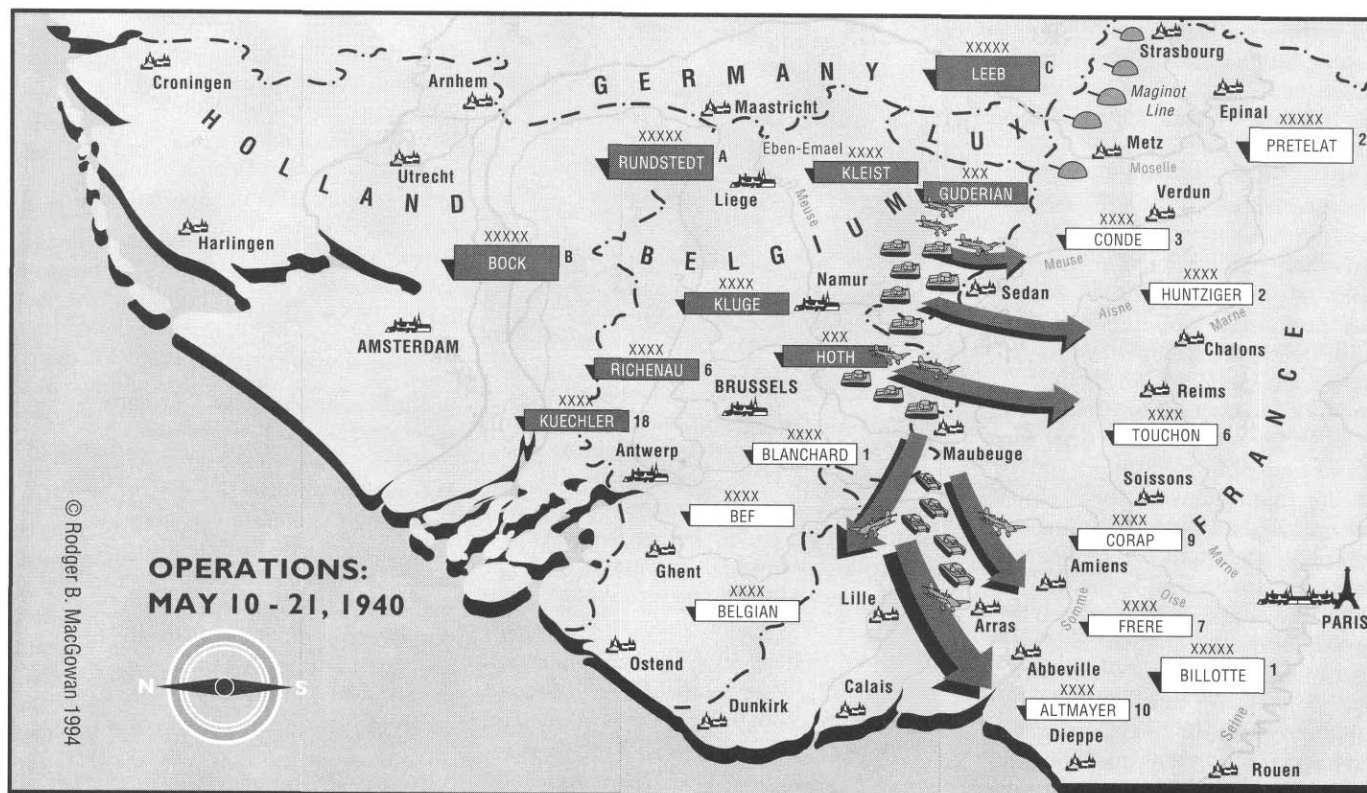


DESIGNER'S NOTEBOOK

Back to the Blitz

BY DAVID JAMES RITCHIE

Post-Publication Reflections On **Victory in the West**, including New Options, New Units and a New Scenario – *The Broken Blade*.



Americans don't generally think much about the German 1940 campaign in France and Flanders. Our boys didn't fight there, so we're not much interested in it on this side of the Atlantic. But we should be.

What happened in France was the first true *Blitzkrieg* - the first campaign in which anybody put together all of the tactical and operational elements of mechanized warfare. The result

astounded the world. An Anglo-French Army that out-muscled the Germans by almost every military measure then known was wiped out or driven from the continent in just six weeks. Belgium, France and Holland were all forced to capitulate. Britain, which had lost most of its military equipment in France, was left to fight alone. The stunning German victory set the framework for how World War II would unfold. Without it, everything else we know about that war would be wrong.

If you doubt that assertion, try this exercise. List the 20 most important events of World War II after June 1940. Now cross out the ones that wouldn't or couldn't have happened if France had not fallen under the treads of the *Blitzkrieg* in the summer of 1940. You can start with D-Day, the invasion of Sicily and the entire Italian

Campaign, and carry on from there. If your list is like mine, it's very short on survivors.

But the effects of the 1940 campaign went way beyond altering the course of one war. The impact of this campaign on how military professionals viewed their craft was nothing short of revolutionary. That revolution has continued down to the present day. What the Germans learned from this campaign, they applied enthusiastically and with immense success for the next two years; they reshaped their military machine and redefined the military art in the process. Meanwhile, their enemies were desperately trying to work the bugs out of their own version of the *Blitzkrieg*. When they finally did so, the tide of war reversed. Once it had ebbed completely, the former Allies became

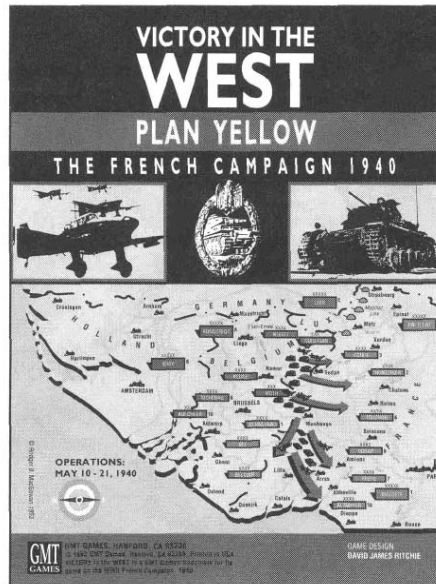
Victory in the West: Plan Yellow, The French Campaign 1940

enemies - and spent the next 50 years planning and practicing how they were going to conduct a perfected *Blitzkrieg* against each other.

The most recent development stemming from the campaign in France was *Operation Desert Storm* in 1991. This was an operation that not only used the same principles (and many of the same techniques) of mechanized warfare employed by the Germans in 1940. It also used the same basic plan.

In 1940, in an attempt to keep the enemy's attention fixed at the wrong place, the *Wehrmacht* trailed a cape in front of the main enemy maneuver force located on the Allied left wing. Once the secondary operation in front of this flank had accomplished its purpose, the Germans punched through a weakly held fortified line in a quiet sector and sent their main force of tanks and motorized infantry wheeling into the enemy rear. This force executed a single envelopment, resembling a left hook (or, as General Manstein characterized it, the cut of a sickle). The objective was to reach a seacoast (along the English Channel) against which the enemy's left wing, containing all of its maneuver forces, could be pinned and forced to fight on a reversed front. In the course of this battle, the surrounded maneuver force was to be wiped out in a great battle of annihilation. Without its maneuver forces, the enemy army would be incapable of offensive military activity, and the static defense could be overcome at leisure, assuming that the enemy didn't make peace immediately.

In *Desert Storm*, the Allied commander used a series of deceptions to convince his opposite number that the main Allied stroke would be a combined land and sea operation along the coast. Once the enemy's attention was fixed in this direction, the Allied Army attacked the enemy's weakly held right wing in the desert, punched a mechanized mass of maneuver into the enemy rear and raced for the seacoast to cut off the main enemy force on the left wing and force it into a battle of annihilation. The most



significant differences between this campaign and the campaign in France half a century earlier were that, in *Desert Storm*, 1) the attacker was able to use a prolonged air offensive to soften up the enemy before the onset of ground operations/and 2) the enemy lacked deep reserves that could, if used properly, have threatened the flank of the enveloping pincer. But the two plans had more similarities than differences and achieved almost identical results.

Even before *Desert Storm* showed its continuing influence on threat of war, I was fascinated with the German campaign in France - in fact, with the entire first year of the Second World War. Much to my surprise, completing *Victory in the West* hasn't changed that. I continue to read and think about that year of decision. Some of that reading and thinking has made its way into additions to the game rules, which I've included below:

New Options

The options on the *Victory in the West* Options Chart deal only with Allied capabilities. This design decision reflected the fact that the most interesting changes in the game were those that gave the Allies a better chance of fighting a mobile war. But, in its earliest stages, the design also contained some

ideas for Axis options. Since *VITW* was published, I've worked out the details of those options and present them here. Rule 3.3 (Axis Options Chart) lists and describes the available options. Rule 23.6 (Axis Options) explains how to work them into the game.

[3.3] Axis Options Chart

1. Germans Build Bomber Fleet.

Strategic bombing enthusiasts within the *Luftwaffe* convince Hitler to allocate more marks to building a bomber fleet, leaving fewer resources for cheaper tactical bombers to support the Army. Subtract 3 from the Axis starting TAP value and add 1 to the Axis starting SAP value. Value: +75 VP's.

2. No Brandenburgers. Germany's specially trained *K-troops* don't perform as well as expected in the Polish campaign, so the *Abwehr* never forms their successor commando organization (the Brandenburgers). Halve the number of *coups de main* that the Axis player can conduct during non-overrun movement (from 8 to 4 on Turn 1 and from 4 to 2 on all other turns). Add 1 to the die roll when resolving all coups. Value: +50 VP's.

3. No Fallschirmjaeger. Germany's early experiments with airborne delivery of troops prove disappointing, and little is done to develop this method of warfare prior to the outbreak of war. No paratroops exist in 1940, and the Germans have fewer transport aircraft, having chosen instead to spend their money on bombers. Delete 1/IFjr, 2/IFjr, 3/IFjr, 1/2Fjr and 2/2FjrII's from the OKH box. Increase the MA of all three units of the German 22 Air Landing xx to 7. The Axis player loses all paradrop and air transport capabilities set forth in 19.0 (Paradrops), as well as the capabilities listed in 23.1 (Sturmabteilung Koch). Only one-quarter (instead of one-half) of Axis TAP's can fly missions at extended range as described in 18.46. The Axis player gets two additional SAP's as reinforcements on Turn 3. Restriction:

Victory in the West

You can't use this option in *The Sickie* or *The Broken Blade*. Value: +50 VP's.

4. No Blitzkrieg. Reactionary elements on the General Staff convince Hitler to keep most of the mechanized forces tethered to the infantry during the 1940 campaign instead of operating independently under their own corps organizations far in front of the main armies. Remove all German Corps HQ's except for 19pxxx HQ from the Axis setup forces and reinforcements. Value: +100 VP's.

5. The Cavalry Prevails. The cavalry faction inside the German Army succeeds in temporarily preserving the four *leichten* (light) divisions that performed so dismally in Poland. Instead of converting those divisions into *panzer* divisions, the Army decides to tinker with the light division to &e to increase motorization, but retains the basic concept of a mixed cavalry/armored formation. Eliminate all units of 6, 7, 8 and 9 *Panzer xx*'s from the game. The following units replace the eliminated *panzer* divisions: 6 *Panzer xx* = 1 *Leichten xx* (1 unit with a one-step cadre); 7 *Panzer xx* = 2 *Leichten xx* (2 units); 8 *Panzer xx* = 3 *Leichten xx* (2 units); 9 *Panzer xx* = 4 *Leichten xx* (2 units). The Axis player gets 1 MRP per turn as are inforcement on Turns 2 through 9; these MRP's represent armor stockpiled in tank parks instead of being used to equip the four *panzer* divisions removed from play. Value: +50 VP's.

6. Fewer German AA Guns. The *Luftwaffe* diverts resources from AA guns to fighters and dive bombers. Add 1 to the Axis starting TAP total, but eliminate the Allied Heavy Flak Penalty when attacking Axis units and bridges (other than those that are part of bridgeheads). These targets are now Medium Flak targets (no die roll modification). Value: +25 VP's.

7. Minimal Siegfried Line. Strapped for cash, the German government opts for a cheaper and less elaborate defensive barrier in the West. All Siegfried Line hexes north and west of the Moselle River have an IDS of 1;

Victory in the West

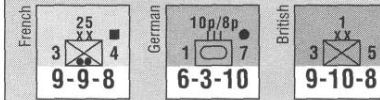
Plan Yellow: The French Campaign 1940

Published: 1993

Game Design: David James Ritchie

Game Developers: K. Boylan & G. Billingsley

Art Director: Rodger B. MacGowan



Contents: 720 die-cut Counters; One 22x34 and One 22x17 inch Mapsheet; Rulebook; Player Aid Cards; One 10-sided die; Bookcase Box

Time Scale: Each turn = Two Days

Map Scale: 11 km. per hex

Unit Scale: Division/Brigade

Players: 1-2

ignore their printed strengths. Shift left 1 column (instead of 2) for defending in a Siegfried Line hex. Value: +25 VP's.

8. No Weseruebung. Hitler decides not to execute *Weseruebung* (the invasion of Norway) until after the completion of the main offensive in France and the Lowlands. Additional forces are available for operations in the West. In addition, instead of being decimated during *Weseruebung*, the *Kriegsmarine*'s destroyer arm is still intact in May, and the Navy is able to sortie to prevent an Allied evacuation. The German 198 *xx* is available as a reinforcement in the OKH box on Turn 1 (instead of Turn 12). The following new German units (see below) are available as reinforcements in the OKH box on Turn 1: 2 and 3 Mountain *xx*'s and 69,163,170,181, 196 and 214 *xx*'s. Option 10 is automatically in effect, if it was not already chosen by the Allied player (+10 VP's). At the end of each Weather Phase, the Axis player announces whether the *Kriegsmarine* is active that turn. If it isn't active, there is no further effect; if it is active, then the players must make an Interception Check for each Allied unit evacuated that turn. Each player rolls one die; the Allied player adds the following numbers to his die roll result: 2 if the weather is clear; 3 if overcast; 4 rain. If the modified result is 1-6, the unit is intercepted at sea and destroyed (and the Axis player gains twice the normal number of VP's for its destruction); other results have

no effect on the unit. In addition, the player with the greater die roll result modifies the VP total in his favor by a number of VP's equal to the difference between his modified die roll result and the other player's modified die roll result; this modification represents the results of attrition in ships and aircraft during intensive naval operations in the English Channel. Value: -70VP's.

9. Trouble in the East. Hitler and Stalin fall out over the disposition of Polish oil (among other things). There is no fundamental change in policy on either side, but Germany's political leadership is less confident of Soviet neutrality, and acts accordingly. The *Wehrmacht* is ordered to keep a stronger garrison in the East, leaving fewer reserves for the battle in the West. Remove the 60, 81, 161, 168, 205, 213, 217, 218, 221, 239, 292, 293, 298 and *Polizei xx*'s from the OKH Box. Value: +75VP's.

[23.6] Axis Options

The Axis Options Chart lists 9 options available to the Axis player. Each numbered option is followed by a value, which is the number of VP's added to or subtracted from the Axis VP total when the option is used. Some options also include one or more restrictions on their use. Except as noted in those restrictions, the Axis player chooses to use any or all of the options at the start of *The Sickie*, *The Blitz* and *The Broken Blade* (after the Allied player chooses his options). He must announce which options he's using and note their effects before starting play. At the start of the Alternate Histories scenario, the players together choose the Axis options they want to use.

New Units

The new Axis options add the following units to the game: 2 and 3 Mountain *xx*'s; 69,163,170,181,196 and 214 *xx*'s; 1,2, Sand 4 *Leichten* (Light) *xx*'s. You'll have to make your own counters until Gene and Rodger decide to include a printed

Victory in the West: Plan Yellow, The French Campaign 1940

set in a future issue of *C3i*, but here are what the faces look like:

And A New Scenario

Late in development, Kevin Boylan suggested that we put in a rule or Allied option allowing the Allied player more freedom of action in *The Sickle*. It was a good idea, but one that I felt was better worked into a brand new scenario (which I didn't want to try writing and testing at the last moment). Since **VITW** was published, I've had a chance to play around with Kevin's idea. This is the result.

[27.5] The Broken Blade

Part of the reason for the unprecedented scope of the Axis success in 1940 was the fact that the Allied High Command misanalyzed the situation from the outset. By the time that the geniuses at GHQ had things figured out, the German spearheads were on their way to the coast, and Allied forces were in no position to stop them. But a commander and staff who were less arrogant and better informed would probably not have executed the Dyle Plan that sent the Allied left wing careening deep into Belgium while the Germans cut behind it. Nor would they have kept so many reserves behind the Maginot Line facing a mere screen of enemy forces. Nor would they have committed their reserves in the north at the very moment that Rommel and Guderian would be breaking out across the Meuse. Had these mistakes been avoided, the decisive battle of the Second World War might well have occurred, not on the Volga in 1942, but on the Meuse in 1940.

This scenario covers the same ground as *The Sickle*, but loosens the restrictions on the Allied player. It starts at the beginning of the German offensive on 10 May and continues until 4 June, the end of the first phase of the historical campaign. The scenario takes 12 turns to

Victory in the West Countersheet C3i Module									FRONT
									BACK

play and uses only the southern map (Map A).

[27.51] Game Length

This scenario starts on Turn 1 and ends at the end of Turn 12 or when one player wins an automatic victory, whichever comes first.

[27.52] Maps & Playing Aids

See 27.22.

[27.53] Allied Setup

Set up Allied and neutral units per 27.23.

[27.54] Axis Setup

Set up Axis units per 27.24.

[27.55] Starting Values

Same as 27.25 except that the Axis starting VP total is zero.

[27.56] Special Rules

At the scenario's start, the Allied player can choose options from the Options Chart that increase the net Axis VP total by up to 100 VP's. By choosing option 1 (No Maginot Line), which has a negative VP value of 150, he can choose options having a total positive VP value of 250. The Axis player can choose any number of

Axis options.

Belgium and the Netherlands are Allied nations at the game's start. Ignore 24.0 (Neutrals).

The Netherlands automatically surrenders (+125 VP's to the Axis player; +3 CP's each to the Belgian and French CP totals) at the start of Turn 2's Surrender Phase.

The Axis player gets 6 SAP's and 4 TAP's during his Reinforcement Phase on turn 4. These points represent air assets redeployed after the conquest of the Netherlands.

Eban Emael (hex A2901) starts the game destroyed.

These Belgian units arrive as reinforcements in any friendly north mapedge hex between A1701 and A2501 (inclusive) on the turn after the Netherlands surrenders: 4, 7, 11, 12, 13, 17 and I.S. Infantry Divisions; BCP Motorcycle Brigade; CyF Bicycle Brigade; 1 Cy/1 DC bicycle Regiment; and 1 CaC/2 DC Motorcycle Regiment. The Allied player can withhold these reinforcements indefinitely, but any time all of their entry hexes are friendly to the Axis, they are automatically eliminated as if by combat.

These German units arrive as reinforcements in any unoccupied friendly or enemy mapedge hex on the north mapedge between A2601 and A3401

Victory in the West

(inclusive) on Turns 1-4: 6xxxx and 16p xxx HQ's; 1,7,11, 14,18,19, 30, 31, 35, 56, 61, 216, 223, 253, 255 and 269 Infantry xx's; 6xxxx Artillery Group; 3 *Panzer* xx (three units) and 4 *Panzer* xx (four units); 20 Motorized xx (two units). Up to 12 SP's can arrive each turn; when they arrive under this rule, they don't count against the number of reinforcements that can arrive from the OKH Box. At the end of Turn 4, suspend this rule and place any of these units that haven't yet arrived in the OKH Box. They can arrive as normal reinforcements.

Axis AP's can use friendly and/or enemy north map edge hexes between A2701 and A3701 (inclusive) as air bases. Reduce by 5 the range of AP's using this option; this reduction represents off-map flying time to get to Map A.

The Allied player can't declare an emergency per 23.3 (Declaring an Emergency).

All units that can't trace supply to a general supply source at the end of the game and all Belgian units that can't trace supply to a French general supply source are eliminated. Eliminate Allied units first, then Axis units.

Life After Victory

Dramatic as it was, the campaign in the West was only one of several significant military events in the first year of the Second World War. In fact, at about the same time that Rommel and Guderian were breaking out of the Ardennes, an even more interesting campaign was drawing to a conclusion at Norwegian port of Narvik.

The two-month struggle for Norway was a desperate affair for both sides, with sudden turns and unexpected twists that almost gave Hitler a nervous breakdown and that ultimately drove Chamberlain from office. For the OKW, Norway was a gamble in which tactical military competence paid off despite the fact that just about everything that could go wrong did. For the Allies, Norway was a decisive naval victory that was ultimately obscured by defeat in the air and on the ground. The final capture of Narvik after an epic seasaw battle up on the rim of the world was one of the war's most remarkable feats of arms. It secured Germany's supply of iron ore for its war effort at a time when that supply was in doubt, and so it seemed, gave the Germans a clear

strategic victory. Yet, six weeks later, this assessment was turned on its head as the *Wehrmacht* captured a second major source of ore in France, and the *Kriegsmarine* was forced to sit idle while the British escaped from Dunkirk; so many German destroyers had been destroyed in Norway that the fleet couldn't sortie to stop the evacuation. By August, when the *Wehrmacht* was wondering how to get itself across the Channel in the face of the British Fleet, the loss of all those destroyers in Norway was looking more and more like one of the pivotal events of the war.

I've had this long-standing craving for something with fiords in it, and my research for **Victory** in the West, which frequently touched on events in Scandinavia, has put a fine edge on that appetite. So, yes, I do believe that my next GMT project (or the one after) will be the 1940 campaign in Norway. I've started gathering research materials. Sometime this winter I'll be designing a prototype. Anybody who has strong feelings on what that prototype should have in it, please put 'em in a letter (D.J.Ritchie, 64 Tunxis Village, Farmington, CT 06032) or send me a message on CompuServe (73124,2526). No promises except that I will gladly listen and learn.

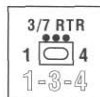


Available Now!

In May, 1941 Hitler's paratroopers launched an airborne invasion of the island of Crete. British, Greek, Australian and New Zealand resistance made them pay a heavy price – one-in-four paratroopers were casualties in the operation.

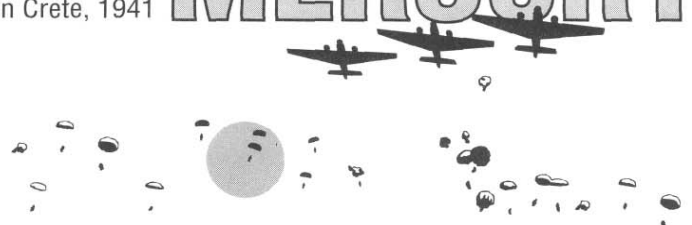
Operation Mercury recreates this eleven day struggle, using the Operational Game System from GMT's Award winning **Operation Shoestring** and **AirBridge to Victory** which allows for multiple combat options.

\$32



The German Airborne Assault on Crete, 1941

OPERATION MERCURY



Game Design: Vance von Borries and Gene Billingsley
Art Director: Rodger B. MacGowan

Unit Scale: Company
Time Scale: 8 hours per Turn
Map Scale: 1.5 km per Hex
Playing Time: 2-10 hours
Players: 1-4

