

## EARLY YEARS: REBUTTAL

by David Bottger

Contrary to his expectations, I was pleased to see Richard Shagrin's article "The Early Years Reexamined" (GENERAL, Vol. 14, No. 5) criticizing my original article "Third Reich: The Early Years" (Vol. 14, No. 3). It indicated at least that someone had read my effort and had been sufficiently moved to apply pen to paper. I would be less than, candid, however, if I did not admit that it is somewhat difficult to respond objectively to Mr. Shagrin's comments, given their superior and often snide tone. But many of his observations demand response, and for that purpose I will proceed.

### Axis Options

Mr. Shagrin first takes issue with my assertion that Germany must conquer Poland quickly, preferably in Fall 1939, by noting that the rules and victory conditions do not require Poland's conquest at all. True, but not very enlightening. THIRD REICH'S main attribute is the freedom it allows its players to deviate from historical or even logical courses of action. But freedom carries a price. To evaluate delaying the fall of Poland requires a weighing of this price with its potential benefits.

As an alternative to a first turn attack on Poland, Mr. Shagrin suggests an all-out effort in the West, with the early knockout of France as the goal. Given optimum die rolls, the move he describes leaves one or two German armored units adjacent to Paris at the end of the Axis first turn. It also requires the use of 10 German air factors against the French air force, 5 in counterair and 5 in interception, resulting in elimination of the latter. Five additional air factors must support the attacks on Brussels (to avoid loss of armor by EX result) and Sedan and to suppress the Belgian and Dutch air units. That leaves only 5 air factors for defensive air support during the Allied turn, although admittedly an Allied offensive option is unlikely.

You may notice I have omitted the attack on Denmark which Mr. Shagrin included in his proposal. The two infantry units assigned to that task are needed elsewhere, according to the rules with which Mr. Shagrin claims such intimate familiarity. At least one infantry unit must be deployed against Poland, since "combat of some type is mandatory" there in Fall 1939 (Second Edition Rules, p. 30, section 6.2). Another infantry unit should be placed in Finland. AH has ruled in response to an inquiry that air units such as Mr. Shagrin advises sending to Finland will

not garrison that country against Russian attack under rule 3.582.

Thus modified, Mr. Shagrin's attack consumes 45 BRP's, 15 for the offensive option and 10 each to declare war on Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg. This leaves 30 BRP's for builds. At least one replacement unit should be sent to garrison Rumania. Three other replacements should be built to provide fodder for the expected Allied attrition option in the West. At first glance, it appears that one replacement unit sent east and added to the two fleets and two infantry units already there will satisfy the 25 factor East Front garrison requirement. But as I read section 6.2 of the Questions and Answers Appendix referred to above, if a Polish attack reduces German strength there below 25 factors, Germany forfeits the game, since the required number of factors would not begin the following German turn in the East. To avoid the ignominy of being defeated by Poland Oust desserts for Mr. Shagrin, in view of his attempted Polish joke), Germany had better send two infantry units east. The remaining 20 BRP's can buy one 5-factor air unit or two armor units, plus assorted infantry and replacements. (Editor's Note: The unit construction and strategic redeployment phase would give the German ample opportunity to avoid a forfeit.)

To digress a moment, it should be obvious why the invasion of Poland is now considered to have been such a gamble. Germany simply lacked the military might to respond to an Anglo-French attack in 1939, had it occurred. For the same reason, but perhaps to an even greater degree, Germany takes a great risk in attacking France so early in the game.

Consider the probable Allied reaction. French units mass around Paris and the German armored thrust. Britain, fearing an early French defeat, transports at least two ground units to the Continent. With at least 21 ground factors adjacent to the invaders, the Allies have a 50-50 chance of either capturing the hex east of Paris (advance by British units to permit use of British DAS) or forcing the destruction of the armor occupying it as attrition losses. Either course removes the armor unit(s) adjacent to Paris, allowing a French build there. With 42 BRP's to spend on unit construction, France resurrects her intercepted air unit and activates both armor units, all infantry and three replacements for sentry duty on the Italian border. England builds air and ground forces to aid her beleaguered ally.

As a result, German units lie at least one, and possibly two or three hexes from Paris, facing equal or greater air power and a formidable ground force. On the shortest route to Paris lie 12-14 British defense factors, then 15 or

18 French defense factors in the capital. This assumes no German casualties from her own attacks. An EX result in the attack from Sedan, for example, costs a precious armored piece, weakening the thrust and limiting attack options in Winter 1939.

And it could be worse. Note that Mr. Shagrin's plan makes no provision for defense of the Reich. I wonder how he would respond to the sight of British units in Berlin. If Britain deployed at least one unit on a port, an amphibious assault on the beach east of Bremen is possible (remember, both German fleets are on garrison in the East). One fleet can carry the invading infantry while the others based in England provide sea escort for extra forces S Wed to the bridgehead/port.

Since Germany spent at least 45 BRP's the Allies can, by judicious spending, gain the initiative in Winter 1939. That means British units can waltz into Berlin without firing a shot, while the French eliminate or cut off as many Germans as possible. Reinforcements SR'ed to Germany may even screen Berlin completely from German counterattack.

Enough horror stories. The simple fact is that the gamble is not worth the risk. At best, Germany would start 1940 with 40 BRP's conquered (assuming Denmark falls in the winter), as compared to 60 (70 if joint conquest of Yugoslavia) by taking Poland first, then striking west. In addition, she will have bought an extra offensive option in the West while wasting a free one in the East, resulting in a further underdeveloped force pool. In BRP terms it does not matter if France falls in Spring or Winter 1940, either way, Germany gets the BRP's in Spring 1941. If France falls as early as Summer 1940, it will still take a turn to conquer Poland plus probably another turn to redeploy east and rebuild the force pool. So now it is Spring 1941, and what time has been gained in this gamble?

The same general comments apply to a first-turn attack on Russia, Mr. Shagrin questions my analysis on this point, rejecting my statement that a Fall 1939 attack on Russia is not feasible because most of Germany's forces will be attacking Poland in the first turn. The point is, if Poland is not vanquished, German deployment against Russia is extremely limited, 20 factors maximum in minor allies at any one time, plus whatever can get into battle from East Prussia. This makes it less likely, not more likely, that enough Russian casualties can be inflicted to force surrender before France and Britain are able to apply intolerable pressure.

Further, I tend to question Mr. Shagrin's proposed attack from Finland. It presupposes an incompetent Russian deployment (e.g., no Russians on Finnish border).

One may certainly aspire higher than to advise how to defeat such poor play.

Next Mr. Shagrin rejects my suggestion that Italy declare war on France and Germany on Yugoslavia, causing a state of war between Italy and Yugoslavia. Then the Axis sends 21 combat factors in an attrition option against Yugoslavia, guaranteeing the elimination of one Yugoslav unit and permitting an Italian 2:1 on Belgrade in the winter.

He discards this ploy by asserting that France, for example, could volunteer one of its units for attrition loss, thus preserving the Yugoslav army, gaining her 20 BRP's and thwarting the planned Italian attack. The flaw in his analysis has already been pointed out by the Question Box in Vol. 14 No. 2 of the GENERAL. There it was ruled that a major power could absorb the minor's attrition losses only if they were joint targets of the same attrition option, i.e., intervening major power already at war with and possessing units adjacent to the attacker on the same front. In all other cases, as this ruling and rule 3.71 itself make clear, intervention, the prerequisite to the major power taking the minor's losses, may not occur until the intervening power's turn. It is Mr. Shagrin's analysis, rather than my approach, which therefore must be judged a failure.

Finally, Mr. Shagrin takes issue with my rejection of "doing nothing" as a reasonable German option in 1939 on the Western Front. He does this by reference to the "fleet in being" concept. "Fleet in being," as a defensive concept, is hardly suited to the German strategic situation in 1939. In addition, I am somewhat puzzled by Mr. Shagrin's advocacy of the "do nothing" course in the same article in which he discusses all-out attacks both east and west. Frankly, I am no longer sure what, if anything, he really is proposing.

### British Options

From my statement that an amphibious assault on Britain is unlikely, Mr. Shagrin concludes that I advocate leaving only 7 ground factors in Britain to defend against an air assault on London. Having leaped to this assumption on my behalf, he proceeds to refute it, showing his prowess against straw men.

In fact, I prefer to keep at least one 54 air unit in Britain. I also suggest garrisoning all British ports within German airborne range with a replacement unit, to prevent the capture of a British port for German SR or transport, the danger cited by Mr. Shagrin. Other units should be placed adjacent to ports, preventing SR into them even if seized by Axis paratroopers.

### Russian Options

Mr. Shagrin next expends considerable energy attacking my views on a Russian invasion of Turkey. It is a pity he does not know where they are. In my article, I attempted to show that from a shortterm BRP viewpoint, the BRP's gained conquering Turkey outweigh potential losses there. Mr. Shagrin responds that the probable German reconquest of Turkey makes this a losing proposition for Russia. Had he put down his copy of Bartlett's Familiar quotations for a few minutes, he might have read this caveat following my BRP calculations: "German conquest of Turkey as a preliminary to invading Russia both costs Russia an immediate 30 BRP's and opens up her southern front .... in short, I tend to accept Greenwood's advice against attacking Turkey . . . ."

### Norway

Fresh from his victory over yet another straw man, Mr. Shagrin attacks my observation that Germany must conquer Norway in one turn, using paratroops, by noting that a German 4-6 armor, a borrowed Italian 2-5 armor and air support can turn the trick. What I actually said was "For Germany, Norway must be conquered in one turn or not at all" and "Germany can effect a one-turn conquest of Norway only through the air."

If I chose to be technical, I could argue that "through the air" includes air support, which Mr. Shagrin also uses. Actually, I intentionally declined to assume that Italian help would be available. But this does not detract from the general validity of Mr. Shagrin's plan. What does detract from it is his assumption that either Norwegian beach is vulnerable, so that Norway cannot guard both. An amphibious assault on the western beach may well stir up the British navy, which can intercept under rule 4.916 even though Britain cannot formally intervene on behalf of Norway until its own turn. Once Russia is at war with Germany, the same applies to the beach hex southeast of Oslo. The loss of just one German naval factor to an intercepting navy will also eliminate the Italian armor and spare Oslo long enough for British intervention in force.

I will stand on the statement that a one-turn conquest of Norway is imperative. It is simply too easy for either side to reinforce there, turning a sideshow into a potentially major thorn in the side. Mr. Shagrin suggests that there are three situations in which an Axis one-turn conquest is unnecessary: (1) Allied ground forces unavailable for intervention; (2) Allied naval forces already used; and (3) Axis has two consecutive turns due to BRP manipulation.

As for (1), it presupposes less than quality Allied play, against which little advice is needed. Situation (2) cannot occur unless the Allies gain the initiative, as is true of (3). Against competent Allied play, this will not happen unless the Allies have bigger fish to fry, e.g., attack on Rome or Berlin. In that situation, Germany will have better things to worry about than Norway. Finally, the statement that Germany should be content to "counterpunch" a British invasion of Norway assumes that Norway does not fall in one turn. Any Allied player who allows this to occur deserves to be counterpunched.

### Polish Defense

Mr. Shagrin criticizes my "expected BRP loss" calculations for various Polish defenses by noting that no German infantry unit can reach Brest-Litovsk, as I stated. That's one for you, Mr. Shagrin. This correction changes the order of average BRP losses thus:

- A. H. Defense 7.59
- Comparison Defense 7.54
- Standard Defense 7.17

It also changes the German force commitment against the comparison defense to no infantry, 16 armor and 18 air factors, for a total of 34 factors. Despite these changes, my standard defense still comes out best in diverting German forces, for an insignificant (0.37) reduction in average BRP loss.