

DESIGN ANALYSIS (3R)

THE SECOND TIME AROUND

by Donald Greenwood

No game in recent years has been as controversial as *THIRD REICH*. Bestowed with prestigious awards on one hand and widely criticized on the other, it, perhaps more than any other game, holds the elusive answer to the oft asked question of what makes a popular game. Few people question the degree of innovation or possibilities for varied strategies which abound in *THIRD REICH*. However, no one will defend it as the panacea of rules presentation.

THIRD REICH, for all its honors, is not indicative of Avalon Hill rule development. In 1974, the game was under the pressure of a publication deadline which would enable it to be released to the retail trade in time for Christmas sales. I, as the game's developer, met that deadline, much to my later regret. In essence, the rules never went through the rewrite development stage. I was too busy playtesting and redesigning the original prototype to do more than basic cosmetic surgery on the Prados rules. For all its innovations and varied strategies, the original *THIRD REICH* prototypes simply did not work. In retrospect, we spent too many of our game design BRPs in making it work and not enough on rules development.

The *THIRD REICH* rules are, to be frank, repetitive and ambiguous. They were not intended as a definitive set of all encompassing rules, but as an outline of situations which could occur. To include specific cases for each unique situation that could occur would have necessitated a booklet comparable to the Bronx phone directory. The player must use the outline provided as a guide and let logic pursue its course. Rules lawyers and novices will have a hard time with *THIRD REICH*.

Be that as it may, a second edition of the *THIRD REICH* rules has been long called for and is now available. Devotees of the game who have been awaiting this event as if it were the second coming and the answer to all their questions should hold their hosannas. Rewriting a rulebook the size of this one is impossible for a multitude of reasons, all of which look suspiciously like the common denominator;

money and the lack thereof. The rules therefore remain in the same outline style punctuated by 35 red dots which draw attention to changes of varying degrees of importance in the original text. The two column format has been expanded to three columns per page resulting in a shrinking of the manual to 32 pp. More historical notes and a five page appendix of questions & answers have been added at the expense of omitting the section on strategy of play for the various powers.

All this may be worth \$2.00 plus postage to many of you, but for those who would otherwise feel ripped off we list the major changes below.

2.4 "Stockholm & the hex west of it", "Genoa & Spezia" have been added to the list of hexside combinations which do not allow physical contact. **2.7** "Defensive benefits are not cumulative; i.e., a mountain behind a river is still only tripled on defense."

3.313 Declarations of War have been added to the total BRP expenditure of a nation during any turn which may never exceed half its Year-Start BRP level.

3.314 "Units can be SR'ed through Gibraltar even though enemy units may be adjacent, as long as friendly forces control Gibraltar."

3.51 "Colonies or conquered territories of a fallen power (other than France) become the property of the first player to occupy them. SR to such areas is not allowed until first occupied by friendly forces." **3.52** "if Paris is taken by Axis troops, French attacks during the upcoming turn must be supplied from England through a French port. These assaults are limited to direct assaults on the capital or those enemy units barring direct access to Paris. If it is impossible for Paris to be retaken that turn by French units, then no further French attacks may be made. French units outside of France when it falls must move to the nearest French colony or France itself (whichever is closer) where they'll undergo the usual Vichy/Free French determination procedure. British units in Vichy French colonies must leave or declare war in their turn" **3.53** The loss of Moscow and Leningrad not only costs the Russian player BRPs but is now "added to the German's (BRP base) every year until the cities are retaken. "The Soviets must also now be reduced below Axis strength in Russia as well as being under 75 factors to be forced to surrender.

3.6 The restriction against naval units of opposing major powers intervening against initial invasion attack of minor neutrals has been lifted.

Another important change is that “Italian fleets cannot convey German units across the Mediterranean and German units may not cross Italy until the alliance is activated. The alliance is activated by a Declaration of War against any major power also at war with Germany.”

4.3 Important changes have been made in the supply rules. “In order for a nation to be used as a source for supply it must have military units represented in the game. Portugal. For example, could not be used as a base for supply. Any Libyan port can be used as an Axis base of supply in Africa as can any Egyptian port for the Allies.”

“Russian units may trace supply to any Russian hex on the eastern edge of the board. Allied units may not trace Supply from Russian sources.”

4.6 “There is one exception to the stacking rules; the British player may stack 3 units in London.”

4.7 “Airborne units which are eliminated after staging an air assault are permanently removed from the force pool if unable to trace a line of supply at the time of their elimination. Once this occurs, they may never be rebuilt. NOTE: for purposes of this permanent elimination rule only: an airborne unit is considered in supply if it is adjacent to a friendly non-airborne unit at the time of its elimination.”

4.9172 “The transport mission must be the first “attack” executed during the turn; i.e. A transport mission cannot be made to a port occupied by the enemy at the beginning of a turn.”

4.9173 “Unlike Transport, units utilizing Amphibious Assault must start their turn in a port hex.”

4.9253 This is the biggest and most important change in the second edition rules and is brought about as a “cure” for the Axis trick of massing all airpower on the French coast and forcing an airborne conquest of Britain. This rule does not exclude the possibility of such a conquest but, in conjunction with the increased British stacking in London, makes it difficult to achieve against a good British defense. “The total air strength involved in any Ground Support Mission may not exceed three times the number of attacking ground factors.

5.7 “Partisans do not require supplies.”

6.3 “French naval units may base only in French territory. French fleets forced out of France may base in French colonies but must return to Vichy, France when it is established. If necessary, French fleets may pass Gibraltar before or after the fall of France in order to reach a Vichy port.”

6.4 “On the first winter turn of any Axis invasion all non-Finnish Axis forces located east of the original Soviet border are not doubled on defense and may not use an Offensive Option.”

9.0 “Commencing with the 1944 Year/Start Sequence, two U-boats are lost for each ASW factor in the Strategic Warfare box.”

9.4 “If supply can be traced overland via Turkey the limitation on German movement is dropped.”

9.8 Axis Minor Variations 3 and 5 have been interchanged. Iraq is treated as a German Minor Ally in Variation I and Axis Variation 10 may not be played before 1943.

That sums up the changes in the second edition of the *THIRD REICH* rules. There are other lesser alterations but the major points have been explained above. Those who play a lot of *THIRD REICH* should probably still invest in the new rules if only for the appendix of questions and answers arranged numerically by subject paragraphs.