

# ANOTHER LOOK AT THIRD REICH

By David James Ritchie

The time is Spring, 1943. Most of Europe is at war. In the east, the armies of the Reich are in possession of Leningrad, Moscow and much of the Don Basin. France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, Denmark, Norway, Yugoslavia, Greece, Poland and the Baltic States have all fallen before Hitler's Blitzkrieg. The Afrika Korps lies astride the last British defensive line at Alamein. Malta is an Italian naval base. Spain has joined the Axis along with Hungary, Finland, Rumania and Bulgaria. Gibraltar has fallen. German U-boats have cut Great Britain off from its empire and all but eliminated the British lifeline to an America which is just beginning to affect the course of the war. The British and Russian war industries have been shattered. As Summer creeps over the continent, the Axis prepares the final great offensive bid for European hegemony: a two-pronged drive on Persia via the Levant and Trans-Caucasia. All that stands between the Reich and ultimate victory is a thin red line of Commonwealth troops entrenched before Cairo and Alexandria.

Of course, that is hardly the way it happened. In reality, by Summer of 1943 the Axis was on the defensive throughout Europe and what offensive actions were in the offing were little more than desperate fantasies. The strategic momentum of the European war had shifted to the Allied side and it would never really shift back to the Axis. The foregoing portrait is not, however, the fevered fantasy of some exiled SS man sweltering in a steaming jungle compound in Paraguay. It is an accurate description of the situation faced by many an Allied player in Avalon Hill's *RISE AND DECLINE OF THE THIRD REICH*. With some inconsequential variations, this situation is a common result of what seems to be a Pro-Axis Strategic Bias in the game design.

In several hundred games of 3R this writer has seen numerous Decisive Axis Victories. On only two occasions, however, has an Allied player achieved a Decisive Victory. Generally, the Allies seem to have some trouble achieving even minimal victory conditions. The problem may not, of course, lie with the construction of the game. It may simply be that the game accurately portrays a situation in which the Axis should by all rights be victorious, providing that the Axis player(s) avoids the strategic absurdities which characterized the historical conduct of the war. Whatever the cause, it is the rare Allied player who can even approximate the Allied momentum of the last two years of the war in which the war continued only because the obviously beaten Axis continued fighting mechanically out of an unwillingness to accept Unconditional Surrender as a worthwhile option.

For those who have experienced a similarly unbalanced situation, the ensuing discussion may be just what the doctor ordered. Included are a number of suggestions for rule

alterations designed to widen the strategic options of both sides plus some corrections in THIRD REICH's portrayal of terrain. Some slight additions are also made to THIRD REICH's OB. The general effect of the suggested alteration is to decrease the ability of the Axis to totally dominate the game without hampering the fluidity of movement which is so necessary to the Axis blitzkrieg. Players may wish to apply the entire package or they may simply pick from among the suggestions offered those which deal with their most persistent problems.

## 1. MAPSHEET ALTERATIONS

While there is something very appealing about all of those vast stretches of clear terrain hexes on the board, there is also something very sinister about their effect on the game. It is somewhat disturbing to see one's enemy rampaging through clear terrain hexes which should contain some of the roughest mountains in Europe, totally oblivious to the fact that his blitz should be impossible. The experience can be especially painful when one sees an opponent blithely (and purposelessly) invading some neutral which is easy pickin's mainly because of a failure to include pertinent terrain. The following terrain alterations are, therefore, suggested.

Casablanca, Tunis, Tangier and Helsinki (or, for the literal minded, Hango, the hex due west of Helsinki) should all be ports. Also, the single beach hexes on both Crete and Cyprus should contain port symbols. There should be a crossing arrow between Suez and Port Said. There should also be a crossing arrow between Tangier and Gibraltar which is usable only by the player who controls Gibraltar. Attacks from Gibraltar to Tangier across the straits are permitted, but not attacks from Tangier to Gibraltar. Control of Tangier to Gibraltar does not convey the capability of interdicting SR between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. This capability is still vested solely in Gibraltar.

The northern entrance to the Crimea should be a marsh hex. This hex is the single land bridge running between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov two hexes north of Sevastopol. For those who have been burned by sneak invasions of the northern portion of the British Isles, neither Ireland nor any other island making up the British Isles is invadable except via beachhexes. The terrain in the northern island is far too rough to permit supply of any enemy force which could conceivably gain a lodgement (a debatable proposition in itself).

The following hexes are mountain hexes: Bilbao, Santander, the hex adjacent to and due west of Santander, Cordoba and the hex adjacent to and due east of Cordoba, the hexes adjacent to and NNW, NNE and west of Madrid, all non-coastal border hexes on the Tunisian side of the Tunisian-Algerian border, the hexes NNE and NNW of Venice and the two non-coastal border hexes on both sides of the Greek-Albanian border. While there are other hexes which could be classified as mountainous, these hexes were added for reasons of strategic balance as much as for purposes of realism.

Sevastopol should be classified as a fortress of the same type as Leningrad. It was often called Russia's Gibraltar and was, in reality, a far stronger position than Leningrad. The Germans

were forced to bring up their powerful 600mm siege mortars in order to reduce the fortress and at least part of the delay in getting the German 1942 summer offensive going can be attributed to the toughness of Sevastopol. Similarly, Moscow and Stalingrad should be classified as Leningrad-type fortresses. Each was defended in approximately the same manner as Leningrad with bomb proof pill boxes scattered throughout the suburbs and separate defense lines guarding the approaches to the cities. While neither Stalingrad nor Moscow had Leningrad's complement of pre-war fixed fortifications, their wartime defense lines were, if anything, stronger than those found before Leningrad. Moscow, for example, was guarded by three separate defense lines, each constructed behind a continuous anti-tank ditch the size of a small canyon.

It is possible to SR between controlled hexes on the northern board edge in Finland and controlled hexes on the northern board edge in Sweden and Norway. It is not, however, possible to move between these countries during normal movement. Nor is it possible to attack from Finland into either Sweden or Norway or vice versa. The nature of the terrain, weather and supply lines would have made such opposed movement impossible at the level at which the game is designed. Supply may not be drawn off the northern board edge between these countries for the same reason.

All Russian units draw supply from the eastern map edge of Russia. Russian units may not draw supply from any other source. Once a BRP pipeline has been opened to Russia via Persia, the British player may SR units (at a cost of 2 SR's into Persia from India and British units may draw supply from either Tabriz or Sarah. Only 8 strength points may be supplied from these sources. Until Leningrad has been captured, only 6 non-Finnish Axis strength points may be supplied from or through Finland. Vichy and Free French units may draw supply from any friendly city in a French colony.

## 2. FORCE POOL ADDITIONS

Should any player declare war on Iraq, the forces listed in Axis Minor Variation #1 are deployed against the aggressor. Should any player declare war on Portugal, one 1-3 and one 1-4 air unit are immediately deployed on Lisbon to represent the Portuguese army (which included some 20,000 veterans of the Spanish Civil War plus veterans of Portugal's colonial wars). Use Minor Neutral Forces. Once either Vichy France or any Vichy colony has been invaded by Allied forces which include 3 or more American land strength points, the British player may add two French 2-3's and one French 3-5 to his Force Pool to represent Gaullist forces. These units are in addition to other Free French forces which may already be available. Should Italy capitulate (see below) the British player may add one Italian 2-3 (WGA: test states Italian -3; without detail) to his Force Pool.

## 3. BRP ADDITIONS

The Russian player receives 15 BRP's in Fall, 1941 to simulate the arrival of strong units of the Siberian army freed from guarding against a Japanese attack by the Pearl Harbor

strike. The German player's initial BRP level for the Campaign Game is increased to 160 to simulate the forces kept secret during the Polish campaign (and thus undeployed). These include practically the whole airborne strength which was used against the West in 1940.

## 4. SWEDISH BRP's

The German war machine was dependent upon Swedish ore to an extent not commonly realized today. Yet, the strategic value of cutting off Germany's ore lifeline to Sweden was the single crucial factor in the British decision to invade Norway. Hitler had hoped to keep Norway neutral until the shadow of British operations against the Swedish ore boats from an interdiction base at Narvik forced his hand. To simulate the strategic possibilities inherent in a British blockade of Swedish ore, the German BRP total is reduced by 15 BRP's during any Year-Start Sequence in which either Stockholm or Bergen are British-controlled or otherwise hostile toward Germany (i.e. invaded, but not yet conquered by the Axis). This reduction takes place prior to the calculation of BRP growth.

## 5. GENERAL WINTER

All lakes, rivers and marshes inside Russia are frozen over during Winter Turns. No Axis units receive any defense value from these terrain features during Winter Turns. During the first Winter Turn in which Russia and Germany are at war, the Axis undergoes an Attrition Attack at 31-40 on the Quarterly Attrition Resolution Table, regardless of the option chosen by the Russian player during that turn. This is a special effect of the first Russian winter and does not regulate any other action which the Russian player may wish to take. This effect is applied before the Russian player announces his option for the turn.

## 6. RUSSIAN OBJECTIVE HEXES

In an effort to offer some strategic reasons for an Axis offensive into southern Russia and to give the Axis some chance of killing off (instead of just crippling) the Russian bear, it is suggested that all Russian Objective Hexes be given a BRP value similar to that given Leningrad and Moscow. While this alteration would tend to favor the Axis, the alterations suggested in Section 5 more than counter-balance its effect. Loss of BRP's through terrain loss would be handled as described in 3.53 of the rules except that the following BRP values would be added to the loss possibilities:

1. STALINGRAD	15 BRPs
2. ASTRAKHAN	10 BRPs
3. MAIKOP	10 BRPs
4. GROZNY	10 BRPs
5. KHARKOV	5 BRPs
6. DNEPROPETROVSK	5 BRPs
7. SMOLENSK	5 BRPs

## 7. THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

One of the few areas in which 3R bears no semblance of reality is in its treatment of the anti-Axis Resistance Movements. A feeble attempt is made to portray the highly visible, but relatively unimportant partisan warfare of the latter stages of the war in Europe. Yet, the game ignores the infinitely more far-reaching results of the nonpartisan and often passive Resistance. In many cases, the BRP value of Minor Neutrals conquered by the Reich should be zero since the cost of fighting the Resistance and the effects of slow-down strikes, etc. was so great. In order to simulate in an abstract manner the continent-wide Resistance, the following system is suggested.

It costs 5 BRP's to activate the Resistance Movement in any country. All countries have a potential for resistance. Colonies do not. In all countries except Russia activation costs are paid for by the British player. Russian activation costs 10 BRP's and Russian Resistance may only be activated by the Russian Player. Once conquered, Russia loses all capacity for Resistance. Should Britain be conquered, the U.S. player takes over the payment of non-Russian activation costs for the Allies. Once activated, all non-Russian Resistance Movements continue to function automatically without the necessity of further BRP expenditure for the remainder of the game. Russian Resistance continues to function unless and until Russia is conquered and so long as there are Axis units anywhere in Russia.

All Resistance Activity is resolved during Year-Start Sequences. The Axis players add together the BRP value received by the Axis for all conquered countries which have an active Resistance Movement and multiplies the total by 25% (ignore all fractions). The result is the number of BRP's not received by the Axis as a result of Resistance activity during that Year-Start Sequence.

When employing this rule, 1/2 the At Start BRP value of Russia is added to the total of BRP's received from countries with a Resistance Movement, despite the fact that no Russian BRP's are, in fact, received. This addition is made only after the Axis is at war with Russia and one or more Axis units occupy any hex in Russia. No Resistance Movement may be activated prior to Summer, 1940. Note: the area annexed by the Russians in 1939 is included as a separate nation.

The effect of this rule is to strain the resources of the Axis in a realistic manner via a relatively cheap form of strategic warfare. The rule should be used in conjunction with the partisan rule for maximum effect. Activation costs represent the reallocation of resources necessary to keep the Resistance supplied and, to some extent, the wastage of effort which resulted when the Axis periodically moved in on a Resistance Movement, using it for purposes of provocation or false intelligence. The Russian Resistance drained a substantial amount of non-Russian resources from the Axis war effort and the Germans never did get as much out of Russia as they put in, despite massive looting. Thus, once Russia is invaded, the Axis manpower and resource drain increases while no new resources are forthcoming. It should, perhaps, be noted in closing this section that Churchill felt the Resistance Movements to be

Britain's most effective weapon during the period when Albion stood alone against Hitler.

## 8. ITALIAN CAPITULATION

During any Game Turn after Summer, 1943, Italy will capitulate to the Allies if the following conditions are met:

1. There are no Axis forces other than Vichy forces in Africa.
2. The Axis controls less than 200 BRP's worth of conquered nations and colonies.
3. The Allies have a functioning Bridgehead anywhere in mainland Italy (not merely Sicily) at the end of the Axis Player Turn.

When Italy capitulates, all Italian units are permanently removed from the game except for one 2-3 unit which enters the British Force Pool. Germany immediately receives 1/2 of all available Italian BRP's. The rest are lost. Germany continues to receive BRP's for Italy at the beginning of each Year-Start Sequence in which the allies do not control Rome. Once Italy has capitulated, it is treated as a conquered nation under the control of Germany unless and until the Allies capture Rome. All Italian hexes not actually moved through by an Allied unit remain Axis-controlled. The Italian 2-3 deploys in any Italian city hex. It draws supply as a normal British unit.

## 9. AXIS MINOR ALLY DEFECTIONS

Once activated, an Axis Minor Ally may defect to the Allies. During any Turn in which the Russian player occupies the capital of an Axis Minor Ally that nation will join the Allies on a die roll of 1-4. Once an Axis Minor defects, all units of that nation outside of the country are destroyed. Those inside the country join the Allies immediately. All units of a defecting Axis Minor become part of the Russian Force Pool. The BRP value of the nation is subtracted from the Axis player's BRP total and added to the Russian BRP total as soon as the defection takes place. Should the Axis conquer a defected ally, all units of that nation are permanently removed from the game and the nation is treated as a conquered Minor Neutral. Axis Minor Allies must have been activated in order to defect.

## 10. YUGOSLAVIAN ACTIVATION

During the Summer, 1941 Game Turn, the German player rolls one die for Yugoslavian activation. On a roll of 1-3 Yugoslavia joins the Axis as a Minor Ally. On any other die roll a coup takes place and Yugoslavia remains neutral. Should Yugoslavia remain neutral, Germany must immediately declare war on Yugoslavia. Should the German player refuse to declare war, Bulgaria and Rumania retain their status as Inactive Minor Allies and are never activated except as a result of Allied Declaration of War. Note: If Yugoslavia has been attacked previous to Summer, 1941, this rule may be ignored.

## 11. STRATEGIC WARFARE

Given the strength of the Axis during the early years of the war, any Axis player who cannot gain and keep the initiative in

the area of strategic warfare has no business being anywhere near a wargame. The disparity in costs and performance between Axis and Allied strategic weapons, plus the usually strong Axis BRP position (allowing a comparatively greater number of Axis strategic builds over the Allies) makes it difficult to lose the U-boat war. The Axis player almost has to be willfully dense to fail to cripple Britain with submarines. Historically, the Germans were pretty dense in this area what with the diversion of large numbers of U-boats to the shallow waters of the Mediterranean (where they were less than useless) and the High Command's insistence (well after the fact had ceased to be in question among Kriegsmariners) that the Allied ASW could not be armed with 10cm radar sets. Even granting the relative stupidity of some German strategists when it came to the U-boat war, however, the fact is that by Spring of 1943, the U-boats were within a hair's breadth of cutting Britain off from both her empire and America and ending the war in the West. It was at that point that the Allies postponed all other operations and diverted maximum effort to winning in the North Atlantic. Aircraft carriers needed elsewhere were diverted to the Central Atlantic to close the aircover gap. Special hunting packs of destroyers were set up to operate offensively against the U-boats instead of simply escorting convoys. Aircraft production and pilot training were geared towards ASW missions and the Second Front nearly died on the vine due to the diversion of effort. Thus, the Allied solution to the U-boat war was a desperate diversion of maximum effort not provided for in the game system.

Just as the Allies had their strategic crisis, so too did the Axis. Their solutions were the same: the diversion of maximum effort to shore up the crisis point. In both cases, the diversion of effort amounted to far more than a paltry 10% of available resources.

To simulate the pace of strategic warfare and the real amount of effort expended on it, it is suggested that both the Allies and the Axis be permitted to declare a Strategic Crisis during any Year-Start Sequence in which that side loses more than 30 BRP's due to Strategic Warfare. Once a side declares such an emergency, it is still limited to the expenditure of 10% of its available BRP's on strategic warfare of an offensive nature (i.e. U-boats and SAC). However, it gains the ability to expend an unlimited number of BRP's on defensive strategic weapons (Interceptors and ASW). Once this ability has been attained by a side, it is retained for the remainder of the game. Thus, if Britain loses 34 BRP's due to U-boat activity during the 1942 Year-Start Sequence, the Allies may expend any number of BRP's on ASW during that Year-Start Sequence and all succeeding Year-Start Sequences.

Note: When employing this rule, British and American losses are added together to determine if a crisis has occurred.

While Germany withstood its trial at the hands of the Allied Bomber Command quite well, Britain could not have withstood the continual sinking of more merchant ship tonnage than was coming off the ways for very long. It is, therefore, suggested that the British be forced to seek peace during any Year-Start

Sequence in which the British BRP level at year's start is less than 75. If Britain seeks peace, the Axis may decline to accept, in which case, nothing changes and Britain may not be forced to seek peace again. If the offer is accepted, all British units (including Free French) are removed from the game permanently. Britain is not, however, conquered. No BRP's or VP's are received for accepting a British peace proposal. American units may still deploy in Britain and any British-controlled nations or colonies which already contain American units. The Axis retains control of conquered British territory. British colonies which have not been conquered by the Axis and contain no American units become uninvadable neutrals (same status as Switzerland). Free French Colonies containing no U.S. units become Vichy. Once Britain has been forced to seek peace, the British Isles may not be invaded by the Axis and any Axis units in the British Isles or in British colonies which go neutral must vacate the area on the next Axis Player Turn or they are destroyed. The U.S. is still allied with Britain due to agreements regarding the Pacific war and it is assumed that British troops have been conveyed thence.

British surrender under this suggested rule involves the acceptance of a secret agreement by which the British withdraw from aggressive actions while the Axis loosens the blockade around Britain. It is assumed that the U.S. continues the war effort and that U.S. pressure forces a weakened Britain to accept occupation of much British territory by American troops. While not wholly realistic, the option allows some latitude in Axis strategy and actually plays quite believably.

## 12. CONCLUSION

The suggestions offered in this article may or may not constitute an improvement. They do, however, make for a much more subtle mixture of strategies while offering the Allied player a chance to punish the Axis a bit earlier in the game and thus pave the way for a real blitz similar to that which took France from the Axis. The realistic resource drain imposed on the Axis plus the disintegration of various allies possible under these options tend to keep the German player from building up an unassailable BRP position while providing for the superiority which gave the Reich its early successes. Generally, by mid-1943 the Axis is on the run and by mid-1945 the Allies are knocking at the gates of Berlin. A sharp Axis player can still, however, march to a Decisive Victory under these rules even though the more likely result of the war is the historically accurate one: unconditional surrender. Those who have been repeatedly victimized by smirking Axis players should appreciate the change in climate. As for those of us who have been able to consistently win with the Axis ... it's about time we had a challenge.