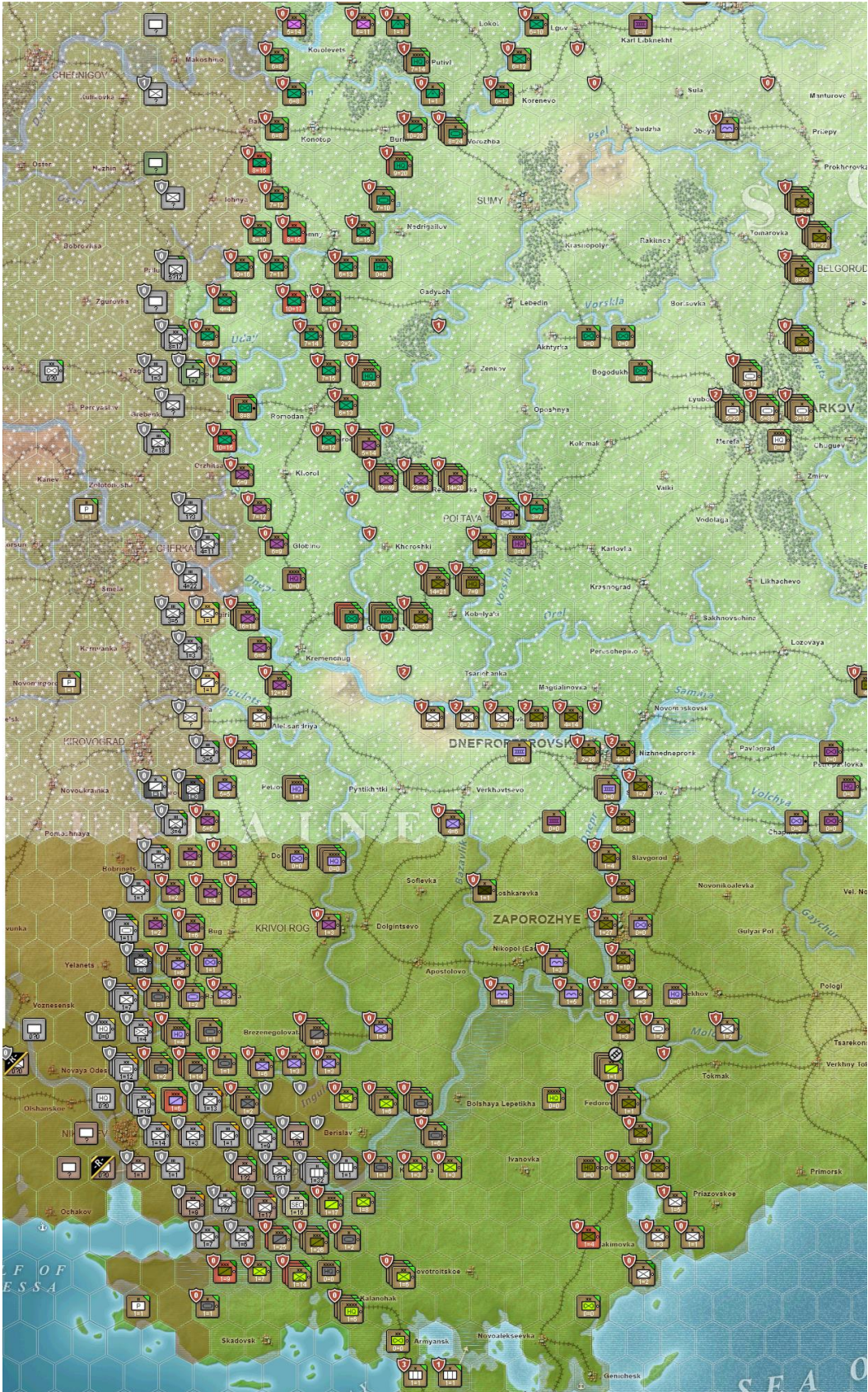
In the center, I have moved my troops up to new defensive positions, and placed the Volkhov Front units as a third line of defense. Should the main German thrust of the summer come elsewhere, I may simply move these units out of their current position and use them as a strategic reserve.

Conducting the usual ground bombing attacks, I found that the Luftwaffe is flying heavily against the Soviet bombers, and some losses have been inflicted on either side due to this. As I can easily sustain far greater losses than the Germans, I consider this tradeoff a success. I have also bombed a few Luftwaffe airfields this turn, as they have been placed close to the front and in good range from my own tactical bombers.

Below is an image of the situation at Smolensk, as I give the turn to Hermann.



The South



Situational Assessment

In the south, almost all events have related somehow to the Nikolaev Bulge. The Germans have continued their slow and steady withdrawal from the easternmost positions, while also launching a series of counterattacks on the flank stretching north from the Bulge itself. I absolutely fail to see the purpose of several of these attacks, including the one below. Why would the Germans wish to attack and suffer losses with odds 4:1 against them?

<div>Axis Forces Attacking:</div> <div>XXXXVIII Panzer Corps 3rd Panzer Division (3) Wiking SS Motorized Division (4) 614th SP Lt Flk Bn (0) 603rd SP Lt Flk Bn (0) 4th Nebelwerfer Battalion (0) 1/31st SP Flak Company (0) 5/55th SP Flak Company (0)</div>		<div>1 of 1</div> <div>87,99 - Clear - Mud</div> <div>Turn:36 1942-02-19</div>		<div>Soviet Forces Defending:</div> <div>46th Army 398th Rifle Division (28) 590th BM Howitzer Regiment (2) 647th Art Rgt RVGK (1)</div>	
<div>[v]</div>		<div>Forces Engaged</div> <div>ATK: men 24416, art 245, afv 204 DAM: men 114, art 3, afv 4 LOST: men 188, art 1, afv 7 ATK: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0</div>		<div>DEF: men 15267, art 208, afv 0 DAM: men 33, art 2, afv 0 LOST: men 66, art 0, afv 0 DEF: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 0, utl 0</div>	
<div>CV: 7->11.2 Comm HQ: XXXXVIII Panzer Corps GO Werner Kempf</div>		<div>Defending Forces HELD</div> <div>Show Details</div> <div>Odds 1 : 5.21</div>		<div>Exit</div> <div>CV: 31->58.4 Comm HQ: 46th Army GM Nikolai Feklenko</div>	
<div>Eng Val: 2</div>				<div>Fort: 0.02->0.00</div>	

In the air, the Luftwaffe has been very active this turn, with heavy attacks on various Soviet formations. This has included some unescorted Level bomber attacks on the Soviet airfields of the Southern Front, which I believe were unwise.

Axis Forces Attacking:		1 of 2 > 92,97 - Clear - Mud Turn:36 1942-02-19		Soviet Forces Defending:	
		Forces Engaged			
IV Fliegerkorps		ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0		DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0	
46 Ju 87D-1		DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0		DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0	
28 He 111H-4		LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0		LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0	
50 Ju 88A		ATK: ftr 0, bmr 136, utl 0		DEF: ftr 139, bmr 0, utl 0	
3 Ju 88A-4		LOST: ftr 0, bmr 110, utl 0		LOST: ftr 49, bmr 0, utl 0	
9 He 111H-6		airfield was BOMBED			
		[v]			
		Show Details		Exit	

At Odessa, my Naval Rifle Brigade has been surrounded by four Rumanian units, and is destined for destruction come next turn or so. The amphibious attacks thus have failed to have any real impact on the game. I should have launched them four or five turns ago, and they might have meant the encirclement of several German formations.

The weather prediction for next turn is "Snow".

Planning

Along the Southwestern Front, I will begin creation of a frontline along the Sula river.

Further south, I need to withdraw the most exposed attacking units of the Southern Front and my two STAVKA Armies. I then need to create a new frontline based on the Ingulets river and the southern stretch of the Dnepr.

I intend to use the local Fronts to create my frontline, withdrawing Rokossovsky's and Batov's armies to my strategic reserve. There will be a lot of reordering my armies, as they are hopelessly mixed up due to my offensive operations over the last few turns.

Execution

In the south, I have conducted a few attacks against exposed Italian and Slovenian units. Apart from that, the main effort has lain in withdrawing my attack formations from their exposed positions. As next turn should be snow, I can expect a German attack in the area.

My forward units of Rokossovsky's army has found it very hard to withdraw very far, some units making it only one hex back. I am a little concerned about the German potential for attacking, but thankfully, the fuel soft factor shows "Red" for all the local Germans.

I have also assigned an airfield with Yak-1 and another with IL-2 to the Caucasus Front.

The situation north of Nikolaev as I give the turn to Hermann can be seen below.



Conclusion

While no units have been encircled or captured this turn, some fighting has occurred. Both the Germans and the Soviets have launched a series of local attacks and fighting has been heavy.

In the air, total losses for the German and Soviet phase of this turn are 212 Axis Aircraft for 292 Soviet ones. Soviet aircraft production this turn was 516 machines. The only Soviet losses of non-obsolete machines that exceeds production are IL-4 losses (with 33 lost to 15 produced) and LaGG-3 (with 79 lost to 66 produced). The Germans have lost 41 Bf 109F-4's and 48 Ju 87D-1's. Both those casualty types should exceed their production with a decent margin.

On the ground, losses are 36.000 Axis soldiers and 500 guns to 27.000 Soviet soldiers and 300 guns. On top of this, the Axis has lost 69 AFV, but many of these have come from the Axis Minors.

For now it seems the initiative is shifting once more, and the Germans will have a while to try to rectify a terrible situation. Later in the year, I look forward to even more Soviet attacks.