

# The Blitzkrieg Story: 1940



An Operational Megagame  
by Paul & Phillip Howarth



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## The Venue

**TRAVEL: St Mary's Church & Conference Centre, Bramall Lane, Sheffield, S2 4QZ**

**CAR** - There is car parking available in the grounds. We may have to move cars afterwards, but there is local, free suitable street parking after 5pm (Sheffield United are playing at 8pm).

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT** - It's a 10 minute walk from Sheffield Central Stations.

**REFRESHMENTS:** Tea, coffee and soft drinks will be provided throughout the day and there is an Aldi and Waitrose within a two-minute walk of the venue, depending on your budget...

**DRESSING UP:** This is not an expectation at games and given the venue and subject of this game, I would ask that you leave the uniforms at home for the day.

**PHOTOS:** will be taken on the day for social media and the Story-living Games website - please let us know if you don't want your photo taking.

**RESOLVING ISSUES:** This includes rules clarifications, a role which is not matching expectations or disputes with other players. Speak with umpires and we will do our best to resolve there and then. Please accept their rulings with good grace and feel free to discuss further in the pub, when there will be less pressure.

w/c 26 July Cast list confirmed & Narrative game begins (see p. 8)

### Timetable for Friday 6 August

1400-1530 Arrival & Set-up  
1530-1700 Planning, FAQs  
1730 Pub/Restaurant

### Timetable for Saturday 7 August

0900-0915 Arrival, Booking In  
0915-0945 Opening Briefing, FAQ  
0945-1030 Commander Briefings  
1030-1115 Day 1 – 30 min turn  
1115-1145 Day 2 – 30 min turn  
Game continues with 20-30 min turns until:  
1615-1640 Debriefing  
1640-1700 Clear up and Leave

Two 20 minute Tea Break/Halt Orders may be called at the end of any turn before 1530.

Within that time players will need to complete their tasks whilst communicating effectively.

## Designer's Notes on the Game System

It's now more than 80 years since the term 'Blitzkrieg' ('foolish' according to Hitler) became widely known after the invasion of Poland. Operational games are my favourite type of megagame and unfortunately in short supply, so I thought it was about time I designed a system to try out some new ideas I've been mulling over after working with Rob Cooper to bring 'Not Over By Christmas' up North. It was tempting to try and develop a double blind game, with a completely hidden map, but this usually requires a large number of umpires to adjudicate and feedback, often with significant 'lag' between orders and resolution. For many megagamers this is a feature, not a flaw, but bearing in mind a desire to encourage more people to try operational games, an open map has been chosen for this run. Also, when you spend time and money on a map and playing pieces, I do think it's a shame that players rarely see the fruits of your labours.



Common perceptions of the German armed forces in early years of the Second World War involve a well-oiled machine, running rings around the enemy and overcoming all odds through aggressive exploitation and combined arms. Certainly, Hitler made for a convenient scapegoat when German Commanders were being quoted by western militaries and authors, who had limited access to a balanced perspective on the Eastern Front. In recent years various myths have been addressed, leading to a more realistic appraisal of German capabilities and the context they operated in. The game will try to present some of the problems faced by both sides, a contest which should be a little more even than conventional wisdom suggests. The two games in the series so far, *Czech Mate '38* and *Hold the Line '39* have provided opportunities to test the system and there is the chance to add in naval aspects and technological advances in line with developments in historical campaigns.



Open maps themselves, of course, present their own challenges, including enough familiarity with rules to move turns along quickly, the increased difficulty of umpires in adjudicating most likely outcomes, as well as fog of war, hidden movement and what is known as 'friction' – the difference between what a commander intends happening and what actually happens when plans meet reality. This can be replicated to a degree through using several layers of command, 'blind' counters and physically separating layers of command.

## Blockspiel

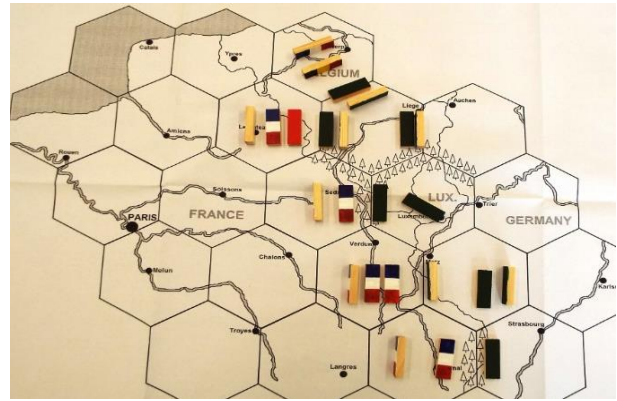
The original inspiration for this system came from watching 'A Bridge Too Far' and other films featuring map rooms with great big, painted wooden blocks and national flags on maps, often with some token German for effect and subtitles, e.g. "Wo ist PATTON?!" The visual effect appealed to me as a starting point.



In addition, wooden blocks have become more popular in a number of relatively recent games. Richard Borg used them in the *Commands and Colours* series with a hex map, usually to fight a full ancient or Napoleonic battle and using stickers to differentiate unit types, with relatively simple rules. The system and other wargames has also influenced my thinking on Staff Points and dice.

I must also credit my brother Phillip's game 'Megamunda' for implementing a faster combat resolution system, with one roll to determine both success and effects.

At the smallest skirmish level there are games such as Urban Operations, modelling modern warfare and adding a layer by rotating blocks to show different strengths. I then started to think about using all the sides of a block to try and reduce clutter on the map.



I've also been influenced by games such as Phil Sabin's 1914 (above right, with wooden Jenga pieces from a run by Bob Cordery). Whilst I felt more detail was required for a megagame with corps commanders in it, the idea that tracking individual strength points was 'below their pay grade' and could also speed up play was worth trying. Likewise, combat resolution has been kept deliberately simple, with the assumption that lower-level commanders are doing the best they can. There are a limited number of cards in play which will represent those times when it's not the case.

I'm also aware that the game for the land commanders is often more involved than that of the air commanders, so in this game the respective high command players will take on this latter responsibility once the game begins. As ever, there's a compromise between trying to replicate actual command situations and ensuring players have a good day. For this reason too, political roles will be played by Umpires, due to the limited role for them within the timeframe of the game. A broad outline of their respective viewpoints at the start of the conflict will be found in the briefing.

The main body of the game covers the military operations by both sides in which the outcome is entirely dependent on player decisions. There is a historical baseline against which to measure success and the key for all players is as much about teamwork and good communication as it is about strategic brilliance.

With thanks to Phillip, Rob Cooper, Tony Morphet, Pete Sizer and Pennine Megagames for advice, playtesting and the regular application of common sense when I get carried away with another new idea.

Paul Howarth

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## The Chain of Command

This game focuses on military decisions as much as possible and therefore in this game you are part of a chain of command which will need to be observed as far as possible. You can disagree with senior commanders but you may not wilfully disobey them without consequence. The game simulates a real military hierarchy and will allow negative consequences for failure or disobedience.

This means that, as in real life, no commander has a completely free hand to do as they like. National political authorities (represented by Umpires) have the power to replace formation commanders. This might be done by moving a new player into the role from another team, or by swapping roles within the team. Sacking like this isn't done for being unlucky or losing a battle. It is done for obvious incompetence or blatant insubordination. If you like your role, then the best way to hang onto it is to be good at it, or lucky.

## Game Day Overview and Principles

- Each turn will consist of alternate movement and combat, with initiative (who goes first) decided separately on the map. Each side will have a set number of initiative cards at the start of the game which they commit to seize the initiative each turn. They do not know how many their opponent has. Allied players will struggle to win the initiative on more than the odd occasion. Accept this.
- Hidden movement and maps add greatly to both the fog of war and logistics of running a game. Instead, dummy units and deploying only corps markers initially should highlight the need for recce and encourage a degree of caution.
- Command and Control are crucial to success on the battlefield. Units without orders will be passive unless an umpire rules otherwise. Commanders will have limited information and capacity in a confused situation. Therefore, they will use Staff Points to activate and re-order units. The number of points will vary between players but there are unlikely to be enough for every unit to be doing something each turn other than marching or . The planning cycle for prepared attacks in particular will occupy a good number of tokens. Plan ahead and make sure your superiors or underlings are aware.
- As Army and Corps commanders, there will be a minimum of record-keeping relating to regiments and their ability to fight. It is assumed that there is a replacement system in place for units so there is no tracking of 'hits' or 'steps'. Regiments/Brigades (infantry) and Battalions (armour), as the lowest units represented, are fit to fight or not and can be destroyed as viable units. The main consideration will be their 'posture' (prepared attack/dug in/move/exploit) and whether the unit is fit to fight (Disordered or not). Disordered units are weak and vulnerable to easy destruction/dispersal as a fighting unit.
- Commanders must decide for themselves whether divisions (rather than regiments) are fit for the front-line or need replacing. Reserves are important in this game. If you have assembled your units correctly, secured local superiority and have terrain in your favour, then you should have a very high chance of success.
- Although it is a commonly accepted 'rule' that attackers need odds of 3:1 to likely secure victory, the statistics of those such as Trevor Dupuy do not seem to back this up and other issues should be considered. <http://www.dupuyinstitute.org/blog/2016/07/11/trevor-dupuy-and-the-3-1-rule/>
- What will be a crucial factor for commanders is the use of terrain, artillery support in the attack/defence and motorised troops in exploiting breakthroughs. As this is 1940 Stukas and Airborne troops will give an edge.
- Supply will be heavily abstracted within the 'Staff Point' mechanism given the time represented in game. Infantry troops can march regardless, but a key issue will be fuel for motorised troops and ammunition for attacks and artillery. High Command will allocate Staff Points to Army Group teams to distribute further. These will be fed into the game through identified supply routes which have a limited capacity. Corps Commanders must decide which resources to bring in for divisions and how to allocate them.
- 'Zones of Control' are a common feature in many wargames which use hexes, but are not a major feature of Blockspiel, a historical campaign which saw very fluid lines and operations. In this game, the commander must decide whether to concentrate his divisions for movement or attack, or spread them to cover more ground. If your units are caught in movement mode then they are weaker. Certain prepared defences (Belgian Forts, Maginot Line, etc.) which occupy a hex may also target adjacent ones as normal artillery do.
- The air game is designed such that players should have time to learn how to develop a rhythm when it comes to operations. Air power (certainly for the Allies) is yet to become a major factor in regard to the land battle. Having secured air superiority, the main decision will be whether to focus on bombing lines of communication or urban areas. Close Air Support as we know it is not an effective option and tends to result in heavy air casualties, although the use of Stukas can be very effective at times in the campaign, when a request could see support to the *Schwerpunkt* arrive within half an hour, due to mobile Forward Observers. They can't be everywhere though and the Luftwaffe need to prioritise.

# The Blitzkrieg Story, 1940 - Setting the Scene

## Game Setting

There's a personal interest in the events of May 1940 for the Howarth family, sustained by stories told by our grandfather and the book he wrote about his wartime experiences. Harry Howarth was a somewhat rebellious private soldier in the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers and part of 70<sup>th</sup> Brigade. A driver in a machine-gun battalion, they were sent to fulfil British obligations to France, on condition they wouldn't be used in combat until fully trained, a commitment which lasted until German tanks rolled out of the Ardennes. His war could have ended on the retreat to Dunkirk, but having 'acquired' a lorry he and his friend picked up other stragglers, avoided German reconnaissance units and saw all the detritus of a British Army which had been fully motorised weeks before. They made their way home via the Mole, only to be sent out to Singapore just before the surrender and his time as a Japanese POW on the Railway started.

As with previous games, this period pits two sides utilising combined arms to varying degrees, still reliant on marching infantry, horses and railways to secure their successes. The Germans did not have it all their own way and unfortunately for the Allies, a mismanaged counter attack at Arras deprived them of the opportunity to inflict a serious reverse on the advancing invaders. It is unlikely that the final French surrender will fit in this timeframe and so the focus will be on the first fortnight. Certainly, based on previous games, we anticipate at least 12 turns, which should allow us to see how the war is likely to go in this reality.

## Game Structure

The game will replicate several layers of command and make use of physical distancing and time pressures to add a degree of friction and fog of war. Map Commanders will be able to run through some sample combats and confirm assumptions before it starts. They will begin with approximately a dozen formations at most (usually moving as hidden 'blind' counters, with reinforcements to follow. As it's an operational game with a very limited timescale, political effects will be introduced by Umpires.



High Command will be asked to make a number of limited decisions which will have an impact on timescales, available resources, reinforcements and some capabilities. Whilst Umpires adjudicate the impact of decisions, national teams will be able to make final plans all together before the game starts. High Command will also run through the air game.

After that the game will run through without team times. However, each side will have the option of calling one 20 minute tea break/halt order each at any point and game Umpires will retain the option of insisting on one. This worked well in previous games and turns tended to rattle along around the 15-20 minute mark after that.

As it's an open map game with a fast tempo, the fog of war and logistics are more difficult to replicate than in a closed system. However, army corps headquarters will be the only identified markers at the start of the game until recce and contacts identify component units and the use of command counters limits commanders, forcing them to prioritise. The air game mainly focuses on recce, logistics interdiction and terror bombing (if you're a shabby Nazi), with more limited opportunities for effective ground support.

## Team Structure

The Germans will operate in two Army Group teams, likely 3-4 players and a high command. The Allies will have several double-player army commands at the start, with limited liaison opportunities between them and high command which should restrict the ability to allocate resources effectively to counter-attack. As the campaign develops they might well need to create new units and find commanders from the high command team or re-allocate players (e.g. Dutch players moving into French reserve commander positions).

## Role List

**Umpires: Paul Howarth, Phillip Howarth and remote political Umpire**

**German High Command (2-3) Responsibilities:**

### **Pre-game**

- Production of *Signal* magazine by Thursday 5 August
- Plan with Army Groups for Case Yellow, in line with Fuhrer Directives 6-11
- Confirmation of any re-allocation of forces between Army Groups A & B

### **Each turn**

- Running of Maginot Line game to maintain pressure and pin French reserves
- Army Group Staff Point allocation
- Commitment of OKH Reserves

**Army Group A & B Command Teams (2 each) Responsibilities:**

- Pre-game Plan with High Command for Case Yellow, in line with Fuhrer Directives 6-11
- Each turn: Army Staff Point allocation
- Each turn: Air Game to contest Air Superiority, allocate Recce, CAS & Bombing

### **Army Commanders**

- Pre-game: Familiarise with core map game rules, including Staff Points
- Pre-game: Confirm operational objectives with Army Groups
- Pre-game: Allocate numbered blind counters to units
- Each turn: Allocate Staff Points, Carry out Military activity

**Allies - High Command & Air Force (2-3) Responsibilities:**

### **Pre-game**

- Production of *War Weekly* magazine by Thursday 5 August.
- Plan for a response to potential German invasion of Belgium/attack on France.
- Confirmation with Umpires of objectives by Friday 6 August

### **Each turn**

- Running of Maginot Line game to protect the soil of France
- French Army Staff Point allocation
- Commitment of French Reserves, subject to approval
- Air Game to contest Air Superiority, allocate Recce, Close Air Support & Bombing

**National Command Teams (1-3 each) Responsibilities**

- Pre-game: Familiarise with core map game rules, including Staff Points
- Pre-game: Confirm objectives for defence against German aggression
- Each turn: Allocate Staff Points, Carry out Military activity

## Pre-Game Day: Establishing the Narrative – Momentum vs Inertia

The debates about simply re-enacting history rather than exploring alternatives or giving players too much latitude apply particularly to scenarios such as 1940. A brief look at certain books and the History Channel suggests that by the time the first gliders swooped down on top of Eben Emael Fortress it was all over bar the shouting. However, just because a series of events came together (occasionally very fortuitously) for Germany, it doesn't necessarily mean that in a game the German players should accrue all the benefits without taking similar risks and sustaining *Momentum*, to keep the initiative. The German High Command

At the same time, Allied Command and Control issues, combined with international diplomacy and the legacy of 30's military thinking are a bit of a millstone to ignore. Certainly the fact that the victors of conflicts tend to be somewhat complacent means there is a degree of *Inertia* which Allied players can try to head off before the game. Opinions differ of the value of various decisions and events behind the speed with which German forces overran the West. And we know the saying about everyone having one.

There has been some recent debate about the utility 'Wizard wheezes/cunning plans' (which bend the rules or fill in the blanks) in megagaming. My personal feeling is that they are usually too *ad hoc* and poorly communicated across the whole game to add a great deal to operational games on the day. Similarly, matrix games with their arguments can be of some use, but ideally need time to consider and compose arguments. However, having done some work recently using heat maps and looking at root cause analysis and marginal gains, I'd like to give players who (think they) know their history, the chance to influence the context. I therefore present...

## The Historical Significance Campaign Matrix

Consider both axes when evaluating Event			Impact on Campaign Outcome				
			Marginal	Minor	Moderate	Significant	Critical
Qualitative Probability and % Range	Almost Certain	95%+	6	12	18	24	30
	Very Likely	75-95%	5	10	15	20	25
	More likely than not	50-74%	4	8	12	16	20
	Less than likely	21-49%	3	6	9	12	15
	Unlikely	5-20%	2	4	6	8	10
	Very Unlikely	<5%	1	2	3	4	5

In essence, both High Commands will produce TWO products:

- A) A short document in the style of a periodical of the era. [Signal](#) or [War Weekly](#) this will use period pictures and re-purpose them with new captions to reference the following...
- B) A number of key events/capabilities, placed at the relevant places on your Matrix, no more than one per box, with the points cost indicated. You may choose to identify a number of marginal gains in Team GB Cycling fashion, or select some big hitters which will be discussed in advance with Command teams. This allows me the opportunity to consider game balance and whether you're being optimistic in your assessment. Pre-game these will be rolled for and some adjustments to rules/resource made, so that all are aware at the start of the game.
- **German High command** (120 points to spend) are responsible for explaining why things went well **historically** (e.g. Spain and Poland for *Luftwaffe* high sortie rate or the development of the Stuka). This should allow them to maintain high operational tempo and momentum, securing additional initiative cards.
- **Allied High Command** (90 points to spend) have the chance to **rewrite history** and show how the Phony War could have been better utilised, to much greater effect and overcome the inertia.

# Case Yellow – The Forces

The main focus for this game is land forces, with subordinate air support and these are organised as below:

## Germany

Two Army Groups (A & B), each of Army Corps (total division numbers in brackets), with a high command team responsible for Luftwaffe during the game. Army Group C is not played at the map.

<b>Head of OKH: Generaloberst Walther v. Brauchitsch</b> <b>Chief of Staff: Generaloberst Franz Halder</b> Plus up to 2 staff officers: <b>Keitel, Jodl</b> AG Commanders to play the air game whilst Army Commanders are running the ground war. <i>Luftflotte 3 - Army Group A – 16 Modern/6 Obsolete fighters 46 Bombers, 6 CAS, 24 Transport</i> <i>Luftflotte 2 – Army Group B - 36 Modern/8 Obsolete fighters 24 Bombers, 16 CAS, 24 Transport</i>				
<b>OKH Reserves – Require Hitler’s Approval</b>				
<b>2nd Army</b>		<b>9th Army</b>		
CO von Weichs		CO Blaskowitz		
VI, IX, XXVI, Corps 9 Infantry Divisions		XVIII, XXXXII, XXXXIII Corps 9 Infantry Divisions		
<b>Army Group A – von Runstedt</b>				
<b>4th Army (12)</b>	<b>14th Army (9)</b>	<b>16th Army (7)</b>	<b>Panzer Group Kleist (8)</b>	<b>Group A Reserves (6)</b>
CO von Kluge	CO List	CO von Busch	CO von Kleist	CO Stumme
II, V, VIII, XV corps 2 Panzer Divisions. 10 Infantry Divisions.	III, VI, XVIII Corps 1 Mountain Division. 8 Infantry Divisions.	VII, XIII, XVIII Corps 7 Infantry Divisions	XIV, XXXVI, XIX Corps 5 Panzer Divisions 3 Mot Inf Divisions <i>GrossDeutschland Regt.</i>	XXXX Corps 6 Infantry Divisions
<b>Army Group B – von Bock</b>				
<b>6th Army (12)</b>		<b>18th Army (4)</b>	<b>Group B Reserves (10)</b>	
CO von Reichenau		CO von Kuchler	CO von Both	
IV, XI, XVI, XXVII Corps 2 Panzer Divisions. 10 Infantry Divisions.		X, XXVI Corps 1 Cavalry Division 3 Infantry Divisions <i>SS Regt Adolf Hitler</i>	1 Panzer Division 1 Mot Inf Division 1 Parachute Division 1 Airlanding Division 6 Infantry Divisions	

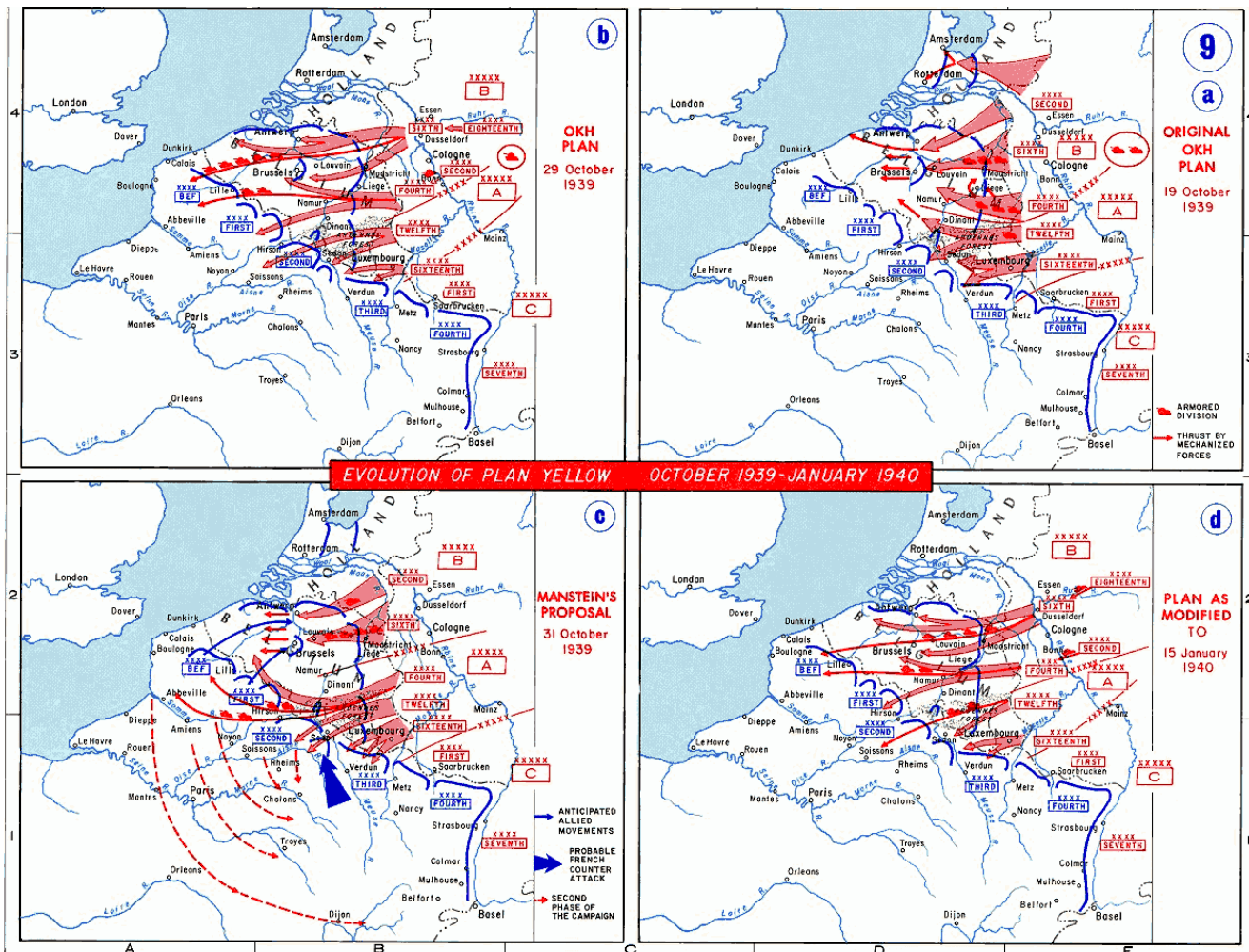


## The Allies

<b>French Commander-in-Chief:</b> Général d'armée Maurice Gamelin (Remote Umpire) <b>Deputy Commander in Chief (NE):</b> Général d'armée Alphonse Joseph Georges (Remote player)			
<b>Air Force:</b> 15 Modern/6 Obsolete Fighters, 6 Modern/2 Obsolete Bombers Army Group C-in-C to play the air game whilst Army Commanders are running the ground war.			
<b>Other Army Groups</b>		<b>Armoured Reserve (5)</b>	
<i>Historically, 5 divisions were taken from further south to contain the breakout. If necessary, more may become available to support efforts, but will significantly denude the Maginot Line.</i>		4 Armd Divs (DCR) 1 Mot Div	
<b>First French Army Group</b> Général d'armée Gaston Billotte + 2 Army Commanders			
<b>First Army (9+1)</b>	<b>Second Army (7)</b>	<b>Seventh Army (6)</b>	<b>Ninth Army (9)</b>
CO Blanchard	CO Huntziger	CO Giraud	CO Stumme
Cav Corps – 2 Lt Mech Div III Corps – 1 Mot, 2 Inf Div IV Corps – 1 Mot, 1 Inf Div V Corps – 1 Inf, 1 Res Div Belgian VII Corps (att.) 8 Air Recce Sdns	Cav Corps – 2 Lt Cav Div (Armd) X Corps – 1 Inf, 2 Res Div XVIII Corps – 1 Inf, 1 Res Div Reserves – 2 Tank Batts, 2 Inf Regt 5 Air Recce Sdns	I Corps – 1 Lt Mech, 1 Mot Div XVI – 1 Mot Div Reserves – 1 Inf, 2 Res Divs 4 Air Recce Sdns	II Corps - 1 Lt Cav (Armd) 1 Mot Div XI Corps – 1 Lt Cav (Armd), 2 Res Div XXXXI Corps – 2 Res Div Reserves 1 Inf, 1 Res Div 5 Air Recce Sdns
<b>Belgium</b>			
<b>C-in-C:</b> King Leopold			
<b>Air Force:</b> 1 Modern, 5 Obsolete Fighters, 10 Obsolete Lt Bombers/Recce			
<b>Field Army</b>	<b>Fortress</b>	<b>Special Units</b>	
I Corps – 2 Inf Div	III Corps (Liege) – 2 Inf Div	Force K – 1 Cav Div, 1 Inf Regt	
II Corps – 3 Inf Div		4 x Ind. Tank Coy	
IV Corps – 3 Inf Div (2 Res)	VII Corps (Namur) – 1 Inf Div, 1 Inf Regt	Coastal Inf Div	
V Corps – (2 Res)			
VI Corps – 2 Inf Div			
CAV Corps – 1 Cav, 2 Inf Div			
<b>Netherlands</b>			
<b>C-in-C:</b> Winkelman			
<b>Field Army</b>	<b>Frontier Forces</b>		
I Corps – 2 Inf Div	Approx. 30 Regt's worth of Reserve and Frontier Battalions, guarding defence lines, interior objectives. Static, poor quality.		
II Corps – 2 Inf Div			
III Corps – 2 Inf Div, 1 Mot Regt			
IV Corps – 2 Inf Div			
V Corps – 2 Inf Div			
CAV Corps – 1 Cav, 2 Inf Div			
<b>Great Britain</b>			
<b>C-in-C:</b> Lord Gort			
<b>RAF (14 Group &amp; Advanced Air Striking Force):</b> 8 Modern/2 Obsolete Fighter, 8 Modern/8 Obsolete Bombers, 8 Recce			
<b>British Expeditionary Force</b>	<b>Reinforcements</b>		
I Corps – 3 Inf Div	51 <sup>st</sup> Infantry Division		
II Corps – 3 Inf Div	1 Lt Tank Bde		
III Corps – 3 Inf Div	1 Inf Tank Bde		
LOC Troops – 3 Inf Div (Res)	2 Inf Bde (1 Guards)		
2 Lt Tank Bde, 1 Inf Tank Bde			

## Area of Operations

This is the historical evolution of Case Yellow. As part of the pre-game is determining exactly when and where the Germans will attack, as well as Allied preparations during the Phony War, it is anticipated that there will be some divergence.



For various reasons, including security breaches, the plan for Case Yellow evolved dramatically and the German High Command may decide to move troops around between Army Groups A & B, although Army Group C is a done deal. Both sides should assume that the Maginot Line up to the Army Group A/C boundary have German troops committed against it, awaiting the order to move. Each turn High Command will conduct reces, attempting to pin/hold enemy troops in position, whilst freeing up their own troops or even attempting an early offensive.











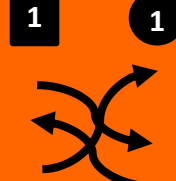
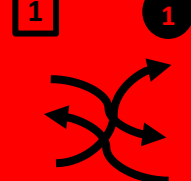
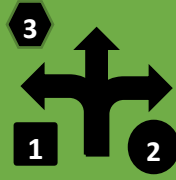
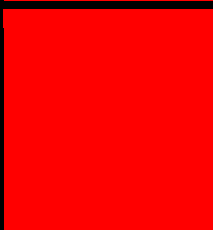
In turn, the Allied teams will identify some separate objectives, based on their historical commitments. As part of the narrative game, they may wish to propose a more coherent response, but this will be a significant investment of their points.

## Key Information to bear in mind when planning and playing:

- Each turn represents **24 hours**
- Each hex represents **7 miles**
- Access to the map will be limited to tactical players so you should take advantage of the tea break/halt order to coordinate and discuss next steps.
- **Staff Points (SP): 1 cm cubes or cylinders**, representing planning capacity and supplies reaching the right place at the right time. The regular supply of these may be disrupted during the game. These are usually coloured by Army.
- **Main Supply Routes and Dumps: Coloured stickers (by Army, to match those on units)** The Allies, particularly Dutch and Belgian troops, will have more pre-committed SPs and additional Points will initially be committed to armies a turn in advance. This will give German commanders more flexibility in the opening stages at least as they can place stickers each turn.
- **Corps HQs:** National colours, labelled and with two numbers – the first is the total number of SPs which may be distributed each turn. The second is supply/support unit range in hexes.
- **Unit Cubes (5cm):** 1 infantry, cavalry or armour **regiment/brigade** in national colours.
- The side which is uppermost on a cube or counter signifies its current **posture**. It requires **SP** to rotate the cube, (except for units disordered by combat).
- **Troop Counters (3cm) in assorted colours** represent divisional and corps artillery, engineers, bridge, independent tank or MG battalions or Fortress and Border troops. The colour signifies the dice used in combat.
- **The dice** used at the map will not have numbers, but **successes (ticks)** or a **critical (a star)**. Successes+Criticals determine
- Allied and German units will be using different dice to better reflect. This may change during the game. Superior Allied units will use additional dice.



**Blockspiel** is a game system which utilises 5cm polystyrene cubes to represent most Regular units, as well as their posture, through stickers. The six sides allow for a range of unit postures to be represented by rotating the blocks. Each posture usually costs each unit SP except Movement Mode.

		<p><b>National Emblem</b> – These face the enemy most of the time. Combined with colour-coding of the blocks, it should make it easy to distinguish units on the map.</p>
		<p><b>Unit Type and Identification</b> – White sticker, which normally faces its owning player.  Units within an army are colour-coded to aid players and usually corps are sub-divided too.</p>
		<p><b>Movement Mode</b> – the default. <b>Move (1 SP Mot) Fight (1 SP Any)</b> (may take ground). <b>Hex</b> indicates movement points per turn. <b>Square</b> indicates the number and colour of dice rolled in combat. <b>Circle</b> indicates the number of kills in one combat to destroy the unit.</p>
		<p><b>Prepared attack</b> – 1 SP/unit. Scouting, preparation and planning. Successful attacks allow units to occupy the hex attacked. <b>1 additional SP for the whole hex</b> to launch the attack <b>next turn</b>. After launching a prepared attack (not defending a pre-emptive attack and remaining undisrupted), they go into move mode.</p>
		<p><b>Dug In</b> – Only available to infantry regiments who have not fought during the turn. <b>It costs 1 SP/unit to Dig In</b>, in terms of time and resources. Dig in dice bonuses can be used in addition to fortress and terrain bonuses.</p>
		<p><b>Disordered</b> – Losing units which are hit but not eliminated are disordered. If disordered units are hit again and lose then they are removed. It costs <b>2 SP</b> and a 'success' or 'critical' in most cases on one dice to go into Movement Mode or Dug In. One additional Staff Point (in advance) allows for a re-roll.</p>
		<p><b>Exploit</b> – only an option for armour. Move AND FIGHT immediately. This allows units to breakthrough gaps in the enemy's front line and disrupt their command control by threatening headquarters and rear areas. It costs <b>1 Staff Point to enter and 1 to move</b>. Units go into Movement Mode after carrying out an Exploit action.</p>

## Other Forces Represented

In this game each 5cm cube represents one Regular infantry regiment/brigade or tank battalion, with three usually representing a division (of around 10-14,000 men) or two per cavalry brigade.

**Corps HQ** – A marked container to hold SP and indicate where support units and capabilities may be deployed from. On the top it will indicate which

**Divisional Artillery** and the Logistic train is represented by coloured barrage markers and the number relates to the number of artillery units in a division.

- May support multiple combats, each once per phase: range 1 hex, 1 dice/counter, 1 SP/use,
- When 50%+ of units in a division/brigade have been destroyed or are currently disordered after a combat, then remove one barrage counter from the game permanently.
- Cut off units unable to draw supply may use their barrage markers as emergency SP to move, change formation, or fight a combat. Do not take the extra barrage dice and remove the counters from the game temporarily. They cost **2 SP** to replace if supply is re-established.

Additional resources and forces are represented by coloured counters and are allocated by army or corps HQ. They roll appropriately coloured dice to represent occasions on which these assets/capabilities played a decisive role in the campaign, **cost 1 SP/use** and are as follows:

**Corps Artillery** – Black: capable of rolling 1 or 2 dice, indicated on the counter.

- Each counter may only fight in one combat/Phase. Range 2 hexes.
- They must be placed within 2 hexes of the Corps HQ.

**Border Defence Troops** – Square counters allocated to fixed positions (not fortresses)

- Incapable of movement, default dug in, with stats listed.
- May defend for free when alone, cost 1 SP when combined with Regular troops.
- If a combat has been lost and no Regulars in good order in the hex, tank units may destroy units by moving through in Exploit phase.

**Machine Gun/Assault Pioneer/Tank/Airborne Companies** – Coloured counters.

- Allocated by corps HQ, may only contribute to 1 combat/Phase.
- Airborne troop counters are given a mission as part of pre-game planning. Once this has been attempted they are vulnerable until relieved by Regular troops, then removed.

You may destroy these counters when they are used in combat against you. Look at the score required – s (success), k (critical) or s/k (either) and roll this on a dice of your national colour.

**Bridges** – place in corps pots. May be placed at the end of movement within 2 hexes of corps HQ. They are committed when trying to assault across a major river if one is not already there. If successful, place them on the map, if unsuccessful they are destroyed.

Some units have been amalgamated to make a Regular cube rather than multiple counters.

## Hex Limits

This game uses hexes representing 7 miles to help regulate movement and combat. It also allows representation of some of the issues faced by commanders.

Unit refers to a cube – troop counters do not count.

### 3 non-motorised units OR

### 2 units if at least one is motorised/armour (greater logistics 'tail')

HQs are considered motorised and in movement mode at all time and include artillery and divisional logistics.

Fortresses have an internal garrison additional – two additional infantry units may be added to the defences. Friendly motorised forces may move through the hex at a cost of 2 SP.

## Random Events & Card Play

A lot of megagames do make use of cards to represent the fortunes of war but they can slow things down and in this one I want to see how players respond to situations rather than having too much control over them. Umpires will have a event generator, which will identify events by corps or armies.



German forces attack dug in troops from the South (*Czech Mate '38*)

# The Land Game

## Turn Order

- **INITIATIVE:** Each side on a map plays initiative cards face down.
- **COMMAND:** Corps Commanders allocate SP and artillery counters to hexes. Unallocated SP may be placed in Corps pots.
- **INITIATIVE:** Reveal Initiative cards within each region. Previous turn winner wins ties.
- **ACTIONS Phase 1:** Winning Player resolves in this order – Disordered units from last turn attempt to rally - Prepared Attacks – Other Attacks – Exploit (includes chance to disrupt HQs/attack disordered units)
- **ACTIONS Phase 2:** Losing Player – Disordered units from last turn attempt to rally - Prepared Attacks – Other Attacks – Exploit (includes chance to disrupt HQs/attack disordered units)
- **MOVEMENT:** Winning player, then losing player take it in turns to move
- **POSTURE:** Both players change unit posture, if necessary with SP (prepare attack/dig in).

## Initiative

Within each region on the map, initiative for actions may fluctuate.

It is important to remember that choosing to change unit postures normally happens at the end of a turn, so commanders should plan ahead. It takes time to prepare an attack, dig in effectively or issue movement orders, particularly when the necessary support and logistics units are considered.

## Supply, Staff Points (SP) & HQs

This game does not focus too heavily on supply, given the short timescale and distances involved. Allied units will have access to supply depots and there are sufficient German stockpiles for a limited campaign. The limitations on commanders are represented by Staff Points – small cubes in army colours. These represent both staff time and getting supplies to the right place at the right time along routes likely impeded by refugees and traffic heading both to and from the front.

Each German Corps/Allied Army will have a small container representing the HQ.

A Main Supply Route (MSR) is traced from table edge to German Corps HQs through friendly hexes with coloured stickers. Allied HQs trace a line through friendly hexes to a named town or Supply Depot. There will be a set limit on the maximum number of SP per army/town, marked on the map.

Units normally need to be within **3 friendly hexes of their HQs/Depots or adjacent to the MSR** to receive SP from their HQ. (In mountains/across minor rivers they must be adjacent – large rivers require a bridge). Named Allied towns count as static HQs for SP and may give them to Corps HQ or units. Fortress and Border units are always in supply unless an event rules otherwise.

**Corps HQ move 2 hexes/turn in the movement phase & extend/expand MSR with up to 3 stickers.**

Note: if a Corps HQ is alone in a hex and has an enemy unit move adjacent with sufficient movement to enter its hex it must retreat one hex unless it has a friendly unit in the hex with it.

There is a limit to the number of Staff Points available per army at any one time and unused ones can be kept within the Corps HQ to represent dumps and depots.

## Actions Order

## 1. Disorder

**Disordered Units from Last Turn** – Rallying disordered units. Each unit has a value which must be rolled, indicated top left on the rally face of the cube, e.g. s (success), k (critical success), s/k (either). Players may use 1 SP allocated to the hex for a re-roll. Rallied units go into Movement mode.

## 2. Attacks

**Prepared Attacks** – 1 Staff Point per hex for all German/British units in prepared attack mode/2 for other Allied troops, plus any additional tokens for artillery support (1 dice per token, limit is given on the artillery counter). **Sequential attacks from multiple hexes are the default.** If you wish to attack from **two hexes simultaneously** (the maximum), this costs an **additional 2 SP for the staff work and briefings.** Units move from prepared attack to Movement Mode whether successful or not. After a successful attack which forces the enemy to retreat, all units involved may occupy that hex, even if disordered. Units in Movement Mode in the hex, may Dig in at **turn end** (not phase) for 1 SP. Note that they may be counter-attacked in the enemy phase whilst in movement mode.

**NOTE: Dug in Troops can gain an extra red/green dice per hex when attacked, by giving them 1 SP.**

**Other Attacks** – Units in Movement mode but **not moving** may choose to attack an adjacent hex at a cost of 1 SP/unit. **These attacks cannot be combined with a prepared attack**, but artillery may be committed as above. After a successful attack which forces the enemy to retreat, then all units involved in the attack may occupy that hex. They may not move again this turn.

### Combat

Feedback suggests that many players like to roll dice, even if the enemy has the initiative, so in this game there will be opposed dice rolls to determine the outcome of battles, with a small number of modifiers. Players will generally use two types of dice, one their national colour and the other black.

Green (Allied), Red (German) and Black (Heavy Artillery/Armour) dice are used for different effects. Most units and divisional artillery use their national dice. Heavy artillery and some units in limited cases use the black dice. On each face of a unit cube it says which dice they use and how many in that posture.

**Green Dice – 1 success face (tick). 1 critical success face (star)**

**Red Dice – 2 success faces (tick). 1 critical success face (star).**

**Black Dice – 1 success face (tick). 2 critical success face (star)**

All dice in a combat are rolled together. Results are applied to both sides simultaneously.

### Combat Modifiers

- **Artillery** - 1 green/red (divisional) or black (corps) dice per Staff Point spent. An additional black dice if supporting dug-in troops (pre-registered targets/comms).
- **Combat across a minor river, in a town/forest** – 1 dice fewer for each armoured unit attacking, +1 Red dice to the defender. These are all cumulative factors.
- **Combat across a major river/fort/mountain/marsh** – 2 dice fewer for each armoured unit (river needs a bridge), +1 Red dice to defender, ignore withdrawal if you choose and ignore 1 success/critical at any point during combat. These are all cumulative factors. Fort hexes generate an additional 'free' red dice and are marked on the map.

## Combat Results

**FIRST, More successes than your opponent** – you win. They take 1 hit. This will disorder one unit or destroy a disordered unit involved in the combat, **of your choice**. The front stabilises.

**Double the successes of your opponent** – you win. They take 2 hits (this may disorder two units or destroy one unit with a defence of 2) and must withdraw one hex unless in defences. Your choice.

**THEN**, in addition to the successes (and even if a draw), total the number of ‘criticals’. If there are enough stars to destroy one or more units **involved in the combat (check the black circle)** they are removed immediately. BOTH sides can lose units due to hits and the **player inflicting hits chooses**. *If you score criticals but not enough to destroy attackers, you may disorder one unit.*

If any special units (MG, Train, etc.) by your opponent are used, get a free roll to try to destroy them.

## 3. Exploit

Armour in Exploit mode may move through friendly units to contact enemy HQs and attack **disordered** units for at no SP cost. This does not count towards a hex limit but the unit must either force the enemy to retreat (automatic vs HQs) to occupy that hex or return to starting hex to laager and go into Movement Mode. Note that artillery cannot be used in exploit attacks.

## 4. Movement

**1 SP/Phase/motorised unit. Infantry & cavalry - None required**

All uncommitted units in movement mode may now move without fighting. Disordered units may retreat **one hex** (no river crossing permitted, except by bridge).

**Normal Terrain – 1 Movement Point (MP) per hex**

**Marsh/Forests – 2 Movement points per hex non-motorised, 3 for motorised.**

**Mountains – 2 movement points per hex and no motorised units unless through passes**, only one non-mountain unit per hex, unless in fortresses.

**Congestion** – only two units in each hex when at least one is motorised, even if one is just passing through.

**Tank reliability** – Any tank unit which uses its full allocation of 4 MP or laagers after Exploiting rolls a dice. On a critical success the unit has suffered breakdowns and is now disordered.

Allied Fortress & Border counters do not move when in place and are always classed as dug in. Allied commanders have the option of combining some of these units to form new regiments.

## 5. Changing Posture

Players spend Staff Points remaining in hexes to change unit postures. This may no longer be possible, depending on what has happened during the turn and represents interrupted activity.

**Non-disordered units which have moved hex (including successful attack) may use SP from the Corps/Army pot if within range of HQ/adjacent to MSR.**

## Top Tips/Frequently Asked Questions

- Putting all of a Division into prepared attack mode is worth doing, if you have the Staff Points available. Whilst it is more costly than attacks in movement mode you gain a number of advantages:
  - you will usually double the number of unit dice
  - you can use divisional artillery bombardments (up to 3 additional SP, one dice each)
  - you can use corps artillery to support the division (black dice)
  - you units are harder to kill/disorder
- Coordinating attacks
- The winner chooses which units to remove but only those in combat
- Artillery can use SP to fire independently Range -1 hex: div, 2 hex: corps
- Additional SP can be used but in separate attacks. i.e. 1 German artillery counter would not be able to use 3 SP to roll 3 red dice simultaneously.
- Remember, you cannot combine prepared attacks with hasty or exploit attacks or in the same dice rolls, but that can follow on in the same turn.
- Paratroop and Airlanding Division Troops: The Germans have Transport aircraft and gliders available. Their pre-game options will include tactical assaults (such as bridge seizures), as well large scale operations. Rules will be confirmed during the Narrative phase and depend on German objectives.



German troops, prepared for Poland, with Corp HQs on the left (*Hold the Line '39*)

## The Air Game

This is heavily abstracted, partly because it is just one task for the High Command each turn. Whilst the Luftwaffe has played a part in the Spanish Civil War, the air-ground cooperation which becomes a feature of 20<sup>th</sup> century warfare is still very difficult to manage.

Accordingly the main impact of air combat, beyond establishing superiority/supremacy to increase enemy losses and allow freedom to act, will be to focus on the bombing of supplies, rear areas and troop movements. There will also be blind counters available, so air reconnaissance can be useful.

Aircraft activity is represented by a counter, labelled for modern or older and aircraft type. The number may be affected by the outcomes of the narrative game and Umpire rulings, although the latter will be minimised.

Counters are colour coded by nationality. It is possible to transfer French/British groups/regiments between regions, but it costs 2SP per counter and they are placed in the Rear Area Box one step lower to account for unfamiliarity and relocating staff/logistics.

There are five standard target choices – there will be boxes on the relevant board showing the precise impact of their activities, but in essence:

- Lines of Communication (limits Staff Points for land players and possibly Momentum/Initiative)
- Cities (Germans only, will have political consequences)
- Airfields (Makes it harder to repair withdrawn aircraft)
- Recce (Enables land players to identify enemy unknown enemy units)
- CAS – (German only, allows for the ‘flying artillery’ approach of the Stukas)

### The Board

There will be two air zones on one board, so that the both sides can play head to head. The diagram below shows the German bottom half of a single air zone board, for clarity.

Attrition																
Modern Fighters Only FAST & FRESH				Any Fighters FRESH				All Fighters WORN				All Fighters SPENT				<b>RECOVERY CHECK</b> No combat possible  All units which enter roll 1d6 at the start of the turn  1-2 Broken Up 3-6 To Rear Area Box 1 at
Hit on a 4, 5, 6				Hit on a 5 or 6				Hit on a 6				Hit on a 6				
Modern Bombers FAST & FRESH AA - Damaged on a 6				All Bombers FRESH AA – Damaged on a 5+				All Bombers WORN AA – Damaged on a 4+				All Bombers SPENT AA – Destroyed on a 4+				
LOC	Cities	Airfields	Recce	LOC	Cities	Airfields	Recce	LOC	Cities	Airfields	Recce	LOC	Cities	Airfields	Recce	
Rear Area Box 5				Rear Area Box 4				Rear Area Box 3				Rear Area Box 2				Rear Area Box 1
Recovery																

## Air Game Instructions

*These processes are resolved by both sides simultaneously and aircraft travel in a clockwise direction as they suffer from attrition and recover (or not).*

- **RECOVER:** Move rear area boxes (out of combat units) to left. Start with Rear Area Box 1 to 2. Finish with WITHDRAWN to Rear Area Box 1. Don't forget, only Modern Fighters and Bombers can move into Rear Area Box 5.
- **ROTATE:** Place any units you wish to rest in the Rest Box behind them and bring out replacements. Simultaneous, column by column. Players use boxes to keep spare units in.
- **COMBAT:** Roll for fighters first, counter by counter, column by column. Total number of hits inflicted as you go.
- **AIR LOSSES:** For each hit you score you have damaged one enemy unit. This results in them moving to the next attrition box along, e.g. from FRESH to WORN. You choose fighter or bomber. If there are no enemy units in either row, you may go onto the next column.

NOTE: Take the first casualty from the All Fighters/Bombers FRESH column first, then WORN, then SPENT, etc. i.e. you need to inflict up to three casualties (if all boxes are filled) before you can start to take FAST & FRESH modern fighters/bombers down.

- **AA LOSSES & BOMBING:** These are rolled before bombing counts. Hit bombers move straight to the next box. Note where you wish to commit them within your area. They will impact on the next turn.
- **ATTRITION:** Move ALL engaged units one column to the RIGHT due to regular attrition. Start with SPENT to WITHDRAWN box, then work left to avoid confusion.

## Air Supremacy/Superiority

- Count up the number of committed **fighters** in the two **fresh** columns for each side.
- If one side has double the number of others, they have **Air Supremacy**.
  - Any hits on the enemy automatically send them to WORN.
- If one side has >3 more than the enemy but not double, they have **Air Superiority**.
  - Allies may send 2 CAS Stukas to Withdrawn automatically.
  - Germans may send 2 Non-British Fighters to Withdrawn automatically.

## Close Air Support

- German Army Commanders have CAS Stuka support counters available each turn – Allied commanders may choose to target these or the other bombers and AG Commanders will relay any losses to the map players. These counters are only removed when a Stuka fails its Recovery Check.
- **Two** FRESH LOC aircraft can be used for **one** additional CAS counter dice next turn, at the cost of 1 SP from the high command/map players. This dice can be used to try to destroy a bridge or in a combat.
- These LOC aircraft go straight to a recovery check, adding +1 to the dice roll.



Luftwaffe versus Polish air commanders (*Hold the Line '39*)

## Notes to Players

- Counters represent aircraft having an impact on the war. They do not necessarily represent a specific unit, nor every aircraft sortieing on that day. As an example, the German high sortie rate contributes to their advantage in counters.
- It is very tempting to pile all your aircraft into an early offensive but you will only be able to manage this for a few days and then suffer significant lag whilst units recover. This is a combination of losses, crew fatigue and limited supplies/spare parts.
- It is far better to try and hold some reserves back so that you can contest the skies and maintain a steady bombing campaign to keep disrupting the enemy.
- Remember that all aircraft in the SPENT box will have to roll for recovery at the end of the turn automatically due to attrition. Try and avoid letting too many get to that stage.

# HOLD THE LINE '39 REFERENCE SHEET

## TURN ORDER

**INITIATIVE:** Each side on one map plays initiative cards face down.

**COMMAND:** Staff Points allocated to **hexes**, excess may be placed in Corps pots until next turn.

**INITIATIVE:** Reveal initiative cards within each region. Previous turn winner wins ties.

**ACTIONS 1:** Winning Player resolves in this order – Disordered units attempt to rally  
- Prepared Attacks – Other Attacks – Exploit

**ACTIONS 2:** Losing Player – Disordered units attempt to rally - Prepared Attacks – Other Attacks – Exploit

**MOVEMENT:** Winning player, then losing player take it in turns to move

**POSTURE:** Both players change unit posture, if necessary with Staff Points.

## Hex Limits

2 if at least one unit is motorised/armour, otherwise 3 non-motorised units.

<p><b>Movement Mode</b></p>	<p><b>No cost</b> to enter (default mode) Foot troops: no cost to move Armour/Motorised troops: 1 SP to move If attacking no further movement possible beyond occupying attacked hex.</p>	<p><b>Movement</b> <b>Normal Terrain</b> – 1 MP/hex <b>Forests</b> – 2 MP/hex non-motorised. <b>Fortresses</b> – 2 MP/hex motorised <b>Mountains/Forests</b> – no motorised units and only one non-mountain unit/hex, unless on roads/in fortresses <b>Road Bonus</b> – any movement along a road adds one hex per unit except in Mountains/Ardennes. Exploiting units must be able to enter a hex to combat/force HQs to retreat.</p>
<p><b>Exploit Mode</b></p>	<p><b>1SP/unit</b> to enter, may move through units unless using road. Armoured troops only. <b>1 SP to move, free attack (no artillery)</b>. Unless they win combat and take ground, must return to starting hex.</p>	
<p><b>Prepared Attack</b></p>	<p><b>1 SP/unit to enter</b> This represents scouting, preparation and planning. Successful attacks allow units to occupy the hex they are attacking, even if disrupted.</p>	<p><b>Combat</b> Units must have MP to enter a hex to attack. 1 SP for all prepared units in a hex to attack 1 SP per unit for those in movement mode Prepared and unprepared may not combine. <b>Prepared Attacks first - may occupy ground</b> Movement Mode Units/Exploit 1 SP/Unit Multiple hex attack +2SP/Attack Small River ignore withdrawal unless at least 1+ defender is destroyed. Fort/Large River ignore 1 success/critical at any point during combat and may ignore retreat.. Defences +1 Black Dice <b>Count Successes.</b> Loser takes 1 hit. This disorders one unit or destroy a disordered unit involved in the combat of winner's choice. The front stabilises. If winner ≥ 2x successes each loser is disordered and must withdraw one hex unless in . <b>THEN</b>, in addition to the successes (and even if a draw), total the number of 'hits'. If there are enough criticals to destroy one or more units involved in the combat (check the black circle) they are removed immediately – if not enough then at least one critical disorders an attacking unit. BOTH sides can lose units due to critical successes and the player inflicting hits chooses. <b>ROLL FOR LOSS</b> of Special Counters (MG, Train, etc.)</p>
<p><b>Dug In</b></p>	<p><b>1SP/unit to enter</b> Only available to infantry regiments who have not <b>fought</b> during the turn.  May spend 1 SP for an additional red/green dice when attacked.  Dug in units take disorder and hits before other units in the hex.</p>	
<p><b>Disordered</b></p>	<p><b>Units enter this after losing in combat</b> (if players leave units out they avoid this). <b>Spend 2SP</b> &amp; roll one dice per unit after initiative and get the required success/critical (top left). Enter Movement Mode or Dug In if successful.  Commander may commit one additional SP/unit to re-roll if necessary (must be allocated to the hex during placement). Disordered units may move 1 hex to the rear.</p>	