



THIRD REICH: THE MIDDLE YEARS

The 1942 scenario of **THIRD REICH** offers the fullest look at that classic game from among the three short situations, for it allows both sides to attack and defend, with the possibility of using every area of the map. In the 1939 scenario, covering the opening moves, and the steamroller 1944 contest the attacker-defender roles generally follow the historical lines, remaining largely an Axis offensive in the first case and an Allied aggression in the second. Local counterattacks might create a temporary change in either scenario (ala Dieppe, The Bulge), but pursuit of victory rests primarily with one side. With the 1942 scenario, the early strategies and Axis victories before Spring 1942 are preset and the players follow the contest through the turning of the tide, if the Allies are capable. The uncertain fortunes of battle in a long campaign inhibits useful planning beyond the first couple of years, because the range of options is so wide.

This article concentrates on the optimum setup for each country to provide the necessary defensive placements and take advantage of the offensive possibilities offered. Some of the alternatives commonly pursued in the 1939 scenario (or early in a campaign game) do not have the same attraction by Spring 1942. An invasion of Spain or Turkey, by either side, will hardly be worth the cost in BRPs and units necessary to secure the conquest. These sideshows would also distract attention from the main efforts in Russia, North Africa and eventually France, at a time when those battles should reach a climax.

SETTING-UP

The Allies deploy first, in Spring 1942, with the U.S. ready to begin moving its units into Britain. Because they are slow to enter the contest, the Americans must follow the British lead at first and build up their forces. Deploying the fleets first is the only way that the Americans can immediately assist the British, by freezing their own fleets for transfer to the active Mediterranean front. The U.S. fleets can be used for escorting BRP grants to Russia or as

the first leg during Strategic Redeployment of British units to North Africa. Sending air units to Britain next poses the threat of air strikes against any German fleets guarding Wilhelmshaven, and also improves the defenses guarding Britain itself (though the Sealion threat should be minimal at this point).

BRP grants to Russia or Britain should be given careful consideration; the extra points may help the Russians recover from a strong Axis attack but sending BRPs with sufficient escorts will delay the American deployment and the opening of a second front. One option is to send 40 BRPs to Russia immediately (in Spring), heavily escorted to insure their safe arrival, and gamble on that supply being sufficient for the first year. That should set the Americans back only one turn, while grants to Britain can wait until the course of battle makes them vital. Strategic Warfare units should be built to the maximum every year, making seven available in 1942. The Germans start with some U-boat units already built, which the British alone can not match; the Americans might build two ASW units and five SAC factors, creating some strain on the German BRP level.

Continuing the buildup with armor, airborne and infantry units, the choice arises of whether to feed the American forces into the Mediterranean to support the British, or aim toward an early invasion of France. A Torch-style offensive should encounter little immediate resistance, but its usefulness still depends on British success, or failure, in Egypt. Other possibilities include reinforcing the British in the eastern Mediterranean, or launching an early attack on Sicily or Sardinia, or even the Balkans. More often, I divide the American and British responsibilities between the Western and Mediterranean fronts, respectively, to consolidate the separate offensives. Neither country would have to deploy units and expend BRPs on both fronts, and the Americans could concentrate on the buildup to invade France.

The British deploy next on an empty continent, spread very thin over their many possessions. Initial deployment requirements remain the same in this third edition of the

rules, although Tobruk is now placed in British hands at start. Minimum defense requirements place two fleets and one 1-3 infantry unit on Gibraltar, one 1-3 on Malta and one more in Syria, plus two 2-3 Free French infantry units in Lebanon-Syria. Two 3-4 infantry and one 4-5 armor, supported by one 5-4 air unit and three fleets protect Egypt (and Tobruk), while Cyprus and Palestine are unguarded. Gibraltar can stand as is, with two fleets safeguarding The Rock from assault. Malta needs reinforcing with a 3-4 infantry, if not a 4-5 armor, and possibly one fleet - if the Axis plan to invade they must attack the fleet first.

An article in *The General* (18-5, "Operation Sealion") outlined several options for the Germans when attempting to invade Britain by sea or air. The potential success of this plan has previously been inhibited by a rule which limits the number of air factors which may support an airborne attack. An additional rule change all but eliminates the immediate threat of a Sealion attack, by shifting one German fleet and the airborne unit to the Allowable Builds forces at start. Even if Germany builds those units in Spring, Britain and the U.S. should have enough time to build and deploy sufficient forces to defend the Home Islands. Initially, the three fleets left available and a strong defense of London (where three units are allowed to stack) should deter the Germans. That minimum defense makes an air unit available to defend Malta or reinforce Egypt, and frees two additional ground units (4-5 armor, leaving three 3-4s in London).

The defense of Egypt should be anchored at Tobruk, held by two 3-4 infantry units. Three 4-5 armor units protect the frontier, placing one forward to present the initial resistance and impose an inhibiting ZOC if the Axis forces attempt to move around it. With the German airborne unit out only the Italian paratroopers can threaten the British rear; the two remaining 4-5s, placed behind the front line would be available to retreat and attack the Italian unit if it threatens Alexandria or Suez. The British can build five ASW units to oppose the German U-boat advantage, and each ASW factor will eliminate 1½ U-boats in 1943 (and then 2 per

ASW starting in 1944). Combined with the American ASW builds, the Allies should stay fairly close to the German U-boat construction pace, thanks to the improved resolution ratio, while the American SAC factors might force the Germans into building some interceptors.

Russia is in the worst position, running short of units, Leningrad isolated, the front approaching Moscow. Additionally, the Russians now hold Sevastopol fortress and hex U40 in the Crimea, along with a front line extending 18 hexes. Six factors must deploy in Leningrad; using two 3-5 armor units seems a waste of valuable forces and the same total can be obtained with two 2-3 infantry counters and one 2-3 airborne, which is allowed to "overstack" legally. One 2-3 infantry can garrison Sevastopol and one 1-3 can plug hex U40; the limited supply of units places a practical limit on the strength of the defenses for those two spots, and if the Axis want to take them, they will. Remaining are 26 infantry, armor and airborne units and two air counters (plus three fleets) to cover the long front and Moscow.

Basically, the Russians have two options: protect the entire front with a thin line or concentrate their meager forces to defend Moscow, conceding the Axis gains in the south. I place the weakest units in the most vulnerable positions, where they are likely to be attacked at high odds. By not deploying in the two-hex bulge northwest of Moscow (F45, G45), the Russians can shorten their front by one hex, and leave only two hexes which can be attacked from three sides. Defending Moscow is the primary concern, calling for two 3-5 armor and one 2-3 airborne unit, preferably with one or both air units within range to support. Two more armor units hold hex H46, the only hex adjacent to Moscow yet also part of the front line. The five other adjacent hexes contain three or four combat factors each. Ten hexes along the front line, from B47 (facing Finland) to K45, are held by the 1-3 infantry units, with the six southern-most hexes left unprotected. The front line can easily be broken, but there is still a second line surrounding Moscow - the one exception is hex H46, which remains a critical point.

Terms for a Russian surrender have been changed, and are now based on a 3:2 Axis advantage in combat factors, with less than 50 Russian factors, at the end of any Russian player turn. Fleets no longer count toward this total, so there is no need to protect them by deploying all three in the Black Sea. To counter this change, a Free Siberian Transfer rule gives ten units to the Russians for free, beginning in Winter 1941 and spread over one year. Using this rule increases Allied victory conditions by one objective hex per level, but its use might also help bring an Allied victory.

THE AXIS

Independent Italian activities, free from German direction and support, are all but gone by Spring 1942. Yugoslavia and Greece have already fallen, Britain's main strength is in the Mediterranean and the Italian BRP level continues to inhibit their actions. At least one 1-3 must start in Albania and two more in Libya; all fleets based in the Mediterranean. Placement of the remaining Italian units should take the German (read Axis) strategy into consideration, possibly adding Lent forces to the Russian campaign or preparing for a North African offensive.

The subsequent placement of the Axis Minor

Ally units involves new restrictions that will affect Italian and German deployment. No Axis Minor Ally units may be used in France, where I often sent them to protect certain beach hexes, requiring more German forces deployed there. Employing Italian units there would weaken the North Africa effort and in 1942 there is always a shortage of units on the Russian front. France can be dealt with later. Bulgarian units are restricted to the Balkan conquests and should, therefore, be used to garrison Belgrade, Athens and the local beach hexes, with some Italian assistance. Finnish units are restricted to Finland, or within six hexes when in Russia, while Hungarian and Rumanian units, also allowed in the Balkans (and the Hungarians, in Poland), are the cannon fodder in the east.

The Axis forces setup last and move first, giving them a definite advantage, but one for which they must have a firm plan in mind. The Germans must deploy one 3-3 infantry and one 4-6 armor in Libya, but any further deployments there can be inhibited by British air and naval units on Malta (which is why, as the British player, I always send either or both there). An air assault on the island fortress would be a nuisance to the Maltese fleet (and any nearby falcons as well), but less of a nuisance than it imposes on the German effort in Africa. With the German airborne unit not immediately available and the strong British deployment, as far west as Tobruk, a first-turn strike into Egypt will not get too far, especially with the limitations that Malta places on the German participation (more on this later). Both Italian air units would be helpful and the Germans could deploy one of their own - allowing the 3-3 infantry to remain inactive - along with one German and two Italian armored units. Tobruk can be attacked at 2-1 odds, using one air unit to intercept the British and several of the better Italian ground units; if the British have a second air unit present, the Axis forces are in a poor position. They might choose to "fix" the Tobruk defense with infantry laying siege and concentrate on the armor units in the south where they might have better odds.

A deep airdrop could threaten the objective cities, but would leave the air unit vulnerable. With fewer British units needed to protect Britain the Axis conquest of Egypt becomes much harder, and requires additional preparation; the capture of Malta, or Cyprus as the first step toward the Levant, may be called for. A sea, air and airborne attack on Malta would be an all-or-nothing venture, but it can relieve the stranglehold on German supply. Cyprus can be taken by sea or the Italian airborne unit, dropped from Rhodes. An air unit, redeployed to Cyprus, could cover a landing in Palestine or Lebanon - which the British navy would oppose in force.

With Malta defended by four ground factors and one fleet, the Axis attack needs 16 factors to gain 1-1 odds, plus three air factors to attack the fleet even before the attack can start. If the British also put an air unit there, then at least five more factors must be used for counterair, and taken away from close support of the invasion. The six Italian fleets will all be needed, preferably carrying one or both 3-3 Italian infantry units, and must be prepared to absorb any losses inflicted by intercepting British naval units. Adding the Italian airborne unit and every available air factor equals only 2-1 odds; by waiting one turn they can up the

odds to 3-1 by adding the German airborne unit and 10 more air factors. If this attack is attempted and fails, the Axis effort may be set back one or two turns, which can be critical at this stage in the campaign. Careful consideration must be made regarding the possible offensives which must be bypassed to supply the necessary air and airborne factors.

Both airborne units should be available for the Levantine invasion, which should be launched immediately after Cyprus is taken. The invasion fleet still has the British navy to contend with but the fleets based at Gibraltar are quite some distance from a possible interception. Beach defenses are likely to be weak enough for a landing to succeed, provided the fleet is not sunk at sea or delayed so as to give the British time to react to an obvious threat. The airborne units could assist the landings or strike out to capture a port city, or even threaten the objective hexes which should at least delay the British response in combating the landings by the Italian fleet. Air units based on Cyprus would also be within range to harass any British fleets based at Port Said protecting that beach hex. The main concern is the potential loss of Italian naval factors, since that fleet forms the first line of defense against the inevitable Allied attack on the continent in the Mediterranean. At that time, the Italian navy is expected to make a do-or-die attempt at interception, but it might also work to risk their fleets for an offensive purpose, while they still have parity with the British fleet on that front.

The rapidly enlarging Allied navy will also carry an invasion force to the northwest coast of France before long, for which the Germans should start planning early. One 3-3 on the Norwegian beach hex should make any Allied expedition there more trouble than it's worth and two fleets can protect Wilhelmshaven (though they remain open to air attack). Calais (L24, M23) remains the most tempting target for the Allies, though Normandy (N21), Cherbourg (M21) and Brittany (N19, N20) are almost as good. The minimum German defense, sufficient at start, would be to occupy five of those hexes with one 3-3 unit each, leaving Cherbourg and Bordeaux (R17) undefended; the former is blocked by the Normandy defenses and the latter is fairly remote. Future reinforcements, installed within one year could include a second 3-3 unit in the Calais hexes and a 3-3/1-0 combination covering all of the others, plus a 4-6 armor garrison in Paris and one or two air units. The Germans can build 14 units during Strategic Warfare construction, in addition to the six U-boats they are given at start. I usually lean heavily towards expansion of the U-boat force, at least during the first SW phase, to press their advantage as far as possible. Building 10-12 U-boats, the Germans can afford to place about 5-6 in the Murmansk Convoy box, along with one or two fleets, and keep their air factors free from that anti-convoy duty. With small additions of interceptor factors each year, the Germans can keep pace with the Allied builds, as long as the Allies continue to build ASW factors in response to the U-boat threat.

Reinforcing the West remains the last priority at the start of this contest, and even the offensive options in the Mediterranean are secondary to the campaign against Russia. The Axis powers have three options: a direct assault on Leningrad; a converging attack toward Moscow; or a sweeping advance into southern Russia. Sevastopol should be taken when

convenient, but soon. The 2-3 unit garrison (8 defensive factor total) can be attacked at 2-1 odds using two 3-3 German infantry and two 2-3 Rumanian infantry units, plus 6 German and Rumanian air factors. Chances of success are adequately favorable and even an exchange result will not be too costly; if unsuccessful, I repeat the attack at the earliest chance, not wanting to leave this bastion in the rear when I advance east.

The Leningrad assault faces a tougher nut to crack since the three 2-3 units total 24 defensive factors (when quadrupled in the fortress), and 10 air factors may be within range to support them. Eight ground units can attack through the four adjacent hexes, including one in Finland, and the Axis forces include 33 air factors which can be involved at start (20 German, 10 Italian, 3 Minor Ally), plus the Italian airborne unit. About half of the minimum 48 combat factors needed to obtain 2-1 odds must be supplied by the ground forces, which allows the Axis player to use all 3-3 infantry units if he intends to commit his entire air strength. Freeing some air factors requires the use of armored units in the attack, adversely affecting any offensive prospects elsewhere. Delaying the attack will not allow the defense to get any stronger (except for an additional air unit), while the Germans gain two air units and an airborne unit, plus more armor for simultaneous pursuit of other possibilities. There are two primary reasons to be wary of a Leningrad attack. First, an attack at 2-1 odds runs a significant risk of failure, and a failure which could eliminate a large number of important units. Second, the attack requires several armor units or a majority of the Axis air strength to obtain 2-1 odds; improving the odds to 3-1 requires every air factor, the Italian airborne unit, several armor units and even some naval bombardment factors, unless the Russian air units are absent.

Threatening Moscow presents a similar problem, but one which can be approached in stages. The Axis forces must push their assault forward at least two hexes, usually more, through a stiff defense, but they do have several avenues of advance to choose from. Presumably, the Russians will align in a defense similar to the one I outlined earlier, with Moscow as their prime concern. A first-turn attack could be directed through hex H46, but would be inhibited by stacking limitations; only two ground units can attack that hex and only six armor units could be adjacent to make the exploitation attack. If all 10 Russian air factors are not within range to defend Moscow, then the Axis player can obtain 2-1 odds against both hex H46 and Moscow, by using seven German 4-6 armor units and most of the German and Italian air factors (possibly Lent Italian Forces). A prudent Russian player will keep the air units within range, leaving the Axis player to attack the first hex at 1-1; if successful, then Moscow could be assaulted at 2-1. Using the lesser odds for the first attack risks fewer units in case of an adverse result.

Delaying the Leningrad attack is a logical alternative because the Germans can add four armor, one airborne and two air units from their Allowable Builds pool. While the offensive is pursued elsewhere, an entirely infantry force will keep Leningrad isolated, whilst waiting to attack at some later time. The defending force can not get any stronger as long as it's isolated, except for the addition of the third air unit which might be able to fly

defensive air support. Also, the Axis offensives elsewhere might draw off some Russian air strength, requiring fewer units for the Leningrad assault. The Axis player might plan to attack somewhere else first and, depending on his success and the Russian reaction, attack Leningrad later in the year.

The Moscow situation differs greatly from the Leningrad siege because the Russians are likely to reinforce the defenses as soon as possible, if not counterattack, with the stronger armor and infantry units. Without risking the first-turn gamble through hex H46, the Axis forces could make multiple attacks converging on the capital, using infantry units to attack several front line spots and armor to make encircling exploitation moves north and south of the city. The Russian front line can easily be penetrated and with the converging attacks the defenders will be boxed in around Moscow, possibly even surrounded completely. A follow-up attack in Summer, using the extra armor and air units which can be built, should obtain better odds than 1-1 and 2-1 during the attack on Moscow, and could also involve the German and Italian airborne units. If the initial attack captures a hex adjacent to Moscow, then the second assault might be made through two avenues.

In the south, the wide open expanses invite a major advance; at the very least, German infantry units should advance through the unguarded hexes, taking the opportunity being offered. An armored advance could move forward six hexes, and even further by "attacking" a vacant hex and exploiting beyond it, though this might narrow the breadth of the advance. A northern swing around the southern end of the Russian line would enable the armor units to reach the adjacent hexes to the south and east of Moscow. Using virtually all of the German and Italian armor, air and airborne units available would give them 2-1 odds for an initial attack and an exploitation against Moscow; the chances are slightly better than moving through hex H46, but if unsuccessful it leaves the remaining armor units bunched, and possibly isolated behind Russian lines. It should be assumed that the Allies will gain the flip-flop advantage and have two turns in a row - the Axis player has plenty of units to build - making that rearward attack risky if unsuccessful.

Turning the advantage due south and southeast brings two objectives into range and could combine with an advance from the Crimea to trap any Russian units defending in that immediate area. Maikop can be taken by one armored unit and Gronzy is within range of an armored exploitation advance; further on, the port of Batum may harbor some Russian naval units that could be eliminated. A new specification states that the Russian supply source extends down the eastern edge of the map to hex Z, and on to hex GG if Lend-Lease has been activated, but there is no mention whether this supply line extends across the Caspian Sea. One can assume that it does not, presenting the Germans with an opportunity to isolate any Russian units in the Caucasus region with an exploitation attack to the Caspian Sea, taking Crozny or Astrakhan in the process. The Allies can be forced to spend the BRPs needed to open Iran as a supply source for the Russians.

Stalingrad is also within range, requiring only an armored advance to occupy it, without an exploitation. Beyond that, there is a lot of open

space to capture, and to defend. Using the extended breakthrough/exploitation attacks, even Uralsk, and Kuibyshev and Kazan can be reached, though not all at once. The Axis player might decide to pass on the Leningrad and Moscow attacks altogether, choosing instead to leave the Russians protecting those objectives heavily while the German armor grabs the others in the south. Infantry units can continue to make limited attacks in the north, knocking off the weaker units where possible and keeping the Russians wary of stripping their defenses. Meanwhile, the advances in the south will stretch the front line in several directions, forcing the Russians to extend their limited resources. The drawback with this strategy is that it will extend, and exhaust, the Axis resources as well, employing the valuable armor units which might also be needed in North Africa or France. Countering that is the incentive of possibly knocking Russia out of the war through the combat factor advantage. Armored encirclements might capture large numbers of Russian units, while also obtaining the "easy" victory hexes.

A Decisive Axis victory requires them to hold 16 objective hexes at the end of Winter 1944. The five objectives in Germany form the "hard core" of the Axis victory total, with Budapest and the three Polish objectives likely additions to this core. Oslo is usually safe and the Allies might threaten Italy or the Balkans, but rarely both; I assume that Rome will fall and at least one objective in the Balkans (probably Belgrade) leaving two more there, two in northern Italy, and two more to be held in France or Belgium. The objectives in Russia are likely to change hands more than once, and one or two might be held by the game's end if the Russian counterattack lacks aggressiveness. Likewise, the Allied invasion of Europe might include an attack through southern France, threatening four objective hexes and sweeping the Germans back to their own border. Decisions about which objectives to hold and which to let go of can not really be made until the Allies make their big moves, possibly not before 1944. As I mentioned at the start of this article, the uncertain fortunes of war make planning for the latter turns very questionable.

ALLIED STRATEGY

The Allies' first concern should be the Russian front, where the situation is most critical with the enemy approaching the capital and the Russian army down to one-third of its strength. Survival at this point means keeping enough combat factors in the game to forestall a surrender, which usually requires massive unit rebuilds after each Axis assault. The new Russian units can be placed in single line, tracing the point of the latest Axis drive and forcing the Axis units to attack if they want to extend their gains further. At opportune moments, the better quality Russian infantry and armor units might make a limited counterattack, attempting to isolate one of the German armored spearheads.

Regardless of where the Axis forces decide to attack, the Russians should reinforce the defenses around Moscow quickly, increasing the combat factors per hex adjacent to Moscow if not in the capital itself. The limited number of BRPs available and the large number of units needed to cover the frontage often keeps the Russians from building the 4-5 armor units, or rebuilding the 3-5 units if lost. The 3-5 armor units garrisoning Moscow can be replaced by 3-

3 infantry counters, freeing the armor to back the thin front line elsewhere. If the Russians are to risk an early counterattack, it will probably be in defense of Moscow. Another priority is an advance to relieve the pressure on Leningrad, though this may have to wait for at least a year, as the Germans attack elsewhere; if Leningrad should fall, the Russians should not be in too big a hurry to get it back because that will require a large number of units and possibly several attacks.

Losing any of the other objective hexes should not be a major concern for the Russians, unless a surrender situation is upcoming, because a momentary conquest can be reversed just as quickly. They should look for the weak spots when making an attack, hexes which can be hit from at least two, and preferably three sides, to gain 2-1 odds, if not better. Attacking far behind the German armor spearheads, and making exploitations of their own can place the Russians in the Axis rear; the Axis forces would then be in the position of having to fight their way out or be eliminated. Once the counteroffensive gains some momentum, usually by late 1943, the Russians can aim at specific targets: a thrust into the Baltic States might trap some units with their back to the sea; a drive south to the Sea or Azov could leave some Axis forces extended too far east (if the Crimea is also cut off). The opening of a second front in the west should leave the Russians with a quantitative superiority about half the time, which helps to perpetuate the advance.

Creation of that second front essentially begins in Egypt, where the British confront the Axis forces immediately. The British should expect some offensive activity by the Axis in Spring, probably an assault on Tobruk coupled with a strike against their single armored unit placed forward in defense, unless the Italian forces are heavily involved in the east. With the threat to the Home Islands removed, making extra forces available for this theater, the British should be able to hold onto their possessions, though they may have to give ground in the Egyptian desert for a turn or two. Falling back to the Quattara Depression will shorten their line to only two hexes while they build up for the counterattack. As American fleets become available on the western front, the British navy can be expanded in the Mediterranean, increasing the Gibraltar fleet to four units, leaving one at Malta, and placing up to five in Egypt; one air unit can also move to Gibraltar, to cover an all-British "Torch" operation, while one stays on Malta and two support the troops in Egypt. A ground force of two 3-4s can base on The Rock while a large group deploys in Egypt, forming a strong defense and preparing to counterattack.

The air unit at Gibraltar can support an invasion at Oran, or Casablanca, and from Malta the air force can cover a landing in Tunisia; the fleets at Port Said could carry an invasion force to central Libya, coordinated with an armored attack from Egypt. Many, if not all, of those landing sites should be undefended, giving the British a "free" landing unless the Italian navy manages to intercept any of the groups. The landings in the Vichy colonies might be initiated before the end of the year, i.e. before they took place historically, giving the Allies a jump on the Axis defenders in North Africa. Using two 4-5 armor units could speed the advance after landing, but would also weaken the counterattack taking place in Egypt, which has the chance to

surround and eliminate some of the quality Axis units. Once the tide has turned, the British could follow-up with a landing in central Libya or Tunisia, combining armored exploitations, naval invasions and airdrops to force an Axis capitulation.

By mid-1943, the British should be ready to attack Sicily, Sardinia or Crete, all of which can be covered by air unit from North Africa or Malta. Depending on the strength of the Italian navy by this time, the British might attempt more than one invasion during the same turn, threatening the Italian peninsula and the Balkans simultaneously. Sicily seems the logical choice because it offers access to the mainland, and should normally be attacked first; capturing Sardinia (and Corsica) brings in the possibility of a further landing further up the Italian coast, or in the south of France. Capturing Crete opens the way for a landing in Greece, in hex CC26, giving the Allies access to the Balkans. A new attraction in the updated rules is a provision for bringing Turkey into the war as a British Minor ally, provided the Allies have an advantage in combat and naval factors on the Mediterranean front, and hold seven objective hexes. Occupying Tripoli gives them six objectives, requiring them to obtain only one more to bring Turkey in (after paying 35 BRPs). My first priority is Rome (hence the Sicilian invasion) to gain the Italian BRPs along with the Italian surrender (another new rule brings an Italian surrender as soon as the Allies land on the peninsula, provided the Axis forces have been thrown out of Africa). The Balkans can be an attractive alternative to Rome, once a beachhead has forced the Italian surrender, because the Axis defense is aided by the terrain in Italy more than in Yugoslavia. Also, once the objective is taken, the Turkish army will be close by to join the British, posing a threat to Ploesti, possibly before the Russians.

Meanwhile, on the western front, the Americans will have built up their forces and launched their cross-channel invasion into France. If they don't spend too much time or resources bailing out the Russians or ferrying British units to Gibraltar, the Americans might attempt an early invasion. No Allowable Builds are available until Summer, but the schedule below illustrates the building and deploying of units into Britain, leading toward an invasion in Winter 1942:

Turn	Builds	Cost	Deployment
Spring	(9 SW builds)	27	4 fleets, 2 air
Summer	3 fleets, 3 air	126	3 fleets, 3 air
Fall	4 armor, 1 airborne	49	5 armor, 1 airborne
Winter	Offensive option Possible rebuilds	15	6 infantry, or redeploy rebuild units

Twenty-five air factors will provide cover for 7 fleets as they cross the channel carrying three or four armor units, with the airborne unit dropping in support of the landing. A maximum of 41 combat factors can be applied to the landing attack (25 air, 3 airborne, 10 armor, 3 naval), with two additional armor units available for exploitation. Sending one substantial BRP grant, heavily escorted, to the Russians will put this schedule off by at least one turn, and assisting the British cause will usually delay things for another season, but the Americans can still conceivably invade France by Fall 1943 at the latest.

Along with deciding when to attack, the Americans must determine where the landings will take place. Invading the Normandy or Brittany peninsulas, at Cherbourg or Lorient,

respectively, affords the luxury of capturing a port immediately in a spot which can only be attacked from two hexes while the bridgehead is reinforced. However, the Germans could block an invasion in those spots by occupying only those two hexes adjacent, possibly inhibiting a breakout. The Pas-de-Calais hexes are slightly closer to Germany, but are usually defended more heavily; within the scope of the game, landing three hexes nearer to the Reich doesn't amount to much when an easier landing can be made slightly west. If the Germans are too slow in reinforcing their Atlantic Wall defenses, an early American invasion can get ashore easily, with three armor units waiting to exploit the moment, or they might risk landing in two places on the same turn. In the latter case, two landings in northwestern France could be mutually supportive in their buildup and breakout attempts, or the second landing could be routed through the Mediterranean into southern France.

Assuming that Germany will prevent their border being crossed - assisting the Russians and British by thinning the defenses on their fronts - the Americans should still claim Paris and Antwerp by game's end. The objectives in southern France can also be important, and offer an additional incentive for a secondary attack there. Capturing those four objectives would give the Allies seven on the western front, plus six in the Mediterranean from Gibraltar to Mosul (discounting any on the mainland). An aggressive Russian player can easily recapture all objectives lost inside Russia and probably Riga in the Baltic States for a total of ten, but they may not get far into Poland (leaving the Germans with their "core" of ten objectives"). The battle, if it shapes up this way, becomes a question of holding Rome, Milan, Genoa, Belgrade, Athens, Ploesti and possibly Istanbul. The Allies need five for a Decisive victory; the Germans need six; one of them will be disappointed. Bringing Turkey into the war gives the Allies one objective and, as I said before, helps them to threaten Ploesti, and probably Belgrade. Athens is a time consuming target to reach, while Rome is very close to an Allied landing on the Italian mainland (forcing Italy's surrender), although taking Rome can be a long process; the British may need to commit their entire air force and a majority of their armor units to force their way up the peninsula. The difficulty in capturing Rome and Athens can make an invasion of southern France even more enticing, since it provides an access route to northern Italy as well. Milan and Genoa might be taken by a group moving through Marseilles, either British or American, leaving the Germans holding Rome and Athens, unless the Allies have the time to oust them.

The range of variables remains almost limitless in *Third Reich*, no matter how precise the initial planning. The Axis forces have the edge in the early stages, but must press their advantage in Russia and North Africa quickly, before the Americans add their weight of numbers. If Russia and Britain can hold on in their respective theaters, preventing surrender or the loss of the Suez Canal, then the tide of battle will inevitably turn in their favor. The uncertainty lies in how soon the Allies can gain the strategic advantage, and how well they apply their resources. *Third Reich* was a classic game from its initial publication, and the third edition rules (and map revisions) have made it even better.