

Turn 39, Strategic Considerations

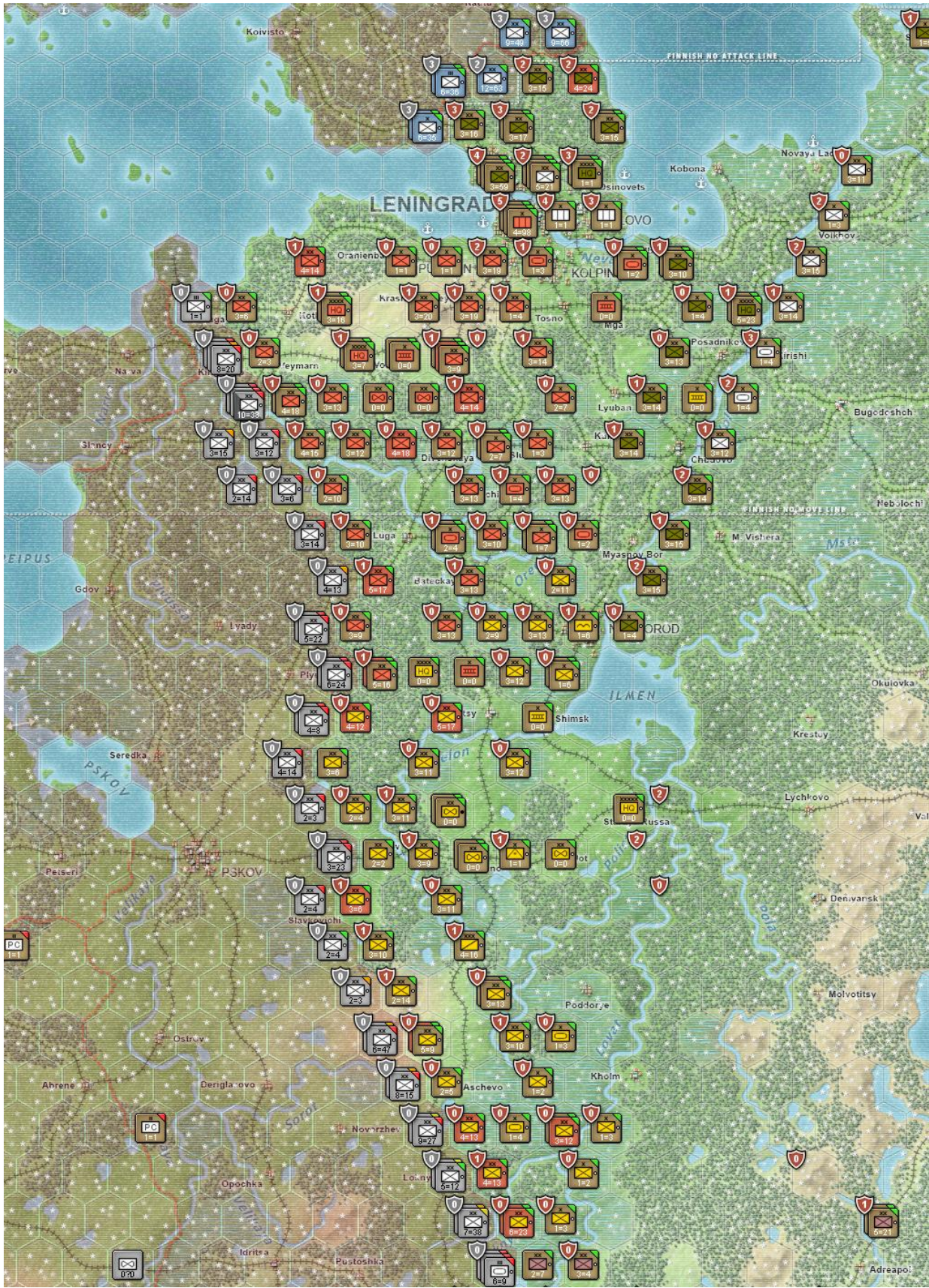
AXIS LOSSES			
Men	0	16865	1746029
Guns	0	392	27565
AFV	0	59	4086
SP & AC	0	6	1218
Men Killed	0	11756	488285
Men Captured	0	46	455713
Men Disabled	0	5063	802031
Men Returned			88560
SOVIET LOSSES			
Men	0	13139	3463183
Guns	0	157	35039
AFV	0	18	16152
SP & AC	0	5	4316
Men Killed	0	9087	865809
Men Captured	0	49	1108030
Men Disabled	0	4003	1489344
Men Returned			146837

On the ground, the Germans are still conducting their attacks spread out across the entire front. The resulting losses during the Axis part of turn 39 can be seen above. With losses of 59 AFV, the German production system must be failing to replace the losses suffered. The German Man2Gun index verify this, as it has dropped by 0,3 during the Axis part of turn 39. With the coming Soviet air attacks, this number is bound to become even worse this turn.

Unfortunately, the Soviet Man2Gun number has begun dropping slightly as well. This is a little surprising to me, as I still produce about 20.000 more armaments than I use, so the drop has to do with either some changes in the Soviet OoB or else with the Red Army simply receiving men faster than guns. The logistics report say that I still add plenty more guns to units than I get back, and the total Soviet gun number is still climbing (it is now 90.000 guns). I will need to keep an eye on developments, in order to get a better understanding of the game as the turns proceed.

In the air, the Germans have pulled a large part of their Luftwaffe units back to National Reserve, resulting in a major drop in the number of available Luftwaffe aircraft this turn.

The North



Situational assessment

In the north, the Germans are pushing forward making contact with Soviet lines along the entire front. Six attacks have been conducted along the front, four of them being successful. The attack reports show, that there are still Ju 87's flying out of Tapa.

There are plenty of locations where I can move units up from the rear, attack, and then move other units into the rear positions, thus creating superior attacking CV's without having to risk stacking units on the frontline.

Finally, in Leningrad itself, I now have my four new Howitzer Brigades ready for their first real action.

Planning

I will continue to conduct attacks on the weak German wherever I can find them in order to inflict more losses on the German formation before summer. I will do so without committing larger formations to the front itself however, and I will leave my units in the rear digging in for new positions as well as they can.

In the air, I will focus my attacks on the German frontline units, as the number of Ju 87's in the area appear to be very low and thus not really worth the effort of hunting down.

In Leningrad itself, I will begin conducting two hex range attacks against the Finns. In Leningrad NW (fortification level four) I have some 120 122mm Howitzers standing ready to fire, and I have two similar units also available in the area. I wish to find out more about the bonus of firing artillery from fortified positions (manual 15.3.2.6), and I wish to see if I can break the Finnish defensive lines over time without committing large formations to the task.

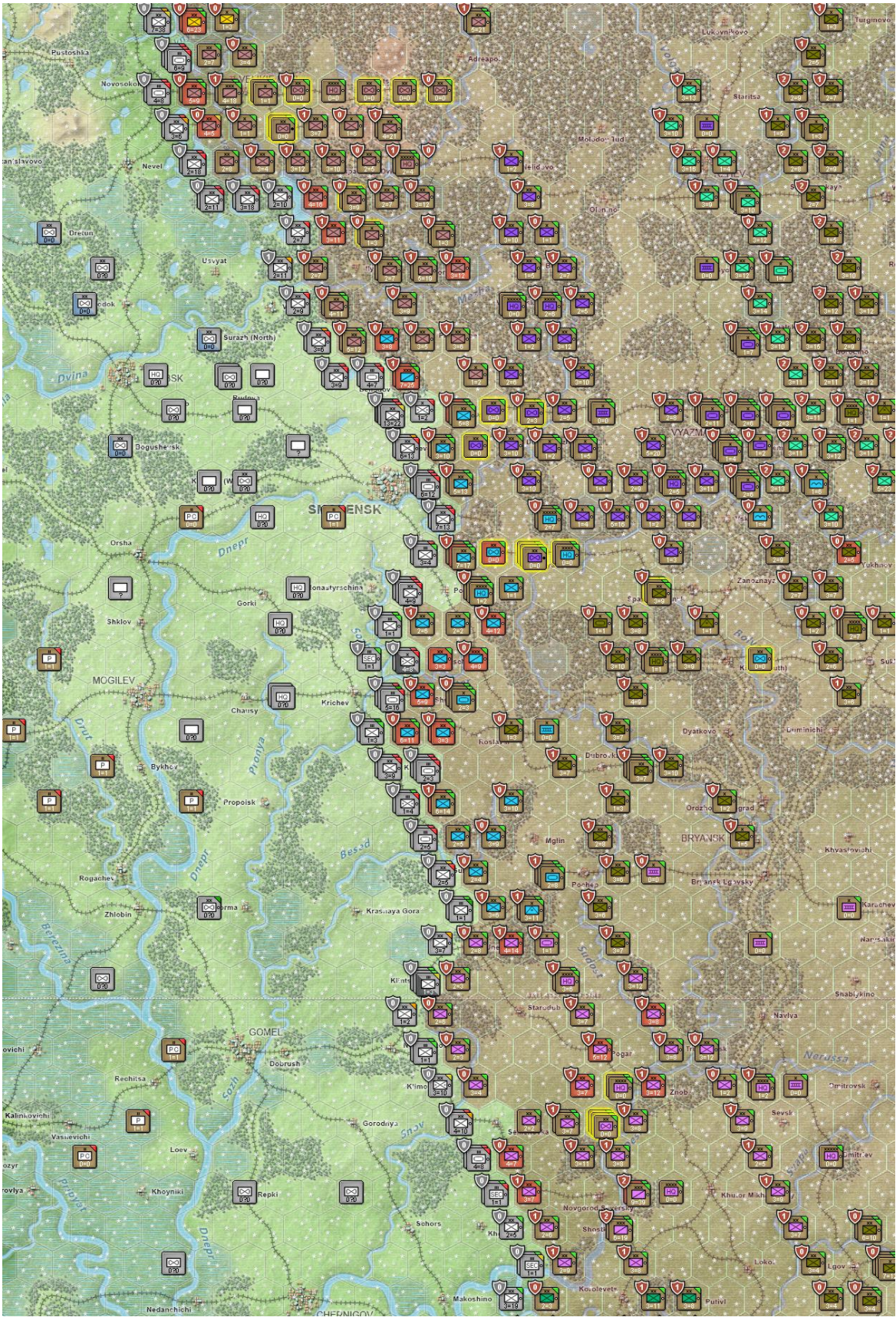
Execution

In Leningrad, the four attacks I made with my Howitzer Brigades has shown that they are certainly not yet combat ready. They basically hit nothing at all. For now I guess they will be left at "Refit" and we shall see what happens when their morale starts to rise.

Other than that, I have conducted a series of local attacks on the Germans and met with some minor successes.

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

The Center



Situational assessment

In the center, the Germans have conducted some fourteen attacks spread out along the entire frontline. Once again, there are many locations along the line where weak German mobile formations are vulnerable to Soviet attacks.

In the air, the Luftwaffe airfields remain in position, and these bases currently hold more than 150 Bf109 F model fighters. Ranged against them, I have the Kalinin Front, the Volkhov Front and the Western Front airfields with a plethora of aircraft.

Planning

On the ground, I will counterattack the weak German Motorized and Panzer units once more. I will precede such attacks by two ground bombing attacks, hoping to draw out the Luftwaffe fighters and inflict some losses.

I will try the Pe-2 in the night bomber role against the Luftwaffe airfields this turn, as it is obvious that it is not really good as a ground attack aircraft. In my honest opinion, I do think this is a shortcoming of the WitE game: Level bombers used in a tactical role are not really efficient, resulting in poor performance of planes such as the Pe-2 and the Ju 88, which is quite unhistorical. The Germans for instance, had great trouble scrambling their fighters against treetop level Pe-2 attacks on their airfields, while the Ju 88 was intended as a schnellbomber, being too fast for enemy interceptors to catch it before the bombs were delivered and the plane was gone again.

Execution

The initial bombing attacks of the Kalinin Front against the German units on the front were met with some good Luftwaffe interception methods, resulting in some losses for the Soviets. I then decided to do my first night attack on the nearest Luftwaffe airbase and, on a whim, included the local SB-2 bombers in that attack. The result was heavy losses for the SB-2's but some success for the bombing itself, as the mission killed off eight Bf109 F-4's. The conclusion is that the Pe-2 might do well in a night time attack role against enemy airfields.

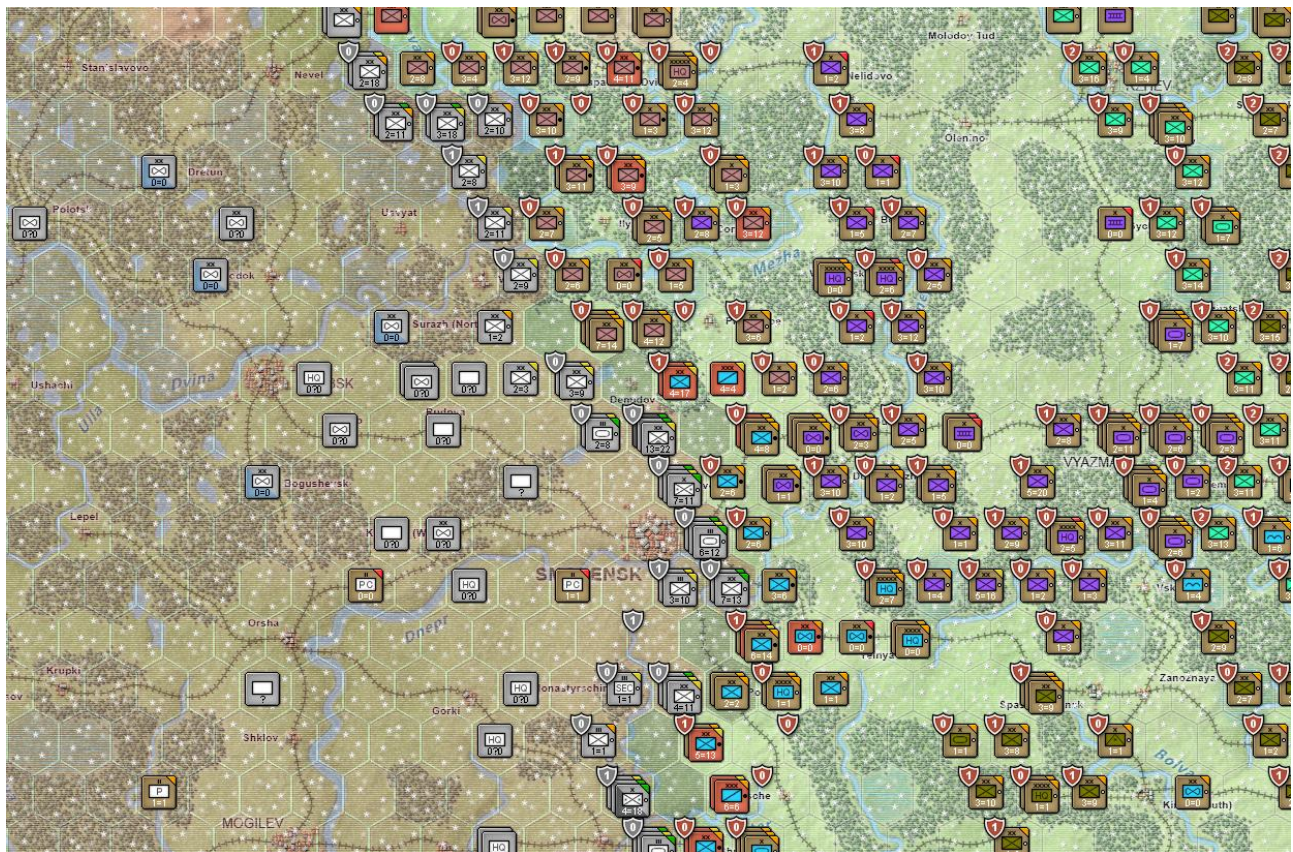
The following bombings of the Volkhov Front and the Western Front showed that the German interceptors have been flown past their limit, as the Germans have sent fewer and fewer planes to intercept the Soviet attacks. I have also done two IL-2 attacks covered by Yak-1's against a Luftwaffe airbase (killing off six aircraft for six of my own).

Following the ground bombing attacks, I started doing my ordinary attacks with a heavy attack against a German Panzer formation outside Velikie Luki. This attack saw the German level bombers flying ground support, but with little fighter cover due to the fatigue of the German fighter pilots having intercepted a lot of attacks already. It also showed that Erich von Manstein is still in command of a corps. Personally, I do not agree with the notion of many players to keep the best commanders at corps level, but I acknowledge that I appear to be in the minority on that topic. In any case, the attack gave some more losses to the Luftwaffe.

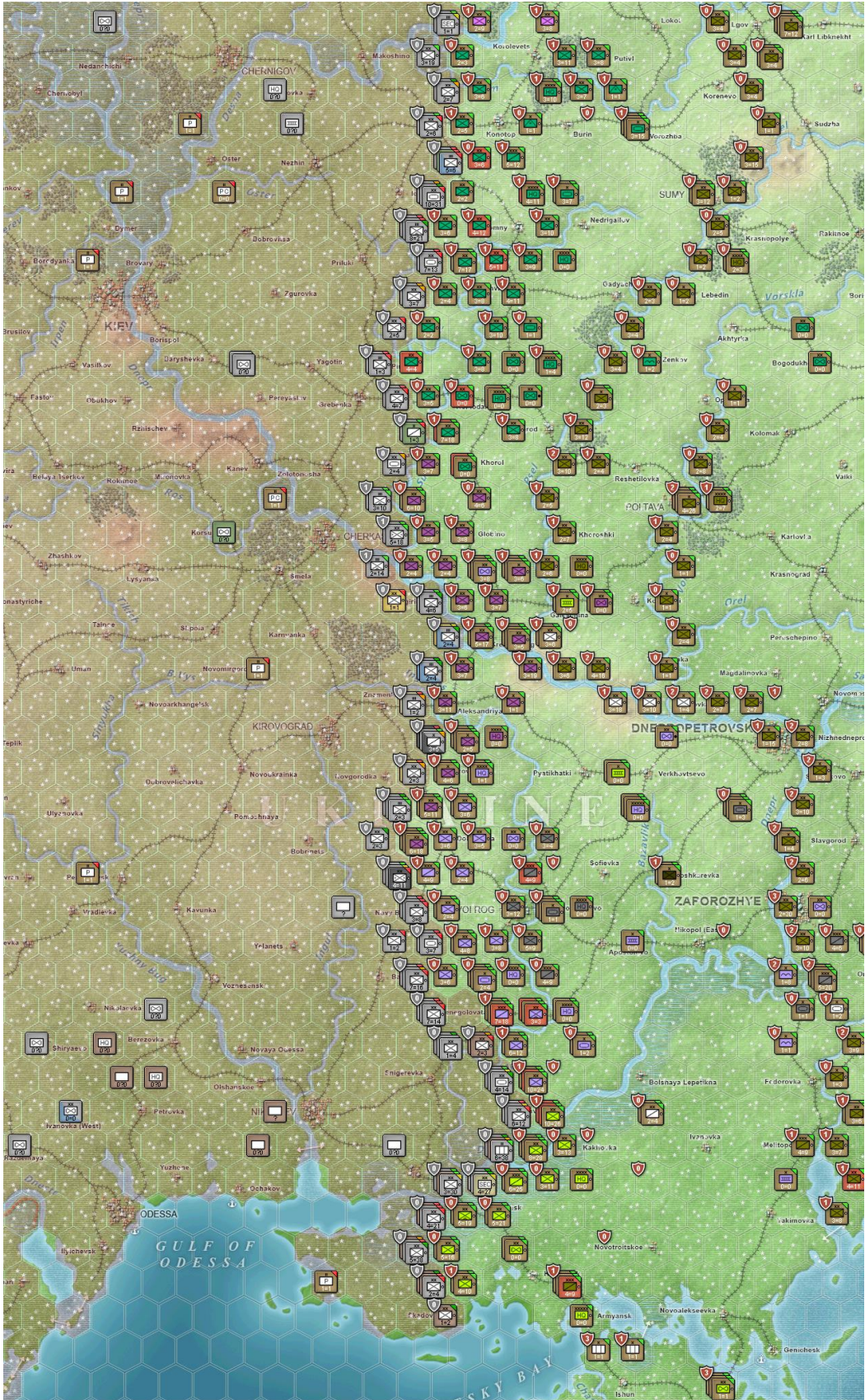
Axis Forces Defending: LIX Corps -28% 5th Jager Division (9) LVI Panzer Corps 1/8th Panzer Division (42) 2/8th Panzer Division (31) II/51st Artillery Battalion (1) 559th Jagdpanzer Battalion (1) 48th Pioneer Battalion (5) [v] CV: 89->110.5 Fort: 0.06->0.00 Comm HQ: LVI Panzer Corps G Erich von Manstein	<div> 1 of 4 > 80,39 - Clear - Snow Turn:39 1942-03-12 </div> <div> Forces Engaged <div> DEF: men 14660, art 159, afv 114 ATK: men 100813, art 1470, afv 38 DAM: men 122, art 11, afv 5 DAM: men 197, art 8, afv 1 LOST: men 363, art 8, afv 3 LOST: men 442, art 8, afv 4 DEF: ftr 28, bmr 53, utl 0 ATK: ftr 136, bmr 15, utl 0 LOST: ftr 6, bmr 17, utl 0 LOST: ftr 2, bmr 0, utl 0 </div> <div> 2/8th Panzer Division RETREATED 5th Jager Division RETREATED 1/8th Panzer Division RETREATED Odds 5.66 : 1 </div> <div> Show Details Exit </div> </div>	Soviet Forces Attacking: 30th Army 1st Cavalry Corps (35) 56th Rifle Division (21) 313th Rifle Division (30) 30th Rifle Division (23) 20th Guards Rifle Division (36) 40th Rifle Brigade (11) 526th BM Howitzer Regiment (2) [v] CV: 238->626.5 Eng Val: 10 Comm HQ: 30th Army GL Vasily Khomenko
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In total, I ended up doing somewhere between 15 and 20 attacks in the region, winning most easily and inflicting a little more losses on the Germans. While such attacks are nowhere near decisive for the campaign, I do believe that slowly bleeding the Wehrmacht will make my life a lot easier later on in the game, when I am on the permanent offensive.

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



The South



Situational Assessment

The Axis forces have conducted some 10 attacks spread along the frontline this turn. As is the situation further north, several weak German units are in forward positions, where I can easily attack them with superior forces.

The Luftwaffe has continued it's bombing campaign against the local Red Army airfields, resulting in reports such as the following three. I am continuously baffled as to their purpose, other than throwing away German bombers. If conducting such attacks, and the first is an obvious fialure, then why would you ever consider conducting another two? And why would you ever risk your valuable bombers against airfields with nothing more than U-2VS and MiG-3's? The result has been 122 bombers lost for six Soviet fighter bombers.

Axis Forces Attacking:	1 of 1	93,102 - Clear - Snow	Turn:39 1942-03-12	Soviet Forces Defending:
	Forces Engaged			
	ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0 ATK: ftr 0, bmr 61, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 25, utl 0		DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DEF: ftr 103, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 3, bmr 0, utl 0	
VIII Fliegerkorps 24 He 111H-3 11 Ju 88A 23 Ju 88A-4 3 Do 217E-4	airfield was BOMBED		16 : 17 MiG-3 5 : 10 MiG-3	[v]
	Show Details	Exit		

Axis Forces Attacking:	1 of 2 >	92,109 - Clear - Snow	Turn:39 1942-03-12	Soviet Forces Defending:
	Forces Engaged			
	ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0 ATK: ftr 9, bmr 87, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 43, utl 0		DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DEF: ftr 82, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 1, bmr 0, utl 0	
IV Fliegerkorps 9 Bf 109F-4 84 He 111H-4 3 Ju 88A-4	airfield was BOMBED		13 : 14 U-2VS 15 : 15 U-2VS	[v]
	Show Details	Exit		

Axis Forces Attacking:	< 2 of 2	92,109 - Clear - Snow	Turn:39 1942-03-12	Soviet Forces Defending:
	Forces Engaged			
	ATK: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0 ATK: ftr 10, bmr 121, utl 0 LOST: ftr 0, bmr 54, utl 0		DEF: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DAM: men 0, art 0, afv 0 LOST: men 0, art 0, afv 0 DEF: ftr 103, bmr 0, utl 0 LOST: ftr 2, bmr 0, utl 0	
IV Fliegerkorps 10 Bf 109F-4 16 Ju 87D-1 33 Ju 88A 43 Ju 88A-4 25 He 111H-6 4 Do 217E-4	airfield was BOMBED		13 : 14 U-2VS 15 : 15 U-2VS	[v]
	Show Details	Exit		

Planning

Once again, I will simply attack the Axis where they are weak and bomb away at everything I can find along the front.

Execution

Along the Southwestern Front and the Transcaucasus Front, I have done a series of bombing attacks revealing that several Axis Minor airfields are active in the area. As the Volkhov Front has one airfield with Pe-2's, I decided to do another nighttime attack on a Hungarian Airfield in the area. The result was two Hungarian fighters for two Pe-2's. Once again, this is an exchange rate, that I am quite satisfied with.

In total, I have attacked about 20 locations this turn, winning most combats and inflicting retreat losses on the opposing Axis forces.

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



Conclusion

Losses have been substantial on both sides this turn, with a total of 50.000 Axis troops, 1100 guns and 140 AFV + SP/AC's going for 64.000 Soviet troops, 700 guns and 100 AFV + AP/AC's since my last turn. A substantial part of the Axis losses this turn has been Axis Minor losses.

Losses in the air are also significant with a total of 279 Axis aircraft going for 410 Soviet ones during the entire turn. Worthy of note is the loss of 51 BF109 F's on the German side and 121 Yak-1's on the Soviet side.

In short, this turn has been much a continuation of last turn, with a lot of local attacks along the entire front. This situation serves the Soviets a lot better than the Germans, as the Soviet production system is capable of replacing losses whiel the Axis one is not.

Next turn will be another snow turn.