

Because of its scope, GW is one of those games that seems to induce people to 'pile it on' vis-a-vis variants. Occasionally we get a good one. For instance:

SCENARIOS AND VARIANTS:

GLOBAL WAR AND THE VICHY VARIANT

by Michael J. Simonds

One of the most important aspects of any historical simulation game is the ability to replay history, to take the 'What if's' of the historian and turn them into a playable simulation. The 'realism' of any game is reflected in the degree of accuracy with which it can deal with these historical questions.

Global War is today the only grand strategic simulation of all of World War II. In most cases it succeeds admirably in reflecting the strategic choices facing the national leaders in that conflict. Yet it fails in one important case that could have made a critical difference in that war: the conduct of Vichy France.

It is difficult to find an account of the Eastern campaigns against the USSR that does not speculate on what might have been had the Nazis pursued an enlightened, humane policy with the inhabitants of that country. Yet few standard works on WWII note that such an enlightened policy in France might have had an even greater chance of changing the course of the war.

We are usually too conditioned by old film clips of the liberation of France to realize that in 1940 Petain was a hero, credited by his people with having spared France the fate of Poland, while DeGaulle was only an obscure traitor in exile. In fact the whole history of Vichy France is obscure to most Americans, who, if they know anything about it at all tend to lump it together with the Quisling governments in the rest of occupied Europe. Was Vichy France ever really free to follow its own course?

The Vichy government established under Petain after the armistice was divided between patriots and collaborators; its erratic policies the result of the rise or fall of a given personality. The central figure of this drama was, of course, Petain.

A thoroughgoing autocrat with little use for parliamentary democracy, Petain willingly oversaw the destruction of the Fourth Republic. His view that a German victory was inevitable left him resigned to the necessity of collaboration, but he generally limited that collaboration to what he felt was in France's best interest.

His chief minister, Laval, was a different breed. Second in line of succession to the 85-year-old Marshal, Laval admired the Fascist governments and sought to remake France in their image. He took it for granted that France must eventually enter the war on Germany's side. On August 26th, 1940 he made an unauthorized offer to Marshal von Brauchitsch of the cooperation of the French Air Force in the Battle of Britain, which was contemptuously rejected. The only question

was how to prepare the population for war with a former ally.

Traveling all over Europe Laval sought out Axis leaders and all but begged them to give France a chance to play an active role in the creation of the "New Europe." Laval's persistence had finally resulted in joint staff talks for a combined Franco-German expedition against the Gaullists in Chad when the 'doves' at Vichy forced Petain to fire Laval, then have him arrested.

Laval was succeeded by Darlan, the Naval chief, whose dislike of the British for what they had done to his fleet all but matched his dislike of the Germans for what they were doing to his country. It was under Darlan that the phrase "For France and France alone" gained currency. A skilled opportunist, he was willing to exploit either side if it would benefit France. His policy, however, could only be effective if he could find some flexibility on the German side. Traces of something vaguely resembling such a genuine flexibility could only be found during those cyclic periods when German interest in France was high.

Global War and the Vichy Variant

The various strategic possibilities created as the result of the establishment of Vichy France can be explored in *Global War*, but only with some major rules changes. Although the optional rules provide for as many as five players, command of the French Forces is, in every case, given to the Commonwealth player. The present 'Vichy French' option merely provides for the French empire to defend itself automatically against all invaders.

The reason for this is obvious. A French player would have no chance at all. Not only is he without military options, he lacks diplomatic options as well. He is in the paradoxical situation of pitiful weakness in 1939 coupled with considerable military potential. It is hard to imagine any deal the French player could offer the German that would off-set the advantage of crushing France while this can still be easily done. If that were not enough the rules make full utilization of the German economy dependent upon its control of the French.

A few rules changes can, however, not only give the French player an equal chance to win, but can also provide some interesting insights into the many possibilities of the Vichy situation. The following are my suggestions as to how this might be done.

RULES VARIATIONS

[20.1] VICHY AND FREE FRANCE

Whenever the French player is in danger of being

driven out of Metropolitan France he has two options: (1) To retreat to North Africa and continue the war from the Empire; (2) To ask the Axis player for an Armistice.

[20.11] Should the French player elect to carry on the war from the empire he may remove from Metropolitan France all units, including naval units, which are capable of crossing the Mediterranean during that Game-Turn under the normal game rules.

[20.12] For purposes of this variant French West Africa is assumed to have a supply center on hex 2520. All other supply rules apply, and in order to be in Attack supply the French forces must be hooked into the Allied or Axis supply network.

[20.13] Any country is allowed to supply the French Forces with lend lease. Since these forces have no industrial hexes this aid must be supplied as follows. The donating player builds a unit for the French forces exactly as he would for his own except for the following modifications: (a) When building infantry points a French counter is placed on the production track. When that unit is scheduled to appear it must either be turned over to the French player's control immediately or interned (see rule 20.26). (b) When producing any non-infantry unit the donor country places one of its own units on the production track. When this unit is scheduled to appear it may be turned over to French control (i.e. exchanged for a French unit) or the donor country may renege and keep the unit for his own forces. Once a unit has been turned over to French control, however, it cannot be reclaimed by the original player.

[20.14] For purposes of this rule the French player may claim the following Victory points: For every industrial hex in metropolitan France and in every French colony, (a) 1 point when such hex or colony is occupied by units allied to the French player, (b) 5 points when occupied by both French and allied forces and (c) 10 points for those occupied by exclusively French forces.

[20.2] ARMISTICE

Should the French and Axis player agree on an armistice this must be announced between game turns. On the game turn which follows this announcement the die must be rolled for each French colony (French West Africa, Syria, the Antilles, French Guinea, Madagascar, Indochina, and New Caledonia). An even number means that the colony remains loyal to Vichy, an odd number and it becomes Free French. This process is then repeated for each naval unit, after which each unit must sail for the nearest friendly (i.e. Free or Vichy French) port.

[20.21] Command of Free French colonies and units passes immediately to the Allied (or Commonwealth) player.

[20.22] For supply purposes case 20.12 applies. Merchant ships between Free French ports become Free French, all others are under Vichy control.

[20.23] The French player is free to enter any alliance, receive or give aid to either side. Should the armistice agreement with the Axis player include reparations, the production points involved are handled exactly as Lendlease (18.8).

[20.24] Physical possession of one French industrial hex (as a conquered industrial hex) plus a total of **not less** than three production points per Game-Turn in reparations is sufficient to satisfy rule (18.72) for full German production.

[20.25] The allied player may produce Free French units as per rule 20.13; may aid or decline to aid the Free French forces in any way he sees fit. He may also return to Vichy control any Free French unit or territory he chooses.

[20.26] Should Vichy France declare war on any power during the game, any forces of that power in Vichy controlled colonies are interned (i.e. removed from play) if they are less strong than the Vichy Strength Points in that colony and are unsupplied by alternative sources. If such units equal or exceed Vichy strength their presence constitutes an invasion of that colony and all standard rules apply.

[20.27] Any Vichy land forces in hostile territory as the result of a shift in alliances are interned if they do not have alternate sources of supply. Naval units must sail for friendly ports on the next turn. Any forces interned during the game may be rebuilt only with the consent of the player who forced the operation. French losses prior to the Armistice can be rebuilt only with the permission of the Axis player. Vichy may at any time demobilize any part of the forces under its control. It does this by simply announcing the fact and removing the units from play. These units are then treated exactly as if they had been destroyed (i.e. they may be rebuilt).

[20.28] Agreements between players are not binding. All players are free to observe such agreements or not, as they see fit.

[20.29] Should the French player accept an armistice his Victory Points are the same as those listed in case 20.14.

The first decision the French player must make is whether to continue the war, seek an armistice, or change sides. The first course has the advantage of retaining control of the fleet and the disadvantage of near total dependence on the allies for supplies and reinforcements. An alliance with the Axis has possibilities—unfortunately both the French and Axis player must haggle over the terms of the alliance in ignorance of just how much of the French fleet will remain loyal to Vichy. The main drawback to this course, however, is a paradoxical one. The Axis alliance may become too strong: Vichy's *only* hope of victory (indeed, of survival) is in a balanced, *stalemated* war. The more powerful his allies become, the more he should be tempted to defect.

Barring some exceptional bargaining by one side or the other then, the best alternative for Vichy is neutrality; i.e., being left alone to pursue its own civil war until such time as it can safely stab some other country in the back. Vichy should, nevertheless bargain hard with both sides in order to get the best armistice agreement possible.

One example of an acceptable armistice agreement might be as follows: The Northern industrial hex of France is permanently ceded to Germany (Alsace-Lorraine) while the Germans occupy the channel coast (hexes 3018, 2919) for the duration of the war with Britain. The two remaining French Industrial hexes may produce normally, the production

of one of them going to the Axis as reparations.

The Axis player may choose to impose other conditions as well, such as the kind of unit the French are allowed to build to reconquer the Empire and a limit on the strength points that may be maintained in Metropolitan France, etc.

After these terms are agreed on the French player rolls the die to determine the extent of Free French defections. For use here as an example, a series of die rolls produced Free French defections in Syria, the Antilles, Madagascar and Indochina, while French West Africa, French Guinea and New Caledonia remained loyal. The determination of the loyalty of the French Navy, however, turned out to be a disaster. All of the fleet except one Surface-B unit defected to the Free French. Due to the configuration of colonial loyalties Vichy retained control of all the Merchant fleet.

Such an unfortunate outcome considerably reduces the options open to Vichy. It may require closer cooperation with the Axis player than would otherwise be desirable. He must consider such desperate measures as seeking Japanese cooperation to recapture Indochina, perhaps in exchange for the transfer of some merchant shipping, perhaps for a Japanese base there or in New Caledonia. Also note that there is nothing to stop Vichy from taking the alleged details of such a deal to the Allies. It may well be that the Allies might prefer to voluntarily return Indochina to Vichy control rather than see the Japanese thus strengthened. The Victory Points count the same for Vichy either way.

Another good tactic for Vichy is to offer to join the Axis in its war with the USSR while remaining neutral against Britain. Vichy has nothing to lose by the offer since the armies built for use against Russia probably would not have been permitted without such a commitment. He does have much to gain though. First of all he directs the Axis attention to the East. Secondly, he gains some room for maneuver in as much as the Axis will be reluctant to see the French forces in Russia disappear at a critical moment. And third, such an effort is perfect cover to build the force needed to betray the Axis, i.e. forces earmarked for Russia which stay in France to defend the ports as the Anglo-Americans pour ashore to establish the Second Front.

It is important to remember that agreements between players have no force in the rules. If the French have agreed to send four production points to Germany as reparations on a given turn there is nothing to stop them from sending only three (or one or none). Indeed such 'Adjustments' may be an integral part of Vichy's bargaining position with the Allies. Likewise Vichy need not regard limitations on the forces it may produce or maintain as binding.

The German player may, of course, simply tear up the Armistice agreement and occupy all of France. Such a move, however, would be very close to killing the goose that laid the golden eggs. It is for Vichy to judge just how far he can push the Axis, how much he can get

away with before they decide he's more trouble than he's worth.

For his part, the Axis player can never forget that as long as he holds French territory, Vichy's betrayal is almost inevitable. Ideally his goal should be to milk Vichy for everything he can get, then to betray it one Game-Turn before it had planned to betray him.

In the case under discussion, however, he also has one other interesting option. If the Axis player has held up the Italian entry until after he knows the disposition of the French fleet, should most of that fleet defect he may simply decide to keep Italy neutral and minimize the front he has to defend in the West.

With the same reasoning he may decide to offer Vichy the total evacuation of Axis forces from France provided Vichy agrees to keep the Allies from using France to attack Germany. His faith that Vichy will keep his promise is based on the hard fact that all hexes of formerly occupied France are worth twice as many Victory Points to Vichy if they are occupied exclusively by French forces at the end of the game. Whether this ploy would succeed depends on the conditions of the game at that time: the balance of forces, the amount of cooperation between Vichy and the Axis, the planning and preparation, etc.

Thus we see that even in the worst possible case Vichy still has a number of options open to it which could be exploited by a skilled player. These options naturally increase if the die dictates the greater loyalty of the French Fleet. The blackmail potential of a few submarines based at Dakar, Madagascar or the Antillies is truly frightening. A completely ruthless Vichy player might even consider a turn or two at commerce war against the Allies for no other purpose than to increase the value of his own merchant marine as a bargaining counter.

When the Fleet stays loyal, Vichy can look to the reconquest of the Empire. Yet it is not difficult to imagine Vichy holding open the supply net to Free French forces, and even encouraging the Allies to reinforce these units. If there is any possibility of a deal with the Allies, Vichy may be very reluctant to destroy forces it may someday control. By the same token the Axis player would do well to watch the vigor with which Vichy pursues its own civil war. A bit too much accommodation may well lead to Axis demands for demobilization of forces already permitted under the armistice agreement.

The Vichy French Variant does more than just add one more role to the already complex multi-player options. As the one state most likely to swing with or against the tide of the game it adds a whole new dimension of diplomatic and political realism. No player can ignore the possibilities Vichy has to offer; no player can put his faith in another.

The history of World War II is the story of international suspicion. Many of those suspicions that seem so unfounded in superficial retrospect (the 'separate peace', Hitler's fear of the French, etc.) will appear in a very different light to people who play this variant of *Global War* more than once.