

2016 Boardgame Players Association Convention game *Gathering Storm – A World at War*

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Allies: Bruce Harper, Eric Thobaben

GM: Bob Kester

Note: *Due to real world interference, Greg Wilson wasn't able to attend the convention and Randy Scheers kindly took over for him.*

The *Gathering Storm* portion of this game was played by e-mail in advance of the convention. The files for each turn are hyperlinked at the end of the summary for each turn.

The Allied players kept a detailed log throughout the game, and the Axis players also kept a log in the beginning of the game, edited excerpts from which are set out for selected turns.

The Game Master's comments are in *red italics*.

Axis player comments are in *purple italics*.

Allied player comments are in *blue italics*.

Spring 1935

The game started with only one civil war flag in Spain, which meant that a civil war was not likely to break out there anytime soon.

The general random event provided +1 support to Italy, which threatened a possible first turn Italian aggression against Ethiopia, although a secret French support event (which turned out to be a -1) might have been a deterrent.

The Allies considered just letting Ethiopia go, but taking into account a Russian random diplomatic event in Sweden, the Allies built a British air unit, moving the Balance of Power to -1, as part of a plan to help the Russian garrison and avoid having to build a Russian unit in the summer. From the Allied player log:

There's another aspect to this – if Britain builds a unit (probably air), it might shift the balance of power and that would also help Russia (as well as blocking Italy in Ethiopia). Since Britain may mobilize next turn, the maintenance cost would be small.

Regarding long-term research plans, with a one-level research event in Economic Preparation, the Allies decided to pursue that project.

The Allies also planned to convert the idle French factory to civilian use as soon as practicable, ideally in Summer 1935, while planning to convert Britain's idle factories to military use when conditions permitted.

If civilian factories are chosen, it is probably more common for the Allies to convert one of the two idle British factories to civilian use, rather than the sole idle French factory.

Very true, which is why we wanted to try something different!

In the Axis player log, the Axis indicated plans for an 18-step result in Strategic Bombers and a maximum (10-step) result for Air Range. The Axis also noted plans for building an additional civilian factory for both Germany and Italy, and an intention to take the Rhineland early in the game to start West Wall research.

The Axis did not indicate any plans for Radar, which, like Air Range, is often part of a bomber-oriented strategy, because of the favorable modifier that a Radar result provides for Air Nationality DRM research in A World at War ("AWAW") (ANDRM cannot be researched directly in GS), as well as for other projects.

The Axis spent the maximum on research in the first turn, an AC3 for Germany and an AC2 for Italy. The Allies spent considerably less, only an AC2 for Britain, conserving tile points for France for an anticipated conversion of an idle French factory to civilian use. Russia, as is typical early in the game, did not spend anything on research.

Players often will delay heavy research spending until they reach the light grey cells, as the payoff from extra research spending is limited when only clear cells are available. A common exception is when a player will add research points to all of the intelligence point categories not covered by the automatic intelligence point, in order to get the automatic intelligence point into the light grey cells as soon as possible, in order to make more efficient use of the automatic intelligence point. The extra Axis research spending was not devoted to the intelligence category, however.

For the most part, the major powers went light on diplomatic spending in the first turn. Germany and Britain used AC1s only, France used an AC1 and an AC0, and Russia used only an AC0. Only Italy spent more, using both an AC2 and an AC1.

Overall, it was a good turn diplomatically for the Axis. The Italian AC2 overplayed a British AC1 in Czechoslovakia and ended the French trade pact there. However, Russia gained a flag in Sweden from a random event, which could not reasonably have been anticipated or prevented by the Axis. It should be noted that three of the Axis flags are in the Rhineland, which do not provide a trade pact and which will go away in any event after the Rhineland is remilitarized.

Axis flags: 13 (up from 7)
Allied flags: 8 (up from 7)
Russian flags: 1 (up from 0).

The Russian flag in Sweden lasted for two years and was not eliminated until Spring 1937.

This was a serious mistake by the Axis.

[Spring 1935 turn file](#)

Summer 1935

The Economic Climate reached +3 this turn, triggering a -1 EAI modifier, on top of an additional -1 EAI modifier from a public -1 Italian support event. The -2 EAI made shipbuilding prohibitively expensive, and there was no shipbuilding or unit construction this turn. It also increased the cost of mobilizing military factories to 12 tile points, but this increase did not deter mobilizations for both Britain and Russia.

Germany elected to convert an idle factory to civilian use for its first factory conversion.

That Russia was able to mobilize on the second turn of the game, even at a cost of 12 tile points, was a remarkable and very favorable development for the Allied/Russian side. In part this was due to good fortune, including "3" random tile draws for Russia in both of the first two turns. The reduced maintenance costs on account of the purge of two units this turn (from a military purge draw and a random event) also helped, as did the assist to the Russian garrison on account of the Russian diplomatic random event in Sweden the prior turn. However, the -1 Balance of Power, which came about through Allied planning, provided a critical assist to the Russian garrison. Without it, Russia would not have been able to mobilize, because its Russian garrison modifier would have been reduced from +1 to 0, reducing its support to -1 and triggering the required construction of a military unit.

The Axis continued their heavy research spending, with Germany again spending 3 tile points and Italy spending 2 tile points on research. On account of the civilian factory, Germany was able to use the special Research AC1 with an AC2, and save its AC3 for diplomacy. The Allies increased research spending slightly to 3 tile points (an AC1 for Britain and an AC2 for France). This additional research point went to a second step of research in Counter-Intelligence, as the Allies feared an Axis intelligence strategy that could produce an Axis spy ring in Summer 1936. Notwithstanding the Russian mobilization, Russia had 2 tile points remaining, and devoted an AC1 to research in order to start Armor research. Russia's most advanced project was Economic Preparation, with two steps.

France drew a random event that allowed it to place an extra diplomatic counter, and the Allies spent heavily on diplomacy this turn: 5 TPs for Britain, 4 for France, and 1 for Russia, versus spending of 4 for Germany and 3 for Italy. Russia retained its flag in Sweden, which was not challenged by the Axis, and the Allies made modest progress on the diplomatic front, reducing the Axis from 13 to 9 flags overall, although the Allies also were reduced from 8 to 6 flags.

Axis flags: 9 (down from 13)
Allied flags: 6 (down from 8)
Russian flags: 1 (unchanged).

Notwithstanding the favorable (for aggressions) -2 EAI, the -1 BoP and the -1 Italian and +1 British public support events deterred any Italian aggression against Ethiopia. Germany also chose not to attempt to remilitarize the Rhineland.

[Summer 1935 turn file](#)

Fall 1935

The random events were poor for the Western Allies, with appeasers winning a debate at Oxford, and with the French themselves becoming demoralized by British appeasement policies.

	Appeasers win Oxford debate. British support level: -1
	British appeasement policies demoralizing. French support level: -1

Even worse for the Allies, these random events were public. Italy had a -2 support event, but it was secret. Even with the EAI returning to 0 from -2, both sides correctly forecast successful aggressions against Ethiopia and the Rhineland this turn. From the Axis player log:

*Will shoot for Rhineland and Ethiopia this turn.
Both Allies have -1 support, and do not know about Italy.
Real shot at Rhineland and Ethiopia is a bluff.*

The Axis built two air units, one Italian and one German, to move the air portion of the Balance of Power from -1 to +1, and also move the overall Balance of Power from -1 to +1. The German air unit was free, on account of a timely random event. The Allies decided not to extend themselves to try to stave off these aggressions and did not build any units.

This turn the Russian purge level reached 5 purge events, somewhat high for only the third turn of the game, especially with the Great Purge card not yet in play.

Germany converted an idle factory to military use, and the Allies followed through with plans to convert France's idle factory to civilian use, providing a French AC1 research-only counter.

Again there was no shipbuilding this turn. No ships have been laid down or even advanced so far in this game.

Russia, purging research this turn, elected to put its only research point in Economic Preparation, bringing it to 3 steps. The Allies maintained spending of 3 tile points on research, and the Axis reduced research spending to 4 tile points.

For diplomacy, Britain went big, spending 5 tile points, and successfully overplayed Axis diplomatic counters in Albania and Hungary and eliminated Axis flags there. Russia was successful and efficient, and eliminated German flags in Rumania and Turkey with two AC1s. Russia chose not to defend its flag in Sweden, but it nonetheless survived. Russia chose not to contest the ACC1 in Finland, because Germany's placement there also was supported by a general diplomatic event in favor of Germany there.

For the first time, Germany was able to deploy a military counter, which went unopposed in Austria to achieve a second German flag there. Germany otherwise spent lightly on diplomacy this turn, placing

two AC1s, one of which, in Czechoslovakia, was successful in removing the sole French flag there. Italy used an AC2 and AC1 for diplomacy, and France, which had only two tile points remaining on account of the civilian factory, used an AC2 and an AC0.

The Allies actually took a lead in minor country flags at the end of the turn, partly on account of the three German Rhineland flags no longer counting. At the end of the turn:

Axis flags: 4 (down from 9, with 3 of these being in the Rhineland)

Allied flags: 5 (down from 6)

Russian flags: 1 (unchanged).

With the Russian flag in Sweden contributing a counter to the Russian garrison, the Axis might have been well-advised to try to remove that flag.

The Axis could safely demand remilitarization of the Rhineland, and did. Even a resistance tile draw of 3 would not have stopped the aggression. For Ethiopia, there is no resistance tile draw. With the -2 Italian support event, the Allies would have stopped the aggression if they had opposed it, but since the Allies didn't know about the Italian negative support event, the Allies did not oppose in Ethiopia.

Although the Italian aggression against Ethiopia was a bluff, it would have been extremely risky for the Allies to have opposed it, knowing that it would have succeeded even with a -1 Italian support event.

Occupying the Rhineland is a mixed blessing for the Axis. It permits West Wall construction, which the Axis had indicated as a priority at the beginning of the game, allows Germany to undertake additional aggressions, and provides an additional AC1 for Germany. But it also adds the Great Purge card to the Russian purge deck, which constrains Russia in the short term, but helps Russia in the long term by advancing its purge level at a more rapid clip. Some Axis players deliberately avoid taking the Rhineland until later in the game, in an effort to try to keep the Russian purge level low.

Fall 1935 turn file

Winter 1935

The favorable +3 Economic Climate continued this turn. However, a +1 EAI general random event, on account of a bombing of the Greek parliament, brought the EAI to 0 for the turn.

Germany, with 19 available tile points, converted its third idle factory to military use, giving Germany five military factories, with six civilian and two idle factories. Italy had only 10 available tile points, but assisted by a timely -2 factory conversion cost random event, converted its sole idle factory to military use. Britain, with 17 available tile points, considering mobilizing its remaining idle factory, but determined that the 10 tile point cost would curtail other priorities that it had for the turn.

The first shipbuilding activity of the game occurred this turn, with Britain launching the BC3 Repulse.

A Great Purge card was drawn at the first opportunity, bringing Russia to eight purge events. Russia decided to build two units, finding that to be the right balance between risking falling too far behind in

its garrison, and spending too much and delaying its next mobilization, which could occur as early as Summer 1936. From the Russian player log:

More importantly, Russia has probably already reached the point where it doesn't have to worry about tile points as much as the AC capacity to use them. This will be helped by the AC1 Russia will get when it reaches medium cohesion, and the AC1 it anticipates getting from an economic preparation result in 1936.

But for now, in military and no purge turns (a two out of three chance next turn), Russia will want to (illegally) spend an AC2 on research and an AC2 and an AC1 on diplomacy, leaving it only an AC1 for its required build. That means it will have to either use only an AC1 for research (the most reasonable choice at the moment) or use two AC1s for diplomacy (also reasonable, although it gives too much information to the Axis). This illustrates the basic problem – in turns in which there is no Great Purge, Russia doesn't yet have the ACs to build more than one unit.

Therefore it should do so now. But not three units. That would risk delaying the next mobilization.

Germany activated an armor unit for free on account of a random event. Otherwise, there was no unit construction apart from the Russian builds. With a single counter Axis surplus in each of the non-naval Balance of Power categories before the German armor build, the Balance of Power remained at +1 this turn.

With six research projects ready for light gray research points, the Allies spent heavily on research, an AC3 for Britain and an AC2 and Research AC1 for France, to advance all six projects into the dark gray zone. Three of these projects were naval (Naval Air Training, British Battleship Design, and Transports), and the others were Maginot Line, Economic Preparation (six steps, for the first research result of the game), and Counter-Intelligence.

The Axis spent more lightly on research, maintaining the same spending level as in the Fall 1935 turn, with a German AC2 and Research AC1, and an Italian AC1. Of the nine German research projects that were ready for light gray research points (including Counter-Intelligence on account of a random event), the Axis were only able to continue five of them this turn (four through regular research points and one with the Axis advanced research point). The Axis continued Air Range, Strategic Bombers, Italian Battleship Design, Advanced Subs, and Economic Preparation; and deferred Jets, German Battleship Design, Rockets, and Counter-Intelligence.

The Allies carefully timed and calibrated their research spending and projects in order to be able to advance six projects into the light gray cells in Winter 1935, while conserving tile points through more limited spending in the early turns. However, the Allies were misled by the early heavy Axis research spending, which caused the Allies to invest in Counter-Intelligence to counter an expected Axis spy ring.

The Axis research spending is harder to understand. The Axis might have been better advised to spend less in the early years and to plan to spend more beginning in Winter 1935, to advance projects into the light gray cells.

An important drawback of the Allied research spending is that it required the use of the British AC3, whereas Germany was able to keep its AC3 available for diplomacy.

The Allies were "misled" into giving priority to Counter-Intelligence to the same extent someone who insures their house is misled because it never burns down...

The availability of an AC3 for Germany, and the lack of an AC3 for Britain, turned out to be important diplomatically, as Germany was able to overplay a British AC2 in Czechoslovakia, to get a German flag there. The Axis also achieved a trade pact in Austria. However, the Axis chose to leave the Russian flag in Sweden alone, even though on account of the Great Purge Russia would not have been able to defend it. France ended the turn with two flags in Poland, threatening a trade pact there, although an Allied trade pact in Poland is a mixed blessing on account of the adverse impact on the Russian garrison. The Allies, while also allowing single Axis flags to appear in Rumania (through the Anti-Comintern counter, which could not have been opposed) and Hungary, and the loss of a fourth French flag in Belgium, had offsetting gains through the elimination of single Axis flags in Finland and Spain, and a British flag in Turkey from a random event. Both sides could point to diplomatic successes this turn.

[Winter 1935 turn file](#)

Spring 1936

The Economic Climate declined slightly to +2, eliminating the EAI modifier. However, a public -1 Italian support event also included a -1 EAI modifier, making the EAI -1 for this turn.

The negative EAI deterred shipbuilding this turn. However, both Germany and Britain converted idle factories to military use, despite the additional cost. The only remaining idle factories were one German and three Russian.

Britain considered converting its remaining idle factory to civilian rather than military use, in order to be able to maintain its research spending while freeing up its AC3 for diplomacy. However, noting the risk to the naval balance of power if it did not increase shipbuilding, it decided against that approach, and mobilized shipbuilding as part of its mobilization. From the Allied player log:

The other [option] is more radical – convert to a civilian factory. This solves our research/diplomacy problem, but at the cost of creating a potentially serious naval balance of power problem, since Britain didn't mobilize its fourth shipyard when it did its third mobilization.

Waiting is a reasonable option, but converting to a civilian factory is not.

A French one-step research event in Maginot Line research gave the Allies a Maginot Line research result. The Allies continued their robust research pace, again using a British AC3 and the French Research AC1 and a regular French AC2 for research. With only six research projects at the light or dark gray level, the Allies elected to push Maginot Line research forward with a seventh step of research. For Russia (which drew a no purge card this turn and remained at 8 purge events), Russia used an AC1 for research, to move Economic Preparation to 4 steps, and also advanced Armor research to 3 steps.

The Axis kept their German AC3 available for diplomacy but otherwise spent the maximum on research, a German AC2 and Research AC1 and an Italian AC2. The Axis continued the same projects in the light gray cells as before, except that they moved the advanced technology point to Jets, and moved German Submarines into the light gray zone.

With no research results (other than for the Maginot Line) or unit construction (apart from the required Russian build), the Balance of Power remained at +1 for the third turn in a row.

In diplomacy, the German trade pact in Austria and the French trade pact in Belgium were eliminated, leaving no trade pacts for anyone. Russia asserted itself diplomatically, and overplayed an Italian AC1 in Rumania with an AC2, to eliminate the German flag there, and used an AC1 to achieve a draw against the ACC1 in Finland. Russia did not defend its flag in Sweden. However, the Axis chose instead to make final round placements in Poland (to block a possible French trade pact) and in Belgium (to destroy the French trade pact there), rather than eliminating the Russian flag in Sweden. Assisted by two diplomatic random events, the Axis held their own diplomatically this turn, despite the full Russian participation, reducing the number of Allied flags from six to three this turn, while the number of Axis flags went from six to four.

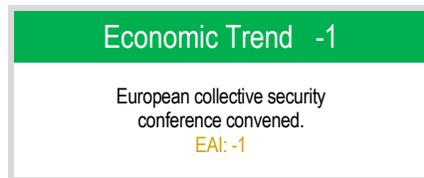
The Axis appear to have been concentrating on their own priorities, while largely not paying attention to Russia diplomatically. This was the fourth turn in a row that the Axis ignored the Russian flag in Sweden. The turn ended with no Axis flags in any of the countries bordering Russia.

[Spring 1936 turn file](#)

Summer 1936

Russia drew a Great Purge this turn, which got it to 11 purge events, but also precluded a Russian mobilization. Since Russia reached Medium Cohesion, it added an AC1 to its activity counter pool.

The -1 EAI (from a public random event) again deterred shipbuilding this turn.



Despite having 17 tile points, Russia played conservatively and built only two rather than three military units, not wishing to risk unlikely scenarios in which Russia could find itself short of tile points to mobilize in the next turn by building the maximum possible three units.

With the capacity for four maintenance-free units from its fourth military factory, Britain built an air unit this turn as part of its plan to try to remain competitive in the air portion of the Balance of Power. From the Allied player log:

Since Britain has unused maintenance, Britain should build a unit, using two AC1s. We decided several turns ago this should be an air unit, because in the long run this is the only non-naval balance of power category in which Britain can compete.

Apart from Russia, there was no other unit construction this turn.

Both sides continued with the same research investments, with a British AC3 and French AC2 and Research AC1 for the Allies, and a German AC2 and Research AC1 and Italian AC2 for the Axis. Since there had been six turns since the start of the game, both sides had a number of research results. The

research results were enough to move the naval Balance of Power from -2 to -3 and the overall Balance of Power from +1 to 0.

Research Results			
Turn	 	 	
Winter 1935	-	Economic Preparation	-
Spring 1936	-	Maginot Line	-
Summer 1936	Strategic Bombers Italian Battleship Design Economic Preparation	Naval Air Training British Battleship Design Transports	-

In addition to the announced research results, the Allies also achieved a Counter-Intelligence result to protect against a feared Axis Espionage result. However, the Axis were nowhere close to obtaining a spy ring, with only two steps of Espionage research completed.

These announced research results also provided clues as to the objectives of the players, both in Gathering Storm and potentially in A World at War. The Strategic Bombers result for the Axis stood out as particularly interesting, as it telegraphed a possible bomber-oriented strategy in AWAW, and a possible drive for an 18-step result in that project.

Both sides made the maximum possible investment in diplomacy this turn with their remaining activity counters—an AC3 and AC2 for Germany, an AC2 and AC1 for Italy, two AC2s for Britain, and an AC2 and an AC1 for France. However, with an important assist from two secret Axis diplomatic events, the Axis for the most part did well diplomatically this turn, increasing the number of Axis flags from 4 to 9 (including new trade pacts in Austria and Hungary), as compared to a slight Allied increase from 3 to 4 flags (with no trade pacts). However, a Russian diplomatic event resulted in a Russian flag appearing in Greece, and the Axis again ignored the Russian flag in Sweden.

[Summer 1936 turn file](#)

Fall 1936

On account of a general random event (unrest in Yugoslavia), the EAI was +1, entering positive territory for the first time in the game. This opened the floodgates for shipbuilding. All Allied and Axis powers did shipbuilding this turn. Italy and France each launched a BB3, Germany advanced a BC3, and Britain laid down two BB4s, taking a lead in the battleship race, and with a Codebreaking result maintained a -3 naval Balance of Power advantage, notwithstanding the announcement of a German Submarines result. Britain had a -3 secret support event but with 16 starting tile points found itself (barely) able to pursue its desired shipbuilding, unit construction, and research and diplomacy activities this turn.

With a new German AC1 from Economic Preparation and an Italian AC1 for Ethiopia this turn, the Axis also were able to invest in unit construction in addition to shipbuilding, with Italy building an armor unit and Germany building infantry and air units. With no Allied unit construction, this increased the Armor

Balance of Power to +2, but the overall Balance of Power remained at 0 on account of the Allied lead in the battleship race.

With a No Purge draw, the Russian purge level after the rapid start in the early game remained at 11 purge events. With 23 starting tile points, Russia was not likely to encounter financial problems for the foreseeable future. Russia mobilized its second idle factory, gaining a support modifier for 7 Russian military factories. Russia also built an air unit, although with positive support it was not required to do so. This additional Russian unit turned out to be crucial, as it maintained a +1 garrison surplus for Russia and allowed Russia to use a military counter in the diplomatic phase.

Germany mobilized its sole remaining idle factory, again choosing an armor and two air units, as it had for each of its three prior military factories.

The Allies maintained the same research spending and activity counter usage for research as in the prior two turns, and this turn for the first time the Axis matched that spending, including the use of a German AC3 for research. This allowed the Axis to advance three projects (Air Range, Strategic Bombers, and Economic Preparation) into dark gray cells, and three other projects in light gray cells (West Wall and German Armor, and German Submarines for a result). For clear cell projects, the Axis started a new Italian research project (Italian Naval Air Training), and took advantage of timely one-level research events in each of Covert Operations and Espionage by placing clear research points in the third step of those projects.

The Allies stopped Maginot Line research at 8 steps and selected French Battleship Design as the new French research project. For dark gray cell research the Allies continued with Economic Preparation, reaching 9 steps, and pushed Transports and British Battleship Design to 7 steps. The Allies indicated that they were concerned about a possible second Italian Battleship Design result and the need to protect the battleship race modifier. From the Allied player log:

All said, of course the Allies have the option of simply assuming the Axis aren't pursuing Italian battleship design (and they probably aren't) and stopping British battleship design at one result. The Allied diplomacy would immediately benefit from the British AC3, Britain would get its battleships sooner and more cheaply, and the two or three dark grey research points that would otherwise go to British battleship design could go elsewhere, including to the Maginot Line.

If this wasn't a convention game, that's what I would probably do. But, in view of how colossal Russia is, and therefore how strong the Allied/Russian diplomacy is likely to be (even if a civil war breaks out somewhere), I'm not inclined to take that chance just to gain some fairly minor advantages (a few turns of improved diplomacy or a few research points).

The Allies also decided to prioritize Espionage research, in order to find out what the Axis were up to with naval research, projecting an Espionage result in Spring 1937.

Although not yet at the threshold for dark gray research points, Russia invested an AC2 in research in order to advance Economic Preparation to 5 steps and Armor research to 4 steps.

Constrained not by tile points but by available activity counters, Germany used only an AC2 and AC1 for diplomacy, and Italy used two AC1s. The Allies, as in recent turns, made the maximum investment possible with available activities counters, two AC2s for Britain and an AC2 and AC1 for France.

Russia drew a powerful random event, allowing diplomacy in Western Europe.



As might be expected, the Allies and Russia had a good turn diplomatically. Russia placed an AC2 in Spain to overplay a first round German AC1 placement and destroy an Italian flag there, and the Allies had contested victories in Austria (eliminating a German trade pact) and Rumania (due to a French 2-point random event). The only Axis victory was in Belgium, where Germany won a contested victory. However, a 2-point secret Italian diplomatic event in Hungary tied a British AC2 placement there and preserved the German trade pact with Hungary. The existing Russian flags in Greece and Sweden were unopposed. A British flag remained in Finland, and otherwise the Russian border countries were free of flags.

The horrible British -3 support event let the Axis back in the game, but that's what random events are all about...

Fall 1936 turn file

Winter 1936

The Economic Climate again turned favorable, to +1 this turn. It has been no worse than 0 for the entire game so far.

On account of a general random event, the EAI remained at +1 this turn, and both the Allies and Axis made use of the EAI to pursue shipbuilding. The turn ended with the Allies in reasonably firm control of both the naval balance of power (an 8-counter surplus) and the battleship race (three British BB4s laid down, to none for the Axis). Notwithstanding an Italian Battleship Design result in Summer 1936, and a favorable EAI the past two turns, Italy has yet to lay down a BB4, and the Axis appeared to be conceding both the battleship race and the naval balance of power (with the limited Axis shipbuilding appearing to be more for the purpose of setting up naval forces for *A World at War*). Unless, that is, Italy was waiting to achieve a second battleship design result in order to lay down BB5s. The Allies looked forward to their Espionage result and spy ring next turn to shed light on that.

All sides maintained the same maximum research pace as the prior turn, with both Germany and Britain using their AC3s for research, and Russia (subject to a military purge) using an AC2 for research. Russia achieved an Economic Preparation result, advanced Armor research to 5 steps, and with its clear research point achieved a one-level secret result in Subversion. The Axis achieved an Espionage result, and placed a spy ring in Allied air research that was immediately eliminated by the Allied Counter-Intelligence result. Otherwise, no research results were announced this turn.

Bolstered by the continuing favorable Economic Climate, and a "3" random tile draw, Germany had 21 tile points at the start of the turn. France and Russia also were doing very well economically, with 20 and 19 tile points, respectively, at the start of the turn, and Italy had 12 tile points. Britain, with 11 starting tile points, taking into account a "1" random tile draw this turn, and having suffered a -3 support event the prior turn, was in the toughest state economically, especially considering the typical spending demands on Britain for diplomacy and shipbuilding.

On account of shipbuilding and research spending, France did not have activity counters available for unit construction without curtailing diplomacy. For Britain, tile points were the constraining factor. The Allies recognized that the Axis would gain an overall Balance of Power advantage and resolved to protect their Allied naval advantage. From the Allied player log:

Since Britain doesn't have the tile points to build units, and France doesn't have the activity counters to do so, the Axis will start getting a balance of power advantage this turn. That's to be expected, and there's nothing we can do about it.

I think that makes it all the more important to be sure of the -4 balance of power modifiers from the naval balance of power and the battleship race.

The Balance of Power did move from 0 to +1 this turn, on account of Germany building an air unit and moving the air portion of the balance of power to +2.

Although not required to do so because Russian support was not negative, Russia built an air unit to replace the purged unit.

In diplomacy, Germany, France, and Russia made the maximum commitment. However, Britain curtailed diplomatic spending, using an AC0 to bluff in Czechoslovakia (the Axis did not take the bait), along with an AC2. Although Italy spent less than the maximum, using two AC1s, that likely was on account of only an AC1 being needed for a second round placement in Greece, to destroy the Russian flag there.

Bolstered by a secret Russian diplomatic event in Spain, and a British regional diplomatic event in Scandinavia, the Allies and especially Russia nonetheless did reasonably well diplomatically this turn. Russia ended the turn with flags in three countries (Sweden, Spain, and Turkey). The German trade pact in Hungary survived.

The Russian random event in Spain, together with random events there the prior two turns, brought Spain to four civil war events, on the precipice of civil war breaking out.

Diplomacy appeared to be affected by both AC3s being out of play for diplomacy, as the players knew that they could safely play an AC2 and at worst achieve a tie, absent a military counter or random event.

With Russian flags in three countries, and tile points to spare, the Russian Genie was out of the bottle.

[Winter 1936 turn file](#)

Spring 1937

A No Purge draw this turn maintained the Russian purge level at 12, and the EAI reverted to 0.

The Axis and the Allies continued the same maximum research pace. Russia throttled back research spending slightly to an AC1, achieving an Armor result, and deciding not to take Economic Preparation into the dark gray cells. The Axis achieved research results in West Wall and German Armor research.

Russia built two units, correctly forecasting that it would secure a +2 garrison surplus and the use of two military counters this turn. The Axis also decided to build an infantry unit in order to gain a three counter advantage and +2 infantry balance of power modifier. However, with no reserve Germany infantry available, Italy built the unit. This infantry build also increased the overall Balance of Power to +2 in favor of the Axis.

Despite the worse EAI (for shipbuilding) as compared to the prior two turns, Germany advanced a BC3 at full cost. Otherwise, the Axis and Allies all deferred shipbuilding.

Having achieved an Espionage research result this turn, the Allies placed a spy ring in Axis naval research, which was not countered. The spy ring revealed that the Axis had not taken Italian Battleship Design research past the sixth step. Notwithstanding anticipated Axis research results next turn in Air Range and Radar, the Allies considered the naval balance of power and battleship race to be secure enough to halt further British Battleship Design research after this turn.

With five random diplomatic events, and two military counters each for Germany and Russia, diplomacy was chaotic. With only two diplomatic placements, Russia could attempt to protect only two of the three countries in which it had flags. It chose to protect Spain and Turkey. The Axis, finally paying attention to Russian flags, eliminated the Russian flag in Sweden. However, Russia gained a new flag in Finland, from a random event.

The Russian flag in Finland presented a mixed blessing for the Allied/Russian side. While it was helpful to the Russian garrison, it precluded the placement of an Allied flag there, which with two Allied flags already there would achieve an Allied trade pact and, if it persisted to the end of Gathering Storm, reduce the Finnish ground forces to only two infantry units.

For Russia to make the maximum possible diplomatic commitment to Spain, and for the Axis to try to oppose it with their own maximum commitment, as each did, made sense with Spain on the verge of civil war, since flags are much harder to place or dislodge after a civil war breaks out.

The combined Allied and Russian diplomatic spending exceeded that of the Axis by two tile points. The diplomatic outcome was roughly even, with the Axis going from 6 to 7 flags (maintaining the trade pact in Hungary and gaining a new German trade pact in Austria), the Allies going from 4 to 5 flags (including important new flags in Czechoslovakia and Poland), and Russia maintaining single flags in three countries.

[Spring 1937 turn file](#)

Summer 1937

A Russian military purge brought the Russian purge level to a still-low 13 purge events, but rendered inoperable the Russian military counters that otherwise would have been available on account of the positive Russian garrison and support level. The EAI remained at 0, making shipbuilding full-price.

Italy nonetheless advanced a BB3, and Britain laid down a second CVL. Although the Allies were bracing for Axis balance of power naval counters from expected Axis Air Range and Radar results, with the Allies'

knowledge of Axis naval research they felt confident that they could maintain their lead in the naval balance of power and battleship race.

There was no military unit construction, apart from Russia replacing a purged air unit.

Both the Axis and the Allies maintained their maximum research commitment. With its spy ring having survived, the Allies were able to add an extra research point to Transports, bringing it to 11 steps and the verge of a second research result. Russia devoted an AC2 to research, to advance Armor into the dark gray cells, and Specialized Units to the fourth step. Anticipating an Axis bomber strategy, Russia expected to pursue Air Defense research soon. However, for the second turn in a row, Russia elected to allocate clear research points to intelligence research, to “make up for lost time” and get the automatic intelligence point operating in the light gray cells as soon as possible, and perhaps eventually achieve a Russian Espionage result and spy ring to help with future Armor research. From the Russian player log:

While we have surmised that Russia should invest in air defense, Russia's clear research point goes into espionage, both to try to get the Russian intelligence research point working in the light grey and possibly to get a spy ring that can help Russian armor (since the Axis didn't eliminate the Allied naval spy ring last turn).

The Axis announced research results in Advanced Subs and Air Range, and the Allies announced a second research result in Economic Preparation. The Balance of Power remained unchanged at +2.

Allied fears of an Axis Radar result turned out to be unfounded. The Axis had achieved only two steps of Radar research, from a random event in Winter 1936.

Diplomatic spending was roughly equal, with 9 tile points of spending (including two military counters) by the Axis, and 10 tile points of spending by the Allies and Russia. Both sides made the maximum possible diplomatic commitment, taking into account prior use of activity counters for research.

With the Axis finally going after Russian flags, and with Russia having used one of its AC2s for research, Russia knew that it could not both protect its flag in Turkey against the German ACC2 and protect its flag in Spain against what it correctly surmised was a German AC2 that had been placed there in Axis first round diplomacy. Russia protected its flag in Spain with an AC2, and let Turkey go. The Russia flag in Finland was not challenged, leaving Russia with flags in two countries at the end of the turn.

Both sides could point to diplomatic successes this turn. The Allies destroyed the German trade pacts in Austria and Hungary, and reduced the Axis from 7 to 6 flags overall. However, the Axis reduced the Allies from 5 to 3 flags, with two of those remaining flags in Finland. Perhaps more importantly, the Axis destroyed the Allied flags that had appeared in Czechoslovakia and Poland the prior turn, paving the way for future aggressions.

[Summer 1937 turn file](#)

Fall 1937

As luck would have it, Russia drew a Great Purge card this turn, reaching 16 purge events, a turn in which Russia otherwise would have been able to mobilize its third idle factory.

This was the second time this happened...

The EAI reached -2 this turn, on account of a general random event. This made shipbuilding prohibitively expensive this turn, and portended possible Axis aggressions.

Britain also received another secret -3 support event, making any opposition to Axis aggressions, apart from a bluff, out of the question.

Someone once advanced the theory that A World at War is supposed to be “a test of character” – which is actually what Real Life is for. That person has never played Gathering Storm.

Despite the increased cost, Germany converted its sixth civilian factory to military use at a cost of 10 tile points, eliminating its Research AC1, preparing for future aggressions and war. The Axis nonetheless spent the maximum possible on research, using the German AC3 and an Italian AC2. The Allies continued their maximum research program, with Britain again using its AC3 for research, and France using an AC2 and its Research AC1. The Allies achieved a second research result for Transports, continued Economic Preparation to 13 steps, and started placing dark gray research points in Radar research. Light gray research points went to Strategic Bombers (5 steps), French Battleship Design (5 steps), and Jets (4 steps).

The Axis continued Economic Preparation research and Strategic Bombers, each to 11 steps, and placed light gray research points in Italian Naval Air Training, German Battleship Design, and Torpedoes, each to 5 steps. The Axis used their advanced research point to achieve a first result in Jets. The Axis also brought Counter-Intelligence research to 5 steps with the Intelligence research point, in position to be able to eliminate the Allied spy ring by Spring 1938.

Germany built an air unit, which combined with the Axis Jets result increased the Axis surplus in the air portion of the balance of power to six counters, for a +3 modifier. This increased the overall Balance of Power to +3 in favor of the Axis. With 22 tile points and the Great Purge prohibiting other spending, Russia elected not to build the maximum possible three military units (two of which merely replaced units that had been purged this turn). The Allies did not build any military units.

With three German military counters, and Russia out of the picture on account of a Great Purge, the Axis had the advantage in the diplomatic phase. The Allies actually performed about as well as could have been expected under the circumstances, eliminating Axis flags in Hungary and Sweden and adding French flags in Belgium and Norway. However, the Axis were able to take advantage of Russian defenselessness to eliminate both remaining Russian flags at low cost, restore a German trade pact in Austria, and place an Italian flag in potential aggression target Albania. Using brute force (a German military counter combined with a German AC2), Germany achieved a result and a German flag in Poland, against no opposition. A German diplomatic event in Russia also added a German flag there, benefiting German support at Russia's expense.

Going into the crisis phase, with a -2 EAI, +3 Balance of Power, and favorable support modifiers, and the defense of Czechoslovakia reduced from 4 to 3 on account of the German trade pact with Austria, the Axis were assured of a successful aggression against Czechoslovakia, even with a “3” tile draw and a hypothetical secret +3 British support event. However, the Axis also looked at Albania, an aggression against which also would succeed absent both a “3” tile draw and a +3 British secret support event. The

Axis decided to go for both, and the Allies did not and could not oppose in either case. Below was the actual support situation:

	MFs	Other	Random	Mobil	Russia	Secret	Secret	Secret	Total
	2	 +1		 +1	 +1				5
	1	 +1	 -1						1
	1					 -1	 -1	 -1	-2
	0	 +1							1
	1				 -1				0

These second Axis aggressions started the countdown towards war. Germany properly took advantage of the favorable EAI to go after Czechoslovakia, the tougher target as compared to Austria, and appeared to lay the groundwork reasonably for its aggression, through mobilizations and attention to the Balance of Power, to protect itself against a pre-emptive Allied declaration of war during the next two turns when Allied support is increased through the temporary aggression support modifiers. Whether the Axis were well-advised to demand Albania at this point is at least debatable, as it provided each of Britain and France with an additional support modifier in the next turn, and then an additional tile point of income for the rest of Gathering Storm. With a +4 support increase for each of Britain and France next turn on account of these aggressions (for a second aggression, Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, and Albania), the Axis will have to be careful not to allow an Allied pre-emptive declaration of war next turn.

The Allied view was that the Italian aggression against Albania was a serious mistake, because the additional British and French support, decaying to additional income, solved the British economic problems that had been brought on by the two -3 support events for Britain, which cost Britain 6 tile points.

This meant the Allies could plan their remaining turns with some degree of confidence.

Fall 1937 turn file

Winter 1937

In the twelfth turn of the game, the Economic Climate finally was negative for the first time, at -2. A timely No Purge draw eliminated the German flag in Russia, and provided a purge event to boot. The

EAI went from -2 last turn to +1 this turn, on account of the Czech aggression and a +1 EAI random event that offset the residual -1 EAI effect from last turn's random event.

Except for Italy, all major powers mobilized this turn, including Russia. With the Axis apparently pursuing an 18-step result in Strategic Bombers, the Allies projected that war should not break out before Winter 1938, assuming the Axis got a random event to advance research in Strategic Bombers, and more likely not until Summer 1939. The Allies selected armor and infantry for the French mobilization, concluding that the French armor should arrive in time for the defense of France.

Both the Axis and the Allies spent heavily on shipbuilding. Germany launched two BC3s, and Italy laid down two BB4s (one of which was free on account of a random event). Britain launched a CVL and laid down another, and France, which achieved a French Battleship Design result this turn, laid down its first BB4. Germany built an air and infantry unit, and Britain and Russia each built an air unit.

Particularly noteworthy were the support levels, which for Britain increased from -2 last turn to 5 this turn, and for France increased from 1 last turn to 8 this turn, in each case a swing of 7. The change was impacted by the negative British support event last turn and the positive French support event this turn.

	MFs	Other				Random	Mobil	Secret	Secret	Total
	3	 +1					 +1			5
	1	 +1								2
	1	 +1	 +1	 +1	 +1					5
	0	 +1	 +1	 +1	 +1	 +1	 +1	 +1	 +1	8
	1		 +1							2

The Allies reduced research spending this turn, using an AC1 for Britain and an AC2 for France. However, the Axis and Russia continued with maximum research spending, with Russia again using an AC2, and Germany and Italy using an AC3 and AC2, respectively. At long last, the Axis drew a research random event that provided an extra point in Strategic Bombers, putting the project on a pace to be completed in Spring 1939. A large number of research results were announced this turn, most of them by the Axis:

Research Results			
Turn			
Spring 1935	-	-	-
Summer 1935	-	-	-
Fall 1935	-	-	-
Winter 1935	-	Economic Preparation	-
Spring 1936	-	Maginot Line	-
Summer 1936	Strategic Bombers Italian Battleship Design Economic Preparation	Naval Air Training British Battleship Design Transports	-
Fall 1936	German Submarines	Codebreaking	-
Winter 1936	Espionage	Counter-Intelligence	Economic Preparation
Spring 1937	German Armor West Wall	Espionage	Armor
Summer 1937	Advanced Subs Air Range	Economic Preparation (2)	-
Fall 1937	Jets	Transports (2)	-
Winter 1937	Strategic Bombers (2) Italian Naval Air Training Torpedoes Rockets Economic Preparation (2) Counter-Intelligence	French Battleship Design	-

The Axis used its Counter-Intelligence result to eliminate the Allied spy ring in Axis naval research.

The Balance of Power, which had declined from +3 to +2 at the beginning of the turn on account of the movement of an Italian infantry unit from active to reserve duty on account of the +1 Albania defense level last turn, increased to +4 this turn, due to an increase of the infantry balance of power from +1 to +2, and a change in the naval balance of power from -3 to -2.

In diplomacy, both the Axis and Allies invested heavily in Finland. Britain played its AC3 there, and Germany played an AC2, which with a Communist threat modifier from the German elimination of a Russian flag there last turn achieved a tie. A French random event in Russia was confronted by a flexible Eastern European diplomatic random event for Germany, for another tie. With Austria written off by the Allies, Germany solidified its trade pact there, adding a fourth Axis flag. The Axis also added a second flag to Poland, although at the expense of overplaying a British AC0 that had been placed there as a bluff. For a success besides the bluff, the Allies could point to Spain, where a French AC2 overplayed the Italian Communist threat modifier to place a French flag. A Russian diplomatic event in Norway resulted in a Russian flag there.

Germany spent especially heavily this turn, using all of its activity counters and spending its 27 tile points down to 3 at the end of the turn.

[Winter 1937 turn file](#)

Spring 1938

Russia drew a Great Purge card and an additional purge from a random event, reaching 21 purge events and high cohesion. Russia was now assured of completing its final mobilization no later than Winter 1938. With 16 tile points, Russia built the maximum three units, which replaced the three units that had been purged that turn.

High cohesion provided Russia with an additional AC2 counter, but also upgraded the anti-Comintern counter to a powerful ACC3. More importantly, it indicated that full cohesion, and the ability for Russia to mobilize civilian factories, was approaching. The clock was running on the Axis.

The Allied view differed – after a fast start, the rate of Russian purges slowed down appreciably and the Axis timetable for war was now determined more by its research requirements and the position on the board, than by any prospect of Russia reaching full cohesion.

The EAI remained at +1, and the Economic Climate improved slightly to -1.

Germany, Britain, and France mobilized again this turn. France again chose armor as part of its mobilization, although it would not arrive until Fall 1939. Italy, with two civilian factories and 18 tile points, did not mobilize.

The Axis needed to carry Gathering Storm at least to Spring 1939 in order to achieve their 18-step Strategic Bombers result. The Allies were well aware that the Axis were researching that project and of its timing.

True, but there was still a possibility that the Axis could get another random event that speeded up German strategic bomber research.

The Axis continued their frenetic research pace, even at this late stage in the game, with a German AC3 and Italian AC2. In addition to Strategic Bombers, the Axis invested in a 13th step of Economic Preparation research, apparently intending to carry that project to at least 15 steps. The Allies maintained the same, more modest research spending as in the prior turn, using a British AC1 and French AC2. The Allies reached the 15th step of Economic Preparation, on pace to complete the project with room to spare if, as anticipated, *Gathering Storm* lasts at least until Winter 1938. A number of research results were announced this turn:

Research Results			
Turn			
Spring 1938	German Battleship Design Codebreaking	Jets Strategic Bombers Radar Anglo-French Cooperation (1L)	-

The level-one Anglo-French Cooperation result allowed France to grant one tile point to Britain.

The Axis economic preparation research was also not a surprise – Germany wanted to get an additional strategic bomber factor from a 15-step economic preparation result.

With the -1 Economic Climate and a “1” random tile draw, Germany had only 16 tile points available this turn, less than Italy, Britain, or France. It could not do everything, and having mobilized, and with maximum research and diplomacy spending planned, it could not afford shipbuilding. Italy advanced one of the two BB3s remaining in its shipyard. The Allies were more aggressive with shipbuilding. Britain and France each laid down a new BB4, while deferring other shipbuilding.

Italy built an armor unit, and Britain and France each built air units. The Allied player log indicated that they were conceding that the armor balance of power modifier was likely to reach +3, but were hoping to challenge the air balance of power, with three new air research results this turn, for a total of five Allied counters to be added to the air balance of power this turn. The Allies also hoped to restore the naval balance of power to -3.

As it turned out, the Balance of Power moved exactly as the Allies had hoped and predicted. The overall Balance of Power moved from +4 to +3.

In diplomacy, both sides decided to leave Austria alone. With four Axis flags and a resistance before a tile draw of -1, it likely could be taken by Germany whenever it wants it. The real action was in Poland, where Britain played its AC3 in addition to a secret French DP1, and Germany played an AC2 and military counter, in addition to a public DP1, for a tie.

For the ACC3, Germany chose to play it in Rumania, for a guaranteed second Axis flag there, although it could have achieved the same result in Turkey and by playing the ACC3 in Rumania rendered superfluous a secret Italian diplomatic event there. In other diplomatic highlights, a French AC0 in Belgium, following a German military counter placement there in the first diplomacy round, successfully prompted a second round German AC2 placement there. Meanwhile, a French diplomatic placement in Finland went unopposed, leading to a British trade pact there. Italy eliminated the Russian flag in Norway.

This was the first turn in the game that ended with no Russian flags in any minor country.

There were no aggressions this turn. At the end of the turn, the remaining *Gathering Storm* civilian-to-military factory mobilizations were 3 for Germany, 2 for Italy and Britain, and 1 for France, plus one idle-

to-military factory mobilization for Russia. Ending tile points indicated that all major powers, except most likely Russia and possibly France, would be under some budgetary constraints as *Gathering Storm* drew to a close.

	Tile Points				
					
End of turn	1	9	4	13	10

[Spring 1938 turn file](#)

Summer 1938

This would be the final turn for which the Fall 1937 German aggression against Czechoslovakia would give Germany an extra random event draw and give the Allies temporary support bonuses. Russia drew a military purge, increasing its purge level to 23. The Economic Climate improved slightly from -1 to 0, and a random event increased the EAI to +2 for the first time in the game, decreasing the cost of shipbuilding and mobilizations. At a point in the game when tile points are particularly crucial, Germany, Italy, and Britain all had random tile draws of “1.”

Germany, Britain, and France each mobilized at a cost of 5 tile points; Italy did not. France again included an armor unit in what was its final mobilization. France will have 3 AAF and, after they all arrive, four armor units in AWAW.

The Allies maintained their research spending, but reversed activity counter usage to an AC2 for Britain and an AC1 for France, in order to leave two French AC2s available for diplomacy. The Axis finally reduced research spending to an AC1 for Germany and an AC2 for Italy, which meant that at last a German AC3 would be available for diplomacy. Russia used an AC2 for research, advancing armor to the ninth step. Rather than complete the sixth step of Specialized Units, for a research result, Russia placed its light gray point in the fourth step of Subversion, for a second-level result. Russia placed its clear research point in the second step of Air Defense. France achieved a second level of Anglo-French Cooperation research, assisted by a random event. There were no other research results this turn.

With ships being on sale, both the Axis and Allied powers conducted at least moderate shipbuilding this turn. However, this shipbuilding was principally for the purpose of preparing for AWAW, rather than any serious effort to challenge or defend the naval balance of power. The Allies were secure in their lead in the battleship race.

With the increase to the EAI, the British trade pact in Finland, the military purge, and the loss of the Russian minor country flags, the Russian garrison modifier actually declined to -2 at the beginning of the turn. Russia nonetheless chose to build only a single unit, in order to ensure that it would have sufficient tile points to mobilize in the fall if not subject to a Great Purge.

Britain built an air unit, and France built an infantry unit, which they each could do without concern for maintenance costs in the next turn because of their mobilizations this turn. With the Axis choosing not to build any units, these military builds had an immediate impact on the Balance of Power, reducing it from +3 to +1.

The combined Allied and Russian diplomatic effort, at 13 tile points, significantly exceeded the 8 tile point investment by the Axis (Germany elected not to use its AC3 for diplomacy). With the ACC3 and an Axis Balkan diplomatic event that the Axis decided to play in Yugoslavia to eliminate the British flag there, the results were close to even in terms of Axis and Allied flags. However, the Allies scored important victories in securing a second Allied flag in each of Norway and Spain, maintaining the Allied trade pact in Finland, and, with the help of two Russian Subversion results, eliminating one of the two German flags in Poland.

There were no aggressions this turn.

With the deterioration in the Balance of Power, and temporary increase in the EAI to +2, Poland and even Danzig and the Corridor were safe from an Axis aggression this turn. The Axis still could have safely taken Austria if they had wanted to.

[Summer 1938 turn file](#)

Fall 1938

Russia drew a No Purge, allowing Russia to mobilize its last remaining idle factory. However, on account of tile point constraints, Germany, Italy, and Britain all deferred mobilizing this turn (France was fully mobilized).

The EAI declined to +1, increasing the cost of shipbuilding and mobilizations and making aggressions easier by making Allied declarations of war harder. The German and French secret support events were seemingly coordinated and complementary:



The Axis, Allies, and Russia continued the same research investment as in the prior turn. The Axis and Russia each announced Specialized Units results, and the Allies achieved a third level of Anglo-French Cooperation research. The Axis also achieved an important milestone of 15 steps of Economic Preparation research.

Through military unit construction (a German air unit, and German and Italian infantry units), the Axis moved the Balance of Power from +1 to +3. A French infantry build had no effect.

At the point the Allied builds were mainly aimed at being more ready for AWAW.

The big diplomatic action this turn was in Spain. The Allies possessed a powerful secret diplomatic random event, which they intended to and did play in Spain to trigger the outbreak of a civil war there.



Britain endorses western European
free trade zone.
One Western European country: 1

With two Allied flags already in Spain, the Allies expected the Axis to contest Spain anyway, and placed the British AC3 in Spain. Although the Axis could have placed the German AC3 in Turkey to secure a trade pact there, the Axis placed the German AC3 in Spain, to contest the Allies and try to head off an Allied trade pact there. After diplomatic counters and random events were revealed, first the Axis and then the Allies conducted covert operations in Spain. When the dust settled, Britain added a flag to Spain and secured a trade pact there, just as civil war broke out.

This was, or should have been, a significant victory for the Allies, because a trade pact in Spain becomes a 10 BRP economic interest in AWAW. There was a cost, however – Germany would get some research benefits from intervening in Spain, but not as much as in most games, because the Spanish civil war started so late.

In other diplomatic action, Russia was able to deploy a military counter and AC2 to Poland, to achieve a tie against the German ACC3, leaving the situation in Poland unchanged – German kept its one flag. The Allies added a fourth flag to Finland, meaning that a concerted effort would be needed in order to eliminate the Allied trade pact there before war breaks out—eliminating all of the Allied flags there likely was beyond reach.

Not unexpectedly, in the Crisis Phase, Germany announced, “Anschluss time!” The Allies could not oppose the German annexation of Austria.

As it turns out, with the -2 French support event, which the Axis of course did not know about, the Axis actually were close to being able to take all of Poland peacefully. Only a “3” tile draw would have stopped the aggression. Even without knowing about the secret +1 German support event, the Allies indicated privately that they likely would not have opposed an aggression against Poland, in part because they were expecting their 18-step Economic Preparation result in the winter. Of course, an Axis aggression against Poland would have been highly risky, especially with a first AWAW turn in the winter (with exploitation prohibited), and the Axis would have foregone their anticipated 18-step result in Strategic Bombers in the winter (now available a turn earlier due to anticipated by civil war research). Without knowing about the -2 French support event, taking Austria was a logical choice, although it should be noted that the Allies will receive +1 support bonuses for the next two turns, which together with a +1 EAI increase will make Poland more secure.

[Fall 1938 turn file](#)

Winter 1938

The Economic Climate, at +1, finally returned to positive territory. The EAI also reached +4, the highest by far in the game, on account of the German aggression against Austria, the outbreak of the Spanish civil war last turn and a German random event. Normally, this would operate as something of a brake against additional German aggressions.

European Aggression Index

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
						 Czech EAI +1	 Civil War EAI +1	 Austria EAI +1	 Random Event EAI 1	

However, Germany drew timely support events, which promised at least +3 support, and likely +4 support if the diplomatic random event in Russia placed a flag there as expected.

Economic Trend +1

Plebiscite in Austria
heavily favors *Anschluss*.
Austria: 2



Successful Party conference.
German support level: +1 EAI: +1



Molotov makes unofficial visit to Berlin.
Russia: 1

Meanwhile, Russia drew a military purge and purged an additional unit from a random event, reaching 24 purges. Russia built just one unit, in order to be able to make the maximum possible research and diplomatic investment this turn. Russia devoted an AC2 to research, bringing Armor research to 11 steps, Air Defense to 4 steps, and starting research in Air Transports. All of its intelligence research projects now were at 4 steps.

With the EAI reducing mobilization cost to a mere 3 tile points, Germany, Italy, and Britain all mobilized. Germany and Italy had just one mobilization remaining, and the Allies (and Russia, apart from its civilian factories) were fully mobilized.

The Axis and Allies again maintained the same research spending of 3 tile points. The Axis invested in a 17th step of Strategic Bombers research, and would get an 18th step this turn with civil war research. The Axis opted against continuing Economic Preparation research beyond 15 steps and instead went back to German Armor research, which had not been researched since Spring 1937 and was only at 6 steps at the beginning of this turn. The Axis also continued Occupation Policies, to 5 steps, and German Naval Air Training, to 4 steps.

The Allies achieve their long-planned 18-step result in Economic Preparation. They chose not to place their other dark gray research point in Transports, for a 15th step (which would allow a Canadian heavy shipbuilding point to be used for transport construction in AWAW), but instead went back to Air Range, securing an 8th step of research there. The Allies also achieved an important ASW Production result.

Germany again stayed away from shipbuilding, notwithstanding the favorable EAI for shipbuilding, leaving its shipyard empty. The other powers were more active. Italy advanced its two BB4s to the third

row; Britain launched its third CVL in *Gathering Storm*, advanced two BB4s, and laid down another BB4; and France advanced a BB4 and laid down a third French BB4.

Each of the Axis and the Allies collectively built an armor, air, and infantry unit.

The +3 Balance of Power, and its components, remaining unchanged.

With the *Gathering Storm* phase of the game approaching its end, all major powers made strong diplomatic efforts. The Axis sent German and Italian military counters to Spain, along with a German AC2, to obtain a one-point diplomatic advantage over the Russian AC2 that was placed there. Germany was awarded an AC1 diplomatic advantage counter for the next turn, but the Allied trade pact survived on a civil war draw of 3. Germany and Britain each deployed AC3s to Turkey, where, with the assistance of a British diplomatic random event, the Allies were able to eliminate one of the two German flags and reduce the threat of an Axis trade pact there. In another key action, Germany added a second flag to Poland, over Russian opposition, placed a flag in Rumania, and succeeded in planting a flag in Russia on account of its diplomatic random event. The 4 Allied flags in Finland survived, perhaps deterred by a Russian AC0 bluff there.

It was fortunate for Russia that the lack of suitable diplomatic targets meant that Russia expected to end its diplomatic phase with 1 tile point. As it turned out, the -1 support on account of the new German flag in Russia reduced Russia's ending tile points to 0.

This was sort of planned ...

With all of the favorable support events, Germany's support had reached 11, up sharply from 6 the prior turn. This meant that Germany could consider additional aggressions, notwithstanding the impediments posed by the +4 EAI and the temporary support for the Allies on account of the aggression against Austria the prior turn.

Support Effects

	MFs	Other			Random	Mobil	Russia	Total
	5	 +1	 +1	 +1	 +1	 +1	 +1	11
	1	 +1						2
	2	 +1	Austria  +1	 +1		 +1		6
	2	 +1	 +1	Austria  +1				5

	2		Rus. garr 					0
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The Axis made the following announcement to the Allies:

*The German Minister of Transportation announces plans for a nationwide highway system which will be called the "Autobahn". The system includes highways to Vienna and Prague, and perhaps more surprising, a high[way] from Kolberg through Danzig to Konigsberg. When asked about that highway, the minister smirked and responded that it was important that the system cover ***all*** of ***greater*** Germany. The government of Poland squawked at the implication, but Stalin was surprisingly quiet. Rumors of some secret accords are heard...*

What do France and Britain do? Actually, that is a rhetorical question; we all know the answer to that question – nothing. But it is polite to ask.

The crisis calculation indicated that the Allies would have needed a "3" tile draw to successfully oppose the aggression.

			
Balance of power	3		
European Aggression Index		4	4
Support levels	11	6	5
Minor country resistance			
Basic resistance level		4	4
Diplomatic alignment		-1	-1
Neighbors		-1	-1
Tile draw		?	?
Threshold value	14	12	11

The Allies acquiesced.

Significantly, with the heightened German support, and Russian support reduced to 0 on account of the German flag in Russia and other factors, Germany was able to buy off Russia at a bargain-price Nazi-Soviet Pact. The calculation for the Pact, including an actual "2" tile draw for Polish defense, was 24.

Pact calculator

			
EAI		4	
Support levels	11	0	
Flags in Russia	1		
Minor country diplomacy	2		
Polish resistance		4	
Pact Adjustment	14	8	-6
	Basic Pact level		30
	Adjusted Pact level		24

The German flag in Russia was triply painful to Russia for purposes of the NS Pact, by increasing German support, decreasing Russian support, and counting separately as an adverse (for Russia) modifier for the Pact.

Russia obtained Eastern Poland and the Baltic States under the secret protocols to the Molotov-Von Ribbentrop agreement, but nothing else. Russia also conceded a 15 BRP economic interest in Russia to Germany.

The German post office issued some special postage stamps to commemorate the occasion:



Stalin nonetheless was feted for his diplomatic skills in negotiating the Pact, and Russian cohesion reached 29 purges after taking into account the five purge credits from the Pact. With even a No Purge providing a purge credit on account of the German flag in Russia, Russia was assured of reaching full cohesion in the next turn.

While the Axis revelled in taking the Polish Corridor, the Allies weren't entirely unhappy with this development, because it meant Gathering Storm would continue for another turn, with Britain and France both drawing two random events because of the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. We spent a considerable amount of time on this and the next turn trying to figure out what would happen had Germany not signed (or, not turn, renounced) the Nazi-Soviet Pact and gone after Russia right away.

We concluded they would have lost, because Germany hadn't mobilized early enough, so the Axis was committed to knocking out France, and we didn't think this was possible in 1939.

The biggest plus in the Axis approach was that the Nazi-Soviet Pact was favorable because of the constellation of random events for this one turn.

[Winter 1938 turn file](#)

Spring 1939

With the Nazi-Soviet Pact in place, and its escalating random event draws for the Allies, and with Russia reaching full cohesion and able to place an AC3 (and the removal of the anti-Comintern counter on account of the Pact), both sides were expecting *Gathering Storm* to come to an end very soon, most likely this turn. Both sides played this turn with that in mind, angling for the best starting position in AWAW.

To Russia's extreme disappointment, and the relief of the Axis, Russia drew a Great Purge card, meaning that it would have to sit out diplomacy and would not be able to make progress with research. As consolation, Russia was able to get two free steps in Economic Preparation, bringing the project to 8 steps and a favorable +1 UCL modifier in AWAW.

With the EAI at +4, Germany and Italy mobilized their last remaining civilian factories at cost of only two tile points each. As with recent turns, the Axis and Allies each invested 3 tile points in research. For dark gray research points, the Axis selected a 9th step in West Wall research, and an 8th step in German armor research. The Allies secured a 15th step in Transports research and a 9th step in Air Range research. The only announced research result was in Occupation Policies.

Britain and France each chose to advance and maximally accelerate a BB4 from the four to the third row in the fall, and Italy finally launched its last remaining BB3. The German shipyard remained empty.

With no credible threat of a Sea Lion, the Axis are giving indications of a bomber-oriented and possibly anti-Russian strategy in AWAW.

The Allied assessment went well beyond this – for several years the only possible Axis strategy was to go after Russia using strategic bombers.

Russia, with 20 tile points and nothing else to do, built 3 military units, leaving it with 14 tile points at the end of the turn. Germany built an armor and air unit, Britain built an armor and air unit, and France built an infantry unit. The Balance of Power declined from +3 to +2 on account of the unanswered French infantry unit.

End of game top-up research would move the end of game Balance of Power to +1.

In diplomacy, the critical action was in Spain. Germany and Italy both deployed military counters, and Germany also placed an AC1. A British 1-level random event in Spain meant that the Axis would need to draw a "1" in order to remove an Axis flag there, but they succeeded, reducing Allied flags in Spain to two and destroying the trade pact there.

This was a very frustrating development for the Allies, especially since the Axis misplayed their diplomacy in Spain.

Germany ended the turn with 2 tile points and an unused AC3. It could have, and probably should have, placed its AC3 in Spain. This would have given the Axis a 60% chance of destroying the important Allied trade pact in Spain (it would have been an 80% chance without the Allied random event, which of course the Axis did not know about). However, the Axis nonetheless overcame the odds to succeed with the AC1, with which there was only a 20% chance of success. As it turns out, this choice will allow Germany to convert the unused 2 German tile points into 6 AWAW BRPs.

With British support at 8 and French support at 7, assisted by +1 modifiers for the Nazi-Soviet Pact and the Austria and Danzig aggressions, as compared to 9 for Germany, Germany was nowhere close to being able to take Poland peacefully. The choices for the Axis were to invade Poland anyway, declare pre-emptive war against the Allies, or wait.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact precludes a pre-emptive declaration of war against Russia. Germany also could have committed an aggression against the Baltic States, which would have abrogated the Pact and allowed Russia immediately to begin mobilizing its civilian factories.

The Allies initially expected a pre-emptive declaration of war against Britain and France, so that Germany could attack in the west in Fall 1939. But Germany was too weak to make this dangerous for the Allies, so the Axis were forced to attack Poland (they could hardly keep Gathering Storm going, with Britain and France drawing an increasing number of random events each turn).

Germany announced its demand for Poland proper. This time, the Allies knew that they could oppose, and did. Germany did not back down. World War II broke out.

In top-up research, the Axis elected not to complete German Armor research, which remained at 9 steps. Instead, the Axis devoted all three regular research points to West Wall research, for a second West Wall result. The advanced research point went to Advanced Subs, bring the project to 9 steps and an interim result. Russia was able to complete its Armor research, and get an Espionage result, allowing regular Russian spy rings. The Allies were able to make productive use of their top-up research, for results in Air Range, ASW Research, French Armor, and a 9-step interim result in Espionage, allowing an enhanced spy ring in AWAW.

Victory points indicated a 10-point margin in favor of the Allied/Russian side. However, the consensus was that the game was closer than that and will be decided on the AWAW battlefield.

Support levels	10 2	8 7	4
Unmobilized factories	0 0	0 0	0
Balance of power	1	0	
Axis aggressions	2 7		
Minor country resistance		10	0
Trade pacts	0	1	0
Research			6
Nazi-Soviet Pact	2		-2
Pre-emptive war (-5+EAI)	0	0	0
Totals	24	26	8

While Gathering Storm certainly led to a viable AWAW game, as described below, the Allies did end the game with an advantage and the VP margin was probably accurate. The main Allied advantage consisted of Britain and France being more ready for war than the Axis, because they mobilized earlier. This is an aspect of the Gathering Storm-A World at War transition that is overlooked by many players, because it is not as dramatic as research results or pre-war aggressions. But units and BRPs count!

Not only could Britain could expect to go into 1940 with almost all its force pool built, which would put it in a stronger position economically, but the conquest of France was likely to be more difficult for Germany than normal, because Germany's BRP position was shaky and it would have trouble conducting

offensives and replacing losses. This ruled out a 1940 attack on Russia, which meant the game would transpose into a (sort of) historical course, with the Western Allies being stronger economically and Germany having a bomber force to use against Russia.

The Allied luck in the Gathering Storm portion of the game was discouraging at times: Russian mobilizations were twice delayed by untimely Great Purges, and Russia also had a Great Purge on the final turn of the game; Britain drew two -3 support events and lost the Spanish trade pact on the final turn of the game on a 20% chance.

This was balanced by some Axis errors – the main ones being leaving the Russian flag in Sweden for two years (this saved Russia a lot of tile points from its improved garrison modifier, because it meant that on some turns Russia didn't have to build a unit and then saved a third tile point on reduced maintenance) and annexing Albania too early (this gave both Britain and France an extra five or six tile points).

All of which goes to show that Gathering Storm is, in its own way, as difficult to play as A World at War.

[Spring 1939 turn file](#)

And now to *A World at War*!

The *A World at War* portion of the write up, paradoxically, is shorter than the *Gathering Storm* portion, partly because it was played face-to-face, and partly because it is impossible to give the same level of detail for *A World at War*.

The war itself was very interesting and challenging, and led to some significant rule improvements, which are set out in *green italics* for easy reference.

Summer 1939

Europe: A tough start for the Axis: Germany conquers Poland, losing a 4-6 armor unit in Warsaw. Two German pocket battleships are sunk raiding.

Pacific: Attritions in China.

Fall 1939

Europe: Germany invades the Low Countries and takes one hex in France. A major naval action is fought over supply to Calais, but the Western Allied success means little because its attrition roll is poor and Germany retains the hex it captured in France.

Pacific: Attritions in China.

Winter 1939

Europe: Germany conducts another offensive in France, although without exploitation. The British air force engages, as Britain can better afford losses than can Germany. The Western Allied attrition roll is bad again.

This was a bit of a surprise, because the German BRP problems were already evident.

The Axis were out of control in 1939. The plan was to go into the Low Countries to set up a border in the west and then turn around and go into Russia. But, as has already been noted, Germany wasn't really prepared economically and didn't have enough built units for that. In the end, we changed our plans in Winter 1939 to have a more normal game. This was going to require some unnatural acts in France to fix the USAT and RGT.

Pacific: Attritions in China.

Spring 1940

Europe: Germany produces a second air transport and an airborne unit, as well as interceptors and strategic bombers.

Germany attacks in France, overrunning a British 2-5 armor unit behind the Western Allied front line and exploiting into southern and western France. The Western Allied attrition roll again fails to take any hexes.

This was simply an Allied oversight – both the Allied players thought the 15 British AAF covered the lone British 2-5 armor unit, preventing an overrun. In fact the British air units were five hexes away from the British armor unit.

This entire game was played at the highest level in terms of sportsmanship and both sides willingly explained what they thought their defenses could accomplish and allowed retractions of obvious oversights that resulted from speedy play. So what happened here?

In turns out that the Axis players paid the Allies the highest possible compliment – they thought the Allied oversight was in fact a deep trap to lure (or force) the Axis into southwestern France! It's hard for the Allies not to be flattered by such unjustified respect!

In the end the mistake turned out not to have too great an effect on the game. Firstly, the Germans were in danger of bogging down in France, through no fault of their own, and secondly, the main effect of the mistake was to reduce the French Surrender Level, with the most important aspect of this being the disposition of the French colonies, especially French North Africa.

We thought that the Allies were protecting around Paris and didn't care if we went into southwestern France. Since we knew at this time we were going for a Fall surrender instead of a Summer surrender, we didn't really care either. So we never knew it was an Allied mistake! It looked reasonable to us! And as already noted, it didn't end up mattering too much.

Russia produces an interceptor, rather than an AAF.

Pacific: Attritions in China.

Summer 1940

Europe: German armor swarms through France, isolating French units in order to improve the French Surrender modifier. Germany declared war on Denmark and Norway, in order to occupy Norway and have the option of opposing later Murmansk convoys to Russia.

At this point, our goal was to set it up so that all KEAs fell and that France would have no more than 9 factors of ground units left next turn. As a secondary goal, we made sure we got a French port for the submarine warfare modifier next turn.

Pacific: Attritions in China.

Fall 1940

Europe: Germany conquers France. The French Surrender Level is -1, because the Western Allies put a DP in France in the 1940 YSS and the Axis didn't. The Axis establish Vichy France: Lebanon-Syria go Vichy, but on a die roll of "1" French North Africa goes Free French.

During the YSS, the Allies almost didn't put a DP in France, because the French Surrender Level looked like it would be so favorable that the DP might be wasted... The French collapse triggered by the overrun of the British 2-5 armor unit changed that, and the one Western Allied DP caused all of French North Africa to become Free French.

None of the players thought this result "felt" right, and after the game the rule in this area was changed: a net result of "1" caused only Morocco to become Free French; and "2" added Algeria; and a "3" added Tunisia. Only a French Surrender Level of "3" can now lead to the result achieved by the Allies in this game.

This is a good example of how the rules to A World at War evolve – very slowly these days, but occasionally things occur in games that just don't seem fair.

French North Africa going Free French was obviously very annoying. In hindsight, it was a mistake to not put any DPs in France to modify the French Surrender Level.

Pacific: Attritions in China.

Winter 1940

Europe: Germany doesn't bomb Britain and instead builds, preparing for the invasion of Russia. Britain reinforces French North Africa.

The U.S. mobilizes in Europe on a die roll of "1", which is a big result.

Germany didn't bomb because they were trying to manage the USAT and didn't want the USAT increases from bombing, and because they needed to spend their BRPs on builds for Russia rather than rebuilding lost air.

Presumably this is also why Germany didn't attack Yugoslavia and Malta in Winter 1940. German air was transferred to the Mediterranean for a Spring 1941 attack.

Pacific: Attritions in China.

Spring 1941

Europe: The Axis take Malta. Germany produces a third air transport and a fourth specialized unit, and sets up for Barbarossa. Russia produces more interceptors. Just to be different, Russia builds a fort in Riga in order to try to hold the Baltic States – this probably won't be seen again. Russia produces two more interceptors.

The British continue to make progress in the Mediterranean.

Diplomatically the Axis put four DPs in the U.S., which ultimately delays their entry to Spring 1942. The Western Allies put their DPs in Finland instead, trying to leverage their strong *Gathering Storm* position. They fail with a bad die roll, but at least Finland stays neutral in 1941.

In the spirit of fair play (and to save time in case the Allies missed it), the Axis remind their opponents that the Axis airborne capability raises the possibility of airdrops on the Russian armor units behind the Russian front line. Unfortunately the Axis fail to mention what the Allies also forgot at first – that airdrops on enemy armor units trigger a +2 DM, not just the +1 DM associated with airdrops made without support ground attacks.

The Russians therefore warp their defense, both for Summer 1941 and in 1942, more than was necessary. This is a good example how rule knowledge is one (but not the only or the most important) part of being good at A World at War.

At this point in the war, it was the Axis assessment that they were losing. The Battle of the Atlantic was not going well and the British were marching through North Africa. The only hope remaining was in Russia.

Pacific: Attritions in China.

Summer 1941

Europe: Germany attacks Russia and surrounds almost all of the Russian army. Russia decides to attrition, rather than spending 15 BRPs on an offensive to allow for more infantry builds. Britain takes advantage of its strong economic position to open the Persian BRP route and starts to send BRPs to Russia via Murmansk.

Germany begins its bombing campaign, inflicting 19 BRPs of damage on a Ukrainian IC. This started Russia on the path to surrender – needlessly, it turned out.

It has been a long time since a serious German bombing against Russia has been seen, and this really can only occur as a result of Gathering Storm research.

Since no one could quite remember how this worked, the rules were consulted:

26.75 RUSSIAN ICs: If a Russian IC is bombed, attacked by flying bombs or rockets, or subject to a strategic atomic attack, Russia may either accept the BRP losses inflicted on the IC or eliminate the IC and incur the normal BRP losses associated with its loss (37.5). Russia may incur a BRP deficit rather than eliminate an IC which has been bombed.

The Axis thought was that there was no limit to the BRP damage that could be inflicted on ICs, but that was balanced by the fact that Russia could destroy the IC. The Allies pointed out that this wasn't much of a balance, because eventually so many ICs would have been destroyed that Russia would surrender, and that destroying ICs didn't even trigger a USAT increase.

It was agreed that unlimited damage couldn't be right, so the question was what the limit should be. One view (advanced by one Allied player) was that the limit should be the value of the IC being bombed, just as for other bombing targets. The Axis demurred, arguing (with some basis) that if that the rule were changed in that manner, the entire Axis bombing plan would have the rug pulled out from under it. No one disagreed with that, and it was decided to set the limit at the maximum possible value of the target IC (20 BRPs).

The only problem with this solution is that the rules actually cover the situation, and the “change” to a 10 BRP limit wouldn’t have been a change at all!

26.71 BRP LOSSES: The effects of strategic bombers, flying bombs and rockets are treated as “bombing effects” and are combined to determine BRPs losses and other bombing effects. BRP losses from the bombing of economic targets are deducted from the targeted major power’s BRP total.

A. LIMIT ON BRP LOSSES: The number of BRPs which may be lost to bombing against one hex in one turn is limited to the economic value of that hex. This does not prevent the creation of a firestorm (26.91) in hexes worth less than 25 BRPs, provided all other criteria are met; excess BRP losses are disregarded. The economic value of mapboard boxes are considered to be: Australia box: 10 BRPs; India box: 10 BRPs; Urals box: the Russian BRP base, minus 20 BRPs for Vladivostok and Irkutsk; U.S. boxes: unlimited.

The effects of this were unfortunate for Russia: not only did Russia lose more BRPs than it should have (and have its construction limit reduced accordingly), but Russia also was compelled to engage with its interceptors every turn, which led to air losses that wouldn’t normally occur. These two factors were the main components in the 1942 Russian surrender, although the way Russia played its Summer 1942 turn played a part as well!

The main cause of this problem was rust and lack of preparation time for both sides. In a game that pushes the envelope, it’s important to review the applicable rules and the options they provide.

Does this mean a Gathering Storm Axis bomber plan isn’t viable, at least against Russia? No, because Germany doesn’t have to commit completely to strategic bomber and interceptor production and can still whittle away at the Russian BRP level with a limited bomber force. What it really means is that strategic bombers aren’t a magic bullet to force a Russian surrender.

Pacific: Japan occupies French Indo-China and attritions in China.

Fall 1941

Europe: Germany captures Kiev, surrounds Dnepropetrovsk and Kharkov, and continues bombing. Some German air is transferred to Sicily. The British close in on Tripoli.

Pacific: Japan prepares to attack.

Winter 1941

Europe: Germany announces a second winter preparation result and the Russian winter roll is a “1”. Germany takes advantage of this by capturing Dnepropetrovsk and Kharkov. The front line is roughly historical, west of Leningrad, Moscow and Rostov. Rostov is firestormed. Germany fortifies Tripoli.

The ultra-conservative German attacks were a surprise – Germany could have taken one of the more difficult ICs, such as Rostov or Leningrad. Russia forgets to voluntarily eliminate the 3-5 armor unit it has in Riga, so it’s not available to defend in Summer 1942.

At this point, as we entered the 1942 YSS, we realized that the reduction in IC value upon capture made no sense, and was actually a vestige of an ancient rule that increased Russia’s BRP base by the “missing” 5 BRPs. That rule was scrapped many years ago, but somehow ICs remained as the only conquests that dropped in BRP value (decades ago the same applied to minor countries).

We therefore decided that ICs remain at full value when captured, although they could not increase in value if recaptured by Russia. This became the official rule after the convention.

Pacific: Japan sinks two American carriers and destroys all the oil at Pearl Harbor and invades the usual targets. Singapore falls and the Japanese push an armor next to Port Moresby.

Spring 1942

Europe: Germany bombs and prepares for its Summer 1942 attack. Germany declares war on the U.S.

Russia forms an overrun-proof line backed by just enough to prevent deep exploitation in the north and south, leaving some room in the center. This may well not have been the best defense and Russia would have been better off just giving up Leningrad and Moscow.

Despite maximum BRP grants, Russia has 7 AAF unbuilt going into Summer 1942, mainly as a result of German bombing.

Pacific: Japan takes the rest of its normal conquests, takes all of the Solomons, and moves into Efate to threaten New Caledonia. Port Moresby is isolated. The US responds by heavily defending New Caledonia in an attempt to stop the Japanese advance.

Summer 1942

Europe: Germany surrounds the northern half of the Russian army. As an aside, Riga falls. Russia attritions, which is probably a mistake, because the number of unbuilt Russian units are exceeding the Russia rebuild rate. Tactically the Russian attrition is clever and the units around Moscow are saved, but strategically this sets Russia up for a Winter 1942 surrender.

In the Mediterranean, the Axis hold only a fortified Tripoli and Ethiopia, which the Western Allies are in the process of conquering.

Pacific: Japan takes Port Moresby but otherwise goes on the defensive against the U.S. and declares war on Russia, takes Vladivostok and destroys most of the Russian forces in Siberia.

This came as a surprise to the Allies, if only because this is exactly what has happened in three of the last four conventions. It might be this has become "standard play" in Gathering Storm-A World at War games, but this depressing thought is unlikely to survive the rules changes which came out of this year's convention. Which is good news for Japan, because it makes for a boring Pacific theater.

As the Western Allies contemplated the invasion of France, everyone revealed their doubts about the excessive effectiveness of CVEs, which could provide all the ground support for such an invasion, even though historically CVEs weren't even used in Europe. We therefore decided that CVEs should only be able to provide one-third of the ground support for seaborne invasions (ground support equal to the strength of the invading ground units), with the other two-thirds having to come from land-based AAF or NAS or carrier-based NAS. This worked perfectly and became the official rule shortly after the convention, as we discovered other players had the same concerns.

The Axis were looking at the imminent surrender of Italy; this was not good. Germany will do what it can to stall the inevitable while trying to get Russia down for the count. Fortunately, Russia is looking very shaky.

Japan had managed to set up its perimeter, which was even bigger than planned with the addition of Port Moresby. The defense of the Gilberts was aided by a defensive port. The U.S. was still timid with the loss of two carriers. So Japan had two choices – push the perimeter or go after Russia. It should be obvious what the German vote was for!

I agree that we have seen too many Japanese attacks on Russia, although I still don't know that it is good play for Japan. I had never tried it before though, so I was definitely willing to try something that was new for me.

Fall 1942

Europe: Germany heads for the northern edge of the mapboard to complete a deep encirclement of Leningrad and Moscow, capturing Gorki on the way. Other German forces head for Kuybyshev. Moscow is firestormed. The Russians make their first decent move, abandoning the north and strongly defending Stalingrad and Rostov.

Pacific: Japan starts to lock down its perimeter and tries to push toward Irkutsk.

Winter 1942

Europe: Despite a winter roll of “2”, Germany can do no more than firestorm, then capture, Kuybyshev. The Russian resistance level drops below zero and Russia surrenders:

- Western Allied major powers at war: = **+2**
- Russian DPs: 3 + 1 (BRPs) – 1 (Vladivostok) = **+3**
- Russian ICs: 8 (Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkov, Gorki and Kuybyshev have been captured) = **+1**
- Firestorms = **-3**
- Unbuilt units = **-5**

At this point a serious rule discussion ensued, not because anyone was unclear as to what the Russian surrender rules were, but rather we were unsure of what they should be.

Several things were clear:

The first point was that Russia would surrender unless it burned its BRP base by building units (even then it was close). The Allies thought that would be bad because Germany could still take Leningrad and Moscow in Summer 1943 and probably force a Russian surrender then, because there were likely to be one or two more firestorms.

The second point was that, despite losing Leningrad and Moscow in the peace (they were isolated), Russia would rebuild its units, the firestorm effects would disappear at the rate of one per turn, and

Russia would re-enter the war at full strength in Fall 1943. This seemed like a very poor and unrealistic payoff for the Axis, considering that their position in the Mediterranean was collapsing and the Western Allies were developing a credible threat to invade France in 1943.

The “standard play”, seen in both the convention games referred to above, was for the Axis to withdraw everything it could from Russia, leaving only the units that legally had to remain (such as the lucky Vlasovs). The Russian steamroller would then strike empty space for the first two or three turns, arriving at the Polish and Rumanian frontiers around mid-1944. This also seemed unrealistic and unsatisfying to everyone.

Ultimately, we improvised some rules that: a) required a sizable Axis force to remain in Russia in order to delay Russian re-entry; and b) delaying Russian re-entry until Winter 1943 (and that only because the Western Allied succeeded in invading France in 1943).

The ultimately effect of these improvisations was probably to extend the war in Europe by a turn or so. We still felt we were missing something.

*And indeed we were, if the post-convention rule change in Russia turns out to be right. That change is simplicity in itself – **Russia doesn't surrender**. This cuts the Gordian knot that we wrestled with at the convention. The entire paradigm of Russia surrendering, giving up isolated ICs, then re-entering the war after rebuilding, just doesn't work as intended.*

Instead, if Russia's resistance level drops to 0 or less, Russia's economy stagnates and its automatic per-turn 10 BRP IC increases are on hold until the emergency passes. In addition, if the Russian resistance level becomes negative (-1 or less), Russia removes 20 BRPs of units from its force (potential and actual: mobilized units on the time track are removed first, then unbuilt units, then units that are on the board).

German success in Russia therefore weakens Russia economically and militarily, but Russia keeps on fighting, so the issues of how many Axis forces should remain in Russia and when Russia comes back into the war disappear.

It was impossible to work this out at the convention, though.

Pacific: The Pacific was quiet, as the U.S. built up before trying to take the strategic offensive.

Spring 1943

Europe: With the Russian front shut down, Germany goes over to the defensive. The Western Allies invade Sicily (an additional modifier is needed to force an Italian surrender) and Brittany (where an opportunity to get ashore presented itself). The Axis conquer Greece, which gives Italy a diplomatic modifier to balance the loss of Sicily.

Pacific: The U.S. invades the Solomons, but makes an instructive mistake in the resulting major naval battle. The U.S. uses some of its carrier air to knock out the Japanese land-based air, but this allows Japan two large air strikes vs. one American air strike, with the end result that the American carrier losses are significantly greater than the Japanese losses.

The Pacific players estimated that this setback probably cost the U.S. at least a turn in the Pacific, which ultimately led to a Japanese one-turn victory.

The U.S. was not well positioned for the invasion of Santa Cruz, but didn't want to lose a turn getting into position. But the resulting naval battle cost them a turn anyway; only two carriers were sunk (as were three Japanese carriers) but five were damaged. This meant that the U.S. wouldn't get a huge carrier superiority until 1944 which slowed down what they could accomplish.

Italy was about to go under, so Germany attacked Greece and conquered Athens to help Italy out. This bought Italy several turns.

Summer 1943

Europe: Because of Athens, Italy hangs on. The Western Allies make limited progress in France, as they are facing most of the German army.

Pacific: The U.S. regroups.

Fall 1943

Europe: Both the Mediterranean and western fronts are fairly quiet, as the Germans will get a significant attrition advantage in the next turn, thanks to their training in combat conditions in several Russian winters.

Pacific: The U.S. prepares for a renewed offensive, as more and more carriers come off the slipways.

Winter 1943

Europe: The Western Allies force an Italian surrender, hold in France, and Russia re-enters the war, attacking in the Ukraine.

Pacific: The U.S. takes Guadalcanal.

Japan was definitely in "hang on as long as possible" mode. The submarine warfare was getting more lethal and the U.S. was now getting on a roll. The good news was that Japan still held Port Moresby, the Gilberts, and the northern Solomons. So the U.S. had a lot of water to cover.

Spring 1944

Europe: The Western Allies invade Greece, hoping to create enough fires in different places to cause the Axis some anxiety. Russia takes what it can, but hasn't yet reached the Polish frontier.

The biggest setback to the Western Allies is their research roll for atomic general research. With five RPs, they roll a "1", missing their third breakthrough.

It's sad, but true, that the failure would still have given the Western Allies only three atomic breakthroughs. The Western Allied atomic rolls have been bad throughout the game, and in 1944 and 1945 they only got worse. There was to be no atomic miracle in this game.

Well, no atomic miracle until the end of 1945...

Pacific: Nothing dramatic happens in the Pacific.

Summer 1944

Europe: Germany is pushed on all sides and slowly gives way. Both sides can see the writing on the wall – the Allies will conquer Germany, but not in time.

Pacific: The U.S. invades Manus and isolates Port Moresby, Lae, and Rabaul. Progress is now inevitable, but the Americans are behind the historical schedule.

Fall 1944

Europe: Germany continues its controlled retreat on all fronts. There is no way the experienced, expert Axis players will panic or blunder.

Pacific: The U.S. continues to advance, but the logistical barriers that slow the American drive to Japan can't be overcome.

At this point we were in a very strong position and one that we could play without much risk of a blunder. The entire goal was to limit the Allied advances (they are not stoppable), assuming we will lose two hexes a turn in Europe and one port a turn in the Pacific.

Winter 1944

Europe: The Axis continue to give ground, but the Allies are still not at Germany's frontiers.

Pacific: The U.S. takes Palau, Rabaul, and Lae, and positions itself for further advances.

Spring 1945

The Allies had only one faint hope to avoid loss – a good research roll for uranium separation. This was unlikely because the Allies had only two atomic breakthroughs, but they at least had a modifier from the enhanced spy ring they obtained in *Gathering Storm*, which gave them an additional [+1] modifier. It turns out the super-spy photocopied the wrong files, however, because the Western Allies finished off their poor atomic effort with a "2" research roll, which meant no atomic bombs until the end of 1945.

On this note, the game ended, as it was clear both Germany and Japan would survive until the end of 1945.

When the U.S. Pacific player and the Japanese player plotted out the Allied advance in 1945, it became pretty clear that with one bomb Japan would probably hold on until Spring 1946 but with two bombs would fall in Winter 1945. The U.S. had one uranium bomb and one untested plutonium bomb. So they went ahead and tried the untested plutonium bomb and rolled a '6'! So finally, after years of bad luck, the Allies did get one good atomic roll.

In Closing...

This game was enjoyable and instructive throughout, with no disputes, arguments or incidents (not that anyone was expecting any!) and was especially fruitful in exposing some rule issues that had lain dormant until now.

The Allies were rusty and showed it – we played better as the game went on, but through a combination of bad luck (attritions) and bad play (the overrun of the British 2-5 armor unit) frittered away the initial Allied advantage out of Gathering Storm. Russia surrendered because it ran out of BRPs for builds, which was an unfortunate result of getting the strategic bombing effects wrong, but both Allied players thought Russia could have defended better. This is easier to say than to do against a strong Axis attack, though!

The same could be said in the Pacific: a bad result at Pearl Harbor and one naval defeat was enough for Japan to hold out for a victory, despite having attacked Russia.

Jason and Randy simply don't give you much, other than an excellent, enjoyable game!

The game was awesome and exciting. The Allies were definitely winning at the start of the game and were still winning before Barbarossa, but some good luck for the Axis and some tactical mistakes by the Russians allowed the Axis to come back. Japan got lucky at Pearl Harbor and won their first naval battle, which gave them a lead that the Allies couldn't overcome, even after Japan lost the rest of its carriers at Manus (Japan didn't stop fighting, even though it didn't normally win).

Bruce and Eric are tough opponents, and it was a hard-fought and great game.