

# GURPS<sup>®</sup>

# WWII<sup>™</sup>

# RETURN TO HONOR<sup>™</sup>

The Defeat and Rebirth of France



By **BRIAN J. UNDERHILL**

**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

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Experience the agony of 1940 and the exultation of 1945 with the rest of war-torn France in *GURPS WWII: Return to Honor!* From the proud Free French to dark Vichy henchmen, inside you'll find:

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- French weaponry, from the most formidable tank of the early war to the most sophisticated auto.
- Campaign notes for a variety of French experiences, from the Foreign Legion to the furtive dealings of the Resistance.

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G U R P S<sup>®</sup>

# WWII<sup>™</sup>

## RETURN TO HONOR<sup>™</sup>

France's Journey From Defeat to Victory

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## ABOUT GURPS

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The **GURPS WWII: Return to Honor** web page is at [www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/ww2/returntohonor/](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/ww2/returntohonor/).

## Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition**. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the **GURPS Basic Set** – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the **GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition**. Page references that begin with CI indicate **GURPS Compendium I**. Others are CII to **Compendium II**, HT to **High-Tech**, W to **WWII**, W:HS to **WWII: Hand of Steel**, and W:IC to **WWII: Iron Cross**. The abbreviation for this book is W:RH. For a full list, see p. CI181 or visit the updated web list at [www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html).

# INTRODUCTION

*“Only he is vanquished who accepts defeat.”*  
– Marshal Ferdinand Foch

France. From the Maginot Line to the Falaise Gap, this land was home to some of the most memorable affairs of World War II. After 60 years, terms such as Vichy, de Gaulle, Maquis, Normandy, Dunkirk, and the French Foreign Legion still evoke images of great courage and heartbreaking loss. **GURPS WWII: Return to Honor** is a roleplayer's guide to France during that tumultuous time, providing an overview of the era complete with examples of the heroism and tragedy that make for great adventure.

After a crushing defeat by Germany and a surrender many considered cowardly and treasonous, a small group of French men and women continued to fight the Nazi regime using whatever means was at hand. Though ill-prepared for war in 1940, Free French soldiers and underground Resistance fighters held tenaciously to their belief in France and their ability to regain their freedom. That belief was not misplaced; by 1945, the German interlopers were defeated, and France was free once again.

Delineating six years of occupation, resistance, and war in only 48 pages is impossible; capturing the spirit that sustained the French, and the moral issues that haunted them, even more so. But what's contained in the pages that follow should provide GMs and players with enough background, atmosphere, history, and plot seeds to last through many adventures. The information can be used in campaigns featuring French soldiers, underground Resistance fighters, legionnaires, spies, and British SOE agents. It can also be used together with other **GURPS WWII** supplements as a backdrop for Allied or Axis soldiers fighting across the war-torn country.

Regardless of its place in any given campaign, it's the author's hope that **Return to Honor** does justice to the brave men and women of France who never gave up hope.

*Vive la France.*

## About the Author

Brian J. Underhill first began writing for *Steve Jackson Games* in 1987, and, after a lengthy hiatus, has recently returned to the fold. This prodigal author's most recent releases include **GURPS Cliffhangers** and **GURPS Traveller Heroes 1: Bounty Hunters**. **Return to Honor** is Brian's first supplement for **GURPS WWII**.



# 1. FRANCE AT WAR

*"On these battlefields, my lovely, safe world  
blew itself up."*

— F. Scott Fitzgerald

France felt secure and self-satisfied in the early years of the 20th century. It was a time of enlightenment and intellectualism, of culture and decadence. In the last week of June 1914, a Paris editorialist declared, "What spoiled children we are!" Some readers probably agreed with delight.

But a decade of war threats and brinkmanship had pushed Europe toward the inevitable. With the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand (see p. W6), diplomatic channels flooded with activity. Despite those who spoke with the voice of reason, France *wanted* to go to war. Still bitter over their 1871 loss to Prussia, the French generals saw the impending conflict as an opportunity to gain back what was lost — a chance to restore Alsace-Lorraine, France's honor, and her undisputed place atop the continental powers.

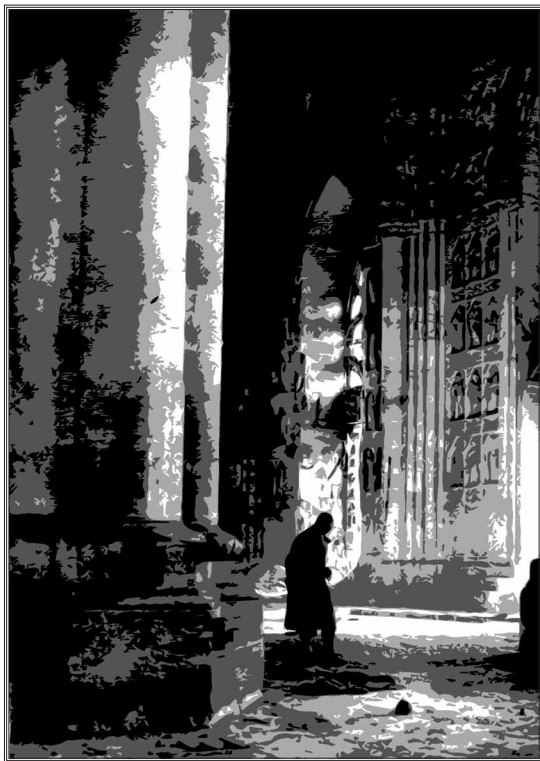
## WORLD WAR I

In their bid to avenge 1871, the French reached back to the chivalric precepts of 1371.

### Plan 17

As Germany prepared to invade France under the Schlieffen Plan (see p. W6), France created a grand strategy of its own, Plan 17. It called for invading Alsace with one thought in mind: Whatever the circumstances, *attack*. Plan 17 was more of a mystique than a military plan. It was not founded on the principles of steel and strategy, but on *élan* and impetuosity. This idea that high morale could defy shrapnel would unnecessarily spill French blood throughout the war.

Soon after the Germans invaded Belgium, the French commander Joffre began his own attack. Dragoons in horsehair plumes and metal cuirasses marched forward alongside infantry in red trousers



and blue jackets. Soon, the French tricolor waved above liberated cities up and down the front. Plan 17 was, briefly, a success, but the horsemen in traditional armor and riflemen in traditional colors would soon discover the modern merits of the Kaiser's drab MGs and artillery.

### Stalemate

In only six days, Germany shattered the colorful French forces. By Aug. 25, 1914, the tricolor flew nowhere in Alsace. Ironically, had the Germans feigned retreat before the French attack, their own Schlieffen Plan might have worked, but they themselves hesitated to give these traditional foes even the illusion of victory. As Plan 17 failed spectacularly, refugees crowded the roads before the advancing Germans. Echoes of 1871's shame haunted France's generals.

On Sept. 2, the French government packed up and moved from Paris to Bordeaux, believing the fall of Paris to be imminent. The city's military governor, Gallieni, had an idea for avoiding that. He made some of the few troops that Joffre sent him move farther north – placing them on the advancing Germans' flank. The southern German line stopped to meet Joffre's frontal assault and the northern portion spread out in fear of the flanking attack that was little more than a shrewd Parisian's bluff. The nervous Germans fell back a bit and began digging in – and the real combat of the Great War began, battles for which neither side had done any planning.



## The Western Front

Germany had every reason to avoid a war of bitter stalemate in the trenches – it could not feed itself for a long war nor fight effectively on two fronts for that length of time. France had neither factor to worry about, but was no more psychologically prepared to dig in and wait things out. Hunkering down in the mud offered no opportunity to display the fighting spirit that the French command felt sure held the keys to victory.

Refusing to accept their reality, the French generals attempted several costly assaults. Thousands of Frenchmen hurled themselves out of their trenches, only to be cut down by a hail of bullets. Their visions of glory and hope soon transformed into a war-weary pessimism.

## The Mutiny of 1917

In 1917, the crisis reached its breaking point. Years of ill-advised slaughter had bled the French dry, and the survivors were sick of mud and certain death. Joffre was pushed upstairs, promoted to marshal and removed from planning the war.

His replacement, Gen. Robert Nivelle, ordered French troops forward to the second battle of the Aisne in April. Unfortunately, Nivelle's plan had been intercepted by Germany. When the French troops charged, they were mowed down in yet another massacre. By the end of the day, France had advanced only 600 yards – Nivelle had promised six miles – and France had taken 40,000 casualties. Unable to admit his plan was a failure, Nivelle continued the attack for two weeks, resulting in 350,000 casualties for France and its allies.

After the first day, many French units refused to go over the top again; some soldiers shot their own officers rather than charge the German line. By the end of the offensive, more than 50 divisions had refused to obey orders in a mutiny that left great stretches of the front undefended. French counterintelligence leapt into action, blocking all news of the mutiny from the Germans. The undefended front was never breached.

On May 15, Nivelle was replaced by Henri-Philippe Pétain (see p. 13). More than 100,000 soldiers were court-martialed; 23,000 were found guilty; 432 were sentenced to death, but only 55 were shot. (Many others were shot without trial.) Pétain also ordered changes in the structure of the French army. Leave time was doubled, food was improved, and Pétain assured troops there would be no more bloody offensives while he was in charge. Morale began to improve, but at that point it had but one direction to go from rock bottom. Echoes of the 1917 mutiny would ring until 1940.

## The End

With the U.S. entry into the war, the tide began to change. After four exhausting years of bloodbaths and barbed wire, almost entirely on its own soil, France won its costly victory. The soldiers returned home to victory celebrations. As spoils, the country claimed Alsace-Lorraine.

Despite the celebrations, France felt beaten in many ways. For a short time following the war, the French population actually declined; the country's huge loss of citizen-soldiers partially explains this, but very few males are required to expand a population. A continuing pessimism also contributed.

The quintessential French joy in life – and its appreciation of fine dining, fine romance, and fine living – would return, but the staggering horrors of the Great War would not be forgotten.



# THE YEARS BETWEEN



After WWI, France found itself the focal point of world politics. Peace negotiations were held in Paris; the treaties of Versailles, St. Germain, Trianon, Neuilly, and Sevres were all signed in France; and the new League of Nations was to be headquartered in Geneva, just across the border. In the midst of all this peace, war was still brewing.

## Syria

Modern Syria was part of the Ottoman Empire (now Turkey) prior to WWI. When Turkey joined the Central Powers, Great Britain offered a guarantee of independence for all Arab lands roughly corresponding to modern-day Syria and Iraq. Four months later (May 1916), Britain and France secretly concluded the Sykes-Picot agreement, dividing Arab land between the British and French governments. Syria and Lebanon were assigned to France, Palestine and Jordan to Great Britain. The Arabs, allied with Britain and France, fought the Turks for the rest of the war, aiding in the capture of Damascus in 1918. In 1919, Britain withdrew, leaving French troops in control, and a year later France was granted a mandate over Syria and Lebanon by the League of Nations.

The anti-Turkish movement quickly turned anti-French, and rebellion sprung up in Syria in 1920, and again from 1925 to 1927. The second uprising was well organized and executed, but the better-armed French forces smashed the rebellion with artillery, tanks, and aircraft.

The region was a hotbed of revolt and skirmishes; French soldiers would find all sorts of

opportunity for adventure defending against surprise attacks, assaulting Arab fortresses, infiltrating anti-French cells, guarding supply convoys, and navigating the twisting streets of exotic Middle-Eastern cities.

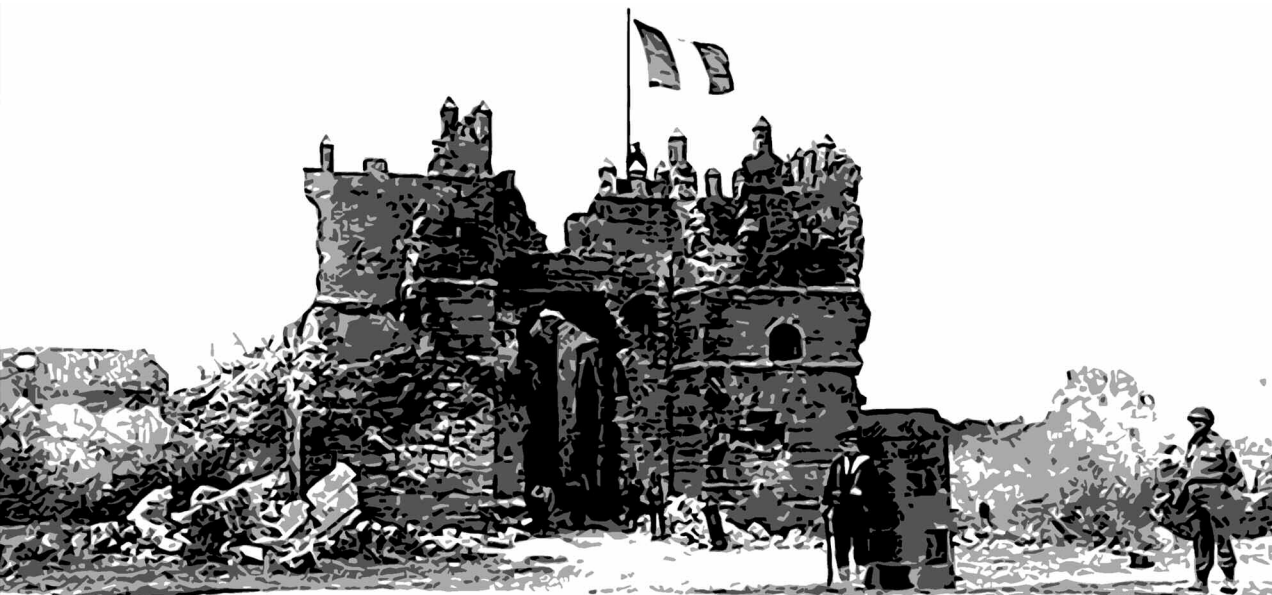
## Morocco

In 1920, war broke out in Morocco between Spanish troops and Rif tribes led by Abd el-Krim. The Rif soldiers trounced the European troops, and by 1924 they had driven the Spanish forces from most of their territory. Spanish losses were heavy, due in part to poor leadership and inadequate weapons.

After defeating Spain, Abd el-Krim turned his attention to the French. In 1925, he pushed French forces nearly to the ancient city of Fès in retaliation for the capture of the Rif supply base in the Wargha valley. That same year, faced with Abd el-Krim's string of successes and growing concerned over the possibility of losing their colonies in North Africa, France and Spain began planning a joint military action.

As Spanish forces landed near Ajdir, a French army of 160,000 men, led by a Marshal Pétain fresh from his Great War laurels, attacked from the south. Faced with a combined army of a quarter-million men armed with superior weapons, Abd el-Krim surrendered on May 27, 1926.

PCs in the region will find many opportunities for action and adventure, and may even come face to face with one of the key Spanish generals in this campaign, Francisco Franco.



# THE DECLINE OF THE FRENCH MILITARY

Given the lessons of the Great War, France concentrated on a policy of fortified defense, despite evidence that new technology would favor the offensive. French politicians viewed another war as costly and self-defeating, thus they intended to deter Germany from ever trying again. In addition, the better the fortifications the fewer men it takes to adequately man them. Given its population declines, France had grave concerns about fielding the manpower to beat Germany again, so planned to substitute concrete for soldiers.

The politicians argued stridently about the cost of these fortifications, with many viewing just about any military expenditures as wasteful. In 1925, War Minister Paul Painlevé described what became the compromise policy when he said France's role was to "achieve a rational system of national defense, adequate in times of danger but unsuited to adventures and conquests."

Pinching francs while building costly forts caused other programs to fall behind. Confident that they never would actually have to fight, France's leaders let the general standards of military training and equipment lag behind throughout the interwar years – the same period in which Germany was setting a record pace for improvement.

## THE MAGINOT LINE

The Maginot Line was built between 1929 and 1940 to defend traditional invasion routes across the eastern frontier of France. It was intended to hold off a German invasion long enough for the French army to mobilize, and to act as a sort of "Great Wall of France" behind which the French could feel safe and secure – a doctrine that would later become known as the "Maginot mentality." This mindset in many political leaders and a few generals would ultimately contribute to France's fall.

The line consisted of a string of forts, usually running along naturally defensible terrain, often the Meuse River. In the south, it ran from the Alps to the Mediterranean. In the north, it stretched from Switzerland to the Ardennes. The gaps bordered upon generally friendly countries, Belgium and Switzerland. The latter would not provide an ideal invasion route under any circumstances, and the French intended to enter Belgium and assist in manning its defensive belts should the Germans invade again from that direction. Belgium had reservations about defending France in Belgium, and ended its alliance with France in 1936. From that point, France began extending the Maginot Line to the coast, but had little work done by 1940.

Much of this vast defensive network boasted state-of-the-art features. The facilities were as much as 35 yards underground; the surrounding earth would give up to DR 44,000 in game terms! Each fort actually consisted of several turrets for 75mm guns; observation posts; and cupolas and casemates that could house more 75mm guns, MGs for close defense, 37mm and 47mm antitank guns, or 81mm and 135mm mortars for attacking out-of-view crevices that might otherwise protect attacking infantry. The

casemates usually were placed to provide flanking fire, at an angle to the line of attack.

Major concrete structures facing Germany were usually 3.5 yards thick, providing about DR 18,000. Lesser features had 1.5-yard-thick fronts for DR 3,400, with the rear walls of most being about DR 1,500. The steel turrets had DR 1,200 or 1,350, depending on their model.

The forts could withstand their own fire, so if the Germans got right on top of a fort's works, adjacent fortresses could shell them with little fear of harming their fellow Frenchmen. Anti-tank and infantry weapons defended a fort's rear, but most of the average fort's weapons could not turn back into France, being sited on a forward slope or in a casemate with a 45° field of fire pointed roughly toward the enemy.

About 800 troops manned a large Maginot fort. They typically lived in two barracks behind the fort, but could live for months inside the complex if need be. They drew power from the state electrical grid, but typically had four 250-kW diesel generators for backup, with a 2-3 month supply of fuel. Miles of brick-lined corridor connected the fort's various scattered hard-points, ammunition stores, and other features, with small electrified trains and elevators moving men and ammo to and fro. If an attacker did force one of a fort's two rear entrances, pre-emplaced demolition charges could collapse the tunnel connecting them to the fighting systems.

Ultimately, the line's failure to cover the Ardennes provided a fatal opening that the French did not foresee. In addition, many of its features were not fully fitted, and some forts were poorly situated, creating gaps in fields of fire. Regardless, the line would have presented a *formidable* obstacle for any head-on assault.



# BEATEN BY BLITZKRIEG



On Sept. 1, 1939, France declared a general mobilization after Germany invaded Poland (see p. W12). Two days later, the French declared war. At that time, the nation had some 30 infantry divisions in the field: 14 were in North Africa, defending the Mareth Line and keeping watch on Italian forces in Libya. Nine were deployed on the Alpine front. Only seven were available along the German border.

The manpower shortage was worsened by a sluggish mobilization that took weeks. Millions of soldiers, as well as plenty of tanks and artillery, were available – enough to mount some 105 divisions – but calling them into service and making them battle-ready was a painfully slow process.

In addition, the army's plans did not include any contingency for invading Germany, even though France had promised an attack in Poland's defense. The French scrambled to organize an offensive, one for which they did not possess a clear goal.

## Operation Saar

On Sept. 7, Gen. Gaston Prételat, commander of the French 2nd Army Group, launched Operation Saar, an attack aimed between the Rhine and Moselle. Some 31 divisions were put at Prételat's disposal, but only nine were used in the initial tentative assault. Gen. Erwin von Witzleben's German 1st Army was facing them with far too few men or weapons for the job, though the wary French had convinced themselves that Hitler had many more forces on their border. The Germans retreated in front of the leisurely French advance, leaving traps in their wake.

The explosive-laden houses and other tricks made a deep impression upon the French, as did the handful of skirmishes that took place before the Germans melted away again. Many of the invaders thought that they were enduring hard combat, and certainly the Poles were told as much, but by Sept. 13 Operation Saar had gained only a few miles and cost the French 27 dead, trivial statistics given the forces involved. The air force had lost nine fighters and 18 reconnaissance aircraft skirmishing with the Luftwaffe.

The French settled in for a long wait, building up their defenses in preparation for the blow that they strongly suspected would come.

## FALL GELB

The original German invasion plans for France – Operation *Fall Gelb* (Case Yellow) – did not fully replay the Schlieffen Plan. The Wehrmacht intended to invade Belgium, the Netherlands, and northern France to secure ports and airfields, but not as a staging area to further encircle the French army in a counterclockwise sweep as attempted in the Great War. The plan's critics seized upon this very lack of a decisive stroke in endorsing their alternate plan for a surprise, clockwise sweep entering France from farther south.

In December 1939 and January 1940, the original plan was scheduled and canceled four times – and the German generals were scrambling to make their men ready with the jump-off date never more than two weeks away. On Jan. 10, 1940, a Fiesler Storch crashed in Belgium, and the Allies captured parts of the operational plan, seriously compromising it: Belgium and the Netherlands mobilized immediately.

On Jan. 16, 1940, Hitler canceled the original plan one last time, and ordered the Wehrmacht staff to create a new one. Operation *Sichelschnitt* (Sickle Stroke) – an unalloyed invasion of France – was born. Had the Wehrmacht stuck to its original plan, and succeeded, it likely would have felt compelled to attempt a great “right hook” as its next operation, repeating 1914.

## THE BATTLE OF FRANCE

On May 10, 1940, Germany invaded Belgium and the Netherlands. Using revolutionary tactics (including paratroops, gliders, and feints), they pressed into the Low Countries, drawing British and French forces northward to defend France in front of its borders, exactly in accordance with the existing French plans. Meanwhile, panzer divisions slowly made their way through the supposedly impassible Ardennes forest, splitting the Belgian and Maginot defensive lines and breaking out in what would become the ultimate example of blitzkrieg.

## The Ardennes

*May 10, 1940:* Seven panzer divisions were placed at the disposal of Germany's Army Group A to punch through the Ardennes. Several German commanders believed the operation would fail, but a number of factors conspired in favor of the German plan.

## PARIS

Paris was a beacon of personal and artistic freedom in the 1930s. The cosmopolitan city had rebounded from WWI in a celebration of creativity that attracted thousands of painters, writers, and musicians from around the world. The Germans and French alike perceived occupation of this special city as the symbol of who controlled France.

Refugees from the battlefield had begun pouring through Paris shortly after the invasion, and on June 1 the government closed Paris schools and advised all noncombatants to join the exodus. Typically, no actual evacuation plan had been prepared for this contingency, so residents only slowly trickled away as they could find transportation. The government began a hasty construction of fortifications, which ultimately served only to get in the way of the military units defending the city.

On June 10, Gen. Weygand decided that Paris should be declared an “open city,” that is, the French promised not to defend it so that the Germans wouldn’t destroy it. The government agreed, but neglected to announce the decision, even to Gen. Héring, the city’s military governor! As feisty as his WWI predecessor, Héring was forming a makeshift army to resist the Germans, hard-won house by hard-won house. On the 12th, Weygand told him to stand down.

On the 13th, the frightened Parisians finally took to the roads en masse, so that 3 million of them were gone when the Germans entered a quiet “City of Lights” on Friday, June 14, 1940. Machine-gun posts were set up along the way, and key buildings (government offices, radio stations) were seized. Those Parisians that remained watched in an unsettled silence. No gunfire or exploding bombs marked the fall of the “open” city – only the drone of Wehrmacht tanks and planes as they poured down the Champs Élysées exactly 35 days after invading France.

See p. W:IC120 for more information on the occupation years.

First, the Belgians had only light forces in the Ardennes; Belgium believed that France would advance into the Ardennes to defend it. Second, French forces near the Ardennes were poorly equipped and tasked with holding an oversized front. Third, the French simply didn’t believe that Germany would attack through the Ardennes – the region was, after all, impenetrable when properly defended. Unfortunately for France, it was hardly defended at all.

Luxembourg was defeated in the first day of the attacks. The Netherlands fell in four days as *Fallschirmjäger* (German paratroops) seized vital bridges. Belgium fared no better as *Fallschirmjäger* captured Eben-Emaël, a fortress that protected the bridges of the Albert Canal. Thirty-five British and French divisions, including the best France could muster, rushed to the aid of Belgium and the Netherlands. But drawing Allied troops to the north had been Germany’s intention all along.

## Across the Meuse

*May 13, 1940:* Germany did not outnumber the French and BEF (British Expeditionary Force), but the German armies were better trained and equipped. In fierce fighting, Germany expanded three bridgeheads into a 50-mile gap in the French line. Stukas from the Luftwaffe terrified the French troops with their accuracy, and the Me-109 umbrella over the bridgeheads prevented the Allies from bringing in bombers of their own.

The French response also suffered terribly from a slow, top-down command structure. Low-level commanders held little authority to respond to changes in the battle, while senior French officers acted with an odd lethargy. For example, Gen. Gamelin didn’t order up divisions from the reserve until May 16 – nearly a week after the invasion began. Throughout the campaign, the French generals failed to coordinate their units well.

## The Drive to the Channel

*May 16, 1940:* It took Germany four days to pass through 80 miles of the Ardennes, but only six to advance 150 miles against the French 9th Army. The German High Command, unnerved by their own success, believed they were misreading the reports or missing some kind of vital information. Their hesitance to take advantage of the advance was, at times, more of a hindrance to the German advance than the French and British forces.

France mustered one of her few counterattacks on May 17, aiming at the southern flank of the German advance. Gen. Charles de Gaulle’s 4th Armored Division made three efforts from Laon on May 17-19. German counterattacks and





heavy Luftwaffe support kept de Gaulle's lone effort from achieving any significant results.

## Northern Advance

*May 21, 1940:* On reaching the Somme, Germany focused on the Allied armies that had been trapped with their backs to the sea. On May 21, the British launched an attack from the south, which was to be coordinated with a French attack from the north (from the Somme). The French attack never happened, in part because one of their key generals was killed. Germany repulsed the British attack, using 88mm antiaircraft guns against the British tanks.

On May 26, Hitler ordered the Panzers to stop; the reason for his decision is still hotly debated (see p. W:IC12). Two days later, they were released from the hold order, but the damage had already been done – the Allied line had solidified. Still, Belgium officially surrendered on the 28th, though it wasn't until the next day that the last of the Belgians ceased fighting.

## Dunkirk

*May 28, 1940:* With Allied forces surrounded and backed up to the sea, Germany continued to press the attack. A motley collection of some 850 commercial vessels and 39 destroyers evacuated Dunkirk during Operation Dynamo. In only eight days, 338,226 troops – nearly a third of whom were French – escaped to England. Most of the French later returned to France after the signing of the armistice and the installation of the Vichy government.

France lost seven destroyers and torpedo boats; Britain lost another six. More than 200 commercial ships were either sunk or damaged. In the air, Britain's Royal Air Force lost 106 planes, the German Luftwaffe 156. Despite the losses, the evacuation was a success, lending an air of heroism and victory to what was actually a devastating loss.

The French XVI Corps stayed at Dunkirk as a rearguard, gallantly providing cover during the evacuation. They

surrendered on the morning of June 4, once the evacuation was complete.

## France Divided

With the fall of Paris and the evacuation at Dunkirk, the French government admitted defeat. The cabinet voted in favor of surrender, and the 84-year-old Pétain, the new premier of France, asked Germany for its terms. Hitler's conditions shocked the French, but the Germans ignored their attempts to negotiate a less harsh peace.

The armistice was signed on June 25, 1940 (see *The Franco-German Armistice*, p. 10), but much of France was unwilling to accept defeat, much less on Germany's terms. De Gaulle escaped to Britain (see *Charles de Gaulle*, p. 12), and thousands of troops simply refused to stop fighting. With de Gaulle claiming leadership of "Free France" from London, and Pétain installed in Vichy, France was divided.

It is possible, even likely, that more Frenchmen would have sided with de Gaulle if not for his affiliation with the British. Emotions ran high, and the dilemma over loyalties demoralized France and divided French citizens and soldiers.

## INEFFECTIVE SHIELD

The Wehrmacht simply went around the fearsome Maginot Line (see p. 6). By the time that Paris fell in mid-June, only a single Maginot fort had actually been conquered, *Villy la Ferté* (see p. 44).

The rest of the Maginot was still intact and still ready to fight – unfortunately, the soldiers manning it rarely had any targets for their relatively short-range artillery aimed primarily toward the east. By July 1, the last of the Maginot garrisons had surrendered to the Germans, by then on their west.

GMs could create many opportunities for players on both sides of the battle to get involved in either holding or storming a Maginot hardpoint. The network of underground tunnels is an ideal location for exciting gun battles as French soldiers hold out against German invaders. Later, out-of-the-way forts might host Resistance caches or secret Nazi projects.

## THE FRANCO-GERMAN ARMISTICE

The French delegates sent to sign the armistice with Germany were dismayed to discover that the signing would take place in the forest of Compiègne, in the same railway car in which France had dictated harsh terms to Germany 22 years earlier at the end of WWI. A gloating Hitler then had the rail car shipped to Berlin, where Allied bombs later destroyed it.

The armistice was unconditionally binding upon the French. Germany reserved the right to terminate it at any time, and did so after the Allied invasion of North Africa in 1942.

The papers dictated France's surrender, and mandated the German occupation of France, the compliance of French citizens and soldiers with German authority, the establishment of the Vichy government (see p. 13), and so forth. Some specific examples follow.

*Article V:* "As a guarantee for the observance of the armistice, the surrender, undamaged, of all those guns, tanks, tank-defense weapons, war planes, antiaircraft artillery, infantry weapons, means of conveyance, and munitions is demanded from the units of the French armed forces."

*Article X:* "The French government is obligated to forbid any portion of its remaining armed forces to undertake hostilities

against Germany in any manner. The French government also will prevent members of its armed forces from leaving the country and prevent armaments of any sort, including ships, planes, etc., being taken to England or any other place abroad."

*Article XII:* "Flight by any airplane over French territory shall be prohibited. Every plane making a flight without German approval will be regarded as an enemy by the German air force and treated accordingly."

*Article XIV:* "There is an immediate prohibition of transmission for all wireless stations on French soil. Resumption of wireless connections from the unoccupied portion of France requires a special regulation."

*Article XIX:* "The French government is obliged to surrender upon demand all Germans named by the German government in France as well as in French possessions, colonies, protectorate territories, and mandates."

The last measure, in particular, would prove fatal to untold thousands of political dissidents, Jews of various nationalities, and other targets of Nazi persecution. Prior to the invasion, they had taken refuge in France, which to that point had held a long history of harboring other nation's exiles.

## SEEDS OF DEFIANCE



The Germans had won their most spectacular victory of the war, acquiring lands they had hardly dreamed of possessing. As they moved to consolidate their gains, the once and current Allies scrambled to minimize the damage.

### The Holdouts

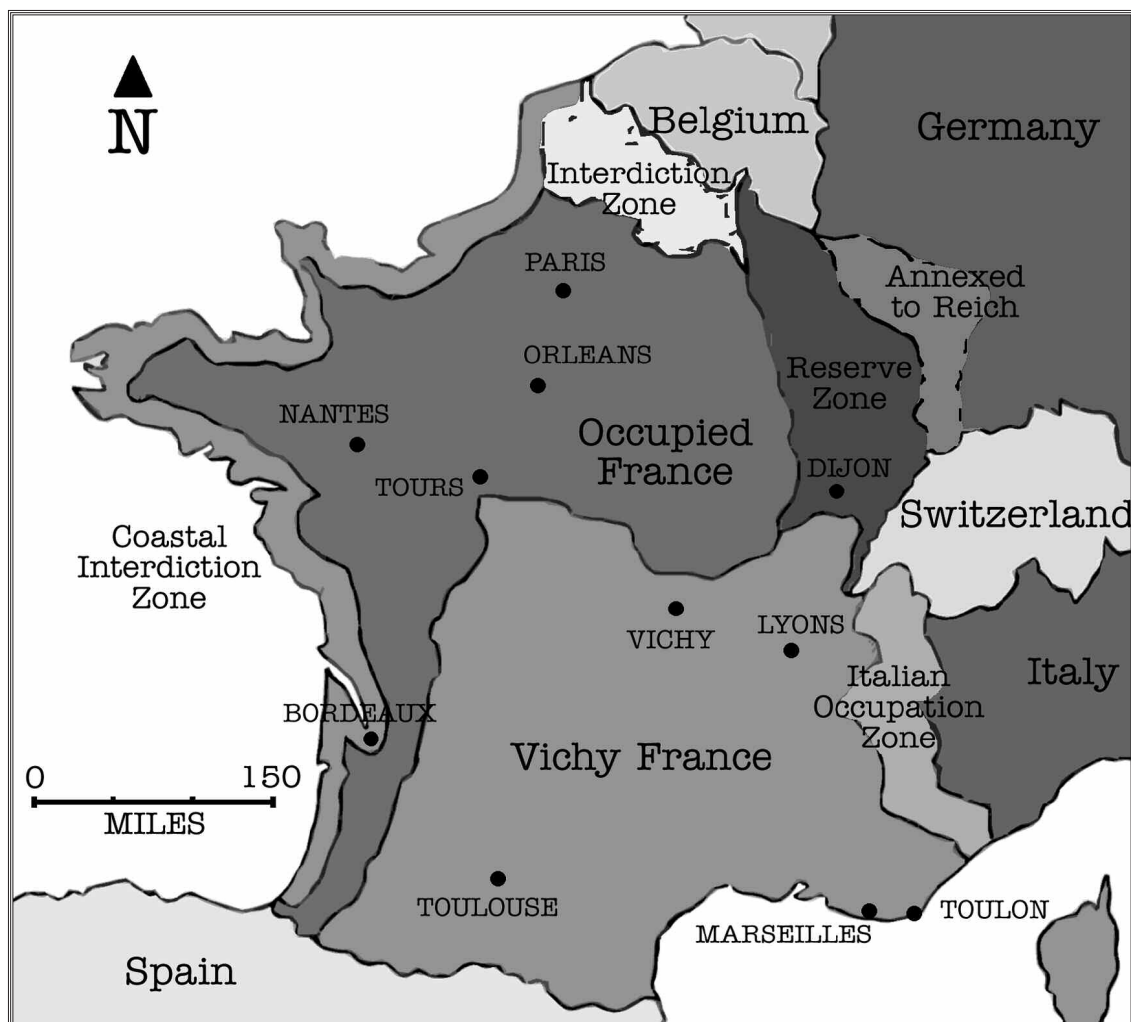
Not every British soldier, and only a relatively few Frenchmen, had made it across the channel at Dunkirk. The Germans had captured about 2 million Allied combatants in their rampage across France, an immense number for which they had not prepared. Held in makeshift confines, many of these men kept a keen eye open and made good on any chance to escape.

If they avoided the German guards' bullets, and any patrols sent to retrieve them, these men joined other soldiers who had been lurking in the woods of northeastern France since the defeat. These men slowly filtered back toward civilization and sought help in getting back home to England,

crossing the Pyrenees into Spain, or back to their civilian French lives. The Germans knew about these former soldiers – at the beginning of September they put up posters demanding that French civilians turn over all British fugitives by Oct. 20, or be shot for failing to do so – but they had a lot to do, and simply could not watch every farmhouse and factory neighborhood at once.

Even those men who sought to escape France often ended up staying, because in those days no organized resistance network existed. Many a French woman did what she could, providing a bowl of hot soup or even passing her fugitives on to a friend who lived close to a border or coast, but these good Samaritans themselves were amateurs, and often ended up in Gestapo custody before too long themselves. Regardless, they provided an invaluable service, keeping the former soldiers alive long enough to get their bearings.

Many of these fugitives would form the core of the Resistance (p. 14) in years to come.



## The British Seizure of French Warships

Shortly after de Gaulle established his government-in-exile, many French naval vessels joined his banner or were simply taken by force in British ports. Twelve days after the surrender, Britain took military action against the French vessels that had yet to side with the Allies. Churchill's decision to do so (against most advice) had two motives: to show the world that Britain was resolved to continue fighting, and to prevent the Axis military from gaining control of any part of the French fleet.

On July 3, the British naval squadron Force H arrived at the French port of Mers-el-Kébir on the gulf of Oran. Adm. Somerville delivered an ultimatum to French Adm. Marcel-Bruno Gensoul: join Britain or scuttle your ships. Gensoul refused to do either. When the French fleet attempted to leave the port, the British opened fire.

Force H included the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal*, the battlecruiser HMS *Hood*, and the battleships *Valiant* and *Resolution*, as well as two

cruisers and almost a dozen destroyers. The French forces comprised the battleships *Provence* and *Bretagne*, battlecruisers *Strasbourg* and *Dunkerque*, six destroyers, a seaplane tender, and the 12 Oran shore batteries.

Damage to Force H was light, but the French lost some 1,200 sailors. The damaged French battlecruiser *Strasbourg* reached open sea and escaped, the *Dunkerque* and *Provence* were heavily damaged, and the *Bretagne* was sunk. Many French felt bitter about the attack by a recent ally. German propaganda and elements in the Vichy government capitalized on the event, portraying the British as murderous traitors.

At Alexandria, Britain's Adm. Cunningham chose a different approach. Acting against orders from their respective governments, Cunningham met with French Adm. Godfrey and the two worked out an alternative to the British ultimatum. On July 4, the French flotilla demobilized by offloading its fuel and handing over the breechblocks for its guns and detonators for its torpedoes to the French consulate at Alexandria. The French ships could neither sail nor open fire.



# THE FREE FRENCH

On June 28, 1940, the British government recognized de Gaulle as the leader of Free France. Working from London, de Gaulle began building the *Forces Françaises Libres* – the Free French Forces. Initially, de Gaulle's small army was made up of French troops that had escaped to England, French civilian volunteers in England, and a few units of the French navy. In late 1940, several French colonies rallied to de Gaulle's banner, including Chad, Cameroun, Moyen-Congo, French Equatorial Africa, and Oubangi-Chari. French colonies in India and the Pacific followed suit. By the end of the war, more than 400,000 French men and women had come forward to fight for their country (see *Free French Forces*, p. 20).

## Dakar

In September of 1940, Free French forces were sent to capture the Vichy city of Dakar, in French West Africa. Britain supported the invasion in order to prevent the port city from falling into German hands. De Gaulle believed it was only proper that “the seat of the French government desiring to continue the fight be located on French soil,” and Dakar was an ideal location.

Initially, a group of Free French soldiers was sent by airplane in an effort to sway the city's governor to join the Free French. They were promptly arrested.

On Sept. 23, some 2,400 Gaullist troops landed at Dakar, supported by ships from the British Royal Navy (including the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal*). The Vichy French air force took to the skies, shooting down British aircraft that were primarily dropping leaflets. Vichy France lost one aircraft and managed to dump six tons of explosives on the ships of the Royal Navy.

The ground troops were repulsed by the Vichy forces, and the invasion was called off on Sept. 25. Free French forces had seen their first full-scale battle, and been defeated by Vichy troops.

## Bir Hakeim

The first engagement between Free French and German forces occurred in May 1942, when an outnumbered French army clashed with Rommel's *Afrika Korps* at Bir Hakeim, Libya.

French forces included the *1e Division Légère d'Infanterie* (1st Light Division) commanded by

# CHARLES DE GAULLE

Described by H.G. Wells as “an utterly sincere megalomaniac,” Charles Andre Joseph Marie de Gaulle was not an easy man to like, but the strength of his often self-important convictions would save France at least twice.

De Gaulle's star rose rapidly with the invasion. Alone among French tank commanders, he defended his country vigorously. As undersecretary of state and minister for national defense, he was one of the few cabinet members who resisted surrender, proposing that the government withdraw to a French colony to continue the fight.

After the surrender, he fled to London. Churchill later said, “De Gaulle carried with him, in that small airplane, the honor of France.” On June 18, de Gaulle made his first stirring radio broadcast calling on the French to resist the occupation. It became perhaps the most famous speech in French history and spawned his rallying cry: “France has lost a battle, but France has not lost the war.”

During the remainder of that war, other Allied leaders conspired to replace the sensitive and stubborn leader with a more reasonable man, and the Vichy government sentenced him to death for treason, but only his own country's Communists could goad him into a 1946 retirement. He returned to power and averted a major political crisis in 1958, retiring again in 1968. He died a year later, a far more popular figure than during the war.

Gen. Marie-Pierre Koenig. The division was made up of several brigades, including the *13 Demi-Brigade de la Légion Etrangère* (13th half-brigade of the Foreign Legion) and the *Bataillon du Pacifique* (Pacific Battalion), which had been created in Nouméa, French Polynesia, and was made up of some 300 Tahitian volunteers. Koenig's driver at that time was an Englishwoman, Susan Travers – known by her *nom de guerre*, “La Miss.” She is the only woman ever allowed to join the French Foreign Legion.

Koenig and his troops were severely outnumbered, but held out against German and Italian forces for over two weeks. Rommel offered terms of surrender, but Koenig refused. In an audacious nighttime attack, his troops assaulted the heart of the German lines. The determined Free French soldiers opened a gaping hole in the lines, allowing for the escape of more than 2,400 French soldiers in one of the most dramatic military breakouts in history.

Travers and Koenig led the column that broke through the lines. Their car passed directly through a minefield, came under heavy machine-gun fire, and drove into a bomb crater. By the time that they had cleared Rommel's lines, Koenig's car alone had 11 bullet holes.

# VICHY FRANCE

Shortly after Germany invaded, many Frenchmen felt that the Germans would win, that they would conquer Great Britain shortly thereafter, and that this wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing altogether. Prewar France did have many political and social problems that a little Teutonic or Fascist efficiency would improve, after all. A France that took a willing, proactive role in the upcoming *une Europe allemande* would be able to claim an equal place within it.

In July 1940, Pétain took the helm of a government that fairly willingly surrendered to Hitler. Its capital in the city of Vichy bestowed its popular name. Pétain himself would later coin the term for this voluntary submission – *collaboration* – a word that quite correctly suggests that the Vichy did not see themselves as taking the role of conquered territory in the Nazi's New Order.

The Vichy regime called a short parliament to abolish the former French government. A new constitution – and a fascist government – were created to replace it. The Vichy government was given control over unoccupied France (roughly the southern half minus the Atlantic seaboard) and the French colonies, but it was little more than a German puppet state controlled by French and German fascists.

The Vichy government ruled with Germany's approval, appointing government officials, controlling the press, and practicing arbitrary arrests. They passed anti-Semitic laws and actively pursued Article XIX of the armistice (see p. 10), rounding up more than 70,000 Jews to be added to the even greater German collection of French and other Jews in the Occupied Zone.

The regime also sent more than a half-million workers to Germany to support the war effort, primarily as farmhands but also as the Third Reich's leading source of imported skilled labor. In addition, French industry usually found itself in a captive relationship with the insatiable appetite of the Wehrmacht's war machine.

During this interval, the Vichy attempted to create a "leader cult" for Pétain much like that created by Goebbels for Hitler. The Nazis, in turn, overlooked this French Führer initiative and other Vichy public

statements alluding to an independent status. As long as the Vichy were compliant, they could delude themselves in whatever fashion that they preferred. A small minority of Nazi leaders advocated favorable treatment of France, but most of them still held a grudge over the terms of Germany's own Great War surrender.

Though the Vichy regime wanted to remain neutral in the war, it was committed to defending its soil, which meant fighting the Allies invading its colonies. In turn, the Allies did not recognize the Vichy government, choosing to throw their support behind de Gaulle and the Free French government that he led from exile.

When the Allies invaded North Africa in November 1942, Hitler annulled the armistice and occupied all of France. The Vichy government continued in a weakened form. By July 1943, Frenchmen were serving in the Waffen-SS and a Vichy army called the Milice was savagely fighting the Resistance. Vichy France had become an integral part of the Nazi war effort.

After France was liberated in August '44, some Vichy politicians fled to Germany, where the Allies caught up to them within a year. Most of them were arrested, and several were tried and executed for war crimes.

## HENRI-PHILIPPE PÉTAIN

Born in 1856, Henri-Philippe Benoni Omer Pétain attended the Saint-Cyr military academy and the *École Supérieure de Guerre* (army war college) in Paris. He distinguished himself and gained great popularity during WWI (see p. 4). In 1934, he became the French minister of war, and later served as an ambassador to Spain.

At the age of 84, Pétain was recalled to active duty as an adviser to the minister of war of May 1940. He soon became vice premier, and after the surrender the Vichy "chief of state" with sweeping powers.

Unlike his own vice premier, Pierre Laval, Pétain wanted to keep the Nazis at arm's length. Ultimately, this led him to oust Laval in 1940, but the Germans forced him to reinstate their admirer in April 1942, after which Pétain became a figurehead with little real authority. He secretly prepared to turn Vichy troops in Africa over to the Allied side in November 1942, but never made the commitment.

After the war, Pétain fled to Germany and then Switzerland. Eventually caught, he was tried and sentenced to death. De Gaulle, who had chosen to serve under Pétain after his own graduation from Saint-Cyr, commuted his former commander's sentence to life in solitary.

Pétain died on Ile d'Yeu, an island off the coast of Brittany, in 1951.

## VARIAN FRY

Thirty-one-year-old American writer Varian Fry arrived in Marseilles, France, in August 1940 with \$3,000 strapped to his leg and a list of refugees in danger of persecution by Nazi Germany. He had planned to stay one month, but the Mediterranean port was jammed with thousands of anti-Nazi refugees – Jews and non-Jews alike – that swarmed to Fry’s American Rescue Committee (ARC).

For over a year, Fry and a few helpers defied authorities, set up secret escape routes, forged passports and visas, laundered money on the black market, conspired with gangsters, and chartered illegal transports. In 13 months, they spirited 1,500 people out of the country and gave aid to 2,500 more.

Fry’s work could provide all sorts of campaign settings. American or European PCs may work with the ARC as forgers, spies, couriers, or escorts. Vichy soldiers may be assigned to counter Fry’s operations, while some Vichy bureaucrats quietly sabotaged the Nazi roundup themselves. Resistance fighters may rub elbows with ARC members. Anyone cooperating with ARC operations will be in danger of arrest by French or German authorities, and even the American consulate will rarely be helpful. In January 1941, Fry’s passport expired, and the U.S. State Department – which disapproved of his activities – refused to renew it. (To be fair, U.S. officials in Vichy France bent over backward in their own efforts to aid refugees from the Nazis. Most likely they perceived Fry as an amateur who would draw too much attention and cause the Vichy and Germans to close all avenues of escape.)

U.S. officials later aided the Vichy in expelling Fry for the “crime” of protecting anti-Nazis and Jews. He returned to New York in September 1941.

networks of mutual acquaintances began to knit together to move these men out of hiding. The Resistance was coalescing.

As 1941 continued into 1942, the Wehrmacht and SS administrations in Occupied France had to devote more and more resources to curbing the still-young Resistance. Some cells, particularly the Communist ones, began random assassinations of German personnel on the street. The Germans responded with tighter curfews, more random identification checks, and – in the case of the killings – with mass reprisals, killing several French citizens for every German slain.

These measures never proved enough, for the Resistance recruited members more quickly than the Germans could arrest, torture, and kill them. Resistance members also held a small advantage because they could always sneak across the border into Vichy France. Though most of the Resistance probably didn’t realize it, on average Vichy officials hunted them far less vigorously than did Hitler’s German wardens.

1943 turned grimmer. The Germans wasted no time in stepping up their attacks after seizing all of France in November 1942. With nowhere to hide, the Resistance suffered massive losses throughout the year. Nevertheless, it continued to grow. At this time the Nazis began scouring France for men to transport to Germany as forced labor. This prompted countless men who had sat out the conflict until then to join the rural Maquis bands of Resistance fighters (see p. 24) – more than offsetting the Gestapo’s work.

By the spring of 1943, the Resistance was beginning to anticipate an Allied invasion of France. Morale improved despite the losses. In September, French Communists on Corsica – birthplace of the Maquis tradition – began ousting the Germans with only minimal support. The Resistance had taken the field of battle and won against quality German units.

The Germans outlawed the French holiday of Nov. 11, the anniversary of Germany’s WWI surrender and the French equivalent of Memorial Day. In the face of this prohibition, a Maquis band seized the out-of-the-way town of Oyonnax and held a formal parade before slipping away again.

In 1944, with hints of the Allied invasion in the air, the eager Maquis began seizing mountain redoubts, then taking heavy tolls among the counterattacking Germans before slipping away. The largest such initiative seized the Alpine plateau of Vercors in June 1944. The Maquis’ luck ran out there. The Germans annihilated them, even as a far larger threat exploded on the Normandy coast.

See Chapter 3 for more on the Resistance.

## THE RESISTANCE

As 1940 turned into 1941, organized French resistance developed only slowly. Some of the French simply felt beaten and resigned; the Germans split France into several zones (p. 11) that required papers to cross, making it harder to find the help one needed, and some French pinned their hopes on Pétain quietly preparing a masterstroke of double-cross to be sprung on the Nazis.

Regardless, minor acts of defiance continued, and spread from simply aiding fugitives to modest attacks. Adding sand while changing the oil in a Gestapo car wasn’t much, but it was something.

In the meantime, farmers and schoolgirls kept looking for someone to help the soldiers they had been harboring for months (see p. 10). Regular



# LIBERATION AND BEYOND



The Free French got their first taste of fighting under Anglo-American command in Italy, where more than 100,000 French soldiers would take part in the grueling campaigns of 1943. Most of these forces had been organized in Africa, and the Free French government had moved its base of operations to Algiers in June 1943.

Shortly, select units would return to the first home of the Free French – England – in preparation for the day that they all had been awaiting, the day they returned to France itself.

## D-Day

The liberation of France began with the Allied invasion at Normandy on June 6, 1944 (see p. W30). French operatives in the Jedburgh teams (see p. 29) already had helped pave the way. A few Free French commandos joined the British and Canadian troops storming the beaches. At Pegasus Bridge, the first French home became free again after four long years of occupation. Within days, French troops in the SAS would be parachuting into Brittany along with much-needed weapons to help the Maquis get organized into a proper fighting force.

The Resistance had gotten busy long before their weapons arrived. Though only half of them were armed, the French operatives struck out on the night before the landings. They crippled the railroads and locomotives essential to a German counterattack in Plan Vert, destroyed telephone cables across France in Plan Violet, cut electrical lines in Plan Bleu, and destroyed bridges and roads in Plan Tortue. In all, these measures kept some dozen German divisions from rapidly converging on the Allied beachheads.

The Americans and British had not made de Gaulle part of their planning. Summoned back to England from Algeria on June 5, he raised objection after objection about the manner in which his hosts had overlooked French sovereignty. Even his staunchest supporters raised their eyebrows at his intransigence, and the irritated Anglo-Americans did not get around to transporting him to Normandy until June 14.

Once on French soil, he stayed.

## Bloody Breakouts

As the American, British, and Canadian armies fought to break out of their beachhead and roll up northern France (see p. W32), Free French units accompanied them. The premier such unit was the 2nd Armored Division, commanded by Gen. Jacques-Philippe Leclerc, who had slipped through German lines in 1940 to join another armored unit when his first one was surrounded.

Having arrived in France on Aug. 1, the 2nd Armored ran into the 9th Panzer Division 10 days later as the Wehrmacht troops were settling into their defensive positions. Despite the opposition, the French took the bridges at Alençon intact.

The next day, they battled elements of the German 2nd and 116th Panzer divisions. Despite being outgunned in his U.S.-made Sherman tanks and outnumbered, Leclerc advanced to the outskirts of Argentan, helping to close the Falaise Gap and hasten the German retreat to Germany.

The Allied forces had swept clean all but the coast of northern France. German garrisons in coastal cities would hold out for months to come, but for all purposes they had lost their highly prized conquest.



# THE LIBERATION OF PARIS

*"Paris must not fall into the hands of the enemy except as a heap of rubble."*

– Adolf Hitler

On Aug. 19, 1944, some 20,000 of Paris' 3 million residents began to revolt against the Wehrmacht occupiers. Resistance fighters threw up crude barricades and turned their weapons on the Germans in a series of guerrilla attacks that left the occupying force reeling. As Tiger tanks machine-gunned cafes, Resistance fighters slipped up behind them and flung Molotov cocktails down their hatches. The poorly armed French irregulars rooted out German troops across the city.

The Allied plan had been to bypass the city; they feared getting embroiled in a long-term battle that would slow the advance and do unnecessary damage to the countless French landmarks. On hearing of the uprising, the Free French command persuaded Eisenhower to allow Gen. Leclerc and his 2nd Armored to charge toward the French capital. Parisians consider it the height of rudeness to drop in unannounced, so for the first time in four years Leclerc called his father in Paris, and told him he would be visiting soon!

On the night of August 24-25, the 2nd Armored, together with troops from the U.S. 4th Infantry, rolled into Paris. They were greeted by thousands of cheering French citizens showering them with handshakes, hugs, kisses, and champagne. A war correspondent later commented that by the time his jeep had reached the Seine, it contained 67 bottles of champagne! Maj. Frank Burk later said it was "without a doubt, the happiest scene the world has ever known."

Lt. Gen. Dietrich von Choltitz surrendered Aug. 26, having chosen for various reasons to disobey Hitler's orders to reduce the city to rubble. A few diehard troops took a little longer to throw down their arms, but it was shortly over. Champagne flowed freely; women donned their best dresses, some pieced together from scraps of black-market fabric. Paris was free at last. De Gaulle made his entrance into the city the same day, Eisenhower on the next. As a strategic objective Paris had mattered little, but as a symbol it was overpoweringly important.

Afterward, 123,000 Parisians claimed to have been part of the 20,000 Resistance fighters that began it all.

On Aug. 15, 1944, Allied troops landed in southern France. French commandos covered the flanks of the invasion, but opposition proved light. A group of these commandos led by Col. Bouvet captured the Cap Nègre fortifications. By nightfall of Aug. 15, they had marched nine miles and taken 1,000 prisoners.

The next day saw the vanguard of the French 1st Army, under the command of Gen. de Lattre de Tassigny, enter the fray. The French attacked with extraordinary spirit and *élan*, capturing Toulon and Marseilles on Aug. 28, and Lyons on Sept. 3. They linked up with Leclerc's 2nd Armored at Châtillon-sur-Seine on Sept. 12.

By Sept. 15, 1944, all of France was free once again.

Leclerc was sent to wrest Indo-China back from the Japanese, but only arrived in time to accept their surrender.

## POST-WWII FRANCE

By the end of the war, France was war-weary but jubilant, proud of her restored honor but tortured by the memory of collaboration. At first opportunity, those seeking to address this shame had shaved the heads of French women who had associated with Germans. They would continue to hunt down collaborators with more passion than prudence in a process of *épuration* (purification) that would cost an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 lives. Many an important Resistance operative who had *masqueraded* as a collaborator would fall prey to this backlash, when the few people who knew his real role were either dead or unwilling to testify on his behalf.

Continuing to push his "allies," de Gaulle had prodded them into allowing France an occupation zone in conquered Germany. This would later be combined with the U.S. and British

zones to form West Germany.

In 1948, France participated in the Marshall Plan – an American aid package aimed at restoring the economies of Europe. It would soon return to economic health, though the social and political fallout of *les années noires* (the dark years) would continue to haunt the country for decades to come.

## Operation Anvil-Dragoon

South of the grand Allied penetrations, the Resistance had kept the Germans busy. One large Maquis unit moved to ensure that the Wehrmacht couldn't flee into Spain. (They intended to, until they discovered that Franco would not greet them warmly, but planned to disarm and intern them.)

# 2. THE FRENCH ARMY

*"I ask all Frenchmen, wherever they may be, to unite with me in action, in sacrifice and in hope. Our country is in danger of death. Let us fight to save it!"*

– Charles de Gaulle



## MILITARY ORGANIZATION

France fielded a wider variety of armed forces than any other combatant nation in WWII, from nervous conscripts to dedicated expatriates to desperate guerrillas. This chapter briefly describes the nature of these forces.

### Basic Training

In 1939, the French army had almost 1 million soldiers, with another 5 million reservists who had been trained and could be called to service. Given that the nation resisted spending a great deal on defense – but already *was* spending a great deal on the Maginot Line – this training often proved minimal and outdated. Most troops were serving three-year conscriptions.

These troops would begin their active service as raw or green soldiers (see p. W71), buying down the attribute and skill levels in the Rifleman template on p. W72. Relatively few would be trained for the air force or armor, but these would average a higher quality, since these were specialist arms less able to utilize reservists.

### Service Culture

By the spring of 1940, France had mobilized one man in eight, mostly through conscription. Many of these men would have preferred to wait and see if Germany would negotiate a peace, or if the Nazi regime would collapse under internal pressure, rather than leave their good lives and put on a uniform in anticipation of the worst. This sudden increase in the ranks combined with spotty morale created an unwieldy, undisciplined mess. French military professionals struggled to quickly create fighting units of men with inadequate training and equipment who did not want to be there.

These circumstances made life in the French army an unpleasant one. The French had long

believed in harsh standards of discipline for their troops, and the French regulars could not afford to ease them while attempting to prepare for the upcoming crisis. This discipline, in turn, made a black impression on the newly called-up reservists. A French soldier once joked: "You Americans have it easy. In the French army, we get shot for not wearing our berets!"

After the invasion, the former complainers tended to melt away, either dead or fled. The troops who kept fighting in the Free French or Resistance tended to have tightly knit communities. They were mostly volunteers prepared to sacrifice their lives in the daunting quest to restore French honor. Those units in Vichy service often would retain something of the mixed morale and perspectives that troubled the pre-war army.

### Commendations

In the following text, the numbers in parentheses represent Reputation bonuses (see p. W63).

The silver Colonial Medal was instituted in 1893, with a number of bars authorized for campaigns in WWII. Examples include service in Libya (created March 1942), Ethiopia (August 1942), Bir Hakeim (October 1942), Tripoli (January 1944), and Tunisia (April 1944). Individual service medals of this sort carry no Reputation bonuses, but a combination of them, especially in large number, might raise an individual's Reputation by +1 at the GM's discretion.

De Gaulle created the bronze French Resistance Medal (+1) in February 1943 to acknowledge the courage of its members. On the front side, the starting date of the German occupation (June 17, 1940) is engraved in Roman numerals under a Lorraine cross. The reverse side reads *Patria Non Immemor* – "The Fatherland is not forgetting."



The *Croix de Guerre* (+3) was meant to honor bravery; stars or palms on the ribbon designated individual citations. (Pétain instituted a Vichy *Croix de Guerre* on Mar. 28, 1941.)

France also issued the prestigious *Médaille Militaire* (+3) – roughly equivalent to the U.S. Distinguished Conduct Medal.

De Gaulle instituted the Order of Liberation on Nov. 16, 1940, as an award to those rendering exceptional services in liberating France. Recipients of the commendation are known as *Compagnons de la Libération*. An inscription on the reverse reads *Patriam Servando Victori- am Tulit* – “He brought victory by serving the homeland.” This order was highly regarded and carries a +3 Reputation.

The highest French distinction, awarded for civilian or military gallantry, was the *Légion d'Honneur*, (+4). When awarded for military service, it included the *Croix de Guerre* with palm.



The Vichy government instituted a number of commendations of their own, most of which will carry Reputation bonuses only toward Vichy supporters. Free French and Allied soldiers may be impressed by the awards; a soldier is a soldier, after all. They may simply ignore the medals, since they were awarded by a puppet government. They may even react *negatively* toward the bearer, viewing him as a traitor to the Allied cause. The attitude adopted by any particular non-Vichy soldier is up to the GM.

Sample Vichy medals include the Colonial Medal for action in Somalia (+0), the Combatant's Cross (+1), the Medal of Merit for Black Africa (awarded only to native troops for participation in French actions in French Somaliland, French Equatorial Africa, and Madagascar – worth +1 in most cases, usually enough to overcome the inherent Social Stigma of being an African native), and *L'Ordre de la Francisque Gallique* (+1), awarded for “acts in promotion of the national revolution” starting May 16, 1941.

## STANDARD UNITS

The bulk of the army was infantry. Armored divisions had just been formed in 1940, and only three were fully available to meet the invasion.

At the start of the war, French infantry units could be categorized along the following lines:

Line infantry formed the bulk of the peacetime army. A large portion of the French line infantry qualified as “fortress infantry,” serving on the Maginot Line, and as alpine infantry facing Italy. Officers sent to command the fortress infantry were often of mediocre caliber.

Reserve infantry comprised new conscripts, young reservists, and semi-retired veteran reservists. Most reserve units were led by a token number of officers and had less than a year's service. These units were categorized as A, B, or C reserves according to their viability as front-line troops. The A reserves were made up of younger soldiers and had a higher percentage of regular officers and NCOs. The second-line B reserves included veteran reservists who were often better prepared than their younger counterparts, but received second-rate equipment. C reserves were made up of the oldest veterans, some of whom had seen battle during WWI, and were assigned to work with the *Gendarmerie* (French police) to guard the home front and rear line. Class C units usually had third-rate weapons and equipment.

*Chasseurs* started the war as dismounted cavalry that fought as infantry; they were better trained than average infantry units. Some were used to form motorized infantry battalions for the newly established armored divisions, although they kept their original names. Because of their origins as cavalry, *chasseur* battalions were usually organized into brigades rather than regiments.

Colonial infantry consisted of second-line troops drawn from many sources. *Zouaves* were recruited from metropolitan French citizens to serve in North Africa. *Tirailleurs* drew their troops from North African natives and from French colonists. Other colonial infantry often recruited members from both indigenous populations (e.g., Senegalese, Malagasies, Indochinese) and even from petty French criminals living in distant colonies.

In fighting effectiveness, colonial infantry was a mixed bag. A few units such as the Moroccan mountain troops provided first-rate service, while many other units were of no value in combat. Another notable exception was the Algerian colonial units made up of native-born Europeans, the *Pied Noirs*. By the late 1940s, these highly motivated and disciplined units could be compared to the elite French Foreign Legion units.

## Unit Size and Composition

A standard French infantry squad consisted of a squad leader plus 11 men assigned to two elements: a *demi-groupe de voltigeurs* (shock element) and a *demi-groupe de fusiliers* (fire element). The *voltigeurs* consisted of four riflemen (armed with rifles) and a rifle grenadier (armed with a rifle and rifle grenades). The senior soldier in the shock element was titled the "first rifleman." The *fusiliers* were led by a corporal (carrying a rifle), and included a light machine gun (usually an FM 24/29), an LMG loader (armed with a pistol), and three ammo carriers (armed with carbines and loaded with extra squad ammo, including both the older 8mm and the new 7.5mm cartridges).

Platoons were made up of a command squad (an officer, an NCO, a signal operator, and an observer) and three infantry squads. Beginning in late 1940, a 50mm grenade launcher squad was added to some platoons, but there was a serious shortage of ammo and training in the new weapon.

French infantry companies usually consisted of a command platoon, a 60mm mortar squad, and four infantry platoons.

Battalions were made up of a headquarters (with battalion commander, three officers, NCO, secretary, three bicyclists, a motorcyclist, and a car driver), a command platoon (with signal squad, medical squad with a doctor and four nurses, and supply squad), three infantry companies, and a heavy weapons company consisting of four machine-gun platoons, two 81mm mortars, and two 25mm antitank guns.

*Division d'Infanterie:* A standard French infantry division consisted of three infantry regiments, each including a command/HQ company, a heavy weapons company (six 25mm AT guns and two 81mm mortars), and three infantry battalions. In addition, each division included cavalry or a motorized recon regiment, an antitank/anti-aircraft company, a heavy artillery company, two engineer companies, two signal companies (one radio, one telegraph), two transport companies (one horse, one motorized), a medical group, and a supply group.

*Division légère d'infanterie:* Light infantry divisions had only six infantry battalions (instead of nine) and a single artillery group. Divisions created from troops that remained after Sedan were light divisions with a second field artillery group and a recon squadron.

*Division infanterie motorisée:* A motorized infantry division was largely identical to a standard infantry division, but with lorries added for transport. The independent *Groupes de Transport de Personnel* (GTP) could be attached to infantry

divisions during strategic movement. Each GTP consisted of about 150-200 trucks (including a company of *Transport Toute Nature* trucks designed to carry horses) and 300-400 buses.

*Division légère mécanique:* France's light mechanized divisions typically consisted of a recon regiment (with two motorcyclist squadrons and two armored car squadrons), a combat brigade (tanks and armored cars), a motorized brigade (infantry, armored cars, and motorcyclists), and an artillery regiment.

*Division légère de cavalerie:* When war broke out, France had three cavalry divisions. By early 1940, they had been broken up and reformed into five light cavalry divisions (DLCs), each consisting of a cavalry brigade, a light motorized brigade, and an artillery regiment. They were deployed to the Ardennes as a delaying tactic, but saw heavy losses. The remaining units, sent to the Somme to cover the left wing of the still-forming French army, were at half-strength at best. By the end of the Battle of France, the DLCs had all but ceased to exist.

Heavy antitank batteries were crewed by artillerymen and consisted of eight 47mm AT guns. Others, which later functioned in an anti-aircraft role, were crewed by infantry and contained a dozen 25mm guns. A typical French infantry division contained both.

Field artillery regiments had three groups of 75mm guns. Heavy artillery regiments contained two groups of larger guns (105mm and/or 155mm). Some B-reserve infantry divisions had a non-standard mix of artillery consisting of four groups of 75mm guns and one group of 155mm guns. An artillery group usually had 12 guns.

### A Tank by Any Other Name . . .

French tanks and armored cars often had a name, written on the hull in large white letters. Early in the war, the names were often fanciful, such as *Le Terrible* or *Ouragan*. By 1944, they tended toward the patriotic, and included historical figures (*Richelieu*), place names (*Alsace*), or battles (*Austerlitz*). The 2nd Armored Division, which contained both French and foreign soldiers, often had tanks with foreign names, such as the Spanish *Guadalajara* or Polish *Poniatowski*.

French PCs are encouraged to name their tank and paint the moniker on the side with great pride.

## SPECIAL UNITS

The following units displayed a particularly high combination of expertise and morale:

*Chasseurs Alpins*: These elite mountain troops were recruited from local populations with experience in skiing and mountain survival. They saw moderate duty with the Allies during the 1940 Norway campaign, and small units of Pyrenean *Chasseurs* were deployed along the Spanish border. An elite scout group, the *Section d'Éclaireurs Skieurs* (SES), was drawn from the *Chasseurs Alpins*. Both groups were made up of expert riflemen, skiers, mountain climbers, and alpine survivalists.

*Chasseurs Parachutistes*: Among the French soldiers who had escaped to England in 1940 were men who had fought in special navy and air-force units. When the British SAS was created, volunteers were selected from other nationalities, including Free French. After serving with the SAS during 1942 and '43, these commandos were pooled into special forces under French authority, forming two regiments of *Chasseurs Parachutistes* (RCP) in late 1944. The RCP, equipped by the British, saw combat when they parachuted into Holland in April 1945. A third element of RCP (equipped by the Americans) was formed in North Africa from French air-force volunteers, but was not used in any airborne operations.

*La Légion Étrangère*: The French Foreign Legion was a hardened group of soldiers drawn from other countries (enlisted men were foreigners; officers were usually French). See p. 23 for more information.

## FREE FRENCH FORCES

With the fall of France in 1940, de Gaulle began recruiting volunteers in England from among survivors of the Narvik campaign and from the evacuation at Dunkirk. In addition, wherever French territories bordered British ones, French troops often joined the British forces of their own accord. Still, by July 1940, fewer than 7,000 soldiers had come forward to fight for de Gaulle's "Free French." British attacks on the French navy at Mers-el-Kebir (see p. 11) had created hard feelings in the French population, and many refused to fight alongside the Allies.

As support for de Gaulle grew, so did the size of the Free French army. Several French colonies and territories (see p. 12) threw their support behind de Gaulle, and by D-Day the Free French forces numbered some 400,000 men and women. More than half were stationed in Algeria and did not participate in the liberation of the homeland.

Free French soldiers were usually equipped by the British (which, in turn, often meant American-made vehicles), and participated in campaigns throughout the war: Eritrea, Syria, Libya, Tunisia, etc. Elite Free French soldiers were even incorporated into the British SAS or Royal Marines.

## VICHY FORCES

In contrast to the Free French, many French units accepted France's surrender and continued to fight for the Vichy government. In practice, this meant Vichy forces sided with Germany and Italy, even fighting against the Free French.

Under the terms of the armistice, France was required to disband her army, except for a force of 100,000 men to be used in maintaining domestic order. The 1.5 million French soldiers captured during the Battle of France became prisoners of war.

The colonial army in North Africa, however, remained to protect the area from attack by Britain. Vichy PCs will most likely be stationed in Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Indochina, Madagascar, or in similar colonies or territories.

## A COMBINED ARMY

As the war progressed, loyalties began to change. During Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa, the Vichy commander met with Allied agents and arranged for his troops to surrender. Naval officers – with grudges against Britain both old and new – refused. After a bitter battle against overwhelming odds, the Vichy forces either surrendered or were destroyed.

Soon soldiers from the Vichy armies in Africa began to desert. Some sided with the Free French, others returned to occupied France and joined the Resistance movement. (Note that although ex-Vichy soldiers flocked to de Gaulle's banner, many were still reluctant to throw in their lot with the Allies as a whole.)

The influx of soldiers was a boon for the Free French. An entire army – the 19th "French" Corps – was eventually formed from French soldiers in North Africa. Though poorly equipped, this army of 60,000 was tasked to hold the center of the Allied line in Tunisia. The six-month Tunisian campaign (November 1942 to May 1943) cost the French 16,000 casualties as they fought a desperate battle and won, a first step in restoring the honor that few by then associated with Vichy service.

Beginning in late 1943, this mixed force of Free French and former Vichy soldiers fought in nearly every Allied campaign – in Italy, Normandy, Provence, and the Ardennes, as well as in Germany and Austria.



# OPERATIONS AND TACTICS

Strategically, the 1940 French army was determined to hold onto its native soil and prevent anyone – particularly Germany – from taking it. This “Maginot mentality” carried down to the tactical level as well. French troops had been taught to dig in and hold their ground.

French tactics – from squad level up – were outdated by the time Germany roared into the Ardennes. Screaming Stukas broke defensive lines and morale, and the rush of 20-ton panzers erased all thought of holding ground from some defenders’ minds.

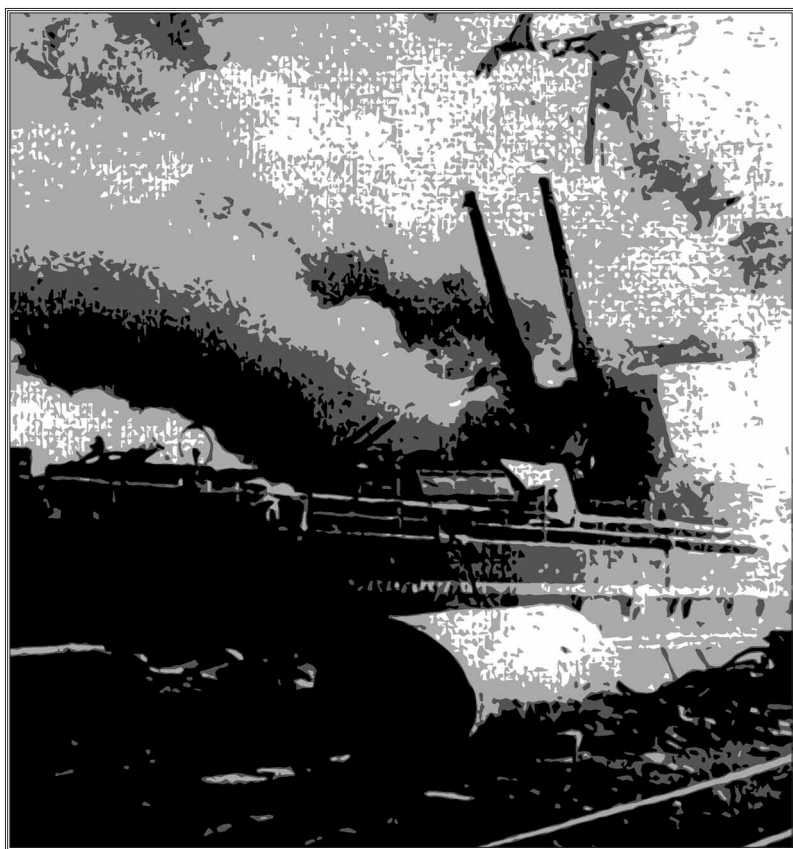
Just as during the First World War, morale was a problem for French troops. Even when tactical plans were well-laid, they could fail because not all of the troops would carry them out with vigor. Some riflemen were motivated solely out of fear of reprisal from a senior officer, rather than any genuine desire to serve France’s defense.

Later in the war, Free French units received better training and became highly motivated. They picked up Anglo-American tactics as well.

## THE FRENCH AIR FORCE

In September 1939, France had roughly 800 fighters (including the MS.406; see p. 42) and 250 bombers, many of which were second-line aircraft. By the following spring, they had phased out some of the outdated models, and entered the war with an effective fighting force of 740 fighters and 140 bombers. The British Royal Air Force supplied some 350 fighters, but because the new Hawker Hurricanes and Supermarine Spitfires were needed to defend Britain, France received mostly second-line British aircraft – most of which were used in a front-line role.

Despite aid from Britain, the French air force took heavy losses in the Battle of France. Total aircraft losses (including combat, reconnaissance, and support craft) exceeded 750 planes.



With the fall of France and the signing of the armistice, some French pilots escaped to Britain where they joined de Gaulle’s Free French. Others remained with the newly established Vichy government. Pilots stationed at colonial bases were split in their loyalty, as well. The British naval base at Gibraltar was bombed by Vichy pilots in reprisal for the British attacks on the French fleet in July 1940.

## THE FRENCH NAVY

At the outbreak of WWII, the French navy consisted of a single aircraft carrier (the *Béarn*), nine battleships and battlecruisers (*Lorraine*, *Jean-Bart*, *Provence*, *Dunkerque*, *Strasbourg*, *Bretagne*, *Paris*, *Courbet*, and *Richelieu*), 18 cruisers, 72 destroyers, 78 submarines (including the *Surcouf* – the largest sub in the world), and countless smaller vessels.

Early in the war, France sent several ships to support British actions in Norway, but by mid-1940 they had been recalled and helped evacuate Allied forces at Dunkirk.

With the signing of the armistice, some French ships (mostly smaller craft) sailed for British ports. The majority of the fleet proper sailed to the naval base at Oran. After the British excursion there (p. 11), the surviving vessels moved to Toulon to be eventually scuttled (see p. W:IC19).

# BEYOND FRANCE ITSELF



French soldiers were stationed in colonies around the world during the 1930s. Some saw action prior to 1939; others simply maintained garrison duty throughout the war.

## Africa

French colonial forces were stationed throughout Africa. Soldiers in North Africa served under the *XIXe Région Militaire* in Algeria, the *Commandement Supérieur des Troupes de Tunisie* in Tunisia, and the *Troupes du Maroc* in Morocco.

In French West Africa, European Frenchmen served alongside native Senegalese regiments under the command of the *Afrique Occidentale Française* command. The *Régiment Mixte d'Infanterie Coloniale de l'AOF*, a regiment of infantry and light mechanized forces, was made up of both local and European soldiers.

Soldiers stationed in French Equatorial Africa likewise served in mixed regiments, answering to commanders of the *Afrique Equatoriale Française* forces.

## Indochina

France had a number of colonial forces guarding its interests in French Indochina. These *Indochine* forces were divided into divisions according to their assigned region. Examples include the *Division du Tonkin* assigned to the Tonkin region, the *Division de Cochinchine-Cambodge* in Cambodia, and the Laos-based *Brigade d'Annam-Laos*, consisting of a motorized detachment and three mixed infantry regiments.

## Scandinavia

In early 1940, troops were sent to Scandinavia as part of the *Corps Expéditionnaire Français en Scandinavie*. The Corps included two

divisions of *chasseurs légère* (light *chasseurs*), a division of light infantry (the *1re Division Légère d'Infanterie*), the *Brigade Autonome de Chasseurs de Podhale* (made up of Polish officers, with enlisted men drawn from both French Poles and Polish nationals), and the *13e Demi-Brigade de Marche de la Légion Etrangère* (a Foreign Legion mountain brigade created on Mar. 1, 1940).

Only parts of the corps actually reached Norway; large portions were recalled before they ever set foot on Scandinavian soil, and returned to aid in the defense of France.

## THE FOREIGN LEGION

Founded in 1831, the French Foreign Legion (*La Légion Etrangère*) was a volunteer army unit surrounded by mystery, intrigue, and glamour. Most enlisted men came from outside France, since Frenchmen were usually forbidden enlistment. (Leaving France and then joining the Legion was an easy way around that rule.) The officers were mostly French, but foreigners *could* hold ranks up to colonel. Enlistments were for five years, but 12 years of honorable service in the Legion earned French citizenship. The pay was terrible (four cents a day for privates) and the discipline brutal, but the esprit of the Legion is famous to this day.

The Legion was a haven for those fleeing political or criminal punishment, as were other select units (see below). It was an ideal place to hide, for no proof of identification was required, and most enlistees adopted a *nom de guerre* which the Legion honored. The FFL insignia was a small red grenade spouting seven flames; uniforms were regulation khakis copied from the *Bat d'Af*. When not fighting, the Legion trained or performed hard physical labor. The desertion rate was high, but the Legion actively pursued and severely punished



deserters, usually requiring several years in the *Bat d'Af* that did not count against the enlistment term.

Legion headquarters was at Sidbel-Abbes, in Algeria. Recruits were shipped from Marseilles to Algeria after three to six months of training. From there, the recruits could be sent to any Legion unit in the French empire. In the course of the '30s and '40s, the Legion served in Algeria, Morocco, Dahomey, Senegal, Indochina, French India, China, Madagascar, Syria, and Lebanon. The Legion had no units stationed in France, proper.

The Legion used standard French army weaponry. It organized artillery and cavalry units, but was primarily infantry. Legion units relied heavily on mules for their transport needs. A veteran often would have high Packing skill.

The Legion's motto is *Legio Patria Nostra* – "The Legion is our Fatherland."

After the French surrender, nearly all Legion units came under the command of the Vichy government. The German Armistice Commission immediately demanded the return of any German citizens serving in the Legion, and most legionnaires were not unhappy to see them go. But the commission also demanded the return of Jewish refugees of any nationality. Most soldiers in the Legion had little sympathy for the Nazi party or the Vichy government, and the Legion itself had a reputation for being a safe haven from exactly such oppression. Its intelligence system usually alerted Legion outposts of German or Vichy visits well in advance, and wanted soldiers were given new papers and new identities, or simply shipped off to another outpost. The Legion also defied Article V of the Armistice (see p. 10) by hiding caches of weapons and material.

Many legionnaires longed to join de Gaulle, but few felt comfortable deserting their unit. Those who were willing recognized that the mountains and deserts surrounding them were a formidable obstacle to overcome before they would reach Free French troops. For most of the war, the Legion remained divided, commanded by the Vichy government but often unwilling to fight for it.

A single Legion unit, the 13th Demi-Brigade, (see p. 12) followed de Gaulle to England and fought for the Free French from 1940.

## Bat d'Af

The *Infanterie Legere d'Afrique* (known colloquially as *Battalion d'Afrique* or *Bat d'Af*) was made up of penal battalions employing



strict regulations and harsh discipline. Many of the legends surrounding the Foreign Legion actually have roots in the *Bat d'Af*. Sometimes called *Les Joyeux*, the *Bat d'Af* were reserved for criminals and are sometimes confused with the *Compagnies Disciplinaires* and *Sectiones d'Exclus* (see below).

During the 19th century, the *Bat d'Af* consisted of recruited men who had served a term in the *Compagnies Disciplinaires* but had not finished their prior term of enlistment. They also accepted men released from prison sentences who had not yet served their term of conscription. Soon a corps of hardened volunteers, seeking adventure and service in North Africa instead of boring garrison duty in France, became the predominant source of recruits. By WWII, the *Bat d'Af* rarely contained criminals convicted of serious crimes. Hard-core criminals were relegated to the *Sectiones d'Exclus*.

The *Bat d'Af* were often used in dangerous, desolate areas of North Africa under grueling conditions that required the toughest of men. They were pushed to total exhaustion under conditions requiring the most brutal discipline. But when the bullets began to fly, their conduct was exemplary.

## Other Units

The *Compagnies Disciplinaires* were made up of men serving punitive disciplinary terms who were then returned to their original units. *Sectiones d'Exclus* were made up of the worst of the worst. They contained only men considered unfit for service and subject to extreme punishment. Only characters of the lowest caliber – or worst luck – belonged to these units.



# 3. FRANCE UNDERGROUND

*"The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire."*

— Marshal Ferdinand Foch



## THE FRENCH RESISTANCE

In 1940, Germany believed the conquest of France was complete, but many citizens refused to accept defeat. The Germans did not consider them terribly dangerous, but they were founders of what would soon become an underground army numbering some 200,000. It would have a substantial impact on the outcome of the war.

The life of a Resistance operator was not easy. He often dealt with Gestapo raids, German spies, Abwehr agents, paid French informants, lack of even basic equipment, and a cloak of secrecy that made trusting *anyone* risky at best. Even in unoccupied France, with no Germans to be seen, he would face the Vichy police and their web of informants, some of whom considered him little better than a terrorist.

### The Maquis

Some French soldiers and fugitives simply took to the countryside, particularly in Brittany and southern France. They formed bands that took the name Maquis, after the scrub and thickets of Corsica, where the practice of heading for the hills during trouble had long been custom.

The Maquis began guerrilla warfare against the Germans and collaborating French militia. Like most partisans, they specialized in guerrilla raids and sabotage, keeping direct contact with German forces to a minimum. They lacked the weapons for a straight-up fight.

In early 1943, Germany created a forced labor draft in occupied France, declaring that all men age 20 and up were required to work in German factories and defense installations. Aware of the prisonlike conditions involved, thousands of French men flooded the ranks of the Maquis.

Some Maquis groups gave the Resistance a bad name by raiding local farms and fields for food, clothing, and equipment, but for the most

part the local populace supported them, providing food and information on German troops.

The term Maquis, singular Maquisard, sometimes is applied to the Resistance as a whole, or specifically its paramilitary aspects.

### ORGANIZATION

Initially, small resistance movements developed independently across France (see p. 14). At the same time, underground newspapers began to spring up. These attacked Nazi and Vichy propaganda in trying to mobilize readers, and played a vital part in further knitting together the Resistance. Many were run by devoted Communists or academics. The Germans and Vichy controlled newsprint and printing presses, but the undergrounds often boasted circulations up to 100,000.

These basement publishers also helped establish intelligence-gathering as a Resistance role. The daring British raid on St. Nazaire (see pp. W:HS4-5) benefited from information passed on by the *Musée de l'Homme*, an early Paris-based network of academics who branched out from publishing until the Germans caught and killed their leaders in the spring of 1941.

Between these needs to establish escape networks and distribute news, the early Resistance groups began to link up. They did not take long to discover that too much communication could be a bad thing, too. A traitor or prisoner breaking under torture would give up every fellow resistant that he could name!

### Compartmentalization

The Resistance networks formed into cells. Secrecy was maintained as to the identity of other cells' members, so that captured operatives could not reveal information beyond the makeup of their own cell. A cell was led by one member –

usually not so much a military leader as a political one – who made contact with other cell heads. Even cell heads did not know the specific make-up of cells other than their own.

Urban resistance groups were usually organized into small cells of some five members. The rural Maquis did not like to exceed 60 members, but often did, particularly during 1943 and later.

All resistance took place under a cloak of secrecy; a slip of the tongue could mean capture, torture, and death. Combined with the small cell sizes, this meant an active resistant often had to deal with complete strangers whose story he could not verify, any of whom could be an informer. The circumstances could induce paranoia.

Because men were expected to work during the day, women were often used to relay messages and smuggle supplies. They raised less suspicion, but their assignments required as much bravery and skill as their male counterparts. Women played a key role in nearly every Resistance group in France, and often took part in any fighting.

## THE NETWORKS

Eventually, the early informal efforts crystallized into a hodgepodge of Resistance networks. These never became too formalized – losses to the Gestapo kept turnover high – but they managed to establish an identity and hold onto it.

### Occupied-Zone Networks

Constantly reminded of the Nazi conquerors, residents of the Occupied Zone formed the first small groups, which were usually limited to publishing and intelligence-gathering; usually, sabotage was too dangerous. Often based in Paris, the most important networks included:

- ⊙ The right-wing *Ceux de la Libération*, formed very early by Vichy air-force officers and strong among police and fire departments. It worked with the British through SOE (pp. 27-28).

- ⊙ *Ceux de la Patrie*.

- ⊙ *Ceux de la Résistance*, or CDLR, originally affiliated with Vichy intelligence officers but for mostly legitimate Resistance goals.

- ⊙ *Comité National de Salut Public*, a particularly large network that spread from Paris throughout the Occupied Zone, particularly to Brittany. Its size may have contributed to its downfall – the Germans arrested its leadership and nearly killed the network twice in 1941 before a massive raid in November 1942 did the trick. The survivors slipped off to join CDLR and *Résistance*.

- ⊙ The Sorbonne-based students and professors of the *Défense de la France*, which specialized in forged papers and operating escape routes.

- ⊙ *Défense de la Patrie*, which eventually folded into the CDLR.

- ⊙ The socialist *La Voix du Nord*.

- ⊙ *Le Front National*.

- ⊙ *L'Homme Libre*.

- ⊙ *Libération*.

- ⊙ The powerful but treason-riddled *Organisation Civile et Militaire*, or OCM, which had agents throughout the Occupied Zone civil service.

- ⊙ *Résistance* (not to be confused with the movement as a whole).

In the forbidden Nord department (see p. 26), *Libération* and *La Voix du Nord* partially joined forces to become *Libération-Nord* in 1943.

### Networks in Vichy France

Networks formed slowly in the French-run zone, but grew large and powerful because the Vichy did not hunt them as ardently as the Germans did. This also allowed them to form sabotage and combat units from the outset. Usually based in Lyon, important networks included:

- ⊙ The oldest and most powerful network, the intellectuals and career officers of *Combat*, affiliated with CDLR in the north and formed from the earlier *Vérités* and *Liberté* groups.

- ⊙ The *Dupleix* serving U.S. intelligence.

- ⊙ The Marseilles-based socialists of *France au Combat*.

- ⊙ *France d'Abord*.

- ⊙ The apolitical and diverse *Franc-Tireur*.

- ⊙ *Le Mouvement Charte*.

- ⊙ The trade unionists of *Libération-Sud*, which had strong ties to *Combat* but none to *Libération-Nord*.

- ⊙ Toulon-based *Libérer et Fédérer*, which included a future president of France on its rolls.

- ⊙ *Témoignage Chrétien*.

*Combat*, *Libération-Sud*, and *Franc-Tireur* further allied to become *Mouvements Unis de la Résistance*, or MUR, after November 1943 – led by the BCRA (see p. 29) and the most powerful non-Communist network. Later in the war, many southern and some northern networks partially united as the *Armée Secrète*, with MUR at its core. Shortly before D-Day, the Free French enrolled the *Armée Secrète* and Maquis bands into their own military as the *Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur*, or FFI.

### The Communist Networks

The Communists kept themselves aloof from their Resistance counterparts. Though already underground, they did not actively resist until Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. At that point, though, they showed more organization, equipment, and aggressiveness than others.

The Communists kept up a watered-down public facade called the National Liberation Front, or National Front, which attracted French citizens of all stripes. Their Resistance network proper was the *Francs-Tireurs et Partisans Français*, or FTP. The FTP gladly enrolled non-Communists, but Communists held all decision-making powers. The FTP also worked in tandem with non-Communist networks on occasion, but treated them vary warily. (They kept the FTP at arm's length, in turn.) Most FTP resources came from Moscow, which had long had an intelligence ring established in France, called FANA. (The Germans called it *Rote Kapell*, or the Red Chapel.)

Some French Communists already had joined other Resistance networks before the Communists began fighting. These members often stayed where they were. Suspiciously, just before the liberation, a number of leaders in non-Communist networks met an accidental death or fell into Gestapo hands, and Communists in their networks replaced them . . .

## The Ex-Armistice Army

Pétain *had* been planning to double-cross the Germans, establishing an “armistice army” within the Vichy military that hid away weapons in preparation for a change of sides that he never ordered. When the Germans disbanded the Vichy army in November 1942, many members collected the weapons and headed for North Africa to join the Free French. Others stayed in France to form *L'Organisation de Résistance de l'Armée*, or ORA. The ORA kept itself apart from other Resistance networks but operated in much the same way.

## ACTIVITIES

Certain functions were central to both a network's survival and its reasons for existence.

## Communication

The armistice specifically prohibited wireless stations from operating in France (other than a handful of government-monitored radio stations), and the Gestapo regularly hunted down wireless stations and arrested or shot their operators.

In 1942, 17 radio operators were parachuted into France, providing multiple communication links with London. Wireless stations were often hidden in basements or false rooms, and could be found in cities and in farmhouses scattered throughout the countryside. Messages sent by wireless were kept short and usually encrypted. PCs trained as wireless operators will be skilled in Electronics Operation (Communication) and

Telegraphy. Many also have skills in Cryptanalysis and Cryptography.

Receiving messages from London was often done via commercial radio channels. For example, an operative might have been instructed to listen to the BBC on the 1st, 2nd, 15th, and 16th of the month. During any given broadcast, a coded phrase was used, warning the Resistance of an attack or providing coordinates of an incoming supply drop. Coordination of sabotage plans prior to D-Day was arranged in exactly this fashion, since the date of the invasion could not be given to the Resistance for security reasons. By listening to BBC broadcasts, advance warning was given. Within days, a second code was received confirming the orders, and multiple sabotage plans went into effect simultaneously.

## Identification

As the map on p. 11 shows, the Germans filled France with borders. They strictly regulated the few people allowed to cross from the Occupied Zone to Vichy France. They placed the Pas-de-Calais and Nord departments (the French equivalents of states) under their Belgian administration. Lorraine and Alsace once again became part of Germany proper. They cut off the northernmost portion of Champagne-Ardenne, even from the former inhabitants, with plans to colonize German farmers there. The northern coast and other regions also became isolated zones.

Crossing any of these borders required proper papers, and of course both the Gestapo and Wehrmacht frequently stopped those inside a region and asked for their documents, as well. They did not hesitate to telephone the issuing agency and confirm that the papers had been issued, so the best false identification copied a real set of papers. The Germans often caught false papers based on a fictitious ID, which meant that the high-quality forgeries carried by SOE agents (p. 27 and p. 37) sometimes failed this test.

The Resistance was always in the market for both the equipment to forge papers and safe, real identities to duplicate. Undoubtedly, in certain circumstances this could cause serious problems for the unsuspecting real owner of that identity.

French soldiers who slipped back into their civilian lives without first surrendering to the Germans (such as the holdouts on p. 10) usually got away with it for months or even years, until stopped for a routine ID check. At that point, they would lack a crucial demobilization certificate.

Many pieces of French identification had strange little details meant to trip up unwary forgers; for instance, an upside-down “o” in one word.



## Supply

Lack of air transport hampered British efforts to supply the Resistance. The SOE (see below) requested more aircraft, but supplying the French Resistance seemed an ineffective use of planes compared to dropping bombs on German industry. During 1942-43, SOE was assigned some 40 aircraft to carry out their missions, which included not only dropping supplies and personnel to France, but supplying agents in other countries as well. (Throughout 1943, for instance, supplying Balkan guerrillas had a higher priority for SOE than supplying the French Resistance.)

Small boats often made clandestine runs from Gibraltar to the southeast coast of France to deliver equipment and personnel. Sea deliveries were especially important during winter, when bad weather made airdrops nearly impossible.

Despite the SOE-F's best efforts, the total amount of supplies delivered was very small – for example, only a ton of explosives was delivered to all of France in 1943. PCs with the Resistance will find it a struggle to acquire weapons, ammunition, explosives, communications equipment, or much of anything else. A high Scrounging skill will be very useful.

In January 1944, U.S. planes began to fly supply missions into France, increasing the flow of both supplies and personnel into the country.

## Sabotage

The French Resistance conducted countless sabotage raids against Germans, hitting both industrial and military targets. The most widespread (and

arguably most effective) sabotage was directed against French railroads as agents cut track, derailed troop and supply trains, destroyed bridges, and sabotaged locomotives. As many as 50 railroad sabotage attempts were being made *daily* by late 1943; more than 1,800 locomotives and 8,000 freight cars were damaged that year alone.

The rail workers themselves often committed these acts of defiance. Having already proven their bravery during the fighting (p. 47), these former union men served the Resistance's purposes with little regard for danger. In addition to sabotage, they routinely smuggled fugitives disguised as brakemen or firemen, and slipped contraband past German and Vichy surveillance.

In addition to railway sabotage, PCs may be called upon to destroy automobiles, roadways, telephone and telegraph lines, power stations, troop barracks, port facilities, supply dumps, construction sites, and even fortresses. The possibilities are limited only by the GM's imagination.

The Resistance often turned to more subtle methods, by sabotaging things in a way that was not obvious until the Germans tried to use them. For instance, cannon shells would be assembled such that they wouldn't actually fire, or a French architect would slyly redraw blueprints so that a fort's gun ports didn't quite cover the crucial angles of their field of fire. This often proved more effective than more standard sabotage, because the Germans often didn't realize they had a problem until it was too late. GMs could base more than one adventure on requiring Resistance operatives to figure out some such method for discreetly disabling various Nazi assets.

# SOE, F AND R/F SECTIONS



The British Special Operations Executive was created July 22, 1940, to “coordinate all action by way of subversion and sabotage against the enemy overseas.” In practice, this meant spirited atomic scientists (see p. W28) and other important persons to England just ahead of the Gestapo. Later, the SOE expanded to support other countries, at which point aid to France became the province of its F Section, under Col. Maurice Buckmaster.

F Section did not work with de Gaulle, and in practice often went out of its way to work around the Free French in representing British interests in France. Still, the general had resources that could not be ignored, so the SOE created an R/F Section (for Resistance/France) shortly after F Section. The British assets in R/F Section worked under Free French supervision (via the BCRA, p. 29) to support the Resistance.

The R/F (usually referred to as “Free French”) and F (called the “SOE” proper) sections had identical missions, simply different masters, and the rivalry fostered by F Section often caused the British R/F operatives – who quite reasonably saw beating the Germans as an “everybody wins” scenario – to sympathize with their French overseers and work around their countrymen. (This rivalry is in *addition* to the rivalry between MI6 and SOE mentioned on p. W41. Even more than the Resistance itself, British intelligence spent a great deal of energy on infighting before turning its attention to the Germans . . .)

SOE candidates were selected on the basis of a personal recommendation only. An initial interview with prospective candidates was carried out in French in a bare hotel room, with only a single desk, two chairs, and a lone light bulb.

If the interviewer believed the candidate could pass for a French national, the applicant's file was passed to MI5 for a security check.

Once the background check was complete, the applicant was called to a second interview, where the true nature of the job was revealed. The interviewer did not mince words – the applicant stood a 50% chance of being killed in the line of duty. Applicants were given several days to consider.

The rigorous training consisted of four weeks of small-arms practice and physical training, then a two-week parachute course in Manchester. Graduates were sent to Arisaig in the Western Highlands

of Scotland where they learned commando tactics and unconventional warfare. Radio operators received 14 more weeks at Oxfordshire.

SOE-F and -R/F operatives were then sent into France – often by parachute – to make contact with Resistance groups, train and equip them, and carry out specific missions as assigned by SOE or the BCRA leadership in London. They were instructors, spies, saboteurs, and soldiers, who often worked alone or with untrained civilian patriots whose loyalty they could never take for granted.

SOE-F and -R/F operatives make great PCs. A template appears on p. 36.

## WOMEN OF THE SOE-F

SOE-F dispatched 39 female agents into the field. They were ordinary women: wives, mothers, dancers, fashion designers. Two outstanding examples are described below. Both were posthumously awarded the French *Croix de Guerre* and the British George Cross.

### Violette Szabo

Violette Bushell, the daughter of a French mother and an English father, spent much of her childhood in Paris, but was raised in south London. In 1941, at the age of 20, she met Capt. Etienne Szabo, an officer in the French Foreign Legion. The couple married, but her husband was killed at El Alamein in 1942, shortly after the birth of their daughter.

Heartbroken and angry, she immediately accepted an offer by the British SOE to “go into enemy occupied France and make life bitter for the Germans.” After extensive training – including parachute training that left her nursing bandaged legs – she was flown into Rouen, where she was arrested twice while assessing the current state of the French Resistance. She was rushed back to London upon completion of her first mission – but not until she had purchased gifts for her daughter along the Champs Elysées.

In April 1944, Szabo – codenamed “Louise” – parachuted into France a second time. Together with several other SOE operatives and French Resistance fighters, she was trapped in a house in southwest France. Surrounded by the Gestapo, she grabbed a Sten gun and as much ammunition as she could carry and engaged the Germans in a blazing firefight that left many of them dead and many more wounded. She was captured only after running out of ammo and strength.

She was repeatedly beaten and tortured, but refused to give away any secrets. She was trans-

ferred to the Ravensbruck concentration camp, and in 1945, at age 23, she was shot in the back of the head along with two other female SOE agents. She had not revealed a single secret.

### Noor Inayat Khan

Noor Inayat Khan was a princess. Born to an American mother and Indian father (Pir Inayat Khan, a direct descendant of Tipu Sultan, the last Muslim sovereign of South India), Noor was raised primarily in Paris, where she gained some repute as a Paris Radio children's-story writer.

With the German invasion of France, she moved to London, where she became an assistant section officer in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. Her knowledge of France and fluency in the language landed her a position with SOE-F, and on June 16, 1943, using the codename “Madeleine,” Noor was smuggled into occupied France as a radio operator.

The Gestapo made countless arrests in the Resistance group to which she had been assigned. Noor was given the opportunity to return to England, but refused, unwilling to abandon her comrades and leave them without a radio link to London. In October, she was betrayed and taken to Gestapo headquarters. Despite an intense interrogation, she refused to divulge any information; she even made two unsuccessful attempts to escape during her stay there. In November, she was shipped to Germany (the first SOE-F agent so deported) and imprisoned at Karlsruhe. Her cell was separated from the main body of the prison, as she was considered especially dangerous and crafty.

On Sept. 12, 1944, the 29-year-old Indian princess was taken to the Dachau concentration camp and shot. She uttered a single word before she was killed: “*Liberté.*”

# THE BCRA



In 1940, de Gaulle formed a special staff known as the *Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action (Militaire)* (BCRA) to aid in organizing, directing, and supplying the French Resistance. From the summer of 1941 to the spring of 1943, the BCRA and de Gaulle's personal representative, Jean Moulin, worked with Resistance leaders to integrate the groups. They created an underground army under the command of Gen. Delestrain (known to the underground as Gen. Vidal) that served as a liaison between the Resistance and the Allied armies that would soon arrive.

## Jean Moulin

Jean Moulin is often considered the father of the French Resistance. Though he never derailed a train or blew up a bridge – he never even carried a pistol – he organized those who did.

Moulin was a civil servant and politician. He aided the French Republicans during the Spanish Civil War, and refused to cooperate with Germany during WWII. On June 17, 1940, Moulin refused to sign a German document that wrongly blamed French troops for a civilian massacre. He was arrested by the Gestapo, severely beaten and tortured, and even attempted suicide in his makeshift prison. (This left him with a vicious scar on his neck and distinctively hoarse speech, which might qualify as an Unusual Feature and Disturbing Voice respectively in a cinematic campaign. He used a scarf to conceal the former.) By November 1940, the Vichy government had had enough of the

41-year-old politician and stripped him of his official status, declaring him *persona non grata*.

Moulin was not deterred. He settled in Saint-Andiol in Alpilles where he began making contact with the various – often mutually antagonistic – factions of the French Resistance such as *Libération*, *Liberté*, and *Mouvement de Libération Nationale*. In October 1941, he was smuggled out of France and soon met with Charles de Gaulle. De Gaulle convinced the prefect to take on an important mission for France: to unite the factions of the Resistance and create an underground army from the existing fragments of one. Moulin parachuted into France on the night of Jan. 2, 1942, and began building this impossible army.

In June 1943, Moulin was captured in Lyon. The Gestapo again savagely beat and tortured him, breaking his arms, legs, and ribs. Moulin died soon thereafter, but his work with the rapidly unifying Resistance could not be undone.

Moulin's role with the Resistance is unmatched, but later allegations were made claiming Moulin was a Communist, or more recently, that he was an American intelligence agent. Though there is little historical evidence to support these claims, and an abundance of evidence demonstrating Moulin's faithfulness to France, GMs may find interesting storylines and plot threads in these possibilities. Certainly, a man in Moulin's challenging position would find it useful to claim to secretly sympathize with *anyone* with whom he was dealing at the moment.

# THE JEDBURGHs



Allied three-man teams were parachuted behind enemy lines shortly before D-Day. Designated Jedburghs, these teams were to include a French officer, a U.S. or British officer, and a radio operator, though in reality the mix of nationalities often was not perfect (see p. W168). The Jedburghs functioned not as spies, but as soldiers. They contacted Resistance groups, rallied and trained them, and put Allied plans into action.

Jeds, as they were often called, were trained to face any situation. Besides the military training provided by their respective governments, Jeds also spent several months in England learning demolitions, marksmanship, telegraphy, ciphers, stealth methods, knife-fighting tactics, hand-to-hand skills, and other guerrilla tactics.

Jedburgh teams usually parachuted into Brittany and southern France. From there they spread

out to cover all of France, as well as parts of Germany, Italy, and the Low Countries. The three-man teams wore their military uniforms as much as possible – seeing Allied soldiers in full military dress behind enemy lines was a great psychological boost for Resistance fighters, and a blow to captured enemy soldiers.

The teams were amazingly successful, given the conditions in which they worked. Every one experienced a degree of success, some outstandingly so. Many Jedburghs were honored with commendations including the Distinguished Service Cross, the *Croix de Guerre*, the Legion of Merit, the Silver Star, and the Bronze Star.

Of course, many also earned the Purple Heart or posthumous honors. Of the 85 French Jedburghs who parachuted into France, 22 were killed – usually shot by the Germans as spies.



# 4. CHARACTERS

*"Nothing great will ever be achieved without great men, and men are great only if they are determined to be so."*

— Charles de Gaulle



## CREATING A FRENCH SOLDIER

**GURPS WWII** provides several templates for creating soldiers. French soldiers can be created by following the instruction outlined on pp. W68-85 and applying the following national Advantages and Disadvantages:

### French Advantages

Purchase Military Rank and resulting Wealth (see p. W63), with remaining points spent among: Acute Senses (p. B19) [2/level]; Alcohol Tolerance (p. CI19) [5]; Charisma (p. B19) [5/level]; Combat Reflexes (p. B20) [15]; Pitiabie (p. CI29) [5]; Reputation from Medals (pp. 17-18 and p. W63) or good performance of duty (p. B17) [varies]; Strong Will (p. B23) [4/level]; Toughness (p. B23) [10 or 25]; Voice (p. B23) [10]; Light Hangover (p. CI27) [2] or No Hangover (p. CI28) [5].

Characters fighting in France also might have one or more Contacts (see p. B234) within the French Resistance.

### French Disadvantages

Native colonial soldiers must take Social Stigma (Colonial) (p. B27) [-5].

French officers may choose from Hidebound (p. CI91) [-5]; Intolerance (p. B34) [-5]; Odious Personal Habit (Harsh Disciplinarian) (p. B26) [-5]; or Overconfidence (p. B34) [-10]. Some officers might have Code of Honor (Officer's) (p. W64) [-10]. Harsh discipline was considered a duty of a responsible French officer, and does not violate the French version of this Code of Honor.

Many soldiers are conscripts, and often do not want to be in the army. These conditions are reflected by disadvantages such as Cowardice (p. B32) [-10]; Laziness (p. B34) [-10]; Semi-Literacy (p. CI94) [-5]; Status -1 (p. W66) [-5]; Odious Personal Habit (p. B26); and Reputation (p. B17) for being lazy, disrespectful, or rebellious [varies].

Volunteers and dutiful conscripts may have Code of Honor (Enlisted Man's) (p. W64) [-10].

Officers and enlisted men alike may substitute: Bad Sight (p. B27) [-10]; Bad Temper (p. B31) [-10]; Bloodlust (p. B31) [-10]; Bully (p. B31) [-10]; Compulsive Behavior (Binge Drinking) (p. W64) [-10]; Fanaticism (*Vive la France*) (p. B33) [-15]; Gullibility (p. B33) [-10]; Honesty (p. B33) [-10]; Indecisive (p. CI91) [-10]; Lecherousness (p. B34) [-15]; Odious Personal Habits (p. B26) [-5/-10/-15]; Post-Combat Shakes (p. CI93) [-5]; Sense of Duty (p. B39) (Men in their unit) [-5] or (The Honor of France) [-10]; Stubbornness (p. B37) [-5]; or Truthfulness (p. B37) [-5].



## FRENCH RANKS

<i>MR</i>	<i>Armée de Terre (Army)</i>	<i>Marine Nationale (Navy)</i>	<i>Armée de l’Air (Air Force)</i>
8	Général d’armée	Amiral	Général d’armée Aérienne
8	Général de corps d’armée	Amiral d’escadre	Général de corps d’armée aérien
7	Général de division	Vice-amiral	Général de division aérienne
7	Général de brigade	Contre-amiral	Général de brigade aérienne
6	Colonel	Capitaine de vaisseau	Colonel
5	Lieutenant Colonel	Capitaine de frégate	Lieutenant Colonel
4	Chef de bataillon/d’escadron	Capitaine de corvette	Commandant
4	Capitaine	Lieutenant de vaisseau	Captain
3	Lieutenant	Enseigne de vaisseau 1re classe	Lieutenant
3	Sous Lieutenant	Enseigne de vaisseau 2e classe	Sous Lieutenant
2	Sergent-chef	Mâitre	Sergent-chef
2	1re Sergent	Second Maître*	1re Sergent
1	Sergent*	Quartier Maître de 1re Classe*	Sergent*
1	Caporal Chef/Brigadier-chef	Quartier Maître de 2e Classe	Caporal Chef
1	Caporal/Brigadier	Matelot Breveté	Caporal
0	1re Classe†	Matelot	Aviateur de 1re classe

This compares to the table on p. W63 except that this table has no equivalent for the top and bottom lines of the *GURPS WWII* table.

\* These ranks increased in authority after the holder’s term of conscription expired.

† Military Rank 0 soldiers’ titles varied, depending on their specialty. E.g., *soldat* (infantry), *canonnier* (artillery), *cavalier* (cavalry or reconnaissance), *legionnaire* (French Foreign Legion), etc. Hence, a Rank 0 infantryman would be a *soldat 1re classe* (soldier, 1st class).

## ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND SKILLS

See pp. W62-67 for guidelines on specific advantages, disadvantages, and skills. Specific notes for French soldiers are included below.

### ADVANTAGES

#### Claim to Hospitality p. CI21

Soldiers and Resistance fighters in occupied France were often given aid by the French populace. This is considered a 5-point Claim to Hospitality advantage. PCs may be given food and water, minor supplies (such as bandages, a knife, matches, etc; no firearms, explosives, or other combat equipment), directions, information on local troops, medical aid, shelter, concealment, and so forth. Much of this hospitality will come from French women, since many French men were either at war, in prison camps, or missing in action. In return, PCs should be willing to help out civilians from time to time, often by doing manual labor (e.g., chopping wood, repairing a roof).

The GM should allow this advantage to be purchased during the course of a campaign.

#### Combat Reflexes pp. W182, B20

At the beginning of the war, few French soldiers will have Combat Reflexes. Exceptions may include soldiers who have previous combat experience (such as in Syria or Morocco during the 1920s) or soldiers in elite units with above average training (such as the Foreign Legion). As the war progresses, the advantage will become more common, particularly among Resistance fighters.

#### Danger Sense p. B20

Resistance legends often tell of this advantage saving lives (or costing them, when ignored). The Resistance placed a great deal of faith in the “sixth sense.” Anyone in the Resistance who displays this ability more than once would be likely to enjoy a hefty Reputation (+2 or even +3) with some cell mates, but also a negative Reputation (possible double agent) with others.



## Fashion Sense pp. CI24

Despite war and privation, many a French man and woman will work wonders to appear elegantly dressed. A Parisian woman's hat might be an old tablecloth and discarded table centerpiece, and a man may be coloring his ankles blue with ink to conceal the holes in his socks, but the end effect is worth the work. In addition to its usual benefits, this advantage also bestows a +1 to *any* skill rolls for keeping up appearances, including Scrounging when seeking material for a new outfit.

## Fearlessness pp. W182, B25

Historically, many French units broke and ran after undergoing Stuka attacks and being overrun by German panzers. Fearlessness (and other advantages that increase a character's Fright Check) should generally not be allowed for the average conscript.

Conversely, specialty units often maintained perfect composure under fire. Those in the Foreign Legion, the SOE-F, the *Chasseurs Parachutistes*, etc., should be allowed to take such advantages at the highest levels the GM allows.

## Reputation pp. W179, B17

Traditionally, French officers needed to enforce harsh discipline upon their often recalcitrant troops; some were even viewed (accurately or not) by their men as being bullies. Hence, French officers that are unusually kind to their subordinates may garner a Reputation bonus from their men as being respectable and a good fellow.

Likewise, soldiers who rise above the stereotype of being lazy and undisciplined may gain a Reputation from their superiors as being a good soldier. In either case, use a +1 Reputation, small group, all the time; a 1-point advantage.

Note that either type of behavior is likely to be frowned upon by the soldier's peers. See the Reputation disadvantage on p. 33.

Free French soldiers that distinguish themselves while fighting with the Allies may elect to receive a small Reputation bonus (+1) from both the Allies and from patriotic French citizens; this is a 1-point advantage (large group, 10 or less). Particularly heroic actions may merit larger bonuses, but only de Gaulle himself (and only from 1944 among the French) would purchase a +4.

For information on medals and commendations, see pp. 17-18 and W63.



## DISADVANTAGES

### Fanaticism

(France) pp. W184, B33

Fanaticism may manifest itself in various ways, especially with the establishment of two opposing French governments (Vichy and Free France). Soldiers with this disadvantage may make diametrically opposed choices as to which government to support. Vichy supporters see Pétain as their country's rightful leader and view de Gaulle and his Free French army as traitors. Gaullists have exactly the opposite view. Both sides fervently believe that they are doing what is best for *France*.

Late in the war, as the tide begins to shift against Germany, Vichy soldiers may shift their allegiance from Pétain to de Gaulle. This has nothing to do with a lack of fanaticism. On the contrary, the fanatical French soldier believes in France above all else, regardless of the politics involved. He supports what he believes is the best course of action for France itself *at that time*, regardless of who is in charge.

### Social Stigma

(Colonial) pp. W180, B27

Native (non-European) colonial soldiers will suffer a Social Stigma amongst most European French. Many such units were no better than a poorly trained militia, while others distinguished themselves as being reliable and hardy. Regardless of the reputation of the unit itself, individuals will still face an unfair negative reputation due to the color of their skin. Because of this, colonial soldiers rarely rise above Military Rank 0.

### Reputation pp. W179, B17

Vichy supporters were viewed as traitors by the Allies beginning in June 1940. The reputation was widespread enough that Vichy soldiers will receive a -1 Reputation from the Allies (a large group, all the time; -2 points) – a reputation carrying over even *after* Vichy forces began to change allegiances late in the war.

French officers that are especially kind toward their troops may be viewed by their fellow officers as being soft or undisciplined (-1 Reputation, small group, 7 or less; -1 point). French enlisted men who strive to rise above otherwise average conscripts may gain a negative Reputation from fellow soldiers for showing off or making their peers look bad (-1 Reputation, large group, 7 or less; -1 point).

## SKILLS

### Area Knowledge

pp. W188, B62

French soldiers will have Area Knowledge related to their primary areas of operation. French “fortress infantry” will have Area Knowledge (Magnet Line Fortress), which will come in handy finding their way around the labyrinthine tunnels, especially if the fortress is being overrun by German troops! French Resistance fighters will do well to have high levels of Area Knowledge (France) to help them find safe havens, ambush sites, and key locations for sabotage.

### Bicycling

p. B68

Due to severe rationing of gasoline, many French citizens took to using the bicycle as a primary means of transportation. Anyone spending any amount of time in occupied France will find many opportunities to pick up this skill.

### Scrounging

pp. W191, B67

Anyone in Occupied France will find this an invaluable skill. Finding the right equipment or supplies often means the difference between life and death. Scrounging rolls often will lead to the black market, where an unwary trader runs considerable risk of being ripped off or turned over to the Gestapo. Often, a skill roll will *locate* goods, but reveal that only the Germans have what is needed. A daring midnight raid, using skills other than Scrounging, would be required to actually *obtain* them. NCOs and Resistance cell leaders often have this skill at 12+.

### Survival pp. W191, B57

Basic military training did not prepare most French soldiers with any kind of survival skills, since most of the fighting was expected to take place near supply lines and civilization. As the war progressed, seasoned soldiers often picked up survival skills through experience, depending on their theaters of operation.

Troops in North Africa should have some knowledge of Survival (Desert); sunstroke, freezing overnight temperatures, and lack of water were often more deadly than enemy troops. Resistance fighters will usually develop Survival (Woodlands) if in the Maquis or (Urban) otherwise. City-dwelling Resistance fighters routinely will find themselves penniless on the street and looking for a place to lie low!

# CHARACTER TEMPLATES



Several character templates appear in the core rulebook on pp. W72-85. Those templates can be used as is by applying the French national

advantages and disadvantages described on p. 30. Additionally, three new particularly French templates appear below:

## JEDBURGH

Jedburghs in France will generally be American, British, or French, though a handful of Belgian, Canadian, or Dutch Jedburghs operated as well. A three-man Jedburgh team will usually include an American or British officer, and a French officer whenever possible, leaving the third member of the team to act as a radio operator. More details on the Jeds can be found on p. 29.

**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 13 [30]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 11 [10].

**Advantages:** Fit [5] and 25 points in National Advantages (see p. 30 or p. W68). As part of their National Advantages, U.S. Jedburghs may upgrade from Fit to Very Fit [a net +10 points], and British Jeds may include Daredevil [15]. Jedburghs of any nationality may take Alertness [5/level] and Fearlessness [2/level] as part of their National Advantages.

**Disadvantages:** Extremely Hazardous Duty [-20] and -30 points in National Disadvantages (see p. 30 or p. W68).

**Basic Skills:** Camouflage (M/E) IQ [1]-12; Climbing (P/A) DX-2 [1/2]-11; First Aid (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-11; Guns (Light Automatic) (P/E) DX+2 [1]-15\*; Guns (Pistol) (P/E) DX+2 [1]-15\*; Guns (Rifle) (P/E) DX+1 [1/2]-14\*; Hiking (P/A – HT) HT-1 [1]-10; Jumping (P/E) DX-1 [1/2]-12; Knife (P/E) DX [1]-13; Parachuting (P/E) DX [1]-13; Savoir-Faire (Military) (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-11; Soldier (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-14; Spear (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12; Stealth (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12; Tactics (Guerrilla) (M/H) IQ [4]-12; Throwing (P/H) DX-2 [1]-11; Traps (M/A) IQ [2]-12.

**Secondary Skills:** Brawling (P/E) DX [1]-13; Demolitions (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Electronics Operations (Communications) (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10; Engineer (Combat) (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Gunner (Machine Gun) (P/A) DX+1 [1]-14\*; Orienteering (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Scrounging (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-11; Survival (Urban, Forest, or Plains) (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10; Swimming (P/E) DX-1 [1/2]-12; Telegraphy (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-11.

**Optional Skills:** Spend 4 points on any of Bicycling, Guns (Flamethrower, Grenade Launcher, or LAW), or Motorcycle (all P/E);

## 85 POINTS



Boating, Driving (Automobile), Gunner (Cannon or Mortar), Powerboat, or Riding (Horse) (all P/A); Carousing (P/H); Area Knowledge (France or Low Countries), Cooking, or Savoir-Faire (all M/E); Armoury (Small Arms), Forward Observer, Gambling, Intimidation, Leadership, Mechanic (Gasoline Engine), NBC Warfare, Shadowing, or Tracking (all M/A); Explosive Ordnance Disposal (M/H); or foreign languages (Belgian, Dutch, or French) (M/A).

\*Includes +2 for IQ.

**Customization Notes:** National Advantages and Disadvantages for French Jedburghs should be chosen from p. 30. Players should refer to p. W68 (or an appropriate nation book) for a list of National Advantages and Disadvantages for Jeds from other Allied nations.

Non-English-speaking Jedburghs must put at least 1/2 point into the English language; all characters may find it advantageous to speak another foreign language, as well. Someone on the team should always speak fluent French!

Commissioned officers and NCOs must fulfill the skill requirements on p. W70.

**Radio Operators:** All Jeds were trained in basic radio and telegraph use, but soldiers chosen as radio operators were given specialized training in wireless operations. Radio operators must raise Electronic Operations (Communications) to 12 and Telegraphy to 13, and gain Cryptanalysis (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-9 and Cryptography (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-9. This leaves 1 point for *Optional Skills*.

# LEGIONNAIRE

65 POINTS

The French Foreign Legion was famous for creating hardened, elite soldiers, both in the foreign-born enlisted ranks and the predominantly French officer corps. (In fact, serving in the Legion was considered a *distinguished* post for a career officer. It in no way reflected lack of favor, as foreign postings often did in other armies.)

With the exception of Susan Travers (p. 12), women did not join the French Foreign Legion during WWII, unless they were disguised as men, a rarely used but occasionally successful ploy. Background information on the Legion can be found on pp. 22-23.

**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 11 [10]; HT 12 [20].

**Advantages:** Fearlessness +1 [2], Fit [5], and 20 points in *National Advantages* (see p. 30 or p. W68). Legionnaires also may take additional levels of Fearlessness [2/level], add Toughness [10] or High Pain Threshold [10], or upgrade from Fit to Very Fit [a net +10 points] as part of their *National Advantages*.

**Disadvantages:** Extremely Hazardous Duty [-20] and -30 points in *National Disadvantages* (see p. 30 or p. W68). Men often joined the Legion to escape from a checkered past. An appropriate Secret [varies] can be included as part of a legionnaire's *National Disadvantages*. Not having one might merit a Reputation -1 (Crazy) among other legionnaires!

**Basic Skills:** Camouflage (M/E) IQ [1]-11; Climbing (P/A) DX-1 [1]-11; First Aid (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-10; Gunner (Machine Gun) (P/A) DX [1/2]-12\*; Guns (Light Automatic) (P/E) DX+1 [1/2]-13\*; Guns (Rifle) (P/E) DX+2 [1]-14\*; Hiking (P/A – HT) HT-1 [1]-9; Jumping (P/E) DX-1 [1/2]-11; Knife (P/E) DX-1 [1/2]-11; Soldier (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-13; Spear (P/A) DX-2 [1/2]-10; Stealth (P/A) DX-1 [1]-11; Survival (Desert) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Throwing (P/H) DX-2 [1]-10; Traps (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-9.

**Secondary Skills:** Armoury (Small Arms) (M/A) IQ-1 [1/2]-9; Brawling (P/E) DX [1]-12; Demolition (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-9; Engineer (Combat) (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-8; Scrounging (M/E) IQ [1]-11; Orienteering (M/A) IQ [2]-11.



**Optional Skills:** Spend 6 points on any of Guns (Flamethrower, Grenade Launcher, LAW, or Pistol) or Motorcycle (both P/E); Driving (Automobile or Construction Equipment), Gunner (Cannon or Mortar), or Riding (Horse) (all P/A); Carousing (P/A – HT); Area Knowledge (North Africa or other), Cooking, Savoir-Faire (Military), or Telegraphy (all M/E); Electronics Operation (Communications), Forward Observer, Freight Handling, Gambling, Intimidation, Leadership, Mechanic (Gasoline Engine), Packing, Streetwise, Teamster, or Tracking (all M/A); Animal Handling or Explosive Ordnance Disposal (both M/H); or a foreign language (usually one of Arabic, French, or English; all three are M/A).

\*Includes +2 for IQ.

**Customization Notes:** French officers should use the French National Advantages and Disadvantages; enlisted men (almost exclusively foreigners) and the rare foreign officer should refer to p. W68 or an appropriate nation book.

Specialists (e.g., artillerymen, combat engineers) should look over the appropriate template in the core rulebook for ideas on background and optional skill choices to flesh out their character.

French officers should consider a small additional Reputation to reflect their favored status among the nation's officer corps.



# SOE-F OPERATIVE

# 70 POINTS

Operatives of the Special Operations Executive (French Branch) provided leadership, training, and support to isolated Resistance groups. They were often sent into occupied France on blind missions – unsupported and alone in enemy territory. Most of them were brave, but ordinary, patriots carefully selected for linguistic ability and a bent for the rigors of clandestine operations. SOE-F agents often were recruited from Allied armed forces, but some had no prior military experience. Additional information on the SOE-F can be found on pp. 27-28.

The following template covers the basic training received at SOE; characters with a military background may have additional appropriate skills (see pp. W72-85 for guidelines to these).



**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 11 [10].

**Advantages:** Composed [5], Strong Will +2 [4], and 25 points in National Advantages (see p. 30 or p. W68). SOE-F operatives also may take Common Sense [10], Danger Sense [15], Fit [5], Intuition [15], or additional levels of Strong Will [2/level] as part of their National Advantages.

**Disadvantages:** Enemy (German/Vichy security forces, 6 or less) [-20] and -30 points in National Disadvantages (see p. 30 or p. W68).

**Basic Skills:** Acting (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Area Knowledge (France) (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-11; Camouflage (M/E) IQ [1]-12; Cartography (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10; Disguise (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10; Electronics Operations (Communications) (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10; Escape (P/H) DX-2 [1]-10; Fast Talk (M/A) IQ [2]-12; First Aid (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-11; Guns (Light Automatic) (P/E) DX+1 [1/2]-13\*; Guns (Pistol) (P/E) DX+1 [1/2]-13\*; Holdout (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10; Intelligence Analysis (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-9; Interrogation (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Language (French or English) (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Leadership (M/A) IQ [2]-12; Parachuting (P/E) DX [1]-12; Scrounging (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Stealth (P/A) DX-1 [1]-11; Swimming (P/E) DX-1 [1/2]-11; Tactics (Guerrilla) (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Teaching (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10; Throwing (P/H) DX-2 [1]-10; Traps (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11.

**Secondary Skills:** Armoury (Small Arms) (M/A) IQ-1 [1/2]-11; Brawling (P/E) DX [1]-12; Climbing (P/A) DX-1 [1/2]-10; Demolitions (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10; Driving (Automobile) (P/A) DX-1 [1]-11; Engineer (Combat) (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-9; Forgery (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-9; Jumping (P/E) DX-1 [1/2]-11; Knife (P/E) DX-1 [1/2]-11; Orienteering (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Streetwise (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10; Survival (Urban) (M/A) IQ-2 [1/2]-10.

**Optional Skills:** Spend 5 points on any of Bicycling or Motorcycle (both P/E); Boating, Powerboat, or Riding (Horse) (all P/A); Skiing (P/H); Cooking or Savoir-Faire (both M/E); Intimidation, Mechanic (Gasoline Engine), Shadowing, or Tracking (all M/A); Sex Appeal (M/A - HT); or languages (mostly M/A).

\*Includes +2 for IQ.

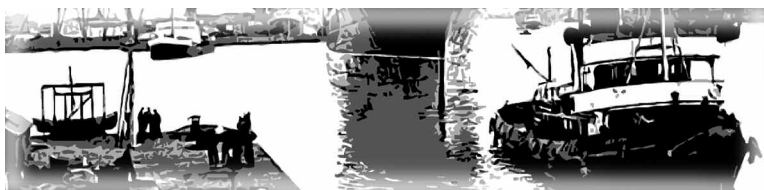
**Customization Notes:** Because SOE agents were often from Great Britain, the United States, or another Allied nation, players should refer to p. W68 or an appropriate nation book for a list of National Advantages and Disadvantages. Agents recruited from France should choose their advantages and disadvantages from p. 30.

**Radio Operators:** The SOE-F sent many agents into occupied France to act primarily as radio operators. Recruits assigned to this task received specialized training before being parachuted in. Radio specialists must raise Electronic Operations (Communications) to 12 and gain additional skills as follows: Cryptanalysis (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]-9; Cryptography (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Telegraphy (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-13. This raises the template cost to 75 points.

# 5. THE FRENCH ARMORY

*“Thunderstruck today by the mechanical force, we will be able to win, in the future, by a superior mechanical force.”*

– Charles De Gaulle



## PERSONAL GEAR

French soldiers carried standard personal gear (e.g., blanket, canteen, mess kit, entrenching tool, knife, etc). Gas masks were issued – including specially designed masks for horses – but were seldom used, and by late in the war, rarely carried. Officers and reconnaissance troops were issued binoculars.



### SOE-F Equipment

SOE-F operatives were given money, food, and specialized equipment to help them survive in enemy territory. GMs can use the equipment list on pp. W87-90 to equip SOE-F agents prior to their infiltration of occupied France.

Operatives were given a knife to quickly cut their parachute shroud; a shorter, serrated knife was usually carried to puncture and slash tires. A small caliber pistol was often carried in an outside pocket of the specially designed jump suit worn during insertion. The suit protected the wearer during the jump, then was to be quickly removed and stowed, allowing the agent to blend in with the French populace.

Agents may receive even more specialized equipment. *GURPS WWII: Hand of Steel* provides some examples. Others include:

*Cyanide Pills* – Agents were often issued poison tablets to enable them to commit suicide if arrested. Such pills were generally issued to any SOE operative flying over enemy territory whether they intended to land or not. See p. CII141 for details on cyanide poisoning.

*False Identities* – Great care was taken to provide authentic German uniforms, military insignia, and German-made clothing (or British fakes with labels from German companies). Agents posing as indigenous French were provided with French papers, identity cards, travel passes, ration cards, and so forth. Forgery kits – including expertly crafted police, government, and military stamps, and appropriately colored inks – were sometimes included to aid in creating papers as needed. Even seemingly unimportant items – such as a matchbox from a well-known French or German nightclub – were included to lend credence to the agent’s cover story.

*Jewelry* – Expensive jewelry, cigarette cases, and other valuables could provide the agent with a ready source of cash should he find himself low on funds. They were also useful for bribing officials. Specially designed items could include secret compartments that could hide other equipment or documents (such as an agent’s list of radio codes, contact names, and escape routes).

*Money Belt* – A leather money belt, with an opening on the underside, could be used to conceal money or documents. Slender pieces of steel embedded in such a belt could double as makeshift lockpicking instruments, or as a shiv. \$2.50, 0.5 lbs.

# SMALL ARMS



See pp. W92-93 for some common French arms. The following tables cover other weaponry typically used by French forces. These troops were sometimes equipped by Britain or America, and may be found using anything from Thompson M-1A1s to Belgian Brownings. Resistance fighters gratefully used whatever weapon was handy.

## Pistols

*Astra Pistolet Automatique Modele 21 (1921)*: A Spanish pistol (called Mod 400 by the manufacturer) used in large numbers by the Spanish and French militaries. It had the unique ability to chamber various different rounds: originally designed for the 9mm Bergmann-Bayard used in Spain, it could also fire the 9mm Browning Long, 9mm Glisenti (Dam 2d+1), 9mm Parabellum, 9mm Steyr, and .38 Super Auto (Dam 2d+3) without modification.

*Gabilondo Pistolet Automatique Ruby (1915)*: A cheap Spanish pistol patterned after the Belgian FN-Browning Modele 1910, which was a standard weapon of the French military up to the adoption of the *MAS Modele 35A*, and still common during WWII.

*MAB Pistolet Automatique Modele D (1935)*: This was a slightly modified copy of the Belgian FN-Browning Modele 1922. While never adopted as standard, it was widely used by the French military and police.

*MAS Pistolet Automatique Modele 35A (1938)*: The French standard sidearm, which saw only little service before the start of the war. Many were captured by the Germans, who used it as the P625(f). It was replaced in production with the simplified *Modele 35S* (1940), which had the same statistics.

## Revolvers

*MAS Pistolet-Revolveur Modele 1892 (1892)*: This obsolete design was the first swing-out cylinder revolver adopted in Europe, and still in service during WWII. Widely known as the Lebel, though M. Lebel had nothing to do with it. The Modele 1892's cylinder swung out to the right, rather inconveniently for right-handed users (except for left-handed shooters, add 1 second to the time required for reloading as per p. W91).

## Rifles

*Lebel-Berthier Fusil Modele 07/15 M34 (1934)*: This was one of the last of a long line of weapons based on the Lebel-Berthier Modele 1886

bolt-action rifle (p. HT114). It used Mauser-style 5-round clips. Despite being officially replaced by the *MAS Modele 36* (p. W95), it soldiered on throughout the war, as did many of the older marks. The older *Lebel-Berthier Fusil Modele 07/15 M27 (1927)* had the same stats except for Wt 9.1.

*Lebel-Berthier Mousqueton Modele 1886/93 R35 (1935)*: This was the last of the Lebel-Berthiers (p. HT114). It was slightly shortened for issue to motorized infantry. It retained both the unwieldy 3-round tube magazine below the barrel and the old 8mm Lebel cartridge (rather than the newly introduced 7.5mm MAS).

*MAS Fusil Modele 36 CR39 (1939)*: The carbine variant of the standard *MAS Modele 36* (p. W95) featured a shortened barrel and folding stock. It was intended for airborne and mountain troops, but few were made.

## Submachine Guns

*MAS Mitraillette Modele 38 (1939)*: The standard French submachine gun at the beginning of the war was the American M-1928A1 Thompson (called the Modele 39; see pp. HT115-116, W96). The Modele 38 was a domestic design, which had only just entered service when the war began. Production continued until 1944, even under German occupation. (The Germans also used it themselves.) It had an odd broken appearance, since stock and barrel were at a slight angle; this was supposed to make it more controllable. Users complained about the weak round it fired.

## Machine Guns

Instead of belts or magazines, French machine guns often used *strip* feeds; these were light metal strips holding a number of cartridges. They were inserted from one side and emerged empty on the other. It takes a loader 1 second to insert a new strip, after which the gunner can resume firing.

*Hotchkiss Mitrailieuse Modele 14 (1914)*: This air-cooled weapon was the French MMG dating to before the war (also see p. HT118). It was a heavy but reliable design, feeding from 24-round strips.

*Hotchkiss Mitrailieuse Modele 30 (1931)*: The standard French HMG was derived from the *Modele 14*, but scaled up in caliber. It could use 20-round strips, 30-round magazines (AWt 9.4), or 100-round disintegrating belts (AWt 32 in an ammo can). The Modele 30 was used mainly for antiaircraft fire, and also installed in armored vehicles (p. W130).



*MAC Mitrailleur Modele 31 (1931)*: This was a variant of the MAC Modele 24/29 LMG (p. W97) for use in fortress installations and armored vehicles (p. W130). It was originally installed in bunkers of the Maginot Line, but later many were incorporated into the Atlantic Wall. It was also popular for air defense, mounted on various tripods, and the Germans even used captured guns on bipods. Two feed devices were available, both inserted from the right side: a 36-round box magazine (AWt 2.3) or the much more common 150-round drum magazine. The weight in the table does not include any mount.

## Hand Grenades

*Grenade à Main Defensive Modele 37 (1937)*: The standard French fragmentation hand grenade, replacing the earlier Modele 15 (which

the Americans had adopted as the Mk II grenade, pp. HT117, W98).

*Grenade à Main Offensive Modele 37 (1937)*: A French concussion grenade. It was almost identical to the unpainted fragmentation type, but was painted gray to avoid lethal mixups.

## AMMO TABLE

<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Modern Name</i>
7.5mm MAS	7.5×54mm
.32 ACP	7.65×17mmSR
7.65mm Browning Long	7.65×20mm
8mm Lebel Revolver	8×27mmR
8mm Lebel	8×50mmR
13.2mm Hotchkiss	13.2×99mm



## WEAPONS TABLE

### Hand Grenades – use Throwing

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>Fuse</i>	<i>Hold</i>
Gr Ma Df Modele 37	2d-1 [2d]	1.1	4	0
Gr Ma Of Modele 37	2d+1 [1d]	0.7	4	0

### Semiautomatic Pistols – Use Guns (Pistol) Skill

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Dmg</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>AWt</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Shots</i>	<i>ST</i>	<i>Rcl</i>	<i>Hold</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Astra Modele 21, 9mm Bergmann-Bayard	Crit.	2d+2	10	3	150	1,850	2.3	0.4	3~	8+1	9	-1	-1	\$40
Gabilondo Ruby, .32 ACP	Crit.	2d-1-	10	2	130	1,600	1.5	0.3	3~	8+1	7	-1	0	\$15
MAB D, .32 ACP	Crit.	2d-1-	10	2	130	1,600	1.8	0.3	3~	9+1	7	-1	0	\$25
MAS Modele 35A, 7.65mm Browning Long	Crit.	2d-	10	3	150	1,850	2	0.3	3~	8+1	9	-1	-1	\$50

### Revolvers – Use Guns (Pistol) Skill

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Dmg</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>AWt</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Shots</i>	<i>ST</i>	<i>Rcl</i>	<i>Hold</i>	<i>Cost</i>
MAS Modele 1892, 8mm Lebel	Crit.	2d+	10	2	150	1,700	2	0.15	3~	6	9	-1	-1	\$20

### Rifles – Use Guns (Rifle) Skill

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Dmg</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>AWt</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Shots</i>	<i>ST</i>	<i>Rcl</i>	<i>Hold</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Lebel Modele 07/15 M34, 7.5mm MAS	Crit.	6d+2	14	10	1,000	3,900	8.4	0.3	1/2	5+1	11	-3	-7	\$25
Lebel Modele 1886/93 R35, 8mm Lebel	Crit.	6d+2	14	8	800	3,900	8.6	0.2	1/2	3+1	11	-3	-6	\$25
MAS Modele 36 CR39, 7.5mm MAS	Crit.	6d+1	12	8	800	3,900	8	0.3	1/2	5+1	11	-3	-5	\$35

### Submachine Guns – Use Guns (Light Auto)

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Dmg</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>AWt</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Shots</i>	<i>ST</i>	<i>Rcl</i>	<i>Hold</i>	<i>Cost</i>
MAS Modele 38, 7.65mm Browning Long	Crit.	2d+1-	10	6	160	1,900	7.5	1.1	10	32	9	-1	-5	\$70

### Machine Guns – Use Guns (Light Auto) or Gunner (Machine Gun)

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Malf</i>	<i>Dmg</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Acc</i>	<i>1/2D</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Wt</i>	<i>AWt</i>	<i>RoF</i>	<i>Shots</i>	<i>ST</i>	<i>Rcl</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Hotchkiss Modele 14, 8mm Lebel	Crit.	6d+2	20	14	1,000	3,900	58/118	2	8	24	29T	-1	\$300
Hotchkiss Modele 30, 13.2mm Hotchkiss	Crit.	12d+	20	14	1,300	5,000	88/177	5.3	7	20	41T	-1	\$1,000
MAC Modele 31, 7.5mm MAS	Crit.	6d+2	19	10	1,000	3,900	45.2	17.7	12	150	22T	-1	\$150

# THE FRENCH MOTOR POOL

Five French vehicles are detailed below. As described elsewhere, the Free French forces also extensively used U.S. and British vehicles that

can be found in the **WWII** corebook and other supplements. Additional French vehicles may be found in future **WWII** supplements.

## CHAR SOMUA MODÉLE 1935-S

The SOMUA S-35 may have been the best medium tank in the world as WWII began. The first tank of all-cast construction, it balanced speed, armor, and firepower. It had one serious flaw: The one-man turret required the commander to spot targets, direct his crew, load both weapons, and aim them. Unsurprisingly, his efficiency in any one of these jobs dramatically declined when he juggled all of them. In action, S-35s sometimes fired HE rounds at other tanks or AP rounds at infantry, because the overwhelmed commander didn't have time to switch to the proper ammo.

A second drawback was a radio shortage. Though the S-35 was to be equipped with a two-way radio, France ran frightfully short; three out of four S-35s in service did not have a radio installed.

The S-35 began as a 1931 "cavalry tank" concept. The Société d'Outillage Mécanique et d'Usinage d'Artillerie (SOMUA) produced the first prototype in 1934, and the first 50 tanks entered service in Spring 1936. By May 1940, France had more than 400 in its arsenal.

The driver and radio operator sat in the body, with the latter passing ammunition up to the commander. The S-35 burns 6.4 gallons of gas per hour at routine usage. The powered turret rotates at roughly 12° per second, or 2.4° if manually turned by the commander. Fuel and ammo cost \$750.

### SOMUA S-35

**Subassemblies:** Medium Tank chassis with medium slope +3; full-rotation Medium Weapon turret [Body:T] with mild slope +1; fixed Mini cupola +0; tracks +3.

**Powertrain:** 142-kW standard gas engine with 142-kW tracked transmission and 108-gallon standard tanks; 16,000-kWs batteries.

**Occ:** 2 CS Body, 1 Both Cargo: 7.5 Bod, 1 Tur, 1 Cup

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	5/230	4/155	5/200	4/80	4/80
Tracks:	4/50	4/50	4/50	4/50	4/50
Turret:	5/270	4/145	4/145	4/100	—
Cupola:	4/100	4/100	4/100	4/100	—

### Weaponry

Ground LMG/Modele 31 [Tur:F] (3,750 rounds).\*  
47mm Short Tank Gun/SA-35 [Tur:F] (118).\*

\* Linked.

### Equipment

**Body:** 2-kW traversing gear for turret; medium radio receiver and transmitter.

### Statistics

**Size:** 18'x7'x9' **Payload:** 1.1 tons **Lwt:** 21.7 tons  
**Volume:** 94 **Maint:** 52 hours **Cost:** \$15.1K

**HT:** 12. **HP:** 1,500 **Body,** 540 each **Track,** 75 **Tur,** 30 **Cup.**

**gSpeed:** 26 **gAccel:** 2 **gDecel:** 20 **gMR:** 0.25 **gSR:** 5  
**Ground Pressure** Low. **2/3 Off-Road Speed.**

### Design Notes

The design includes 4,000 rounds of MG and 120 of 47mm ammo. Historical values were substituted. The S-35's best sloping actually was on the hull rear, but the oddly shaped hull front apparently served well in combat; German antitank gunners regarded the S-35 as hard to kill. For these reasons, the tank is given medium slope, but the benefits are split between the hull front and rear.

Often, tank cupolas are assumed to be part of the turret, but the cupola on this turret (also used by the Char B1-bis) was very large. It did not include a hatch in French service; the commander stuck his head up into it to get a bit better view through slits. (He still suffered a Poor View per p. W144. His crew station had *no* means of obtaining a clear view.) The Germans replaced it with a hatched version on captured tanks they deployed.

The S-35 had armor covering the sides of its track assemblies, but not true standoff armor per p. W140. This feature is represented as a modest improvement in the tracks' DR.

### Variants

In 1940, construction began on the S-40, an improved model with a modified suspension and a 220-hp (164 kW) engine. Few had been completed by the fall of France. The SAu-40 was a self-propelled 75mm gun based on the S-35 chassis; only a single prototype was completed.

The Germans considered the S-35 the best tank they faced during the Battle of France. By mid-1941, captured S-35s were being issued to German units as the PzKpfw 35-S 739(f). Many were used as trainers; others saw duty in Finland (June 1941) and Normandy (June 1944). The Vichy government gave Italy 32 of the machines.

# RENAULT CHAR DE BATAILLE B1

The B1-bis was the main battle tank of the French army in 1940, and was considered one of the most powerful tanks in the world. Unfortunately, it was expensive and painfully slow. It was also hampered by the same problems that plagued the S-35, for it used an identical turret. As with the S-35, the tank commander had to fire and load the 47mm SA-35 cannon and Modele 31 machine gun. In some ways, the B1 tank commander's job was even more difficult, since he also needed to spot targets for the 75mm howitzer.

The driver sat next to the 75mm gun, with the radio operator behind him and the loader behind the gun. The loader loaded both hull guns and passed ammunition to the commander for his turret guns. The radio operator sometimes assisted in passing ammunition; tank antennas were often sheared off during combat, rendering the radio useless. The driver aimed and fired the 75mm gun; a special auxiliary transmission allowed him to precisely rotate the tank to aim his gun. (This is modeled as a casemate mounting from p. W132 for the 75mm gun, with the special effect that the whole tank must turn with the gun.) The driver also possessed a gyroscopic compass driven by compressed air, to help him retain orientation while spinning his vehicle to and fro in pursuit of targets.

The Char B1-bis burns 10.3 gallons of gas per hour at routine usage. The turret is powered and rotates at roughly 12° per second, or 2.4° if manually turned by the commander. Fuel and ammo cost \$940.

## Renault Char B1-bis

**Subassemblies:** Large Tank chassis with mild slope +4; full-rotation Medium Weapon turret [Body:T] with mild slope +1; fixed Mini cupola [Tur:T] +0; tracks +3.

**Powertrain:** 229-kW standard gas engine with 229-kW tracked transmission and 99-gallon standard tanks; 16,000-kWs batteries.

**Occ:** 3 CS Body, 1 Both Cargo: 5.2 Bod, 1 Tur, 1 Cup

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	5/345	4/230	4/215	4/100	4/80
Tracks:	4/70	4/70	4/70	4/70	4/70
Turret:	5/270	4/145	4/145	4/100	—
Cupola:	4/100	4/100	4/100	4/100	—

## Weaponry

Ground LMG/Modele 31 [Tur:F] (2,550 rounds).\*  
Ground LMG/M 31 [Body:F] (2,550 rounds).  
47mm Short TG/SA-35 [Tur:F] (50 rounds).\*  
75mm Short TG/SA-35 [Body:F] (74 rounds).

\* Linked.



## Equipment

**Body:** casemate mount for 75mm Short Tank Gun; 2-kW traversing gear for turret; medium radio and transmitter; navigation instruments.

## Statistics

**Size:** 22'x8'x9' **Payload:** 1.6 tons **Lwt:** 34.7 tons  
**Volume:** 118 **Maint:** 39 hours **Cost:** \$26.8K  
**HT:** 10. **HP:** 1,800 **Body,** 600 each **Track,** 75 **Tur,** 30 **Cup.**  
**gSpeed:** 17 **gAccel:** 2 **gDecel:** 20 **gMR:** 0.25 **gSR:** 6  
**Ground Pressure** Low. **2/3 Off-Road Speed.**

## Design Notes

The tank is designed with 5,000 rounds of MG ammo, 40 of 47mm ammo, and 80 of 75mm ammo. Historical values were substituted. Top speed should be 26 mph. Since the B1 was *designed* as a slow infantry tank, a new (and less reliable) transmission might improve speed.

Only HE and smoke were carried for the 75mm gun, though AP rounds were available.

The B1-bis had very large tracks, with much of the running gear beneath the hull armor. This robust design justifies a steep upgrade in the tracks' DR. On the other hand, the left rear hull side featured a vulnerable radiator grill with only DR 80. The grill can be specifically targeted with a +0 size modifier. Additionally, any shot targeting the left hull side has a 1-in-6 chance of hitting the grill.

Also see the S-35 design notes, p. 40.

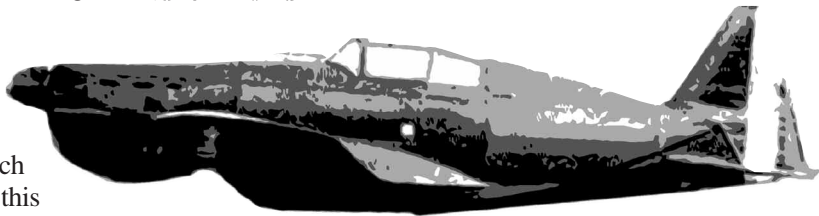
## Variants

The original Char B1, with lighter armor, entered lengthy trials in the early 1930s. The B1-bis (second) upgrade began production in 1935, with 365 entering service before the invasion. In 1937, the French built a handful of heavier B1-ter (third) prototypes. Neither the B1 nor B1-ter saw combat. Secret design staffs kept working on the B1-ter during the Occupation. After the war, this work formed the basis of the ARL-44 tank.



# MORANE-SAULNIER MS.406

The MS.406 was not the best plane in the *Armée de l’Air*, but it was the most common in 1940. Its saving grace was that it was easy to fly. French pilots also found it easy to die in this underpowered and undergunned mount.



The fighter entered the prototype stage in late 1935 as the MS.405. At the time, it was a revolution in French aircraft design. The government ordered 1,000 planes in March 1938, but many of them went to fill export deals with several countries, notably China, Finland, and Turkey. When the war broke out, France had four squadrons, with three 25-plane groups in each, flying the MS.406.

The 406 retained its previous-generation roots from the original 405. It could hold its own – barely – against the earliest Messerschmitt Bf-109s, but usually fell prey to those improved 109s taking part in the Battle of France. Overall, France lost more than 400 MS.406s during the invasion against 175 confirmed kills for the plane.

The MS.406 continued to serve with the Vichy government, but French industry was reallocated to producing German designs and the aircraft drifted into obscurity. A total of 1,064 were built from 1938-1947.

The plane uses 29 gallons of gasoline per hour at routine usage. Fuel and ammo cost \$45.

## MS.406.C1

Subassemblies: Medium Fighter chassis +3;  
Light Fighter wings +2; 3 retractable wheels +0.  
Powertrain: 642-kW aerial turbo/supercharged gas engine with 640-kW prop and 108-gallon self-sealing tanks.

Occ: 1 CS      Cargo: 4.1 Body, 2.4 Wings.

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
All:	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
Cockpit:	0/+0	0/+10	0/+20	0/+10	0/+10

## Weaponry

20mm Long Air AC/HS.404 [Body: F] (60).\*  
2×Air LMG/MAC M34 [Wings:F] (300 each).\*  
\* LMGs linked and all three guns linked together.

## Equipment

Body: Medium radio transmitter and receiver; navigation instruments; autopilot.

## Statistics

Size: 27’×35’×9’ Payload: 0.5 tons Lwt: 2.7 tons  
Volume: 200      Maint: 56 hours      Cost: \$12.8K  
HT: 9. HPs: 120 Body, 70 each Wing, 12 each Wheel.

aSpeed: 302 aAccel: 7 aDecel: 19 aMR: 4.75 aSR: 2  
Stall Speed 72.  
gSpeed: 225 gAccel: 11 gDecel: 10 gMR: 0.5 gSR: 2  
Ground Pressure Very High. 1/8 Off-Road Speed.

## Design Notes

The design purchases 500 rounds of MG and 90 rounds of 20mm ammunition. The historical values have been used, instead.

## Variants

The MS.405 was essentially a prototype for the MS.406. (Each of the 16 MS.405 prototypes varied slightly. Numbers 13 and 15 were shipped to Switzerland as pattern aircraft for the Swiss D-3800 while prototype number 16 became the standard for the MS.406.) The most notable difference between the MS.405 and MS.406 was the plywood/aluminum skin on the prototype, and a different engine (with a troublesome radiator). Despite these and other subtle differences, treat the MS.405 as an MS.406 with an aSpeed of 275.

The MS.410 was a product-improved version with a redesigned wing, a more reliable oil cooler, and 2×Aircraft LMG/MAC Modele 34 in each wing. Some 500 aircraft were scheduled to be converted, but only five had undergone the upgrade by the time France fell.

At least 96 captured MS.406s entered service in the Luftwaffe as trainers. These are identical to the French-service plane except for the installation of German electronics. Sixty-nine were upgraded to the MS.410 standard under German supervision, but many lacked the upgraded radiators. Two later went to Finland, 44 to Croatia, and 52 to Italy.

Switzerland built 74 MS.412s (D-3800s) that were little more than MS.405s modified with Swiss electronics, the better engine from the MS.406, and belt-fed (instead of drum-fed) machine guns in the wings. Later, 207 Swiss D-3081s were built using most of the MS.406 features, and the upgraded radiator of the MS.410.

The 41 MS.406 and MS.410 airframes in Finnish service were modified to use captured Russian 820-kW Klimov M-105P engines, skis, and a German 20mm Medium Air AC (MG151/20) in place of the Hispano-Suiza cannon. The resulting plane was known as the Mörkö (“Ghost”).

# RENÉ GILLET V-TWIN MOTORCYCLE

René Gillet produced motorbikes known for their power and reliability, and the French military and police received large numbers of the 750cc and 1000cc V-twins during the 1930s. Soldiers used them for scouting, courier errands, transporting officers, and other duties.

The René Gillet L1 listed below was a chain-driven motorcycle, with a side-valve engine and a crossover gearbox. The frame employed rigid, tubular construction.

The René Gillet 750cc burns 0.7 gallons of gas per hour at routine usage. Fuel costs \$0.75

## René Gillet 750cc Type L1

Subassemblies: Motorcycle chassis +0, large wheels -1.

Powertrain: 16-kW standard gas engine with 16-kW wheeled transmission and 5-gallon standard tank.

Occ: 1 MCS, 1 MPS      Cargo: 0.1

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	2/4	0/0	2/4	00	00
Wheels:	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5

### Statistics

Size: 4'x3'x3'    Payload: 430 lbs.    Lwt. 1,252 lbs.

Volume: 2.4    Maint. 697 hours    Cost \$85

HT: 8. HPs: 20 Body, 8 each Wheel.

gSpeed: 80 gAccel: 4 gDecel: 10 gMR: 1.5 gSR: 2  
Ground Pressure High. 1/6 Off-Road Speed.

### Design Notes

A 6-gallon tank was included in the design, and weight was increased to match the very heavy historical weight of 822 lbs. empty. The small battery was ignored; see the design notes on p. W107.

The French army often attached sidecars (use the sidecar statistics on p. W107) to the motorcycle. The Wehrmacht used confiscated Gillets after their victory, as well.

# CITROËN TRACTION AVANT

Citroën pioneered many automotive advancements, including hydraulic brakes, front-wheel drive, rack-and-pinion steering, monococque construction, rubber mounts for the engine, and torsion-bar suspension. The results were reliable, very safe automobiles with excellent handling.

After the invasion, the Gestapo confiscated every Citroën they could get their hands on. The sight of a black Traction Avant in a French street soon came to mean that trouble was brewing . . .

The Traction Avant 11L burns 1.5 gallons of gas per hour at routine usage. Fuel costs \$1.80.

## Citroën Traction Avant 11L

Subassemblies: Small Wheeled chassis with Civilian option +3, standard wheels +1.

Powertrain: 34-kW standard gas engine with 34-kW wheeled transmission and 12-gallon standard tank; 4,000-kWs battery.

Occ: 1 CS, 3 PS      Cargo: 6.7

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
Body:	3/8	3/8	3/8	3/8	3/8
Wheels:	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5

### Statistics

Size: 15'x5'x5'    Payload: 0.5 tons    Lwt. 1.7 tons

Volume: 36    Maint. 349 hours    Cost \$700

HT: 9. HPs: 65 Body, 7 each Wheel.

gSpeed: 72 gAccel: 4 gDecel: 10 gMR: 1 gSR: 5  
Ground Pressure High. 1/6 Off-Road Speed.

### Design Notes

The chassis' high DR represents its extreme sturdiness. The design includes a WWII-era prototype of an improved suspension (p. VE20), costing \$10 times wheel area for +0.25 gMR and +1 gSR, but without the modern improvements to gSpeed.

### Variants

The few civilians who did not have their cars confiscated had no gasoline. Many installed wood-chip burners called *gasifiers* that extracted hydrogen and carbon monoxide to be used as fuel. A gasifier includes 1 VSP of filters and tubing, plus a burner of any size. Each VSP of burner holds 120 lbs. of wood chips (up to 2" wide) costing \$0.5 (mostly for the chipping). This 120 lbs. of wood will produce gases replacing 1 gallon of gasoline. Most setups *greatly* curtail power output to limit wood consumption. A gasifier divides maintenance interval by 3. The burner is *very* hot and a careless handler will suffer carbon-monoxide poisoning. A gasifier weighs 40 lbs. plus 20 lbs. per VSP of empty burner. It costs \$25 plus \$2 per VSP of burner. Starting a cold gasifier takes 10 minutes.

Installation usually costs \$20 for labor and parts, taking 8 hours and a Mechanic skill roll. Traction Avants came pre-plumbed for a gasifier: \$5, 2 hours, and +3 to the skill roll.

Any civilian vehicle still running in Occupied France will be using a gasifier to burn wood. Germany, Britain, Australia, and many other nations also used gasifiers extensively.

# 6. CAMPAIGNS

*"If the blood of France and of Germany flows again, as it did 25 years ago, in a longer and even more murderous war, each of the two peoples will fight with confidence in its own victory. But the most certain victors will be the forces of destruction and barbarism."*

— Édouard Daladier



## CAMPAIGN STYLES

An overview of military campaign styles is found on pp. W158-162. The following points add to that discussion when basing a military campaign on the French.

### FALLEN FRANCE

GMs running an intensely realistic campaign should consider having players create conscripted French soldiers, using only 50 or 75 points. Many of them would be reservists, with only a raw or green level of skills (see p. W71).

These inexperienced troops don't have to be portrayed as cowardly or craven. Many individual Frenchmen displayed a classic (that is, almost suicidal) sense of Gallic bravery during the 1940 fighting. No matter how they conduct themselves, though, they would encounter deserting and routing troops in the 1940 campaign. The GM should emphasize that these less-than-stalwart souls have a point: The Germans are *deadly* foes and the French will be short on weaponry and training. It wasn't an easy time to be brave.

This sort of campaign could play up the low morale and lack of discipline that plagued the French army early in the war, and can be used to create morale dilemmas for soldiers choosing which government to support after June 1940.

### REALISTICALLY GRITTY

This is probably the campaign style of choice for running a long-term French military campaign, simply because it enables the GM to highlight the problems faced by the French (which certainly did not go away after the defeat of their country!) while giving PCs an opportunity to shine as individuals.

Characters should be created on 100 points; this leaves room for personalization of templates found in both this supplement (pp. 34-36) and the core book (pp. W72-85).

### Adventure Seed: Fortress on the Brink

The fortress *Villy la Ferté* (see p. 9) anchored the Maginot Line at the French Ardennes. It was surrounded by German troops in mid-June 1940. Outgunned and outnumbered, the 105-man garrison refused to surrender, fighting the German attackers to their last breath. GMs looking for a realistic battle can use this heroic last stand to depict the slaughter that typified the German advance, while others may choose to highlight the heroism and loyalty of the brave soldiers that died there.

Historically, all 105 defenders were killed as the Germans swarmed the subterranean complex. GMs may choose to alter history enough to allow PCs a chance to escape or surrender after watching their comrades fall to the Germans.

Soldiers that begin the war in France can face the realistic agony of defeat, retreat, and flight to England, and yet come back to fight with the Free French in various battles throughout the war. (Or, they might even spend a brief tour with the Vichy military forces in Africa before turning around and fighting with the Allies after November 1942.) For those in England, the interlude between Dunkirk and D-Day can be filled with adventures centered on training, scrounging up the loan of new equipment, and possibly even dealing with a few insults from newly arrived U.S. troops in the pubs . . .

Later in the war, these French troops may find themselves fighting alongside Bouvet in southern France, or even liberating Paris with Leclerc (see p. 16). Encourage the players to portray them as wearing their national pride on their sleeve — the legendarily prickly de Gaulle did!



## Adventure Seed: Fort Coudon

The battle at Toulon, in the south of France, was the source of some of the most heroic – and bloody – fighting in the European war. French commandos, working under Col. Bouvet, have been assigned to climb into the fortress of Coudon, located northeast of Toulon, and take out the German forces holed up there. The Führer has ordered his troops to fight to the last man, an order that they will follow literally.

Under the cover of night, the PCs must infiltrate the perimeter defenses, scale the fortress walls (strong ropes and good Climbing skill will be needed), and eliminate the fanatical German soldiers before daybreak. Stealth and deadly force are the keys; once the garrison is alerted to the commandos' presence, the firefight will be horrific.

## HIGH ADVENTURE

The daring exploits of the French Foreign Legion, the SOE, and Resistance fighters provide an opportunity for truly heroic roleplaying. High adventures include daring night drops into enemy territory, dangerous liaisons with questionable French Resistance groups, commando raids on mountain fortresses, and amazing battles against overwhelming forces (see *Bir Hakeim*, p. 12, for a real-life example).

In this setting, “cinematic” style doesn't have to bend reality very much. A single Resistance agent *can* defeat a panzer regiment – if he attacks their train with a wrench rather than each tank with a weapon!

# CAMPAIGN SETTINGS



GMs may wish to run a full-scale French campaign, beginning in the 1930s and extending through the liberation of France. Others will find a smaller, more focused campaign to their liking.

## BEFORE THE WAR

The 1930s were an era of intrigue and adventure. *GURPS Cliffhangers* provides useful information on running a “high adventure” campaign set prior to WWII. French soldiers can gather some badly needed combat experience fighting in Syria and Morocco in the mid-'20s, then begin a WWII campaign as seasoned veterans.

## THE BATTLE OF FRANCE

A campaign that focuses primarily on the Battle of France can be effectively handled by keeping the timeframe moving slowly. Considering that the entire campaign only lasted a month, the GM should not be in a hurry to rush through the key battles one after another. Rather, he should play up the day-to-day uncertainties and non-combat incidents, punctuating the lulls with sessions of deadly, terrifying battle.

## OTHER FRONTS

French soldiers may find themselves stationed in French colonies, or fighting alongside the Allies as part of the Free French. Chapter 1 provides an overview of France's involvement in the war, and can be used as a stepping stone to more detailed research for individual theaters and battles.

Two colonial locations that can be used to create exciting adventures are Dakar and Bir Hakeim (see p. 16). Many other locations in Africa or Indochina could host small bands of French troops fighting for their lives, on a scale too small for history to notice but perfect for a campaign. As for the fighting in Occupied France itself, see *The Resistance* on p. 14.

## Adventure Seed: Rendezvous

On Sept. 29, 1942, the SOE-F drops American saboteur Thomas Casey into occupied France via parachute. That night, Casey is to meet his Resistance contact – one of the PCs – in the cellar of a farmhouse near Arras. Instead, German forces swarm the Resistance hideout and engage the group in a vicious firefight, torching the house in a blaze that lights the sky for miles.

The PCs must take on the German soldiers if they can, or flee under the cover of darkness and regroup elsewhere. In either case, they must then decide what happened to the SOE operative. Was he injured on landing, delaying his trip to the farmhouse? How did the Germans learn of the location of the rendezvous? Has Casey been captured and interrogated? Once they find him, how will they rescue him from his German captors before he is relocated to a German concentration camp?

# THE FOREIGN LEGION

Legionnaires may be of nearly any nationality, most certainly including Americans. (Peter J. Ortiz, a New York native who later served as a U.S. Marine officer, fought in the Battle of France, and was the youngest sergeant in the Legion's history.) This creates excellent opportunities for conflict between PCs from different nations. A U.S. Army barracks tended to put together Indiana farmboys who picked up the same conversations that they'd left off at the grain elevator prior to enlisting. A Legion barracks combined a Czarist mass murderer with an Italian counterfeiter used to silk sheets with a Spanish anarchist who bombed one too many post offices, and so forth.

Historically, the Legion's barracks etiquette recognized this huge potential for friction, and legionnaires were encouraged to keep their personal business to themselves. Since this "business" had been awful enough to drive them to flee their homes and take up a brutal existence, most legionnaires were quite happy to do just that. Still, the GM of a Legion-based campaign should provide plenty of opportunities for PCs and NPCs alike to bring their backstory to the forefront. An Italian counterfeiter might come in handy when the brutal company sergeant refuses to sign weekend passes; a Spanish arsonist might be just the man to have in a unit lacking heavy weapons and frantically cobbling together Molotov cocktails.

Regardless of how much campaign emphasis is placed on barracks relationships, eventually the characters will enter into the thick of combat. Historically, most Legion campaigns took place in North Africa, where it was based at the time, as part of the British and Commonwealth armies opposing the Afrika Korps. Legion units often received tough assignments and took huge losses in this campaign, though things quieted down considerably after El Alamein (see p. W26). They also suffered the occasional attack by Allied planes or men, perhaps in part because they didn't resemble the other soldiers on the Allied side in their particularly heavy stubble and ragged uniforms.

On one occasion, some British MPs visited a Legion camp to arrest a British Legionnaire who had fled from arrest for murder at home. The MPs sized up the Legionnaires protecting their mate and decided to retreat empty-handed. The GM could replicate this sort of tension by having one of the PCs come face to face with the circumstances that drove him into the Legion while serving with the multinational Allied armies. Or, he could place an NPC under the spotlight, and make the PCs choose between protecting someone accused of a vile crime or dishonoring the Legion's basic pact.

# THE RESISTANCE

The Resistance provides a wonderful opportunity to mix military and espionage themes in an exciting *GURPS* campaign. The epic arc from dismal defeat to the liberation of Paris provides a well-known backdrop, but doesn't diminish the drama as agents undertake their low-key missions. See pp. W168-169 for basics of a Resistance-based campaign. Adventures set in France should also take into account the following factors:

## Who They Were

French men and women made up the majority of the Resistance. They came from all walks of life, from conservative secret policemen still working for the Vichy government while leading a double life, to factory workers crowding into the Communist Resistance ranks.

Early on, stranded British soldiers also played a significant role, though their lack of integration into daily French life gave them little hope for a long career. Many Spanish and Polish immigrants played a much longer-term role in the Resistance. The Spaniards tended to be Communists who had fled Franco, but had him to thank for their existing military experience. The Poles were more varied, and a bit more likely to be working for the British, who were hosting their government in exile.

Most of these characters should be conceived as civilians. If they are to stand a reasonable chance of surviving an active part during the entire war, the GM should allow 75 or 100 points for character creation. Alternately, they could be built on a more realistic 50 points, but the GM should give them liberal experience points during the campaign.

Either way, he should keep players from investing too much in combat-related skills. A French man who recently "released himself" from the reserves would have some military training, and might be allowed combat skills equivalent to those of a raw or green rifleman per pp. W71-72. Some civilian pursuits also will provide skills that translate into combat utility. For the most part, though, characters – particularly women – should lack military expertise as the campaign begins.

## The Initial Chaos

Starting out, the GM cannot overly emphasize how much distress that the German invasion created. French culture revolved around things being "just so." The mail arrived at a regular time daily, the trains ran on time, one exchanged a few pleasant words with the florist on the corner while walking to work each day. French life thrived on an orderly routine full of little pleasantries.

War, of course, threw all of this out of sorts. Whether the PCs are reservists stranded from their units, refugees joining the masses on the roads (where the Germans sometimes machine-gunned them to clear the lane), or civilians holed up at home, they will often find that their job has shut down, familiar faces have disappeared, and their telephone doesn't work. This disruption led to tense squabbling among the French populace as they scrambled to pick up the pieces of their lives.

The PCs should have to do this, too, whether it involves finding a grocer who's open or traveling miles to get home and burning an Army uniform. In either case, taxis and buses won't be of much help. Their drivers commandeered their vehicles to join the exodus to the south. The trains *did* run; their crews often went to heroic measures to perform their duties.

## Little Needs

During this period, the GM should introduce one or more motives for joining the embryonic Resistance. Perhaps a British soldier shows up bleeding on a PC's stoop. Perhaps PC dockworkers in the south watch German supervisors divert all incoming fresh vegetables to Germany while leaving spoiled fare to resume its journey into France. (They eventually got back by pouring acid into the Germany-bound produce.) Perhaps one of the PCs is caught in the northern Occupied Zone and simply wants to return to his family in the southern Vichy Zone; lacking the proper papers, he needs to find a smuggler to guide him during the huge risk of an illegal crossing.

Whatever the motive, PCs seeking out the Resistance in this early phase should encounter a vacuum. No one wore lapel pins. Casting about too openly for others of a like mind will almost certainly end up with an informer calling the Gestapo or Vichy police. Proceeding too carefully will find the PC, months later, still searching for a smuggler or someone to take this mending Tommy off their hands. Even worse, many seemingly fruitful contacts really intended to rob, even kill, those seeking their assistance – if a person sets out to disappear, who's to say he didn't get where he was going?

## Desperate Days

Even if the PCs give up on finding other contacts, and form their own cell, by late 1941 or so the Resistance will be making itself known, whether being sought out or not.

The Communists, in particular, will begin killing Germans; they don't often let the occupier's 10-to-1 reprisals dismay them, because they don't believe their countrymen should be sitting out the

war. They presume that the reprisals will goad those on the sideline into fighting (preferably for the Communist cause, of course).

Resistance members of all stripes might also approach the PCs at their jobs. *Anyone* can help out the movement; factory workers can sabotage products and steal tools; clerks can pass along data; cooks can slip a little food away to hungry and homeless partisans. French citizens of all stripes often invite contact with the movement, because increasingly they have to turn to the black market to find basic goods, and the market often is tied to the Resistance.

At this point, German security gets more intense, with random street stops to check papers, radio vans sweeping for illegal transmitters, etc. The Germans take a dreadful toll on the Resistance, killing many members and turning many others into double agents. Only the fact that the Resistance gains recruits faster than the Germans can catch them keeps the movement going.

For the individual resistant, these are terrible days. All of France is struggling to make ends meet, and spending most of your energy on the fight makes it all the harder. Most members lack any sort of weapon and foolproof papers. Many also lack jobs or even a place to live. Everyone they deal with is a potential informer, leaving them one careless word from torture and execution. Despite these hardships, the goal is to keep moving forward, to get *something* productive done.

One small consolation during this period is that some "collaborators" began looking the other way. Many Vichy officials only served because they saw no alternative, not out of any love for Fascism. If they passed over a nervous man in his 40s to check the papers of a woman in her 70s, so be it. Each day, the Vichy convictions eroded; each day, the Resistance gained in social legitimacy.

## The Grand Finale

A campaign of this scope demands an epic ending. The PCs' network should be called upon to perform some essential task in the night before D-Day, or to hunt down a V-1 launch site that is ravaging London, or something of similar magnitude. At this late point in the war, and only this late, the freedom fighters may begin seeing the equipment they need: cash, food, explosives, pistols and SMGs, etc. In return, they'll often be asked to go out and look for trouble with the Germans, certainly not in a frontal assault, but their missions will carry great risk all the same. The GM shouldn't hesitate to exact a toll among the PCs as they fight to accomplish this goal that legitimates all the hardships that they've endured for *liberté*.



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