

### **The scenario of autumn 1939**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1939, Germany launched land, air and sea attacks on Poland. Soon, the Nazis deployed 5,000 planes upon Poland. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 1939, 240 German planes bombed Warsaw, dropping 560 tons of bombs (including the first bomb of 1,000 kg). 30 transport aircrafts dropped 70 tons of firebombs. Meanwhile, 1,000 batteries shelled the city day and night. Warsaw burnt for many days. The sky above Central Europe was filled with smoke and dust. Poland surrendered before the end of the month. Total casualties are estimated at 1 million, including 200,000 dead people and 700,000 war prisoners.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, Great Britain and France declared war to Germany. Several hundred-kilometre military defence zone between France and Germany (the Maginot Line and the Westwall) were put into full operation immediately. Two million soldiers faced each other in September 1939. Since October, the number increased to over three million. Attacks and encounters occurred frequently. One of the first attacks during the first war week saw 700 French tanks and planes moving seven miles over the Saarland border, while 300 air planes attacked German positions in an industrial region and ammunition area, some 125 miles further north. Similar encounters occurred frequently, week-by-week, month-by-month, until Germany attacked and occupied the Western Europe countries, in summer 1940.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 1939, Russian troops invaded Finland with an army of 500,000 men (ca. 30 divisions), 2,000 tanks and 1,000 airplanes, while Finnish forces were weaker. Fighting took place along a 1,000 kilometre frontline, from the Barents Sea to the Gulf of Finland, with few access roads and very low temperatures (-46°C around the Christmas of 1939), in the permanent darkness at north of the Polar Circle and with only a few hours of daylight in southern Finland.

On the night of 26-27<sup>th</sup> of December, Anatolia was hit by a major earthquake which caused the death of 30,000 persons and generated a tsunami in the Eastern Black Sea.

In August 1939, many naval vessels had already been sent to distant positions. Baltic Sea, North Sea and Eastern North Atlantic were the preliminary areas for the war activities. After hour zero, many hundred naval vessels were permanently engaged in patrolling, escorting, mine laying, mine sweeping, depth charging of submarines, shelling of coastal batteries, enemy vessels or enemy air planes.