

Thoughts on this year's model: Variant

The basic flaw in *Third Reich* is that the Germans, through strategic warfare and the assembly of a huge BRP base (by the time Barbarossa rolls around it should be at least 325, plus future conquests, all magnified by a 50-percent growth rate — and this isn't even considering what the Italians ought to have done in Africa) can guarantee that the Allies will never gain the initiative (and hence Italy might never fall). The end game then degenerates into a slugging match between an outnumbered (in terms of total units and combat factors), but economically superior (in terms of BRPs), Axis attritioning the Allies to death (the exact opposite of history). This situation was nicely illustrated by the recent *AH General Series Replay* between Marcus Watney and Richard Wein.

There are also other little things that stick out after one gets into the game, and merit discussion. Did American infantry perform similarly to that of the French and Russians? Were the German mechanized forces only marginally superior to the French? Why is everybody else able to complete the construction of their force pools before Germany? How come everybody starts the game on a total war footing? Was the Italian "war machine" (do I hear hysterical laughter?) that much better than Poland's or Spain's? And why do the British and Americans display a lack of concern when their convoys get blown out of the water by U-boats while the Germans take desperate measures to preserve their factories? Do you think that there is further room for improvement here?

SUGGESTED CHANGES TO THE RULES

The following are recommended rules additions/revisions designed to add a little fragrance to *TR*'s bouquet:

1 — American infantry units gain zones of control (ZOCs), and the ability to function as do armored units, on the fifth quarter following a U.S. offensive option and subsequent ground attack against a German armored unit. (Example: the U.S. pays for an offensive option in the fall of '42 and makes the required attack; starting in the winter of '43 American infantry units gain ZOCs and can perform exploitation.) This rule reflects the American practice of reinforcing their infantry divisions with additional tank, tank destroyer, reconnaissance and artillery battalions to the point where they were as "armored" as most panzer divisions. Other factors would be the total motorization of the American army, the development of a doctrine stressing mobility, and the presence of commanders that exercised this advantage to the hilt. While the Commonwealth countries fulfilled the first condition, they failed to fulfill the latter two.

2 — French armored units initially lack the unique characteristics (ZOCs and exploitation ability) of armored units. The reason for this should be apparent, but, for those not familiar with the pathetic showing made by the French mechanized forces during 1940,

(French tanks had a limited operating radius), and poor employment during the campaign.

3 — German '44 infantry force pool additions are made available in the '42 Year Start Sequence (YSS). As demonstrated by their mobilization for the campaign in France the Germans could expand their infantry arm to the same extent as they did in 1944, with the subsequent demobilization a result of Hitler's orders that should not be forced upon the German player while everybody else receives the remainder of their force pool additions during the '42 YSS. However, the expansion of the armored corps (1SS, GSD, 2SS) came as a result of political events and were not envisioned as part of normal mobilization, and so are unaffected.

4 — Yugoslavian armed forces are reduced to eight 1-3 infantry units and one 1-4 air counter. Why this motley collection of warring Balkan tribes armed with obsolete equipment was overrated is beyond me. They barely performed as a cohesive mob, let alone as a national army.

5 — All major-country BRP growth rates start at 20 percent, except those of the U.S., the Soviet Union, and Italy, which remain unchanged. Great Britain goes to total war footing (full growth rate) the first YSS after the fall of France; France goes to total war footing and her armored units gain their full capabilities (it is assumed that they learn from their mistakes) the first YSS after the invasion of France. And Germany goes to total war footing the YSS after the YSS in which the Allies gain the strategic initiative as a result of comparing combined BRP bases.

6 — Certain minor countries were large enough and capable enough to almost be considered rivals to some of the major countries in conducting operations while working with their own resources. Hence Sweden, Poland, Turkey, Greece and Spain may spend up to one fourth of their BRP value (fractions rounded up) per quarter to build new ground and air units as long as they have not been conquered and do not belong to another player as a minor ally, and they do not have to pay for any front option they may choose to execute.

7 — Should Great Britain or the U.S. suffer any losses to strategic warfare (SW) from submarines or bombers, the respective country must remove one full-strength fleet or air force and replace it with an equivalent number of ASW or Interceptor factors (in the same fashion as do the Germans as a result of Allied SAC-inflicted BRP losses), and also the American SW builds are no longer limited to any percentage of the BRP base. The Allies were just as conscious of their economic losses as were the Germans, and in addition placed a much greater emphasis on strategic warfare (note that the Americans placed clearing the Atlantic ahead of invading Europe) than did the Germans.

8 — The following constitutes a revision and expansion

of the variant historical events. Each side now has twenty historical alternatives and chooses two chits out of a set numbered 1-20. The new set runs as follows:

Axis

10 — Germans plan adequately for the Russian winter: All special effects of the Axis' first winter in Russia are negated. Playable any time prior to said quarter.

11 — Hitler continues support for the Kriegsmarine's Z Plan: The Germans add two full-strength fleet counters to each of their allowable builds in the '42 and '43 YSSs, and total naval builds (fleets and U-boats) are limited to a maximum of 20 percent of the BRP base per year. Playable only at start of the '39 scenarios.

12 — Hitler continues expansion and employment of the Luftwaffe's *fallschirmjaeger korps*: The Germans train and utilize the newly raised paratroop formations as airborne units, which allows the 2 *Fsjr* unit (which appears in the '42 YSS allowable builds) to assume all the characteristics of an airborne unit (functions and BRP costs). Playable any time prior to the '42 YSS.

13 — Increased motorization of the Wehrmacht: German industry gets more organized and efficient, permitting an increase in output of AFVs and motor vehicles. German infantry units gain ZOCs and two 5-6 armored units (3SS, 4SS) are added to the '44 YSS allowable builds, and one 4-6 armored unit (HG) is added to the '45 YSS allowable builds. Playable any time prior to the '44 YSS.

14 — Improved German industrial preparations for war: Hitler realistically gauges the economic needs of his campaigns and plans accordingly. The German BRP growth rate starts at 50 percent and the BRP base at 200. Playable only at start of the '39 scenarios.

15 — Improved Italian industrial preparations for war: *Deus ex machina* 1, as the Italians adopt a serious and realistic attitude towards the war. The Italian BRP growth rate starts at 30 percent and the BRP base at 100. Playable only at start of the '39 scenarios.

16 — Revitalized Italian armed forces: *Deus ex Machina* 2, as the Italians overhaul their armed forces through closer cooperation with Germany and improve morale, doctrine, and technology. National air and naval DRMs are now +0. Replace two 1-3 infantry units with two 3-3 infantry units, and add one 5-4 air counter to the '42 YSS allowable builds. Playable only at start of any scenario.

17 — Yugoslavia maintains her alliance with Germany: The government of Prince Regent Paul is not thrown out (and with it Yugoslavia's membership in the Tripartite Pact), and the country becomes a German minor ally with the rest of the Balkan states (as dictated by the rules or other variants). The Yugoslavian armed forces can only be used in Albania and

Greece (and Yugoslavia).

18 — German-Swedish economic cooperation: During the war these two countries struck up a profitable (at least from the Swedish point of view) trade. As long as Sweden is neutral, and Norway, Denmark, and Finland neutral or Axis-controlled, Germany receives 5 BRPs each YSS from Sweden. Playable prior to the first YSS of any scenario.

19 — Broader development of the Luftwaffe: Gen. Wever (the open-minded Luftwaffe Chief of Staff) doesn't suffer an untimely death and remains active as a progressive influence upon the German air force. Strategic bombers are developed, permitting the Germans to send SAC against the Allies (who get to respond with interceptors) using established procedures and BRP construction costs, except that the roles are reversed). Initially SAC can only be sent against the British, but beginning with the '44 YSS they may be used against the U.S. Also uninterrupted development of jet aircraft continues, which beginning in the '43 YSS gives the Germans a national air DRM of +1, and an exchange rate of 2 German SAC or Interceptors for 3 Allied Interceptors or SAC, with fractions rounded in the German's favor. Total air builds (air force, Interceptor, SAC) are limited to a maximum of 30 percent of the BRP base per year. Playable only at start of any scenario.

20 — Japan attacks the Soviet Union, the Dutch East Indies, and French Indochina: Hitler persuades the Japanese to leave the U.S. and the Commonwealth alone and assist Germany and Italy in their crusade against Bolshevism. The Soviets must expend, each quarter, BRPs equal to twice one die roll for Far East Front campaign costs, and there is no Siberian transfer. The British increase their BRP base by 10 and add one 3-4 infantry unit (4) to their '42 YSS allowable builds (the Dominions watch the Japanese in S.E. Asia while the British concentrate on Europe). The Americans increase their BRP base by 30 and add one 3-3 airborne, two 3-4 infantry, and one 5-6 armored (respectively 17, 1, 9, 11) units, plus one air and one naval (full strength) counters, all to the '42 YSS allowable builds (the Pacific is left to the US Navy as the regular Army is sent to Europe). Also Roosevelt must convince the U.S. Congress to declare war on Germany, which occurs in spring '42 on a die roll of 1, in summer '42 on a roll of 1 or 2, and so on until it occurs automatically (and the Americans can begin operations) in summer '43. Playable only during the '42 YSS.

Variants 1 through 9 are unchanged, and variants 1 and 18 are the historical events.

Allies

4 — Axis disasters inspire Spanish declaration for the Allies: Desiring to be on the winning side, Spain enters

play as a U.S. minor ally provided Great Britain is still in play and Italy is not (as a major power), Africa is clear of all Axis units and controlled by the Allies, the Allies control at least 22 objectives, and possess the strategic initiative. Playable upon fulfillment of the above conditions in any scenario.

7 — Axis defeats encourage active Anglo-Turkish alliance: The Turks follow their beloved Ataturk's advice and side with the British. Provided Great Britain is still in the game, Africa is clear of all Axis units and controlled by the Allies, the Allies control at least 15 objectives and possess the strategic initiative, Turkey becomes a British minor ally and enters play upon fulfillment of the above conditions in any scenario.

11 — Allies have several intelligence coups: Reflecting "Ultra" and Sorge, the Germans must tell the Allies one turn in advance their front options during the years 1942 and 1943. (Example: the German player must plan the three front options one turn in advance, and so for fall '43 he decides upon offensive options on all fronts, and notifies the Allies of his decisions at the beginning of their summer '43 turn, allowing them to take this information into consideration as they plan their own strategy) playable any time prior to '42 YSS.

12 — France completes the Maginot Line: By deferring other defense expenditures the French are able to extend the line to the English Channel before the outbreak of hostilities. The line follows the Franco-Belgian border, and the French lose one full-strength fleet from the '39 at start, and one 3-5 armored unit from the '39 allowable builds. Playable only at start of '39 scenarios.

13 — France develops modern combined-arms doctrine: The French place greater emphasis on mobility, mechanized forces, and air power. French armored units have full capabilities at the start, and one 3-5 armored unit is added to the '39 at start, and two 3-5 armored units (respectively 3, 4, 9) with one 5-4 air counter are added to the '39 allowable builds. Playable only at the start of '39 scenarios.

14 — Low Countries ally with France: The Netherlands and Belgium maintain and strengthen their defense agreements with France instead of scrapping them. Both may be considered French minor allies and France may freely deploy forces in them. Playable only prior to the '40 YSS.

15 — Italian defection to the Allies: Allies succeed with a negotiated settlement whereupon the Italians change sides. Provided that the conditions for Italian surrender are met and the Allies have invaded mainland Italy with a minimum of eight ground units (in the peninsula by the end of their turn), Italy is immediately considered to be a U.S. minor ally with half of her previous force pool. Italian units currently in play are also reduced by half in an alternating fashion, with the American player choosing one unit first, followed by

the German player. The Americans, however, do not gain the Italian's BRPs (half of the previous BRP base), nor can they build new Italian units, until they control Rome. Playable upon fulfillment of the above conditions.

16 — Increased commitments from the Dominions: Commonwealth member nations increase the proportion of their war effort devoted to the European theatre. Increase the British BRP base by 5, the British BRP growth rate is raised to 45 percent, and add to the '42 YSS allowable builds one 3-4 infantry unit (CW). Playable any YSS after the '40 YSS.

17 — Allied strategic bombing concentrates on crucial German industry: Each surviving SAC factor eliminates four German BRPs instead of two for the remainder of the game. Playable any YSS after the '43 YSS.

18 — Greater British preparedness for the war: The threat of Nazi Germany is accurately perceived and defense spending boosted. Allow the British to add 30 BRPs-worth of units to the '39 at-start forces from the allowable builds. Playable any YSS after the '43 YSS.

19 — No Red Army purges: Stalin curbs his paranoia and the officer corps is spared. Reflecting the resulting improvements over historical performance, the Soviets may add 20 BRPs worth of units from the allowable builds in the at-start forces of any scenario.

20 — Variable U.S. entry into the European campaign: Hitler controls himself and doesn't declare war on the U.S., leaving Roosevelt to convince Congress to declare war on Germany as well as fight Japan. The U.S. Congress does so (and the Americans begin operations) in spring '42 on a die roll of 1 or 2, in summer '42 on a roll of 1 through 4, and automatically in fall '42. MUST be played at '42 YSS.

Other Allied variants are unchanged. The historical events were 11 and 17.

Fantasy elements were downplayed in favor of highlighting those events that might have had a decisive effect upon the outcome of the war, such as the accidental death of Gen. Wever (this has been referred to as the Luftwaffe's worse disaster), the failure of the French to complete the Maginot Line (had they done so, the line might have bought time with which to rally the country's will to fight), and the inconclusive negotiations to bring Italy over to the Allied side (had the Italian armed forces conducted a coordinated resistance there is no doubt that the German position in Italy would have proved to be untenable). In addition numerous actual events were given their due ("Ultra", Sorge, German-Swedish cooperation) because of their importance in influencing the conduct of operations during the war.

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Cumulatively, these variants favor the Allies, both in their individual effects and in their combined effect on German strategy. Seven of the Allies' and three of the Axis' variants are felt during the opening campaigns, but the rest are sleepers whose impact is mostly psychological, because of their potential for dramatically altering the situation. Imagine how conservative German play will become when the possibility exists of Turkey, Spain, or even Italy going over to the Allies (all very real in Hitler's mind). Or imagine the nervousness of the Soviet player as he wonders if Japan is preparing to attack him in the Far East, just as the Western Allies anxiously scan the skies for hints of the German jets that might very well sweep their own air forces out of them.

But in the final analysis, what should win the war (and what did win the war) for the Allies will be the entry of the United States. The Americans did not enter the war with any immutable preconceived notions (which proved to be the undoing of many European nations) about the best way to do anything. They learned and evolved. This flexibility in doctrine should be matched by unfettered BRP spending allowances, to support Allied strategy as it comes to grips with the many obstacles that will have to be overcome. The Allies' greatest weapon is the American BRP base, which should be given every opportunity to employ its high growth rate, even at the expense of limiting early operations.

Given a multitude of BRPs, the Allies can clear the Atlantic of U-boats and fill the skies with bombers. This will alert the Axis that serious trouble is on the way. Then the Allies must seek to reduce the German BRP advantage further. Afterwards, the total commitment of the small but potent U.S. Army will demonstrate how good as teachers the founders of the blitzkrieg really were. And from a military standpoint, that is what the war in Europe was really about, and that *Third Reich* ought to reflect.

Now doesn't this sound like we have some potential excitement here? But you'll never know for sure unless you break out that old dog-eared copy of *TR*, get the revision package, add these new rules and give it a go.