

# CRETE '41

## The Megagame After-Action Report By Peter Merritt

*The game was intended as an abstracted version of the German invasion of the island of Crete in late May, 1941. It was the first time in history that such an operation was mounted solely by airborne troops, with normal ground forces following-on later. It was a real see-saw battle, with victory hanging on a knife-edge for 48 hours, as the elite German forces, on a 'high' after almost two years of straight victories, attempted to 'bounce' their way from the Balkans, through Greece, and then on to Cyprus, Rhodes - and Egypt? The motley collection of British Empire troops tasked with defending the island were certainly tired and ill-equipped (most having just been evacuated from Greece), but, like the Arnhem operation three years later, rather better-prepared (and in greater numbers) than the over-eager airborne planners cared to admit.....*

*Of course, hindsight is a marvellous thing, and if left with a free hand the Germans would simply 'swamp' 1x airfield and mop-up the island from there. Likewise, the allied players would simply 'sit' on the runways, ignoring other landing zones (and the plentiful invasion beaches). So, to try and 'force' events along more historical initial starting positions, I set events on a sliding points-scheme whereby the allies seek to maximise points in the FIRST half by hanging-on to vital points (airfields, bridges etc), then in the SECOND half by exiting units - not easy to balance (or indeed to switch between them!). The Germans seek to minimise the allied points score by sinking ships, landing their follow-up forces, and of course capturing all or at least some of the airfields as soon as possible. Taken together, this should have had the effect of forcing players to 'make do' and create/discard tactical plans on the spot, rather than come-up with some wonderful global offensive which would be far too late to influence the final result..... In the event, elements of both sides chose to ignore these points, but the significance may have been lost (along with many of the rules - more of that later).*

*Despite an early start to the day (Christine opened-up at 09:00 hrs - thanks Chris) and the prompt arrival of the bulk of players, the pre-game organising of teams and plans dragged-on way past my initial target of 10:30/11:00, mainly due to teams (a) having a lot to assimilate (in terms of available forces, loadings etc.); and (b) allied detailed deployments kept changing, which of course had an impact on the German's planning (even though they had their materials at the start of the week). Anyway, six big tables were set-up around the hall, the four main ones (looking left-to-right along the north of the island) being **MALEME**, **CANEA\***, **RETIMO**, and **HERAKLION**. The huge maps were blown-up from some pretty dodgy A3 originals I'd created (based on Phil Short's 1978 SPI boardgame) by **Graham Bull** (many, many thanks) - indeed, the ones for RETIMO & HERAKLION were complete fakes, but as long as they had a main road along the coast, an airfield, some rivers, villages and LOTS of crappy terrain I figured, well, what the hell! The main sector & town of Canea (\*) was a major port and contained the Allied HQ, but did not have an airfield. It did, however, have several good landing zones and as such represented the 'back-door' to Maleme. The other two tables in the back corners of the hall were 'Greece' (with both HQ's for XI Flieger Korps - Student - and their Italian liaison staff); and 'Egypt', where **Steve Littlefield** and **Kevin Dallimore** (an excellent umpiring team) ran the naval and political side of things.....*

*Allied C-in-C General Freyberg (**Phil Short**) had done a great deal of planning over the previous couple of weeks with his 'Chief-of-Staff' (- and golfing fanatic - **Mark Landymore** {a*

newcomer who pitched straight into the game with excellent results}). What nobody else knew was that the umpires were keeping Phil informed of strategic German planning because of the 'ULTRA' code-breaking, courtesy of Bletchley Park - but he couldn't tell anyone about it! Thus, he spent a great deal of time trying to correct his subordinates' detailed positioning and orientation, but without explanation many regarded his 'little obsessions' with this feature or that as either quaint eccentricities or "....Pommy lunacy...."! The inclusion of about 20-25% 'dummy' counters helped to produce the right amount of historical German confusion as, although they could 'fly over' any table at any time, all the counters were face down.....

Part of the reason for delayed planning was a result of introducing some historical 'What ifs', both to confound anyone already familiar with the history, and to provide even more interest for myself as the developer (after all, who wants to simply repeat history?). For the Allies, they received more intelligence, a few more AA guns (three units instead of ONE), and some of the artillery and trucks which were requested but never arrived. In addition, the Royal Navy (pretty strong in any event), were due to receive elements of 'Force H' which had just made a supply run to Malta and, instead of turning back, were permitted to push-on in the hopes of intercepting the Italian fleet. If the Allies seemed short of the 40,000 on the island, this is partly because almost HALF were non-combatant 'support troops', and I had decided to provide slightly fewer but stronger units to speed-up play.

The Axis forces were helped - at least, that was the intention - by the inclusion of an additional glider-borne battalion (made-up from the cadres in Germany) which increased 1st (Assault) Regt. to 4x battalions, and strong elements of the Italian forces. The latter provided assistance in three forms - some SM79 torpedo-bombers (in an anti-shipping role); an airborne regt. (yes, they had some trained but lacking in transport aircraft) from the elite light infantry 'Folgore' division; and finally a strong battlegroup from the navy, including three modern, fast battleships and cruisers, plus a convoy carrying an infantry division with it's (very) heavy weapons..... True, their equipment was old by any standard, and the men lacking the enthusiasm of their brothers in 'Folgore', but they would provide a huge boost to German chances - if they could be landed.

Despite allied rumours to the contrary, the numbers of German aircraft present were accurate (even a little 'light') on the historical pattern, weighted rather more in favour of high-level bombers than the 40% dive-bombers in the original op. The 'downside' of this boost to Axis forces was that **Jocky Ramage** and my brother **John Merritt** were playing the Italians, who had secured Hitler's personal guarantee that their forces would be given (a) a suitable victory for public consumption (after the debacle in Greece); and (b) the BEST support from German forces, particularly in the form of air cover. With a 'direct line' to Berlin and Rome, German commander Gen. Student (**Paul Williams**) and very able ADC (**Dave Diston**), were fully aware of the personal consequences of failure.....



## THE GERMANS' PLAN

Eventually, however, the Germans adopted a more concentrated drop plan, going for long-term points parity by surrendering one or two major objectives almost permanently to the allies for the first day, hoping (presumably) to 'claw back' this lead later:-

### # FIRST DROP (mid morning, first day)

[1] 1st (Assault) Regt. to attack and secure Maleme airfield and push-on towards the town of Canea (the island capital);

[2] 2nd (Para) Regt. to attack and secure Retimo airfield; elements of 3rd (Para) cut-off contact with Heraklion;

### # SECOND DROP (mid afternoon, first day)

[3] 1st Italian Airborne Regt. to 'harass' the Heraklion defenders, preventing either their interference with Retimo (next door) or their escape south;

[4] Remains of 3rd (Para) Regt. to support the operations at Retimo & Heraklion as the situation demanded.

### # NAVAL FORCES:-

(a) The Italian fleet would sortie-out with a fast convoy heading firstly for the southern tip of Greece;

(b) There it would meet-up with a 'scratch force' of shipping hastily assembled by the Germans, carrying ALL the heavy artillery units of their 5th (Mountain) Division (i.e. the only bits NOT air-transportable);

(c) The combined force would then make best possible time towards Crete, hoping to avoid contact with the RN at night (because the Italians didn't have radar).



## THE ALLIES' PLAN

The allies were constrained by certain strategic dispositions, and the fact that, once the attack opened, the lack of air-cover would make moving any distance in daylight extremely hazardous. For ease of organisation, I therefore gave each of the four sectors a 'Commonwealth' brigade (2x British, 1xNZ, and 1x Aussie) each of 4x rifle battalions at reasonable strength, plus an attached Greek regiment of 3x battalions. The latter were a compromise, representing the thousands of under-equipped Greek troops in a wide variety of units actually present. In that respect, the allies had a better chance at command & control than if they'd had THREE TIMES the number of units, but at much reduced strength. Apart from a few coastal guns (which could not face inland - built by the same contractors as Singapore, I assume?), and a handful of 'classic' early British tanks which were extremely hard for the Germans to destroy, but had a typical 1-in-3 chance of breaking-down when they moved!

Apart from holding-on to key terrain and denying close landing zones to the Germans, Gen. Freyberg (Phil Short) also had to deal with **King Constantine** ("**...The Great...**"; **his words**) of **Greece**, who had escaped from the mainland and was now on the island ready to command his men in battle - just like his namesake (but without the ability)! This character - played with great gusto and much evil enjoyment by KevinD - was a real worry for the general, as his loss (either dead or captured) would have major political consequences both during and after the war. I think it fair to say that, between us (the umpires) we left Phil in no doubt as to (a) the King's importance, and (b) Phil's future in the event of 'a problem'.....

## WHAT HAPPENED?

As overall control umpire I was able to get an overview of events on each table, but I must leave much of the detail to others to write - PLEASE! However, the gist of events were as follows:-

The attack on **MALEME SECTOR** had been allotted to **Paul Greenwood** and **Colin MacKenzie** of SELWG (in command of the 'best of the best' 1st [Assault] Para Regiment). Unfortunately, Paul's notoriously bad dice-rolling deserted him (briefly) just when he need it most. Out of about 22 separate rolls, 18 of them were 4+ - it's just that these were for the damage taken on landing..... Not only this, but Paul's personal a/c was shot-down and he himself (Gen. Ramke, 2-i-C of the German paras) killed outright! This news was not exactly unwelcome back in Greece, as there was some historical conflict between Student & Ramke, with the latter waiting to take-over should the plan go into 'cock-up' mode. Paul did get 10x seconds of stunned silence, however, the effect of which was somewhat offset as it was almost immediately followed by 10x minutes of howling derision and laughter (from both sides)..... Paul made some good decisions on the drop, however, with all units dropping 'low' to avoid too much drifting ('high' avoided more AA fire).

The badly battered Germans landed west of the Tavronitis river, along which were dug-in the bulk of the allied forces (commanded by **Simon Hughes** and ADC **Dave Burn**). These commanded the first of two ANZAC brigades, in this instance containing some very fierce New Zealanders. A bloody, grinding battle now ensued which went on all day and throughout the night - each side knew how vital success was, and the Germans were not going to get any help until (if?) the amphibious relief arrived..... I must say that both sides performed excellently, the Germans using their air-power 'ace', while the allies shuffled both real and dummy-units to bewilder their opponents' planning, then using the fearsome (but costly) 'bayonet charge' combat option to re-take important positions time and again. I think the only 'interesting' tactical event which I would query concerned Paul & Colin's carpet-bombing of half of the airfield - true, it disposed of the last of the defenders, but also rendered it's use as..... oh, well. As per history, however, Gen.Student would have risked rough-landing some Ju52 transports simply to get fresh men onto the island, so half the airfield was enough for that - just not to take-off again.



Both sides suffered from rule misinterpretations (and lack of familiarity), but in the end the Germans were all across the river and had pushed the now exhausted allies back from the (remains of) the airfield. At the last, a convoy arrived on their sector (the German one - more on this later), alas hotly followed by the Royal Navy, which proceeded to shell everything in sight! Luckily, enough of the ships survived to be beached in Pauls' rear (if you'll pardon the expression) having been forced further west by the (unsuppressed) coastal guns, and turned-out to be carrying the 5th (mountain) Div.'s heavy artillery ("...and there was much rejoicing.."). I have since discovered, however, that a couple of Greek units were still lurking that side of the river 'masquerading' as inert dummies, and so there would be an interesting 'race for the guns' the following morning!

Next door at allied HQ in **CANEA SECTOR**, apart from massive air-attacks the Germans had decided (despite umpire 'nudges') to leave this sector alone. In doing so, they did give the allies' strategic points total a tremendous boost. The staff and garrison commanders appeared to be occupied (rather than busy), however, as all through the morning and early afternoon a flurry of messages arrived by various means (once Mark's character could be dragged-off the golf course he'd had the engineers set up!). Meanwhile Phil 'burnt the airwaves' to Middle East Command back in their nice, cool hotels in Egypt, asking about their current attitude to regicide.....

It seems that daring King-about-town Constantine of Greece (Kevin D) had 'gone walkabout', only to surface a little later on a fly-by of the island in a commandeered Sunderland flying boat, dodging in between German air-raids! Given that Allied HQ had devoted much pre-game thought to getting rid of him, I thought that the extremely disrespectful series of comments which this caused was a little hard.....! Narrowly avoiding German air-attacks (other than by an equally ungainly Fw200 Condor), the King eventually located the Royal Navy, participating in the sea battle off of Greece - which Steve & Kevin insisted on calling 'Salamis 2' - being lightly wounded in the process. When this news reached the island it had the effect (apart from muted cheering at Allied HQ!) of enraging the Greek troops for a couple of turns, much to the Germans' consternation!

Political and crowd-control problems surfaced at various times, as the bombing started to panic the citizens of Canea, but also inspired the local Cretans to form volunteer units. These suddenly appeared in the streets and villages around the town (led by 'Mayor' KevinD) enthusiastically offering to attack the Germans - if only Phil could give them some rifles..... I'm not sure how this was resolved - I know that someone armed some newly-released prisoners(!), and that Cretan bandits turned-up with some 'missing' British trucks!

Late in the afternoon, at Hitler's insistence, the Germans finally dropped one of their support battalions (the combat engineers) in the south of 'Prison Valley'. This area was identified by both sides early on as a good dropzone, but once the main landings had taken-place it was quietly abandoned by the defending brigade (**Alastair Austin** and **Mark Hunter** against the C-in-C's orders) only a couple of hours before the drop, a move which went un-noticed by the harassed C-in-C. Such a small force could never really threaten a garrison three-times its size, BUT the valley also carried the only main road south over the mountains - so, once the nearby harbour was made untenable by the Luftwaffe, the ENTIRE central area was in danger of capture unless the route could be re-opened. By the end of the game infantry of both sides were facing-off, each being pounded in turn by aircraft or artillery-fire, but the allies were gradually pushing the isolated paras aside (making up, at least in part, for the somewhat boring early part of the game here). It would have been interesting to see if massed Axis air-power could 'seal-off' the valley long enough for the other paras to close the trap, thus trapping the best part of 40% of the defenders.



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On **RETIMO**, **Ken Cooper** and **Micky Lee** witnessed probably the largest para drop of the war (so far) as the best part of two regiments began dropping (commanded by **Richard Chace**, <..>, and <..>). Their landing zones seemed to be selected more for safety than speed. however, as most of them were well-away from the airfield (and anything else for that matter). It was a reasonably good drop as I understand it, but it took a good 3-4hrs (i.e. early afternoon) before serious fighting got under-way. Once it did, however, the battle developed into a WW1 style 'see-saw', with the airfield changing hands several times - per turn! This did lead to just a little confusion

at each HQ, it being especially hard on poor **Dave Diston** (ADC to Gen.Student) who had on several occasions efficiently marshalled infantry units to be air-landed on their newly acquired airfield, only to be recalled just on/after take-off as yet another "...oops..." message got through!

There were a number of incidents which came to my attention as the battle went on - the use of a handful of tanks as pillboxes (they daren't move them on account of their chronic record of mechanical unreliability!) caused the lightly-armed Germans no end of trouble, as they did historically. Then there was the confusion about the only bridge carrying the main road to Heraklion sector further east. The Germans seemed to spend some time considering how to cut this, with a number of bombing raids having little real effect. This situation was soon resolved, however, when the Brits blew it up! It seems that they were "...concerned about paras coming from the east...", even though at that point there were no axis troops AT Heraklion - just some reinforcements on their way to help! Oh, well.....



In the end the Germans were able to create a large wedge-shaped deployment pointed northwards, which by the beginning of day 2 had finally cleared the airfield and was doing a 'march to the sea', effectively cutting the defenders' line in two. With the UNDAMAGED airfield now secured (are you taking notes, Paul?), both sides realised that this was the turning-point, as a now heavily suspicious Dave D began yet again to assemble the troop carriers with elements of 5th Mtn.Div. About one third of the defenders would have been trapped on this front, but the others still retained control of one main road south, and so, as elsewhere, the Germans were only too relieved to see them go.

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Finally we come to the westernmost sector around the village and airfield of HERAKLION. Although some way from Canea and the main port at Suda Bay, the presence of a good airfield made the place critical to the strategic defence of the island and could not be ignored. Noting the importance of the a/f, Phil assigned it's defence to the other strong ANZAC brigade, commanded by **Steve Morgan** and **Joe (cash only) Blacker**. This brigade was made-up of Australian battalions, and the two players certainly 'played-up' to their roles, running just along the edge of insubordination whenever contacted by their British commanders or his staff. Partly this was due to the sector being ignored by the Germans (other than massive air attacks, which were met by heavy return-fire from interlocking AA sites) until midday - again surrendering big 'strategic points' to the Allies - and partly because, well, they enjoyed it!

After considerable 'prodding', the Germans were finally compelled to something about this area and decided to drop **Jock Ramage's** Italian airborne regt. to the south of the main position, the intention being to cut the TWO - 2 - II - ZWEI - DEUS - DUE - DVA..... (are you reading this, Jock?) roads leading south over the mountains, this being the Aussies' only escape route if it all went pear-shaped elsewhere. Well, the drop itself went very well with minimal damage being sustained other than some minor flak hits, the LZ being in clear terrain between both roads and some 1-2Km from the nearest Allied units. The Italians soon regrouped and took one of if not THE first village to fall into Axis hands; it wasn't actually defended by anyone other than Cretan civilians, but it made great propaganda! You see, both the Italian naval and army commanders were under the strictest instructions NOT to do anything which would produce any more cock-ups on the scale of the recent ops in Greece.

Now things began to go a little strange, however, as Aussies first braced themselves for an assault on the airfield (a natural assumption), then became confused and finally not a little sarcastic as the Italians moved away from them! Sensing a possible trap they did not want to move-out to engage the Italians for several reasons -

- # The German's total command of the skies made leaving their trenches very costly;
- # It was not in their strategic orders;
- # They had already moved some units earlier in the day to reinforce RETIMO, only to hear that their route was effectively cut when Ken & Co blew-up the only bridge! As this was also their 'emergency escape route', to say that they were a little peeved is putting it mildly!

Meanwhile the Italians, presumably overcome by one of their few successful martial exploits in almost a year of war, noticed some enemy units approaching and began to draw into a smaller and smaller perimeter..... Unfortunately, this meant that when the Greeks (incensed at the news of the wounding of their King) began to make bayonet assaults, the airborne units had nowhere to which they could pull-back out of the way. Thus it was that all through the night, as the bulk of the Australians slipped away via the numerous fishing villages, the Italians took a great many unnecessary casualties, finally being relieved by a German battalion from 3rd Para Regt the next morning. The latter had been diverted from RETIMO as the Italians 'forcefully demanded' some more support - apart from the constant aerial 'curtain' of interdiction which effectively screened them from the bulk of the garrison, that is (at some cost to the Luftwaffe).



Finally, The 3rd Para unit was originally tasked to follow-up a truly MASSIVE night-bombing raid by the Luftwaffe on the other road south (you remember, the one left completely open by.....), which had been reported as "...packed with fleeing Allied units...". Well, Dave D asked the umpires if it could be done and so, as true believers in the 1930's theory of 'area bombing', we of course jumped at the chance to have a go! Now, at this time the RAF in Europe (with much more experience in this field) was still having trouble finding Berlin (sometimes Germany!), and so overall accuracy was just a little short of the Germans' initial expectations..... In the end, we decided NOT to lose most of the bombers over the eastern Mediterranean, and instead flew in a 'box' about 10Km long by 5Km wide, using a prominent arrow-straight river as a left-hand marker, as this would be visible from the air at night. Well, they came over and quite literally filled the skies over the table, but the effects did not (initially) justify the effort because:-

- # The aircraft were dispersed over a wide area (to avoid collisions);
- # There was a tendency to 'hug' the left-flank following the river as it was the only known point by which to navigate at night;
- # The road actually curved-off to the right, moving away from the flight-path;
- # The Australians had left before the bombers got there, not that there were many to start-with! I think a few lorries left this way, but nothing significant.

The edges of the 'bomber box' did hit some AA emplacements, the perimeter of the airfield, some Greeks - and the southernmost Italians (more complaints, completely ignored by Student.....). However, unbeknownst to the Germans who - apart from a very smug Luftwaffe - were extremely disappointed by the apparent 'failure', the show of force did convince the Aussies

to take the opportunity to (understandably) 'get out while the going was good' BEFORE they'd heard about RETIMO being lost and without trying to clear any roads south. This did, however, effectively deliver a second airfield with only minor bomb damage into the Germans' hands for use on day two.....

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Just before I finish, there remains the operations at sea to be recounted. Now I was not privy to much of what went on here (this area being run superbly by semi-umpire **Steve Littlefield** and '**King**' **Kevin Dallimore**), but it was critical to many aspects - both strategic and political - affecting the course of the campaign not just on Crete, but perhaps in the entire Middle-East theatre. As per history, the Germans (under admirable 'Admiral' **Andy Smith** from Student's staff) had the opportunity to create a make-shift 'fleet' of transports in Greece, mainly by commandeering every trawler and tramp coastal steamer they could find. These would be necessary to transport either large bodies of men from 5th Mtn Div (in one 'go'), or at the very least the heavy artillery batteries which were certainly not air-transportable. There were NO German warships of any size available for escort in this area of the Mediterranean - the reported sightings of the battleships Scharnhorst, Tirpitz (even Bismark) etc. etc. were entirely the creation of certain warped Australian senses of humour, although I don't think that the harassed allied HQ shared their particular sense of 'fun!' Actually, as timelines go, on the day of the game Bismark has just sunk HMS Hood in the Denmark Straights, and is about three days away from her own end.....

In addition to the Germans, however, one of the major historical 'what-ifs' which I wanted to introduce was to allow for the Italian Navy to sortie-out (under bother **John Merritt**), with additional infantry forces from mainland Italy. Joking aside, the Italian fleet had some superb modern ships which, if a little 'thirsty' on fuel (being exceptionally fast for their size), were certainly the equal in technical terms of any RN ships in the area - with one key exception; radar. Despite a very 'conservative' image, the RN was quick to adopt radar both for long-range detection AND gunnery fire-control.



Even allowing for 'average' shooting ability, at night it would give the RN a major advantage (like the USA enjoyed over the Japanese in the Pacific, once they'd fixed their sets). Although still outnumbered by the RN, the Italians had another advantage in that they were not using the German ENIGMA code-machine (which our ULTRA service had broken), and so the Allies had no idea where they were! This meant that the RN forces (who knew that 'something was up') had to be spread-out in a wide screen to try and find them - that is, until the Italians agreed to a rendezvous with the Germans off the SE coast of Greece to escort them too.....

German aerial recce failed miserably to pick-up any RN units at all until after the Italians' first surprise encounter, being spread-out over a vast area around Crete and south towards Egypt instead of covering the areas adjacent to the course the vital convoys would take. Thus it was that, soon after an RAF Sunderland flying-boat (NOT carrying King Constantine, just for a change) had spotted the Italians, a host of RN units including two battleships, some cruisers and numerous destroyers hove unexpectedly into view. The brief engagement which followed saw the loss of the Italian destroyer-screen, sacrificed to cover the main fleets' withdrawal once the size of the RN force became apparent (plus Steve's infamous die-rolling, of course). John had been privately

briefed beforehand that the loss of a capital ship would be an 'Italian strategic defeat', and so kept them out of the firing-line of battle.

It was now the turn of the Axis forces to inflict damage, however, as while the bulk of the Italians made best speed back to Italy, both the Luftwaffe and Reggia Aeronautica now had an exact 'fix' on the RN's position..... Dave D & co now launched a constant series of missions led by the deadly Ju88 dive-bombers and SM-79 torpedo planes, which constantly harassed the fast-retreating RN until nightfall ended their ordeal.

Now, these events had left Andy Smiths's Germans with something of a problem, in that (being much slower) they had already sailed and were nearing their (well-known) rendezvous point. As it was by now as far to go back as it was to go to Crete (and the fact that he wasn't actually *with* them), Andy ordered the fleet to proceed but in 'dispersed' formation, as the idea that the RN - let alone SteveL - would miss such an opportunity was beyond even wishful thinking..... Actually, Steve had detached some of the damaged units to make for Alexandria before dawn, but had positioned some of the rest of the fleet only a few miles off the northern coastline. His intention was do some shore-bombardment of the 'captured' airfields, but was surprised - and not a little delighted - when screening forces detected the rag-tag arrival of the 'Little Ships' of Force Schmidt. In the end, the need to get out before dawn added to the dispersed nature of the target (hidden from the ships' radar by background reflections from the island), and so 'only' about 40% were lost. The failure to neutralise the shore batteries in MALEME sector did, however, force the fleet to land further west than intended, leading to the 'race for the guns' mentioned earlier.



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**SO, WHAT DO I THINK OVERALL?**

OK, given the very kind reception afterwards overall I thought that it worked very well, with everyone in general taking-in a lot of rules and systems in a short space of time. There remains just a few observations which I feel need to be said before summing-up:-

**THE RESULT:** Well, the Germans were undoubtedly gaining the upper hand by the morning of the second day (when the game had to end). Of the three key airfields, RETIMO had been taken by brute force; HERAKLION had been more or less abandoned (if only the Italians - or somebody - would occupy it); and MALEME had eventually been taken but was badly damaged in the process (by the Germans.....), with lots of aggressive allies still around. Of course, barring disasters, odds were that the Germans were likely to get one airfield eventually, but this was slightly ahead of schedule. In 'honour points terms', the Allies were effectively handed a major bonus when two of the tables were basically ignored for most of the day, quite apart from hanging-on to the airfields and (most) other strategic points until darkness. The Italian navy did well, if only by avoiding disaster and diverting the attention of the RN. So, all-in-all a less costly operation all round, with a clear strategic victory for the Germans, and a notable 'honour points' victory for the Allies.



**RULES:** Modern warfare is a complex operation and I wanted some simple rules which could still reflect key aspects of operations at this level. It also became apparent early-on that, to fill all the player slots, umpiring would be limited to key 'control' activities, leaving players to administer combat etc. for themselves. Thus the rules (and excellent maps) were more 'formal' than some other games. It was inevitable perhaps that with so many rules and such a 'busy' day, some rules (AA fire at Heraklion, Command & Control in several places, para equipment collection etc.) got 'lost' or misinterpreted. I tried to ensure that I was on hand for the first turn on most tables, but was defeated by the layout of the rules themselves and the 'chinese whispers' series of amendments. Structurally and in overall effect I was very pleased, but more examples are needed for future reference. My apologies for any of those who felt 'hard done-by' in this area.

**PEOPLE:** Phil Short and Mark Landymore did some excellent pre-planning, Paul Williams slightly less-so, but this was mainly the result of a lack of details on Allied deployments not available until the day. John M and Dave D each did an excellent job on the German staff and as - respectively - the Italian Admiral and planning head of the Luftwaffe. Finally, my own combat honours have to go to SELWGs' Simon H and Paul G at MALEME, both of them locked in a true no-quarter 'Wagnerian' death-struggle for most of the day (assisted by 2-i-C's Dave Burn and Colin MacKenzie). All players performed well, however, even if a couple of areas (CANEA and HERAKLION) were under-used, leading to a major megagame 'crime'; player boredom. Sorry guys - all I can say is that this will not be the case in future.

I also want to make a special 'thank you' to the 6-8 players who turned-up from the South London Warlords (forming the bulk of the Germans), and to SELWG for continuing to make them feel welcome. Both clubs have a lot to offer in this area, and it is to our mutual benefit that such contacts continue. Indeed, the SELWG games have started plans to run similar events at Dulwich on a more frequent basis (on Saturdays, rather than Sundays) - I'll keep both clubs posted.

Lastly, I (and everyone else for that matter) have to thank **Steve Littlefield** and **Kevin Dallimore** as a pair of the best umpires you could wish for (I'm still hearing strange reports of 'King Constantines' activities on the day); **Graham Bull** yet again for the truly magnificent maps; and **Christine** for the early opening.

## **THE FUTURE**

Elsewhere in this issue should be a list of proposed games actively under development. Two of them are some more 'operational' WW2 games using a variation on the style of rules system used for 'Crete41' but tailored to reflect slightly higher-level, more mobile ops. The test game will be 'Desert Fox' (set in Tunisia, 1942/43), moving-on later to a long-cherished dream to do a whole series of games set in Russia in the 'balanced' period 1942/44, when both sides can still mount major attacks. If you have any suggestions, criticisms, requests etc., then please get in touch.

