

CASE WHITE

INVASION OF POLAND 1939

by Friedrich Helfferich



Masochist's Delight and Toy for the Problem Solver

For years we have been flooded with games on World War II, but the campaign that started it all has been strangely neglected — until now: Game Designers Workshop's newest release finally brings us an authoritative simulation of that campaign in Poland, 1939. Superficially a three-map, 480-counter, 20-turn game, *Case White* is not as big and long as it looks, and can easily be played in an afternoon. Heart-shaped Poland at the scale of 25 kilometers per hex could have been squeezed onto a single map, and by no means all counters come into play. The extra map space, from Holland to Helsinki and from South Tyrol to Sevastopol, and the extra counters, including the entire Polish Navy, are for eventual use in the grand *EUROPA* supergame; *Case White*, like its predecessors *Drang Nach Osten*, *Unentschieden*, *Narvik*, and *Their Finest Hour*, is both a member of the *EUROPA* Series and a self-contained game. Those interested only in Poland 1939 thus buy more than they need, but at a good bargain, and face the inconvenience of what to do with that added map area. As for game length, the twenty-turns merely set a deadline, which is not hard to beat for a competent German player: the game may well be over as early as Turn 6! *Case White* is, however, not a game in the standard mold that affords both sides comparable opportunities and problems. Players expecting this are apt to be disappointed. True to the historical campaign, which inspired the British-coined catchword 'Blitzkrieg', there is no stopping the Wehrmacht's onslaught, and only a masochist or spoilsport might cherish playing the Poles. The challenges the game poses and the enjoyment it can provide are on a different and more sophisticated level. What

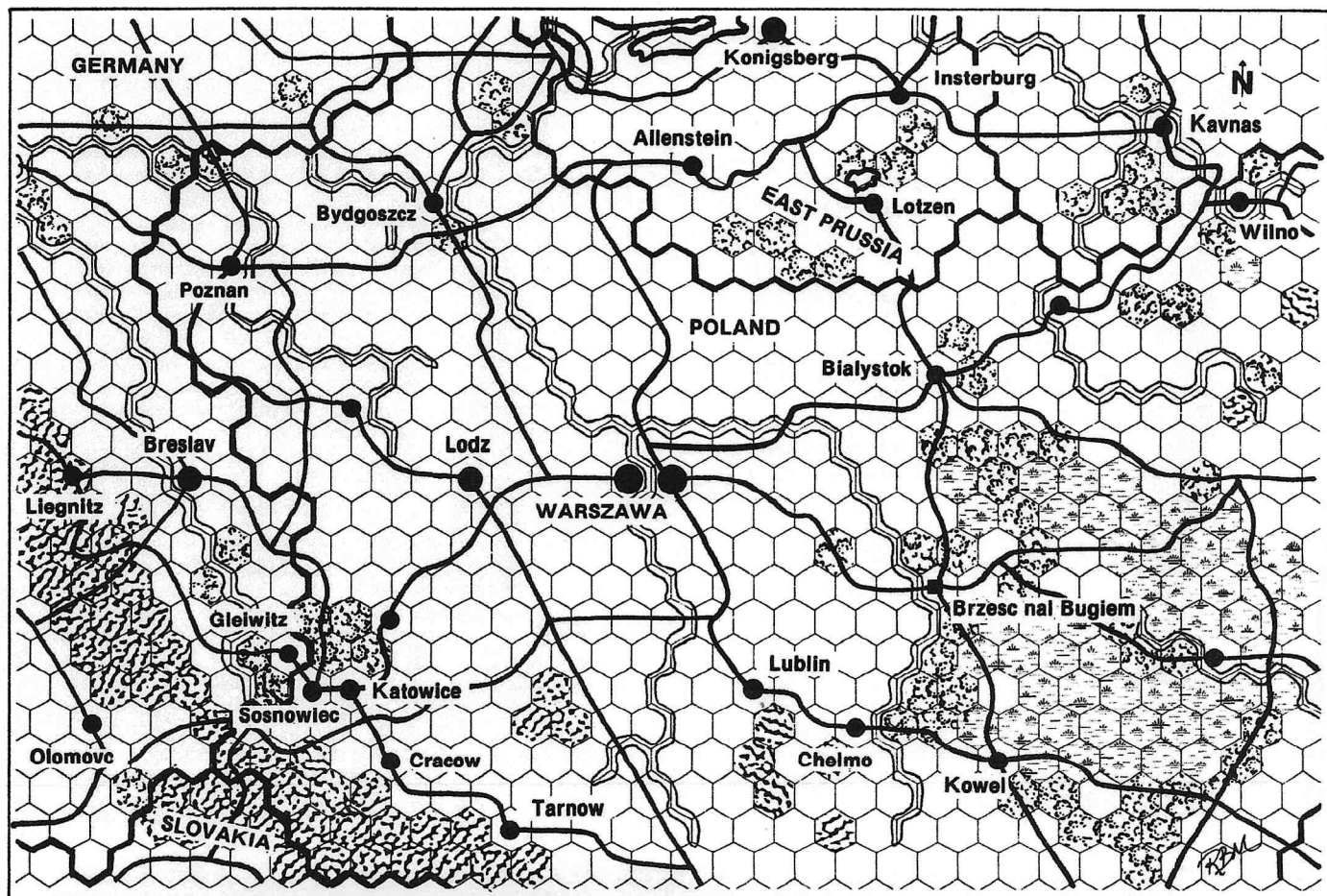
the German Command really faced in 1939 was that Poland had to be not only defeated, but crushed with such lightning speed and awe-inspiring totality that her Allies in the west would have no time, and lose all inclination, to intervene. This facet of the situation is modeled with amazing faithfulness in *Case White* — so much so that even someone who was there at the time (as I was) will see this problem in sharper focus. While the German player will surely win the campaign, he may still lose the game: he will quickly discover that a big victory is not enough, that his victory must be very big! In game terms, the challenge is shifted from board tactics, to an exercise in problem solving that resembles a chess problem: for the Poles, to devise an initial setup that delays or mitigates the inevitable disaster; for the Germans, to crack whatever such defense the Poles can come up with. Much is decided in the first two turns, which set the tempo of destruction. Thereafter, even the best of tactics may no longer bring redress. The Germans still have to go through a balancing act of withdrawing to the west all that can be spared without loss of momentum, while the Poles are reduced to attempts of throwing a monkey wrench in as best they can. To be appreciated, *Case White* must be viewed in this broader historical content, not just as a 'game'. *Case White* comes in GDW's standard zip-lock bag with maps, counters, charts, loose-leaf rules, designer's notes, and, of course, errata, and is impressive at first glance. The counters, if not as flamboyant as in *Pearl Harbor* or *Avalanche*, measure up to GDW's reputation for excellence. The maps are much better than in earlier games of the *EUROPA* Series. In different shades of brown, green, and blue they offer better distinction between terrain types, more terrain differentiation, and more detail. Two of the maps replace *Drang Nach Osten's* Maps 1 and 3 and are almost a 'must' for devotees of that game. Short

of supplying umlaut dots and lettering Russian cities in Kyrillic, the designers have gone overboard in adhering to native spelling. (If you haven't had Polish in school, Brzesz na Bugiem is Brest Litovsk.) Errors are remarkably few. Unfortunately, the new Map 13 pictures southern Germany as a featureless plain, while in fact much of it is every bit as rough as the Ardennes of Bulge fame. In *Case White*, of course, the Poles will never get there, but one may hope this inaccuracy will be corrected for the *EUROPA* game, in which that region could become a battlefield. Such objections notwithstanding, the maps rank among the best, second only to those of *Avalanche* and *Highway to the Reich*. *Case White's* rules are an evolution of the *EUROPA* System initiated with *Drang Nach Osten* and are better and clearer than previous GDW efforts. More delicate points are illustrated with examples from play. Movement, with fluid Zones of Control and 'exploitation' for motorized units, is quite conventional. The adaptation of the *EUROPA* System's half-month to *Case White's* three-day turns is attempted by an increase in movement penalties for entering and leaving Zones of Control and is, perhaps, not entirely successful: the campaign still tends to run too fast. The combat system, with odds-based Results Table and die roll modifications (and occasional doubling or halving) for terrain and armor effects, supply status, etc., is simple and effective, and better integrated than in *Drang Nach Osten*. The most marked improvement is in the armor effects rule: no longer does a tank unit suffer in effectiveness from being supported by artillery and the like! Also, the strength of artillery relative to other combat units no longer appears overplayed. The concept of 'supported' and 'unsupported' units has been taken over from *Their Finest Hour*, a useful idea for modeling logistic effects, even if in its present form it seems to exaggerate the logistic capabilities of non-divisional artillery. Unit integrity rules are not included, and that should have made stacking rules, the bane of GDW games, a simple matter. But those of *Case White* are apt to evoke reluctance; for example, three non-divisional and two artillery units will accept up to three complete divisions

in their hex, but will bar entry to even a single non-divisional battalion. The air system is a slightly simplified version of the Basic *EUROPA* Air System in *Their Finest Hour* and is fairly elaborate, in view of the relatively few aircraft and the little leverage they can exert in the game. However, without being more complex, the system is an improvement over that of earlier *EUROPA* Series games, mainly in its more realistic handling of interception, the provision that aircraft may be damaged and repaired, and a better tuning to produce realistic losses. Overall, the approach in GDW's *EUROPA* Series to let a game system evolve and mature from game to game, rather than each time starting over from scratch, has paid ample dividends in *Case White* in producing clearer, better, more complete, and more realistic rules. In a way, it seems a pity that the imbalance of forces on the board will not let this fine game system show itself to best advantage.

Case White's victory conditions are perhaps the weakest part of the game and are best not taken literally. While providing some appropriate incentives, they seem to give the Poles too little chance and lend themselves to some absurd ploys. For example, the German player may intentionally delay occupying Warsaw and other cities, to harvest extra points from air raids on Warsaw and, if he is strong, to precipitate French intervention which he can then defeat, collecting still more points. Like many other GDW games, *Case White* is best played for enjoyment of historical simulation more than for point scores.

For historical accuracy, *Case White* earns highest marks. In particular, the painstakingly compiled German and Polish Orders of Battle, with correct unit designations down to obscure Landwehr and border formations, constitute an admirable piece of research deserving publication all by itself. For lack of reliable sources, the Soviet Order of Battle involves more guesswork, but is entirely adequate. One might merely miss the ancient German battleships *SCHLESSEN* and *SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN*, whose 11-inch guns were instrumental in subduing



Fire & Movement's Sketch-Map of GDW's *CASE WHITE*, © GDW and F&M — Map depicts a segment of total map display. 9

CASE WHITE ERRATA: The following questions arose during the course of preparing this article for **F&M**. The replies, in bold, are by Frank Chadwick, Designer of **Case White**, and may be considered official rulings.

- 1) Please note correct starting position for 9th and 19th POLISH Infantry Divisions. **9th Div. (13/2704); 19th Div. (13/3907)**
- 2) Several aircraft, including all Polish bombers, have only one number as a bombing factor. Is this factor strategic, tactical or both? **Tactical**
- 3) May Patrol Attacks by fighters be made over target hex (in addition to possible interception by same fighters in same hex)? **Yes**
- 4) During air movement, are waves moved consecutively and separately? (This would preclude protecting a mission wave on way to target by a fighter escort wave.) **Yes**
- 5) What is significance of sequence KKA, KAK, etc., of letters on Air-to-Air Combat Results Table? **If less than three aircraft are in the wave affected, the sequence is the priority. For instance, if two were affected, both would be destroyed on a KKA, one destroyed and one aborted on a KAK.**
- 6) If mixed wave containing fighters makes strategic attack, is fighter's defense factor counted in calculating odds for flak fire, even though fighters have no strategic bombing factor? **Yes**
- 7) If Warsaw is isolated but both city hexes are still in Polish hands, are units in Warsaw in supply because each hex can trace a rail line to the other? **No — for Warsaw to be a friendly supply city it must trace a rail line to another city, not another city hex.**
- 8) Rules for Victory Conditions refer to nonexistent chart for points if Germans have less than 351 factors in Westwall. How are such points calculated? **Nonexisting? That is the Westwall Victory Point Chart at the top of the second page of rules.**
- 9) How many bombing hits are needed to sink a River Flotilla? **One**

Danzig's Westerplate fortress. The counters make appropriate and historically correct distinctions in combat strengths between units of different states of training and readiness, so that the units develop personalities instead of remaining faceless. If any criticism could be raised, it would be that the Panzer Divisions might be a little too strong; true, in number of tanks they were about twice as strong as those of Barbarossa, 1941, but they were still equipped almost exclusively with the pitiful 6-ton Mark I and II, the 'sardine cans' or 'tin coffins' that had proved inadequate even in the Spanish Civil War and whose successes in Poland surprised even their commanders. The game's excellence in simulating the historical context of the campaign has already been emphasized. The success in modeling the actual course of the fighting is not as complete; while the battles develop in the right places, German advance tends to become too fast, too soon and, in particular, cities such as Warsaw and Lodz are taken too easily once isolated. Perhaps, the game should have been given a time scale of five instead of three days per turn.

Overall, **Case White** is a most interesting simulation. Its components are of the highest quality, its game system sound and mature, its historical accuracy is outstanding. **Case White** models, faithfully, a one-sided historical situation perhaps even slightly exaggerating it). Its greatest appeal therefore will be to those interested in wargames primarily as historical models rather than as instruments for competitive play. **Case White** is a simulation much more than a 'game'. ●●

**Designer's Notes
CASE WHITE
by Frank Chadwick**

Fred Helfferich is the quintessential historical wargamer. I can think of very few gamers around who bring Fred's rigorous demands for historical accuracy into a game, and none of those have Fred's personal experiences of the war to draw on. When Fred has approved of the research and play accuracy of our games, I've always found it quite flattering.

In **CASE WHITE**, I think Fred's concern with the historical campaign may, however, have interfered with his appreciation of the game's potential. It appears to me that all he has played is the historical scenario, which he finds to be an accurate representation of a German walk-over. (With a good player, the German will make better time than was the case historically — true. On the other hand, in 1939, no one, including the majority of the German Army commanders, knew exactly the incredible potential of the weapon they had forged. Given a little less hesitation, the campaign could have been resolved even sooner.) The real potential of the game, in my opinion, lies in the optional rules. If I may engage in a little second-guessing, I believe I can understand Fred's reluctance to dabble with non-historical optional rules. I generally tend to look askance at flights of fancy that have nothing to do with a serious investigation of the campaign. (My favorite one was 'What is the entire German Army motorized in 1941?' Sure. What if the Germans had a death ray?) It was to avoid that kind of nonsense that we spent a good deal of time carefully researching the optional rules. What we came up with was a set of options for the Polish player all of which were clearly within

his capability in September of 1939. These include, (1) a continuation of the already-started process of converting the cavalry to mechanized brigades using tanks on hand, but spread-out in independent companies and battalions at the start of the war, (2) retention of Polish-produced export aircraft for home use, (3) uninterrupted Polish mobilization (the Poles started to mobilize soon enough but stopped, then started again too late), (4) foreign orders for aircraft placed a week or two sooner, etc. All of these are very modest changes which, most importantly, do not require any great change in Polish military thinking before the war. Poland was an extremely aviation conscious nation (second only to Germany on the continent) and had already made the decision to convert her cavalry to mechanized brigades. The mobilization foul-up was just that — a mistake!

When these optionals are used, **CASE WHITE** becomes a different game. Probably the most radical change came from uninterrupted mobilization. With about ten more divisions behind the lines (instead of ten weak cadres), the ability of German mechanized spearheads to pocket Poles during exploitation after the initial breakthrough is almost nil. In one playtest here with all the optional rules, yours truly as the Germans, had his clock cleaned by John Harshman as the Poles. I suppose that the way the optional rules work in **CASE WHITE** is what I am most pleased with in the game. Not only do they make it a balanced game, but for me they've provided a number of entertaining hours exploring the effects of different alternate histories. ●●