

## Inside the Third Reich

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Old wargames never die, but many fade away. Sometimes, though an old classic gets the chance to regain its youthful vigor after mellowing on the shelf for a few years with a revision of its rules, or a full scale new edition. *Decline and Fall of the Third Reich*, by Avalon Hill, stands among the chosen few with the newly released 1981 Revised Update Kit. Benefiting from six years of trials and error finding, and great success in its field, this Update Kit offers a fresh look at the design to counter the plague of time. Third Reich deserved all of the attention it received in its original form, and will deserve even more with this sophisticated face-lifting of the map, scenario cards and rule booklet. The 2nd Edition rules changes (ca. 1978) started the process of sifting out the bad parts, but this 3rd Edition involved two additional years of revelations and rethinking about how Third Reich should be designed.

First, the map, where the visual display creates a better impression with a lighter blue for the ocean and neater continental lines. The 1/8" wide coastline smudges have given way to 1/16" wide strips, helping to clarify the geographic questions present on the first edition map (e.g. visibly separating Cadiz from Gibraltar). All beach hexes now feature a darkly shaded "sand strip" along their watery edges instead of covering the entire hex, a nice visual affect. Mountains, in the same dark shade, contrast the standard white hexes, and new ranges appear in Scotland, Greece, Albania and Yugoslavia. All rivers and sea have been named on the map, and the river Thames now appears in Britain, as it should have. Northern Ireland shows the border dividing the country from Ulster and Belfast has been named, along with several other port cities. Tunis, justifiably, becomes a port, but Bengasi, mysteriously, loses this status; the ports in northwestern Germany have been correctly relabeled. Other, more practical, changes include a Crimean start-line for the 1942 and 1944 scenario, giving Sevastapol to the Russians, and the inclusion of the Siegfried Line on the map. Reduction in size of the holding boxes located in the Atlantic Ocean allows more "usable" sea hexes, permitting naval unit to move in that area out of range of air units based in France (in case the Allies are invading Portugal, etc). Lastly, a grid coordinate system makes identifying a specific hex much more convenient.

The Scenario Cards come slightly redesigned and now include more details about the special situations in a particular scenario, plus rule section references for several specifics. Some small changes appear in the areas controlled by certain countries; the British gain Tobruk and the Libyan hexes to the east in 1942, the Germans gain Rhodes in 1944, and the Russians hold Sevastapol in 1942 and 1944, as was mentioned. German garrison requirements for the Eastern Front have changed, requiring only 20 combat factors instead of 25, once Poland has been defeated. Only 20 factors may garrison the minor allies, while still neutral, and from this total only five may garrison Finland; if Finland is not garrisoned at start, the Germans can only move units there via an air drop, since Finland has no ports visible. One addition on the scenario cards lists Strategic Warfare surpluses for the Germans in 1942 (receiving six U-Boat factors free) and the Americans and British in 1944 (totaling four ASW, five SAC). Lastly, instead of putting the French and American cards back-to-back, the reverse side of each displays some of the new and

more commonly used features, alterations in the combat resolution system, plus Intelligence and Foreign Aid.

The rule booklet reflects most of the efforts undertaken to produce this update, with many sections explained more fully and a number of important changes made. The improvements in the rules even extend to the organization of the booklet itself, introducing new sections in a more logical pattern. From the introduction it moves straight to the victory conditions, with some changes in the Alliance Game Victory Conditions. In the 1939 scenario, French victory is based on the length of time before France is conquered, allowing a decisive victory if she remains undefeated. Italian victory in the 1942 scenario also rests on survival or holding out for a certain length of time. The French victory conditions remain the same when transferred to the Campaign Game, and the Italians are allowed a turn of defeat for a Stalemate or Marginal Victory, and objective hex totals for Tactical and Decisive.

Strategic Warfare changes offer some advantages to the Allies, allowing British SW units to retreat to America if Britain should fall (as long as the US has entered the war), and restricting German air capabilities. The second possibility occurs if Allied SAC factors inflict losses on the German BRP level, by exceeding the German interceptor factors. In that situation, a 5-4 when no interceptors are issued in exchange. Both sides must now be concerned more about deficit BRP levels, caused by year-end Strategic Warfare losses, because this deficit will decrease the BRP Base level permanently, or until it is raised by subsequent Growth Rate additions.

The Allies can receive some additional aid, with historical precedent, from a Free Siberian Transfer rule allowing the Russians to gain active units without actually building them. Beginning in Winter 1941, the Russian player designates the first four of his ten Siberian units, the others arriving in Spring (three), Summer (two) and Fall (one) of 1942. Use of these units does exact a penalty, though, by shortening the Axis victory conditions in a two-player Campaign Game, and increasing the Allied, or Russian, objective requirements in a multi-player campaign, and any 1942 or 1939 scenario. The procedure for American units to enter the mapboard is outlined more fully, with special attention given to the situations when either, or both, France and Britain are out of the game. One new point brought out is the fact that if an American unit, once strategically re-deployed to Britain, returns to the US it can then move back to Britain (via SR) without counting as one of the six American units allowed under the Initial Deployment rule. Also, if an air or naval unit had already been built, before the turn during which it was SR'd to Britain, it could take part in a defensive mission during that first turn on the map. Lastly, if the Americans must initially land via an invasion, the fleets involved do not count toward the deployment limit of six; they are considered to be performing a mission from their US base, to which they would return after the invasion procedure.

Several specifications appear concerning minor country operations, when still neutral and when allied with a major power.

When a major power declares war on a minor country, a hostile major power can oppose the attack with naval intervention, technically before coming to the minor country's aid (which must be after the aggressor's turn). The intervening country can provide supply to the minor units when they are cut off from their capital (if it's not conquered). One clarification is offered about German Minor Allies when the capital of one is captured; the units

belonging to that country are lost for good, but the Germans can retain the BRPs if they can retake the city. A series of possibilities are explained for the activation of, and Axis intervention in the Axis Minor Allies, and an important rule restricts the countries in which these Minor Allies units may operate. The Finns must remain within six hexes of Finland and the Bulgarian units are restricted to the Balkans. Hungarian units have Poland added, but they can't move in Greece or Turkey; the Rumanians are the same (minus Poland) and both of these may operate in Russia. Iraqi forces operate only in the Levant, the Spanish and Turkish only in the Mediterranean, unless they are in Russia. This rule prevents the German player from using any of the weaker Balkan units to bolster the beaches in the west (freeing German units for the east) and keeps Spain from moving through France's back door.

One of my favorite changes, adding to the historical flavor of the game, alters the criteria for an Italian surrender away from merely the occupation of Rome by the Allies. Simulating the political situation at the time, an Italian surrender becomes automatic, starting in Spring 1943, whenever three conditions are met. The Axis must be cleared out of North Africa, the Allies must control either Sicily or Sardinia and Corsica, and there must be a supplied Allied unit on mainland Italy during a turn when the Allies have the initiative (move first). All Italian controlled hexes fall to the Germans along with a portion of the Italian fleet (based on a die roll plus two). The criteria for a Russian surrender also differ from the original edition, though only slightly. At the end of any turn when the Russian combat factor total falls below 50 (rather than 75), the Germans need a 3:2 ratio advantage to force a Russian surrender. If the surrender is refused, the battle continues in the same manner as before.

The supply system receives a few clarifications, but has not been changed from the original methods. Malta remains a self-sufficient fortress unless Gibraltar and Suez/Alexandria came under Axis control; Konigsberg (E. Prussia) and Durazzo (Albania) serve as supply sources until a normal supply line is established. Lastly, dual-front ports (Gibraltar, Kiel, Istanbul) can support a supply line on either front, if a fleet is based there for that purpose; also, a fleet in a dual-front port can be part of a chain of fleets, supplying units from one front to another. The first of three changes in the Air segment follows from previous rule changes, restricting the number of air factors providing ground support to three times the number of ground factors involved in the attack. A second change alters the method for combat resolution between air units during counter-air and intercept battles, using quantity and nationality die-roll modifiers. The larger side receives a +1 for each excess factor, and each country has its own addition, ranging from 0 for Germany, Britain and the US to a -2 for all minor countries. The lower roll loses and the losses must equal the difference between the modified rolls. One other change concerns air attacks against naval units at sea. Instead of equal losses, one naval factor for every four air factors, a roll of "1" eliminates one naval factor and a "6" downs an air factor. One exception to the one-mission-per-turn rule for air units occurs if the defender in a counter-air mission has the larger force and wins the battle; they could then be used later that turn.

Naval combat undergoes die roll modifications similar to air combat, based on a superiority ratio from +1 for a 1.33 : 1 advantage to +5 for 4+ : 1, and a nationality rating from +2 for Germany down to -2 for Russia, Turkey, Spain and Italy. The side with the lower die roll loses and

eliminates a factor total equal to the difference between die roll; losses are multiplied by the number of fleets involved if more than two, and the winner eliminates half as many as the loser. Another interesting rule demonstrates the possibilities for continuous naval intercepts in the course of one turn. If a naval expedition is intercepted, the phasing player can attempt to intercept the defender (the initial intercepting force); if successful, the defending player could then attempt to intercept the offensive intercept, and so on. The restrictions prevent naval units operating from the same port to intercept separate targets, and once an intercept attempt fails, the sequence ends.

This rule rewrite encompasses the large and the small, and the slightly farfetched. The rules for Partisans are greatly expanded, and allow for Partisan units in Britain and Italy (after it surrenders). Another rule allows an airdrop to chase an opposing fleet from a port hex, allowing a friendly fleet to conduct a seaborne invasion in the hex. There is even a rule designed to prevent an Allied player from sending the French fleet on "suicide" attacks to prevent its capture by the Germans should France fall; one side can elect to refuse its opponent's naval losses at any time.

Several changes were made in the variant counter results, along with notations for when each counter applies and when it does not. German variants three and five have been reversed (for no apparent reason), with no change to the first (concerning Vichy activation); Finland and Bulgaria have been added to the list for early activation of Minor Allies, which now occurs any time France has fallen and Germany is at war with Russia, instead of a simple early activation in fall 1940. The Irish rebellion variant can't be used if the Germans control Ireland, but that's not very likely. Two other variants offer more to the Germans than before, number eight's U-boat superiority need only be 3:2, not 2:1, to reduce the US Initial Deployment to five, and with the jet fighters in number ten (eliminating SAC factors 2:3) comes an additional +1 DRM in any air combat.

The Allied variants do not have as many changes, but they are still better than before. Variant five has changed from ten free ASW factors for Britain to a better elimination ration versus German sub factors, losing only two BRPs per sub in SW resolution instead of three. Variant six still adds two US fleets to the force pool, and also offers a naval DRM of +2. One variant that does not work totally to the Allies advantage is number three, the Free French colonies. French air, naval or armor units can not be rebuilt if lost, once they become controlled by the British, and the variant becomes void if France is out of the game before Winter 1940: hence there is an incentive to retain a majority of their units in metropolitan France throughout the year.

One totally new addition to the game system involves an element of espionage, an Intelligence Table used to discover the contents of an opponent's SW or Murmansk boxes, to disrupt foreign intelligence operations, or in conjunction with the variant counters; it can also affect the use of Foreign Aid (explained below). For the cost of five BRPs any major power (one per alliance) can attempt a major intelligence effort, rolling two dice and referring to a table which allows that country a range of opportunities. Any opponent can also pay the five BRPs, as counter-intelligence, otherwise the die-roll is modified with a +1 (higher numbers are better for the rolling player since he can elect to use a lower numbered result instead). The very low numbers offer negative results, increasing the cost of

future intelligence to ten BRPs or preventing its use for one turn. Other results will reveal opponent's strategic situation, his variant counter, or allow rolling player to draw an additional unused counter for his use in guessing what the opponent possesses.

Foreign Aid adds some economic considerations to influence minor neutral countries in the 1939 and Campaign scenarios. German and Britain can both influence Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Finland, Turkey, Vichy France, Ireland, Spain and Iraq; the Russians might affect the first three and the Italians the last two. When one of those countries is ready to activate, the controller player must roll a "1" or higher, with one die, subject to a -1 modifier for each excess BRP given via Foreign Aid to that minor country by a hostile major power. New allies can not be gained through excess BRP grants but activation can be forestalled indefinitely, with a little luck from the die. Turkey constitutes the one exception, becoming a British Minor Ally if the Allies ever manage to gain an overwhelming superiority in the Mediterranean, outnumbering the Axis ground and naval factors, controlling at least seven objective hexes and by paying 35 BRPs to activate Turkey. Since the British begin with only four objectives under their control in the Mediterranean this option will usually not become available until very late in the game, after Italy has fallen and the Allies have a firm hold on the "soft underbelly".

Across the Mediterranean Sea from Europe's "Soft underbelly" the Axis forces operate under supply restrictions unless Malta can be taken from the Allies, as in the first edition. The limit of 18 German combat factors still applies in North Africa, supplied either from Libya or through any port west of Suez. This idea has been extended to cover situations in the eastern Mediterranean, where the Levantine ports from Antioch to Port Said can support an additional 18 combat factors, via Italian naval supply fleets or through Turkey or Persia to another supply source. A British (or American etc) air unit based on Cyprus, Crete or Rhodes or a naval superiority in the eastern Mediterranean inhibits the Axis supply through these ports in the same manner that Malta affects those units originating from Libya.

Along another supply line, the Murmansk convoys' combat resolution system has been changed for all three aspects - naval, air and submarine. The changes make German fleet sorties slightly less frequent and a scattering convoy loses a smaller percentage of its BRPs. However, an additional BRP is lost for every air and submarine factor which attacks the convoy, the latter must be in excess of any ASW factors. For air attacks a die roll, modified for a scattered fleet (+1) and excess fleets guarding the transports (4), determines the BRP losses, and the air factors must roll for survival after their attack. Intercepted convoys are likely to lose a significant portion of their BRPs, and a standard naval battle might also take place, but an uninterrupted convoy delivers 100% of its BRPs to Russia.

Several other sections receive few changes, instead concentrating on more complete explanations. Anglo-French, German-Italian and Russian-Allied Cooperation, Poland/East Europe and the Russian Winter all required a number of clarifications. Likewise, it is pointed out that Gibraltar, though located on the Mediterranean Front, can be assaulted by sea from the Western Front as well, opening the possibility of a German expedition against The Rock. Spain takes on new importance if the Axis player sees it as an avenue to attack Gibraltar; attacking Spain

cancels variants one, three, five and seven if not already used, and any subsequent minor ally activation must pass a die-roll of a six or higher, forcing additional Foreign Aid. Finally, Vichy France's position as an inactive Minor German Ally is covered with a couple of alterations. The German player can move Vichy units between Vichy and her colonies, using the Vichy fleets. Vichy activation still rests on a die-roll modified by various situations, such as the British losing Gibraltar or Suez/Alexandria or Malta, and the US declaring War, the Axis being ousted from Africa and the Allies establishing a Bridgehead on the continent. One addition to the list of modifiers: subtract two from the die-roll (aids the Allied cause) if the Axis declares war on Spain.

Many, if not most of these rule changes offer an alternative to previously employed strategies, altering a specific advantage or creating a new disadvantage. Discovering every possibility and seeing every strategy played out will take many contests spread over several years by many different players. The larger a game is, the more divergent can a player's strategy be from that of his opponent, and the scope of *Third Reich* remains immense. This article only scratches the surface of the strategic options created, intending mainly to highlight the more significant and most often used rules changes for those *Third Reich* owners still wondering if the Update Kit is worth buying. For any *Third Reich* enthusiast, it's essential.