**1 The Day Before**

The grizzled old Admiral sat at the port end of the long table stretching nearly the full width of his dayroom, the shutters on the rear windows to his right open but the windows closed. The midday sun stretched across the ship’s deck on to the table highlighting the cap placed to the left of a bunch of looseleaf folio pages held together with a green treasury tag. They were neatly typed but obviously a carbon copy and several notes had been added in black ink, probably from the gold Parker fountain pen lying to the right of the pages close to his hand. Beyond the top right hand corner of the pages there was a deep indentation in the hard wood filled with an enamelled mug partly full of steaming Klar – a 50/50 mixture of coffee and cocoa much loved by most of the officers in the navy – the sailors preferred their tots!

The Admiral was Allorishus Temeraire Arbuthnot, so called because he was born on the same day that the RAN (Regal Albion Navy) Temeraire had been launched. This was the second ship designed specifically for the fledgling Albion Navy and his father had been a Captain of one of the old two-decker wooden ships that still formed part of the navy at the time, albeit one that was part of the reserve.

He was dressed in black patent shoes with extra grippy soles for when the ship was pitching and rolling, a dark almost mauve blue pair of trousers with an orange stripe up the outsides, a pure white starched shirt and jacket with copper coloured epaulets, a belt that matched the trousers – blue with a central orange band and of course all the medal ribbons that would be expected of a Flag Officer with 51 years of continuous service, including the Great War Cross, the Battlecruiser Battle Cross and the Last Great Battle Cross as well as a Red Heart Medal with Bar and a Distinguished Service Cross with two bars. The cap on the table was also blue with a white top and an orange band had no ship marker at the front. This exposed the spikey white hair cut short at the back which matched the short triangular beard and neat moustache. His old grey eyes still shone with brightness from under the bushy white eyebrows.

The Admiral had been promoted to be the Captain of the Battlecruiser Mairebekairne as she was first commissioned shortly before the start of the Great War. She became nicknamed La Belle Femme by her crew but the Admiral had always called her Ma Belle Femme – she still swung on her anchor not far from his new flagship. The ship was the only battlecruiser at the Last Great Battle to survive being hit on the central “Q” turret. After the Battle they found the Marine Major in charge of the magazine with his hand burnt on to the wheel that had been turned to flood the magazine and save the ship. The Major received a posthumous Arthur Cross named in honour of the first King of Albion. The other three battlecruisers hit in a similar manner in the action had all blown up with the loss of over 3000 lives between them.

Behind him his Flag Lieutenant wrote on a blackboard standing on an easel with a piece of white chalk. Behind the chair at the starboard end of the table was the Admiral’s so called Nightroom which was in fact two doors in the wall with a six foot long bunk behind them, the drawers below the doors were strong enough to act as a ladder when pulled out. To the right of the Nightroom was a wardrobe and a toilet flushed from a tank of sea water out the side of the ship, and to the left a large cupboard to store the folding chairs when they weren’t in use. The long table could be separated into four parts the legs folded up and the table lowered into holes under the lifted floor to clear the room when necessary.

The only permanent piece of furniture in the room was the comfortable arm chair that the Admiral was sitting in. On the wall to his left was a large full length portrait of the present queen – Queen Victoria II – looking regal in a long white silk dress and train with a dark mauve blue sash reaching from her right shoulder to left hip, a large crown with dark blue cloth to show off the large white diamonds was on her head. On either side of the Queen’s portrait was a smaller landscape painting of his Belle Femme, the one to the left dressed over all with flags gaily showing it was for the present Queen’s coronation. The one to the right showing the same ship painted in grey overall firing during the Last Great Battle. It was painted to show the moment when the middle “Q” turret exploded, a pillar of flame reaching higher than the masts. “There but for the Grace of God go I” was painted as its title.

Despite the wartime painting showing the ship in overall grey, the Navy had reverted to their Arthurian colour scheme – the same dark mauve blue on the hull, an orangey yellow on the turrets and funnels and white on all the superstructures, as shown in the more recent painting during the Queen’s coronation.

His thoughts were interrupted by a knock on his door and a shout of “Rear Admiral Moores”. The Admiral stood, picked up his hat and placed it on his head, turned to the door and called “Enter”. The Marine at the door opened it, and the Admiral saluted the Rear Admiral standing in the doorway in the way of his Nation by bringing his right thumb to his heart while holding his hand in a fist – a similar way to the salute the Roman Empire had used. He then walked over to the door, shook hands with the Admiral standing there in an almost identical uniform (there was one less orange-gold band around the wrists) and waved him to the desk where the Admiral’s factotum showed him to his seat at the right hand of the Admiral.

Behind the Rear Admiral was another, followed by two Commodores and many Captains, all in order of seniority. His goffer took each to their seats, the first Rear Admiral to the right of the Admiral and the second to his left, then the two Commodores opposite each other and the senior Captains spread along both sides with one at the far end facing the Admiral. Lesser Captains were sat on folding chairs along the windows and the wall opposite the windows under the paintings.

The Flag Lieutenant had turned the blackboard to the opposite side when the door opened so the work he had been completing was not visible. The goffer bought each officer a mug of Klar and freshened the Admiral’s then left the room, the Marine following him to stand outside the wardroom to give the senior officers some privacy. More marine boots marched back and forth on the poop deck above them to ensure nobody could listen at the skylights.

The Admiral remained standing but removed his hat to allow the other officers to relax a bit. “Gentlemen”, he started, “We have been given a bit of a challenge”. “You do not all know me unfortunately, but some of you have worked with me before”. He had in fact been working on simulations of ways to conduct a possible future war for some years, his predecessor as Admiral of this fleet had retired seven days ago and he had been ordered to this job only yesterday and been given the orders that he himself had prepared over the last few years.

“I would rather have met you all at a Ball or some such but I am afraid we don’t have time for pleasantries”.

As you know, the Neutrals had agreed at the end of The Great War to sell us Oil and Iron ore as we have none on our island, and more recently have added food into that agreement as our population has grown beyond the point where we can feed them all. They have however raised their prices to the point where we can no longer pay them and continue to survive as a Nation. Her Majesty Queen Victoria II and the government have agreed that something must be done – we have been given the task of doing that something.

Gentlemen, this information must not leave this room, it is most secret. Now that we have filled all of our warships and our oilers we only have enough fuel oil to keep the fleet moving at its most economical speed for 12 days once that fuel is used, and that is only because we de-mothballed some of our ancient coal fired battleships and cruisers to show the flag for the last few months. We also have only enough steel left to continue building our new ships for the next month and our population is beginning to become hungry – we will have to introduce rationing soon, probably this month.

As a result our government are issuing declarations of war to the ambassadors of the so called Neutral countries near us at Midnight tonight.

He paused to let the news sink in, there was a low murmuring around the room so he glared at each officer in turn and eventually the room fell quiet again.

I have been told not to sail to intercept their forces until after that time, but I have decided to leave the harbour starting at 1500 this afternoon as the fleet leaving the harbour in the dark could cause several accidents. We will form up outside the harbour and sail at midnight. Signals have been sent to all of your ships to raise steam for 12 knots by 1500 hours, though we will obviously leave harbour at a slower speed than that.

Once we have left the harbour we will set the fleet up as you see on the blackboard behind me – he stepped to the right hand side of the blackboard while the Flag Lieutenant turned it back so that the officers could look at it. His Flag Lieutenant stood on the other side.

The Admiral pointed to the blackboard and said, I will directly lead the Starboard Squadron consisting of the First Battle Division and the first half of the Third Battle Division and Rear Admiral Wingate will lead the Port Squadron consisting of the Second Battle Division and the second half of the Third Battle Division. Ahead and between us will be Ma Belle Femme acting as an Anti-Air defence – she only has three twin 4” AA replacing her old middle turret but she is better than nothing. One of her sisters would have been a better option as they are being rearmed with more and better guns, but they are with the Carriers. Ahead of her in line abreast will be the four heavy cruisers though they will be acting as two sub-divisions as I will explain later. Commodore Newcombe, I would like you to move your flag from the Heavy Cruisers to the flagship of the second half of the Third Division. I give apologies to the captain and officers of that vessel for their newly cramped quarters. The Heavy Cruisers will be led by the most senior captain in each sub-division.

Ahead of them will be the two divisions of DesRon5 (DesDiv9 and 10), which are much newer than our other destroyers, also in line abreast which will be acting as a combined Anti-Submarine and Anti-Air screen with two of our newer Light Cruisers to add to the Anti-Air role and strengthen the formations. Not that we expect the enemy to have any submarines but we are trying to cover all possibilities.

On the starboard side of the fleet will be DesRon1 (consisting of DesDiv1-Caroline Class and DesDiv3-David Class) and on the port side of the fleet will be DesRon2 (with DesDiv2/4 of the same classes), as you know these are our heaviest destroyers although they do not have the modern Dual-Purpose guns to allow them to fire at aircraft. To give them some AA protection each squadron will be led by another of the Light Cruisers. Note please Gentlemen – the cruisers shall not fire their 4” DP guns at ships unless they absolutely need to protect themselves, we need to keep the ammunition back in case we have to fight off the enemies aircraft.

Behind us also in line abreast will be the four light destroyers of the DesDiv17-Frederick class, they may not have many guns but they are all capable of engaging aircraft as well as ships and submarines. They will form our rear defence against aircraft but their primary duty is to protect the auxiliary train behind us – he nodded to the young Captain(D) sitting by the window. When we sight the enemy you will turn the whole auxiliary train on to a course directly away from them, with the destroyers trailing the auxiliaries. Your light cruiser will also be attached to that force, he nodded to the Captain(D), it is your job to provide the main Anti-Air capability though both the old heavy cruiser converted to carry nine scout floatplanes, the fleet oiler and the fleet auxiliaries (which carry extra ammunition and torpedoes for all the warships) have some anti-air ability.

Last but not least, he nodded to the Captain at the opposite end of the table, Ma Belle Dame will drop back to the rear of my Squadron once the enemy open fire, she is too valuable a ship to waste in a gunnery duel.

I would have liked a tailing squadron or two of destroyers to keep the enemy destroyers off our tail, but unfortunately the Powers That Be have decided to allocate them all elsewhere. The light forces, including all of the cruisers, will have to be ready to reverse course, down the unengaged side please, if it looks like the enemy forces intend to do that. We might have to turn both forces forty five degrees to starboard and interlace the lines to allow the light forces to engage the enemy light forces, threading our lines between each other. Please be aware of that situation and brief your deputies in case of casualties. I will send a signal “interlace” if I wish you to do that.

If during the battle you cannot get a response from me, then Commodore Hoskins in the third division is to immediately take over the Starboard Squadron, but any further orders from me will override them. I suggest Rear Admiral Wingate and Commodore Newcombe do the same.

Some distance behind our force will be the First Carrier Group under command of Rear Admiral Moores – he nodded to the gentleman on his right. Their job is to attack the enemy air strip at the Neutral’s eastern port, destroying their fighters and most importantly their torpedo bombers. Meanwhile his torpedo bombers will attack the enemy battleships, with priority on the battlecruiser and two 13.5” gunned battleships, we need to slow them down and preferably sink them.

Along with the Carrier force for protection will be a convoy of liners filled with six divisions of our troops and several cargo ships with their artillery, tanks, lorries, fuel for the vehicles and ammunition.

Gentlemen, that is how we will deploy. The good Queen Victoria II, her Prince-Consort Graham, the Princess Royal Boudicca and the Cabinet of the Government are aware of our target – the large island to the west of us, which is why we have chosen to gather at our western port to minimise the travel time. Only the Grand Admiral and four of his senior staff and I know how we intend to carry out our job. The information I have given you may not leave this room, you may not pass it on to your officers, your wives and especially not your mistresses. He paused to let the resultant laughter die down.

Our job is to land those troops and if possible support them. We can only do this once the enemy ships have been sunk.

We will keep three of the floatplanes aloft so that we can find the enemy fleet, we will then turn our fleet so that the enemy is on our starboard quarter. One of the many issues that we have is that while we could destroy the enemy in a long range gun duel, we cannot carry enough ammunition on our ships to destroy all the enemy ships. We therefore need to get closer to them, almost into medium range so that we get enough hits. That however might allow their lighter guns to penetrate our armour.

My plan is to continue in our designated formation until we are almost into medium range and then turn the starboard column ninety degrees to starboard with DesDiv10 still in line abreast and one of the light cruisers in support, followed by the first sub-division of heavy cruisers in line ahead then DesRon1 also in line ahead led by their light cruiser and the Battleships with our Battlecruiser bringing up the rear.

With this move, we will position our Battleships across the enemies bow, giving us a chance to do far more damage than if they were parallel with us. If they turn to parallel our course, the Port Squadron will be across their stern having the same advantage. If they turn opposite our course then the Port Squadron will be across their bow instead. They are unlikely to turn away in any direction as they need to drive us away from their coast to stop us landing our troops. The only direction that is likely to cause us any issues is if they turn to aim for the point where our two forces diverged. If they choose that option, I will turn my squadron forty-five degrees to port to parallel them on an opposite course and once we are beyond them turn a further ninety degrees to port to cross their “T” astern.

Note at some stage the Port Squadron will need to reverse course as the enemy passes them – I will leave it up to Rear Admiral Wingate to decide when to do that and whether to turn in sequence or together. I am aware that the so called Battle Turn Away first used in the Last Great Battle is frowned upon by many senior officers but it does have the advantage that half the ships aren’t being blocked by other ships crossing in front of them, although while they are turning, only half their guns may bear on their target. For me though the main advantage of the Battle Turn Away is that the ships don’t lose ranging on their target.

We don’t expect the enemy to surrender – they have to drive us away from the shore and keeping their fleet in being will not help them – expect them to be desperate.

Once we have cleared the enemy ships from the seas, we will land at least two of our divisions of troops somewhere on the eastern coast and take the eastern port so that the warships can enter, refuel and rearm and unload the rest of the troops including the Armoured and Motorised Divisions. After that it will be a case of rolling up the other enemy brigades, they only have five in total compared to the twelve that we will be able to field once we can get into their ports. By the time that we land the full force they should only have four brigades.

After that will depend very much on how this first battle goes. With luck we will be finished before summer let alone Christmas. Note however that like My Admiral at the Last Great Battle, of whom it was said “He is the only man who can lose the war in an afternoon”, I have also been given a poison chalice. I have to destroy the enemy in their entirety, yes I have 12 battleships to their 8, we have almost double the number of cruisers and a similar advantage in destroyers. Yes all of our ships are better gunned, better armoured and faster than the enemy and our destroyers carry far more torpedoes, but after this battle we have two more medium sized fleets to destroy and twelve XXXX more small fleets, some of whom may decide to combine. There are no more Battleships available, Gentlemen, other than those still building and we need steel to complete them. We also have very few lighter ships available so cannot afford to throw them away to preserve the Battleships.

We have to destroy all these fleets and still leave more than our rivals to the east and west otherwise we will find their remnants falling on us and undoing all the good work that we will do tomorrow.

Gentlemen, tomorrow we must be on our best game. He strode to the table picked up his cap, then picked up his nearly empty cup of Klar and waited for all the other officers to do the same and stand. Then he placed his cap on his head, raised his cup and shouted “For the Queen, may God bless her and her heirs”. All of the men present drank to the toast, having learnt long ago to always leave a little Klar in the cup for the final toast, even if it was cold. All the men then threw their caps in the air in the time honoured manner. With the exception of the Flag Officers, they all had their ship’s name on the cap-band so it made sorting out whose was whose easy afterwards.

**2 The Fleet Sails**

Pictures moved to shore.

Waved off by Queen, Consort and Princess Royal.

**3 The Day Dawns**

As the Cathedral clock in the Port of Westron chimed midnight on the first day of the year 1940, the Battle fleet accelerated to the economic cruising speed of the slowest ship in it – 12 knots. The Carrier Group also accelerated to 12 knots six hours later so that they were 72 miles behind the Battle Group. The Convoy of liners and cargo ships with their small number of escorts also set out at 12 knots shortly after the Carrier Group, so that they got some protection from the ships in that group and also their aircraft.

On the third night the Battle Group slowed to ensure that they were 100 miles off the enemy’s eastern port by dawn at 0700. The day was cold and clear and three scout floatplanes were launched from the converted late war heavy cruiser (a Hawkins class CA1 converted to a CAF, ie CA-Floatplane) to carry nine floatplanes, to search for the enemy fleet between the Battle Fleet’s position and the eastern port. One headed directly west towards the port, the others heading northwest and southwest respectively. At the same time a force of dive-bombers and their escorting fighters flew overhead at high level, heading for the airfield at the eastern port to try and destroy the enemy’s fighters and torpedo-bombers (fifteen of each of those types of planes). The Carrier Group was far enough back that the enemy aircraft at the other ports couldn’t reach it, but they could probably reach the Battle Group.

A short time later a radio message was received stating that the enemy fleet were about 38 nautical miles to the west. This was timely as another force of torpedo bombers with some fighters to strafe the ships flew over on route for the enemy battle fleet a few minutes later.

The Admiral ordered the fleet to turn together in formation so that they would pass 6 nautical miles to the south of the enemy fleet when they came alongside them. An hour later (with both fleets still travelling at 12 knots), the lead ships were fourteen miles apart and the lookouts could see the tops of the funnels, the bridges and masts of the enemy. That was the maximum distance that the guns could hope to make a hit – it was not possible to see the fall of shot relative to the target beyond that range though the scout floatplane could have helped one battleship to plot their fall of shot. It was not possible to have more floatplanes in the same vicinity as they might fly into each other.

The Admiral ordered all ships to full speed so that for example the DesRon1 could drop into the space between the 1st SubDiv of Heavy Cruisers and the fleet flagship. It also helped to close the distance between ships to 1000 yards – they normally cruised with 2000 yards between ships so that a collision was unlikely.

It is often said that no plan survives meeting the enemy – this was true in this case as well. The enemy were travelling east in line ahead at twelve knots with one of the 13.5” armed battleships in the lead, then the two Collosus XXXX, St Vincent, the Battlecruiser Invincible and finally Dreadnought herself all armed with 12” then the 13.5” armed battlecruiser (not dissimilar to his Ma Belle Femme but still with the central “Q” turret) and finally the other 13.5” armed battleship.

The Admiral hoped that this meant that damage had been done to one of the heavier enemy ships, and possibly the battlecruiser as well.

On either side of the battle fleet was a line of lighter ships with an old Weymouth class light cruiser leading four very old River class destroyers and then the same again following them, so sixteen destroyers and four light cruisers in total. The Admiral had sixteen more modern and more powerful destroyers to fight with and four heavy cruisers, the other light ships were on guard duty although one of the light cruisers and possibly the other could get into the mix as well. Once they got into range, the leading enemy light cruiser on both wings dropped in towards the centre of the fleet and let the lead destroyer pass it, all the odd numbered destroyers started a smoke screen blocking off sight of the battleships from the Albion fleet.

The Admiral ordered the starboard column to turn ninety degrees to starboard, as previously discussed, so that the flagship was directly in front of the lead enemy battleship when that ship reached a range of 7 (nautical) miles (14000 yards). The smoke screen could only block sight towards the side of the enemy not towards their bow.

Albion’s Battlewagons are numbered as below, EW1 designates the ships completed early in the Great War (equivalent to Queen Mary and the Iron Dukes), MW1 is the QE/R’s and LW1 are later designs started towards the end of the war and completed afterwards. PLT are ship started Post 2nd London Treaty and completed some time after the Start of Hostilities.

B1-4 EW1BC-13, Battlecruisers the first three converted to AA ships with the CarGrps and the fourth was Ma Belle Femme with the BatGrp, due to be converted once this battle was over and steel was available.

B5-8 MW1BB-15, Battleships similar to HMS Queen Elizabeth.

B9-14 LW1BB-15, later 15” gunned Battleships with Single 5.5” in shields, all are fitted as flagships but there are only four flag officers in the BatGrp – Admiral, Rear Admiral, Commodore of the 3rd Division and the former Commodore of the Heavy Cruisers reassigned as Commodore of the second Sub-Division of the 3rd Division.

B15-16 LW1BB-16, later Battleships with 4 Twin16 and Single 5.5” in shields.

B17-18 PLTBB-16, started before Start of Hostilities and completed during 1940, others of this class are still completing, the last two are still not launched.

The Order of Battle is (F indicates a Flagship):

BatRon1 (Starboard Wing)

BatDiv1 B9F, B15, B10, B5

BatDiv3a B11F, B6

BatRon2 (Port Wing)

Bat Div2 B12F, B16, B13, B7

BatDiv3b B14F, B8

The Battle

EnemyB#1, sunk by #1/2, EnemyB#2 by #3,4, Enemy#3 engaged by #1/2 when EnemyLC#2 loses steering and rams EnemyB#4 in stern and she loses steering and heads through stbd smoke screen to be destroyed by Port Sqn

Enemy#5 turns the other way, to avoid E#4’s stern, towards BB#1 which opens rapid fire on her blowing up the A mag. Her return fire however caused a hit on the B turret of BB#1 which failed to penetrate and exploded in front of the bridge, decapitating Captain Cooper (unknown by the rest of the crew as the father of the Midshipman of the same name) and injuring others, including the Admiral. Earlier in the engagement BB#1 received a 13.5” shell which destroyed the rearmost port 5.5” shielded secondaries, BB#2 received a similar 12” shell destroying the 2nd and 3rd secondaries, and as she turned to disengage after firing all of her main ammunition, BB#1 received a 12” shell from Enemy#6 just aft of the port belt on the waterline where there was no armour. This caused flooding and the flagship had to rapidly slow and counter flood to keep an even profile. Also as the leading two ships turned away without ammunition for their main guns, a 13.5” shell fired by the enemy Battlecruiser struck the second ship on the belt over the third boiler room, penetrating and destroying almost half the room, not quite enough to slow her, but she had to slow rapidly and turn to avoid the flagship.

Unable to engage the Albion battleships at the start of the engagement, the rearmost Enemy ships fired at the retreating HC, one 13.5” shell, probably from the rearmost ship which was only travelling at 12 knots having taken two torpedo hits from the swordfish (on opposite sides so there was no need to counterflood), crashing into the rear of the second HC smashing the X and Y turrets which were never designed to take such punishment.

Enemy#6 engaged by BB#5/6 after BB#1/2/3/4 run out of ammo, all remaining ships were hit by torpedoes from DesRon1 XXXX (84 fired in total) sinking the remaining ships apart from a couple of DD on the Enemy’s Port wing. The Enemies Starboard wing was destroyed by the Port Squadron once the smoke screen cleared who also mopped up the last two DD of the enemy Port wing.

1st Guards and half 1st Motorised and half 1st Armoured and last Trainees dropped on beaches to south of East Port which overrun Neutral Brigade and enter the Port. The troops were supported by the Port Squadron as the Starboard Squadron was almost completely out of ammunition. The Starboard Squadron lay further off the beach acting as guard ships with what little ammunition they had left in the unlikely chance that somebody else would turn up.

Next day ships enter Port and rearm/fuel and land remaining troops and tanks and artillery. Last Trainees left in port and 1st half Motorised/1st half Armoured swing round to south of capital – other halves to the north.

1st Guards and remaining 2 divisions of Trainees attack along the Capital/East Port road with the others attacking from the rear taking out the artillery and HQs.

Midshipman Cooper made Acting Lt and asked for speciality – Gunnery – Anti Air recommended first. He recommends Midshipman Cummings as the next senior Mid. Later offered 3rd Lt on the DD Caroline which had only one surviving officer, a Lt who was given Acting Commander, the most senior middie from that DD was promoted to 2nd Lt and a junior Lt from BB#2 given 1st Lt on that DD. In a later battle the DD is blown up with 3 survivors – Lt Cooper, one of the middies and an ABS from the forward observation position, a fourth person died in the water from his injuries b4 being picked up.

1st Lt George Carrington on BB#1 promoted to Acting Captain and BB#1/2 sent back for repairs with HC2 and Caroline and Charles from DesRon1 which had both taken a beating. Admiral first meets Cooper’s widowed mother.

Some of the mothballed ships have been de-mothballed and designated as below:

OB1-4 SDr

OB5-8 EDrBB-11

OB9-12 MDrBC-11

AC1-2 MAC-9.2

AC3-4 EAC-9.2

Second major battle:

BatRon1:

BatDiv1 B9F, B17, B18, B15

BatDiv3 B10F, B5, B11, B6

BatRon2:

BatDiv2 B12F, B16, B13, B7

BatDiv4 B14, B8, OB9, OB10

8/9 gunned ships initially give 4 hits and 10 gun give 5, so enemy flag takes 5x15+4x16, E#2 takes 8x16, E#3 9x15, E#4 9x15, E#5-8 unengaged until BatRon2 turns to starboard (both factions) so enemy BatRon2 leave the combat and Albion BatRon2 land up on opposite side of enemy BatRon1 closer to the 2nd Div.

Enemy BatRon1:

PLTBB-16, PLTBB-16, LW1BB-16, LW1BB-16, LW1BB-14, LW1BB-14, LW1BB-14, LW1BB14

Enemy BatRon2:

LW1BB-14, LW1BB-14, MW1BB-14, MW1BB-14, MW1BB-14, MW1BB-14

The 2xEW1BB-12 are supporting the landings on the North Pole west of the Eastern Port. The 2xEW1BB-14 are supporting the landings on the most north-easterly small island along with a VF.

B9 (flagship) badly damaged by enemy PLTBB-16 and stationary when attacked by six TB, shot down 1 and drove off 2 but the other 3 put a torpedo in B9’s stern which caused her to capsize. Adm took his gig to B11 after sending signals from the gig. 7th Lieutenant Conner, who was in charge of the Damage Parties asked for volunteers among the unmarried men to help shore up the waterline damage to give the rest of the crew time to evacuate, given a posthumous Arthur Cross and all of the volunteers also received posthumous Distinguished Service Medals, allowing the families to acquire a lifetime pension.

B17 & B18 reduced to 21 knots and B18 loses X turret

B15 reduced to 15 knots and loses Y turret

All other Battlewagon were lightly damaged

B11 moved to BatDiv1 flagship temporarily. B6 was also badly damaged by the air attack.

The Admiral in B11 led the badly damaged survivors of BatDiv1 home along with Charles and the almost wrecked Light Cruiser XXXX. On arrival he briefly spoke to the Superintendent of the Naval Yards and asked him to get the ships checked over and report his findings as soon as possible.

He then took a train to the Capital to see the Queen and the heads of the Admiralty. He first apologised to the Queen for losing her ships and her brave sailors, and offered to resign his commission. She asked him how many of his ships he had lost, his reply was of course two, then he said but three more are almost unusable. She asked how many he had sunk, his reply was of course eight to which she replied, then I think you did rather well, I am more than satisfied with your efforts, but please try not to lose too many more.

The Admirals were more down to earth – “shame about the ships, but at least you gave the enemy a good clouting”. Thank you Sirs the Admiral replied. I believe we have the better of the enemy but can you help me to expedite the repairs. Where do we go from here?

There was a knock at the door and it turned out to be the Superintendent. He reported to the assembled Admirals that B15 was so badly damaged that she could not be used until repaired which could take some time, his initial estimate was that it would take XXXX months. B6 and the new CL were so badly damaged they might never be repaired. B17 and B18 while damaged could still operate but at no greater than 21 knots, and in the case of B18 with only two turrets. The Light Cruiser would also require a lot of work, but Charles could be fixed relatively quickly.

The Admirals thanked the Superintendent who left to start the work to prepare the ships for their repairs. The Admiral in charge of the Navies material (ie the ships), indicated he would like to speak. Once given permission, he stood and said, Gentleman, I realise that the loss of speed in our two latest ships is a great shame, but it does give us an opportunity. The other Admirals looked puzzled. He continued, we have recently de-mothballed a third pair of our old coal-fired ships and like the first four we have not found time to upgrade them to a more modern AA fit, but they are at least available. They were intended to strengthen the guard forces for the Convoys, but they are now capable of 21 knots as we have refitted the engines so that they can again make their original speed. We could add these two to B17 and B18 to form a slow division. They only mount 11” guns but it is better than nothing and they should be able to engage the enemy’s weaker ships.

Admiral Arbuthnot stood and said, Thank you sire, that would be very useful, it would give us sixteen ships again if we could have a third ship of the old Battlecruisers as well. Five of them would be armed with only 11” guns and the three Battlecruisers have appalling thin armour but we would probably be facing no more than eight or ten ships depending on whether they get the two ships that were with the invasion force back home.

BatRon1:

BatDiv1 B10F, B5, B11, B8

BatDiv3 B17F, B18, OB5, OB6 (21kn)

B15 and B6 sent off for repair

BatRon2:

BatDiv2 B12F, B16, B13, B7

BatDiv4 B14F, OB9, OB10, OB11

CarGrp2 & 3 swamp Enemy CarGrp2 (2xVF) sinking both carriers and CarGrp1 hits the convoy with the VF sinking that and all six liners and most of the cargo ships – a second attack capsizes the two battleships and one cruiser, the remaining cruisers and destroyers escape as do Enemy BatRon2 from the main battle fleet – insufficient shells to sink them even if they were caught. CarGrp2 beats off an attack by aircraft from Enemy CarGrp1 but takes minor damage (bomb doesn’t penetrate armoured deck).

Aircraft at North Pole Port C attack the convoy landing troops – sink one of the EW1BB-12 and one of the liners but the others land. All Albion troops at the North Pole retreat to the Capital and prepare for a long and unsupported battle.

BatRon2 left in position after being rearmed from the Auxiliaries with both of the new DD squadrons and the old DD squadrons plus the new and old Cruisers.

BatRon1, as reorganised including DesDiv1 with its wrecked Light Cruiser and the Auxiliary train (which had passed on its ammunition and torpedoes) although the CAF was left behind to support BatRon2 returned to Eastron to be rearmed and evaluated for repairs. DesDiv17 travelled with BatRon1 to supply an AA/AS role. Admiral Arbuthnot XXXX called to Admiralty in the Capital to explain the losses. Showed they had done significantly better than might have been expected, the major damage had been received from aircraft after the battle. Asked how the new designs had worked BB, CL and DD. Arbuthnot replied that it was best that the new BB weren’t built faster than the rest of the fleet as had been suggested, they could be cut off from the rest of the fleet if they used a faster speed. He suggested that better armour would be a bonus and possibly more main guns, the secondary armament had performed well when they came under air attack, but hadn’t been used before that. The new CL had a good gun armament, especially against aircraft but had been hopelessly outgunned by the new enemy cruiser and had been shattered, only the sacrifice by Caroline had saved the ship. As for the DD, they had proved to be absolutely vital when the enemy aircraft attacked, both the new and old anti-air DD had come to the aid of BatRon1, without their effort, the entire BatRon1 could have been lost. One of the Admirals who favoured carriers on the board pointed out that neither of the old anti-air DD divisions had returned to the homeland when the new ones arrived and was quite cynical about it. That way the Admiralty couldn’t take the DD from the Battlefleet! At the end of the gruelling interrogation, the Chairman of the Board (the Fleet Admiral) asked the Admiral if he had any questions. The first was the obvious, “Am I still in charge of the Fleet”, the Chairman looked around his companions, three were quick to nod with the other two (both Carrier enthusiasts) seemed more reluctant before finally saying yes. The second was “Are you going to be able to replace Caroline”? You have a great Lieutenant in young Cooper and Midshipman XXXX deserves recognition too. The Chairman replied “We are aware of your mentoring of the young Lieutenant, Admiral!”. With the injury to his arm, we must look at whether he has a place at sea. The Admiral instantly fired back with “I can remember a very famous Admiral with a similar disability”. The Fleet Admiral glowered at the Admiral but said nothing. The Admiral then asked if his ships could be repaired and his wounded men looked after. One of the other Admirals replied, “We will do our best with the ships as and when steel is available and the docks are free, but you have to know that we will extend every assistance to the wounded, and your men must know that they and their families will get the best help that they need.

B15 and B6 were left behind for repairs when a Dry Dock becomes available along with the badly damaged new CL, C19, and Charles which once again had taken a hammering. DesRon1 had once again gone down to six ships though the Admiral had plans to move one of the Caroline class from DesRon2 to DesRon1 giving both squadrons only 7 ships until a replacement could be found. He also planned to move HC1 to be the AA ship with that squadron to give a heavier support against the new enemy cruisers. The other ships would have to continue as they were regardless of damage. There was some suggestions that C19 could be remodelled as a new design using the new Triple 5.5DP to replace the destroyed X turret and possibly the A turret too. There were also suggestions that Charles should be remodelled to a Twin 5.5DP in X position and Singles in the other two locations, though it was felt that four guns was not a good solution. Another solution to replace each existing mount with a Twin4” DP was better received, but it would reduce her usefulness as one of the main fighting destroyers. In the end it was decided to just replace the destroyed mount with another 5.5” Quick Fire (no AA capability) and to build a new ship to replace Caroline – the Admiral requested that it use the same name. All Navies tend to reuse the same names over and over rather than dream up new names – there were for example at least two Dreadnoughts before the ship of the iconic name, one of which had fought at Trafalgar XXXX.

The Admiral returned to the fleet having rearmed and refueled with those ships that were deemed to be suitable for future use. The Rear Admiral suggested that his only 16” gunned ship should swap to BatDiv1 to give the Admiral more firepower as he no longer had any 16” gunned ships in that division – the only two were in the slower BatDiv2. The Admiral gratefully agreed, swapping it with B5.

Two months later the Scandinavian and Low Countries Navy to the east of the current enemy attack across their border and institute land battles on both pole countries. Albion had already taken the western port on the enemies southern pole whilst loosing all three ports on the northern pole but keeping the beseiged capital.

A retired Admiral was asked to fly to the enemy’s large neutral island to offer assitence against the Scandinavians. At the southern pole the enemy ground forces quickly lose their eastern port and are trapped between the Albion forces and the Scandinavians. They only hold the central port and the capital.

The Deal offered to the enemy is an alliance. They will be left with the north pole central and eastern ports on the Albion iris and be given the NE most small island to provide those two ports with cover and support, if they give up the western port on the North Pole (so that the capital can be resupplied). They will be supported by Albion troops currently at the north pole capital and the SW pole port in their own iris as well as by the complete Albion fleet. If they refuse to attack the Scandinavian fleet, they will be left to their own devices – most of the Albion fleet are considerably faster than the enemy fleet and the Scandinavian fleet with the exception of the Dutch battlecruisers.

On the South Pole of the enemy territory, an Albion FPS, with two white sheets wrapped round its upper wing, is flown to a large group of surviving enemy aircraft and waggles their wings before leading them back ot the western port where they land and are offered one of the squadron spaces at the airfield there. All bar one division of newly trained troops are marched from that port towards the capital to support the remaining enemy troops who are falling back. The infantry, now with a lot of lorries to transport them travel down a minor road that parallels the coast road (to avoid the civilian refugees) and a force consisting of two divisions XXXX of Panzer Grenadiers and one of armour travel on a parallel road further inland to the south.

The mixed group of enemy aircraft hear a voice in English saying “Follow me” on their own radio frequency when they spot the FPS. The enemy wing commander flying the lead aircraft replies “Roger” in the manner of all aviators. A while later the enemy wing commander gets on the radio again to inform the FPS that they are nearly out of fuel and gets the response “Wilco, only two minutes to the airfield now”. A short while later they spot three runways with a large town beyond it. The aircraft start to land immediately but the wing commander follows the FPS round in a circle to allow his men to land safely and lands after them. Most of the aircraft have enough fuel on board to taxi to the hanger apron but the last one to land and the wing commander’s engines both splutter and stop at the end of the runway. A large group of unarmed engineers run out of the hangers to push them to their colleagues while fire tenders stand by on the grass to the side of the runway.

When the FPS lands and stops on the same apron, an Albion wing commander climbs down along with a female navigator and male gunner. The enemy wing commander stops surprised to see the female climb out of the plane, something that wouldn’t happen in their forces. The Albion WC also stops and salutes, then says “What Ho old boy”, “are your guys all ok”. “Yes, thank you, but what is going on – are we prisoners”. The Albion WC looks around at the lack of armed troops in the vicinity “No old boy, I believe we are now Comrades in Arms, our goverments have agreed a truce to counter the Scandinavian threat”. Then he added “Do you have any support troops heading this way?”. “Yes” the enemy WC replied, “I believe they are ahead of the refugees with spares and munitions and probably some fuel”. “Would you mind accompaning me to speak to them to get them to head here” the Albion WC asked. “I need to speak to my men first, but of course I will accompany you”. The Albion WC saluted him again and turned to the female standing behind him he said “Sorry Maam, I need to pinch your seat” to which she replied with a grin “as long as you don’t do it for real Sir”. They both laughed.

A fuel bowser pulled up and started to refuel the Albion WC’s plane then headed off to start refueling the enemy planes.

On the North Pole of the Albion iris the Albion troops march out of the capital to support the enemy troops at the boundary between the Albion iris and the enemy one as they fall back to push the Scandinavians out of their own iris.